

Shelter Stories

A TALE OF FOSTER FAIL

Nelly arrived on a hot Tuesday, a tiny skinny bundle of dirt and faeces - but with a heart the size of the sun. Her ears twitched at every new sound, and her eyes held a train of tiny questions. She had the softest cream-coloured coat that made you want to cradle her like a warm, living tea cup.

Nelly's exact origin is unknown. Because she was a very young orphan, a SPCA employee decided to foster her, a homeless creature who deserved a family. The plan, as with so many stories, was simple: a couple of weeks of care, a little training, and then a loving forever family would come along.

But plans—oh, plans—sometimes misread the heart.

Nelly was supposed to be a temporary guest. What happened instead was a quiet, stubborn elbowing of fate, a whisper in a dog's ear that said, Stay. Stay longer. Stay forever.

The first night, foster mom tucked Nelly into a warm bed next to her own. Nelly did not whine or pace. She simply settled, as if the world's chaos could be subdued by a soft breath and a steady heartbeat. The other dogs sat next to her, watchful guardians who welcomed her to the pack.

Nelly grew into the rhythm of the house with surprising ease. She learnt the good things, to sit while waiting for food, to listen when you call her, to pee outside... She also copied the bad things. Stealing socks, rummaging through bins, chewing on shoes. Most importantly, she learnt how steal hearts. Her foster family's heart.

As the months unfolded, Nelly became more than a guest. She became her mom's shadow, accompanying her on trips, outings, hikes and to work.



Weeks turned into months, and increasingly, none of the potential adopters for Nelly met Mom's standards. Eventually, the effort to find Nelly a new home came to a complete halt, leading to the inevitable outcome.

This situation is not uncommon; it's known as a *Foster Fail*.

A foster fail occurs when a temporary home transforms into a permanent one. You begin fostering an adorable dog, and then the magic of bonding occurs, convincing you that adopting them yourself is not only reasonable but also completely necessary.

In essence: you open your home to a foster, and in return, the foster opens your heart.

Nelly was just another lucky Foster Fail.

