

## CHAPTER 4

### 'ARE LIONS ALLOWED?'

It's hard to keep it a secret when you have a lion as a pet, and Christian soon became famous. It wasn't long before he was invited to be 'interviewed' on BBC Radio.

When Ace and John arrived at the BBC, the guard stopped them and said: 'Sorry. There's a rule here – no dogs are allowed.'

'What about lions?' they asked. 'Are lions allowed?' To this, the guard had no reply, and he had to let them in.



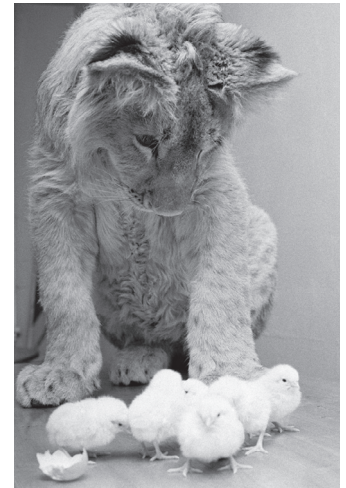
The interviewer was hoping that Christian would roar on the radio. Unfortunately for the listeners, Christian was shy of the microphone and remained completely silent for the whole interview!

Christian was also invited to appear on a children's

TV programme. This time he was confused by the bright lights and frightened of the cameras. Ace or John spent a lot of time on the floor with Christian, trying to stop him from running away. Luckily, people watching the programme afterwards thought they were watching a man and a lion playing together!

After the TV programme there was a lot of interest in Christian. Magazines and newspapers wanted to take photos of him. But they wanted him to look wild and frightening. They took photos of him in the middle of a yawn, when his mouth was wide open and his teeth were showing. They wanted their readers to think he was a dangerous lion. Ace and John decided they needed to be more careful about the photographs that appeared in the newspapers. They met a photographer called Derek Cattani who understood Christian. They asked Derek to take photos of him. After that, if the newspapers wanted photos, they had to buy them from Derek.

Ace and John agreed to let Christian appear in some advertisements, as long as he enjoyed them. He was getting very expensive to feed, and Ace and John needed the extra money from the advertising. In one photo, Christian is seen sitting with six tiny new-born chickens. Nobody could believe how gentle he was with them! In another advertisement, for top fashion magazine *Vanity Fair*, Christian had to lie on



Christian and the chickens

a bed with a beautiful actress. The actress had lovely long hair. Christian always enjoyed chewing hair. However, the actress did *not* enjoy it, and Christian had to stop. He was cross about this – so he bit a hole in the bed cover instead and destroyed the expensive pillows!

Sometimes on Sundays, when the shop was closed, Ace and John took Christian out. Unfortunately there aren't many places in London that you can take a lion. Once they



The lions at  
Trafalgar Square

drove him to Trafalgar Square to see the four lions at the bottom of Nelson's Column. He enjoyed that very much.

Another time they took him to a park called Kensington Gardens but he was frightened by the big open space. Lots of people came up and stared at him too and he didn't like that at all.

One day Ace and John took him to a children's home. They thought it

would be a nice surprise for the children to see a lion. The director kept Christian in one room, while the children had afternoon tea with Ace and John in another room. But one of the children opened the door to Christian's room and he ran to find Ace and John. The children screamed and jumped onto chairs and tables. Christian had never seen people behave like that before. He went home, very quiet and confused – while the children probably had nightmares for a long time afterwards.

Sometimes Ace and John took Christian with them when they were invited to their friends' houses. On one visit Christian pushed open a bathroom door. There was a loud scream. It was difficult to know who was more frightened – the girl sitting in the bath, or Christian himself!

Ace and John often went to visit their friends who owned the puma, Margot. They hoped that Margot and Christian would become friends. But Margot was a different kind of big cat; she was also older than Christian, and very jealous of him. Margot didn't like Christian at all. The only time he went near her, she hit him on the nose with her paw. He didn't go near her again.

As Christian became more and more famous, and articles about him appeared in newspapers all over the world, Ace and John received lots of phone calls and letters about him. But only one letter attacked them for owning a lion. In April, 1970, a woman in the USA wrote to them. Her letter ended:

*That lion must be quite big now. You have made him live an unnatural life - he must be bored and unhappy. You have probably pulled out his claws and his teeth. A zoo won't want him without claws and teeth. So what are you going to do with him when you get bored? Have you thought about his future?*

The woman was wrong about Christian's life. Ace and John had not pulled out his claws or teeth, and Christian wasn't unhappy. But she had been right to question their plans for his future. Ace and John had been worried about it for some time now. What *were* they going to do with him?