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# Kalaya's LAST VISIT

GROWING UP AND MOVING AWAY DIDN'T DIMINISH MY LOVE FOR THIS SPECIAL CAT, ESPECIALLY ON THE NIGHT SHE PASSED.

By Sharon Therien

When I was 14, my family and I went to a beat-up farmhouse in small-town New Jersey that was advertising kittens. The owner of the house came to us with five kittens in her arms. We requested a female, so she handed us the only one in the litter.

Although all her siblings had orange and white stripes, the female kitten had a beautiful layer of speckled brown and black over her stripes. She was a beauty, with large golden eyes and a diamond-shaped patch of fur on her forehead. We took her home with us, ecstatic to have a new feline friend. We had recently lost our precious Siamese, Snowflake, and were ready to fill the hole in our hearts. We also felt that our other cat, Sydney, needed a new companion.

The first night after we brought Kalaya home, she wouldn't stop trying to cuddle with me under the covers. Normally I would love that, but I quickly discovered she was covered in fleas – and so was I! To this day, I still feel bad that we had to lock her in the bathroom that night, when all she wanted was some love.

## HAPPY MEMORIES

My family and I quickly made up for that first night. Kalaya slept on our beds countless nights after that, alternating between my parents, brother and me. She also received plenty of love from Sydney. They would cuddle on the couch or in a dresser drawer, and Sydney would lick her clean, just as he had done with Snowflake. Sometimes, the two of them sat on my lap together. Although there was barely enough space, we made it work.

When we were both young, I would chase Kalaya across the yard into the woods and she would come zooming out from under the hanging branches to chase me back. She was such a playful cat. My brother would flick folded paper footballs into the air and she would fly higher than I've ever seen a cat jump to catch them. She also loved the outdoors. She would spend countless hours in the garden simply enjoying the sun, patiently hunting mice and rolling in catnip plants.

Don't get me wrong, though – Kalaya wasn't always sweet. She had a vengeful side, and would give you a swift all-claws-out whack for an unforgiven crime, or for petting her when she wasn't in the mood!

## MOVING AWAY

When I left home to go to college, it was hard for me to leave Kalaya. I think it was hard for her too. I only saw her when I visited my mom, and that only included some weekends and a few months between semesters. My visits dwindled to a couple of weeks a year when I moved to Florida.

Just about every time I arrived at my mom's house, I would find Kalaya in the form of a lump in the bed, sleeping under the covers. She would act like she didn't know me and would give me the cold shoulder. But after a couple of hours, she would inevitably sit on my lap.

The last time I saw Kalaya, she snuggled with me the whole time I was home, and I wonder in hindsight if she knew she was dying.

“ When we were both young, I would chase Kalaya across the yard into the woods and she would come zooming out from under the hanging branches to chase me back.”

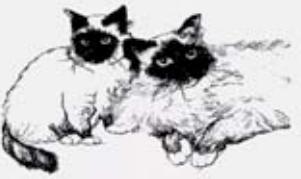
## ONE LAST MOMENT

About six months after that trip, when Kalaya was 14, we discovered she had kidney failure – the same condition Sydney had died from a few years before. We knew she was dying, but I was unfortunately unable to make the trip to New Jersey to say goodbye. She quickly declined, and even though I was living so far away, I had trouble imagining a world without Kalaya in it. My mom had been planning to move to Florida in the near future, and I was looking forward to seeing Kalaya more often...but now that wasn't going to happen.

When I knew Kalaya's time was near, I asked my mom to hold the phone up to her. I told her how much I loved her and I said goodbye. While reading later that night, I suddenly felt as if Kalaya was with me. I savored the moment and then looked at the time, planning to ask my mom if that's when she died. It was 8:50 p.m.

The next morning, Mom called me and told me Kalaya had died at 3:00 a.m. I told her about my experience, and she said that was about the time Kalaya started relaxing and leaving this world. My mom said both she and my sister-in-law had similar experiences during the night.

Some might say it's silly, or just wishful thinking to make myself feel better, but I'll always believe Kalaya came to visit me before she left this earth. I still grieve over her sometimes, but I'm grateful I got to spend that one last moment with her. 



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