

SOULMATES

Short Story

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I'm told that I have a human personality like that of a child who is always getting into mischief. What do they expect of me? I'm only a cat, and a calico one at that. And it's not my fault. I was adopted from Lollipop Farm Animal Shelter when my eyes were barely open, by two college roommates who thought they needed a kitten.

At first, they pampered me by hand-feeding me, cuddling me, and wrapping me in my own blanket in my own bed. They also showered me with kitty toys and treats. They named me after the Disney Princess Jasmine who is a funny, intelligent, and loveable character. That attention didn't last very long. They had classes to attend, basketball practice, parties, and lots of other places to go. I became very lonely.

That's when they thought I was becoming naughty and full of mischief. What did they think I was going to do all day, and sometimes all evening with no one else to play with? I wanted attention so I thought about ways to get it. I started by jumping up onto things that were very high, like the top of the fridge. I found boxes of people-food stored there. Then I discovered that I could open them by knocking them onto the floor. The cheesy fish things were quite tasty.

I also longed for a drink. Overturned half-full glasses and cups that were left around the apartment quenched my thirst. Eventually, the best way I discovered to get a drink was from the dripping faucet. For entertainment, I'd chase some of the toy mice. It was a problem, though, when I had batted all of them under a dresser and couldn't get them out.

When the roommates came home, I thought it was time to play. But what did they do? They fell asleep. I wanted their attention, and I knew just how to get it—especially if they were sleeping in bed.

Karin, the special roommate, left her bedroom door open so the morning sun could shine in. An open door was my invitation to join her. I jumped onto the bed. I got no response. Then slowly and quietly I padded across Karin's body and onto her nightstand. That was still not getting her to respond. My next trick was to one-by-one knock everything off the nightstand so it would thud on the floor. After about the third item, I made the alarm clock crash. That still didn't work so I gently put my paw over her eyes to wake her.

Karin cheerfully greeted me with "Hi, Jazzy," and off we went to turn on the bathroom faucet for my morning drink. As Karin was preparing for our shower, she shared some news with me. "You and I are going to be relocating to our own apartment. Aunt Tara is moving in with her boyfriend, Dan, and we can't afford to live here alone," she whispered as she stroked my soft fur.

Following my usual habit, I jumped into the back of the shower where I could stay dry while still being with my favorite roommate and now, my only roommate. I got a little wet, but I didn't care.

The rest of the day brought more surprises. It took us all day to move into another apartment. I guess I was the one who made the process more complicated. I didn't like all the noise and confusion, so I hid. Karin had a floor-to-almost-ceiling computer desk and cabinet in the far corner of her bedroom. By jumping onto the desk and then springing up to the top of the cabinet, I could make myself as small as possible in the back corner. Karin and friends kept calling for me, but I was nowhere to be found. When she entered the room, I could hear her

soothing voice and smell the treat in her hand. That did it; I plunged into her arms. While she was lovingly hugging me, she gingerly stuffed me into my carrier and off we went to our new home.

I didn't like being in the carrier or riding in a car, so I howled all the way there. After every piece of furniture and every box was deposited in 18 West Street, apartment four, I was free to explore our new surroundings. The spongy salt-n-pepper grey wall-to-wall carpeting was most intriguing to me. I sniffed and sniffed everything. Then I felt very itchy all over my body, but mostly behind my ears. When Karin woke up the next morning with bug bites covering her body, she decided that the carpet must be infested with fleas. She was right. The landlord told her we would have to find another place to stay for a week while they fumigated the rooms.

Off we went again in that horrible car with me pent up in my carrier. I started to howl again, until Karin let me out. What a relief! I started exploring the car's whole interior as I walked all over the back and front seats. I finally curled up on Karin's feet; it was so comfy there. She didn't agree so back I was sent, now with a soft blanket over my cage. I felt much more comfortable without the sight of passing scenery, so I slept all the way to Gramma and Papa's house.

"Now, Jazz, you be a good girl. We'll be staying in my former downstairs apartment for a week. Remember my boyfriend, Matt? He will be visiting us so remember to be nice to him. Next year, he's going to be your Daddy. Don't bat him away from me like you usually do," Karin lectured.

"Be nice to Papa and Gramma, too. You know they love you, but Papa is allergic to cats," she said as she kissed my nose. "He wants you to stay in our downstairs space." We quickly settled into our new digs. We had so much fun together. Karin tossed catnip mice for me

to bring back to her. I captured that laser pointer so many times, but it always got away. She tired me out. We snuggled in the afternoons while I napped, and she read a book.

One afternoon Matt came to play cards with us and Gramma and Papa. Karin put up a baby gate on the first step to keep me downstairs. She forgot about my amazing physical abilities. I just jumped right over it! There I sat at the top of the stairs, waiting for Karin to hug me. As she stomped up the steps, I greeted her with “Heowoe,” the best I could do for “Hello.” Soulmates that we were, her grimace melted away and I got the hug I wanted. We never did play cards that day.

The next day Papa stepped in and installed the baby gate on the second step as well as adding a two-foot plywood wall on top of it. It took me a crouch and a jump to make my way over this.

Not to be outdone by a cat, the following day Papa added another two feet to the plywood wall. That was a total of eight feet in height—two feet for the first steps, two feet for the baby gate, and four feet of plywood attached atop the gate.

I examined the structure, swished my tail back and forth, crouched, and with a mighty leap, my paws grasped the top of the eight-foot barricade. To my audience’s chagrin, over the top I soared. Again, Papa put another two-foot plywood piece on the top of the already formidable eight-foot construction.

“I’d like to see her get over this one,” Papa said with a snarky chuckle. “That’s ten feet she’s gotta jump!”

This was when I wandered into the room, sized up the challenge ahead of me, trotted halfway across the room, several feet back from my target, and turned around. My locked gaze focused in; I moved my body into launch position. I swooshed my tail back and forth about

three times and off I ran, vaulted up from the bottom step, and landed about an inch down from the top. With a mighty pull of my front paws, one at a time, over I surged! I won the challenge! That's when Papa gave up. He claimed that it wasn't a fair contest since I must have coil springs for leg muscles.

The past week was so much fun, but I sensed that it was time to leave. I had to hide. I explored the house and found that Gramma had the same computer desk and cabinet that Karin had. I used the same technique to jump on the desk, propel myself up onto the seven-foot top of the cabinet, and curl myself into the smallest ball in the darkest corner of the room.

But this time, Karin didn't coax me down with a treat. She was in a hurry, and it wasn't a fun hide-and-seek game. She knew how to corral me. Across the hallway, she turned on the bathroom faucet. I jumped down from my hiding place and scampered to get my drink of water. Then the bathroom door closed behind me. With my carrier in hand, Karin snatched me while I was slurping away. As I turned toward her, she gently nudged me into confinement.

We had an uneventful trip back to our new home where no fleas remained. This time I gingerly padded and sniffed around the whole apartment. The carpet still felt slightly damp, but that was better than carrying those flea critters that jumped onto my fur before. There was no more smell of a dog that must have lived there prior to our arrival.

The first thing I found in the kitchen, next to the frig, was my lunch in my favorite cat dish. I checked out the shower. There would be room for both of us. The bathroom sink would also work as my water source. Karin's candy-apple red living room furniture will be such a comfy place for me to curl up and nap. The bedroom was small but it's all we needed. With the closet and all, I'd have several places to hide when Karin is looking for me. This time, I might be able to keep her from putting me in that dreadful cage. I really don't like traveling.

Karin and I had thirteen years together, through good times and bad. Once, while I was climbing our decorated Christmas tree, it fell across the living room floor. Despite my sometimes-mischievous ways, she always took care of me. I, in turn, provided her with my affection and many stories, just like this one. We had the best life as soulmates.