

A Cat Named Boots

By Marilyn Reeves

Throughout my adult life I've had a half dozen cats, but my favorite wasn't mine at all – she belonged to Jim.

During the course of our nineteen-year relationship that began in 1986, I would drive out to his place in Arvada nearly every Friday after work to stay the weekend. Jim would be out in his workshop creating, among other things, beautiful wood bases for sculptures that were shown every August at the Loveland Arts Festival. I'd take care of the cooking and cleaning inside. The latter was a bit of a challenge, as Jim was a borderline hoarder. He had back rooms and closets and outdoor sheds filled to the brim with stuff he had collected over the years – some of it valuable, some of it pieces of junk he'd picked up for a buck-fifty at a neighborhood garage sale.

A couple of years after we started seeing each other, one of his daughters brought him a present. It was a little ball of fluff whose hair stood on end as if it had stuck its paw into a light socket. Its fur was charcoal grey except for some white markings on its face, a white bib, and four little white paws. So he named the little fuzz ball Boots.

There's a chemistry that happens between people who fall in love, and something similar can be said of people and certain animals – instant soulmates. As I picked her up and held her for the first time, it was love at first sight! She felt like she weighed about six ounces. But over the years I watched her grow, and she finally topped out at something close to fourteen pounds. Every time I sat down, Boots would hop into my lap so that we could cuddle. Her fur was as thick and luxurious as mink, her face the perfect symmetry of classic cat beauty.

Boots had landed in Cat Heaven! So many storage spaces, indoors and out, to explore and hide away in. So much accumulated stuff to paw through and pounce on and rattle. But one time a pile of boxes that had been haphazardly stacked in a basement closet came crashing down ... and she ran lickety-split back up the stairs and scooted under the nearest chair for cover!

Of course I didn't spoil her. I only fed her gourmet cat food two or three times a day. The rest of the time she had to tough it out with cat chow. She'd stroll into the kitchen like royalty, long fluffy tail held high, and rub against my ankle, telling me it was time for dinner.

Oh, how I loved that cat! It broke my heart to watch her fade away during the last few months of her life, going from one big hefty handful down to where, once again, it felt like she weighed no more than six ounces.

Of all the cats I have ever loved, I loved Boots the most. And she wasn't even my cat. She belonged to Jim.

But of course, Jim loved her too.