

A Place I Used to Know

By Suzy Hopkins

Three cats, a mother and two kittens, made their home on my patio. For days the skinny tan mother had begged at the sliding glass door. I spoke sweetly to her but no food was offered. I'm allergic to cats. Besides, I have a parakeet that flies loose in my house. However, one day the tiny grey and white kitten sat down, looking in at me through the slider, and just howled. So much noise from such a small body had to be responded to. I gave them some borrowed cat food. They gobbled it up. Three hours later I fed them again since they were all so thin. I bought many kinds of cat food and for the next three weeks I fed them twice a day. They slept on my lawn chair in a contented tan, grey and white pile. The kittens nursed whenever they could after their mother had gained some weight. The kittens played for hours: in a paper bag, attacking and demolishing the massive fern, killing the baby spiders from the huge mother plant and generally rough housing. Even the mother would occasionally hide in the plants popping out to surprise the kittens.

Over the weeks I spent many hours watching them play. Nothing is so entertaining as kittens making games out of the simplest things. I would catch myself laughing out loud. I reminded myself, "Of course I have better things to do. Things I HAVE to do." Still I stayed, transfixed by the pureness of their joy. It was relaxing, like a deep meditation.

That's when I realized they were living-in-the-moment. TOTALLY! They were not worrying, planning, scheming. While watching them, I was also in-the-moment. After my son was born I was on *his* schedule. At work I was on the *boss's* schedule. I was always thinking about what had to be done next, later, tomorrow. After he moved away and since my retirement I was still in that mindset. Habit, I guess. I realized that I hadn't lived-in-the-moment since I was a young girl.

The kitties have all found homes. Since they left my patio I spend some enjoyable time each day consciously in-the-moment like I did as a young girl. It took a cat and two kittens to take me to a place I used to know.