



Ten Tails

Every year, 3.4 million cats are adopted from animal shelters.

And every year, 3.2 million adopted cats are relinquished.

And every year, 1.4 million cats are euthanized, 80% of which are perfectly healthy.



It's hard to believe these statistics. How is it possible to not care? To abandon, give up?

To me, they are my family.

Holier than that, even.

*I look to them for solace.
I speak to them as I pray.
I love them, each one.*

Growing up I had to learn the different Catholic Saints. Who they were, and why I prayed to them.

I felt a similar sense of respect and reliance for all the cats I've loved.



Every different breed, character, temperament.

I love them all.

Every one.

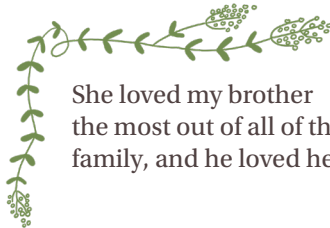
Helie was the first cat I ever owned. Her memory makes me nostalgic for an older house and a younger me.

I remember dressing her in my doll's clothes when she was little, using my barbie VCR recorder to capture her high fashion looks.

She always seemed to know our schedules better than us. A bit neurotic, but calmer with age.

Humble Queen of Everything

She was always a sick cat, trotting around with casts on every leg, spending nights in animal hospitals. Eventually I'd have to give her shots at home. And she never cried about any of it.



She loved my brother the most out of all of the family, and he loved her.



Helie Alexander



Ellie's namesake was Eli, her father, a loyal cat who survived a house fire. We met her as a small, quick-footed kitten, but eventually she got so chubby she could only run sideways.

She her time napping; a painful gum disease forced her lethargy. Once all of her teeth were removed she was happy again, except now she would drool.



An equal opportunity lap-cat, Ellie loved everyone. But she always seemed to love Mom the best.

She was loved as she loved

Ellie passed on a cool summer evening. I held her wrapped in a blanket, cradled in my arms.



Ellie Alexander

Blué was first named “Lu Lu,” which soon became “Bleu,” French for the color of her slightly calico, soft, suede-y coat. We got her for free from a breeder of semi-hairless cats because of a kink in her tail. Her future as a show cat was over before it began.



Now she often indulges in her toilet paper addiction, and prefers to drink her water directly from the faucet of only one sink.

A contradiction. She’s the most anxious cat ever. She shakes, is quick to up-chuck, easily frightened.

Even so, she’s commanding when she needs to be. In her there is a certain hidden confidence.

She reminds me of myself



Bleu Alexander

Coco was brought into our home shortly after being spotted at a cat show by Mom, who also gave her the name. Still a kitten, she's not the brightest or the most graceful. As she's gotten older, her personality develops more and more.

She's spunky, needy, too playful for her own good. We had to put a bell collar on her just to keep track of her. She's a crazy cat, full of spirit.

Her favorite past times include running around the feet of those walking upstairs and shooting randomly down empty hallways.



Coco Alexander

Always busy with chaos

My family has always been a cat family.

Even before we adopted cats in my home, I'd visit my extended cat family elsewhere.



It's hard to imagine my childhood or my life now without them.

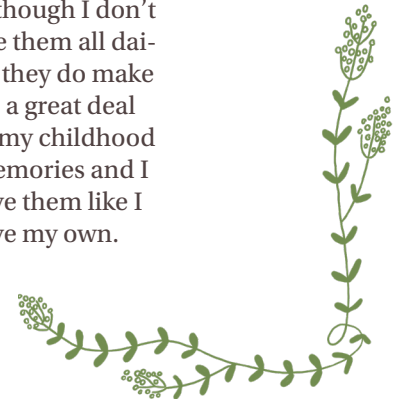
When I hear that cats are often relinquished to shelters post adoption, it's hard to believe.



There are always cats to visit in North Virginia; where a lot of my family lives.

They're the cats I befriended when I was little, and the new friends I visit now.

Although I don't see them all daily, they do make up a great deal of my childhood memories and I love them like I love my own.



Fog was my Grandmama's cat. I'd see her whenever we visited. She had a peppered, gray coat, and wore a little blue tag on her collar. She was an both an outdoor and indoor cat, and as such, she was very independent.

I only knew Fog as an older cat. She was always a little standoffish and hesitant towards us, but she still preferred to take naps in the hub of the house, the kitchen.



Fog had a life outside of the house. She used to feud with the neighbor cat, Yoda. Still, scuffles between them were a rare sight. Alas, feline warfare is a subtle art.

Fiercely independent



Fog Alexander

Smooch was the first of the Burmese dynasty, and another of Eva's. He had a silky, near-black, brown coat. Perhaps the most graceful cat I've ever seen. It's a surprise that Tucky and Rollo, far less graceful, share the same breed.

Swift and slinky

He was a sneezer, a stretcher, but more than anything, a sweet cat. However, he was always hard to pin down and was quite skittish towards me.

He'd slink under tables, wherever I couldn't reach, to avoid my unwanted attention. But when he did want it, it felt extra special.



Smooch Alexander

Gellie was a sweet cat, similar to Ellie in general size and demeanor. He was another of Eva's, and another that I only knew as an older cat. When I'd visit as a kid, I'd often find him curled up under the pillows of the bed. He wasn't technically "supposed" to be there, but it was always the best surprise to uncover his little hiding spot.

The pillow gremlin

Gellie was a Devon Rex, a semi-hairless breed of cat, but he was always the most normal looking of all of the cats.

Gellie spent a lot of his time with Haggis, and more time cat napping.



Gellie Alexander

Haggis was another of my Grandmama's cats, and was the first cat I ever really met. He was an easy favorite. He looked a little alien, my mom would say "ugly cute," and his personality was even stranger.

When I visited, I spent most of my time with him. I'd dress him up, play tea-time, pretend to be a vet with a plastic doctor's kit.

He knew his name whenever you called it, and he would come running to the door whenever he heard it.

King of cats

He was such a sweet cat.
Most Devon of Devons.



Haggis Alexander

Tucky is named after the state he was born in: Kentucky. He belongs to my Aunt Eva, who lives in Northern Virginia, but often visits with Tucky in toe.

Tucky is perhaps the most sturdy cat I've ever seen, his gentle spirit contradicts his physical form.

He's not much of a socializer when meeting other cats. But he does like to socialize with people. In fact, he makes it a priority of his to be noticed.

He flops down on the floor in front of people, preoccupied or not, just so that he might be cuddled. And of course, he is usually successful.

A deserving attention seeker



Tucky Alexander

Rollo is another of Eva's cats. He is the younger of the two. When Rollo visits, he's often confused with Coco. They look near identical, and act near identical, too. They share the same chaotic, crazy energy. When he visits, Coco becomes his shadow and follows him.

Mischievously sweet

Similarly to Coco, Rollo likes to stretch out and run through the paths of people in precarious situations.

Rollo seems to be more interested in socializing with other cats than Tucky is. And even if he seems annoyed by Coco, he enjoys her company.



Rollo Alexander

My cats have snuck
into my memories.
Their different faces
remind me of different
versions of myself.

I fear one day I might
forget these stories.

Some are already too
faint to remember.



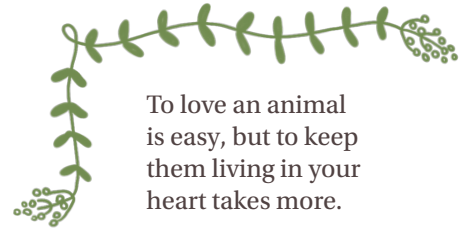
By writing this, I
hope to cement
their spirit, so I
can reflect and
remember.

none should be forgotten

When pets are adopted
and later returned, will-
fully forgotten, I assume
a person doesn't know
what it means...



*to take care of
to find space for
to be patient with*



To love an animal
is easy, but to keep
them living in your
heart takes more.



Helie

Ellie

Blew

Coco

Fog

Smooch

Gellie

Haggis

Tucky

Rollo



Zoe Alexander

Spring 2019

Type

Utopia

Transitional serif based on 18th and 19th century classical design, created by Robert Slimbach in 1989

Paper

Mohawk Superfine Eggshell 100t in white

Cover

Book cloth, headband from BooksbyHand
Gold leaf

Paintings

Gouache and Photoshop

Class

Jan Fairbairn's Typography for Illustrators

