

Sam

She liked pumpkin, squash, corn silk, paper, the glue on envelopes and licking photographs. Ripping the Sunday paper to shreds was a weekly joy. She had tiny paws that felt like nails when she stood on you. She was lost outside a couple of times but stayed close to the house until someone found her. When she was young she would lie on top of the shower rod and bat my head while I showered. Chlorine was like catnip to her and she would bite my head when I picked her up after swimming in a pool. She had a chirp, a yowl, a hiss, and a raspy, gurgling purr. She went ak-ak-ak while watching birds in the yard. She was a noisy eater. She smelled like thick sugar syrup. She preferred the left shoulder. She used to hang on screen doors and jackets. She could use her paws like hands and had a pretty good right cross. Her eyes were mostly yellow but would sometimes wander into green. She taught herself to climb the ladder to the attic. She had truly amazing tail control. She loved open windows and sunshine. She made kitty dents in the bedspread. She once fell behind a water heater, but climbed up a towel that I hung down for her. She once pulled down a Christmas tree. She loved diving into grocery bags. She had traveled across country by both car and plane and stayed in several motels. She and Coco once teamed up to make my life hell for a year in retribution for taking them to a groomer. She would play string and in her prime could jump several feet into the air after it. She would often pull herself up by her front legs, like a chin up. I am sure she used that technique to jump to the top of the fridge. She was a mean drunk. She disdained most store bought toys but enjoyed shoestrings, wrapping ribbon and dice. Her fur was a shiny, velvety black, though in the sunlight you could see red undertones. She liked the outdoors though she was only allowed out on supervised visits. We walked all over the back yard, on four legs and three. She despised most living beings other than people. Her tail would bush out several times its normal volume when she spotted another cat, while she raced from one window to the next, tracking the offending feline. She was a heat-seeker and enjoyed laps, fireplaces, her heated blanket and under the covers. She slept with us most every night curled against an arm or leg, on top or underneath the covers. She didn't like touching bare skin. She did not like her belly rubbed or being held upside down in general.

She was diagnosed with cancer several times. The first time cost her a pad on your foot. The 2nd time it cost her a leg at the shoulder. The third times things were just too wide spread. When when she came home after losing her leg she was out of the carrier and learning to balance while still groggy from the drugs. She re-taught herself to climb the attic ladder with only three legs though I would carry her back down.

She was 18 when we had her put to sleep. She had been going downhill pretty steadily over the last couple of months. She was not eating much at all and her body mass was down to nothing. She had become so weak that she couldn't jump onto the sofa without help. I don't think she was in much pain, but she was so very tired. There was nothing more we could do to help her and she wasn't going to get better, but would have definitely grown worse so we chose the easier option, for her and for us.

Lynda is convinced that she hung on until I was ready to say goodbye.

She was a good kitty, who gave more then she took and I miss her terribly.

Streak of black lightning
caught for a moment
to clean an offending paw

Furry black motion
as her frantic dance leads
from floor to counter to sofa and back

Rumbling black head
shoved nose first into my face
the center of attention is the only place worth sitting

Soft warm presence
curled against my leg
firmly establishing who owns whom

Coco

She was fascinated by water and spent hours staring into her water dish, at drops on a shower curtain or into toilet bowls. She once spent the afternoon chasing air bubbles around a waterbed. She despised grass and would not willingly walk on it. She loved to prowl the garage. She smelled like clean dust. She traveled by both plane and car and stayed in several hotels. She lived in Texas, Washington, Colorado and visited Indiana. She caught the sniffles quite often. Her hair knotted up every spring and the knots pooled together into half-inch thick plates over each hip. They fell off with her summer coat. Her purr was astonishingly deep and rumbling. She played string, but preferred chasing paper wads. Her favorite attack was sitting on whatever she was chasing. She disappeared once during a move and I spent the evening alternating between panic and despair before tracking her to dresser she was hiding under. She was very light on her feet and seemed to float up rather than jump. Even at her heaviest you could hardly feel her land on you. She would vibrate and yowl for spaghetti, eggs and salmon. She could be astonishingly loud. She woke us up every morning for a month at 3am with wailing and yowling and then just stopped. She loved eating cellophane would sneak it whenever she found some. If she knew we saw her, she ate faster. If she were trapped in a closet or a drawer she waited patiently and silently for someone to open the door. She used her paws to eat, pulling out a single kibble and then eating it off the floor. It took her 3 longer to eat than a normal cat. You could hear a steady rhythm of "rustle, rustle, (pause), clunk (as the kibble fell out of her mouth), rustle, rustle, pause, clunk, rustle ..." and eventually "crunch, crunch". She loved riding in the car and would either run around trying to look out all the windows at once or just ride on the dashboard. Car rides made her drool though; huge hose spraying drool that tickled her nose enough to work up a sneeze that sprayed cat drool all over. Her whiskers were easily 4-5 inches long and her eyebrows are just a little shorter. She has long cream and white hair with a chocolate colored mask, ears, paws and tail.

She is sitting here now, 20 years after we first met, on her shelf next to my desk. I made the space for her because Sam didn't like to share the blanket on Lynda's desk. Her chocolate parts have faded over the years but her eyes are still shockingly large and very blue. I just made an appointment for 5 o'clock this evening to have her put to sleep. It is not even noon yet.

She was diagnosed with kidney failure a couple of years ago. Weekly IV fluid treatments and B12 shots from the vet have been keeping her stable, but she is rapidly going downhill now. She has trouble walking, and can't jump at all anymore. Today she can barely stand. And she has lost so much weight. The hardest part is that she doesn't really care how sick she is. She tries to do what she has always done and looks annoyed more than anything when her body betrays her. She has always been strong willed and very demanding. I feel that I am betraying her, but I can't just wait until she is sick enough to really suffer. She is pretty much running on pure stubbornness. We get each other and I will miss her so much.

It's over now. We had a good day wondering around the house and yard together. We played in the sink, had some tuna, sat at the computer and took a nap on the bed. Though I know she was only going to become sicker I feel I took the easy way out for myself, not her. She was such a fierce little thing and didn't go easily. Her veins were so tiny and fragile that the vet failed three times before custom rigging an injection for the overdose. She was stubborn and unforgiving right to the end.

She had been a constant running through what feels like so many lifetimes.

Wide-eyed
adventure kitty
blue eyes shining with conquest
she boldly reaches new heights

Frantic eyed
demon kitty
blue eyes flashing wild in her dark chocolate mask
a frenzy of activity with no direction

Dreamy eyed
pleasure kitty
blue eyes closed as the comb
through her long silky hair
brings out a raspy purr of contentment