

Replacing the Cat, Not the Love

By River Blankenship

Youth Category: Second Place

Dead. That was the one word to describe the cat I had with me for ten years. Every morning I would wake up to Domino lying down next to me. Whenever I went downstairs for breakfast, he followed. Whenever I talked to him, he meowed back. Whenever I lost a pencil, he found it and chucked it down the stairs. Whenever people walked by, he would greet them by smacking their ankles with his paws. Sure he wasn't the nicest cat in the litter, but he was mine. My family got him because we went to the pound looking for a pet. My mom says that it's because he was interested in my toddler self. Most of the cats don't want anything to do with little kids, but he was different. Many years passed by with him by my side. I suppose he picked up most of his routine from me because every time I went to get a bowl of cereal he would wake up to come downstairs to try and lick some of the milk. Everything was perfect.

That is until I woke up the morning after he went to the vet because of a urinary blockage. My mom had woken me up. "Are we picking up Domino?" I kept asking. But she wouldn't answer. Finally she sits beside me on my bed, "we're going to say goodbye to him." So this was it. He was going to leave me. He was being put down. Later when we went to the pet hospital the veterinarian took Domino into the room. The IV catheter was still in his arm when he was put on the counter. We had time to say our goodbyes, but it wasn't enough. There would have never been enough time to say goodbye. After a while the vet came in. Domino was then placed down. Seeing the life slowly draining from him pained me. But I knew it was for the best.

"Is he gone?" The vet nodded. It was done. He was then wrapped up into a blanket, I was the one who held him dearly on the drive home. Later that day my mom dropped me off at her friend's house so she could go to work. We mostly just watched movies there, but something was off, something was missing. Domino. I sat there trying to shake off the feeling but it only grew worse. The realization that he was gone finally hit. It felt empty. Lonely.

Months passed and I was still grieving. Eventually my mom brought up the idea that we get a new cat. So of course, we did. A couple of days passed and we came across someone who was selling kittens. We looked through them and got the one we wanted. I chose a partial Maine coon mix, I chose her because she acted unique. She was different. "Cozmo. That will be her name." There was no reason as to why I chose that name, it just fit. At first she was skittish and afraid of the new environment, but later she got comfortable with home. She started to sleep next to me whenever I went to bed. She would end up sprawled over me, sometimes over my face and almost suffocating me. Whenever I got up to get breakfast, she too would go downstairs. Whenever I'm talking, so is she. She acts just like me in many ways. Everything is perfect. I replaced the cat, not the love. I love both Domino and Cozmo just the same, just in different ways. Getting another cat helped me after I lost one, because I got to understand that he was gone, but my love for him wasn't.