



*But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. -*

**Matthew 15:9**

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## **A Story of Love from Butterscotch, Phoebe, and Peanut Butter and Jelly on White Bread**

This week I learned a lesson in love that will be hard to forget. I'm not sure I want to forget it. Yes, I shed a few tears as the week passed and the story unfolded.

Let me introduce you to my family, specifically my grand-babies.

My son had twin babies of his own that he had adopted a couple years earlier. They are named Hansel and Gretel. We had 3 babies of our own but last December Ethan took one of our babies back home with him leaving us with our 2 girls. We had been in the habit of letting our little boy, Nermal, out to play and one day while he was out one of our neighbors was kind enough to shoot him. He survived, but to keep him safe Ethan took him home with him to give him a chance to recover.

Before returning my little Nermal to me, Ethan got married to a lady that also loved cats and she fell in love with Hansel and Gretel, and also my little Nermal. Not long after they married they called me and asked if they could just keep my little boy. It broke my heart but I knew that it wasn't safe for him to be here with us so I let her have him. With them I knew he would be cherished, spoiled, and I would occasionally get to see him.

So Ethan and Laura began their married life with a ready-made family of 3 rescued cats.

Ethan was here visiting when Nermal got shot. He and I took Nerm to the vet

but we weren't satisfied with the care he received. Ethan had found that there was blood in the litterbox but the local vet wasn't interested in checking that out. He sold us an antibiotic and sent us back home.

Ethan returned to his own home with Hansel, Gretel, and Nermal in tow. With much concern he kept an eye on the litterbox because Nermal continued to have bloody stools. He didn't wait too long before scheduling an appointment with a veterinarian not far from where he lived. When she heard his story, she treated Nermal and offered to neuter him free of charge as a thank you for saving his life.

With that kind of vet care, Ethan began using her for his 3 cats. She recognized that Ethan, and his bride, were both cat lovers and soon she began calling then to say she had kittens that had been abandoned and needed a home. They received several of this sort of call from her and they ended up with 9 rescued cats..

When you have cats you need to take action to ensure that your zoo-ette won't turn into a full-fledged zoo. And the cost of getting all those cats "repaired" was staggering. But it was their intention to do just that. They had time. The three Ethan had when they married had already been de-sensuous-ized so they only needed to worry about the 6 kittens. Rocky was the first of the 6. When he reached the age of puberty, he was ready to be a man and found himself the recipient of lots of yells, things thrown at him, and even being temporarily locked up in the bathroom because he thought the 6-week old females were available to him.

Ethan has a job that requires him to move a lot. When he was offered a different job in another state he and Laura decided to accept it which meant relocating. We ended up baby sitting those 9 cats for several weeks while they took care of their move. As soon as they arrived here with their large family we were asked to take Rocky in for a rock-ectomy. We took care of that one for them so now there was only one more tom to worry about. Angelo was only about 7 weeks old when we met him so there was still time before it became urgent for him to go visit Mr. or Ms. Vet.

Time pulls some pretty nasty tricks on us and seven week old tom kittens aren't immune to aging. They tend to turn into teenage cats who are full of kitty-type testosterone and little Angelo fell victim to this malady. His parents knew this was a problem and were trying to make the arrangements for him to also go visit the vet and experience the joys of having a rock-ectomy but there were other problems that needed their attention. Hansel had developed urinary problems

and ran up a large vet bill which meant Angelo's rock-ectomy was postponed.

There were 4 female kittens who had grown up with Angelo. Nikita, Butterscotch, and Peanut Butter and Jelly on White Bread (that's her name) were all the same age. Phoebe was a bit older but she was still a kitten when she stayed with us.

Phoebe went into heat and had escaped from inside the house before Angelo discovered he was a man. However, Phoebe's night out didn't result in any kittens. She returned home unmolested. Angelo received his rock-ectomy before he could get to her, and all was well at their home. Now it was time to concentrate on getting the 3 youngest girls equipped with a zipper on their tummies.

A funny thing happened though. Before taking the girls in to get their zippers, two of them began to get fat. And they got fatter and fatter and fatter.

Phoebe was a feral kitten who was afraid of everyone. They had not had a lot of success at taming her. Ethan could touch her occasionally and Laura had less physical contact with her than that. She was just too frightened of humans. But all that changed last Friday night. Things happened that tamed the wild beast in Phoebe. She was hungry for love and demanding attention of the hands-on type.

During our weekly Bible study on Friday evening, Ethan called to tell us that Peanut was in labor and had already delivered 1 kitten. He sent a video of her with her baby and they weren't alone, Phoebe was in the box with them. Butterscotch had been with her acting as a Lamaze coach while Peanut was in labor. But as soon as Sylvester was born, Phoebe took over. Phoebe is not pregnant and never has been, but she was just as filled with mothering instincts as Peanut and Butterscotch. Phoebe got into the bed with Peanut and began grooming both the baby and his mother. When the other cats would come near she would chase them off. When Ethan and Laura weren't watching she would take the kittens and hide them. She was trying to claim those kittens as her own.

Clearly she loves those kittens. But she doesn't have milk and they have a mother. My heart aches for her. Why she wasn't able to get pregnant I don't know. She was outside for a few days while she was in heat, and she was inside with Angelo while he was breakfasting on Wheaties. That poor cat needs kittens of her own.

In the middle of the night on what I think was Saturday night, I saw on Facebook

that one of the kittens had died. Laura was online and I chatted with her a while, wanting to know what had happened. I was told that the baby was weaker than the others and it just stopped breathing and died.

When it happened Peanut just lay there looking sad. They don't know if she understood what was happening or not. But Phoebe was right there and aware that the kitten was dying. She went ballistic! She meowed and meowed trying to revive that kitten. She licked it and rolled it around on the floor trying to bring it back. My son gave the baby mouth-to-mouth and light chest compressions but was unable to revive her. She lived only a few hours. They were all heartbroken.

When I heard about it I cried along with them. No, I hadn't seen the kitten but I did know her mother and I know that my son and daughter-in-law were excited about her arrival. Death is so sad! Especially when the one who dies never has a chance to experience life.

But I said I learned a lesson about love. I learned it from Butterscotch. Butterscotch and Peanut are sisters. They are littermates. They've been together all their lives. Butterscotch was with Peanut while she was in labor and was so close to delivery herself that she was filled with mothering instincts. Four days later Butterscotch gave birth to only 1 kitten. After it was born, Butterscotch picked it up, carried it to her sister who had just lost a kitten and gave it to her.

Hearing that brought tears to my eyes. I know that animals have the capacity to love, but I didn't know their capacity for love was that strong. Butterscotch is still there with her baby so he knows his mom, but he is also blessed to have the love of his auntie, as well as Phoebe who still wants to steal them all and keep them for herself.

Won't heaven be wonderful? There will be no more death because death will no longer exist. We on this planet are the ones who are out of harmony with the way the universe operates. I'm anxiously awaiting the day the eastern sky splits and Jesus appears. I expect to meet my little great-grand-baby then.

And as I reread this after writing it, it occurred to me to consider how saddened I was over the loss of the 1 kitten that I hadn't even met. As sad as I was, how must God feel? God is Love with a body. It's his very essence. It's what he is and what he does. How many deaths has he witnessed? He has the ability to restore life and some day he will. But how he must suffer and be pained over the loss of those he won't resurrect.

The thought is staggering and my brain cannot wrap itself around it. Throughout

history how many people have died? How many animals? How many plants? How many life forms we are unaware of? I wept for one lost kitten. How many will God be weeping for? I hope to some day throw my arms around his neck and offer him what comfort I can. I know that he's doing all he can to try to reach us.

May God bless you with His presence as you press forward into the upcoming week.

Much love to all,

Hannah

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