

Annabelle in June – June and Annabelle

Loving nature as we do, my family and I decided to go to the mountains on a beautiful June day. A day I will never forget, June 24, 2020. About two weeks prior, my cat “Bunny” a twenty-one-year-old bobtail tabby cat had passed. My parents said, “NO MORE CATS!”

We decided to go to the mountains for the day, to get away from all the noise and stress at home, and we had a very pleasant time. We looked at the skies, rock formations and tree shapes, we enjoyed a picnic lunch in the great outdoors. It was an extremely sweltering day, but nice and cool in the mountains, as we were shaded by all the trees and mountains.

On our way back home, on a graveled road far away from houses, with just trees and the road leading to the Appalachian Power Plant, we spotted a tiny baby kitten and another one a little larger. I told my parents we should take them home and see if we can find them homes. When we bent down to get them one more baby kitten lay lifeless, all but dead. We took them home and my mom fixed some kitten formula and started feeding the lifeless one. Later that evening it was up and running around in the house. Now was the time I was told to contact a local rescue group to take the kittens and find them homes.

My Dad always picks up the pieces for me. He told my mom since my cat had just passed, I should be able to keep the larger one. He said it would be “A good barn cat,” so we got to keep one. The rescue people took the two little ones, and in the end, we had a “barn cat.” The kitten needed a name, she is a calico with white, yellow, gold, and black hair. I thought of different names for her and came up with June. This was the month that my older cat died and the month that we found this baby.

The kitten was very small, and we also have five pet dogs that kill any animal that comes into our yard. So, my dad and I decided we would take an empty barn stall and put chicken wire over the window and door and make the kitty a home. When she got older, we would let her out, and when we were at the barn, we would train her to stay at the barn. We put a litter pan, a small house, bed, food, and water in the barn stall. Dad and I cut a tree and put it in her stall for her to climb on. The tree goes from the dirt floor to the ceiling, anchored and secured to protect her. She loves the tree, and she loves to walk around the board on the walls so she can go around her stall, and lie on the shelf at the door, and watch everybody. She has many hiding places as well. Many beds, and different cat houses.

After a few days of playing with June, the name just did not seem to fit her right. So, I changed it. I liked the name Annabelle better. Annabelle reminded me of an old timey name, and I loved it for her. It fit her perfectly, especially as she grew older. She has been Annabelle ever since.

I trained Annabelle to walk on a leash, have a collar or halter on. I would let her loose on an exceptionally long leash as I did not want her to run away, but she had no intention of doing so. She always came back to me when I called her name, and she always did so well with the leash. I decided I could let her off it. I was right, even without it, she always came back. It was remarkably similar if not easier than training a dog. I had never seen a cat like this. She amazed me with how well-trained she is.

But with me going back to college I had to leave her with my parents to care for her, and they did not mind. She is always so happy to see me when I go home for weekends, and we go on walks in the pasture and have playtime, and cuddles. She loves to sit on my back like I am the chair she has always wanted. She jumps up onto my back and flops out on me like she knew I was the softest bed around. She also loves to be held and carried around like a baby until she started to get so heavy that my arms felt like they were about to fall off. Then she lies in my lap. When we go on walks in the pasture, she climbs up every tree on the property and meows at me from the tops of the trees, and she climbs as high as she can.

Annabelle has made wonderful progress with the voice commands, and it is amazing how well she minds. We have even taken her camping, and she loves the drive to and from camp. While at camp she explores everything, even the creeks! She chases ground squirrels and relaxes in the shade. Once we both went deep into deep in the woods for a few hours, and when we returned to camp, she stayed in the camper enjoying the air conditioner. One warm day I laid a blanket out in the grass and took a nap. I woke up to see Annabelle lying right next to me sleeping her day away as well. She is very content with her new family and their lifestyle.

On October 23, 2020, after dark, my mom noticed a truck sitting across the street from our house, only to see them throw something out of their window. Beside the streetlight ran a little black kitten, scared to death. Mom and Dad went out to make sure it did not get in the yard because of our dogs. No such luck. The next morning, they went out to look for the kitten again. My mom heard a tiny meow in our garage. It was the tiny black kitten that had been thrown out. They fed it and put it in a cat carrier. Once again, Mom said, "NO. MORE. CATS." But my Dad always had another viewpoint, "But honey, Annabelle needs a friend." Well, needless to say, Annabelle has a sister and best friend named Salem! Salem has never got the fear fully out of her from being thrown out that October night. But both cats mind commands very well. Annabelle is more confident than when she first got here, and she and Salem get along very well. They will lie in beds together, roam around outside together, chase after birds, butterflies, moles, and of course chase each other up trees for fun.

To this day, Salem is still not very affectionate; she is very leery of us even though we have tried to show her love and kindness. She does know we are family because she squeals happily at us when she sees us coming over. She just does not want us to touch her a lot. Annabelle, however, has never known fear; she lets us pet and play with her all day long. She can be in the pasture and see me and come running to be petted.

It is so relaxing to go home from college, get an enjoyable book, sit by a tree and let the cats roam freely, playing, climbing, chasing, and coming to check what I am doing.

As of now, we can go to the barn, open their house door, leave the barn, and go back a few hours later and they will be relaxing in their house beds with the doors wide open. They enjoy their time outside but when they are tired of being, they take a break. I have watched them go inside for 30 minutes, then come back out, play more, and repeat the process until it is time to put them up for the night.

Being a responsible pet owner, I had both cats spayed to reduce the population of unwanted kittens. Although I love my stray cats that found forever homes, not all kittens will be that lucky to get a safe loving home. That is the whole reason I ended up with these two sweet babies because some other careless person did not want them yet was not responsible enough to find them safe homes. Just dumped them to fend for themselves.

Both cats found a best friend. Even if it seemed like we were an unlikely pair, we are the best of friends.