

Sister Cat

Written by Jennifer Regan
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On July 26, 1993, after losing our two beloved cats, Lady and Pretty Kitty, we adopted two precious Persian kittens from the same litter. We decided not to name our two little girls immediately, in order to choose names befitting their respective personalities. So, for lack of a better way to identify them, our vet named them for us: Kitten #1 and Kitten #2.

Kitten #1 was a Black Smoke Persian having an outer coat of lustrous charcoal-gray fur with gorgeous white roots. She looked like a little black mop on four legs with a skunk stripe down the back.

Kitten #2 was a Blue Persian with magnificent blue-gray fur. She was "taller" than Kitten #1, very feisty, and seemed to be the Alpha cat early on.

After a few weeks of living with these babies and debating zillions of possible names, it came upon me one night that we would name them Jasmine and Jezebel. Kitten #1 would be Jasmine because, like the flower, she was so absolutely beautiful. Kitten #2 would be Jezebel because she was feisty and daring – having already gotten trapped in the toilet as a result of an ill-planned escapade. I confess that at the time, I really didn't know the extreme nastiness of the Biblical Jezebel, or I would have chosen a different name for my precious baby. Jezebel Regan was definitely not mean.

These two furry sisters blessed our home for over 16 years. In adopting them into our family, a criterion had been that the chosen two must enjoy playing together – and that they did. I have a photo album with 150 pages of photographs and memorabilia that help me recall everything from the adoption of the 12 week old kittens to expressions of sympathy after their deaths. That doesn't include the videos and the digital photos we have of them.

Both cats died of kidney failure in 2009 – Jasmine in August and Jezebel in November. I wrote a poem in tribute to Jasmine on the one year anniversary of her death. Today, the one year anniversary of Jezebel's death, I'm writing this story instead.

It's hard to talk about one cat without the other, especially in the case of Jezebel, also known as "Miss Jezy", "Jezzebelle", and "Sister Cat". I mentioned earlier that Jezy started out as the Alpha cat. Later Jasmine quietly assumed this role, primarily because she outgrew her sister and was stronger. However, despite the fact that she was smaller, Jezy evolved into the role of "Big Sister" to Jasmine. I knew this by the way Jezy would groom Jasmine. So often I'd look over at them and see Jezebel licking away

at Jasmine's fur, giving her the most thorough bath until Jasmine would finally run out of patience and swat her.

This nurturing and mothering of Jasmine by Jezebel became vividly apparent during the last three months of Jasmine's life. In December 2008 Jasmine was stricken with a neurological problem that caused her to lose strength in all four legs. Fortunately, with excellent veterinary care, she recovered most of her functioning. However, to conserve her strength as she was rehabilitating, we had her confined to our guest bathroom. In order to keep her socialized with the rest of the family, we placed a waist-high piece of Plexiglas® in the bathroom doorway, allowing her to see us and us to see her. Of course we let her out to sit on our laps, etc., but we had to be sure she wasn't getting into physically compromising situations that would re-injure her.

From the time we confined Jasmine, until the day she died, Miss Jezzy sat in front of that Plexiglas wall guarding her sister. Eventually we even moved her bed to that spot because she was there day and night. Whenever we'd open the other bathroom door, she'd run into the room to inspect everything. Truth be told, Jasmine didn't appreciate the trespassing. That's why we chose to keep Miss Jezzy apart from her sister. That said, the two cats could frequently be seen sleeping on either side of the Plexiglas wall, close enough to hear each other snore.

During these months we also discovered that Jasmine had extensive kidney disease. Whenever Jasmine would be hospitalized, Jezebel would stand guard by the Plexiglas wall, waiting for Jasmine to return. The day before Jasmine died, we talked about the pros and cons of leaving the sisters together that night. Our vet had given Jasmine some additional fluids to kick-start her kidneys, warning us that if the intervention didn't work she would probably have a heart attack or stroke. We decided to keep the cats apart that night to avoid trauma for both of them. The next morning, as I looked into the bathroom over the Plexiglas wall, I saw Jasmine's beautiful but lifeless body and Miss Jezzy sitting by the doorway, still guarding her sister.

Fast forward two and a half months and we began to notice very strange behavior on Miss Jezzy's part – jumping up on tables and getting into places she never used to venture. This uncharacteristic behavior evolved into extreme listlessness and lack of appetite. A trip to the vet and blood test revealed that Jezebel's kidneys were way worse than Jasmine's had ever been. In six months her kidney values had gone from normal to literally off the charts bad. Despite our best efforts, she died within a month of diagnosis.

I think the real reason why Miss Jezzy left us was so that she could be with Jasmine again. They had been together for over 16 years. They were meant to be together. They were sisters.

Jezebel, Jasmine, Patches and Mama



Patches, on mama's lap, is our only remaining cat. She's definitely a diva and does not miss her sisters.