**The Search for the Enchanted Balls**

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Once upon a time, in a land not unlike our own, two tabby cats named Janice and Jacob were playing in a grassy field with their enchanted balls. Janice's ball was pink with purple stripes. Jacob's was bright green with small yellow circles. They loved their toys and played with them every day.

One day as Janice and Jacob were playing, they both lost their balls. They were heartbroken. They went home and cried themselves to sleep. The next day, they decided to search for them.

Janice and Jacob left to travel the world to search for their beloved toys. They didn't know how long their search would last or how far they'd have to travel to reacquire their precious treasure, but they were determined.

They searched all over the world. They traveled by foot, by horse, by boat, by train, by plane, and by steamship. Their hearts grew heavier as time passed, each preceding day forever lost to them. They couldn't think of anything else but their balls. Try as hard as they might, they couldn't forget about them. Often they sat with each other and talked about them. They daydreamed about how happy they would be when they found their balls.

The days carried over to years, and the years slowly transformed into centuries. Janice and Jacob were able to expand their search using new inventions. They voyaged by spaceship to other worlds, crossed into different universes, and searched on millions of worlds. They traveled to other dimensions. Once, they even traveled back to the past using a time machine—to the point in history when they lost their balls. Despite their best efforts, however, they were unable to find them.

Nine thousand years passed. Janice and Jacob were very tired. On a day that decided their future, they arrived on a world they'd never before visited. It was a Tuesday. The sun was shining, the flowers were blooming, the birds were singing, and the lakes were calm. Jacob was looking through some tall grass that bordered a forest. It was there he finally spotted his ball. He was overjoyed. After retrieving his ball, he ran to Janice, who was nearby eating lunch. Janice hugged him and expressed how happy she was for him. After Janice finished her meal, she reflected on her quest and made an important decision. She walked over to Jacob to tell him about her wishes. As she approached, Janice was puzzled by the sad look of disapproval on Jacob's face as he looked down at the ball in his hands.

“Jacob, what's wrong?”

He replied, “This ball isn't how I remember it. I know it's mine; I know it's the same one I lost. But it's nothing like how I imagined it all those years I dreamed about finding it. This ball doesn't even seem like it's enchanted anymore. You see--” Jacob held out the ball for Janice to inspect more closely.

“Yes, Jacob, I understand what you mean. How strange.”

“Would you like to have it, Janice? Maybe we'll never be able to find your ball. You may have mine if you like.”

“No, thank you, Jacob. Let's leave it here, and hopefully someone will find it and enjoy it as much as you did. Now, I have something important to tell you. I feel as if I'm not accomplishing anything when I spend all my time searching for my ball. I'm going to quit looking and find other things to do. I'm sure I can learn to live without it.”

Jacob supported her decision and wished they'd have thought to accept their loss many years ago. However, he soon let go of his regret and became grateful for the outcome. The two friends lived for many years and had many happy adventures together. Sometimes they would talk about the fun they used to have with their enchanted balls. More often, however, they discussed the good things presently in their life, and they learned to love each day of their happiness and contentment as much as they once loved their enchanted balls.