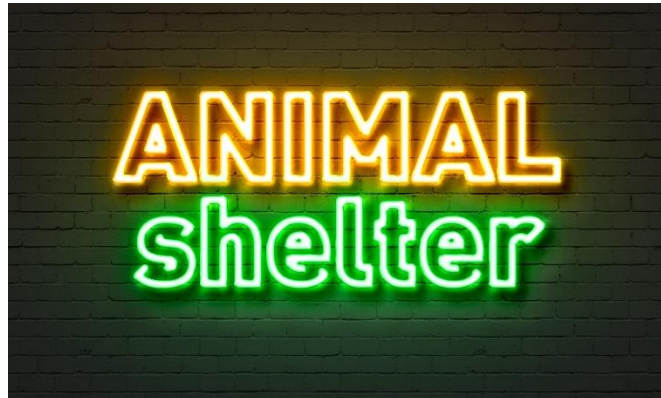


Kittypalooza



I stood next to my two closest friends, Ileana and Phoenix, and the three of us peered inside the Best Friends Animal Shelter. We had waited a long time to choose our kittens, and now the day was finally here. It was the last weekend in June, and the Best Friends Animal Shelter was holding its very first annual Kittypalooza.

Not long after we went inside, Phoenix was busily scribbling a list of his cat contenders.

"Don't take too long, Phoenix. In just a blink of an eye, someone might adopt one of the cats on your list," I warned.

"Well that's the risk I'll have to take. It will all work out in the end. I know my mom and I will find the right cat for our family," he said.

I knew exactly what I wanted—a Siamese kitten that I would name Remy. I grabbed Ileana by the hand, and we made our way over to the long rows of tables.

"Look over there," I pointed to a large cage labeled 3B. "I think those two kittens are Siamese."



As we approached the table, a man scooped up one of the Siamese kittens and walked across the hallway to his wife.

"They took one of our kittens," I whispered, rather alarmed.

"Looks like they are going over to an adoption counselor to fill out an application and begin the screening process," Ileana replied.

My heart raced as I instinctively reached into the cage and grabbed the other Siamese kitten. Just then it hissed and swiped at my left arm. I drew back in shock because I had just barely avoided a scratch.

"I don't think this one likes me," I said in a disgusted tone.

"Don't worry about it. You just scared her," said Ileana. "Let's keep looking because we've only seen two kittens, and there are 298 other candidates to consider!" Ileana had a point, and I laughed at how silly I probably sounded. We made our way through the multitude of visitors and looked at the other cats.



"You know, Priya," said Ileana, "there are lots of other cats to choose from. You don't have to adopt a Siamese just because I have one."

"But this was always the plan," I snapped. "We'd own matching cats, dresses, and shoes, and then we'd walk through the mall together so everyone would notice!"

"Seriously, Priya! You've got to be kidding me," Ileana rolled her eyes. I could feel a hot flush spreading across my cheeks as I tried to contain my anger.

"We were eight years old then, and by the way," Ileana paused and looked at me intently. "Please don't snap at me like that again. I was only trying to help."

"You're right. I'm sorry." Maybe that Siamese cat and I had more in common than I thought. It wasn't like me to lash out like that.



As I wandered away from Ileana, I saw the intake volunteer who had unlocked the door an hour ago. The intake workers had difficult jobs, and that was an irrefutable fact. They were the first point of contact for the frightened animals, who were extremely wary of their surroundings. Many of these animals were often injured or showed signs of neglect. They comforted and cared for each animal as it was dispatched to the shelter. The intake workers were definitely the reason that these animals were successfully adopted.

"Excuse me," I asked. "Do you happen to have more Siamese kittens?"

I held my breath as the volunteer scanned her papers, "Sorry, I don't see any, but there are plenty of other cats here who are looking for homes."

I didn't know what to say. Just then I heard a soft yipping coming from one of the cages. As I turned to look, I saw two dark brown eyes peering at me from beneath a soft yellow blanket. I could see a furry head moving around, but I couldn't make out the breed.

"What kind of cat is this one?" I asked.

The volunteer laughed, "That's not a cat. He is a terrier and poodle mix named Albert. Albert holds the dubious honor of being the only dog featured at Kittypalooza!"

As I walked closer to the cage, Albert came out from under the blanket. He was an adorable dog with lots of white fur, a black nose, and big dark eyes. He looked so sad.



Before I could ask anything else, the volunteer began, "Animal Control found him hobbling down a dark alley one night. He is very skittish, so he's probably been through a terrible ordeal. We can only speculate about what his life may have been like. We've been worried that no one will adopt him. He's very afraid of people, but he seems to like you," she said. I slowly reached in and patted his head. Albert's eyes met mine as he nuzzled up against the cage.

By the time we were ready to leave, Ileana had adopted the beautiful Siamese kitten that had swiped at me. The kitten had buried its head against Ileana and was purring softly. Phoenix and his mother had chosen a huge tabby that Phoenix decided to name Einstein.

"Did you find a Siamese?" asked Phoenix.

"No, not a Siamese," I replied, with a smile.

"Well, what breed is your cat?"

"Funny you should ask. I can't wait for you to meet Albert!" I tried to sound very casual, but I couldn't contain my excitement any longer. Boy, were they in for a tremendous surprise.