

## **2023 FDL Holly Jolly Writing Contest: Second Place Winner**

### ***A Christmas Past***

By Judy Dahlman

My name is now Bobbie. In actuality, it's been Bobbie for many a moon. My memories are dimly lit of my previous life; as I recall, I went by Polly then.

I've lived an exceptionally lovely life, one most would be envious of. My people love and care for me beyond anything I could have hoped for. Appreciation and a deep sense of fondness is what I hold for them. If it weren't for their kindness towards me, I wouldn't be alive to share my story.

Winter has always been my favorite time of year, cozy fireplace burning, a warm snuggle near my dearest person; this is heaven to me. But, a winter that's burned deep into my memories still brings a mingling of chills mixed with emotions of delight...

It happened almost a decade ago:

My previous life was filled with joy and peace, it was a life I thought I would always have. There was never a doubt that my person wouldn't always be there for me, loving me, protecting me; we were two peas in a pod, he & I.

His name was Jon, as I remember. I came home with him as a wee kitten. He had no idea how to care for me but I knew that very evening he was committed to giving me all his love. He worked almost every day at his keyboard writing songs. Well, that's my assumption since he was always humming and whistling throughout his day. He fixed the softest blanket in his desk drawer where I spent the majority of my time.

As my life unfolded, I slept, ate, and grew with his ever vigilant gaze over me. He was my person and I knew nothing but love and kindness. Jon was a hard worker and a loner, I was fine with that; what more would he need other than me?

Two glorious years passed together, but life was about to change for the both of us.

There was a bustling of clothes being tossed across our bed. I thought he wanted to play hide & find me at first but he just left me hidden under a shirt he absent-mindedly tossed on top of my head. Right after supper-time, he pulled out the carrier that we only used for outings or the dreaded trip to the vet's office. Pawing at his sleeve, I asked that he tell me where we were going: did I need to start worrying about seeing the vet so soon after my last appointment? His soft, brown eyes reassured me everything would be alright.

Dusk was ushering in the night when he tucked me into my carrier. He seemed distracted, not like his usual fun-loving self when we would take our day trips to various parks. I didn't let it bother me, my belly was full and I had just used the litter box; I was cozy in the seat next to him.

I dozed for several hours only to wake up at a place I didn't recognize, it was blustery outside and the wind whistled through the vents of my carrier. He rushed up the sidewalk to a steep set of stairs that was met by an old fashioned porch. A woman with big hair and an even bigger stomach came to the door yammering on about being careful and that it was slippery.

We were welcomed inside.

It didn't take me long to recognize the sound of the woman's voice from the many phone calls I had overheard; it was Jon's mother. We had never visited her before, well, at least not in my time with him. As she chattered away, I slipped off to use my litter box Jon brought in and proceeded to investigate my new surroundings. I managed to find myself a comfortable spot under an old captain's chair where I felt sheltered but near enough to overhear ongoing conversation.

It was soon apparent that we were here to celebrate *Christmas*.

The next afternoon, Jon took his mom and I for a car ride around a lake in a mountainous area, I rode in the back under his seat. It was relaxing to feel the humming of the road. We stopped at an overlook, getting out to admire the scenery; the fluffy snow buried me as I made my way towards them. It was beautiful, the trees were majestic and the lake was frozen solid. I was mesmerized. I turned only to see Jon driving off, leaving me in the snow.

How could this be!? He must not have known I got out with them!

I panicked, my paws were already freezing and I knew I needed to get up a tree while I waited for his return. Morning came after a *dreadful* night of howling coyotes and hooting owls. There was no sign of Jon anywhere.

As I assessed my surroundings, I spotted a house across the bay. Arduously I made my way forward through the woods and deep snow. I knew little of the outdoors, but I had seen enough TV to know I wasn't alone and *certainly* not safe. Three horrible, stormy days and nights I struggled to stay alive; hungry, cold, and *wet*.

Making my way up a set of deck stairs, I watched for any sign of movement in the house. I had tried to get their attention but I fought with myself, being so frightened of them at first.

Finally, when my instinct to live far out-weighed my fear, they opened their door to let me in.

Shy squeals of delight came from the stairway. As I looked up, a little girl's grin softened as she wrapped her arms around me, gently whispering '*I love you*' in my ear.

I don't know why Jon never came back for me or why our paths never crossed, but I think of him on occasion with fondness; hoping he too had found someone new to love as I.

**THE END**