

## **"A Cat Named Cake"**

By Courtney Cook

I often joke with people that I have all five Love Languages. But the reality is that I have a three-way-tie for first place: gifts, quality time, and physical touch. And as you can imagine, COVID and the lockdown have drastically affected me in that area because there is no touch or quality time when you live alone. And the lack of having my needs met in that way affected me so much that on a Friday in March, um, a Friday night in March, I got onto Google and typed in "how much prescription medication do I have to take to end my life" and "will it hurt if I overdose on medication". Thankfully, when you have queries like this on Google, it automatically pops up, "you're not alone, text this number, call the National Suicide Hotline". And, uh, clearly, I'm here and I just ended up crying myself to sleep.

On Saturday, I woke up and uh, previously I had been approved to be a foster pet parent and so that Saturday I got up and went to the shelter and they gave me a foster cat. The only thing I really knew about cats is that they are very solitary beings, um, they don't like affection, and they think they're better than any other human on the planet. And so that's what I believed going

into having this cat. By the way, the cat's name is Patty Cake; terrible name! Too many syllables! And so I shortened it to Cake. Cake, the cat. So I get her home, show her her kitty litter, scratching pad, her food area. I sit down on the couch and she jumps in my lap. This tiny little creature that I wasn't even sure I wanted to foster; all she wanted to do was cuddle with me. Lay on my lap, lay on my shoulder and purr and sleep.

I don't know how to accurately explain to you what it feels like when you are not having your need met. The desperation. The grief. The emptiness of not being touched. I don't know how to describe that. And I also don't know how to describe what it feels like when you get that first warm body that is touching you. Suffice to say it was exactly what I needed and Cake and I went on to have adventures! I trained her like a dog, cuz that's all I know and so uh, I taught her to come when her name was called, taught her to sit, taught her how to get up, and I swear this is true! There's video, there's proof! (laughter) Um, I have scratches on my furniture in places that weren't there before but we're just going to call that character (laughter).

About a month into having Cake, I get a call from the pet shelter and they are like, "hey! We got a forever home for Patty Cake!" And my initial thought was dread. You know, I'm not ready. Um, but I gave it a second thought

and I realized in this moment in time, I needed warmth, and care and touch. And Cake provided that for me. And Cake needed a warm and loving home away from a scary loud shelter while her forever home was being worked on and I provided that for Cake. And so, while I'm sad she's gone, I'm happy she's with an amazing forever family and I can now say that the best roommate I've ever had in my life is a Cat named Cake.