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Cosmo and Christopher

JOY, THE NIGHT SHIFT SUPERVISOR AT A LOCAL GROCERY STORE, was glad to learn that Kristina Hancock and her staff at Shanti's House look after a colony of cats living on the hillside behind her store's parking lot. The cats receive food and water twice a day and medical attention as needed. Joy could have taken a hardline approach and enforced a no trespassing rule, but she recognized that the cats were slowly being socialized in an effort to find placement in permanent homes.

Sensing a kindhearted animal lover, one day Kristina asked Joy to foster Cosmo, a young black and white feral cat that had come to Shanti's House as a kitten. Cosmo had already failed two earlier foster placements due to excessive meowing, but Joy still agreed to help.

Because Joy and her partner Karen already had a large Mastiff named Duke and a three-legged cat named Tria, Joy knew that a careful approach was needed to make Cosmo feel safe in his new home. Joy placed a large enclosure with a hiding place in the middle of the living room where Cosmo could become accustomed to the smells and sounds of the home. Duke and Tria were interested, but not overly concerned about the newcomer. Cosmo, for his part, was only willing to come out at night, but was well-behaved, with no excessive meowing or scent marking the new territory. Joy's take it slow approach, along with a purchase of some litter attractant, paid off with Cosmo making regular use of the litter box.

As Joy maintained contact with Shanti's House providing updates on Cosmo, she began to learn more about the other cats on the hillside including a beautiful gray and white shorthair tabby named Christopher. Joy became quite fond of Christopher as he readily accepted her attention and would even try to prevent Joy from leaving when she had to return to her work duties.



It wasn't long before Joy accepted Christopher as a second foster. Oddly, Christopher, who was extraordinarily friendly as an outdoor cat turned shy when brought indoors. He took to hiding behind the dryer and rarely came out to visit.

One day, during one of Christopher's rare outings from the laundry room he jumped up onto some pass-through shelving that faced the living room and Cosmo's enclosure. Cosmo, in a moment of unusual boldness, joined Christopher. Fearing a literal catfight, Joy and Karen watched closely as Cosmo and Christopher became acquainted. After some hair-raising initial arched backs and hissing, Cosmo and Christopher settled down for some serious how-do-you-do time, and it wasn't long before they started grooming each other. Within a few weeks, Cosmo and Christopher became a bonded pair, preferring to sleep, eat, and explore together. Christopher overcame his shyness and regained his friendly demeanor from his days on the hillside. Cosmo, while less confident, has made great progress probably due to Christopher's example.

The entire process of bringing these cats into their comfort zones was not days, not weeks, but months of effort. Joy explained that after seeing all the progress that these two made in overcoming their fears, she and Karen decided that they just could not imagine having these cats go to another home only to experience a socialization setback. Likely in the years to come Cosmo will overcome his last few reservations and fully embrace the love this family has to offer.

