



# Sheena Finds Her Home

JULIE'S WORLD WAS TURNED UPSIDE DOWN WHEN HER ADULT SON WENT MISSING ON JULY 4, 2020. AFTER FIFTEEN LONG AND DIFFICULT MONTHS, SHE RECEIVED THE NEWS THAT the San Diego PD had located his remains. They found no signs of foul play and could offer few details to explain what had happened. At that time, and honestly, even today, Julie can't help but wonder if her son would have been found sooner if not for the COVID lock-

down. Adult missing persons reports were just not a high priority for the police department at that time. Julie had searched for her son every night after work, but still asked herself what else could she have done?

These were the kind of questions that filled her waking hours when she came across a help wanted ad from a feral cat sanctuary in her neighborhood. Julie had lived in the Point Loma area for many years but had never heard of the place. She was curious and badly in need of a worthwhile activity that could help her regain her equilibrium and reconnect with the outside world. After a short qualifying interview, she soon found herself at Shanti's House caring for lost and abandoned cats.

At Shanti's House the staff works hard to understand and to attend to the needs of each cat. Julie learned which cats liked fish and which preferred chicken, which cats wanted attention and which did not. She even learned which cats played well together and which ones needed separation. It was through this learning process that Julie met Sheena. Sheena would poke her head out of her enclosure just enough to be touched and scratched a bit before retreating.

Sheena is a beautiful black and white long-haired female, born near the sanctuary and raised on kitchen scraps. She lived with other feral cats but came to trust and accept the kindness offered to her at the sanctuary. Sheena was shy and independent but doing quite well because of a bond that had developed with another cat at the sanctuary. When Sheena's mate died, she withdrew completely and became very depressed. Concerned about Sheena, the director of Shanti's House, Kristina Hancock, asked Julie to consider adopting Sheena to give her a permanent home.

Julie liked the idea but had not really considered having a cat at home before. When Julie mentioned that her place wasn't set up for a cat, Kristina offered to do a home evaluation and to make some suggestions. To create a great home for Sheena, folks from Shanti's House even helped to convert the balcony deck into a full-on cat patio (catio). The deck railing was covered with plexiglass and the top was enclosed with a frame and wire mesh. The neighbors didn't mind the modifications because the wire mesh was painted to match the house color and the quality of the work was outstanding.





Julie brought Sheena home expecting to soon enjoy some close companionship, but Sheena had other ideas. Sheena hid either under the dresser or in a play structure that Julie had set up. Sheena definitely did not like to be out in the open, particularly during daylight hours. She moved so quickly between her two hiding spots that Julie started to refer to her as “Corvette” (like the fast car). This went on for about six months, and then one day Sheena decided to sleep at the foot of Julie’s bed. Sheena now accepts lots of attention but is still not, and perhaps never will be, a lap cat. That’s okay with Julie, she loves Sheena’s company and her antics, one of which involves the catio.

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Sheena sits in the catio observing the birds, but mostly watching for her buddy, a neighborhood cat named Boots. When Sheena sees Boots, she runs inside to tell Julie all about it and she keeps up the conversation until Julie opens the front door to invite Boots in for a visit. Boots eventually comes inside after some trial runs at the door. Once inside, he heads right upstairs to visit with Sheena. After just a few minutes of play, Boots usually curls up and takes a nap. Not exactly what Sheena was hoping for but still happy to have his company, even when he snores. After the nap, Boots hits the trail to finish his neighborhood rounds.



*Sheena with Boots*

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If we take a moment to think about the impact Sheena has had on Julie’s life, we recognize that Shanti’s House does much more than simply look after feral and abandoned cats. Shanti’s House builds a community of folks that care about each other while sharing a love for cats.



*An Oasis of Healing for Feral Cats*