



A Holiday

Dave is unconscious on the floor of his living room, face down, limbs akimbo. Relax ... he hasn't had a heart attack; it's nap time! Here on the third Monday in September (the day is important, as we will see) the weather is still very warm, and after a good lunch the patch of sunshine on the tatami mats had been just too inviting for him to resist. Dave never remembers dreams, but as he wakes up this time, he definitely has the feeling that there had been some kind of dream about washing. Washing his feet ...

He suddenly twists around and sits up. His feet *are* being washed! A moment later, the fog in his mind clears, and he understands - Boots the Cat is here, and had licked his sole to wake him up!

Dave: Well, look at this, after three months! (He reaches out to scratch Boots under the chin) You woke me up from my nap!

Boots: Well, I waited for a while, to see if you would wake up by yourself, but it seemed like you would never come out of it. And anyway, your feet could certainly do with ...

Dave (interrupts her): So, they let you out today? Ah, it's a holiday. (Because the people at Boots' place are home for the day, the front door must have been left open.)

Boots whistles a few bars of Ellington's 'Don't Get Around Much Anymore ...', and Dave laughs. He reaches out to scratch Boots under the chin, but as he does so, he hears the sound of a cat bell. A small cat bell. Not Boots' bell.

Dave: What's that sound?

He turns towards the kitchen ... A moment later, a little kitten - a black and white kitten - comes into view.

Dave: Ah, you brought your buddy! Look!

The little cat backs away upon hearing his voice.

Dave: Don't be afraid!

But the little one is too timid, and moves back towards the entranceway. Dave knows better than to try and follow, so turns his attention back to Boots. They chat for a while, and Dave learns that the little cat - which he had seen out on the street a few days ago - is a new member of the family over there, having been picked up as a newborn a couple of months ago.

As the two of them talk, the kitten returns, and after some encouragement from Dave, gradually gets up the courage to come into the room. Dave is careful not to make any sudden movements to frighten her, and she begins to explore. Her colouration is very similar to Boots, but where Boots is compact and stocky, with a stubby tail, this one is very long-limbed and slender, with an astonishingly long and lithe tail.

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Boots makes her way (very stiffly) over to the cushion that Dave had used as a pillow, and plops down. It seems be *her* turn for a nap ...

Dave watches in silence as the kitten spends the next ten minutes or so sniffing around the room, poking her nose into every nook and cranny, and at one point even climbing into a narrow space behind some of the books piled on the floor.

A few minutes later, the sound of a boy making a whistle call comes from down the street. The little cat responds instantly, runs out of the room over to the entranceway, and is gone.

Dave sits in the silence. His thoughts wander back to the time when he moved into this place. The black and white cat who lived two doors down came in one day, looked around in just this same fashion, and decided to make it her 'second home'. It had been the beginning of a wonderful friendship.

And now, almost exactly ten years later, her breathing somewhat laboured, and one eye now permanently out of action, Boots-chan sleeps peacefully on the cushion that is always waiting and ready for her.

The name of the little kitten is 'Haru' ... Spring. And this day - a holiday, as mentioned - is 'Respect for the Aged Day'.

Indeed.

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