

My Food Chain Gang – Restored!

I have a wonderful tale to tell – a God story, and I love those.

A few weeks ago now, I met a friend for lunch at McD's. Later that evening, as my hubby inquired about my day and asked how my lunch was, I talked about how much I enjoyed hearing my friend's updates on her beloved cat, Mya. I even lamented, "I wish I could have a kitten." I seem to be an animal person you say (I AM) – so why don't I just get a kitten? Well, I'm allergic to cats, otherwise I would probably have a cat (or two or three or...). I actually had one for 10 years and loved her very much, but I was very allergic to her and that was tough for both of us. But anyway – back to this Friday night a few weeks ago – I'm wanting a cat. Saturday morning, the early risers in our family were alerted by an "alarming" sound in our backyard. They found 2 cats fighting on the fence, and across the yard, 3 baby bunnies crying out in alarm. Sammie was dispatched to alert me (still in bed, allowed to sleep-in, THANK YOU Hubby!), and in the now-calm backyard I found 3 exhausted baby bunnies resting while my kids were comforting one of the stray cats. The stray was a friendly fellow; he had black and white fur, green eyes, and a few extra toes. I couldn't believe the obliging attitude – pleasure even – that this cat was deriving from the attention my kids were doting upon it.

I couldn't resist petting this friendly kitty, and when I did, something strange happened. Well, actually, it was nothing at all that happened. No sniffles, no itches, no hives – no allergy symptoms. How could it be that I wasn't allergic to this cat? For the record, Hubby is also allergic to cats but didn't react to this one either. So anyway, we let the super friendly tuxedo cat in the house. He walked right in and

looked around, and it really did seem as if he had lived here for years – and he's been here ever since! Just fit right in with our entire family, and it's not an easy feat to forge a seamless transition from outdoor feral cat to indoor family cat, especially when the new family = 5 kids (3 girls ages 12, 8, 5 and 2 boys ages 3 and 8 mos.), a dog, a parrot, a rabbit, and 2 rats. But saying we've had a smooth transition would be an understatement!

What a gift he has been. A gift from God for our family... to bring us together as we welcome a new member for however long we're allowed to take care of him. A gift for us to cherish together while we play with him. A gift for me to help ease the mounting stress I've felt lately. Have you seen the medical research on how a purring cat relieves stress? It exists, trust me!

So to acknowledge this gift for us and to honor our God, "Mittens" became "Moses" – and it is cute when the kids rhyme about "Moses with the extra toe-ses". Moses seems very adept at using his paws, and he acts very cat-like around the house, which I love – just why I wanted to have a cat around. For now, we are enjoying Moses and his company. He gets along with all of our other pets and is wonderfully tolerant of the kids – he fits in our family like the missing piece of a puzzle; not that any of us realized there was a piece missing before Moses came. So could it be that "my food chain gang" has been restored?

Both an article I read and a devotional I heard recently happened to be about the same subject: knowing and having the faith and satisfaction that God sees you, even if you feel invisible to the world. God uses many aspects of His creation to bring people closer to having meaningful relationships with Him and to help us receive His messages, even animals. My family was getting burnt out from a busy schedule, and it really rejuvenated the kids' spirits to get to have this cat. And they aren't the only ones ☐

“...You are the God who sees me...” from Genesis 16:13



This is a picture of our oldest daughter holding the cat. No, my 12-year-old does not normally wear make-up; this was “spa night” ☐

God is so good!!

If Cats Ran The World

Because my family and friends know that I’m an animal lover, they’re always sending me emails with pictures and articles about cute animal-related topics. All of them are adorable, but this one stands out as something to share – a man built an entire feline-sized village for homeless cats! Kind of sounds like something I’d like to do with some extra free time, money, and if only I didn’t have the darn cat allergy that’s always getting in the way...

Below are some pictures of his creation. For the entire story, [click here](#). And to visit the cat village online, The Caboodle Ranch, [click here](#).



Furry Babies Sucks!!!

We began our trip to Chicago last Saturday, and the 3-state, 4-kid, mini-van trip went pretty smoothly. At some point, we achieved the quadruple-kid-pass-out which is never anything

short of a great thing!

We arrived at our hotel in Naperville, Illinois on Saturday afternoon, and we decided to take the girls swimming in the outdoor pool which was really refreshing on an 80°+ day. It's been a long time since I've been swimming outdoors, and it was nice of my mom to meet us there for a swim instead of us driving the girls to her house for their week of fun with Grandma. After the girls left with her, we wanted to meet with a friend, but we were staying in the west 'burbs rather than the north 'burbs this time. Both parties had just endured long car rides, so we settled on a halfway point – a mall in the west 'burbs. Not really knowing what to plan on doing, we ended up finding such a great parking space at the mall that we just ended up going in to bumble. And it was fun! Partly because I haven't been in a real mall for years, so it was really interesting to see the different techniques that have evolved to try and entice shoppers to buy and visit... But I also enjoyed my mall visit because of the company we were keeping; it was nice to chat and catch up. And as you might have read in [derek's blog](#), we happened upon a glow-in-the-dark indoor mini-golf course that was less than a week old! It had 56 holes, but I don't think I could ever play that much mini-golf at once, so we stuck with the traditional 18 holes. I guess I should add in that I won the round and also had a lucky day with two holes-in-1 ☐ And I must comment on how good the baby was – he just sat in the shopping cart and watched the glow-in-the-dark golf balls throughout ALL 18 holes! There were these small contraptions sprinkled throughout the golfing space – you put your ball in, and it rolls around and comes out glowing brighter – those were fun! And it was fun to see the mall again. It wasn't the same mall I hung out in all the time as a teenager, but I had still been to this one a lot growing up, and it was neat to see how much (or how little, compared to most things in the area) it had changed over the past decade and a half. That reminds me, speaking of change... when we arrived in Chicago,

err Naperville on Saturday, we took the Naperville Road exit off of I-88 which is an area with which I am used to be very familiar. Back in the day (did I really just say that?), I would commute through that same intersection to work and back every single day, yuck... but apparently they've completely redone the entire area in the past few years because the intersection was unrecognizable. I mean, they added new roads and everything – it was the most bizarre feeling, it felt like I had gotten dropped into the middle of the twilight zone. We exited I-88, and all of a sudden, we were on Freedom Drive. Where now? Freedom Drive? I had literally never heard of Freedom Drive, they created the street from scratch and plopped it down into this area where I worked and played so many years ago. As much as I thought I knew where we were going, Jill the GPS was actually quite helpful during this twilight zone adventure, and she got us to our hotel, even though I knew where it was – WAS being the key word here. But back to the mall... we bumbled around some more after getting some pretzel dogs (yummier in Chicagoland, of course, what isn't?) at the food court. I heard some lady talking on a cell phone about the "puppy store", and sure enough, we happened across it. I'm an animal lover, so I love to see and visit with animals, but I think a side effect of my tenderness toward animals is my loathing of pet stores. And the pet store in the Stratford Mall in Bloomingdale Illinois is just about the worst I've ever seen. It's no secret that many of the major chains of pet stores get their "wares" from puppy mills; ie dog breeding facilities with cramped quarters, little food, and animal abuse. The huge chain famous for bad press, Petland, just closed a bunch of stores, which I believe is a good thing for dogs and dog lovers everywhere. I strongly believe that people should adopt animals, namely dogs and cats, from humane societies and other animal shelters. There are so many homeless pets, so how can it be justified to buy a puppy who is bred for selling when there are so many others bred accidentally who are also looking for love? I strongly support spay/neuter programs as well, fyi...

So anyway, the new pet store at the mall is called "Furry Babies". Their website calls it an "upscale puppy boutique, not just a pet store", but I call it disgusting. The puppies were in cribs, for goodness sakes, and along the walls they had a large variety of dog clothes for sale, no doubt at prices that I wouldn't pay to clothe my human kids. We inquired about one particular puppy, who was cute but looked to be slightly cross-eyed. We found out that she was a "designer dog" – they pretend like they meant to mix two breeds together (in this case a golden retriever and a poodle, thus giving us a "Goldendoodle"), but where I come from (the reality land of logic), we would call it a "mutt". And mutts tend to be better with kids, live longer, and are cheaper than purebreds – at least they were until a few years ago. Now mutts are these "designer dogs" and they cost a **lot** of money – in the case of the furry baby Goldendoodle – a cool \$1600. I cannot denounce this place loud enough! I also don't want to spend a ton of time going off about animal welfare nor lose readers by getting political. This just happens to be an issue I feel strongly about, and I plead that if you are in the market for a family pet, you consider adopting your animal companion from a shelter and also realize that you are entering into a life-long committment! That being said, Furry Babies sucks, but the good news is that I can't see them lasting that long. Oh yeah, I forgot to mention that the employees wear mock scrubs, in order to imitate delivery room nurses, I guess, which to me is even more sickening. But there I go again... get me going and I will never stop... so if you want to read more, [here is a link](#) to the forums about Furry Babies on the bestfriends.org website, which is an awesome organization – the country's largest animal sanctuary for homeless pets of all kinds! I hope to visit them someday in Utah, but until I get over my fear of flying I will just persue their website and I suggest you do the same...

Now that I'm actually leaving the homeless pet tangent behind... we left the mall at a decent hour since we wanted a

good night's sleep to rest up for the Cubs / Sox game the following day – the entire reason we were in town to begin with. Poor us – that did not happen! We got back to the hotel (which was pretty crappy for a Naperville Hampton Inn – see my [Small Separate Side Post](#)), and the baby decided he was going to go nuts and stay up until midnight. Then the little booger awoke at 6 the next morning, and he crawled around and caused mischief like dipping my drying bathing suit into the toilet, thanks for THAT. My husband was nice enough to take him in the bath for awhile and do other various quiet activities with him in the small room so that I could get a little more sleep, and then we all went down to breakfast – my poor husband was a zombie. I decided for us (he could not make decisions at that point) that he would go back up to the room while I drove our son over to my mom's for the day while we went to the Cubs game. We did that, and it took me about an hour to get all the way out to Aurora (not much traffic on a Sunday morning, but 5000 many stoplights!) and back. I thought we had plenty of time, but if you read my “A Patch of Blue In A Sea Of Black And White” post, you'll see why I should have stepped on the gas a little..

Marley and Me

Reluctantly, I saw [Marley and Me](#) in the movie theater yesterday. It's not that it was a bad movie, but I didn't want to see it in the theater because I knew it would be a tear-jerker since I read the book by John Grogan. Unfortunately, I don't remember much about the book since I read it a long time ago, and I do all of my book reading while I'm dozing off just before bed, which sometimes makes it difficult to remember what I've read. But I know I really enjoyed the novel and recommended it to my family and

friends. The story is about a family who gets a puppy named Marley, and the novel follows his journey through life as the 'world's worst dog'. But eventually, Marley charms his way into the hearts of his family, even helping them through life changes and tragedies.

From what I remember, I think the movie stays pretty close to the book, although I don't necessarily agree with the casting choices of Jennifer Aniston and Owen Wilson as Marley's masters. I was a big fan of the tv show Friends, but every movie I've seen Jennifer Aniston in since seems like she's still Rachel, her character from Friends. She's just not a very diverse actor in my book, which I also think she has in common with Owen Wilson. But characters in this heartwarming family film were not very deep, so in the end the poor casting did little to sink the movie. And you'll notice that I crossed out family film. Another thing that disappointed me was the PG rating Marley and Me received. There are about 3 too many adult-themed scenes that I wouldn't want my kids to see, and I'm really glad I previewed this film before I let them see it, which I usually do anyway. This movie should NOT have received a PG rating, and it will make me more careful about making sure I preview *everything* before the kids view it, regardless of rating.

But overall, cute movie. If you're an animal lover or have ever owned a dog, prepare to cry. Sorry if you consider that a spoiler, but it's been all over the media and has dominated water cooler talk everywhere about how sad the movie and book are. I'm sure you can guess what happens and you think you can prepare yourself, but you can't. I was a total wreck in the theater and have had a bit of a cloud over me ever since. But don't let that scare you away from seeing Marley and Me. I think it just struck a chord in me because we own a dog who was once 'The World's Worst Dog' and is now an old lady who has been a huge part of our family for over 10 years. I probably would not watch this movie again, but only for lack

of wanting to ride the emotional rollercoaster it provokes in its viewers. The big screen version of Marley and Me was entertaining, and it made me definitely want to read the book again... if only I had time for that.