

Love at first sight? ... Not Quite.

“Invisible threads are the strongest ties.”
— Friedrich Nietzsche

7 years ago, today, *she* entered our world. Today is her “Gotcha Day”. This sister of nine, once called “Cinnamon”, left her short life at the shelter. Leaving her mother and siblings behind, she entered our lives. Her name soon changed and so did we all. You may know her as Hocus Pocus. Her presence in our lives has transformed all of our lives for the better. I Am forever grateful.

But I did not want her. In fact, I ran from her.

Let me back up a bit before I go any further. Eight years ago, we were ready to rescue a dog, and add a canine to our current 4-feline family. I did my diligent research on breeds, temperaments, training, etc. Eventually we found what we thought would be the perfect puppy at it soon died, just before we were to adopt him. The search continued. Time after time it wasn't the right fit.

Eventually the tides turned.

We received an email: A volunteer found a pregnant stray mother on the side of the road, just before Thanksgiving. This dog, soon named Lola, gave birth to a whopping nine puppies and embraced motherhood like a canine champion.

We decided to investigate.

We drove a couple of hours to the no-kill shelter in Robeson County, NC. The staff were delighted to see us; they had a plethora of puppies to and couldn't wait to find them great forever homes. Apparently other stray mothers had recently given birth since we last contacted the shelter. I was beyond excited to discover that one of the breeds I had initially been interested in were some of the newborn puppies! I quickly asked to see them and was escorted to the back.

But someone in our family had his eyes locked on Lola's canine crew.

I skirted past the area where I could see my husband scanning the puppy kennel that housed the “Spice Pups”. Lola's puppies were all named after spices (cinnamon, chipotle, cayenne, etc.) I was not drawn to that area. In fact, I wanted the other puppies who were housed in another kennel with their mother.

Rich asked me to come over to where he was. Eventually I joined him, half hoping he would see my disinterest and move on from that group. What happened next would be the defining fork in the road for our family.

There was a cacophony of commotion coming from the kennel area as I approached. But one puppy seemed determined to get out. She was clamoring at the kennel gate, far away from her siblings as they wrestled around in their messy puppy pen. Jumping up and down at the gate, pawing and whining, she clearly wanted to get on the other side of that gate. Peering closer at the wee canine, I was rocked to my core. I saw that face, those eyes.

I knew them.

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But that couldn't be. She wasn't her. She couldn't be. It was impossible.

Regardless of what my mind was unable to perceive and make sense of, I left. I couldn't be there and I certainly couldn't have anything to do with *that* dog.

Love is an untamed force. When we try to control it, it destroys us. When we try to imprison it, it enslaves us. When we try to understand it, it leaves us feeling lost and confused.

— Paulo Coelho

Since you don't know the full story, I should explain. Four years prior to this puppy-palooza we were smackdab in the middle of at the shelter, I lost my best fur friend. Just shy of valentine's Day my soul mate suddenly left this world. It nearly broke me. Her death destroyed me on many levels. I was clinically depressed for over a year. I wanted to leave the world and join her, wherever she was. I thought I would never recover from losing my soulmate. She was my world. And no one could ever replace her.

But here we were; four years later, staring into the face of a puppy with the eyes of my friend. Those eyes. That face. They were so familiar.

Just for a second, I felt like I could see you - all of you. At First Sight

So of course, I bolted out of there like my head was on fire and my ass was about to catch next. I don't remember the details; only that my husband was completely confused, and I couldn't get into the car fast enough. Fear took over. Afraid of a love that I once knew completely. Scared of seeing it again. Terrified of experiencing the loss of this love again. Not again. No Way.

We drove away.

On the start of the long drive back home, my husband began to ask me what was wrong and why I was so upset. I couldn't verbalize it; I could barely talk. And even if I could get the words out, I had no idea how to explain all of what I was feeling. So many emotions and so much confusion. And fear, so much fear.

But he knew. He always knows. He knows sometimes even before I do.

When Love comes calling

Don't look back

When love comes calling

Don't look away

-Telepopmusik

With a continuous gentle nudge, my husband asked me to consider returning to the shelter. He understood that my emotions had taken over and I was unable to think clearly. My mind was racing and all I wanted to do was run away with it. Eventually I settled down and listened to what he had to say. And as always, he made perfect sense. He suggested we maybe just sit with all the puppies and look at them together, get to know each of them, and see what happens.

We turned the car around.

For some, "the point of no return" begins at the very moment their souls become aware of each other's existence. — C. JoyBell



Back to the shelter we went. Back to face that face; those eyes; that familiar soul. I wasn't ready but I trusted my husband - my best friend and soulmate. I knew he was right (as usual), even if I wasn't ready to hear it.

Reluctantly, I went inside.

We were invited into a new room and one by one, the staff brought out the puppies. I had to admit, my mood shifted dramatically. It was pretty darn adorable. The puppies were bouncing around, playing with toys, biting each other's butts, and clearly happy to be out of their kennel.

And there she was. Again.

The puppy who I ran from. The familiar face that struck me with fear. As she pranced around the room, she had a self-assured air about her. Confident, sassy, and in control. Yet you could feel that she was loving and sensitive. When she wasn't sneakily stealing all of the toys from her siblings and hiding them in the back of the room, she took turns crawling in and out of our laps.

And that's when it happened. We fell in love.

"If I am really a part of your dream, you'll come back one day."

— Paulo Coelho

Fast forward to today ... This incredible canine has become the light of our lives. She has far exceeded any small expectations I might have had. From my limited human perspective, I could never have known who she'd become, and who I would become because of her. The challenges, the joy, the unconditional love, the inspiration, the laughter, and the endless love she has brought to our family and countless other souls is unparalleled by anything I could have imagined.

Years later I finally asked my husband what was it about "Cinnamon" that spoke to him; what made her stand out among all the rest. He answered quickly and directly, "I just knew."

"The simple things are also the most extraordinary things, and only the wise can see them."

— Paulo Coelho, *The Alchemist*

Part 1 of 2
(To Be Continued ...)

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