

Max & Rayli

Two Remarkable Felines
Forever Imprinted on My Heart

A Tribute by Nicole Strickland



One of my favorite photos of Max and Kayli

WITH CELESTIAL WINGS
LIFTING THEM UP AND AWAY
FROM THE WEIGHT OF THE WORLD,

TWO ANGELS TAKE FLIGHT
IN FELINE FORM.
QUIET IS THE NIGHT,
IN HONOR OF THEM BEING ADORNED.

TWO STARS ARE BORN AND GLISTEN
IN THE LIGHT AND MIGHT OF LOVE.

KAYLI AND MAX'S
CELESTIAL HOME.

Why I Wrote This Piece

Cats are such amazing creatures, an absolute gift from the universe. Since I was a baby, these majestic beings have been celebrated members of our family.

Trixie was my very first cat, an anxious stray that my mom and dad welcomed into our home in Las Vegas. She used to sleep in my crib, providing me with endless affection and warmth.

Next, we adopted Cindy, a nervous but loveable kitty, when I was in first grade. She preferred being in the great outdoors as she paraded around with a proud

tomboy-like personality. In one of my favorite childhood photos, I am holding Cindy as a kitten, dressed in my clown costume for Halloween.

A few years later, when I was in the sixth grade, my dad and I went to watch the hang-gliders do their thing in Torrey Pines, a northern coastal area in San Diego. Even though the show was impressive, the highlight of the afternoon was meeting a tiny orange tabby kitten eager to find a permanent home. My dad sensed my puppy-dog eyes, obliged, and allowed me to claim him. Mittens, as he was almost immediately named, was a quiet, gentle soul with iconic, expressive Puss-in-Boots eyes.

In my undergraduate college years, I adopted Simba and Merlin, grey tabby and midnight black, respectively. The former came from a shelter and the latter I met as a wee, six-week-old orphan at a laundry facility. Tragically, Merlin had been abandoned at a nearby construction site, and my big heart couldn't close the door on him.

Next in line were, of course, Max and Kayli, and the rest is history, as they say.

Felines have been revered by humans since ancient times. The Egyptians believed that cats had divine energy and turned to them as a way to comprehend and connect with the world. Specifically, the Egyptians felt that household felines conveyed the quintessential essence of Bastet, the goddess of domesticity, fertility, and pleasure.

The Romans also regarded these four-legged furballs highly and felt that they represented freedom and independence. Intriguingly, cats were the only creatures permitted inside Roman temples.

In Cyprus, a shallow tomb from 7500 BCE was unearthed in 1983, containing human skeletal remains, stone tools, some iron oxide and a few seashells. Another grave was excavated just inches away that contained an eight-month-old feline. This discovery implied that these animals were being

domesticated as settlements sprouted in the Middle East's Fertile Crescent.

As the years carried on, people from all walks of life welcomed cats into their homes and established them as applauded members of the family. In my eventual timeline, two remarkable tabbies named Max and Kayli would make their mark, enter the hearts of many and create an everlasting legacy.

Inspirational stories and accounts shouldn't be locked away in a diary. Instead, they should be told and repeated as a way to unite fellow men, women and children. There are many ways personal inspirational stories can help others. They can help someone in time(s) of need, provide an extra layer of positivity in someone's heart and leave an eternal ripple of encouragement and healing. Enlightening experiences are meant to be shared, as they can provide an unwavering amount of benefit to people. This is especially the case with stories involving animals.

There is an unspoken bond between humans and animals, an everlasting connection that never weakens. One of life's ultimate cruelties—having to say goodbye to a furry loved one—is, indeed, one of the most difficult experiences to endure. Even though mortal beings eventually transition from the physical plane, their spirited soul remains in the multiverse. This is a concept that I have known for a long time as an afterlife/paranormal researcher. It took Max and Kayli's passing to further solidify my understanding.

I do believe that many, if not all, animals can communicate to us after they depart the earthly plane. We most often hear of spiritual incidences with cats, dogs and horses. This would make sense, seeing as though they are among the most popular animals to have as close companions. However, I think there is more to the equation. I strongly believe that the frequency of spiritual activity is due to their expansive intelligence and innately intuitive nature. Whether it's an apparitional sighting, a disembodied vocalization or footstep, or an olfactory sensation or cold spot, paranormal occurrences between pets and humans are

similar across the board. Reading and/or talking about these experiences can facilitate acceptance and healing. That is why I am writing this tribute to Max and Kayli, the brother and sister that were my companions for so many years.

When Max and Kayli passed away, I felt as though the end of my world was completely imminent. Of course, that was the grief talking. After a few days of complete sadness and dejection, something beautiful happened: I started to feel a sense of peace, the beginning of the acceptance of their departure. I began to feel brother and sister alive in my heart and soul. Although they are gone physically, I hold onto the notion that their energy is always present, a feeling that overpowers the grief. There's solace in knowing that their vibrant energy and majestic souls are intertwined with mine.

Writing about the remarkable story of Max and Kayli is not only cathartic in its own right, but it also continues on their everlasting legacies. This isn't the only way I am honoring brother and sister, as future dedications are in the works. I am indebted to both

Max and Kayli for imparting their innate insight, unconditional love and awe-inspiring wisdom to me and many others. My goal in writing their story is to connect with those who are going through the heart-wrenching time of saying goodbye to a dearly loved furry friend. All animal lovers can relate to and empathize with anyone who is going through the physical loss of an animal. When you read their account, it is my hope that you can find comfort, restoration, and peace.



When they were tiny enough to fit in one cat bed

Meeting Max and Rayli

On August 18th, 2003, two one-of-a-kind felines entered this world. Little did they know that in the coming months they would bless the life of a human being—that individual would, of course, be me.

On October 25th of the same year, San Diego and neighboring Southern California counties were engulfed in flames with the onset of the Cedar and Paradise fires. At the time, this flame fest was the largest wildfire the Golden State had ever endured. Unbelievably, my mother and father both share the same birthday, which happens to be October 25th. As

if that's not bizarre enough, my maternal grandmother transitioned to the heavens on that exact date in 2001. One can't deny that there's some sort of metaphorical symbolism to this date.

As the smoke and soot started to settle, thoughts of adopting two littermate felines entered my conscious. The symbolism was ever-present: youthful, innocent life signifying a fresh rebirth. With the new replacing the old, I set upon my quest to seek the cats of my dreams. In my young 24 years, I had been blessed with many wonderful kitties, each and every one with a unique personality and earthly mission. However, I had not yet experienced the joy of having two feline siblings. That was soon about to change.

During my expedition, I set out to various pet stores all around San Diego County in hopes of finding the perfect duo. While en route from a PetSmart in the La Jolla area, an instinctual gut feeling advised me to stop at Petco off Morena Boulevard. This particular retailer was not on my list of locations to visit, so I paid careful attention to my inner voice. I parked the car and

eagerly approached the entrance door. As soon as I stepped inside, I saw it: Right in the center of the adoption display, in a perfect spotlighted position, stood a three-tiered kennel complete with two almost identical-looking kittens with bright emerald green eyes. As I walked up to them, I noticed that they were cuddling and embracing each other, a perfect visual representation of yin and yang. One of the store employees noticed my curiosity about the two fledgling littermates and asked if I'd like to visit with them. My eyes brightened and I let out an affirmative, enthusiastic reply. As she opened the door to their temporary shelter, I stared intently into their eyes, four effervescent green jewels that could see right into my soul.

As I proceeded to place my hand inside the kennel, the slightly smaller kitten reached out her paw to me as she sat on top of her brother—a motherly, protective gesture at such a ripe age. “I want you to know that there’s already an application for these two littermates,” said the store clerk. As my stomach started to knot, she proceeded to say, “But, I don’t

want that to deter you from also applying to adopt them.” As I processed those latter words, I grabbed my pen and willingly completed the adoption application. “We’ll let you know in a few days,” the woman relayed. With that, I left the store with a swirl of both excitement and unease.

The next few days seemed to drag out at the pace of a fatigued sloth. With hope and anticipation, I cleaned my apartment from top to bottom. Holding onto the prospect of being the chosen individual to adopt both brother and sister, I meticulously vacuumed, disinfected and prayed. After about three days, I phoned Petco to check on the status of my application. I told the employee that I had cleaned my entire apartment in hope that I could introduce both kittens to my home. The woman I talked with was amazed and said that I should be hearing very shortly.

When the next day dawned, I received a phone call I will never forget. The voice on the other end said, “Hello, I’m looking to speak with Nicole Strickland.” With my heart racing, I responded with a slightly

nervous, “Yes, that’s me.” The woman who phoned me was from The Rescue House and happily told me that my application was accepted! With tears of happiness streaming down my face, I eagerly thanked her and vowed to take the best care of my newfound friends.

Conceived in 1999, The Rescue House, Inc. is a non-profit, volunteer-based society dedicated to helping with the rescue, foster and adoption process for cats. The organization is committed to finding quality homes for abandoned, homeless and mistreated cats of all ages and backgrounds. In a milestone achievement, the association has rescued over 16,700 felines and works tirelessly to make sure that these animals are appropriately matched with loving owners. Collaborating with eight veterinarians, The Rescue House of San Diego ensures that each kitty has been inspected, spayed or neutered, vaccinated, micro-chipped, dewormed, treated for fleas and tested for feline leukemia. All in all, it’s a fantastic group highly devoted to ensuring an esteemed quality of life for all cats.

After some additional phone calls to share the fantastic news with family and friends, I gathered my mom and we sped off to Petco. When I arrived, the aforementioned feelings of unease were eclipsed with gratitude and utter exultation. Oh, the joys of shopping, making sure I purchased all of the necessities for brother and sister. I excitedly conveyed to them that they were coming home with me. In their unique body language, they both responded that they understood through their gaze, replete with innate feline insight and wisdom. This may sound trivial, but I renamed brother and sister when I brought them home. They were previously known as Joey and Beauty by The Rescue House; while those were cute monikers, I felt that Max and Kayli suited them perfectly.

As a loveable gesture, various nicknames were established for brother and sister. For Max, this included “Max Factor” as an ode to his beautiful brown eyeliner around his eyes. I sometimes affectionately called Kayli “Kayli Bayli” and “Little Girl.” They were both quite accepting of these cute little nicknames;

however, they'd sometimes glance at me as though I was ridiculous. In typical cat lover fashion, I had to come up with a silly name for the two of them together: "The Bumpins." It beats me how I came up with this, but one day I said it and it stuck like sap to a tree.



*Max and Kayli were almost always cuddled together.
If you look closely, you can see how they're
forming the shape of a heart.*

Home at Last

Max and Kayli most likely felt that my 701-square-foot apartment was a newfound castle. As I placed their carrier on the floor, they both eagerly jumped out and started their curious exploration of the space. Walking this way and that, they were probably thinking, “Is this my new home? Wow, we’re going to get lost. It’s so big.” In follow-the-leader fashion, sister took charge and led her brother on the expedition to inspect all the rooms. It was such a cute and rather memorable sight to see. Indeed, this was just the beginning of a lifetime of cherished remembrances.

That evening, I had so much fun watching Max and Kayli get accustomed to their surroundings. Max found my walk-in closet almost immediately and jumped up on one of my drawer organizers. I imagine he felt like a king as he stood on top and nestled his head in my hanging clothes. Kayli found my bed and eagerly jumped up on it. She was probably thinking, “Wow, this is the biggest bed I’ve ever seen.” It was so heartwarming to see them acclimate to their loving home.

After about 30 minutes, I decided it was time to feed them. I purchased a few sets of twin food bowls at Petco. For their first dinner inauguration, I chose the purple paw-printed dishes and smiled as they ate with gusto. I also bought a Drinkwell pet fountain, which provided fresh, filtered water. Oftentimes, both brother and sister would play in the water with their paws. Fatigue started setting in after a long day, so I took a hot, relaxing shower. I would have never guessed that Max and Kayli would have an affinity for water. As I was showering, I heard some meows and saw them looking up at me with curious eyes. After a

few minutes, they both attempted to jump up on the edge of the bathtub. As the night carried on, sleepiness began to eclipse their enthusiasm, so I prepared a comfy resting spot for both kittens in my master bedroom. After some endearing cuddle time, all three of us journeyed off into a gentle slumber.

Since I had to work during the weekdays, I made the decision to keep Max and Kayli in my master bedroom while I was gone for the first few days. To them, the room seemed like a castle, and they adjusted accordingly. Morning routines consisted of snuggle time and a hearty breakfast before I ventured off to my job. I began to enjoy every afternoon drive home from work as I readily anticipated coming home to them and being greeted by four sparkling eyes. Prior to getting ready for bed, the three of us would have some evening television time on the living room couch, a spot they soon claimed as their own.

After about a week or so, I was confident that both kittens could roam about the entire apartment while I was gone. Of course, I made sure that the entire space

was safely suitable for fledging cats. Innocent inquisitiveness is the hallmark of all cats, both in their prime and older years, so I safeguarded my entire living area. Nevertheless, Max and Kayli still managed to occasionally ride the naughty train; each time, I chuckled and shook my head with a welcome smile across my face.

Curiosity Inspired the Cats

Cats are curious creatures by nature. They yearn to explore their environment with laser-focused interest. Almost all felines exhibit their unique preferences when it comes to play. Through recreational activities, I was able to get a grasp on Max's and Kayli's similar yet slightly different personalities. As alluded to earlier, Kayli was more of a leader, whereas Max was more of a follower.

Both of them often engaged in something rather astonishing: They'd sit at the base of my front door and stare up at the peep hole. Without any hesitation,

they'd jump up and meet it eye-to-eye as if they knew what it was. They'd repeat the sequence until their four little legs tuckered out. Apparently, athleticism ran in their genes. Like a hiker climbing to the tallest peak of a mountain, Kayli did just that—albeit to the top of my kitchen cupboards. She'd sit there and relax for hours without a care in the world. She also soon found an affinity for climbing up my living room curtains. I'd be in my bedroom and come out and see her “hanging ten” from them.

One of their gold-standard favorite toys was the classic stick with feathers. There are enough varieties of this popular toy to satisfy the pickiest of cats. Since brother and sister were so athletically agile, they loved to wiggle their furry butts and charge toward the feathers like a bunch of football players going after a fumbled ball. Upon capturing their soft prize, they would look at me as if to say, “Mommy, I got it. Woohoo!” Sometimes, I'd also wave the toy around in circles and watch Kayli and Max jump high in the air, similar to how a dog jumps up to retrieve a frisbee.

Isn't it hilarious how one can spend lots of money on ordinary cat toys, only to find that the most popular go-to objects are the free varieties lying around the house? Seriously, all cat moms can relate. For Kayli, it was bottle caps and pencil eraser heads, of course with my supervision. She loved to play soccer with bottle caps and enjoyed trying to bite the tiny eraser as I moved the pencil in circular motions around her face. Max had an affinity for tissue paper, so it's easy to surmise what his favorite Yuletide holiday was. He enjoyed anything in the paper family. One of his preferred pastimes was deliberately knocking bills or envelopes off the counters. He'd accomplish this task with such a snide grin and look of achievement in his eyes.

There are a few other honorable mentions worthy of sharing. There was the "Bat the Blinds and Verticals" game, which happened frequently when both brother and sister demanded my attention. Sometimes, they'd do this early in the morning, long before the chiming of my alarm clock. Another honorable mention: Max and Kayli adored their cat houses. They would often

nap in the cubbies, scratch the material, or climb up and down like monkeys. And last but not least, “Chase the Red Laser Light” was one of their favorite workouts. Sometimes, I pointed the light a couple of feet off the ground and held it there until they ran toward it and jumped up to meet it eye-to-eye. There are so many cherished memories of their play times.



Time with Mommy!

Our Shared Soul Connection

I do believe that Max, Kayli and I share the same soul group. We knew each other prior to meeting for the first time in Petco. I'm positive that we've traveled through past lifetimes together. It's a collective understanding of each other's physical, emotional and spiritual compasses. For that reason, all three of us were greatly in tune with any symptoms of illness, anxiety, or stress. For example, they exhibited tension whenever I had a bad day or was fighting a cold. I would react in similar ways when the roles were reversed. It was a mutual understanding of our soul

contracts and a willingness to help each other. The communication lines were always open and I made ample time to talk with brother and sister and reassure them that I was okay. They, in turn, did this for me, too.

We came into each other's earthly lives for a reason and that's something our soul contract understands. In my 42 years on this earth, I have not ever had this magnitude of spiritual experiences with any of my animals until I came into contact with Max and Kayli. Meeting them initiated the start of an unspeakable and everlasting bond, an endless union that not even death could interfere with. I've always felt that love can conquer all, and it leaves me seeped in tranquility knowing that they felt loved to the galaxies and beyond.

Early on in 2004, I started experiencing relentless abdominal pain. For many months, I endured several diagnostic tests and surgeries to discover the origin. I was eventually diagnosed with Interstitial Cystitis (IC), an often-chronic painful bladder condition, as

well as various gynecological issues. Max and Kayli comforted me in ways no human ever could. They reassured me and reminded me of my uncompromising strength to get through my ordeal. I had a hysterectomy in 2020, which for the most part resolved my woman issues. As I'm writing this, I have occasional bladder flares associated with IC; however, it's pretty much controlled. In the coming paragraphs, you'll read how both brother and sister endured health challenges as well. I was there for them just as they were there for me. In fact, there was such a harmonious synergy in the way the three of us looked out for each other in the face of any challenge.

All intelligent beings have an innate intuition. Some are more aware and practiced at it than others. Strong intuition and psychic abilities run in the maternal side of my family. I've been keenly aware of my natural gifts since childhood. Advancing in years coupled with my work as an afterlife and paranormal researcher, has strengthened these aptitudes. Both Max and Kayli had (and still have) these intrinsic insights as well. Perhaps we've helped each other in amplifying them. Both cats

exhibited sensitivity and wisdom beyond that of a typical cat. All you had to do was look into their eyes: Nestled deep within was a layer of divine pureness and knowledge. This was one of the many gifts they bequeathed to the world and one they continue to offer from the cosmos.

Unyielding Strength in the Face of Health Issues

When cats get older, they are more prone to disease and illness. Both Max and Kayli were extremely healthy before being diagnosed with their eventual health issues. Max's hypertrophic cardiomyopathy diagnosis came out of nowhere, a sudden shock to all who knew him. In his younger years, however, he developed an extremely painful pilonidal cyst, which demanded strong antibiotic and surgical treatment. Initial operations were done to place tubes in, so the purulent, malodorous discharge could drain from his

body. More in-depth invasive intervention was eventually needed to remove the rather stubborn ailment. After extracting the cyst located near his tailbone, the veterinarian came out to the waiting room to show me the contents. These types of growths almost always contain hair and skin debris and the one inside Max was no exception: coarse, black hair and layers of skin, looking as though they came straight out of a science fiction movie. In addition to other medicines, Max was treated with Imipenem, an effective antibiotic utilized for the treatment of pathogens in several organ systems. According to the drug's manufacturer, its claim to fame is evident in the therapy for mixed aerobic and anaerobic infections, bacteremia or the presence of bacteria in the blood and hospital-acquired contagions. For about a week during his therapy, I had to take Max to the hospital every eight hours to receive his medications. As a loving owner, I was committed to seeing him through this terrible ordeal.

All in all, it took about a solid month for Max to completely recover from this difficult tribulation. Max

was at a somewhat normal weight in the years prior to this. Whether it was the result of extensive treatment and potent antibiotics or just something of unknown origin, he started to gain a lot of weight, eventually becoming around 20 pounds. I intervened and tried various ways to place him on a diet, but it was as if he was destined to be chubby in his later years. He was quite athletic and quick on his feet considering his heavy girth.

Boy, did Max love to eat. For a while, I had five cats in the house, and they were all on a similar eating regimen. When I put the plates down on the floor, Max would examine the food in each of them to make sure he had the same amount or more. It was a rather funny sight to see. The other kitties left remnants of food in their bowls, whereas Max's was cleaned to perfection—every single morsel consumed with delight. After licking his chops, he'd attempt to annihilate the leftovers in the other dishes, but I'd swiftly remove them before he got a chance.

Kayli developed feline diabetes when she was 13 years old. Initially, it was difficult to control her blood sugar but she began to self-regulate in the weeks and months following. Upon her diagnosis, she had to spend one night in the hospital as her values were around 800. She cycled through a few types of insulin before settling on Vetsulin. This involved many consultations with her primary veterinarian to gain knowledge of how it affects cats. I spent my own individual time researching feline diabetes as well, including the signs and symptoms of hypoglycemia or a drop in blood sugar.

Kayli received insulin twice a day, both morning and night with weekly “ear pokes” to check blood sugar levels. Interestingly, in the last year of her life on earth, she needed less insulin and not always twice a day. In order to alleviate the stress of needles, I’d tell Kayli, “Okay, it’s time for the ‘pokeys.” She was a trooper, especially early on before I became adept at finding a vein. Caring for a diabetic cat, especially one in their elder years, takes patience and unrelenting commitment. Being diabetic, Kayli was more

susceptible to infection. As such, she endured a few urinary tract infections (UTIs) warranting antibiotic treatment. I was always very scrupulous about making sure her litter box was clean but even that couldn't prevent an occasional UTI.

On a few occasions, Kayli's blood sugar levels dropped considerably, with the lowest being around 40. Emergency protocol included giving honey and food as a way to combat the sugar depletion. Sadly, it made her have explosive diarrhea. Obviously, I'd rather clean up any poopy messes as opposed to her going into a diabetic coma. Since I was quite in tune with her, I readily noticed the tell-tale signs of hypoglycemia, which included a ravenous desire to eat, dilated pupils, anxiety and sweatiness. Words cannot relay the steadfast bravery and strength Kayli showcased during these episodes.

As if diabetes wasn't enough, Kayli also developed hyperthyroidism when she turned 16. The thyroid becomes overactive in this disease, producing excess amounts of the hormone thyroxine. It can cause a host

of problems, including an increased metabolism leading to weight loss, irregular heartbeats, sweating and moodiness. In addition to insulin, I'd give her a morning and evening dose of Methimazole, an anti-thyroid medication whose aim is to prevent too much buildup of thyroxine. These were tiny pink pills, so they were easy for Kayli to swallow. She despised them but took them like a champ. After the diagnosis of hyperthyroidism, she needed to have her thyroid tested every few months with a T4 blood test. Medication adjustments were occasionally needed; all in all, her values eventually stabilized.

Towards the end of Kayli's life, one of her chest x-rays showed a nodule on one of her lungs. Tragically, both her primary and specialty veterinarians felt it was a slow-growing type of cancer. In fact, they relayed to me that she could go a long time without any symptoms. This third diagnosis came in December 2020, exactly a year before her passing. She also developed mild kidney disease, which is common in older cats.

So, picture it, as *Golden Girls'* Sophia Petrillo would say: An 18-year-old cat with diabetes, hyperthyroidism, lung cancer and kidney disease just marching along as though she were still a kitten. Not too many cats would be able to concurrently endure the complexities of these illnesses and trek along with will and might. Kayli did just that, and this remains one of the many reasons why she was so exceptional. She still is, albeit in spirit form. Of course, my tender loving care greatly helped, but this cat had a strong determination to continue having a happy life regardless of these physical ailments. For a long time, she didn't let any of these disorders interfere with her life. Just looking at her, you'd never guess what was going on with her physically.

Both Max and Kayli displayed unwavering courage and strength in dealing with their physical issues and ensuing heart problems. Witnessing their vigor taught me better ways to deal with life's challenges and tribulations. Whenever I feel a wave of trifling frustration, I instantly remind myself of how brother and sister would tackle a problem. They wouldn't

excessively wine about it or ruminate on its annoying factors; they would face it with sensibility. Max and Kayli bestowed on me the divine teachings of living in the moment and staying in the present. They endorsed the importance of optimism and listening to the heart as opposed to the ego. I am forever indebted to them for their imparted wisdom.



I took this photo of Max just a few days before his transition

*Max's Rite of Passage
and Crossing Over
the Rainbow Bridge*

In 2016, I had to take Max into our community's veterinarian due to an eye infection known as conjunctivitis. While Max was there, his doctor listened to his cardiac and pulmonary functions and diagnosed him as having a heart murmur. A murmur does not necessarily mean that there is heart disease present; however, it can indicate that something more serious is going on. The following day, I took Max to

a specialist for a cardiac ultrasound, an echocardiogram of the heart. Just like the wildfires had overwhelmed San Diego thirteen years prior, I was then engulfed with the tragic news that no animal lover wants to hear: Max had hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, an acquired and often hereditary physical ailment. As tears swept down my despondent face, the doctor reassured me that medication could possibly help treat the disease and keep Max alive for many years to come. Needless to say, I drove home with a mixture of reassurance, anxiety and anger.

Max was on beta blockers for a few days to help manage his cardiac functions. On the fourth night, I noticed that his heart and breathing rates were extremely high. I rushed him to the emergency VCA Animal Specialty Group, which was only about 10 minutes away. After a few minutes, the veterinarian came out to talk to us and relayed that he either may have had a reaction to the beta blockers or more seriously, may be headed into heart failure. Unsurprisingly, he had to undergo some more tests, which lasted about an hour. At about the 60-minute

mark, I heard the song “Endless Love” playing on the ceiling’s radio speakers. Knowing this was no coincidence, I saw the doctor’s forlorn facial expression as he came out to brief us at that exact moment. No words needed to be relayed as I knew the tragic news we were about to hear: It was the latter and Max’s heart had weakened.

He stayed overnight so he could be monitored and receive the oxygen that he so desperately needed. The following day, my mom and I went to see him and it was then that his attending doctor conveyed that nothing more could be done. My whole world collapsed and my soul was pierced with anger, sadness and hopelessness. The veterinarians catering to Max were relentless in their treatment of him, and they tried everything to help prolong his beautiful life. After a 45-minute consultation with the medical staff, I was hit with the decision to either keep him on life support or allow him his rite of passage to peacefully transition to the stars. Of course, I chose the latter as it would have been completely selfish to keep him alive

in the condition, he was in. It was his time and I did everything I could to honor it.

The registered veterinarian technician took us into a room, a location that I never want to see again in my life. Max was lying on a table with an oxygen mask surrounding his face. Placing my arms around him, I told him how much I loved him and echoed the following words: “Max, my prince and golden boy, I love you so much and our bond will last forever. Always and forever. You will always be a part of my heart and soul. Endless love, baby. I love you.” As I saw the needle responsible for delivering the medication to commence his transition, I told Max how much I loved him. I embraced him until he breathed his last breath and crossed the Rainbow Bridge. When that time came, he had such a peaceful look on his face. The technician wrapped a paw-printed blanket around Max and brought him to a serene private room. It was beneficial for my mom and I to be alone with him for a while.

With death, comes the departure of the physical body and only the physical body. Death cannot touch the soul or energy of our animals. It is my belief that the bonds we have with our beloved pets grow even stronger in spirit. The night I came home from the veterinary emergency hospital after Max's passing, I heard his meow in my bedroom as I was getting ready for much-needed sleep. His vocalization was so loud and clear; he was reassuring me that he was at peace in heaven's pastures. It was later that same evening when I felt Max breathing underneath my hand. His ethereal inhalations were representative of a new life beyond the ethers. In one of my often-lucid dreams, Max sat in front of me and wrapped his front legs around me. Needless to say, I woke up with complete serenity. In the days and months that followed, I continued to encounter his angelic spirit many times and in many special ways. Almost on a daily basis, I hear Max's meow, sometimes several times in a row. I have seen him in ethereal form on many occasions and have felt him jump up on my bed.

Just Kayli and I

Since Max's passing, Kayli and I have grown infinitely closer, a woven tapestry of pure cosmic love and connection. After her brother's physical demise, I consistently worried about her emotional and spiritual health. She and her brother were inexplicably close, and I knew she'd endure tremendous grief. Cats mourn just as much, if not more than, humans. I did everything I could to help her navigate through the heartache and sorrow. During her five years of physical life without her brother, Kayli became more affectionate, allowing our bond to further develop.

Intriguingly, when I first adopted Max and Kayli, I also created the nickname of “Kaylimax,” not yet aware of how profound that moniker would be in the years to come.

Losing Max was a temporary yet devastating blow to my personal universe. However, I found consolation knowing that Kayli was alive and well. She was my number-one priority in addition to dealing with my own anguish. Much apprehension swept over me, as I didn’t exactly know how her brother’s passing would affect her. Her incredible confidence and strength abetted her grieving process; nonetheless, I worried about her wellbeing—this concern a hallmark of any stellar owner, of course. After returning home from the VCA Animal Specialty Group on the night of Max’s passing, I dedicated ample time to spend with Kayli. I let her know that although Max was gone physically, his spirit remained and danced around—and within—us. The expression in her eyes revealed a sense of understanding.

As the days, months and years carried on, Kayli and I became infinitely closer. It's difficult to exactly portray this type of bond in words as it's meant to be experienced, not explained. We were both grieving and instinctively helped each other through the process. In a way, we relied on each other's courage and strength to move through the intense waves of sorrow. We grieved together and we healed together. Collectively, we both accepted Max's rite of passage.



Kayli with her expressive green eyes

Kayli's Rite of Passage and Reunion with Max

One afternoon, as I was just about to leave to run some errands, I heard Kayli meowing quite forcefully. I proceeded to run down the stairs as fast as my legs would allow. It was then that I saw her right front leg extended upward in an awkward position. She was resting on her favorite living room chair, so any verbalization of distress was quite unusual. I noticed that one of her right front claws was stuck in a blanket that was aesthetically draped over her cherished recliner. While I freed her claw from its torment, I

noticed that she was breathing quite rapidly and displayed a staunch look of fear in her eyes. With all my might, I picked her up and held her in my arms as I whispered reassuring words to appease her anxiety. After a few minutes, she calmed down and became herself again. Sadly, this wasn't an isolated incident, as change was about to dawn in the coming days.

Those days surfaced in the second week of December, 2021. I've always been exceptionally in tune with Max and Kayli, which has allowed me to zero in on obscure and hard-to-detect physical issues. One morning, I noticed that Kayli was in a type of respiratory distress known as retracted breathing. She was heavily relying on her abdominal muscles and inhaling through her mouth. My automatic instinct kicked in and I rushed her to the Veterinary Specialty Hospital of San Diego, a renowned facility that provides esteemed quality of special care for animals. While en route, I phoned the hospital to let them know I was on the way. Upon arrival, one of the veterinary technicians triaged her immediately. "Kayli, Mommy is right here. I love you," I said, as I disquietly watched her being transported

back into the emergency room area. Due to COVID-19 restrictions still in effect, people have to wait outside or in their cars while their animals are being seen. As such, communication between veterinary staff and owners is accomplished remotely. With Kayli's many health conditions in her golden years, I had become a pro at this suitable albeit annoying setup.

As the seconds turned into minutes, I waited patiently hoping to receive a call with good news, as was the norm in previous visits. This time, however, the call took on a foreboding theme as I was told that Kayli had pleural effusion in her chest cavity. In addition to running some tests to determine the origin, the veterinarian opted to remove the fluid via a thoracentesis, a minor invasive procedure to remove air or fluid from the pleural space. After several hours of apprehensive waiting, I was told that my baby girl was in heart failure. This devastating and surreal news took me back to 2016 when I was notified of Max's cardiomyopathy diagnosis. While Max had the hypertrophic variety, it was thought that Kayli's was more restrictive. In lay person's terms, the former is

when the heart becomes abnormally thick versus being more stiff and rigid in the latter. Kayli's internal medicine doctor was quite reassuring and explained that cats with heart failure can often times live comfortable lives with the right treatment. Nonetheless, for the time being, she had to stay in the intensive care unit overnight for continuous monitoring.

I can hardly recollect another night when my nerves were as high as they were that night. When I arrived back home from the Veterinary Specialty Hospital, there was this invading sense of angst and concern, an emerging tsunami of the unknown washing over me. Kayli's emergency room veterinarian phoned me around 9:00 p.m. that night asking if I wanted the staff to proceed with CPR or DNR (do not resuscitate). I've always signed to have CPR done; however, the doctor advised me that due to my baby's delicate condition, any effort to revive would be brutal. I hesitantly agreed to the DNR, emphatically praying that the evening's eventual seconds, minutes and hours wouldn't reveal

my greatest fear. Exhaustion came over me and, remarkably, I was able to fall asleep with ease.

One of the greatest senses of trepidation I've ever endured occurred when I was awakened by the ring of my smart phone in the early hours of the following morning. Feeling as though my blood had drained from my body, I answered the call with staunch courage. One of Kayli's favorite ER veterinarians who had started his shift during the night was on the other end of the receiver. I was relieved when he didn't relay the news I was utterly dreading, but instead stated he had simply called to update me on her condition. At that moment in time, to say I had a feeling of relief was a complete understatement. We discussed the strong possibility of Kayli being able to go home later that day. This particular doctor has seen Kayli in the ER a few times, so he was familiar with her medical history. During our phone call, he told me, "I've had many cats; not one has made it to 18 years old. I've never known a cat with diabetes and hyperthyroidism to make it to that age. The fact that Kayli has made it to 18 years with all her conditions is a testament to

your care.” While I agreed, I also believe that Kayli’s out-of-this-world strength and will contributed to her longevity as well. In other words, I wouldn’t dare to take all the credit. The ensuing words that came from this doctor, enlightened my heart. He said, “I don’t say this often but I can tell you that Kayli is my favorite feline who comes through here.” These were monumental words of comfort that were so desperately needed at the time.

After sleeping a couple of additional hours, I got up and prepared for Kayli’s return home. It was around noon when I received the call that Kayli’s condition had not worsened, which meant she could be cared for at home. The ER doctor discussed the importance of her being able to return to familiar surroundings for golden moments, however long they lasted. It turned out that I would be gifted four glorious days to be with my girl before she received her wings. Around 4:00 p.m., I drove to the facility to pick her up. When the technician brought her out to my car, I thanked the goodness of the universe for allowing my girl to come home. On the way back to our house, Kayli’s natural

curiosity took over as she peeked her head out of her carrier to watch all the scenery. Upon arrival, I gently picked her up and placed her on her favorite chair. Utterly exhausted, she journeyed off to a deep slumber.

New medications were added to her already existing daily regimen of Vetsulin and Methimazole. Twice a day, Kayli also received a diuretic to prevent fluid buildup and a drug to help the contractibility of the heart muscle. Although they served their purpose, it broke my heart that she was on all these prescriptions. So, for the next four days, I never left Kayli's side and punctually supplied her morning and evening medications. For the most part, sleep eluded me as I remained attentive to her during the night. It was difficult for Kayli to relax as the diuretic caused excessive thirst. As a result, she commenced a cyclical routine of going back and forth to the water bowl. While I remained stoic and courageous, it was incredibly difficult to observe this. As her frail little body started to get adjusted to the medications, she was finally able to acquire some much-needed sleep. She found a comforting spot under the bed, a fort of

tranquility to help her lay in repose. I checked on her frequently and felt an ephemeral sense of relief knowing she was peaceful. Yet, at any moment, I was prepared to act accordingly should any suffering overtake her comfort. After all, one of the greatest acts of unconditional love is honoring an animal's rite of passage.

By the grace of goodness, I was gifted these few days of golden moments with Kayli. We cuddled, we embraced and we talked—golden moments, indeed. I told her to let me know when she was ready to transition and reunite with her loving brother. When I did, her astute green eyes articulated and confirmed her understanding. The night before her exodus from the mortal realm, my innate intuition really took center stage. I would start to snooze and then wake up and wonder if her transition was imminent. As the sun dawned the following morning, Kayli came up on my bed, of course with my assistance, and secured herself in her favorite cat bed. It was then when I knew: My baby girl communicated with me that she was ready to cross the Rainbow Bridge - a telepathic transfer of

information that was accomplished without the need of words. I picked Kayli up and held her in my arms and reassured her that I was going to honor her wishes as best as I could.

After shedding some tears and composing myself, I phoned the Veterinary Specialty Hospital, letting them know that Kayli's time on earth was coming to a close. The receptionist placed her on the appointment board for 2:30 p.m. In the few hours before our departure to the facility, I continued to spend close time with my baby girl, reminding her that Mommy's love will lead the way. Even though she already knew, I also reassured her that Max would accompany her as she gained her wings. In his own unique way, he reassured me that he would be right there with Kayli. If he could speak in words, he would have said, "I got this, Mom." As our short time together in the physical started coming to a close, I continued to cherish the feel of Kayli's soft fur and warm body.

With an added dose of synchronicity, the same ER doctor who fell in love with Kayli started his daily shift

at around 2:00 p.m. The staff advised him that she would be coming in later that afternoon. With my mom in the driver's seat on the way over, Kayli sat in my lap on top of a sweater. The sun was glistening on her back, providing a layer of warmth and comfort. With my arms securely embracing her, I kept repeating the following words: "We're soulmates for eternity—endless love—let Mommy's love guide the way." There was a difference in Kayli while en route to the hospital. Normally, she'd be fervently meowing, her way of expressing disgust in having to go see the doctor. This time, however, she was accepting and exhibited a willing surrender as she innately knew the reason why we were headed there.

Upon arrival, one of the staff members greeted us and allowed me to carry Kayli into the facility. We were escorted to the same room we waited in a few days prior when Kayli was diagnosed with heart failure. This wasn't an ordinary lackluster exam room: This space was designed for healing and peace, a quiet area complete with an eternally lit battery-operated candle and soft earth tones enveloping the walls. A large

photo loomed on the back wall showcasing a silhouette of a dog playing on the beach at sunset. Holding Kayli in my arms, I walked with the staff member to the entrance door to the treatment area. I gently transferred her to the employee's arms, kissed her beautiful face and told her how much I loved her. After a few minutes, this same individual came into the room to let us know that the veterinarian who'd be with us held Kayli in his arms as the technicians started her intravenous line. "Most veterinarians don't do that," she added. It was palpable that Kayli touched this doctor's heart in the same way she touched all who were blessed to meet her.

After a few long minutes, the doctor came into the serene room carrying Kayli safely in his arms. Her intravenous catheter was in place and she was ready for her journey to the stars. He gently placed her across my lap and instructed me on the process, a procedure I had been through before. While Kayli remained in a peaceful state, my swirling emotions and heightened nerves were at full blast. Nonetheless, I persisted with an audaciousness that was allowed only by the grace of

God. As my heart pounded in my chest, I concentrated on my breathing as a way to exhibit a calm demeanor.

“I’m going to give her the Propofol first, so she can quietly fall asleep. She may yelp from the effects of the medication,” relayed the veterinarian. As the substance resembling milk started to flow into Kayli’s body, I was overcome with a steadfast feeling of loss, heartache and grief. Those three words alone don’t nearly describe the feelings associated with their meaning; they’re emotions that have to be entirely experienced in order to fully understand their effects. As the Propofol was flowing through Kayli’s veins, the doctor flushed her IV port and slowly injected the second medication responsible for commencing her journey over the Rainbow Bridge.

In a brave and zealous fashion, I embraced Kayli and expressed the following: “Let Mommy’s love guide the way. Max is waiting for you, sweetheart. He’s ready to show you the way. Remember, we will always be together as we are soulmates for eternity. Go with your brother now sweetie. I love you.” Kayli never flinched,

and she never yelped—a sure sign that she was ready to reunite with Max. All in all, this procedure was the most peaceful I have ever witnessed in an animal. A sheer sense of calm permeated the space and the three of us all felt Kayli's energy around us.

The hospital allowed my mom and I to spend some quality time with Kayli afterwards. Her soul and spirited essence were well on their way to the afterlife, but we were able to find consolation while holding her body in our arms. These next cherished minutes provided a tangible sense of solace. During this time, I reminded Kayli to not feel obligated to come around and console us during our grief as she needed time to get adjusted to her soul's next expedition. I felt this advice reassured her by knowing that she could show her presence to us mortals when it was convenient for her and on her own terms. As an afterlife researcher, I hold the conviction that loved ones in the physical can inadvertently call the departed back to the earthly realm, potentially interfering with the orientations of spirithood. It was of utter importance that Kayli's

passage over the Rainbow Bridge to eternal paradise be as seamless as possible. In my heart, I knew it was.

After about twenty minutes, the doctor came in and wrapped Kayli's quiet little body in a blanket. He held her with pure compassion and I watched as they ventured down the corridor. As we exited the room, the sunlight was shimmering through the window on the exit door down the hall, one of the first universal signs from the universe that she was bathed in infinite peace. In an enigmatic way, feelings of tranquility and acceptance began to surface. As my legs motioned toward the sunlit door, a surreal sense was ever-present. Outside, seeing other physically vibrant animals going into and out of the building intensified the heartache. I instantly reminded myself that Kayli was ready to transition and although it would be incredibly difficult to not have her physically present, it was time for her rite of passage.

We hit some traffic on the way back. Normally, I would have said a couple of expletives, but the bottleneaking didn't really phase me as I was soaked in

a plethora of emotions that accompany grief. The veterinarian urged my mom and I to share memorable moments with Kayli as opposed to having lingering thoughts of the Veterinary Specialty Hospital. We followed his advice and talked about notable memories during the drive.

Since we hadn't eaten much during the day, my mom recommended In n Out for dinner. I wasn't really that hungry but I couldn't pass up getting one of their legendary cheeseburgers and fries. We insatiably munched on a few french fries on the way home. From that moment forward, I will always remember Kayli's harmonious transition when eating In n Out.

As I unlocked the door and walked into the house, I immediately noticed the surreal sense of emptiness. Kayli would normally be sitting on her favorite chair in the living room. On countless occasions, she would be sitting there to greet me when I walked through the front door - her eyes displaying a dichotomous "Why did you leave me? I'm so glad you're home!" look. Sometimes, she'd be right at the entryway, meowing

with zest. The kitchen was also silent—no clickety-clack of her nails as she walked on the floor, no sound of the cat food cans opening—just utter stillness. I made the only distinguishable noise as I grabbed plates from the cupboard. Apparently, I was hungrier than I thought as I scarfed the food down with gusto. Afterwards, I went upstairs and took a nice hot shower and let the warm water sooth my tired and mournful body. I went to bed shortly thereafter where the flowing tears slowly paved the way for desirable slumber.

Due to Kayli's diabetes, her eating regimen was around-the-clock. Thus, for the past few years, I had gotten up a few times during the night to feed her. It was a routine I became rather accustomed to. On the first night home without her physically present, I'd wake up in the middle of the night only to be instantly reminded of her passing. A feeling of utter sorrow overcame me every time this happened. As of this writing, it's still that way. I miss her gentle voice waking me up. I miss the sound of her eating. I miss the sound of her drinking water. I miss feeling the

sensation of her jumping up on my bed. I miss her with every shred of my being. Knowing that she and her brother are now perfected in the afterlife helps the heartache ease up a bit.

When you become in tune with life's synchronicities, it's hard to ignore them. One of the first universal signs of Kayli's journey to the afterlife was showcased in a billboard advertisement. While turning the corner onto Balboa Avenue after exiting In n Out, I glanced right at a sign that displayed a finger touching a bright orb of light. I talked with my mom the following day and she said that she heard two ethereal meows the following morning. Immediately, I knew this message was signifying that Kayli and Max were reunited once again. Later that same day, I made a trip to Starbucks for some much-needed caffeine. While at a stoplight, I looked up into the blue sky and saw two birds dancing together—another surefire sign that demonstrated their togetherness.

About two nights after Kayli's passing, I had a profound dream—not the typical variety that stems

from our unconscious but rather a spiritual communication. In the dream, I was standing in my bedroom and noticed Kayli laying on my desk. I said, “Kayli, you’re here. Can I feel you?” I motioned toward her as she intently looked at me. I touched her warm fur, embraced her and then woke up with utter peace. Max came to me in this fashion shortly after his transition, so it was no surprise that Kayli did as well—after all, like brother, like sister. They both mastered the ability to come to me during sleep.

Since Kayli passed in the days before Christmas, I made a promise to dedicate the holiday to her legacy and memory. With that said, Christmas 2021 just wasn’t the same and with good reason. I preferred to have a quiet Yuletide and stay at home. It allowed me to mourn with ease. I’ve never been one to cater to the materialism of Christmas as buying gifts isn’t nearly as important as the memories shared between loved ones and friends. Nonetheless, I was utterly amazed at the tribute gifts people sent me in regards to Kayli’s passing. It perfectly epitomizes that the love between her and I is palpable to many people. Each trinket is

placed throughout my home, representing my girl's memory and celebration of life.

As the days venture on, I occasionally hear their distinct meows. They essentially sound the same but distant, which is often the case with auditory spiritual accounts. About three days before New Year's Eve, I was intently watching some television when I noticed movement out of my left peripheral vision. There Kayli was in ethereal form, walking down the stairs and onto the entryway.

Additionally, I had another profound dream in the early morning hours on New Year's Eve. This was a unique experience as I was either in between an awake/sleep state or I astrally traveled to meet Kayli. During the dream, I was resting in bed when I heard some ruffling at the foot of it. I said "Kayli" out loud and then felt her pawprints walking up to meet me. When she arrived, I embraced her and felt her warm fur and heartbeat. She was even purring, which she loved to do when alive in the physical. This dream lasted for a while as if it moved in slow motion. The

symbolism in this was quite palpable: Sensing the heart beat represented new life and experiencing this dream the day prior to 2022 signified a fresh slate.

I went to bed somewhat early on Saturday, January 8th and had another amazing dream. In the dream, I was lying on my back in my bed, the same position I was actually in when I fell asleep. The dream commenced with me intently looking at a bulletin board situated right in front of me. The board was essentially bare, with the exception of an 8x10 photo in the upper left-hand corner, a picture of a mug and an attachment that read, “Hope you enjoy the mug.” By the way, I had designed a mug on Shutterfly for my mom with photos of Max and Kayli, and the text “All you need is love and a cat” and “We love you, Grandma.”

Max and Kayli also had a brother. I was told at their adoption that he was sick and was cared for at another facility. Sadly, I never got the chance to meet their sibling. The 8x10 picture referenced above in my dream showed three kittens positioned next to each other looking up toward the sky. This was the

universe's way of letting me know that Max and Kayli had been reunited with their brother.

While dreaming, I do believe I astrally traveled slightly from my body to meet Kayli's ethereal form. I felt her jump up on my bed and motion toward me. While I sat up in bed, I swiftly extended my hands hoping to feel her. When I did, I felt the upper part of her tail. I then sensed her plop down and sit against my left leg. She was purring. As I sat back up and said, "Kayli, I love you. You're here," she got up and positioned herself in my lap. Our eyes met as she looked up at me with endearing intent. I caressed her ears, face and back, a gesture of love she craved when alive in the physical. This entire dream seemed to play out in slow motion and I cherished every moment. I then woke up with such a pervading layer of peace.

Kayli joined me in an adventure dream I had a couple of nights later. One of my friends and I decided to take a trip to the mountains to go hiking. I typically recall descriptive details of my dreams, so I remember taking Kayli with me in one of those kitty backpacks. Right

before awakening, I was holding her in my arms as I gazed at the beautiful scenery the mountain pinnacle bestowed on the eyes. Perhaps, the higher altitude in this dream represented her ascent to the afterlife and the paradise it's often described as from those encountering NDEs (near-death experiences).

Thoughts on Bereavement, Grief, and Loss

The swirling emotions that accompany grief are no different than the ocean waves, unless you prevent their natural flow and progression. When this happens, you get a mountainous blockage that disrupts the body and mind's innate way of cycling through the loss of a loved one. In the same way that blood continuously circulates through the body to keep it alive, the energy that's overcome with grief and heartache needs to consistently move in order to land on the path to healing. When you metaphorically

shove the stages of grief under a rug, you're inhibiting yourself from mending the mourning heart. Let it be its own compass, with you as the navigator.

Swiss psychiatrist, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, devoted the majority of her life to studying the complexities of grief and loss. Her works have changed the way society views the end of life. Having worked with the terminally ill, AIDS patients and the elderly population, she is considered the foremost authority on the concepts of death and dying. Kübler-Ross once said that when she “transitions and graduates,” people should celebrate as she would be “dancing in the galaxies among the stars.”

The phases of grief are an interwoven tapestry with infinite intersections. Everyone endures this process in unique ways. Some move through the stages in sequence; others cycle through them in intervals. It's vital to be patient with yourself and seek the support of caring family and friends. Participating in grief and loss support groups can be beneficial. There's a reason why the saying, “There's strength in numbers” appeals

to people from all walks of life. When you have the opportunity to exude empathy toward someone else who's experiencing a similar type of anguish, it inherently facilitates your own healing process. About a week after Max's departure to the afterlife, I attended a pet loss support group at the San Diego Humane Society. Hearing other people's stories reaffirmed that I wasn't alone in my grief, as many other individuals were going through the exact same process.

Memorializing while grieving is quite therapeutic. I have designated a special place in my home to display Kayli's and Max's urns, photos and mementos—a tiny monument to their legacies. Max has a rustic cedar urn. For Kayli, I chose a custom-made variety that has brass and mother of pearl. To personally honor their transition, I registered a bright star through Star Registration. I named it, "Kaylimax." Upon registration, I received a beautiful certificate that I chose from the website. I also downloaded an app that allows me to easily locate their star. I also plan to write a children's book series one day with Max and Kayli as the main characters. Over the years, I captured some

absolutely stunning photographs of brother and sister, which I proudly showcase in a photo collage on the wall. Since I am an avid presenter and offer various lecture topics relating to the supernatural and spirit realm, I decided to develop a new one about animals and the afterlife. This lecture will share meaningful stories and accounts regarding my animals who've crossed over the Rainbow Bridge. Furthermore, in the coming weeks, I will select a perennial plant and place it next to Max's succulent—a forever reminder of their vibrant lives and impact on all who knew them. As an ode to both Max's and Kayli's legacies, it is my eager plan in the future to develop a foundation in their honor.

Writing this piece is cathartic in its own right and offers an everlasting account of their earthly lives and beautiful departures to the stars. Max and Kayli taught me so much about innocence, courage, strength and living life in the moment. I remind myself and thank them daily for their imparted wisdom. While I miss their physical presence gracing the surroundings of my

life, I am endlessly comforted knowing that they are forever imprinted on my heart.



Snuggle time is the best

GO TO SLEEP MY LITTLE ONES,
FOR YOUR JOURNEY HAS JUST BEGUN—
TO FROLIC IN THE MEADOWS
AND BASK BENEATH THE SUN.

NO LONELINESS FOR YOU
WHEN YOU AWAKE TODAY,
SO CLOSE YOUR EYES AND GO TO SLEEP
AND LOVE WILL LEAD THE WAY.

About the Author

Nicole is one of the leading afterlife and paranormal researchers on the West Coast. She is the founder and director of the San Diego Paranormal Research Society. Nicole writes for Paranormal Underground Magazine and has authored several books about history and the supernatural. She's been featured in numerous media outlets, including television, film, radio and print. Her website is:

<http://www.authornicolestrickland.com>

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