

## The Guardians of Castleview Court

SAMANTHA, the Squirrel Monkey  
& SABRINA, the Great Dane

“What do you mean I’m *dead!*” Samantha squeaks as loud, and as long as she can.

With all of the calmness that a Great Dane can bring to bear, Sabrina responds.

“Clam down Sam. You’re on the other side ... we’re here together.”

“The other side *of what!* I’m dead ... it’s all over!!”

Sabrina smiles. When a masterful dog like a Dane smiles not a lot changes with her beautiful black muzzle ... but it presents a change in her whole look.

“That is *exactly* the feeling you carry with you ... that’s how we survive on earth. You fight to stay alive throughout your life.

Grumbling, Sam retorts, “Obviously I failed at that”.

“But you’ve crossed over to the magic side. This is where life really is — it’s constant, and unending. Just divided into different chapters, if you will. The journey you just finished on earth Samantha is only that ... a temporary trip.”

Sam is calmer now ... a little. She reaches out her little hand with the beautifully long fingers and touches Sabrina’s golden head. Sam gently scratches right between Sabrina’s fine pointed ears, where Sabrina once loved to be touch by the little monkey.

Sabrina speaks softly, “I’m here, and that should make you feel better.”

Sam opens wide her round dark eyes. “For all I know you’re a strange illusion left over in my highly advanced brain.”

With that, Sam begins to look around. Things are still a little fuzzy — like a fine film over the rough edges of everything.

“Okay,” Sam starts, still with great suspicion (not unusual for Sam, since it’s her nature to always be suspicious). But .... *what* ... am I on the ‘other side’ of exactly? Himmmm???”

“The veil.” Sabrina responds.

The Dane lays down very close to Sam, just as they had once. Her great legs are stretched out before her; her head still high above Sam, watching her closely.

Automatically and without any clear thought process, Sam cuddles closely into the massive Dane’s chest ... still looking carefully around. Things are becoming sharper now, and the little squirrel monkey’s beginning to feel a sense of safety.

Small monkeys are born with the instinct of jumping from tree to tree, and staying off the jungle floor for safety. Even though Sam had been raised with a family, and her tree branches were the tops of open doors and large pieces of furniture — it’s not an easy state of mind whenever she’s on the ground.

Sabrina quietly whispers to her little friend. “Come on Samantha ... remember. You can do it. It just takes a few seconds. You know all about being here.

Never one to lose an argument easily ... except to Sabrina ... Sam responds.

“*No* Sabrina! What’s natural is watching over and terrorizing my family of humans. I ruled! For 25 years I’ve jumped from door jam to door jam. Happily pushed stuff off the kitchen bar to get attention. Masterfully, going into mom’s purse for my piece of gum. Taking delightfully hot showers with dad as he held me under the pulsating water. *And* enjoying great meals of mashed potato’s, cooked vegetables, monkey baskets, and my favorite ... plump raw show peas ... while sitting on my comfortable heating pad in my large spacious cage. *All* of this is what I know Sabrina!”

“Samantha ... you’re being ornery ... again.”

Still cuddled closely into Sabrina’s chest, Sam turns her little head up and looks at her friend. “You do look beautiful Sabrina. It feels like it’s been so long since I’ve seen you.”

“Time seems long on the other side, but here ... as you start to remember ... everything happens instantly — the past, the present, *and* the future. It’s however we choose to look at it.”

“Whatttt??” That makes no sense!” As she tucks her head back down into Sabrina’s chest, she whispers to herself. “Dogs ... humph ... maybe you’re not so wise.”

“Never mind, it’ll make sense to you later ... as you allow yourself to became part of this world again.” Sabrina’s now looking off to the side at something. She nods at the figure coming near them.

Sam curls her head down, as monkey's do when preparing for sleep. She shuts her eyes, trying to ignore Sabrina.

Sabrina is wise to her friend's behavior. If something doesn't make sense to Sam ... especially with her highly evolved brain ... Sam just ignores it. The size of Sam's ego almost matches her brain. Not always a constructive combination.

"Sam," Sabrina gently prods the little monkey with her regal black muzzle. "You look beautiful too. Your fur is soft and golden brown, sparkling with highlights. Your tail is strong and full, as it used to be when you'd lie in the sun after a dip in the pool. And ... your little face is bright and alert ... with your dark mask around your mouth as pretty as when you were young."

Sam stays closely cuddled into Sabrina's chest and opens her eyes, but still won't look at her friend. "You left me ... and that black and white dog tried to take your place."

"Ah, Keisha."

"Yes, Keisha. And she was really, really a *dog*. Nothing like you Sabrina. Dumb as they come. I had to pull her whiskers from time to time ... especially when she tried to nuzzle me as you used to do."

Sam's now laughing to herself.

"Mom would always come up to me, unfolded my hand, look at the fist full of whiskers ... at least three on a good day ... and shake her head. She kept telling me not to do that to Keisha. But ... I just couldn't help myself. Sooooo dumb!" Sam's chuckling openly now.

"Maybe Keisha wasn't as dumb as you think. Maybe she just thought it was a game you two played, and that she liked to share time with you."

"Himm." Sam thought for a second. "Nope. She was just *dumb*."

"Gosh, I wouldn't say that if I were you." A young boy's voice is coming from nearby. Sam quickly whips her head around; while getting in even closer to Sabrina's chest, if that's possible.

## GRIFFIN

This young boy, about 10, is now standing near Sabrina and Samantha. His thick blonde hair is wavy and looks almost red in the sun. His charming smile matches the twinkle in his eye, and there is a sense of mischief in the way he looks at this world around him.

“Who is this child!” Sam inquires, starring at Griffin with her most intimidating look.

“This is Griffin, Sam ... he’s here to spend some time with us.” Sabrina replies.

“Actually, I’m here to slay Dragons.” Griffin responds. Sabrina just looks at Griffin and cocks her head slightly ... waiting for the real answer.

Well, *actually*, I was assigned to you to find out about the family I’ve chosen for my next trip to Earth,” Griffin says. “And then I’ll learn how to slay dragons.”

What family??? Sam asks.

“Ryan and Caroline,” Griffin proudly announces. “They look like fine people. I think we’ll learn a lot from each other.”

Ryan? *My* Ryan?? The one I’ve raised and teased since he was a newborn??? *That* Ryan?” Samantha looks from Griffin to Sabrina.

Sabrina nods her head in the affirmative. Sam is still a bit incredulous.

“My *Ryan*? Who was only 18 when I left ... barely out of the “Gruesome Threesome” stage, and completely *void* of any world experience? *That’s* whose going to be his father???”

Again, Sabrina nods. Griffin is nodding too, with a quirky smile on his face.

“Ohhhhh, we’re in trouble here. I definitely didn’t get enough time with him. After years of torturous work, I was *just* getting him to the point where he was showing some real strength of character.” Sam shakes her perfectly formed little head. “Now he’s going to be a father?” She looks at Griffin with a softer expression. “Oh ... I’m so sorry Griffin”

Suddenly, a stunning black and white Malamute is lumbering into view. It’s Keisha — and again, Sam’s round dark eyes get bigger.

As she gets within earshot, Keisha addresses Sam, although she still sounds a bit like a wolf singing, “Oh for heavens sake Samantha, you’ve really got to adjust yourself to this side of the veil. I thought you were smarter than the rest of us.”

Keisha then lands with a plop next to Sam ... but moves her head slightly away when Sam slowly reaches out for Keisha’s whiskers.

“I told you that you shouldn’t call Keisha dumb.” Griffin leans down and whispers into Sam’s little ear. “I knew she was right around the corner.”

Sam sits up straight, and as monkeys do, her tail is formally wrapped in a vertical circle next to her side. With great indignity in her voice, she turns to Sabrina, tilts her little head up to the Dane’s great face, and says, “E-x-p-l-a-i-n.”

#### KEISHA

“Well,” Sabrina starts, “In just the little time we’ve been talking ...”

“You mean since I discovered I was dead,” Samantha retorts.

Sabrina continues, “In the time it’s taken you to get used to being here ... on this side of the vale ...”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah. ‘Instant ... past, present, future’ — right, got it. But Sabrina... I just left her behind!!! *Good grief!* Is there no rest for the weary over here!?”

“I also said it’s *how* you choose to look at the time dimensions,” Sabrina quickly replies.

Now Griffin plops down and starts to stroke Sabrina’s long back “Yep, I’d say you’re definitely stuck in the past Sam.”

“Quiet you crumb-cruncher. I’ll deal with you later,” Sam grumbles.

Griffin turns to Keisha, who has just sat down next to him, “What’s a crumb-cruncher, and why did she call me that?”

Not to incur Sam’s wrath any further, Keisha whispers to Griffen. “It’s just her expression for annoying little children ... she use to call your dad that until he was a teen-ager.”

“You dumb dog, I can hear you!!!”

Sam dashes out from the safety of sitting cuddled next to Sabrina, and heads swiftly for Keisha; little hands out-stretched for the Malamute’s long whiskers.

Instantly, Sabrina raises one paw, moves it over Sam as she darts in Keisha's direction. In a flash, she drops her paw on Sam's back ... gently but firmly flattening her.

Sam is on her stomach — both arms and legs stretched out away from her body.

Sabrina continues, "As I was saying Sam, ... in just the last little while — while you've been *trying* to adjust to your new form here — earth time has moved swiftly."

Sam shakes her little head and sits up. "Wow, you haven't done that to me in a long time Sabrina."

"Sorry my sweet friend, but on earth it was the only thing that calmed you down when you were losing control."

"I ... I've missed it Sabrina," she replies as she goes back to the safety of Sabrina's chest.

Keisha — looking quite relieved — whispers to Griffin. "Trust me, I'll bet our parents missed Sabrina's 'swift paw' too."

Still leaning into Keisha, Griffin responds, "Let me guess, you didn't get to be the alpha dog with Sam."

Keisha rests her beautiful head on Griffin's legs, "By the time I came along, she was older, nastier ... and blamed me for taking Sabrina's place. So — that's a yes"

Sitting quite comfortably between the two dogs, Griffin smiles as he starts to rub Keisha's head, "Gee, I'm sorry I missed all the fun."

"I don't know why she didn't like me, Keisha continues, "all I ever wanted to do was be friends."

Sam now looks around Sabrina's massive neck, looking across Griffin to Keisha. "Because you were so darn excited about ... everything Keisha! Sniffing and nuzzling and ... and ... well just being annoying."

"Well ... I was young. The rest of the family seemed to like me."

"And you smelled! All summer long ... up and down in the pool. Encouraging those crumb-crunchers to swim and play, and get the place all wet!"

Sam snuggles down again next to Sabrina, turning her face up to speak. "Not like you Sabrina. You hated the water ... I loved it when you barked for everyone to get out." Sam

snickers at the thought. “Then mom had to put you in the house ... and you stood at the dining room window ... still giving those crumb-crunchers what for!” Sam’s squeaking out loud now - eyes closed and little head bobbing up and down with laughter.

“Because I sank when I fell in!” Sabrina responds, “You know that Sam. So I just never felt it was safe for my little guardians. But you’re a monkey — and in the jungle, monkeys swim.”

“I was so young when mom and dad became my family, I ‘adapted to my lifestyle,’ as they say.” Sam puts her head down pretending to sleep. “But every summer, someone decided that *I* wanted to go swimming! Insulting.”

Keisha raises her head off of Griffin’s lap. “I saw you on the raft dad put you on ... you were having fun.”

“I was just pretending! I just wanted to get wet so I could lie on the towel in the sun and warm my fur ... at least *I* didn’t smell!”

“I couldn’t help it! It was my long hair fur.” Keisha retorts with her head held high.

Sam stands up on her hind legs, and places her delicate hand on Sabrina’s black muzzle. “And that’s *another* thing Sabrina! Keisha was always too hot. She never went near the warmth of the fireplace ... not like you.”

Sam sits down and moves close to the Dane. “Remember all those afternoon naps we took together in front of the fireplace Sabrina? *Ahh ... heaven.*” As she tucks her head down, the little monkey smiles — and her whole body becomes softer.

Griffin looks at Keisha with a puzzled expression. “But I thought *this* was heaven Keisha?” Keisha nuzzles under his neck. “Griffin, “Once you get on the other side, you’ll understand how many things are alike ... it’s really quite amazing.”

A short distance away a very black cat is seen coming towards them.

All — except Sam — look in Zack’s direction as the cat yells out, “Oh ... the stories I could tell about *all* of you!”

Sam looks up quickly. She immediately puts her head back down as she mutters loudly, “Oh damn.”

## ZACK

The beauty of Zack is that it's hard to tell when he ages. All black fur with penetrating green eyes and a well-formed shape, he appears now as youthful as he did for most of his 20 earth years.

Zack almost bounces, but with an air of sophistication, as he sneaks up to Sabrina.

"Hello Zack, good to meet you face to face."

"You too Sabrina! And, I must say thank you ... your messages were a real help."

"What!" Sam says as she whips her head around, looking quickly at Zack, then at Sabrina. "You were talking to this lowly black cat from *this* side?!"

"Yes Sam, that's what I do for my family ... guide them from this side ... where I can see everything. *Much* easier than when I was on earth."

Sabrina looks at Griffin, who is still comfortably sitting next to her. "And when your father and aunt were outside playing Griffin ... my, oh my, did I have my work cut out for me!" As she remembers, the magnificent Dane closes her eyes and shakes her head.

"Well, your messages sure helped," Zack responds as he sees a cozy spot left open on Griffin's lap. "Ah, my favorite place to snuggle down ... many a nights I would enjoy television from this very place on my humans."

Griffin smiles as Zack settles in. "But how did Sabrina's messages help you?"

"Well ... Sam would suddenly *appear* and block me from going up the stairs! It was only when we were going to bed. Mom and dad were behind me, and I was doing this crazy dance with an invisible object. But it was Sabrina who would whisper how to get past Sam."

Tucked nicely into Griffin's body, Zack turns to Keisha (who now has nowhere to rest her head). "You don't mind me taking his lap, do you old girl?" With a nudge of her nose on Zack's head, Keisha replies. "Not at all Zack, as long as you realize I'm *still* your matriarch ... even over here."

"Oh, who could forget," Zack answers as his purr motor starts. "I was low man on the totem pole for *way* too long. Bennet left first, then Sam, then you Keisha, and *finally* I got to have our parents all to my self. Well, Ryan was heading for college, but he left soon enough"



Gently petting Zack, Griffin speaks up. “See Sam ... Ryan went to college ... getting smart so he could take care of me someday!”

“Don’t count on it Griffin,” Sam answers.

“And whose’s Bennet?” Griffin inquires.

But Sam is once again standing on her hind legs; looking directly into Sabrina’s eyes.

“Whoa, whoa, whoa! I want to go back a minute Sabrina! As clever as it was ... how could *I* block Zack’s moves on the stairs, *after* I died. How did I *appear* to this cat??? I-just-got-here.”

“You stayed in the in-between land for a while ... refusing to let go of your guardianship of the family. You remember — that family that irritated you so often ...”

“Oh yeah ... now I remember. Is *that* where I was. And mom kept saying she saw me. Well, I had to make sure they were doing right by those little humans.”

‘Humph, and I thought I was rid of you,’ Zack exasperates, eyes closed and moving his head around to catch Griffin’s hand for the perfect scratching.

Suddenly, Zack opens his eyes and extends his head towards Sam, on full alert. “What do you mean ... ‘little humans?’ All *your* charges were grown by then.”

Samantha stares into Zack’s eyes, pushing herself forward practically nose to nose with the black cat. “The new one.”

“Kassie? Zack stares back. “*My* Kassie.???”

“Yes, the one you brought into my home in my old age.” Sam replies. “Another child to train.”

Griffin leans down close to Keisha’s ear and whispers, “Whose Kassie?”

Keisha turns her long black and white muzzle towards Griffin, “Mom and Dad’s first granddaughter ... she spends a lot of time with them while she’s growing up.”

“Huh? Granddaughter??” A puzzled Griffin responds.

Keisha continues. “The first child of Shawn Anne ... you know, your aunt ... Ryan’s sister ... Ryan, your upcoming dad.”

“Ohhhhh,” Griffin replies; not really grasping it all.

“Kassie’s real special. She’s going to be your older cousin — and you’re going to love her.” Keisha ends this with a wink to Griffin.

Griffin pets Zack again, mainly to calm him down. “Wow, so you brought this little human granddaughter into the home Zack — where did you find her?”

Sam shakes her head, and settles once more into Sabrina’s massive golden chest. “Dumber than a melting ice cube; maybe you deserve Ryan — a perfect match.”

Sabrina sticks her nose into Sam’s side to give her a quick push. “Enough Sam!”

Turning her regal head towards Griffin, she speaks gently. “Zack didn’t bring Kassie into mom and dad’s home Griffin, your aunt Shawn Anne did. She, Kassie, and dad Jim, came to live with our mom and dad when Kassie had to have a heart operation. She was only a baby at the time, so they all stayed for a long time.”

“And, I had to endure a trip in a truck all the way across country,” Zack chimes in, slowly beginning to calm down as Griffin’s rubs his neck. “At least Jim let me out to wander when I howled enough. Now *that* was scary. Here I was ... a certified Washington DC apartment cat, raised to think a leaf blowing pass the window was big stuff, and now I was exploring the wilds!”

Keisha leans in again to whisper to Griffin. “And you can imagine how thrilled I was when they told me a black cat was on the way to live with us.”

“I’ll ignore that Keisha,” Zack replies opening his eyes. “But, if getting to California meant getting to see *my* charge ... Kassie ... then even being fourth in line of the hierarchy was worth it.”

“I know that feeling Zach,” Sabrina adds, “It’s terrible when your charges aren’t right there with you.”

“*Oh right Zack!*” Sam squeaks. “If you missed her so much then, why did you stay with us instead of going with her family when they finally left??? You stayed around another ... another ...” Sam turns and whispers in Sabrina’s ear, “How long did Zack stay with mom and dad Sabrina?”

Sabrina moves her muzzle close to Sam’s little delicate ear, “It was another 17 years before he came onto this side.”

“Yeah,” Samantha raises her voice and looks at Zack, “You stayed for another 17 years!”

“Well ... I wasn't going to get back in that truck!” Zack responds with disdain as he moves around again on Griffin's lap. “It'd been six months, and by then I knew Kassie would be coming back — a lot — to her grandparents. I decided it was best to wait for her with them.” Zach flops down again. “I was very intuitive that way.”

“Oh *please* ... initiative??” Samantha scoffs, settling back down again. “When you arrived you were so inept that Bennet had to teach you how to chase a mouse! You were only three years old for heavens sake. *I* was experienced with little ones; as annoying as they may have been.”

Sam's expression becomes soft again as she lowers her voice. “But Kassie *was* different. I loved her little smile as she sat on her blanket on the floor and watched me.”

“She was still *my* charge,” Zack quickly retorts. *I* was with her from the day she was born.

Sam smiles and shuts her eyes. “And, *I* made sure everyone took care of Kassie while you were learning how to chase something besides your tail.”

To which Zach immediately replies, “*I* watched over her long after you left ... to go hanging around in the in-between!”

“Which is *why* I was haunting you on the stairs. Just wanted to keep you on your toes. I use to talk to Kassie, but there was only so much I could do ... with all that damn free-will humans get.”

Sam sits up straight and speaks softly. “But ... I wanted you to keep your senses sharp Zack; since she was with you so much.”

Samantha suddenly does something remarkable. She moves onto Griffin's lap, practically sitting on Zack. With one hand she reaches up for Keisha's face — who instinctively tries to move her whiskers away, but Sam gently pulls Keisha's muzzle towards her. With her other small hand, Sam puts her long fingers next to Zack's face.

The expression of pending fear is priceless on their faces.

“Okay guys, I might not have been the best I could have been with either of you.” Sam looks from one to the other. “I should have realized that you just couldn't help the way you were.”

“I don’t think that’s the direction you want to go Sam.” Sabrina’s sitting up now, facing Griffin and his entourage — Keisha, Zack and Sam.

“Oh ... right.” Sam smiles at Sabrina. “Okay, what I really want to say is ...”

This little golden monkey looks at the cat and dog — who are still quite dumbfounded — and then glances back at Sabrina, who gives her a nod of approval. Sam speaks, “Well, I just want to thank you for making our home special. And for helping me take care of everyone.”

“Very good Sam. Sabrina nudges her gently. “I think you’ve finally arrived.”

“Yeah, it feels good to be here now ... must be the weather or something.”

“I *still* don’ know who Bennet is?” Griffin implores.

“Oh ... he’s already back on the other side, with Bo” Sabrina answers.

“What’s a Bo??”

Keisha joins in (with the howl that’s a natural part of her voice; being a descendent of wolves and all), “Bennet is a white cat ... and Bo is an annoying little dog that lived next door to us on Castlevue Court.”

Turning to Sabrina, Keisha’s “howl” now sounds like laughter.

“Of course ... not sure how we can call him a dog since he was barely bigger than Bennet!! I tried your paw-on-the head-to-flatten-body trick Sabrina ... usually worked to keep Bo from barking. Talk about *irritating!*”

“I’ll second that one,” Sam retorts, “I could hear him all the way to our house!” The monkey puts her long hands up to her little ears. “Sound sensitive and all that.”

She turns to Griffin, “Did you know I could hear the actual sound of mom or dad when they were coming home ... even when they were a long distance away!?!”

“That’s called Extra Sensory Perception ... all animals have it Sam,” Sabrina responds.

“Yeah, whatever. I just have it better.” Sam leans against her friend’s long leg. “But, I’d like to see Bennet again ... now that was a cat with a real sense of adventure!”

Zack looks up from cleaning his thick black tail. “Yep, I learned a lot from Bennet ... too bad he left so early.”

“Oh, you’ll see him again next time you’re on earth,” Sabrina stretches back down again. “Just like humans, we souls travel in packs from one lifetime to another.”

“Traveling in packs ... I like that!” Keisha howls out loud. “We Malamutes *love* traveling in packs. Sled dogs you know.”

Griffin pats Keisha’s firm head and looks at Sabrina. “But, why isn’t Bennet here now?”

“Well, as you can guess, he left a little soon last time.” Sabrina lowers her voice. “Went out one night searching for adventure where he wasn’t suppose to go. Soooo ... Bennet was over here just long enough to get some instructions — and then quickly returned to finish learning stuff he missed out on.”

“Ahhh ... I would have liked to meet him.”

“Actually, you might ... we all catch up with each other eventually,” Sabrina smiles as she lays back down. “You’re leaving soon Griffin, but for now, we guardians have a lot to do here.”

Sam leans her small back against the curve of Sabrina’s body. “Ahhh ... you’re lucky Griffin. I miss those times ... all of us playing in the cul-de-sac. Me terrorizing the neighbor kids ... just for fun, of course.”

Sabrina shakes her majestic head. “Why they kept playing that game with you, I’ll never know.”

“They fell for it every time!” The only sound we hear now is Sam’s muffled, “hee hee hee.”

Samantha stretches out her long body on the ground next to Sabrina. “I miss *so* much — like jumping on the sheets when mom and dad were making the bed. Oh, how I loved it when they threw me in the air!”

Griffin’s eyes grow wide. “Threw you in the air — now that sounds like great fun!! How’d they do it?”

“Well ... I’d be in the middle of the sheet. Mom and dad would each be holding a corner, and they’d swing the sheet up in the air. I would go *way* up ... and then I’d come back down with my best, long lasting sound: ‘Wheeeeeee!’

Almost as much fun as jumping off the top of a door, and landing on someone's shoulder! They never knew what hit them!!!” Sam's lying on her back; rolling in laughter!

Griffin's eyes are wide. “Gee ... I missed all the fun. Will it be as exciting when I get there?”

“Sure Griffin.” Sabrina nuzzles his side. “You have twin cousins, and an older sister to get in trouble with. *And* ... Kassie will be there. She's in college now; but from what I hear, you two will have a *very* special bond.”

Griffin cheers up considerably. “So I'll have fun times too!?! I didn't miss anything???”

Suddenly, Sam jumps up! Standing tall on her back legs, she faces everyone.

“THAT'S IT!!! Griffin can't miss all of my coaching. IT'S TOO VALUABLE. How will Ryan ever know what to do with him???” Sam looks directly at Griffin. “You have so much potential kid — I gotta be there to guide you!”

Sabrina sits up. “That's what we're here for Sam, coaching from *this* side.”

Almost imploring Sabrina, Sam continues.

“OKAY ... okay. You guys stay here ... I can hear you now no matter where I am. Promise. And ... I'll box the new crumb-crunchers in from the other side!”

“I'm absolutely brilliant!” Sam walks back and forth; thinking ... thinking ... thinking.

“I've just got to whip on down ... if you say there's no monkey body available, I'll use,” Samantha shutters, “a cat. I hear there's a new breed called a Fox Cat ... highly intelligent. I'll use that one.”

To Griffin ... “By the way kid, you're gonna love cats.”

Sabrina softens, “I'm not sure about this plan Sam. But, I can't stop you.”

Appalled at the idea of this monkey using a cat as a cover, Zack speaks up. “And just *how* are you going to get to Griffin and gang? Himmmmmm?”

“Same way I did the first time ... through their 'grandparents' — our mom and dad! I'm going to be their new family member!” Big smile.

Zack's sitting straight up. "They haven't had a cat since I passed through the veil. In earth time that's ... that's ..."

"Nine years." Sabrina states. "And from what I can tell ... they're not in the looking mode Sam."

"Well, okay." Sam stops pacing and thinks. "I'll have to go in through .... someone they can't resist."

"Who?" Keisha inquires.

"Kassie," Samantha replies with a smile.

Zack's green eyes get wide. "*My* Kassie??? Again!?"

### SAGE ...

Mom comes back into the bedroom, where she and dad were making their oversized king bed.

"That was our granddaughter. She home from Brazil, and sounds very, very happy ... our Kassie has just been offered a job in New York."

"Let me guess," dad smiles, "and because the job's across the country, she can't take Sage back." He looks at the handsome, *very* large black and gray striped cat sitting in the middle of the freshly placed top sheet. "Well, your 'short 3-month visit' seems to have been extended."

"I'm going to go out on a limb and say it's indefinitely," mom responds with a wink. Grabbing the corners of the sheet, she adds, "Welcome to the family Sage."

With the other two corners firmly in his hands, dad adds, "Good thing ... Griffin's certainly fond of him. He'd be heartbroken if Sage weren't here when he comes over."

With that, mom and dad toss their new family member into the air. With paws outstretched, one can almost see the glee on Sage's face.

"I don't get it," dad says for the umpteenth time, shaking his head. "I've never seen a cat who likes to be tossed in the air."

With another wave of the sheet, mom responds. "I keep saying ... there's a monkey in there."

"Yep," dad replies with one last wave of the sheet. "Sam's home."

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