

Serena

Currently Eating

Dry Food: Science Diet Kitten / Purina Kitten Chow 50/50

In a Nutshell

Serena is a complex girl. There's so much more to her than meets the eye.

Terms that could describe her personality are: inquisitive, tenacious, diligent, clever, quick, loving, sweet, darling, independent, willful, self possessed.

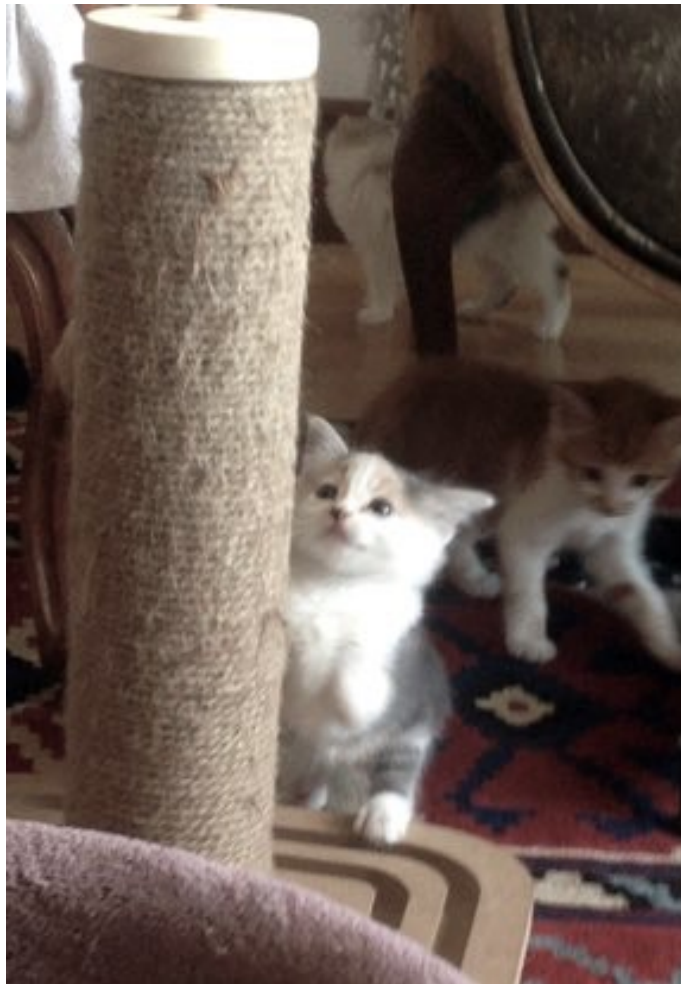


From the beginning...

It's difficult to find words to describe how much we admire and respect Serena. We love her very much. The best I can do is try to take you with us from the time she arrived until she was able to come find you...

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Serena got her name before any of her five siblings. It felt right to us because of the fact that she didn't seem to realize she was different despite her disability. Neither did her siblings by the way. They would all be running around playing and she'd be right in there with them. She'd fall over, but rather than being intimidated or embarrassed, she'd just get right up and keep going. She was such a champion, and the first champion that came to our mind was Serena Williams. However, the name also fit well because when I'd pick her up and pet her, she'd lay back in my hand, close her eyes and purr - it was absolute serenity.



When she first arrived, she fit in the palm of my hand. She would lay on her back in my hand and because she was the tiniest of the lot, I'd usually wind up holding her up over the others - she was always the first one in my lap and everyone wanted that spot. Their method of getting her spot was to simply pile on top of her.

(Watch her with her siblings in their first days here <https://youtu.be/ISdBr5097Ko>)

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I would sit and watch them all while they ate so I could keep track of who was eating and how much. She always walked away from the dishes first (still does), and as soon as she looked up and saw me, she'd run over and climb in my lap for a nap. As she started to grow a bit, I'd lift her up and she'd fall asleep in the crook of my arm. She still runs over for a quick cuddle after eating before going on to play.



Serena is a beautiful girl. She's got striking markings with a little 'hat' on her head. Someone suggested she looks like she has freckles. She's got tufts of fur in her ears, and also on the bottom of her feet between her toes. It's just lovely, especially when she stretches out a paw. She's also got long fur on her tail. Her fur is incredibly soft. I call her "my velvet kitten" because her fur feels like the finest velvet.

Serena purrs a lot! She's a happy girl who loves attention and being cuddled, but she doesn't always like kisses. If she's playing, she's busy, but when she's relaxed, she does enjoy loving and stroking. She has a really cute little voice that sometimes sounds a little gravelly or harsh. She also chatters with her brother when they're playing. Before the others were adopted, she'd occasionally chirp and reach out to tag someone passing in order to instigate...something. She's an instigator for sure. And she doesn't accept correction well. In order to get her to stop doing something, you usually have to physically remove her from whatever she's focused on. Even a little tap on the nose only causes her to retreat until I'm distracted by something else. Then she's right back at it. This makes thorough kitten proofing pretty important. So far, the best form of cor-

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rection is to appeal to her affectionate nature. She really is a loving cat, and she's more amenable to persuasion than disapproval.

Another of her cute/sometimes not cute traits is she likes to use her paw to push things on tables or shelves toward the edge until they fall onto the floor. This isn't especially unique, but if you appreciate inquisitiveness in a cat, it's pretty fun to watch. As long as it's not a breakable item!



She has this adorable habit of cocking her head to the side while she's looking at you, either watching you do something, or listening to you say something or waiting for you to be distracted by something. She also sometimes does this while waiting for you to toss toys for her to chase.

Before we decided to adopt her brother Theodore, we knew she was going to be having her leg surgery and would be confined to a cage for at least a week. I decided in order

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to make it easy to spend as much time as possible with her post-surgery, it would be best to put the cage into our sitting room where we could interact comfortably. I wanted to let her become familiar with all upper floor rooms so she wouldn't be in a completely new space when the time came. So, beginning a few days prior to her surgery we let all six siblings have the run of the entire upper floor. They loved it! However, as a consequence, they started sleeping on the bed with us. I suggest if you don't want Serena to sleep with you, don't let her in your bedroom at night. She loves to sleep next to or on top of me. If she realizes I'm awake, she reaches out a little paw to touch my lips or my nose. She also becomes active around 5:30am, so again, if this doesn't suit your lifestyle, keep her out of your bedroom.



When she's not playing, she follows the sun throughout the day taking cat naps wherever she finds a warm or sunny spot. There are windows on the east, west and south side of the rooms, and she's learned where to be at which part of the day. We have a kitty bed here (pictured on this page and page 4) where she loves to nap in the afternoons. It's soft and plush with sides she can lean against. When she's curled up in this bed, she will not come if I call to her.

My favorite thing about Serena and her siblings is that they bonded with us so deeply. I really believe they think we're the same species. She talks to us and feels she's entitled to the same privileges. She's a little shy with new people at first, but gets over it with gentle patience. There's a good degree of trust.

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One of her unique behaviors took me a while to understand. And I'm still only guessing based on my experience with the entire litter. Not only her, but all had/have a tendency to bite gently. When I watched them doing this with each other (usually just beneath the jaw), I thought they were playing tough. Over time, they started biting me too, and turns out it's very gentle, with little pressure, almost more holding on. I'm not sure if it's a carry over from their mom or if it's just something they started with each other, but it's characteristic of all of them. I'd say when she does this, she's demonstrating her love, perhaps possessiveness, and bonding with you.



Serena is an incredibly active and playful kitten (*watch her and siblings playing on the bed* <https://youtu.be/I3cWIBPtrM>) and has numerous toys she adores. She likes anything that makes noise, at least for a while. She's always loved the Cat Dancer, but since her surgery she doesn't always play with things over her head. She's doing more of this as time passes. She still loves it and likes chasing it if you pull it along the floor or, if she's laying down, wave it not too high overhead. However, her current absolutely favorite toy is a kitty laser. She's amazing scooting around the floor after it. (Her scoot is so cute!) She also climbs the furniture and leans against the wall trying to catch that little red dot! She rarely tires of this game. Another thing she loves is to play with the marbles embedded in the base of the scratching post. *Watch her and all her siblings playing a game of marbles* <https://youtu.be/AyJ0-LeLqk>

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Serena's Surgery Story

Serena arrived with five siblings, all of them equally gorgeous kittens! She also came with a birth defect; an unformed foot. During the first month this didn't present any significant problems to her; when she'd fall over, she'd get right back up and resume whatever play or wrestling or chasing she was doing before. She used the short leg to balance and generally seemed fine. But her veterinarians felt that over time it would become a problem and possibly cause her physical difficulties. Sure enough, as she began to grow, she started to appear to be having trouble, possibly even some pain while walking. Her other leg was growing, but with this one remaining short, her walk became much more difficult on her hips. The decision was made to amputate the malformed leg.

Her surgery occurred on a Friday and we brought her home the same evening. Serena has an unusual reaction to anesthesia or recovering from it. She had a very difficult time, some with pain, but also some with the drugs. We knew for her safety she must be confined in a cage (or small room) for 7-10 days, but that first night she was impossible to control. She kept thrashing around in the cage and kept hurting the incision, which caused not only pain, but also caused her to become extremely agitated. With great support from the veterinary staff, we got further ideas and instructions for trying to make her more settled. However, nothing really worked. What we eventually ended up doing was to bring pillows and blankets and make up sleeping spots next to her cage. We took shifts reaching into the cage and holding and petting her head while laying our other hand on her shoulder for comfort and light stroking. We still had a number of stressful moments when she'd try to get up and thrash around, but we got through them. In fact, sometime after midnight, she became absolutely insistent we let her move about. She was literally 'shouting' at us, so we decided to let her go and see what would happen. After all, we were right there and could at least prevent anything extreme. We let her up and she hopped over to the small litter pan next to the bed, squatted (without falling over) and peed...a lot! Yes, we *did* look at each other and say 'was that what she's wanted all this time?'. But no, she really was in pain and the drug effect really freaked her out or pissed her off. After that she settled down in her bed inside the cage and we all watched an episode of Luther on Netflix. She had a couple of additional moments of pain/stress through the early morning hours. By the next day, she was resting comfortably, if unhappily for being kept in a cage.



Her recovery went much better than I expected. We took a lot of opportunities to take her from the cage and hold her in our laps for cuddles and playtime. She played well in the cage on her own and with her brother who remained outside the cage. They'd poke their paws through and tease each other. By the 7th day, she was getting pretty frustrated about her confinement, so I took the approach of moving her for brief periods into a small bathroom. The first time I let her down on her own in there, she immediately ran to the scratching post and gave it a good clawing. Then she started running around the marble floor, skidding into her toys. Her sutures were removed on the 10th day and when I brought her home and let her out to play with her brother, they had an absolute blast!

The next photo is how I found her a little later...



Since then, she's learned to hop walk pretty well, but running remains her best form of locomotion. She's got some limitations and seems not to struggle against them. Whereas before her surgery she didn't realize she was any different and thus would try everything all the rest were doing. Now she's learning some of the things she can't do. Such as getting up onto things she can't use her claws to climb. She tried a few times to get up onto low tables and shelves, but couldn't grip the surface and would fall back off. Now she knows she needs a surface she can climb from. She's remarkably capable.

Watch her in this video playing - Only 3 legs? no problem!

<https://youtu.be/0kgFVYRPANM>

They (Serena and Theodore) are confined to the upper floor for her safety, but every time I open the door, she makes a dash to escape. We have heavy, solid wood doors, and she recently learned that if the door isn't latched, she can poke her paws beneath

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and pull it open. She still climbs well on surfaces on which she can use her claws. I've also noticed that she sometimes takes a running start and she and Theodore tackle each other mid-air. I really don't know exactly how she pulls that off, but it's pretty awe inspiring! She doesn't walk exactly straight, so when she's walking with me, she often moves in front of me, which on occasion has nearly caused me to step on her.

Another thing Serena needs special consideration for is her litter box. With only one rear leg she sometimes steps in her urine and tracks it around. We have Yesterday's News cat litter because one of us has a hyper-sensitivity to regular clumping cat litter. I think Serena may do a little better with a conventional clumping clay litter, or maybe she'd just track that around. She's an excellent and diligent groomer, so she will attend to any issues on her person.



She also loves to be combed or brushed, especially since she can't scratch itches well without that leg. She does use a scratching post for claw sharpening, though since her surgery she only seems to use the vertical one. The incline version may not be something she can use based on balance, or maybe it will just take time for her to learn. She also tries to use the furniture, which she's not easily distracted from, but then again, she's a kitten. She and Theodore love to get a little treat of Newmans Organic canned food.

As She Moves On

Serena has amazed us from the very beginning. I'm pretty sure she can achieve whatever she puts her attention toward. She has tons of energy and loved/loves playing with her siblings, so other cats would probably be great. She's probably tough enough to handle dogs too, though hasn't been exposed. Conscientious children (understanding of her limitations) might be fun for her. Because of her temperament and special qualities, we think she should have not only a person (people) who loves her as much as we do, but also an indoor only home with fewer uncarpeted hardwood stairways. She has some fragility, though it's not easy to notice, simply because she's missing a rear leg. She can't get out of the way of things quickly all the time. In addition, she's determined to have her own way...always. She needs a safe space and someone willing and able to compel her to be safe.



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We've struggled with the idea of letting Serena go. We really love her and we've all been through so much together. We'll miss her immensely. We discussed adopting her ourselves, but the most important thing is her well being. We want her to have the best forever home possible.

SERENA IS STRONG AND DEEPLY AFFECTIONATE. IF YOU GIVE HER YOUR LOVE, SHE WILL CERTAINLY RETURN IT...UNCONDITIONALLY!

