

Best Buddies for Life

BY DEBORAH BARNES



Courtesy Best Friends Animal Society Lifesaving Center

We all know the myth that cats and dogs don't get along. But for Alani, a tiny, tiger-striped tabby kitten with a severe front paw injury, and a kind-hearted Chihuahua-mix dog named Simon, they're not only housemates but best friends, too.

A rough start

The friendship began after Valerie Lord agreed to foster 4-week-old Alani and her siblings (a brother and sister), who came to Best Friends Animal Society Lifesaving Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, from local city partner West Jordan Animal Shelter. They'd been found outdoors near the interstate, and one of Alani's front paws had been crushed.

Best Friends veterinarian Dr. Megan McCarthy and her team assessed the kittens and got their medical care started for fostering as soon as possible. Alani, clearly suffering, was given pain medication and antibiotics for her badly infected paw.

A purrfect pair

Adopted from a shelter as a puppy, Simon has always had cats in his life and has been gentle with the numerous kittens Valerie has fostered over the



years. But how it would go with a kitten with a severe injury could be a different story. According to Valerie, "Alani was smitten with Simon the moment she saw him, and there was nothing to worry about. She never showed any fear, and she was as curious about Simon as he was about her."

Valerie was cautioned that as Alani grew, her paw might need to be amputated. There was also a chance it might come off on its own. Sure enough, two weeks later, it did. Alani's remaining limb was then swathed in bandages so the stump would heal. During the transition, Alani went from cuddling catnaps with Simon to vigorous play sessions where she'd use her bandaged leg to bop him on the head and then grab his ear to nibble on. "Simon has always had a sweet disposition around her foster kittens, but he has never bonded with them as he has with Alani," Valerie says.

Keeping an energetic kitten comfortable and keeping her bandage (which required changing every couple of days for several weeks) in place was challenging. But between Valerie's care, Simon's friendship and help from the veterinary team, Alani was on her way to recovery. When the bandage was finally removed, the prognosis was fantastic: No need to amputate!

Not only could she run and play more than ever before, her cute little



Learn more about **Best Friends Animal Society** at bestfriends.org/salt-lake-city or follow the organization on Facebook @[bestfriendsanimalsociety](https://www.facebook.com/bestfriendsanimalsociety) and Instagram @[bfas_ut](https://www.instagram.com/bfas_ut).

mode of "hopping" while in motion earned her the name Bunnie. She was now ready to safely be spayed and adopted into a permanent home. But Bunnie and Simon didn't have to part ways. Not only did Valerie adopt Bunnie, she also adopted her brother! And no worries: Bunnie's sister had already found a home, so everyone got a happy ending!

Bunnie is not as rambunctious as in her early days with Simon, but the adoration remains. She likes to snuggle close to Simon, closing her eyes, and sniffing the air as if to absorb her friend's scent. Sometimes she even touches him with her paw when they're napping, a testament to their everlasting bond. 🐾



Deborah Barnes is an award-winning author, including the book *Makin' Biscuits* — *Weird Cat Habits and the Even Weirder Habits of the Humans Who Love Them*. She's past president of the Cat Writers' Association and cat mom to seven felines featured in her blog *Zee & Zoey's Cat Chronicles*.

Courtesy Valerie Lord

