

BROWNIE

SAMPLE CHAPTER

RELICTOWN
BOOK TWO

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BROWNIE

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DOLLHOUSE

*B*rownie's mother sang to him. Those sweet notes were the first sounds he heard. Brownie's mother washed his little kitten body. Those gentle licks were the first sensations he felt. Brownie's mother's fur pressed up against his nose when she snuggled him. Her scent was the first thing he remembered smelling. Brownie's world was his mother.

After he opened his eyes, he found he wasn't the only kitten his mother was a mother to. Other small balls of fluff, like him, climbed around her. She gave them all licks and snuggles, and Brownie learned he had siblings to play with when he didn't have his mother's attention.

Still, she sang to her kittens often, and just as often, they tried to sing back. Brownie tried the hardest and was rewarded with extra licks.

Brownie's world expanded little by little. First, there was the great blanket border to cross. Then there were the cardboard walls to climb. This he achieved with the little claws that were attached to his paws that he somehow already knew how to use. The next barrier was a large, furless hand that would scoop him up and place

him back by his mother. Try as he might, Brownie could never get past the large hand.

One day, it occurred to Brownie that there were fewer kittens in the little cardboard box. The next day, he confirmed it. The kitten he liked best was gone. Brownie searched the box and never found him. Soon, Brownie and his mother were the only cats left in the box. Brownie got a lot of extra licks, but grew lonely and sad without his siblings. His mother had also stopped singing.

Then it was Brownie's turn. Brownie's mother was grooming him when they reached in to take him away.

"Don't forget. I love you," she said.

Then, she gave his face and his white paw each one more lick. Before he could even turn to his mother and say goodbye, he was scooped up by large human hands and placed in a small cardboard box with holes in it. He screamed goodbye to his mother, and he hoped she heard him. He hoped he was going to be with his siblings again.

Brownie wobbled as the box was closed and moved through the air. It settled in what felt like a small room that rumbled and moved. Something invisible pushed Brownie to one side of the box, then the other. He never found out what was pushing him, though. He tried looking out the holes in the box, but he couldn't see much. Brownie missed his mother.

The rumble and the feeling of motion stopped shortly after it had begun, but the box moved again. Brownie smelled the wonderful smell of open air and cut grass. He didn't know what these things were, but they smelled lovely and he wanted to investigate. The box had a different agenda, though, and it carried Brownie into another structure that cut him off from those wonderful natural smells.

Inside his new environment, everything smelled artificial. After the smells of his mother and the wonderful outside, this artificial smell made Brownie's stomach hurt. He hoped he would spend a lot of time in the outside smells.

That was not the case. The box was placed on a flat surface and opened. Someone lifted Brownie out and placed him on a slippery tabletop. Three humans looked down upon him. There was a man, a woman, and a little girl. Brownie grew to refer to them as Meanie (the man), Mommy (the woman), and Kitten (the little girl).

Brownie looked past the humans and saw a very sparse and angular environment. Nothing looked soft and comforting. Everything was a muted color.

When Brownie took a step and started slipping on the smooth tabletop, Mommy produced a dull grey blanket. Meanie lifted Brownie up and placed the blanket under him. The humans talked amongst themselves. Kitten got down and looked Brownie in the eyes. She was cooing some nonsense to him, and petting him, a little too rough for his taste. He was too scared to do anything but shake a little and hide his eyes in his paws.

Where were his brothers and sisters? Did he fail part of this test and get sent to a different place than them? When was his mother going to be joining him? She could sort this all out for him, he was sure. He sniffed and sniffed and could find no traces of any other cat in the area.

The humans soon tired of watching Brownie paw at folds in the blanket and put him in a little cage. The cage contained a bowl of water and a bowl of something that looked edible. It had a small tray of sand, a few small balls and a few other toys that smelled really, really good.

The family left the room then. Smells of better food than what was being offered in Brownie's cage wafted into his nose. Sounds of the humans talking and eating were monotonous enough that Brownie fell asleep.

Brownie's mother sang to him. Those sweet notes were... just a dream. Brownie woke up in the same cage, with the same strange food and the same stale water. What was he supposed to do? There was nothing to do and nowhere to explore. Soon, all the lights were turned out, and the humans went away.

A short while later, Meanie came back and turned on a rectangle on the wall that gave off light and sound. He sat on the couch and put his feet up on the table where Brownie's cage sat. Meanie's feet smelled horrible and Brownie whined. One smelly foot kicked at his cage, spilling some of the food and water. Meanie yelled at him and Brownie went into a corner and tried to disappear. That's when Meanie got his name.

Brownie's new life comprised being given fresh water and new food at semi-regular intervals by Mommy, taken out of the cage and played with by Kitten, and yelled at late in the night by Meanie.

Brownie was confused. What was the point of all of this? Was this training for something? Was he going to turn into a human? This was Brownie's theory for quite some time, partially because Kitten routinely dressed him up in small human-style clothes and placed him in a miniature human house she kept in her room. She made him eat imaginary food with humans his size who didn't move on their own, and made him drink imaginary drinks around a table populated with a variety of animals who didn't smell like real animals.

Kitten was a nice little girl, with long brown hair that Brownie liked to play with. Brownie could tell she tried to be gentle with him, but once in a while she pulled his tail or pinched him so hard it hurt. Each time Brownie told himself that she was just a little kitten like him, and that kept him from biting or scratching her.

Mommy was not pleased when she came into the room to find Brownie dressed up. She always undressed him gently. Brownie tried his best to purr around Mommy and tried to get her to act like his cat mom. But she never did. Interactions with Mommy always ended up with him being locked in the cage again. And every night, Brownie made sure his water bowl was almost empty so that it wouldn't be spilled all over his cage.

Then there was the day of the incident. Kitten had him in an ill-fitting jacket and pants and was trying to cram him into a room of her little house that he was slowly getting too big to inhabit. A

piece of the miniature furniture poked him in the back and it hurt so bad, Brownie lashed out. He gave Kitten a few good scratches on the arm.

Kitten cried. Brownie hid under Kitten's bed. Mommy was upset. She eventually coaxed him out, stripped off the outfit, and put him in his cage. That night, Brownie's cage was placed in an unused room that looked a lot like Kitten's bedroom, but with more somber colors. Brownie was thankful because he could only imagine what Meanie would have done to him that night.

Brownie only saw Mommy for the next few days, and only for a few minutes a day. He got his water and food changed twice a day, and his sand box cleaned now and then, but he was not allowed out of the cage to wander around the strange room. When his sand box was cleaned, Mommy put him on the ground and immediately put a plastic basket over him. He watched her through the holes in the plastic and tried talking to her, but she rarely addressed him anymore.

Eventually, Brownie got too big for his cage. The humans had no choice but to let him out into the house. His water bowl was kept in the kitchen and his food bowl was placed near it twice a day. They moved his sand box about. The placement of it seemed to be a point of argument between Meanie and Mommy. One day it was in the unoccupied bedroom, the next day they placed it near the back door. Brownie found he was looking forward to hunting it down each day.

Kitten seemed scared of Brownie now. That made Brownie sad. He was sorry that he had scratched her, but at that moment, he couldn't help it. He tried to sing to Kitten like his mom sang to him. She didn't notice.

Brownie's new favorite thing was trying to get outside into the fresh air that flowed in every time an outside door was opened. Mommy or Meanie always intercepted him. Eventually, Brownie was segregated to certain rooms of the house by the convenient shutting of doors and the addition of gates. Brownie thought he

could certainly jump over the gates, but he didn't want to upset the humans anymore than they already were.

With his access to fresh air cut off and his play sessions with Kitten being a thing of the past, Brownie's life became a never-ending cycle of eating, sleeping, and searching for his sand box.

One day, things changed. Meanie had come home the night before with a bigger cage that had a handle on top of it. The next morning, Mommy picked Brownie up and put him into the cage. Then, he was brought outside. The smell of the fresh air was overpowering. Brownie purred, despite fearing what was going on.

Through the bars of the cage, Brownie saw what he thought must have been the rumble room they brought him to the human house in. It had wheels. Mommy placed his cage in it. Then she strapped Kitten into a seat beside his cage. Mommy sat in front of them and the room rumbled and pushed Brownie from side to side.

After quite a while, they stopped. Mommy and Kitten then brought Brownie's cage into a room that smelled even more artificial than the human house. But it also smelled of a variety of other animals. Brownie's cage was set on the floor next to a huge furry animal, who barked loudly at Brownie. The humans were all laughing, while Brownie spit and hissed at the beast. Brownie felt the fur on his back settle down, finally, when his cage was brought into a brighter room.

A human Brownie had never seen pushed and prodded at him. Light was shone into his eyes, something was placed against his ears. Lots of talking between Mommy and the new human. Then Kitten chimed in. She sounded concerned and cried a little. She waved to Brownie.

Mommy and Kitten left the room. The new human put Brownie back in the cage and brought him into a hallway and stacked his cage on top of a stack of other caged animals. Brownie realized in a panic that he wasn't going home with Mommy and Kitten.