



## CHAPTER ONE I Deserve Better

"Get out of here. You're nothing but a trouble!" Mrs. Langdon held her broom tight as she swept Paris off the porch and down the pathway. "I don't know how you got out again." Paris tripped and tumbled and rolled. Then with one final swat, Mrs. Langdon pushed the cat right into the garage.

"Now, stay there you filthy cat!"  
The door slam closed. "Harold," yelled Mrs. Langdon, "nail shut that hole. I don't want the cat finding its way out again."

Squinting, Paris sat up on the cold cement floor. The garage had only one dim bulb that sometimes worked and sometimes didn't. In a matter of minutes, Paris watched as the hole with light streaming through it, the hole that he got out of was nailed shut. Not again. I just went to the house for some food. I'm really hungry. I hope they don't leave me in here as long as last time, it must have been at least a year. I did get to smell the fresh air though. I felt the warm sun.

"Ah, back already," squeaked Tiger Mouse. "I told you they'd just put you back here. You should've made a run for it when you had the chance."

With his shoulders slumped, Paris nodded and sniffled. "I'm afraid to run away. They're mean but the Langdons are my owners." He glanced at the fixed hole. "It took me months to make it. I'll be locked in here till I can make another one. I just can't figure out why they dislike me so much. I never did anything to them."

Tiger scrambled behind a work bench and came back with two pieces of cheese. "Here you go. I got it from down the road. The kids in that house leave crumbs and bits of food around outside all the time."

Paris sniffled again. "Thanks, Tiger. I would have starved if it weren't for you with all the times they forget to feed me."

"You know, you're not really their cat. They didn't want you," said Tiger with his hands on his hips. "They only took you in because Edwin left you with them."

After gobbling down the cheese, Paris licked his paws. "I know. I miss Edwin. He took good care of me until he decided to travel the world. Why would he leave me here when he knew his parents hated cats, especially me?"

Tiger swallowed the last bit of his cheese. "Awh, I go to a lot of houses and I hear other people say how mean the Langdons are. You just have to be tough for now. Life is sure to get better for you one day."

"I'm a loving cat. I'm not a tough cat."

"Wish I could stay," said Tiger as he headed toward a teeny, tiny hole between the wood wall and the cement floor. "I'm, sorry I can't stay with you all the time, but I have lots of things to do and places to be. I'll keep coming to visit you as often as I can though. And, I'll bring food. See you soon." Paris forced a weak smile as he waved his paw. I just want my old life back when I was with Edwin. After the mouse was gone, Paris cried himself to sleep.

Paris would wait for Tiger's visits. He usually came once a week and always brought food. They'd sit and eat and talk. Tiger would tell Paris tales of the beautiful countryside, of the winding roads and streams, and of the interesting animals he met. He'd stay for a short while then explain that he had to be back on his way. Each time Tiger left, Paris felt like he lost his best friend. He knew Tiger would be back, but he couldn't shake away the loneliness.

As the nights got chilly, Paris would curl up in a pile of old rags and purr himself to sleep. He'd dream of being free. But he mostly dreamed of finding a kind owner. Tiger once asked Paris what a kind owner was like. Paris told him, "It's someone who'd love me, appreciate me, and take care of me. Deep down I know I deserve better than what I have now."

