

# **Wayward Cat Finds a Home**

an excerpt

Dana Trantham

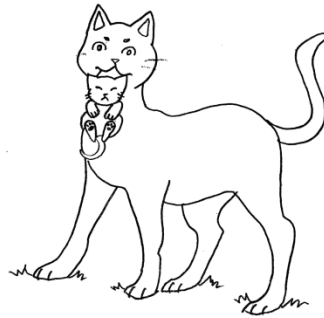
Illustrations by  
Brandi Trantham

Wayward Cat Publishing

# Chapter One

## *The Garage*

Wayward Cat was a tiny kitten when he was brought to Mrs. Person's garage in Palm Bay, Florida during a hurricane. He didn't remember being carried by the neck, dangling from his mother's mouth, against the powerful winds. But Mama Cat told him the story many times.



Her kittens were born in a small wood by a ditch when the winds started to blow. She knew she must find shelter for them all, so she set out alone at first, just as it began to rain. The first house she came to was closed up tight. But then she saw the open side door to Mrs. Person's garage, swinging wide, then slamming itself against a concrete block, keeping it from closing. Back and forth the door swung on its hinges. Mama Cat darted inside before the door clanged shut again and knew this was the perfect place to hide her kittens.

So, one by one, she carried them as fast as she could manage and left them on a pile of old towels. With each slam of the door, with every gust of wind, her kittens meowed and were afraid. But Mama Cat cuddled them and told them they were dry and safe and everything would be all right.

Soon after, Mrs. Person rushed into the garage. She kicked the concrete block out of the way of the banging door and closed and locked it. When she turned to go back in the house, she heard something in the corner. There, curled up on the pile of old towels, behind a stack of boxes, she found Mama Cat and her five kittens.



Mrs. Person kept Mama Cat fed and warm even after the storm had passed. She couldn't bring Mama Cat inside, she said, because she had big dogs that would be too curious.

"The garage is not the best place for kittens," she scolded Mama Cat. "But I suppose it had to do in a pinch."

She helped Mama Cat tend her brood, keeping them free of fleas, sweeping up the garage, and providing a sand box for their business. Mama Cat was grateful and once the kittens were up and about, tried to teach them not to play in the sand box.

"That's not for fun," she would tell them.

But it was difficult for them to understand not being able to play in a box full of sand.

Mrs. Person took her time giving the kittens names. Plop was first. Every time Mrs. Person put Plop back on Mama Cat's bed of towels, he lay down and rolled over. "Plop," she would say. "This one plops." Next was Wiggle, because she never let Mrs. Person hold her. "Oh, wiggle, wiggle," she would say. Then Howler and Prissy got their names.

As the weeks passed, Wayward Cat and his brothers and sisters grew and grew and Mrs. Person said she would find homes for them all.

"Why do we need a different home?" Howler cried to Mama Cat.

"You heard her," Prissy said. "A garage is not a proper home."

"That's right, Prissy." Mama Cat said. "One day soon, you will leave me. We will all be safe and fed. That is as it should be."

Mama Cat was full of wisdom and advice and she taught her kittens to clean themselves and to hunt and to purr and to be kind to the people who would help them.

"Purr to those you wish to hear purring back at you," she always said. And, "One day, we will leave this messy place and have real homes."

Wayward Cat thought the garage was a fine place to live and gave no thought to going anywhere else. While his brothers and sisters kept close to Mama Cat, Wayward would rather explore. There was so much to see. Mrs. Person's garage was full of nooks and crannies, spiders and palmetto bugs, lizards and cobwebs. And it was crowded with boxes and bins, rakes and brooms, cans and jars. And strewn about on the floor were screws and nails, tools and pencils, rags and leaves.

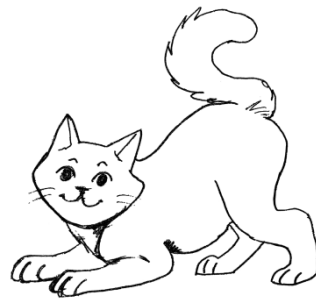
"This one is wayward," Mrs. Person said time and time again when Wayward Cat went missing. Each time she found him, she carried him back to Mama Cat and

threatened to put him in a box. But Wayward couldn't help himself. He loved his days in the garage and hoped to stay there all his life.

## Chapter Two

### *Wayward Cat's First Adventure*

One day, when his brothers and sisters were asleep and the garage was dark, Wayward Cat crawled off the towels and decided to go on a great adventure. I must hike through the jungle to find the stolen treasure belonging to my feline ancestors, he thought. I will sniff it out.



So he sniffed and sniffed and the smells were glorious. He found one particular smell and decided it must be his treasure. He set off in search of it, but came to a great mountain. He jumped and clawed his way up onto small ledges, and then onto rocks and cliffs, higher and higher. And then down the other side of the mountain, he bravely tumbled, landing with a kitten squeak. That was a tall mountain and he was a brave cat to have climbed it, even if he did fall off it rather clumsily.

Now he was in a dark cave with a low ceiling, inching his way forward. The smell of his treasure was very strong here. Something moved up ahead, skittering across his path. Something else was after his treasure! With his powerful cat eyes, he tracked the enemy to its hiding place where he lunged and pounced.

It's a trap! He was caught!

Wayward twisted this way and that, but it was no use. His foe had set out a sticky web to catch him. He would never find the treasure of his feline kin now.

Suddenly the room outside the cave was bathed in light and he heard Mrs. Person counting kittens. One. Two. Three. Four. Where's Wayward Cat? He meowed and tried to get free of the trap he was caught in but it was no use. Finally, Mrs. Person

moved the mountain, it was only a small stack of shallow boxes after all, and reached into the cave, which was under a shelf, and pulled him to freedom.



“Oh, Wayward Cat,” she said. “What mischief have you gotten yourself into? You’re covered in cobwebs.”

She took a cloth and wiped Wayward clean.

“Much better.”

She cuddled him up against her neck. Pinned onto her dress was a smelly flower with purple petals. He pounced on it and bit it. It tasted almost as good as it smelled. Mrs. Person laughed and held him up to her face again. She rubbed her nose against his and then deposited him back in his mother’s nest.

“That was a great adventure,” he told his brothers and sisters. He couldn’t wait to see what other parts of the garage he could explore.

Every day, Wayward wandered farther and farther from Mama Cat. He pounced lizards and bugs and loved the way they wriggled under his paws.

“Aw, I’m only teasing,” he would say and let them go, only to pounce again and giggle.



“Really,” he told them. “Only kidding.” He set them free once more.

He climbed the shallow boxes and tumbled off them many times, but couldn’t jump high enough onto the bigger boxes.

“One day,” he told them. “I’ll be bigger and climb all the way to the top.” But the boxes didn’t respond.

Wayward Cat pretended he was a weary traveler, winding in and out of the maze of mountains and hopping over rivers. Sometimes he imagined he was being chased, only to turn and bravely face his predator. Other times he decided he was separated from Mama Cat, lost in a strange land. But most of the time, he sniffed out treasure and found himself covered in dirt, leaves, and cobwebs. The garage was so full of shadows and hidden things, it wasn’t so hard to believe in his own imagination.

“You’ll never guess what I did today,” he would tell his brothers and sisters. And they would sit and purr, and listen to him tell his tales.

When he told them a giant ant chased him all the way to the big metal door, Plop asked, “Did it catch you?” And Howler cried out, “Did it eat you?”

“Almost,” Wayward Cat said. “Almost.”