



BRIAR

Third Place Winner:
“Little Briar Cat”
by Alison Helmer

- *2.5 years old – 4 months in shelter*
- *Shy at first but really loves attention*
- *Nervous of other cats*

Little Briar Cat was born in a small shrub nestled into the corner plot of an old woman’s cherished and well-tended rose garden. As the only child of a somewhat preoccupied mother, Briar often roamed unescorted along the rocky shores imagining countless stories of daring pirates, beautiful mermaids, and fearsome sea monsters. She enjoyed spending her time daydreaming, wading, and feeling the cool sea winds on her dappled fur.

In her younger years, she remembers sneaking bits of salted fish and cheese from the old woman’s kitchen pantry, and sipping the last drops of milky tea from her many hastily strewn porcelain cups. As months passed, she and the woman quietly became friends, and spent their days sharing stories over cups of tea with cream and sardines on toast.

The two learned many things from one another; Briar taught the old woman how to hunt and catch fish, and the little cat in turn learned how to bake biscuits and knit a pair of thrummed woolen mittens.

Together, they knitted each other two matching pairs of mittens with a single red rose on each hand to commemorate Briar's rose bush.

One evening as Briar awoke from a long rest, she noticed the winds picking up around the small cottage and the sound of waves crashing louder and louder against the cliffs nearby. Afraid for her new friend's safety as the storm rapidly approached, Briar set off to warn her. After scouring the small cottage for any signs of the woman, she was alarmed to discover she was not inside.

Uneasy but determined, she made her way back out into the storm. She searched the garden, the gravel path, and the nearby duck pond with no luck, when suddenly she heard a cry from the shoreline. Briar sprinted to find the old woman wading, arms outstretched towards something in the water. One thrummed mitten floated precariously out into the swirling waves.

Thinking only of saving her friend from almost certain death, Briar leapt across the rocky shore and into the icy cold water. Her little body quickly adjusted to the frigid temperature and her focus returned once more. Briar swam fast for the lost mitten and quickly retrieved it with her sharp teeth. As she made her way back towards the shore, the old woman was finally able to scoop her up, whisking them both back to safety.

Returning to the cottage, the two dried off with warm blankets, tea, and a roaring fire. Briar and the old woman soon fell asleep in the warm crackling glow while the little mitten hung to dry, and the storm outside passed, leaving their little cottage as it had always been.

