



# Chapter 1:

## *The Pet Store Departure*

**I**t was a sunny day in June, and the streets outside the pet store were alive with people enjoying the warm weather. Kids ran by the big front window with ice cream cones in their hands, their laughter ringing in the air. Inside the pet store, however, things were quiet and still.

Gingo lay curled up in his cage, staring through the glass. He could see the bright sun shining outside, and he could almost feel the warm breeze that drifted through the cracks of the door. In the cage next to him, his best friend, Leto the white rabbit, was sitting up, watching the same scene unfold with his long ears twitching.

"Do you see all those kids with their ice cream?" Leto asked, his eyes wide with curiosity. "I wonder what it tastes like."

Gingo gave a small nod. "It would be nice to try," he said softly, his heart feeling a little heavy. Both he and Leto knew they were still stuck inside the pet store, far from the exciting world outside—the one they had explored six months ago. Gingo and Leto had been reminiscing about their last adventure, dreaming of going on a new one. But today felt different.

The doorbell jingled as the front door opened, and in walked a family that caught Leto's eye right away. They were dressed in dark clothes—black jackets, boots, and long pants, even though the sun was shining bright outside. The boy with them, who looked about fourteen years old, had long black hair that brushed his shoulders and dark eyes that seemed curious, just like Leto's.

Leto tilted his head, whispering to Gingo, "Look at that family. They don't look like the

other families we've seen."

Gingo stretched his neck a little to peek over, but something about the boy made him uneasy. The boy looked right at Gingo, his dark eyes narrowing with interest. Gingo felt a shiver run through his body.

"I don't like this," Gingo whispered back to Leto, his heart thumping faster.

The boy walked closer, kneeling down right in front of Gingo's cage. He pressed his hands on the glass and smiled a little. "Mom, Dad, look at this one," he said. "He's perfect."

Gingo's stomach turned. He didn't want to be perfect. Not to this family.

"Oh no," Leto murmured, his nose twitching nervously. He turned toward Gingo, his eyes wide with worry. "What if they take you?"

Before Gingo could answer, the store's owner, Clarence, walked over with his usual friendly smile. "Ah, you like the little cat, huh?" Clarence asked, standing beside the family. "He's a special

one, this one."

The boy nodded excitedly, and soon Clarence was scribbling down notes on a piece of paper. Gingo's ears twitched as he caught the address being mentioned: "550 Park Lane." He repeated it silently to himself.

Leto watched the scene unfold, his heart sinking. "550 Park Lane..." he whispered, trying to memorize the address.

Suddenly, Gingo's cage door opened. Clarence reached in and scooped him up gently, but Gingo's little body trembled. His eyes darted over to Leto, who was pressing his face against the side of his own cage, staring in horror. "I don't want to leave," Gingo whispered, his voice shaky.

Leto pressed his paw against the glass, wishing he could help. "I'll find you, Gingo," he promised, his voice soft but strong. "I'll find you. Don't worry."

Before Gingo could say anything, Clarence placed him inside a small portable box. Gingo

peeked through the tiny holes in the box, his heart pounding. The store felt so far away now, and he could only see glimpses of Leto as the family headed toward the door.

"I'll find you!" Leto yelled as the door closed behind them with a final jingle. The sound echoed in the now-quiet pet store.

For a moment, Leto sat perfectly still, staring at the empty space where Gingo's cage had been. His best friend—his adventure partner—was gone. But Leto wasn't going to let that stop him. His mind raced, full of ideas and plans. He knew what he had to do.

Leto's nose twitched. "550 Park Lane," he whispered again. He would find Gingo, no matter what. Their adventure was only just beginning.