

January 1st, 2011 I was born. I couldn't see anything because I was a puppy but I could hear and smell. I explored the small room I was in with my nose. I could smell lots of other dogs who had been there before me. I also smelled something that I later learned was a cigarette. When I was done exploring and had played with my litter mates for nearly an hour, I was exhausted. I tried to find a soft cushy thing to sleep on but there wasn't anything like that. I decided that the next best thing was my mother so I smelled my way back to her, laid down and dreamed of juicy meat.

I awoke to the voice of a very loud human. "Which one do you want?" the human boomed. I sniffed the air and smelled four humans, two men, a woman and a boy. One man had the smoky cigarette scent I smelled when I had been born. He was the breeder who had bred me. The other humans smelled strongly of cats. "I want this one!" exclaimed the boy. He had been pointing at me. "All right," the breeder replied "come and get 'em in two weeks!" The humans left and I fell back asleep.

When I woke up again I was hungry and I really needed to use the bathroom. I didn't know better so I went in a corner of the room. I faintly heard the breeder groan over the rumbling of my stomach. I was very hungry. I heard some rattling and then a *thump* as a bowl of food got placed down on the floor. I ran to it with all my might. It was good to have food in my stomach even if it didn't smell as good as the food humans ate.

After eating, my litter mates and I played with some squeaky things. It was lots of fun to run around with other puppies. When we were tired we slept by our mother. Then we played some more until it was time for dinner. Dinner was more of the dry food but still, it was something. After dinner we slept until it was time for breakfast. That's how our days went: go to the bathroom, eat, play and sleep but everything changed on the tenth day.

I drowsily lifted my eyelids. I realized that I could see the moment that the dark room came into view. I laid staring and stunned. I looked around and saw some of my litter mates awake. Some of them had their eyes open too. They were mostly brown with a few gray-white spots like me. This was amazing.

Over the next few days I spent my time re-exploring with some of my litter mates. It was weird how everything was so different from my imagination. The walls were yellowish brown

and had lots of small bumps. The floor was light blue with a few yellow stains on it. The most surprising thing was the man.

The man had no hair on his head except a scrawny little mustache. It looked very out of place under his big nose. He was skinny and wore baggy clothes that were worn out. His voice was loud and scratchy. He was nice and that's all that I really cared about.

I was playing with my litter mates one day when I heard a loud *ding*. The breeder went to the door and opened it. The people who smelled like cats came in. The man and the boy were rather chubby and the woman was skinny like the breeder.

"There he is," the breeder announced as he picked me up. "I'll give ya the blanket and toys over there for ten bucks more if ya want." "Do you want to, honey?" the man asked the woman. "Sure, why not" the woman replied. "All right, that will be one hundred and ten dollars please" the breeder told the man. "Here it is" the man replied as he exchanged the money for me. I then got passed down to the boy. "Hold him tight" the breeder warned, "you don't want him running away". That was the last time I heard and saw my mother, litter mates and the breeder.

The boy held me close as he, the man and woman walked toward an old beat up convertible. The boy climbed in and the smell of old burgers and fries came instantly to my nose. I looked at my surroundings. The car was cluttered with fast food bags and crumpled papers. I was delighted to have stuff to chew. I reached for a paper but the boy held me back. I tried again but the boy just laughed so I gave up.

The man drove for a long time. It seemed to take forever. We got to their house just before I had to use the bathroom. "Take him on a walk soon" the man said. "Okay, just a minute" the boy replied. The boy opened the trunk of the car and pulled out a short rope that he called a collar. Then he got another rope out. This rope was much longer. He put the collar around my neck and attached the other rope to it. I didn't like it so I tried scratching it off but the boy tugged the rope and sternly told me 'no'.

The boy lead me around a path. We passed lots of houses some of which smelled like dogs. I even met some dogs. One was short and had lots of hair. Another was gigantic and had drool creeping out around his mouth. I tried playing with the dogs but for some reason the boy

held me back and dragged me away.

I was very upset. I was away from my mother for the first time and I felt lonely. When I tried forgetting about her by playing the boy would scold me. So when I felt that the boy had a loose grip I ran as fast as I could in the opposite direction. The leash came free from his grasp. I kept running and running until my lungs hurt but even then I didn't stop. I could still hear the boy's footsteps and panting. I stopped running a few minutes later but kept walking until dark.

When it was dark out I decided to look for a place to sleep and food. I could barely make out a garbage bin filled with food in the dim light of the street lamp. I rummaged through it and found a bone with a few pieces of soggy chicken left on it. I also got some burnt toast and a mushy brown banana.

When I finished eating I looked for a place to sleep. I found a dark little alley between buildings that was hardly noticeable. I saw a old ratty blanket peeking out behind another trash can. I grabbed it and pulled the blanket to the alley. I got situated on the blanket and thought of my mother as I fell asleep.

There was a lot of clanging when I woke up. "Just grab him and throw him in a cage" a man said. He had a blue-jean colored hat and a matching suit. His hair was matted with sweat and sharp blue eyes. Next to him there was another man. He wore the same thing and he was holding a long stick with a wire loop at the end of it. I could tell that he was very gentle. "That's not right" the second man said astonished. He turned and looked at me. I cowered against the cold brick wall. I couldn't trust humans. "It's okay," the man with the stick cooed. He stepped closer to me and put down the stick. "Come here, I won't hurt you" the man said as he reached for me. I looked into his eyes. They were a soft hazel color. I decided to take a chance so I stepped half a step forward. "Well, I'm going to wait in the truck" the man with the blue eyes impatiently said. He slouched over to a shiny truck got in and slammed the door shut. The gentle man kept calling me. Step by step I was finally in his hands. He picked me up and gently put me in a little cage. Then he lifted the cage up and put it in the truck. The man got into the car and started to drive off.

The ride was much like the one I had with the boy only this time it was extremely bumpy and I was in a cage. I sniffed and smelled the same smoky scent I had smelled when I was born. It was the cigarette smell and it was coming from the sweaty man. I covered up my nose, curled

up in a ball and drifted off to sleep. I dreamed about the warmth of the breeders house, the soggy chicken and what my future was going to be.

I woke up in another cage. This one was a lot bigger. Three of the walls were concrete and the other side was a metal gate. To the sides of the concrete walls were other dogs. Across from me there were even more dogs but a path way separated us. I looked in the cage some more. There were two bowls. One had dry food and the other had water. Next to the bowls was a mat. It was not very cushy. I heard footsteps coming toward me. It was two humans. They looked but did not pet me. I turned from them and ate my food.

The days went by and not much happened. A few humans came in everyday but not one came to save me from the horrible jail I was in. One day a woman came and let me out on a leash. I assumed that she was going to take me out on a walk but instead she lead me to a very large bus. We both got on.

The bus had lots of cages like the ones I was in before only these were smaller and instead of concrete walls there was metal. The bus had three layers of cages. There were about twenty other dogs on the bus and more were being loaded on. I got picked up and put into a top cage. It felt odd to be so high up.

“Another long ride from Louisiana to Michigan” I heard a woman sigh. She was helping a dog go up the stairs to get on the bus. “I know,” a man replied, “I don’t know how you can stand eighteen hours on a bus almost everyday”. I stopped listening and tried to sleep. I found I couldn’t sleep at first with all the dogs barking. The barking bounced off the walls and made it twice as loud. Eventually I fell asleep.

I woke up still on the bus. The lady I had heard earlier was checking on all the dogs. She looked over at me and smiled. “We’ll be there in just a few hours” she told me. I was delighted to have some attention. I stood up and wagged my tail. I had learned to like humans. The lady laughed a lovely laugh as she walked away. I was by myself again so I slept some more. The whole bus ride I kept waking up and then falling asleep.

Finally the eighteen hours were up. A man put a leash on me and lead me off the bus. I was brought into another big cage. This one was a lot nicer. Humans came up and petted me and I licked them. I became much more comfortable with humans as time went on. I was at the

place about the same amount of time as the prison like place although it didn't seem like it. I enjoyed my days at the new place and always looked forward to the next.

Four humans came in one day. There was a girl, boy, woman and man. They took me on a walk like lots of other people did. It was a nice walk and before I got put back in the cage I got to go in a little fenced in area and play. I never expected to see them again but the next day they were back. This time instead of taking me on a walk they took me to a big room full of toys and other people. I was confused. I looked for emotions of the humans. They all looked excited and happy.

We all stood by a small wall. It was small enough for the girl to see over. We waited for a while so the humans could talk. After that we went outside to a parking lot. There were lots of cars. The humans walked over to a blue Malibu. We all got in. I stood on the boy's lap and put my head out the window as the woman drove away.

A while later the woman pulled up to a house. I was led to a yard where the boy and man played with me. The girl and woman went into the house and a short while later joined us.

I have been living with the same family ever since and have been very happy. My life is much more enjoyable especially with a big cushy couch. I go on walks around the neighborhood and around a nearby pond. I am spoiled with many toys that my humans get me. I love my life as a dog!