

An educational and entertaining children's book about drugs and addiction .

The Addiction Monster and the Square Cat

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Praise for SQUARE CAT...

Sheryl McGinnis has done it again. Sheryl has the unique ability to create books that will elicit conversation and dialog between an adult and child. Sheryl weaves her personal family story into one that a creative adult can use to begin helping a child understand the dangers of drugs and alcohol at an early age. If you have a young child, it is time to get started on The Addiction Monster and the Square Cat.

Larry Golbum, R.Ph., MBA, host of the Prescription Addiction Radio Show, Tampa, FL

The author hit the mark here with a cleverly disguised educational piece. This book has many valuable lessons. I now have a better understanding of what addiction does not only to oneself, but to an entire family and I hope I never put mine through anything like that. I will always remember that NEVER to start is the key.

Kate Clunn, Age 15, Ocean City, NJ

I learned that drugs and alcohol can cause an addiction. It only takes one time to become addicted. It begins to take control of your life and you struggle each day to try and stop it. Take it from The Square Cat — drugs make you unhappy and they make everybody that loves you unhappy too. This book was a good lesson for me to have enough self esteem to JUST SAY NO.

Talia Stokes, 12 years old, Weymouth MA

"I thought the book was good. It really told me that drugs are bad and that they could really hurt you. What I also liked was that they had Pumpkin the cat telling the story.

Hunter Penrod, Age 10, Santaquin, UT

"The Addiction Monster and the Square Cat," is a perfect title as this itself creates a great inquisitiveness to what the problem is. Beautifully done by the Author, Sheryl Letzgus McGinnis. Comfortable and educational. Reading for ages 10 to 12 and up.

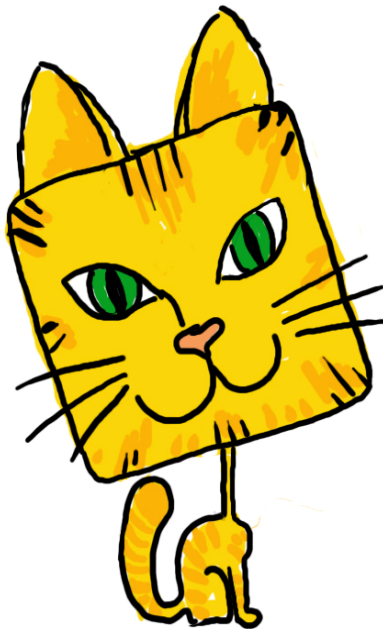
**Layne Robertson, 8 years in Education,
Company Director Tokyo, Japan**

A great tragedy of our modern life is we can no longer allow our children to indulge themselves as children. In "The Addiction Monster and the Square Cat" McGinnis has bridged a gap by subtly weaving the perils of addiction with a child's story. Congratulations to the author for providing such a unique approach to combating an all too present and pervasive social ill.

**Graeme Archer, Father and Grandfather,
Sydney Australia**

The Addiction Monster and The Square Cat

**A book for children about the dangers
of drugs as told by Pumpkin,
The Square Cat**



By Sheryl Letzgus McGinnis

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SECTION ONE

Boo!

Did I scare you?

No, probably not. You like to be scared, don't you? I know you enjoy scary movies and reading about monsters and playing scary video games, right?

Well, let me tell you about another kind of monster, one who doesn't have big scary fangs or red eyes or horns sticking out of his head, or...

Oh wait...before we get to the monster, the villain in our little story, please allow me to tell you about myself. I'm sure you're wondering why I'm called the Square Cat. I'm not really square as you've

probably already guessed.

You see, I'm a beautiful big, fluffy orange cat (not square at all but pleasantly plump and sort of round) and instead of having 9 lives (that's not really true anyway, we cats have only one life just like humans) I am lucky enough to have 9 owners. Actually it isn't quite that many but still I am taken care of and loved by many people.

The story takes place once upon a time, not so long ago in a lovely little community called Fairview.

Fairview isn't a very big place and everybody knows everybody. In the middle of Fairview is the town shopping center and in the middle of the shopping center is a really cool park with nice benches (just perfect for sunning myself while my people play in the park).

There are streets that go from the edges of the little town to the park. There are four of these main streets, one in each corner of the park, forming a square.

You're already ahead of me but wait, let me set my story up for you. The park is called The Square by all the locals and has been called that since the beginning of World War II, a very long time ago.

The school buses arrive at The Square in the morning and take all the high school kids to school

because our town isn't big enough to have a high school; just grade school from kindergarten through 8th grade.

I was born in a house that was right on The Square and lived there until I was about six weeks old when my mother and my brother and sister and I were dumped off in The Square because nobody wanted us anymore. I don't know what we did wrong. We tried to be good, but the humans took us to The Square anyway.

There we sat in a box snuggled up with our mom who fed us as best as she could. We were warm because winter hadn't arrived yet. We were lucky because we were only there overnight. The next morning as all the kids were getting on the school bus somebody spied our little box and heard us mewling. One of the boys walked away from the school bus and came over to our little box, lifted the lid and got a big grin on his face. I knew I liked him right away.

He waved at his friends who were waiting on the bus and then he picked our box up and carried us to his house.

When we arrived at his house, he was greeted by a lady who wanted to know why he wasn't in school and what was in the box he was carrying. The lady started to get very angry with the boy until he opened the box.

As soon as the boy lifted the lid, I looked up at

him and did my best to look really cute and adorable (which wasn't too hard because I really am one cute cat!).

I would learn later that the lady's name was Sherry and she was the boy's mom. She had really kind eyes and a soothing voice. When she looked at me I gave her the biggest and loudest purr that I could. She smiled and stroked my head. I had a good feeling about these two humans.

"Mom, look at them aren't they beautiful?" the boy said. "You know we have to keep them, right?"

"No way Scott" said his mom. Ah, I know the name of my rescuer now.

"We'll keep one but we can't keep them all. I'll call my friend, Joan, and see if we can talk her into taking the mama cat and the two kittens. I know Joan will give them a really good home, that is if she'll agree to take them," Sherry promised.

Then Sherry called Joan to come to the house to see us beautiful kittens and our mama that somebody had left at The Square.

Before Joan arrived to come look us over, Scott picked me up and put me aside in another room, away from my mama and brother and sister. I was very confused but happy to be in a nice home with two very kind people.

Later, “Look at this beautiful mama cat and her two kittens” I heard Sherry say through the closed door.

“Oh they’re beautiful and so sweet” Sherry’s friend purred. I mean it, I really think she purred. Can humans purr? Seems I have a lot to learn about humans. Maybe they’re not all mean.

“I know your precious Boo Boo and Trigger died recently,” said this nice Sherry, “so I thought you might want to replace them with these three beauties.”

“But I lost just two cats,” the purring woman said, “and now you want me to take three?”

“Well we can’t separate them from their mama can we?” Sherry said and I swear she was purring louder than the purr lady. What a saleswoman this Sherry is I thought to myself as I sat, hidden behind the closed door.

“Okay Sherry, you’ve got a deal. Who can resist kittens and this mama cat seems to have such a sweet nature,” the purr lady said. “You know I’ll give them a great forever home.”

“I know that,” Sherry smiled at Joan, and put my mama and my brother and sister back in the box that we had been found in, knowing that her friend would indeed take such good care of them.

I later learned that Sherry felt bad for not letting me go with my mama and brother and sister but she also knew that she was stretching it by asking her friend to take 3 cats. No way could she take four.

So off my mama and brother and sister went to live with this kind lady in a good home. I felt good about that. But I was secretly happy that I would be an “only cat” and have all the attention on just me... or so I thought.

I don’t know why I was the one chosen to stay with Sherry and her family. Well, I always thought I was much prettier than my siblings but I kept that to myself. My mama knew what I thought though.

“You won’t win any popularity contests if you brag about how handsome you are,” my mama always said. She must have thought I was special too.

“What have we got here?” a big strange man said as he walked in the kitchen eyeballing me. I heard Sherry call him Jack and Scott called him dad so bingo! I figured that one out. I’m not your average cat. I always knew I was more than just my good looks. Got brains too!

So here I was; I was going to be living with Sherry, her husband Jack and Scott. I had no sooner started to plan how I was going to wrap these humans around my little paws, when another member of the house walked into the kitchen. I heard them call him Dale, and he was Scott’s older brother. He

came right over to me, picked me up and said “Well, what have we got here?”

“What you’ve got here, braniac,” I thought to myself “is a kitten. Not only a kitten but by far the fairest kitten in the land. I’m special. Just ask Scott. Hel-loooo, haven’t you ever seen a kitten before?”

Well those were my thoughts but I didn’t dare say them out loud. I didn’t want to get kicked out of this home too. I’d have to wait to see if they had a good sense of humor or not.

How did I go from being unwanted to being so lucky? I wondered. Oh well who cares, I’m here now and I’m stayin’.

As soon as Dale had put me down, Scott scooped me up and said “I’m going to call you Pumpkin because you’re round and orange and I know you’re going to grow to be a big fat cat.” Nobody argued so Pumpkin I was.

Little did I know when Scott gently laid me down on the couch, that I would soon be greeted by other cats! Not only other cats but a big black dog. I mean she was the biggest dog I’d ever seen in my life, although I must admit I hadn’t seen that many dogs in my short six weeks of life.

I decided I couldn’t show any fear. I had to let the other cats and this big dog know who was boss. After all, I was special. I had been adopted. Whoo-hoo - I

am the king of all felines! Everybody bow down to the Great Pumpkin.

Yes, I admit I liked the name that Scott gave me, although I thought Alexander the Great was a much nobler and fitting name for a cat of my beauty, grace and intelligence.

It wasn't until much later that I learned that Alexander the Great, King of Macedonia (a far away land near Greece) had become an alcoholic (someone who drinks too much alcohol and can't stop) and he died in a drinking binge (drinking a lot of alcohol at one time)! Oh the horror of it! Imagine - I could have been named after a man who was once one of the great rulers of all time, until he discovered alcohol, burned down cities, killed his best friend and lost his life at the young age of 33. Why, that's only about 5 years in cat years!

I didn't know that alcohol could cause people to do things like that. Of course there was a lot I didn't know then but I would slowly learn about alcohol and drugs and something called addiction.

Back to the big black dog and those other ordinary felines. As it turns out I didn't have to try to be brave because the dog was really just another pussycat. She weighed 115 pounds and could have smooshed me with one giant paw. But she was a gentle giant and she loved me right away. Well, what's not to love? I am totally adorable. Just ask me.

The other cats were tolerable. They didn't hiss at me or try to pick fights – most likely because they recognized that I was superior to them and much more handsome – but they were polite and shared their food with me.

Over the years we all got along very well and played rough and tumble with each other, quite often running and jumping and landing on the dog with a big thump! But the dog...oh by the way, I didn't tell you her name, it's Kazak, named after a dog in a Kurt Vonnegut story (a very popular author), Scott named her that, and she enjoyed watching us play.

Kazak, and my adopted sister and brother cats, Pippi, Taffy, Squeaky, Sugar, and Sly loved being inside cats. They were allowed in our big fenced in back yard to play but they really liked to stay inside.

Not me! I longed to be outside so I would try to follow Scott or Dale as they opened the door to go to school. Dale was wise to my tricks and always made sure that I stayed in the house.

Scott, on the other hand wanted to see how far I'd follow him if he let me outside. Well I showed him. I followed him all the way to The Square. It wasn't much of a walk but to me it was a big adventure.

Here I was, back to where I'd been found and adopted. It was very bittersweet. I missed my mama and my brother and sister. But I knew they had a good home and I had a loving home with humans

who spoiled me rotten (as I so richly deserved) and they took care of all my health needs.

Okay, so I didn't like going to the vet – especially when they fixed me so I couldn't become a daddy, (they said something about there being too many homeless cats and dogs in the world) but they made sure I had all my shots so I wouldn't get sick.

My humans loved me but Scott loved me more than all the others. Maybe because he saw how special I am. Maybe because he admired my incredible beauty. Or maybe because he somehow knew that I understood him.

Scott and his brother Dale were extremely popular with all the kids who hung out in The Square. They could both play the guitar and they would bring their acoustic guitars to The Square and play them and sing. Everybody loved to hear them and to watch them. Those days were what I like to think of as The Good Times.

After school and at night after dinner, all the kids would walk to The Square and sit around on the park benches and listen to Scott and Dale play their guitars. The girls would dance to the music while some of the guys played air guitar. And everybody was texting somebody! Even texting the kids who were right there in The Square with them! I never could figure that one out but who really understands kids anyway? They're very special people, but not cat special of course!

I was happy because Scott would always let me follow him to The Square where I would be greeted by everyone as though I were the King of England, himself. Well, let's not be silly. The King of England would have to bow down to *me* if we met. I'm sure there is royalty in my background. I can just feel it. And I do carry myself in a most regal manner which the girls especially find amusing.

I would jump around from lap to lap being petted and stroked and cooed to as if I were a little baby. Kids being kids they always had food with them and there was usually something that I could eat, although I would sniff their offerings gingerly at first, waiting to hear them beg me to eat. Oh my, I had *them* eating out of *my* hand and they never knew it. Clever, aren't I?

What I remember most about The Good Times is that everybody had fun! There was a lot of laughing and good-natured kidding, eating and drinking sodas, telling jokes and of course complaining about teachers and homework. The dreaded homework.

"That Mr. Dunn is such a dork" somebody would say and everybody agreed with him. "All he cares about is how much homework he can give us."

"Well be glad you don't have Mr. Lewin" one of the girls moaned. "He's mean and hollers if we chew gum in his class."

I found this all to be very amusing. Just what the devil was homework anyway and what's a dork? And who would want to put sticky gum in their mouth and chew it? Yuck! The thought is enough to make me throw a hairball!

Nobody liked having a curfew either. They wanted to be out all night with their friends, just hangin' out and then when they went home they wanted to play games on their computers or email people or more texting. My goodness I've never seen anyone's fingers fly so fast as these texters!

How do they do that? I'll bet even if they had only paws like me, they could still text people with them and do it really fast. Kids are amazing.

The Good Times went on for many years. But slowly, over time, the kids grew older and became legally old enough to drive. There would be no more walking to The Square if they had their way. It didn't matter that it was only a couple of blocks to The Square. If they could beg their parents into letting them have the car, then they would drive there.

I didn't like riding in the car with Scott because I preferred to walk. Have to keep my perfect figure you know. But if I wanted to go to The Square for my daily pampering and Scott was driving I had to go with him.

But there was another reason I didn't want to ride in the car with Scott. I couldn't put my finger on it, I

mean my paw on it, silly me, but I had a feeling that something was changing. I think somehow I knew that The Good Times were coming to an end.

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