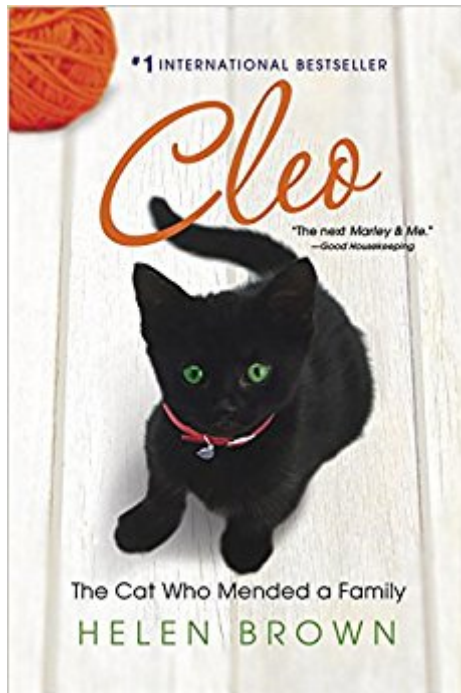


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CLEO: The Cat Who Mended A Family



Synopsis

"We're just going to look." Helen Brown had no intention of adopting a pet when she brought her sons, Sam and Rob, to visit a friend's new kittens. But the runt of the litter was irresistible, with her overlarge ears and dainty chin. When Cleo was delivered weeks later, she had no way of knowing that her new family had just been hit by a tragedy. Helen was sure she couldn't keep her--until she saw something she thought had vanished from the earth forever: her son's smile. The reckless, rambunctious kitten stayed. Through happiness and heartbreak, changes and new beginnings, Cleo turned out to be the unlikely glue that affectionately held Helen's family together. Rich in wisdom, wit, heart, and healing, here is the story of a cat with an extraordinary gift for knowing just where she was needed most." A remarkable memoir. . . I realized that Helen Brown didn't break my heart at all--she opened it." --Beth Hoffman, New York Times bestselling author of *Saving CeeCee Honeycutt* "An absolute must." --Cat World "The next Marley & Me. Even non cat-lovers will be moved." --Good Housekeeping

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Customer Reviews

Grace can come in deceptively small packages. For Brown, it arrived in the form of a runt-of-the-litter kitten whom her two young sons, Sam and Rob, adored on sight. Promised as an upcoming present for Sam's tenth birthday, it was a gift the boy never received. While the kitten was being weaned from its mother, Sam was taken from his. Just weeks after his birthday, Sam was killed in an auto accident, and Brown's world changed forever. Yet when the

kitten was delivered to her new home right on schedule, Brown's heart first broke with the unfairness of it all, then gradually began to mend as little Cleo did what all kittens do: mounted a charm offensive like no other. Over the next 23 years, as Brown's marriage ended and career blossomed, the spunky Cleo remained her constant source of comfort and inspiration. Heartfelt and open, Brown's buoyant tale of loss and recovery celebrates the resilient patience and restorative powers of animal compassion. --Carol Haggas

" A remarkable memoir... I realized that Helen Brown didn't break my heart at all - she opened it."
--Beth Hoffman, New York Times bestselling author of Saving CeeCee Honeycutt "An absolute must."
--Cat World "The next Marley & Me. Even non cat-lovers will be moved." --Good Housekeeping

Love, love, love this book. Second time I've bought it (don't know where my first copy went) If you are a cat person, this book will have you bawling your eyes out, crying tears of both sadness and joy - at what a beloved pet can do in a family that is going through tragedy and broken hearts. Truly a wonderful and inspiring book

I will start off with a quick generalization that I really liked this story. The author, Helen Brown, gives a very direct and honest portrait of her family from her time as a young mother in a struggling marriage to becoming a successful woman who finds the courage to love again in many different facets. I found myself rooting for Helen, mourning with her, and learning about people in all their flawed beauty as she did. And she's just one member of this wonderful family. Then there is the namesake of the book, and quite possibly the little monarch of the clan, Cleo. Truly something special, Cleo is always there for this family when she is needed most. As the author says, Cleo gives her son his smile back after a horrid tragedy. She is there to stave off depression for Helen in the worst of times, and she even gives a little dating guidance when the time comes. Long after Cleo gives Helen's son, Rob, his smile back, she is there to nurse him back to health when he is hit with a life threatening disease. What got to me most was Rob's dreams in which Cleo told him that she would be there to help him make friends and, much later, when he has a very prophetic dream about what she was sent to teach him in her lifetime. Overall, I got more out of this book than I expected and was very pleasantly surprised by the depth and candor the author bestows.

I have to say that this was a difficult book to read. The very real pain and grief that the author

endured when her oldest son was killed, is almost unbearable. I had to take it in small doses. But it is joyful fun when Helen and Rob start watching the antics of their new kitten, and learn to laugh again. I was surprised that the editors of the book had let all this raw pain and emotion stay in. But, as I said in my review of the author's second book, 'Cats and Daughters', which in part tells how the writing of 'Cleo' came about--the author had actually deleted the original material in favor of a more upbeat story. It was the editors that encouraged her to put the emotion and pain back in, which actually makes the telling of the story much more powerful. Once I got through it the first time, I re-read it again. I recommend this to anyone who has experienced the loss of a loved one. In the end it turns out to be a story of hope and renewal and joy--carried in on little cat feet.

I seldom write reviews for books, and rarely keep them after reading them. This is a keeper. I loved this book from beginning to end. Helen Brown is an accomplished writer that relays a story well. Her story is told with feeling and insight into her life as a young wife and mother. Cleo is adorable and so easy to fall in love with, as described by the author. By the end of the tale, when you know how the story must end, you cry along with the family over the loss of the beloved pet and family member. Through the loss of her son and, eventually, her cat, Helen Brown tells how one family grows through their grief, without losing the memory of those lost. I sent this book to my daughter and told her that she must read it.

I really can't add anything to what the other reviewers have said. They have taken the words right out of my mouth. I didn't want to like this book, it is not the type I usually read (too sad), but I absolutely loved it. It is very well written. I highly recommend it. Sad though it was, it was also very inspirational and I finished it feeling richer for having read it and for having learned from Ms. Brown's life.

My son was also hit by a Blue Ford Escort when he was 9 yrs. old. He was badly injured and had to have reconstructive surgeries, skin grafts, etc., but I didn't lose him. Thank God as he is my only child. I didn't know if I could read this book after Sam was killed. I kept going and am so glad I did. I, as did Helen, end up divorced. Something like this really puts a strain on a marriage, some make it and some don't. I never remarried, but have been in a long term relationship for which I am grateful. I could identify with Helen in so many ways. Cleo was a remarkable cat, her gut instincts made things somewhat more tolerable for this family. I really liked this book, lots of inspiration, lessons to be learned, and lots of things to look at differently (as Rob) pointed out while ill. You don't have to

be a cat lover to read this book, it's a great read for anybody. I hope that Helen and her family do not have to go through anymore trying times like they have in the past.

I read the reviews both good and bad before purchasing this international best seller. Being a cat lover who recently lost her 21 yr. old domestic black cat, the story drew me in. This is a story about life and death, not about a cat per se. The role the cat played was to connect the past, present and future of the author's life. Cleo is the thread that sews the family together and manages to make them laugh, and give them a reason to remember yet look forward as life goes on. It is not action packed, nor spell binding, but rather a tale (no pun intended) about the ups and downs that people experience in a lifetime. I particularly liked the fact that it was set in the author's country of New Zealand. I could almost envision the cottage and the zig zag path leading to the door. Descriptive, heartfelt, and wonderful... this is my take on a little book about much more than a cat. Although, everything she says about cats is spot on!

Really wonderful book. I also have a little black cat that I love. This is a wonderful read. If you have animals, but this book.

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