

## CHAPTER 1

*"Run, Micheala, run!"*

With a hit and run style speed, a tabby blob had begun pelting down a dry field like it was its last night alive. Bobbing, and twisting, and pulling itself above the long stalks of hay it zoomed, like a bumblebee buzzing its way speedily to the next daisy or dandelion pitstop. Behind her, of course, ran two enormous, bolstering Rottweilers whose barking jowls were slathered with copious amounts of thick, blubbery slobber.

*Shit!!!*

That blob making a desperate attempt for its life was, obviously, none other than Micheala, a small tabby with a big, fat golden heart that sometimes made, uh... some *errors* in judgement when it came to acting for the greater good. Most often involving putting herself in dangerous situations for tiny acts of kindness.

*"Micheala!! I believe in youuu~! But you better book iiittt~!!"*

"I'm trying!!" Micheala just barely managed to squeeze out past aching lungs and short gasps. The hot, heavy breathing on her heels didn't exactly help her situation either.

The small, round blue ball stuck firmly between her jaws probably didn't help at all, either. And it probably, just maybe gave a clue to why the notorious yapping behind her was more akin to excited, playful yelps than some of anger or straight up bloodlust.

*"C'mon, c'mon!! You can make it!"*

By this point, Micheala had been speeding so fast that she'd almost lost track of why she was in this mess in the first place; of course, it *was* her fault. She had no problem acknowledging that. But when there's a puppy, and he's sad and whining right next to you, and you don't want to be a bad person, and his eyes are round and glittery with sorrow and his head is so soft and tiny, and you don't want to hurt him, when he's piping up about the lost ball in the yard right across the street-

*"Micheala!"*

A shout caught in the young tabby's throat as teeth momentarily seized the very tip of her tail; and in that same moment, she found herself almost crashing head first into the fence that'd divide her from imminent death. The panic and fear in her chest propelled her forwards like a hurricane, and in one clumsy, rapid move she had clambered her way successfully over the fence and with a tired flop onto the ground.

*"Uuuuuuuuuu."*

Despite her groan, the shape cheering her on before was soon by her side. “You made it and you didn’t die!!!!”

“Yeah, I didn’t die at least!” Micheala just barely managed to cough out, voice muffled by the soil her snout was buried in. Oh, and by that ball she had been keeping safe. With a wheeze, she spat the tiny blue toy out and watched it in a daze as it rolled a few inches away from her nose, dabbled with saliva.

The figure beside her gave it a poke. “Eww, that’s gross, Micheala. Near death doesn’t mean you gotta slobber on everything,” she snickered softly.

Through her blurry haze (and a dash of tasteful ignorance), the tabby rolled over on her back just in time to make eye contact with the shape who’d accompanied her on this small and slightly dangerous assessment, one of her best and closest friends; Catty. A slim gray she-cat with bright yellow eyes, she had a body built for athleticism and outdoor activity, and the excited glitter in her eyes gave her a certain spunk that not just anybody had. Catty was a truly unique soul; both in her personality and, well... the purple splotches mottling her pelt.



"You okay? Need some help?" the gray fuzzball quirked her eyebrow and gave a tiny playful smile.

"Yeah... Yeah. Thanks."

Micheala didn't think she'd ever gotten the full story to her friend's oddly colored pelt – Catty did tend to ramble and rant and get distracted by things with ease. She'd always noted this friend of hers as being a bit of an airhead and a *total* goofball with the strong inability to take anything seriously. The only thing the tabby could remember was that it happened a long time ago in an old home where Catty was under the supervision of destructively creative toddlers.

Micheala couldn't remember much past then – she was quite forgetful herself, really. That, and she kinda tended to get her head stuck in the clouds, too.

She sat up with Catty's help, and with a quick scoop returned the ball to its rightful place between her claws. "That... was a wild ride!"

"Yeah – an awesome wild ride!" Catty beamed. "You almost got chomped though... you were going wayyy too slow."

Micheala furrowed her eyebrows. "H-Hey! I'm not built like you!" As if to prove her point, the tabby sat up on her haunches and pointed a claw into her belly. "See? I'm on the chubby side *and* I have stubby lil' legs! I'm not built for running! And *hey*- "-- her claw slid back in and returned jutting out towards her spiritedly arrogant friend – "*you* were the one who suggested the idea!"

Catty responded with an embarrassed scoff. "...WELL, we got the ball and that's what matters, riiight? So, my genius plan worked either way and you're just jealous!" She paused, and then let out a soft giggle. "You okay though?"

"Just a bit shellshocked," Micheala said, rolling her paw pad over the small blue ball. "Big dogs are kinda scary, y'know?" *You're also better built for this kind of stuff, you doof.*

"You jumped in before I barely had a chance to tell you the rest of the plan!"

"I panicked!!" Micheala huffed. "The pup was crying out, and you started spitting out plans, so I just went with one and hoped!"

Catty shrugged. "Again -- we got the ball, and that's what matters, right?"

The tabby snorted quietly. "Well, *yeah*, so...let's go deliver this toy now! The poor pup's probably been waiting for a while!"

"It's been like, five minutes? Also, I don't think pups *need* toys." The gray she-cat grinned. "Actually, scratch that. As a kitten I always needed toys."

“Well, that’s because you’re Catty!” the tabby leaned down and squished the toy between her jaws gently. “Leeet’s go!” she grunted out, muffled by the sphere of cerulean plastic.

The tiny puppy was only across the dirt road, which wasn’t that big of a trek at all – in fact, before the two knew it, they were already across and Micheala was racing up to the fence. She was excited – what could she say? She was going to make this pup’s day!!

The she-cat dropped the ball with a light -boing!-, and watched guardedly for the awaited guest after a softly called out ‘hello?’. Sure enough, after a soft stirring from the corner of the lot, a tiny brown and white furball had dashed his way over.

Before Micheala could even say a word, the tiny pup was yapping like crazy, and only between certain tremors of excitement could she catch an occasional ‘thank you!’. Regardless, the notion made the tabby smile, and she shot a genuine beam at the pup as he sprinted back inside, tiny legs a motion blur and the ball tightly screwed into his mouth.

“Sorry about the spittle!” Catty called. “Not my fault.”

Micheala gave her a lighthearted scowl.

However, the moment’s playful attitude was diffused just as quickly as it had started when Catty’s eyes went wide, and she swerved her head to meet Micheala’s. “Oh, *shit*.”

“Huh?”

Despite her previous grimace, the gray she-cat’s grim look was replaced by a mischievous smirk. “Bet – when we tell Stella, is she gonna kill us or what?”

“Oh, *shit*.”

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“You did *what*?!”

“I told you.”

Stella’s eyes were tired and droopy – a telltale sign that she had been awoken from an afternoon nap earlier than she would have liked. “Told me *what*?”

“Not told you, dumbie,” Catty huffed. “Micheala! Me and her had a bet that you’d kill us for going out and doing this! Didn’t I, Micheala?”

The tabby gave a soft nod. Since the she-dog’s beginning roughness, her eyes had started to automatically train themselves on the nearby mud puddle (really, Micheala always felt bad disappointing Stella, like she was letting down her mom or somebody else above her) – Stella’s humble abode always seemed to be mucky and wet, didn’t it? “But! It’s no big deal- “

"Bets are always a big deal!" the gray she-cat said rather loudly before snatching her attention back to Stella. "Especially when somebody's so predictable and grumpy all the time alla *Stella*, unlike your precious princess sitting right smackdab in front of you—"

"Alright, alright, whatever!" Catty's face twisted up into a small, sly grin as Stella rolled her eyes impatiently, and then sat up onto her haunches instead of laying halfasleep on the porch floor. "Deal or not on whatever the hell you guys were doing and what way I would react, that was dangerous! You guys could've gotten hurt!"

Catty narrowed her eyes. "That's where the fun comes in though!"

"And I'm a dog!" Stella very blatantly ignored the other. "You guys could've just gotten me up, and I would've, y'know, gone over there and gotten the ball for the pup, and given props to Micheala for the generous idea!"

Micheala smiled genuinely. "Oh, thank you."

"The fun, Stella!" Meanwhile, the other she-cat's face was bordering on an impish sneer.



"Oh, shut the hell up, Catty! You know I love adventures and physical activities way more than your lazy ass does. You practically have a panic attack anytime you get close to filth — *I live in filth!*"

"Hey!"

Oh no.

“Don’t ‘hey’ me!” Stella huffed. “I go out on morning jogs every single day, for crying out loud! You would literally lay down and sleep all day if you could, and I’m pretty sure you already do. That’s why you always get Micheala to carry out your crazy ideas?!”

The tabby in question frowned. “Guys...”

“More like my name’s Stella and I have no sense of freedom or creativity, unlike your glamorous host me--”

“Oh, shut up, you arrogant prick! At least I’m not constantly showing off every single little thing literally every waking second of the day!”

“Sounds like somebody’s jealous~!”

“Guys--”

“Jealous of *what* exactly? Tell me, I’ll wait. I’ll wait for you to come up with--”

“Ohhh, you know Stella. You know all too well~!”

“Piss off.”

“GUYS!”

The two arguing animals quickly turned their heads, both wearing very different expression – Stella’s being one of irritated rage, and Catty’s of childish mischief.

Micheala, giving herself a few seconds to breathe in the silence, continued with a bold voice and posture. “Calm down you guys, okay? There’s no need to fight!”

In response, the two gave expressions that ultimately boiled down to begrudging agreement.

“I’m sorry,” Stella said.

“Thank you for apologizing, Stella.”

Catty stifled a short laugh. “...I’m not.”

“I know, Catty.”

The three then erupted into a quick fit of giggles, even Stella taking on a series of snorts. As soon as the difficulty had come it had left, and a great deal of thanks had to be dealt to Micheala for her consistent role as peacemaker between the often-arguing set of friends. *It’s a part of what makes us all best friends*, the tabby thought gently. *We kinda all need each other. You can’t be friends without there being some sort of consequences. That’s just life, and the good always pays out the bad!*

*And I wouldn’t ever trade these guys for the world.*

“Well, are you guys doing anything cool today?” Micheala finally said, her voice still a bit shaky from the laughing fit prior. “I don’t think I have any plans past what happened with the ball and the pup back there.”

“Meee either,” Catty just barely managed to push out past a roaring yawn. “Jade’s been working really hard lately, so I haven’t really had anything interesting going on at the home house, either.”

Micheala frowned. “That sucks! At least you’ve got time to nap though, right?”

As the gray she-cat gave a fervent nod, Stella snorted and murmured something briskly under her breath. Of course – and much to Micheala’s dismay – this didn’t go unheard by sometimes if not often *overreactive* ears.

“I thought you had a walk to get to, Miss Athleticism?” Catty scoffed as her head swerved to meet Stella’s eyes, much like a hurricane shifting paths. The spaniel in question simply narrowed her eyes.

“I jog in the morning, *dumbass*.”

“There’s always time for more running! A *true* athlete would be trying to get in all the miles they could-“

Catty’s sentence was cut off abruptly by a gasp of air, a huff, and then a slow, shrill screech that filled the air as its very own tornado siren.

“Stttttttttttellaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!!!!!!”

When Micheala did herself the favor of looking back up, she saw Catty laying in the nearest mud puddle, her pelt caked in an assortment of mostly dry muck. Nearby, of course, sat Stella, who’s sour mood was now very obviously depleted and quickly replaced by a whole gallery of cackles loud enough to fill the entire town.

“Micheala, oh my god, did you see that ohmygod-“

“Shut up, what the **hell** Stella-“

The tabby, either way, couldn’t help but start to snort herself. *Jeez, I don’t think even I can defuse this one.*

“You absolute asshole what the hell-“

“Pfffttshhh, like you didn’t deserve it ohmygod-“

...*Nope, no defusing this one.*

“I’m gonna let you guys sort this one out!” Micheala called, which usually wasn’t necessary in a general, normal conversation where you were footsteps away from one another,

but this *was* Catty and Stella she was speaking to. That was always different. “Be safe -- see you guys later!”

“I’M NEVER FORGIVING YOU-“

“You’re so ridiculous Catts oh my *god*-“

Turning away from her two best friends (and hoping the two’s incoming physical scuffle didn’t end up killing one of them), the tabby was left to walk home alone. Of course, the walk wasn’t *too* far away – a couple minutes, maybe five, and she’d be right back under the roof of the barn, her owners’ cottage in near sight by then. The thought was enough to make her smile – Micheala loved her owners almost more than anything on this Earth – but one of them was (secretly-not-so-secretly) her most favorite for a multitude of reasons she couldn’t even pin down in a day’s time.

Living on a farm was nice, the tabby thought. It was all she’d ever really known, after all! Micheala’s earliest memories were of the farm and her owners, and she couldn’t really remember much past then besides angry rainy days and no shelter. Everything before she had come to live with the two she did now – memories that were mostly hidden and all from her days as a nearly newborn kitten – just seemed like a nightmare come true.

It was good she was happy and safe now. She wouldn’t want it any other way, after all.

As she approached the cottage and slid herself under the thin metal gate, the sense of ‘home’ echoed warmly within her heart. For a second, she paused while watching the small white house and let the joy of being *home* and being *safe* and being where she *belonged*, being where things were what she knew and had always known consume her for a few seconds. There was nothing better, in Micheala’s opinion, than that; being where you’d always been, where things were familiar, where things were, without a doubt, *safe*.

After giving herself the appropriate amount of time to indulge, she staked forwards.

“Oh, dear *lord*, Tom!” As the tabby swept from under the cat latch, she had snuck her way in just in time to see a domestic dispute unfold right before her very eyes, one that was much more kind and sweet in nature than ... well, really *anything*. Her two owners – who she’d known as Tom and Addison ever since she was a tiny, tiny kitten – were almost sickeningly sweet in their relationship, gentle and soft and kind and loving. It came to Micheala suddenly that she’d never even *seen* a real fight between the elderly couple, and that anything even treading the lines of a “fight” was always patched up with jokes and hugs and kisses in mere seconds.

“Whaaat?” Micheala easily picked up the responding voice as Tom’s as she slunk around the corner. “Is there something wrong?”

If there was anything the tabby could note about her favorite owner (though she wouldn’t ever admit it, of course, she could hurt Addison’s feelings, and Addison mattered

too!), it was that he had a strong sense of benignity and innocence she'd never seen in anyone else. His words were always pronounced softly and kindly, so sweetly said it almost ached your heart to hear. So sweet, it almost made you afraid, for it felt like the world would trample all over such a sincere soul.

As Micheala rounded the table, her eyes quickly picked up what was wrong. Now sitting across from her was Tom, dirt and dust smudged on every possible crevice of his face and hair twisted into the most complicated of rat nests. However, his eyes were trained on his wife, neither realizing their pet had come for a greeting.

"Really?" Addison huffed, and without another warning, she whipped out a hairbrush and began belligerently combing through Tom's hair. "How'd you even do this, Tom? You look'a wreck, Christ almighty!"

If there was one thing about Addison, on the other hand, it was that she was very, *very* neat. "Well, you know the chickens-" Cleanliness was something that had apparently ran strong in her bloodline (Micheala would know, she had heard them discussing it before!), and it clashed head-on with Tom's down-to-earth attitude and slightly slobbish manners. "Of course I do, but our own *cat* attracts less flies and crap than you, Tommy, and she always hangs around in that darned barn!" He was the politest person to ever exist (and also the absolute *best*), but he as well got dirtier than practically anyone. Did dirt just come to him like that, like a magnet? He never *tried* to get dirty or anything. Micheala let out a fat yawn, her own ponderings starting to tire her out, along with the day's work.

Almost immediately, both adults swung their heads in complete unison towards the tabby. She met them just as fast, round blue eyes aglow and another small, soft mew peeping itself from between her jaws. Even if neither said anything, Micheala kind of felt like they could understand her – at least, she *knew* Tom could. She always knew that he could – he was special, after all. "She's..." the man trailed off as the plump tabby made a lopsided attempt to her paws and scampered over hastily, finishing her short journey by slithering her way onto the couch.

There, Micheala dipped softly under Tom's touch, pressing her head up against his hand. The elderly man responded in tune with simple strokes all over the she-cat's body, and a warm, sunny-like happiness worked its way up onto his face.

"She's not just any cat, though," Tom remarked, a soft chuckle punctuating his words. "She's Micheala – my Micheala, *our* Micheala."

"Our little mouser," the sides of Addison's mouth followed suit, perking up into a small smile. "And she came to us like a lil ol' miracle, too!"

"Miracle mouser Micheala." Her – a *miracle*?! And *she* considered both Tom and Addison her heroes!

She peered up softly at the two, who crooned over her with rough yet gentle hands. “She’ll always keep the rats out of the chicken coop,” the older lady said softly. With that, she took back her hands and scurried back to her mass of cleaning supplies, fishing out a rag and a spray bottle with fickle fingers. “Now, Tommy, you *better* keep yourself clean. I ain’t gonna mother you over here.”

Tom only chuckled softly. “I wouldn’t want that in the first place, darling.”

The two had always had such a sweet relationship, Micheala thought. They just ... always had so much love and care in their eyes, and rarely ever fought (if they ever did, it was always playful and toned so kindly it would still be impossible to decode). She thought she was incredibly lucky to have such kind owners.

As she dipped one last time under Tom’s touch, she plopped herself down and curled up in his lap instead, enjoying the heat radiating from the window. Life... was good. *Great*. It was great on this farm, with colorful and kind friends, a home that always stood within comfortable range and similarity – Micheala could not ask for more. It was a perfect home.



Life was good on the farm.

