# The Fire Cat

By Esther Averill

***Chapter 1 PICKLES***

Once upon a time, there was a yellow cat with black spots on his fur. His name was Pickles. (pg 5)

Pickles was a young cat. His paws were big. And he wished to do big things with them. But where could Pickles find anything big to do? (pg 6)

Pickles lived in a barrel. The barrel was all that he had for a home. (pg 7)

Pickles's barrel was in an old yard where there was nothing big to do. So, what did Pickles do? (pg 8)

He ran after little cats. He ran after every little cat that came into the yard. And he chased the little cat out of the yard. This was a bad, bad thing. But it was all that Pickles could find to do. (pg 9)

Next to Pickles's yard was a house. In the house lived many cats who called out to Pickles, "You are bad. You cannot be our friend." But Pickles did have a friend in the house. His friend was Mrs. Goodkind. (pg 10)

Everyday Mrs. Goodkind came into the yard and gave Pickles something to eat. (pg 12)

One day Mrs. Goodkind said "Pickles, you are not a bad cat. You are not a good cat. You are good and bad. And bad and good. You are a mixed-up cat. What you need is a good home. Then you will be good." (pg 13)

Mrs. Goodkind picked up the mixed-up cat. She took him into her home to live. (pg 14)

In Mrs. Goodkind's home there was a pretty chair for Pickles to sit on. There were toys for him to play with. (Pg 15)

But Pickles did not want to sit on a pretty chair. He did not want to play with toys. So, he ran back to his barrel in the yard. And he began to chase the little cats again. (pg 16)

Mrs. Goodkind said to Pickles, "Things cannot go on like this. Something will happen." (pg 17)

The next day Pickles chased a little cat up an old tree. He climbed after her. (pg 18)

Pickles sat up in the tree near the little cat. He would not let her climb down. (pg 19)

After a time, the wind began to blow. It blew and blew and blew. And the rain came down hard. It came down harder and harder. At last Pickles let the little cat climb down and go home. Pickles wanted to climb down, too. He wanted to get back into his barrel. But he could not climb down. Sometimes this happens to a cat. And it happened to Pickles. (pg 20)

Mrs. Goodkind ran to the tree. "Pickles!" she called. "Please try to climb down." But Pickles could not climb down. (pg 21)

Mrs. Goodkind ran into her house. Pickles could see her by the window. She was talking on the telephone. Then she called out to Pickles, "The firemen are coming!" (pg 22)

A fire truck came up the street and stopped at Pickles's yard. The firemen jumped down from the truck. (pge 23)

Mrs. Goodkind came out of her house. She ran to the firemen and pointed to Pickles. The firemen put a ladder against the tree. One of the firemen began to climb up the ladder. (pg 24)

The fireman climbed to the top of the ladder. “Come, cat,” he said to Pickles. “Let me help you.” The fireman picked up Pickles and tucked him into his coat. Then he took Pickles down the ladder– down to Mrs. Goodkind. (pg 26)

“Mrs. Goodkind,” said the fireman, “is this your cat?”
“No, Joe,” said Mrs. Goodkind. “Pickles has no home, and he does not want to live with me.”
“Why, “ asked Joe.
Mrs. Goodkind answered, “My home is too little for Pickles. Pickles is a cat who wishes to do big things. And someday he will do them. Look at his big paws.” (pg 29)

Pickles put out a paw for Joe to see.
“My goodness, Pickles,” said Joe, “what big paws you have!”
Pickles looked at Joe and said the one word he could say: “MEOW!” And Joe could see that Pickles wanted something very much. (pg 30)

Joe gave Pickles a pat. “Pickles,” he said. “I will take you to our firehouse. Maybe our Chief will let you stay.” (pg 31)

***Chapter 2: THE FIRE CAT***

Joe took Pickles to the Chief, who was sitting at his desk. (pg 32)

“Oh!” said the Chief. “I know this young cat. He is the one who chases little cats.”
“How do you know?” asked Joe.
The Chief answered, “A Fire Chief knows many things.” (pg 34)

Just then the telephone began to ring. “Hello,” said the Chief. “Oh hello, Mrs. Goodkind. Yes, Pickles is here. He came with Joe. What did you say? You think Pickles would like to live in our firehouse? Well, we shall see. Thank you, Mrs. Goodkind. Goodbye.” (pg 35)

The Chief looked at Pickles and said, “Mrs. Goodkind says you are not a bad cat. And Joe likes you. I will let you live here *IF* you will learn to be a good firehouse cat.” Pickles walked quietly up the stairs after Joe. (pg 36)

Joe and Pickles went into a room where the firemen live. The men were pleased to have a cat. They wanted to play with Pickles. But suddenly the fire bell rang. All the firemen ran to a big pole and down they went. The pole was the fast way to get to their trucks. Pickles could hear the trucks start up and rush off to the fire. (pg 38)

Pickles said to himself, “I must learn to do what the firemen do. I must learn to slide down the pole.” He jumped and put his paws around the pole. (pg 40)

Down he fell with a BUMP. (pg 41)

“Bumps or no bumps, I must try again,” said Pickles. Up the stairs he ran. Down the pole he came – and bumped. He tried again – and bumped. But by the time the firemen came back from the fire, Pickles could slide down the pole.
“What a wonderful cat you are!” said the firemen. The Chief did not say anything. (pg 42)

Pickles said to himself, “I must keep on learning everything I can.” So, he learned to jump up on one of the big trucks. (pg 44)

And he learned to sit up straight on the seat while the truck raced to a fire.

“What a wonderful cat you are!” said the firemen. The Chief did not say anything. (pg 45)

Pickles said to himself, “Now I must learn to help the firemen with their work.”
At the next fire, he jumped down from the truck. He ran to a big hose, put his paws around it, and tried to help a fireman shoot the water at the flames.
“What a wonderful cat you are!” said the firemen. The Chief did not say anything. (p 46)

The next day the Chief called all the firemen to his desk. Then he called for Pickles. Pickles did not know what was going to happen. He said to himself, “Maybe the Chief does not like the way I work. Maybe he wants to send me back to my old yard.” But Pickles went to the Chief. At the Chief’s desk stood all the fireman – and Mrs. Goodkind! (pg 48)

The Chief said to Pickles, “I have asked Mrs. Goodkind to come because she was your first friend. Pickles, jump up on my desk. I have something to say to you.” Pickles jumped up on the desk and looked at the Chief. Out of the desk the Chief took – a little fire hat! (pg 50)

“Pickles,” said the Chief, “I have watched you at your work. You have worked hard. The time has come for you to know that you are now our Fire Cat.” And with these words, the Chief put the little hat on Pickles’s head. (pg 51)

***Chapter 3: THE OLD TREE***

Pickles made friends with all the firemen. But he did not make friends with any cats. When cats came to the firehouse to look at the trucks, Pickles chased them away. (pg 52)

The Chief called Pickles to him and said, “A Fire Cat must be kind to everyone. You must be good to other cats.” Little by little, Pickles learned to be good to the cats he met. He made friends with them, too. (pg 53)

Then all the cats loved to come to the firehouse. (pg 54)

On rainy days, most cats stayed at home, and Pickles sat upstairs with the firemen. One rainy day, as he sat there, he thought to himself, “How bad I was when I chased the other cats. Once I chased a little cat up a tree. Oh, me! Oh, my! Why did I do that?” Suddenly Pickles heard the Chief call out, “Cat in a tree!” pg 55)

Fireman Joe and two other men slid down the pole. Pickles slid down after them. (pg 56)

He heard the Chief say, “The tree is in the old yard next to Mrs. Goodkind’s house.”
“Oh,” thought Pickles. “That’s the yard where I lived. And that’s *THE TREE*.” Pickles jumped up on the truck with the three firemen. (pg 57)

Away they rode to the yard. And there, in the wind and the rain, stood Mrs. Goodkind, pointing to a very little cat. The firemen put a ladder against the tree. The ladder scared the little cat, and she ran to a high branch where a fireman could not go. Joe said to Mrs. Goodkind, “I don’t know what to do.” But Pickles knew. He began to climb the ladder. (pg 58)

Pickles climbed up and up and up. It was hard work. But at last, he came to the top of the ladder. Then he climbed up the tree until he came to the little cat. “Come, cat,” he said to her. “Let me help you.” (pg 60)

He picked her up and took her gently down to Mrs. Goodkind. (pg 61)

Mrs. Goodkind thanked Pickles. Then she said to him, “I always knew that someday you would do big things. Today you have done something very big.” Pickles waved a paw at her, as if to say, “Mrs. Goodkind, this is only a beginning.” And he rode home to the firehouse– a proud and happy cat. (pg 63)