

A sneak preview of

## Little Truff

*Aged three months, Little Truff has just left the kennels where she was born and taken to her new home.*

### CHAPTER ONE

Murphy was the most eccentric cat I've ever known. He was my best friend, neighbour and a compulsive thief.

Because a lot had happened to me in such a short time I was feeling completely bewildered sitting on the back porch of my new home.

Facing me was a wide strip of lawn and a row of fruit trees bordering a high fence with a vegetable garden along the western boundary, and an A-frame kennel sat between the apple and the pear. The expanse of grass was a bonus. As I stepped onto it I felt like a lone frog in a large green pond.

I'd just been for a tiddle when suddenly I heard a thump. I spun around in the direction of the noise but my nose had told me what to expect long before I saw him.

A handsome, muscular, marmalade cat stood on the grass between the grapefruit and the mandarin trees. He had someone's old grey sock hanging from his mouth. I don't know who was more surprised, him or me.

Arching his back and fluffing out his fur made him appear twice his size as he lashed his tail threateningly and growled.

From the corners of my eyes, I could see him sizing me up. Now if there is one thing I already knew, it is never *ever* eyeball a cat – especially a strange one. I averted my gaze but stayed where I was, sitting on the ground with a bump.

'Hi,' I said, trying to sound calm. 'Who're you?'

After his initial surprise he regained his poise. Dropping his trophy, he fixed me with a brittle stare. 'So, you're not afraid of cats. Most unusual. Are you a boy or a girl?'

'A girl.'

'What's your name?'

'I don't have one yet. My mistress didn't like my kennel name, and she hasn't made up her mind.'

'I see. 'How old are you, then?'

'Eight weeks. And *I* like cats. My breeder had a Burmese.'

‘Well, well, well!’ the marmalade mused, his expression softening. ‘My name’s Murphy. I live next door at number eight.’ Stepping up close to peer at me he asked, ‘What kind of dog are you?’

‘I’m a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel,’ I replied proudly, straightening my back and lifting my chin to show I wasn’t afraid. ‘The breed King Charles the Second fancied,’ I added, turning my head ever so slightly so I could see him better. ‘You may call me “Little Cav” for now.’

His coat glowing like amber in the afternoon sun as it slowly smoothed back against his body, he twitched his whiskers. ‘It’ll be a pleasure,’ he said. ‘Come to think of it, I’ve seen your type before. It was black, if I remember rightly, with bits of brown here and there.’

‘That would be a black and tan,’ I offered. ‘Cavaliers come in four different colours: black and tan, tricolour, ruby and Blenheim.’

‘So what are you?’

‘I’m a Blenheim,’ I said, ‘because I have a pearl coat with chestnut markings.’

‘Then why aren’t you called a pearl and tan? It’d make more sense,’ he scoffed, scrutinising me intensely. ‘Your owner should call you Spot.’

‘No, thank you! I want a nicer name than that.’

‘Well, why not Dot then, after that splodge on top of your head! It’s big enough,’ he grinned, as he sat on his haunches. ‘Maybe a bird went *splat*?’ he added tucking his tail neatly around his front paws.

‘You’re rude,’ I retorted, turning to face him, ‘and ignorant, too. This is my *lucky spot*. It’s an asset.’

His whiskers wiggled as a Cheshire cat grin spread from ear to ear. ‘Since when has a *single spot* been an *asset*?’ he asked patronisingly.

‘Since 1704, to be exact,’ I stated primly. He hadn’t expected that.

