

## **A Fabulous Fluffy Tail**

The four lands that joined together at the centre of Wooded Crossing belonged to the crows, the dogs, the cats and the hummingbirds. It was a soft day in Wooded Crossing. High clouds had rolled in that morning, blocking the sun. Spring buds and fresh greenery could be seen everywhere. All four lands were quiet except for the morning birdsong in the distance. That was until the kittens and the puppies woke up! They shook their fluffy heads and ran outside to play, jumping and tumbling over each other.

The kittens and the puppies would run each morning to the centre of Wooded Crossing and play together. They would hide and seek, and race and tumble, and make up games that made each other laugh.

They greeted each other with the customary yaps and pounces, then the fun and games commenced. They had a lovely morning playing.

Their bellies were just starting to grumble when the air began to feel heavy. Slowly water began to fall from the sky. Steadily and softly, small raindrops came down over Wooded Crossing. The puppies and kittens had just felt the first drops hit their noses, when they heard their parents calling them home for lunch. They ran gratefully out of the rain to their respective homes, excited to see what deliciousness they would find waiting for them in their food bowls.

After a hearty lunch (and a short nap), the puppies and the kittens enthusiastically ran outside again. When they met at their usual play spot, they were disappointed to find everything was wet and they could feel their fluffy baby fur dampening, along with their spirits.

"Oh, it's still raining," whined Tabby Kitten.

"Actually, it's not raining," said Brown Puppy, like a bossy schoolteacher. "It's spwinkling."

"No it isn't. It's raining," replied Tabby Kitten with a furrowed brow.

"No. It's spwinkling," insisted Brown Puppy as he puffed up his chest with confidence and put a paw on his hip the way he'd seen Mommy do.

"Noooo. It's rain-ing!" argued Tabby Kitten, now thoroughly annoyed.

"NO! It's not. It's spwinkling." said a determined Brown Puppy.

Tabby Kitten took an angry step closer to Brown Puppy and narrowed her eyes.

"It's raining!" she hissed.

Brown Puppy stepped forward boldly, lip curling, and yapped, "It's spwinkling!"

All the other kittens and puppies had formed a wide circle around Brown Puppy and Tabby Kitten. They stared wide-eyed while quietly trying to decide – was it raining or was it sprinkling? Whose side were they on?

"Raining!" shouted Tabby Kitten.

"Spwinkling!" yelled Brown Puppy.

"Raining! Hiss!"

"Spwinkling! Grrr!"

Tabby Kitten and Brown Puppy were now face-to-face, almost touching noses, as they began to circle round each other.

Brown Puppy's ears flattened. Tabby Kitten's tail twitched.

High above in the big maple tree, the young crows had been watching this scene with interest. They usually had their shiny black eyes trained on the puppies and kittens in case they found something of interest that the crows could snatch away with delight, but today held the promise of a rare kind of treat. The young crows fluffed up their feathers, cocked their heads at each other and joined in a loud "Cawww!"

Dropping to the ground, they began to hop around Brown Puppy and Tabby Kitten with excitement.

"Fight! Fight! Fight! Cawww! Fight! Caa-haaw!" chanted the young crows in unison.

A fight between the puppies and the kittens would make for truly excellent entertainment, they thought.

Brown Puppy and Tabby Kitten locked their angry gazes.

Tabby Kitten's twin sister, who was one minute older than Tabby and known for her deep thinking, calmly stepped forward and put a friendly paw on Brown Puppy's bristling shoulder.

"But, puppy," she said, "it *is* raining."

Brown Puppy, blinked, and stared at Tabby Kitten's sister. Doubt briefly rippled across his frowning face, but then his jaw took on a firm resolve and he said,

"But, my mommy said it's spwinkling!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Tabby Kitten's sister in surprise as she stepped away from them.

Tabby Kitten, now confused and frowning at Brown Puppy sternly replied,

"But, MY mommy said it's raining!"

Gasps and murmurs rose from the other puppies and kittens. Everyone knew that Mommy's were always right. How could one mommy be right and the other wrong? How could this be? This was an impossible riddle for puppies and kittens as fluffy as these. Their mommy was always right. So the other mommy must be wrong! They slowly moved into two separate lines, faced each other and bared their teeth. It was Kittens vs. Puppies.

The hummingbirds of Wooded Crossing had seen many wars. Their ancestors had constantly been in battle with neighbouring nests and many lives had been lost amongst the hummingbirds. After the casualties of the Great Honeysuckle War, the remaining elders came together and made a peace accord, which had allowed the newest generation to grow up in peace instead of learning to stab their neighbours in the throat.

Old Ruby was the last of the elders who had survived the Great Honeysuckle War.

At his age, he didn't like to go out when it was damp, but there was so much commotion outside that he roused himself to go and investigate.

Old Ruby zipped over the scene and quickly assessed the situation. Those fluffy young things were fixin' to do battle. He buzzed around their heads and chattered loudly.

"Hey now, fluffies. What's all this about?" asked Old Ruby.

"The kittens think it's raining because their mommy said so, but their mommy is wrong! Our mommy said it's spwinkling." declared Brown Puppy.

"No! The puppieSs' mommy is wrong!" said Tabby Kitten. "It's raining. Our mommy is right."

"Hmmm." grumbled Old Ruby.

He briefly zipped up into the air and flew back and forth, high above the group of agitated animals.

"I see." said Old Ruby as he flew down and hovered between Brown Puppy and Tabby Kitten.

"You know," sighed Old Ruby, "I have seen many wars and they all started with a disagreement, not unlike yours, that grew and grew until it was so big no one could see a way around it or over it. It is important to talk things over while you can still fly over the problem and see it from all sides."

"Sometimes, things are not what they seem", said Old Ruby.

"Today, it is raining." he said.

The puppies frowned.

"And," Old Ruby spoke slowly, "It is also sprinkling."

The kittens gasped.

"You are *both* correct."

There was a confused silence amongst the puppies and kittens. They cocked their heads to the side, trying to comprehend what Old Ruby was saying.

"You're too young to have known this yet, but there are many kinds of rain with many different names." said Old Ruby.

"Both your mommies are correct." said Old Ruby calmly.

"But..." started Tabby Kitten.

"This is a *sprinkling* rain." interrupted Old Ruby firmly.

The puppies and the kittens looked up at the rain.

"Ohhhh." sighed Brown Puppy and Tabby Kitten as understanding spread through their fluffy heads.

The puppies and the kittens began to murmur amongst themselves.

Old Ruby looked at the disappointed young crows and flicked his tail.

"War is terrible for everyone...everyone except for naughty young crows!" growled Old Ruby.

There was a flash of shimmering pink and suddenly the young crows were on their backs, flapping and cawwing madly.

"Wait until your parents hear about this!" shouted Old Ruby as the young crows flew off in disgrace.

Brown Puppy and Tabby Kitten blinked at each other as the sun peaked out from behind the clouds. The rain had stopped.

The puppies and kittens, gratefully, went back to playing and tumbling.

"Puppy pile!" shouted Brown Puppy and Tabby Kitten together.

Moral is:

Sometimes we are saying the same thing, with different words.

Or

Never listen to crows.

or

Puppy piles are better than war.