

Tales from the Stormthrower
Meeka, A day in the life of

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She opened her eyes as the sun insisted to heat up her manes. Searched for a bit of shadow and only found the prying eyes of her mother. School wasn't starting until the late afternoon, so the only bit of shadow left was hauling water out of the lake. She picked up the water basket and slowly walked down the winding road pacing herself to get full exposure to the moistly air along the noisy water channels. Dipped her paws in the cascades as she crossed over one of the channels and continued her walk, stepping on the big platform, where her class would start later that day.

Hugging the walls, circling the open space, she reached the side road down into the next residential area. Avoiding the main road being way to steep so early in the morning. Giving way to bigger cats, she managed gaining some compliments as well as time in the shadow.

In the end the road emptied onto the bypass around the lake. She followed it clockwise, entering the quays a few jumps further on. Wriggled herself under the water basket, making sure both sides were of equal length. Picked up the strap with her mouth and slowly descended down the incline into the nice cool water of the lake. Quickly lapped up some water to quench her thirst, until the bag was starting to weigh down on her body. She stretched her legs to test the distribution. Shook her hindquarters to lose some weight on the left side, then climbed back on the bypass.

Eyeing for bullies she got lucky, quickly stepping in the wake of a big neighbor, she recognized. Her little paws needed twice the paces as the big cat in front of her, but she managed to keep up. Climbing the main road, losing all coolness on the steep hill. Thanked her neighbor, sounding all weird with the strap in her mouth, then sneaked over the filling schoolyard, courtesy of her big brother growling at anyone getting too close to her. Quickly stepped along the winding road, praying all bigger whelps were kicked out of bed early. A growl behind her told her otherwise. Turned to see who was challenging for water. Backed away from the biggest, laziest whelp on the block. Managed to get out some yelps, backing away further. Showed her teeth, when recognizing the marks on the road. Waited for her opponent to close in to get the pleasure of seeing him tumbling through the air, after a well judged slap from the paw of her father. Emptied the water carefully into its basin. Let go of the strap, rolled up the bag, emptying it completely and picked it up after dipping her paws in the cool water to start her second run.

This time she jumped over the schoolyard only stopping to lap up some water at the cascade, knowing her father would be waiting on the way back, protecting the precious water. Unfortunately he had no tolerance for tardiness. Hearing some friendly voices she waited a bit longer until three of her neighborhood friends joined her. Jumping down the main road, they filled up their bags and stepped back up in formation. Teaming up they were bolder growling

at potential threats. An almost full-grown male came teasingly close but stepped on remembering their teeth all too well from a few days earlier.

Again they waited at the cascade quenching their thirst until the huge shape of her father insured free passage over the schoolyard and back home. With the early run and the now full basin, she had some time to close her eyes in a shady corner, just too slow to react as her friend came collecting her for the grass run. They rolled laughing through the sleeping quarters, quickly emptied out onto the road, to fall in line behind her friend's father, the biggest male on the block.

They took the main road up, out of the city, almost jumped one of the more careless birds at the refuge pile, getting back in line, haunted by the sound of the bird mocking her failure.

One of the attending females pointed them towards a patch of long grass and at the sound of her friend stretching father, she carefully lay out her bag. Clawed the nails of her front paws through the sand, then with a quick slap cleaved the grass toppling it right into her bag. Slashed more, adjusting her bag every time the row ended. Piling them up onto the amount she could carry, when she tugged it back to the road. Divided with her nose the pile in two halves. Freed the strap by clawing it over the soft part of the grass, then went over to the other side to tap at the stalks just enough to free the strap at that side. Got hold of both bag and strap and tugged hard. Got it up high enough. Crawled under it head first and stretched her legs, widening the gap. Big enough to crawl under. Repeated the procedure on the other side, then glanced over at her friend father, who nodded and shoved over to guard the grass.

Helping her friends with tugging their bags, the area around the huge cat filled up. A loud roar meant competition. They rushed over to the smallest of the group. Lacking the skill she was hacking at each stalk way too long before it fell. And never onto her bag. She pushed her aside and started slashing the grass, not caring where they landed, as the others were piling them up quicker than she could fell them. Slashed the last. Her friend strapped the little whelp in and together they raced back diving under their bags just in time to save them from being trashed.

Two males were eyeing up there protector way bigger than them, trying to create an opening for their smaller companions. The arrival of ten small cats, however, cooled their urge, moving away searching for easier targets. They bunched up, the small whelp protectively in the middle and stepped back to the city.

With their protector actively showing brawn and vigilance, they passed the refuge mount and onto the main road unchallenged as all saw the six big cats lying at the side of the road, getting up and following them when they passed, each close to his offspring. One by one they split from the pack, promising to meet each other later down by the lake.

Carefully she pawed at the few remaining stalks of grass still on the stockpile, putting them aside. Unloaded one side of her burden in one go, stacking the other side one by one on the pile, finishing with the older ones. Put the bag to the side on its spot and went to lie at the

side of the basin her front paws dangling in the water, closing her eyes to let the hottest part of the day glide by.

Waking at the sound of her father move in his sleep she stretched lazily and strolled outside. Taking the scenic route down to the lake she made sure she passed as many cascades she could find. Not bothering to use the bypass she jumped straight into the lake swimming across it to the shallows. Closing her eyes, happily waiting, watching through narrow slits, checking what was happening around the lake shore.

More and more friends joined her in the shallows, until the big cats on the shore rose from their slumber and walked off into the city. They all swam the gap between them and the shore and started their favorite game, catch and let go, until the sun disappeared behind the lonely rock way up on the side of the gorge. A last dive into the lake and all dissipated. Each to their own schoolyard.

With the wind having been picking up, most likely they would have a lesson out on the greens, hunting for small animals. She and her friends were just in time to join the queue out of the gorge. Now and again as the teachers where distracted, jumping the girls in front of them, to get to their designated spot in the line.

The wind had swollen so much she had to close her eyes, only looking through her thick lashes to keep out the scorching sand. Hugging the ground, following their teacher onto the open grasslands. Did the practices she showed them almost thoughtlessly, having done them ever so many times. Then got leave to start their runs.

She watched at the efforts of her classmates, staying flat on the ground, always watchful of the sand dancing far away in the wind. Counted down the leaps of time when the sand revealed a larger gust of wind. Set off, gaining speed heading for the flat rock in front of her. Jumped from it right into the storm search, boosting her high into the air. Waited to turn, gaining height. Rolled her body, with the wind, stretching out, riding it until she spotted a potential prey. Put her head down and legs under her body swooping down to the grass, she nearly got it, overshot, crashed in the long stems, turned and was lucky the mouse had reacted jumping up, blown right into her mouth,

Triumphant she crawled through the grass, back to her class. The tiny mouse was nothing compared to the prey brought in by the bigger girls, but it was her first kill and no matter what the other thought of it, she was proud and made sure the teacher got a good look at it.

Back in between her friends she shared the snack with them and helped the little one, letting her stand on her back to catch wind and glide a little as other had done to her. But when the sands blew high in the distance, she ordered her little neighbor down to the ground and together with bigger friends she started a second run. The stronger wind gust swooped her much higher, so straight away she adjusted her height, diving closer to the ground. Stretched out gliding the wind and found a good target. Shot down, only to see one of the bigger girls

crash nearby, making the small deer jump up to escape. Put her head up riding the wind to chase it and misjudged its landing spot, seeing it race straight into the wind, out of sight.

Rolling through the grass she congratulated herself with so nice a landing and went struggling against the wind back to class. Entered the group, facing complaints from the bigger girl of chasing away her kill. She looked at the group, then apologized for swooping in, seeing her misjudge the location of the small deer by at least four jumps, did not realize she already had the speed to chase the little jumper. Then turned and apologized to her teacher for losing the kill, misjudging its jump. The group grinned seeing her images as real and let her pass through, to her friends. With some big girls taking notice of her she decided to stick with the group, playing jumping games until it was time to go home.

Several girls jumped out of the line trying for the hateful carrion birds. But as careless as they seemed, the cats were always that little bit too slow. She too was eyeing one of the birds, judging distance, calculated escape moves it could make. Thought of the mouse then made a jump, smaller than she was capable of. Saw the bird launching itself into the wind. Jumped again now full stretch, smashing the struggling bird right out of its flight. Crashed on the ground, turned, looking for the bird and saw it under the paws of the big girl. Got respect from her and smiling she collected the bird and stepped back in line, to add her piece to the banquet already on display on the schoolyard.

She ate her fill and helped bringing the remaining bones to the refuge pile. It was probably her imagination, but it seemed like the birds were keeping their distance from her. Back at home she curled up on the grass and hoped of a dream about the great flying sand cat.

The End