



The Friendship Fire

The school bell cut through the air, muffling Whaea Stevie's sentence about pythagoras theorem, something about the sum of all sides equalling something, something else. The students in the class couldn't care less. Whaea Stevie's students found it difficult enough paying attention in the cooler months, let alone the warmer months when the summer air and beach holidays starting calling the students names.

Just like a flock of birds who had spotted an abandoned loaf of bread, the students frantically gathered their belongings, eyes all pointed towards the classroom door, freedom beckoning them for the weekend.

"The bell doesn't excuse you I do" swaked Whaea Stevie.

Maddie's hand shot up, the only student who had remained seated at her desk, notes and pens sprawled out in front of her.

"Whaea stevie, our math homework is due Monday isn't it" Maddie eagerly said. The whole class let out an audible groan.

“Oh yes, I almost forgot! Everyone please remember your homework due Monday morning, 8am on the dot.” Whaea Stevie said, packing up her desk for the day. “Oh and you’re all dismissed”.

“Thanks a lot Maddie” Maddie looked up from her desk and saw Chey standing over her, arms crossed with a mean expression plastered across her face. Maddie and Chey had been neighbours ever since they were little, they had even been friends once, but not anymore. Since growing apart following an unfortunate fall out over a silly misunderstanding, Maddie had committed herself to the books whilst Chey had committed herself to her blossoming friendship circle.

“You know you should really stop being such a nerd” sneered Chey. Ignoring Chey’s jabs, Maddie packed up her paperwork carefully into her leather satchel and pushed past Chey and her minions. Maddie knew that although her classmates may hate her now for her bookish ways, they would thank her in the future when they were throwing up their graduation caps in the air, cheering her on as she made her valedictorian speech. Realising she was yet again daydreaming, Maddie brought her head back down to earth and made her way to the school paddock.

There in the school paddock resided the horses of the students at Blue Bell school. Ironically, Chey’s horse Wendy and Maddie’s horse Cardi were best of friends, spending their days grazing the paddock together, never leaving one another’s sides.

As Maddie called over Cardi, Wendy loyally followed behind until they were both right at the gate, both of them nuzzling into each of Maddie’s hands for a pat. “Um, what are you doing?” Maddie turned to see Chey standing alone, a rare occurrence Maddie thought, her minions were nowhere in sight.

“I am just calling over Cardi, you know Cardi and Wendy love each other” Maddie answered meekly. “Whatever,” Chey responded.

Both girls mounted her horses and awkwardly pivoted to ride the same way home. This was the bad part about living next to your enemy, not that there were truly any upsides to it.

Not wanting to be seen with the school loser, Chey galloped ahead with Wendy, leaving Maddie and Cardi in their dust. With a sigh, Maddie and Cardi began their trot home, making sure not to go too quickly to catch up with Chey.

10 minutes into a silence trot home, Maddie’s ears picked at a loud neigh and scream which could have only come from Wendy and Chey, squinting her eyes Maddie made out in the distance Wendy bolting towards the town’s cornfield with Chey clinging on for dear life on her back.

Without a moment more to think, Cardi suddenly reared up on her back legs and darted towards her best friend Wendy. Letting out a scream, Maddie too clung on for dear life as Cardi galloped to the aid of Wendy.

As Chey closed in on the field she noted an amber glow, a fire. "Oh no". A sea of fire stretched out, 10 metres long, steadily growing as neighbouring plants began to burn. Every day since Chey had started at Blue Bell academy she had passed this cornfield and never thought anything of it. Each summer it grew tall and plentiful and each winter it was so barren it felt almost impossible that any crop would survive there. But to see it aflame now was a new sensation, it was pain, fear, an emptiness but also a heaviness felt at the pit of Chey's stomach, a sensation likened to that of a stomach which hadn't seen a bite of food for days.

With no control over her horse, Chey started screaming for help, she knew she needed to put out before it threatened the townhouses it neighboured, but she knew this was not something she was going to be able to stop herself.

"Chey! Wendy!" A distant cry from a familiar voice caused Chey to pull her eyes from the blaze, whipping her head around to see Maddie and Cardi as they charged towards the scene. "We need to get this fire put out before it's too late," Chey screamed.

"I know, we need a plan and we need it fast," Maddie breathlessly replied.

At this moment in time the two girls weren't enemies, they were allies. Eyes wild and alert the two girls started running through ideas, each one more complicated than the last until Chey spotted it, a puddle of water left in a hoof print of Cardi's

"I know what we can do," Chey exclaimed.

"One of the major water supply pipes is running right under us, we need to dig down and start filling up buckets with water."

With wide eyes Maddie nodded in agreement.

The two girls leaped from their horses and started to dig for dear life. The horses still spooked from bright orange blaze reared on their horses and sped towards town leaving the girls alone.

Whipping her head up from the ground, Maddie gasped in horror as the horses disappeared down the hill.

"That's ok, someone in the town will see Wendy and Cardi together without us and know that something is up, they'll bring back help." Chey tried to reassure Maddie.

Turning their attention back to the ground, Chey and Maddie started digging like mad women.

Then, a tiny splash of water hit Maddie's leg, a grin of disbelief and pure happiness spread across her face

"Chey! Chey! Yes!" she squealed

Chey looked at Maddie and laughed and they continued to dig. The fire wasn't getting any smaller, the girls could feel the heat of the flame licking their backs as they dug for dear life.

As they started to reach a larger supply of water, Maddie ran to get a couple of buckets that was conveniently close by while Chey continued to dig, splattering mud over both the girls. Chey helped maddie fill the first couple of buckets and they threw them over the fire.

"It's working" Chey exclaimed

Chey continued to fill up the buckets with the muddy, muggy, messy water and throw it over the fire, and although it was putting out the fire, she could see on one side, the upside of the hill, the fire was burning bright.

"Look over there!"

Chey turned to see where Maddie was watching Wendy and Cardi running back towards them from the town, behind them were the townspeople with a large hose to help fight the fire.

A big shower of water came over the cornfield, extinguishing the fire. If there was the perfect opportunity to play celebratory music from a UE boom, it would be now.

Maddie and Chey turned to each other and embraced in a big hug. In this moment they had forgotten all their differences and they were a team, two friends, heroes.

The two girls walked back to town hand and hand, laughing and giggling together where the town's Mayor met them at the ice cream parlour to award them two large scoops of ice cream.

"Okkkkkkkkkrrrrr" Maddie said before taking a lick of ice cream, Chey threw her head back and laughed.

"Thank you girls for your bravery and teamwork, together you have saved the town from burning down!"

The Mayor awarded both the girls a medal of honour, if he had had a couple of UE booms in the back, they would have gotten one of those too.

That night the two girls went to bed knowing that they were bonded for life, as best friends and as heroes.

