

the Improbable Imagination of Michela Mouse
"Call Me Michela"

Chris Otsuki

chris otsuki
burbank ca 91504
(818) 767-8181
chrisotsuki@ca.rr.com

THE IMPROBABLE IMAGINATION OF MICHELA MOUSE

"CALL ME MICHELA"

INT. TIN CAN - ON MICHELA - NIGHT

NOTE: suggest that like *the wizard of oz*, everything is monochromatic SEPIA TONES until Michela's fantasy when we go to full color.

Our cute little mouse, MICHELA sits inside a tin can. Michela puts up a bit of label on the inside wall. Indeed, we see the whole inside of the can is decorated with various human labels, eg. DO NOT REMOVE LABEL, CLOSE COVER BEFORE STRIKING, NEW IMPROVED FORMULA! etc.

MICHELA (V.O.)

Call me Michela... I suppose you never heard the story of Whiskas the Great Cat-whale.

Through the opening in the can behind her, we see a silvery full moon. Michela gazes at it dreamily.

MICHELA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Well, his tale... and mine... starts here...

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

We see a small, neat cottage in a dingy little alleyway. And at the foot of the kitchen window, we see Michela's little tin can home tucked away amidst a small garden of tomato plants.

MICHELA (V.O.)

...in a little house on the corner of Gray Street and Rainbow Avenue...

CUT TO:

INT. COTTAGE BASEMENT

A flooded basement. Bottles and crates float. PAN up the wooden stairs to the doorway. Silhouetted there we see...

THE HUMAN (VO)

Sandy? Auntie Flo. My basement is completely flooded again...

SFX: PHONE CHATTER.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

We see THE HUMAN, a woman, older, but smartly dressed, making a phone call. (NOTE ARTISTS: we NEVER, EVER see her face)

THE HUMAN
Are you coming over to fix it
tomorrow?

We see a mangy cat, sour as last week's curdled milk, WHISKAS, curled up in a cat basket at her feet. Whiskas starts mouthing her complaints. He's heard this routine a million times and he's as tired of it as the long suffering, unseen Sandy on the telephone.

THE HUMAN (CONT'D)
You promised, that's all I can say.
I'll expect you eight AM. Sharp!

PHONE CHATTER and CLICK! Whiskas cringes at the sound. The human's feet start tapping nervously.

THE HUMAN (CONT'D)
He never calls... never visits...
And me, his own Auntie Flo...

Whiskas covers his ears, trying to shut out the lady's grousing and get some shut eye. Suddenly a broom comes down on his head. SWAT!

THE HUMAN (CONT'D)
Whiskas! Catch some mice! Earn your
keep!

Whiskas reluctantly stretches and yawns. PAN as the Human stalks around nervously as Whiskas heads for the cat door.

THE HUMAN (muttering) (CONT'D)
Trying to keep this house from falling
apart--The least *you* can do is catch
those filthy vermin--

Whiskas grumbles a meow. The broom comes down again on his head. He ducks out the cat door.

CUT TO:

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Whiskas steps out the cat door. We can hear the Human nagging him through the door.

THE HUMAN
You hear me, Whisk-a--

The catdoor swings shut, mercifully cutting her off.

WHISKAS

I hear, I hear, ya old coot.

He scuttles down the steps to the alleyway. He strolls over to the trash cans where Michela's tin can home lies. He taps on the lid.

The lid lifts up and our heroine MICHELA peeks out. She's youthful, bright, cheerful, sweet tempered--everything that Whiskas isn't.

WHISKAS (CONT'D)

Come on, kid. The Human's on her high horse again. We gotta do the chase thing.

MICHELA

What's The Story today, Whiskas?

Whiskas rolls his eyes. He fishes around in the trash can.

WHISKAS

(sigh)

Story? Oh yeah... the incredible, Pulitzer prize winning story...

MICHELA

Some day I'll earn one, Whiskas. You'll see.

WHISKAS

Sure, sure. Here, Melville, read this.

He tears off a bit of label and hands it to her. She swoons as she reads it:

HARMFUL OR FATAL IF SWALLOWED

MICHELA

(reading)

Harmful... or Fatal... if swallowed.
Oh! This is a wonderful one, Whiskas!

WHISKAS

Hah? What's so wonderful 'bout a warning off a can a' motor oil?

COLOR INTERLUDE FADES IN as she talks. The wind whips up. The sky turns blue and the BG behind them changes to the ocean, with a tall ship sailing and a whale spouting far off to the distance. SFX: SEAGULLS.

MICHELA

Oh, Whiskas. Suppose... suppose you were Michela the sea mouse... and you were swallowed up by Whiskas the giant Cat-whale...

WHISKAS

I should be so lucky.

MICHELA

...That could be *harmful or fatal if swallowed--*

Whiskas motions impatiently. The Imaginary COLORS fade.

WHISKAS

Yeah, sure kid... Make with the chase thing before she sells me for catgut.

Michela perches herself onto Whiskas's head. He trots back to the cat-door, holding it open for her. With a curtsy she leaps through, into the kitchen. Immediately we hear:

THE HUMAN (V.O.)

Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeek!!!! Rat! Filthy vermin! Whiskas? Whiskas!!!!

With a disgusted SIGH, Whiskas leaps through the cat-door.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN

Michela scurries through kitchen, dashing between the table and chair legs. We follow her as she runs underneath a chair, upon which is perched the HUMAN.

THE HUMAN

Ooooo! There it goes, Whiskas!
Whiskas! Catch it!

In hot pursuit, Whiskas bangs into one chair legs. SLAM! He rubs his nose which is dented in with the impression of the chair leg. A broom WHACKS him on the head.

THE HUMAN (CONT'D)

Catch it, you worthless piece of furniture stuffing!

She WHACKS him OS after Michela.

WHISKAS

Merooooow!

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM

Michela runs along the floor. Whiskas skitters in the doorway behind her, PANTING HEAVILY.

Michela leaps up along a bureau, passing a china plate picturing clipper ships at harbor in San Francisco. Standing atop a folded up newspaper proclaiming EXTRA, she pauses and looks back for Whiskas. He leaps onto the edge of the bureau after her.

THE HUMAN

Whiskas!

She pauses in front of the plate, picturing San Francisco harbor.

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO WHARFS - CIRCA 1870

NOTE: scenes are COLOR till specified otherwise.

THE HUMAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Whiskas! Whiskaaaaaas...

We see Michela, walking the streets of San Francisco. She's now CAPTAIN MICHELA, dressed in the greatcoat of a US Naval officer. The docks and ships are the same as in the china plate. Mice in human clothing of the time scurry the boardwalk. She walks OS revealing a little PAPERMOUSE hawking newspapers.

PAPERMOUSE

(voice blends from
previous)

...Whiskas the Cat-whale, Terror of
the Seven Seas! All shipping
threatened!

The mouse GOVERNOR and the mouse ADMIRAL of the Navy scurry past the papermouse to Michela, snatching one of the papers.

GOVERNOR

Captain Michela! Captain Michela!

Michael turns back to them as they rush obsequiously up to her. She salutes them, the height of discipline and courtesy. The Governor nervously brandishes the paper in her face.

GOVERNOR (CONT'D)

You see the threat this Whiskas poses?

MICHELA
 (peering at the paper)
 What have we got, Admiral?

ADMIRAL
 'Tis a great beastie, Captain. Only
 your skill can save us now.

The papermouse reaches in his paw.

PAPERMOUSE
 A penny for that paper, Mister!

GOVERNOR
 Oh... eh...

The Governor fumbles for a penny. Casting the Admiral a knowing glance, Michela tosses the lad a coin.

MICHELA
 Ever the deep pockets, I see, eh,
 Governor?
 (winking to the Admiral)
 Come, there's no time to lose!

Michela and the officials stride off. The papermouse looks at his coin.

PAPERMOUSE
 A whole *nickel*.... Captain Michela!
 Take me with you! Captain Michela!

CUT TO:

EXT. DOCK -- MOMENTS LATER

We see a splendid, heavily armed ship of the line docked ahead of the scurrying Mice.

ADMIRAL
*The USS Farragut. Finest, fastest
 ship in the fleet. I know you'll
 want to find that beastie soon as
 possible--*

But suddenly out in the bay, we see the waves boil up... and the huge, horrible WHISKAS THE CAT-WHALE rears up out of the water. He splashes a wave over the *Farragut* with his tail.

Terrified mice run through the frame. Michela and the Admiral stand firm, the Governor cowering behind them.

MICHELA
 Seems he's found me, Admiral.

MICE
 (ad-lib screams)
 The cat-whale! Eeeek!

Whiskas rears up out of the sea, looming over her.

WHISKAS
 I've come to kill ye, Captain Michela!

Michela snatches up a harpoon.

MICHELA
 I'm not so easy to kill, Cat-whale!
 Have at ye!

She hurls the harpoon! It parts his hair. Hissing, Whiskas the cat-whale ducks back into the sea, afraid. He rears up again, RASPBERRYING her with his tongue.

MICHELA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*For all his bulk, he was too much
 the coward to meet me then... on the
 docks of the greatest of Mousedom's
 Maritime cities...*

He SPLASHES a wave at her. She easily jumps atop a pylon and stays dry. The other mice are swept along by the wave of water washing up the street.

MICHELA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*He beckoned me to go down to the sea
 in ships... to meet him in his own
 vasty element--*

Snickering, Whiskas smashes into a docked boat. Mice scramble off the wreckage, screaming.

MICHELA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*--where all the advantage would be
 on his side!
 (righteous fury)
 Whiskas! Whiskaaaas!*

RIPPLE DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KITCHEN - ON COUNTERTOP - SEPIA TONES

We match to Whiskas on the counter, having just slammed into the dishes in the rack. Michela deftly eludes him.

THE HUMAN (VO)
 (blend voice from
 previous)
 Whiskas! Get your filthy cat fur off
 my dishes!

He comes up with a cheese grater clamped over his head. He shakes it off, revealing his face, forced into the shape. A broom hits him on the head, knocking his head back to normal! He scowls and charges off.

THE HUMAN (CONT'D)

There it goes! The cellar! The cellar!

CUT TO:

INT. CELLAR -- MOMENTS LATER

Michela scampers down the stairs. After a BEAT, Whiskas charges down after her. He screeches to a halt at the foot of the stairs, noting with distaste that the entire basement is awash in dirty floodwaters.

Michela is paddling away from him on a stick of wood. She beckons to him to chase her.

MICHELA

Come on, Whiskas. The Story awaits!

Whiskas sticks a toe in and cringes.

WHISKAS

Ooo. I hate water.

A shoe hits him from the top of the stairs.

We see the Human in silhouette screaming down at him as she hurls another shoe.

THE HUMAN

Get that rodent! *Now!*

The shoe hits him, knocking him over. Off balance, he leaps onto a crate floating in the water.

Michela paddles toward him. He calls to her plaintively.

WHISKAS

Merroow! I haaaaate this!

RIPPLE DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SEA - STORMY DAY - COLOR

MATCH DISSOLVE to Whiskas the Cat-whale leering over the edge of a cargo ship. Some mouse arms can be seen waving for help from the portholes. We hear mouse SCREAMING. But soft! We see the *USS Farragut* fast approaching.

WHISKAS

(Blend voice from
previous)

I haaaaaate ye and yer whole verminous
mouse brood, Captain Michela!

Captain Michela, backed by MICE SAILORS, mans the deck. We see there's a big weapon of some kind, hidden under a canvass tarpaulin in the center of the forecastle. The papermouse from earlier, now a cabin boy, sits atop it.

MICHELA

(to Whiskas)

Unhand that shipful of mouse nuns
bound for the Belgian Congo!

On the stricken ship in Whiskas' clutches we see a cloister-full of MOUSE NUNS peeking fearfully out of the portholes, crossing themselves and waving for help. Whiskas leers down at his prisoners.

WHISKAS

They're bound fer Davy Jones, Captain
Michela! Want them? Have them!

He jumps off the ship and dives down deep in the sea. An agonizing BEAT later he smashes through the bottom of the ship, punching a hole in it. CRASH! He rears up out of the water, wearing the ship like a hat.

MICE NUNS

Eeeeeeeek!

The Papermouse pulls the tarp off to reveal a big CATAPULT.

MICHELA

Let him have it, lad!

The Papermouse, pulls the lever, FIRING a huge boulder.

Whiskas is cackling in arrogant triumph, till the boulder SMACKS him right in the nose, imbedding itself in his face. He shakes it off as a whole storm of boulders hail down on him. He ducks back and forth, HOWLING in rage.

WHISKAS

Ahhh! Aughhh! Aaaaaaaaaaaaah!

RIPPLE DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BASEMENT -- MOMENTS LATER -- SEPIA TONED REALITY

Whiskas dodges this way and that on the crate. Shoes, books, all kinds of bric-a-brac cannonball into the water all around him.

WHISKAS
 (blend voice to
 previous)
 AAaaaaaaaeerrroooooow! Merooooow!

THE HUMAN
 Get him! Whiskas!

Michela paddles away from Whiskas. YOWLING in protest, Whiskas starts leaping along the flotsam in the water toward her. He teeters this way and that, but he manages to stay dry--so far.

The Human, in silhouette at the top of the stairs, continues to hurl household projectiles down on him.

THE HUMAN (CONT'D)
 In the water, you worthless bit of
 furrball!

Whiskas grabs at Michela, but she nimbly jumps out of his reach, amongst the floating debris. A shoe knocks him into the water. Whiskas dunks up and down, flailing and SPUTTERING. He finally leaps right out of the air in a cascade of water.

Whiskas lands on the basement freezer, snagging onto the door handle. His momentum yanks the door open, swinging him around over the water like a garden gate. He snatches at Michela drifting by.

THE HUMAN (VO) (CONT'D)
 Whiskas! Shut that freezer!!!!

Another shoe flies in and BONKS Whiskas on the head, knocking him splash, into the water. The shoe ricochets into the freezer, jarring a shelf full of frozen food to come tumbling down.

Whiskas leaps SCREECHING out of the water, his arms wrapped round a big frozen fish he has just caught. His momentary delight turns to cat shivering agony as a box of ice cubes cascades over him. He comes back up, covered in ice cubes sticking all over him.

WHISKAS
 Merooooooooooooooooow!

RIPPLE DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ANTARCTICA - DAY - COLOR

MATCH DISSOLVE TO Whiskas breaching the surface of the ocean, whale-like, leaping over a *Nautilus style* submarine amidst the Antarctic icebergs.

We see Michela and whaling crew Mice, in a longboat, heading toward him. Whiskas spots her and SHRIEKS.

WHISKAS
 (blend voice from
 previous)
Merrroooooooooooooow! Captain Michela,
 leave me be!!!

MICHELA (V.O.)
*Having detailed the USS Farragut to
 transport the convent of mouse nuns
 safely to the Belgian Congo, I had
 no choice but to continue the chase
 alone...*

Michela raises a megaphone as her brave mouse crew rows for the mighty cat-whale.

MICHELA (CONT'D)
 The *Nautilus*, under peril of that
 scoundrel?
 (megaphone)
 Unhand that wonder of mouse-
 technology, you craven cat-denizen
 of the deep!

Whiskas clutches the submarine in his fin-paws.

WHISKAS
 Take her from me if ye dare, Captain
 Michela! Meow!

Whiskas swims away, pulling the sub away with him. Through the portholes we see Mice crewmen waving for help.

Michela throws a lasso after him. It snags the periscope.

WHISKAS (CONT'D)
 Meeerowwww!

Whiskas dives beneath the surface, yanking Michela out of the longboat after him.

PAPERMOUSE
 Captain Michela!

Hurtling through the icy waters, Michela bravely hauls herself along the rope to the sub periscope. She latches onto it just as the whole sub disappears 'neath the icy waves.

CUT TO:

INT. SUB -- CONTINUOUS

CAPTAIN NEMOUSE peers through periscope. His mouse CREW cower fearfully. A MATEMOUSE holds onto a ladder near.

NEMOUSE
Ye gods! 'Tis me old friend, Captain
Michela, topside! Open the hatch!

The Mousemate opens the hatch. Michela washes down in a cascade of icewater, blue as ice herself. She immediately aids the others in closing the hatch. Nemouse throws a blanket over her.

NEMOUSE (CONT'D)
Are ye alright, me brave Captain?

MICHEL A
(teeth chattering)
T'was a foolishness to save me,
Captain Nemouse.
(grin)
Yet I'm thankin' ye, all the same.

Suddenly the ship lurches, sending them all staggering. They look up.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHIP - UNDERWATER

Whiskas pulls the ship ever deeper. He dives to the depths of the abyss.

CUT TO:

INT. NAUTILUS - ON TORPEDO TUBES

Michela is stripped down to her long johns. She lies in the tube, with a hatpin in her teeth. She flashes a thumbs up. They seal her in. The Mate-mouse fires Michela off.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNDERWATER

Michela shoots out a torpedo tube. She RASPBERRIES Whiskas, who releases the *Nautilus* in fury. Hurling toward her at flank speed, his jaws gaping wide, he swallows Michela whole!

CUT TO:

INT. WHISKAS'S MOUTH -- CONTINUOUS

A cavernous place. Michela pulls out the hatpin. She touches a soft spot on his tongue. She antics back with the hatpin and...

CUT TO:

EXT. UNDERWATER

Whiskas suddenly turns WHITE with pain. He HOWLS his mouth open wide, spewing Michela out.

WHISKAS

Yeeeeoooooow!

Furious, he chases her down through the waters.

MICHELA (V.O.)

Down, down, down we dove... and we both knew... the time had come... to end the one of us.

On the ocean floor we see a giant clam, snoring peacefully. Michela darts through. Whiskas barrels after her, jarring the CLAM awake.

The clam frowns and tries to go back to sleep. Mouse and Cat swim through the other way, jarring him awake again. Now he's pissed. The third time they bolt through, the giant clam CLAMPS right onto Whiskas's tail!

WHISKAS

Merrrrroooooow!

Whiskas thrashes for his life. But he's caught. He starts to turn blue with lack of air.

Michela has escaped, but she looks back with pity.

MICHELA (V.O.)

But when the Mighty Whiskas got caught by a giant clam I had to save him...

Whiskas' eyes plead for mercy as Michela swims over to him.

MICHELA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

...for what would life be without he that I'd battled for so long?

She tugs at his tail. Whiskas struggles as we...

RIPPLE DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BASEMENT - UNDERWATER - SEPIA TONES

Whiskas has his tail caught in a storm drain. Michela tugs at it. The drain is plugged with papers and other debris.

Michela pulls out the HATPIN. She sticks Whiskas with it.

WHISKAS

Meeerooooooooooooow!!!!

That does it! Whiskas yanks free of the drain, pulling it open. Unplugged at last, the drain sucks all the water down.

The whole basement is draining in a huge whirlpool! Cat, mouse, and debris swirl around the drain. The Human watches in awe from the top of the stairs.

Whiskas, exhausted to death, slides along the last of the water to the edge of the drain. In triumph, he hold up Michela by the tail. SOARING MUSIC!

THE HUMAN

Whiskas! You'll eat fish tonight for this!

CROSS DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HOUSE -- NIGHT

Through the kitchen window, we see the Human in silhouette on the telephone.

THE HUMAN

That's right Sandy... Whiskas fixed the drain himself.

Below the window, we see Michela's tin can. Whiskas kneels before it, slicing the now thawed out frozen fish with his claws. Michela sits before him with a scrapbook in her lap. She's pasting a picture together with bits of colored paper, the only COLOR in the entire sequence.

THE HUMAN (CONT'D)

I know he's just a cat... but he's very clever... What do you mean, now you don't have to come over?

Michela's book is a rather childishly drawn, but charming picture of Whiskas the Cat-whale, with Michela riding him.

MICHELA (V.O.)

And Whiskas the Catwhale promised never to do his evil deeds again...

(sigh)

Did she like The Story, Whiskas?

WHISKAS

Sure. She loved it. A whole fish's worth.

MICHELA

The salt sea air whipping through your ears...

As Michela talks, she whips herself into a frenzy. The lighting turns blue and the wind whips up as if the fantasy were beginning all over again.

MICHELA (CONT'D)

...the ocean depths, the irresistible force of Nature against the immovable will of Mouse--did she feel like that, Whiskas?

WHISKAS

Shuddap an' eat, will ya?

Whiskas pulls off a sliver of fish and Michela eats it happily.

Overhead, in the window, we see the Human remonstrating with her nephew on the telephone.

THE HUMAN

Four o'clock tea time, Sandy. I'll expect you promptly!

And above all this floats the moon, as full and lovely as the story in Michela's childishly dreamful mouse heart.

MICHELA

Ahhh.... Blissful, fleeting sigh of contentment...

WHISKAS

(exasperated)
Grrr. Grumble, grumble, grumble.

The MUSIC SWELLS. A hoot-owl flies past the moon, pauses a second. and flies into the distance.

THE END

FADE OUT: