



NELLY

- 7 years old – 4 months in shelter
- Sweet on her own terms
- Known to be a bully to cats and humans

Runner Up:
“Nelly”
by Sally Cunningham

“Pell-mell!” they say, “Hell’s Bells!” they always cry. But no, it’s none of that. It’s just me, Miss Nell. So what I’m the boss—always, I’m always the boss—what of it? I believe I’m an affectionate bully, I just maybe showed my love by making demands one or two times too many.

It was me and the house kitties in the street that evening, the kitties that are allowed to roam out and about until sundown. I’d pitched them my plan, and at first, they wouldn’t have it. I’d lined them up in one of the back alleys downtown, those skinny alleyways between restaurants — the ones that smell extra fishy and good — you know the ones, I know you do. Give a good sniff next time you take the stairs, it’s delightful, I promise. Codfish, scallops, fishcakes. All the scrapings and more, so much more could’ve been ours if the housecats would just stick to my plan. But they never did. They asked questions and licked their paws and flicked their tails and were standoffish — you know the way cats are.

I had herded them up (no easy feat!), gotten them standing shoulder to shoulder in the alley, and told them about the Great Fish Heist I had planned for that night.

It started with a stacking. A tabby on the shoulders of a Scottish fold, a Maine Coon making a bridge from there to the dainty calico on top. When the whole stack started yodeling, I knew the kitchen door would have to fly open and that was when we'd make our move—me, Nell, bouncing off the topmost calico into the cracked open window, the other cats making a break for the burst open door. While the chefs lost their hats herding housecats, I'd snag the stew pot right off the burner and roll it outside for us.

And it was all looking perfect, the cat tower came together with minimal nipping and scratching on my part—but the tower fell, and claws and paws and teeth went flying every which way except into the kitchen. I was hopping mad and hungry to boot.

We regrouped in a less-fishy-smelling alley a block up. The house kitties hadn't followed directions, but they sure didn't like it when I chewed them out for good measure. They called me a downright bully. The Maine Coon even hissed, and he was the most even-tempered of all. But then the last of the sun sank down, and the fog crept in with its damp chill and the house kitties turned tail and went home to tinned Whiskas and wood stoves in Georgetown, and I had to curl up with an empty belly behind Yellowbelly, hoping for pepperoni pizza scraps from passers-by.

I'm sweet, I swear. Sweeter than cream, if it's a good day. If everyone just does what I say.

