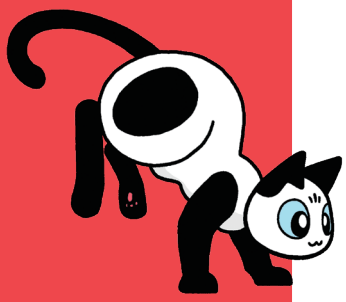
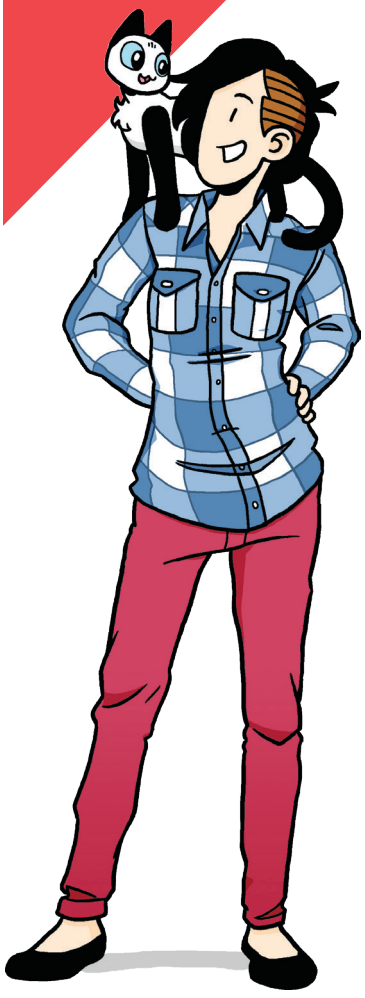
FRANKIE COMICS









They say, “you don’t choose the pet. The pet chooses you.” I yearned for a cat my whole life. I was a nervous kid and allergic to animals, so it was difficult to find a pet that wouldn’t make me flinch, sneeze, or wheeze.

Growing up, I lived with many pets who weren’t mine. There were two cats: Zachary, a sweet grumpy man who spent his days sleeping on my parents’ bed; and his partner, Duke, who spent his days hiding under my parents’ bed. There were seven midway goldfish: Stanley and his six unnamed schoolmates, who lived for over a decade. The loyal Redbone Coonhound, Scarlet; the sickly feeder mouse, Freak, who I “saved” from the pet shop; and last, before I reached adulthood, the joyous Jack Russell Terrier, Sally.

I made it into my mid-twenties without a cat. My partner, Mike, and I were researching cat adoption, but I had recently been diagnosed with asthma. Hypoallergenic cats were rare and usually only available through breeders. I had been allergic to every animal I grew up with. Odds seemed poor that we would find an adoptable cat I wasn’t allergic to.

But fate intervened, as immediately after I felt defeated in our quest to adopt, a noisy pack of stray cats arrived behind our building. After several nights of catfights between the more feral of the pack, Mike asked me if I had seen the sweet, small cat in the building’s parking lot. I hadn’t, so we walked down to the cars, peered underneath, and I saw—for the first time—a very small cat with a very serious face.

Over the following weeks, Frankie chauffeured us between our car and apartment as we went about our daily routine. She would visit at dinnertime, going door to door meowing until she was given something to eat. (She would do the same when it rained, too, until someone would let her in! Heartbreaking!) I would leave our apartment door open during the day, and Frankie became a regular midday visitor. She would strut in and jump right into my lap, like she had always sat there… and I didn’t flinch, sneeze, or wheeze. Not once! Eventually, we brought her in to stay.

Frankie became my shadow, companion, and supervisor. She sat next to me while I created my earliest webcomics, and slept in the merchandise boxes while I published comic anthologies and ran a comics microdistributor. She moved across the country with us when I pursued my MFA in cartooning, and inevitably stole the show in her own webcomic… which became the book you’ll read today.

You’ll see in the following pages how Frankie is an instigator and a comfort. Unafraid to voice her opinion, she is playful, loving, and she will always have my whole heart.

I spent my entire life longing for a cat. Being chosen by Frankie was worth the wait.

—Rachel Dukes

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