

## The Secret Life of Guinea Pigs - Mikey, Year 5, NSW

I woke up in the dead of night. My stomach was aching, my bones were rattling like an earthquake, and my head was going on an endless roller coaster. Nothing a cup of water couldn't fix.

I tiptoed out of my room, down the creaking stairs, and into the kitchen. Suddenly, I heard a shuffling sound. I quickly jerked my head to face the direction the noise was coming from.

And there, under the moonlight, I saw the most amazing thing I had ever seen in my life.

I have four guinea pigs. Skittles, Zappo, Tim Tam and Chupa Chup. Chupa Chup is a baby girl, Skittles is a boy, Zappo is the dad and Tim Tam is the mum. The extraordinary sight that I saw was that Skittles, Zappo and Tim Tam were playing...

A CARD GAME!!!

And not just any old card game. My Exploding Kittens game! As soon as I caught sight of the guinea pigs, they froze. They stared at me, eyes as wide as their food bowls. And then they all packed their things into their little hut in the blink of an eye – cards, tiny table, and little chairs.

Tim Tam eyed me seriously. "Don't. Tell. Anyone."

I got my cup and filled it with water. My deep thought caused the water in my cup to overflow.

*How are they talking? Why are they playing Exploding Kittens?* I placed the cup on a table and walked upstairs, still bamboozled and amazed by my strange experience. I got into bed, pulled on the covers, and slept.

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When I woke up in the morning, I was refreshed and recovered. "That was a weird dream!" I mumbled to myself. I trod down to the guinea pig cage and started pouring their breakfast.

"Seriously, though. Don't tell anyone," Zappo said with a stern look on his face. I gaped.

"But... but... the... no... it... was..." I stuttered. Then I called for my parents. They rushed over as quickly as cheetahs. "The guinea pigs are..."

Tim Tam frowned at me.

"Um... they're... they're really um... enjoying their breakfast um... today."

After I had eaten my breakfast, the guinea pigs called me over with their high-pitched squeaks. They gathered into a group like they were sharing important information.

“Listen,” Zappo whispered, “Amy, Laura, Tommy and I are trying to prevent a cat attack.”

“Who are those people?” I questioned.

“They’re guinea pigs. Your guinea pigs. Laura is Chupa Chup, Amy is Tim Tam, and Skittles is Tommy,” Zappo replied.

“Skittles are revolting,” Tommy interrupted, with a disgusted look on his face.

“Then who are you?” I asked Zappo.

“I’m Alex. Anyways, we are trying to stop a cat attack. We have bombs hidden in the secret base under—” Alex stopped. As my mum put her bread in the toaster just across the room, I pretended that the guinea pigs were just regular non-talking American Crested guinea pigs. As soon as she left, Alex started talking again. “Phew. OK. We have bombs in the secret base under the cage (don’t ask me why, it’s a long story).”

“Splody Cotton!” Laura squealed.

“No, Laura. Not ‘Splody Cotton’. You pronounce it ‘Exploding Kittens,’ but yes, we are going to try to explode them into millions of tiny furballs,” Zappo continued. “Laura is learning to say, ‘Exploding Kittens.’”

“I see. Do you have any info on the time of the attack?” I asked.

“8:32am,” Tim Tam replied.

“Eckplody Kittons!” Laura squeaked.

“Not quite, Laura. You say it ‘Exploding Kittens,’” Tommy remarked.

“The time now is 8:27, so you guinea pigs should prepare.”

The guinea pigs were in the outside cage now. They had brought their bombs with them. As Tommy made traps out of Lego, Laura tried sucking on a real Chupa Chup. But I still had a question.

“Tommy, do you know why you are fighting the cats?” Tommy sighed. He stopped his Lego and gazed up at the sky, sorrow revealed in his eyes. I felt bad for him.

“Because... well... I had a friend at GPS. Not Global Positioning System, but Guinea Pig School. And he is somewhere, somewhere in one of the stomachs of one of the many, many cats in the world. And so are many other guinea pigs who risked their lives.” I felt tears rushing up to my eyes.

It was time for the battle. Bombs were hidden, Lego traps were placed, and long biting teeth were brushed. I told my parents how deserving they were of a sleep- in and sent them back to bed. Everything was ready. I could hear soft meows coming from behind the fence and suddenly...

The three cats pounced. Amy sprinted forward, waving the deck of Exploding Kittens cards in front of her. Alex ran, shooting his mini nerf gun. Tommy tried to lead the cats into his Lego contraptions. And sitting in the cage, cheering for her fellow guinea pigs, was Laura, happy as can be.

There was yelling, screaming, roaring, meowing, tripping, hitting, slapping, shooting, punching and kicking. Laura turned away for some of it because it was too chaotic for her.

But eventually, something terrible happened.

While Amy was whacking the huge cats, one cat picked the deck of cards up and used it like a golf stick. It putted poor Amy into the cage with ease. I was speechless. Suddenly, something even worse occurred. Alex had gone to get some more bullets for his nerf gun without realising that he had one left in the gun. A cat snatched the gun and, POW, sent the bullet flying into Alex who soared straight PLOP into the cage’s water bowl. Could this get any worse?

It was all down to Tommy. He casually skipped in and out of the traps, but the cats seemed to know what they were. Tommy turned around to see if the cats were still following him and accidentally stepped into the launcher that he made that he called the ‘cat- apult’. It was aimed at the cage. A cat pressed the button and he fired through the air and into the cage.

The three cats did a series of meows that sounded like “Hahaha! Now cats will take all other guinea pigs, and the owners will have to have cats instead!”

It looked like Alex was trying to tell me something, but a cat had its paws over his mouth, and Amy's mouth, and Tommy's mouth. Only Laura was the light of hope in the hopeless darkness.

Tommy signed something to Laura and so did Alex. They were trying to make her say something. And finally, she got it. “E...eck...ex... Exploding Kittens!” she squealed.

I knew what they meant! I fished out the bombs from underneath the cage, got the matches, and lit the bombs with haste. I chucked the bombs towards the cats. But I was nervous. Wouldn't the bombs do serious damage to the garden?

They were in position. Exploding in...

3...

The cats stared wide-eyed at the bombs, tails straight.

2...

The cats slowly backed away.

1...

The cats dashed away with fright, faster than lightning.

**BOOM!!!**

I couldn't watch, but when I looked, the garden was covered with... colourful confetti? The bombs had been a trick! They weren't exploding bombs; they were confetti bombs! I gave a heavy sigh of relief as I unlocked the cage and released the guinea pigs. We cheered that we had scared away the cats and that Laura had learnt two new words. We decided that after all that excitement, we should sit down and play a game of Exploding Kittens.

"And now what?" I asked.

Alex looked up at me. "Now we train for our next mission."

Laura nodded solemnly. "Splody Kittens 2."

I chuckled. "Guess I'd better stock up on confetti!"