



The Cat Lover's Circumstances

Chapter 3 *Transcript*

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Illustrations by Aiwa and © Chromatic Press

Cast:

Misaki: Tara Burke
Aina: Elissa Park
Nishida: Anthony Sardinha
Ayukawa: Sarite Harris
Rina: Courtney Lunn

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Note: Due to last-minute changes, transcript may not match final audio exactly.



[Begin in the middle of the festival: sounds and music are louder and closer, people are talking and walking around. Yoshimura, an old friend of Nishida's, is nearby, cooking takoyaki at a food stand.]

MISAKI: There's so many people...

NISHIDA: Stay close. I don't want to lose you in the crowd.

MISAKI: (annoyed) I know.

YOSHIMURA: (from some distance away) We've got the best takoyaki right here--just seven hundred yen! Come on, folks!

MISAKI: (muttering) Seven hundred yen for takoyaki? You could get a Big Mac and fries for that...

[stomach rumbles]

NISHIDA: Are you hungry?

MISAKI: No! I'm fine!

YOSHIMURA: (calling out from the takoyaki stand) Hey!

MISAKI: Hey, the takoyaki guy's calling you.

NISHIDA: (quietly) I know, let's just go.

YOSHIMURA: Hey, Nishida! Come over here!

NISHIDA: (quiet) Great... (louder) Hey, Yoshimura.

YOSHIMURA: Long time no see, man!

NISHIDA: How's the student council?

YOSHIMURA: (brightly) Ah, it's just not the same since you left... But you know, we get by. Hey, guys, Nishida's here!

[A group of men and women greet Nishida.]

STUDENT COUNCIL GIRL: Nishida, how's the kickboxing club?

NISHIDA: Eh, it's all right...

YOSHIMURA: This guy left me behind, man. Now that he's a hit with the ladies... Who's

your friend?

NISHIDA: Um, this is... [pause] My friend.

MISAKI: (stuttering, shy again) I'm Mi-Mi-Mi-Misaki Tanabe! Ah, um, um...

YOSHIMURA: Huh... [pause] Well, hey! Nice to meet you, Miss Tanabe! Nishida's a good guy.

MISAKI: Oh. R-really.

[Sebastian meows.]

NISHIDA: Uh, anyway, we'd better get going.

YOSHIMURA: Hang on, just a sec.

[pause]

YOSHIMURA: Here--it's on the house. You guys like takoyaki, right?

NISHIDA: What? No, it's okay, really, you don't have to...

YOSHIMURA: It's fine, don't worry about it. Just enjoy the festival! (aside to Nishida) I'm happy for you, man. She looks nice. You need someone like that.

NISHIDA: Oh. No, uh...

MISAKI: *What?* He needs someone like what?

YOSHIMURA: (pretending to be embarrassed) Ha, guess she heard me. *Whoops!*

NISHIDA: (under his breath) You are *so* dead, Yoshimura.

YOSHIMURA: (laughing) See you both later! [Out to the crowd.] All right folks, takoyaki, get it hot and fresh! 700 yen!

MISAKI: Th-thank you for the food...

[Nishida and Misaki walk away.]

MISAKI: Who was that?

NISHIDA: That was Yoshimura. We worked together in the student council last year.

MISAKI: (slightly amused) He really misses you.

NISHIDA: Hah. He misses screwing with me, maybe.

MISAKI: No, um, actually...

VOICES (YOSHIMURA): (comically sad and despairing) *Lonely! Friend! Frieeeeeennnnddd! Gone! Sad...*

MISAKI: He seems nice. [pause] Why did you leave the student council?

NISHIDA: Ah... Because they're useless.

[Sebastian purrs.]

MISAKI: Shh, kitty... What do you mean?

NISHIDA: (a little emotion creeping into his voice) They're just useless! They're supposedly there for the students, except...you know. When a student actually needs help.

[Nishida's emotional voices break through, very quietly.]

VOICES (NISHIDA): *Bitter. Hate. Angry.*

MISAKI: [slowly inhales, whispers to herself] There it is...

[Voices abruptly stop.]

NISHIDA: Hey. Misaki.

MISAKI: Huh? What is it?

NISHIDA: Your cat's really eyeing the food. Is it okay to give him one?

MISAKI: No! He can't eat that!

NISHIDA: Oh?

MISAKI: Of course not! [clears throat] Cats are inveterate carnivores. The carbohydrates in flour batter are terrible for them, and can lead to gastrointestinal problems. Don't you know anything about cats?

NISHIDA: Not really, no.

MISAKI: You used to take care of strays back home...

NISHIDA: Oh, that? It was just because *you* looked so sad every time you saw them.

MISAKI: I did?

NISHIDA: You really don't remember the important things... Here, let's just eat.

[Sebastian meows.]

NISHIDA: Wait, you can't put down the cat, can you... Jeez, what were you thinking?

MISAKI: I didn't bring him myself...

NISHIDA: Let's sit here. We'll do this.

[Sound of box opening, chopsticks being split. Nishida blows on a piece of takoyaki.]

MISAKI: What are you doing?

NISHIDA: I'm feeding you.

MISAKI: Huh?!

NISHIDA: Open up.

MISAKI: (panicky) Nuh-uh, no way!

NISHIDA: Hm?

MISAKI: We're in *public*!

NISHIDA: Hmm... I guess we do give off a couple's vibe--at least, that's what Yoshimura thought.

MISAKI: [disgusted noise]

NISHIDA: Wow. I don't think I'm *that* bad.

MISAKI: (stammering, anxious) No, it's not that... It's just weird. The idea of it is weird.

NISHIDA: Misaki, have you ever dated anyone before?

MISAKI: Huh? O-of course! (mumbling, trailing off) In video games and stuff, like I got pretty close to Chrom in Fire Emblem and some other guys, oh, and then there's Fantasy Quest, I guess...

NISHIDA: Hey, you're gonna have to speak up...

MISAKI: (annoyed) I know how dating works, okay! I understand the theory!

[Begin fantasy sequence: Romance manga. Appropriately romantic background music. A happy-sounding male narrator speaks.]

NARRATION (MALE): Springtime, the start of school. On her very first day, young Misaki Tanabe is about to run into destiny.

MISAKI: (saccharine) Oh my goodness, I'm so late!

[Misaki runs into Nishida.]

MISAKI: Ow!

[innocent sparkly sounds]

NISHIDA: (super suave and gentle) I'm sorry, miss. Are you all right?

MISAKI: Yes, I'm fine... Sorry!

[serious dramatic sound]

NISHIDA: (forceful and slow, like a dark shoujo love interest) *Hey*. You're not getting away from me.

MISAKI: [squeaks in shock]

[innocent sparkly sounds]

NISHIDA: Not until I fix this. Your tie's crooked.

[Random schoolgirls in the background shriek and swoon.]

RANDOM SCHOOLGIRL 1: He fixed her uniform!

MISAKI: (breathless) Thank you... Wow...

[Music changes to something tense.]

RANDOM SCHOOLGIRL 2: (bitter) Hey, you! What's your relationship with him?

MISAKI: Me? I'm just a normal average transfer student who wants a completely normal school life!

RANDOM SCHOOLGIRL 2: You'll regret this! I'll turn everyone in the school against you!

MISAKI: Oh no! This is terrible...

[sparkly sounds]

NISHIDA: Misaki. You don't need to worry about anyone else. You've got me.

MISAKI: Nishida...

[music swells]

MISAKI: What's this growing warm feeling in my heart? I just met him ten seconds ago, but...

[sparkly sounds, now happening excessively]

NISHIDA: Listen, I don't say this to many girls, but...

MISAKI: But...?

NISHIDA: Do you want to... walk home after school? And perhaps... hold hands?

MISAKI: Yes! I would love to!

NISHIDA and MISAKI: (laughing creepily in sync) Ah-ha-ha! Ah-ha-ha-ha!

[End fantasy sequence.]

MISAKI: (laughing bitterly in real life) Ah-ha-ha... [sudden gasp]

NISHIDA: What? What is it?

MISAKI: Uh...

[Emotional chorus of bystanders, mostly female voices:

"Jealous!"

"Annoying."

"Wow."

"Disgusted... ugh, jealous."

"Awww!"

"Hah! Amused"]

MISAKI: [sigh] It's nothing... I'm hungry.

NISHIDA: I've got a solution to that. Here. Ahhh.

MISAKI: We're really doing this? [awkward pause] A...Ahhh.

[Misaki chews. Sebastian purrs.]

MISAKI: (with full mouth) No, Sebastian. People food is bad, okay? You got that?

NISHIDA: Is mommy getting angry?

MISAKI: Oh, hush.

NISHIDA: We can relax for a bit. I know where Ayukawa's gonna go anyway.

MISAKI: How do you know that?

NISHIDA: Well, that's kind of a long story. [pause] I only saw it for a second, but my sister was messaging Ayukawa today about meeting at a shrine. She said she wanted to discuss something. And since there are only two major shrines nearby, and only one that would be reasonably private right now, logically that means all I have to do is go and... [pause] What? What is it?

MISAKI: Why are you doing this? You're following Ayukawa, and you're spying on your sister Rina? What does she have to do with anything?

NISHIDA: Just listen, okay? Ayukawa asked Rina to come out. And...then she *did* it, just like that.

MISAKI: So?

NISHIDA: (frustrated) Do you know how many times Rina's gone outside in the last few months?

[Misaki is silent.]

NISHIDA: Well, I do. I know what she eats, I know when she goes to bed, I know everything she does.

MISAKI: (clearly weirded out) Um...

NISHIDA: No, Misaki. Do you know why that is? Because Rina's been too scared to go out on her own. I've been taking care of her for months.

MISAKI: ...What happened to her?

NISHIDA: Do you know about the music scholarship?

MISAKI: Yeah, there were two scholarship students.

NISHIDA: And one dropped out of school. Do you know why?

MISAKI: Your...sister was the one who dropped out?

NISHIDA: She had to. It got that bad. [pause] Random people started calling her in the middle of the night, saying disgusting things...

MISAKI: What? But why?

NISHIDA: Look, I've already said too much.

MISAKI: Nishida.

NISHIDA: [sighs, pained] They were saying she...slept with someone to get the scholarship. That she slept with a bunch of people just to get in, something like that. And then it became like a crusade. Nobody said anything to her face, but they put pictures of her online, on Twitter, and they said horrible things about her.

[Misaki is silent.]

NISHIDA: (angrily) None of it's true, okay? It's all lies. But the police wouldn't help us, and the school... (bitterly) The student council. Everyone just told us to wait until it went away.

MISAKI: (quietly) And it didn't go away.

NISHIDA: No. It didn't. That's why she dropped out. But I figured out who was behind it all.

MISAKI: You mean Ayukawa?

NISHIDA: People are saying it was her, but nobody has any proof. That's why I'm here--to make sure my sister's safe. And to catch Ayukawa red-handed.

MISAKI: But...it doesn't make sense. She seemed so happy...

NISHIDA: What do you mean? Who did?

MISAKI: Ayukawa... (quickly) I mean, um... The way she was dressed, and the look on her face. And I've talked to her. Why would she do something so bad?

NISHIDA: You're being naïve, Misaki. Ayukawa's always had a good image. Hell, she's been even more popular since Rina dropped out. (bitterly) A real social butterfly.

MISAKI: You mean she wasn't always that way?

NISHIDA: No. Nobody even knew who Ayukawa *was* before. But now she's always got her entourage... except tonight, going to meet Rina. Do you see why I'm afraid for her?

MISAKI: (reluctantly) Okay, yes...

NISHIDA: I just have to catch Ayukawa. That's it.

MISAKI: But...

NISHIDA: But *what*? This is why I didn't want to explain.

MISAKI: [Makes uncomfortable sound.]

NARRATION: *I don't know everything about Ayukawa. Not even close. But I can feel her feelings... And she's usually so angry inside, it's scary.*

[Flashback to Ayukawa's happy emotional chorus.]

NARRATION: *Right now, though... She's just so **happy**.*

MISAKI: Nishida, um, please just listen to me...

NISHIDA: Okay, break time's over. We gotta go now.

MISAKI: Hey-- wait!

[Sebastian, who has been docile for a while, now meows, hisses.]

MISAKI: Ow! No claws, hey-- Hey, Sebastian! Seba--

[Sebastian runs away.]

MISAKI: Oh no! My cat!

NISHIDA: Huh? Where are you going?

MISAKI: I'm sorry, I'll be right back!

[Misaki runs into the crowd.]

MISAKI: Sebastian!

STRANGER (MALE): Hey.

STRANGER (FEMALE): Ow!

MISAKI: I-I'm sorry! Sorry, sorry!... It's my cat! [bumps into someone else] Ow!

STRANGER (MALE 2): Hey, watch it. What's wrong with you?

MISAKI: M-m-my... Um, my...

[The collar bell rings, far away. Misaki stumbles away.]

MISAKI: Sorry, excuse me! (running) Hey! Please...!

[A whizzing sound, followed by an explosion: fireworks. Crowds ooohs and ahhs.]

MISAKI: Ouch! Excuse me! I'm sorry! Ex...

[Misaki is being pushed around by the crowd gathering to see the fireworks. The background noise from the crowd is rising, and at the same time, emotional voices are rising as well.]

MISAKI: (scared) Where did all these people come from? I can't move.

[More fireworks. Applause.]

AINA: Oh, hey--Misaki! (concerned) Is something wrong?

MISAKI: I can't... Don't touch me...

[The emotional voices spike in volume, up and down. Misaki's breathing is audible and growing heavier.]

AINA: (more worried) Misaki? What's wrong? Misaki--hang on!

MISAKI: (weakly) I can't breathe... Please, move...

[collar bell, far away]

MISAKI: Sebastian...

[Misaki's breathing is heavy, panicked.]

MISAKI: I can't breathe. (panicking) I'm going to die. I'm, I'm going to die. Help me...

AINA: Misaki, look at me.

NISHIDA: (also from far away; annoyed) *There* you are. What's...

AINA: Nishida-senpai, help!

MISAKI: I can't... I can't breathe...

NISHIDA: (concerned) Misaki? (more commanding) Excuse us! People, move out of the way! (back to Misaki) Hey, come on. You gotta breathe... Aina, help me hold her up.

MISAKI: (now very quiet) Help...

AINA: Come on, it's okay.

MISAKI: My ESP... It's going to...

[With a sound like a tempest, Misaki has a direct channel into Aina's feelings. All other voices and background noises fade to nothing as Aina's emotional voices take over all of Misaki's senses.]

VOICES (AINA): *WORRIED. SCARED. CONFUSED. Lonely. Love. Ugly. Sad.* (gradually softer and gentler) *Strong. Caring. Okay. Calm. Calm...*

MISAKI: (breathing hard) Calm...

AINA: Let's get you some air, okay? Breathe slowly.

VOICES (AINA): *Calm. Calm. Love. Sad. Caring. Okay. Okay.*

MISAKI: Okay...

AINA: You're not walking so well. We gotta get you out of the crowd... Sorry Misaki, can I lift you up?

MISAKI: (weakly) Yes.

AINA: (grunting with effort.) Time for a princess carry! *Here we go!*

MISAKI: Ah...

AINA: Hey, you're pretty light. [starts walking] Or I've gotten stronger.

NISHIDA: You got her okay?

AINA: (suddenly nervous) Uh, yeah. We'll go rest over by those tables.

[Crowd noises taper off. Aina sets Misaki down on a bench.]

MISAKI: Aina...

AINA: M-Misa. How are you feeling?

MISAKI: Did you carry me out of the crowd?

AINA: (embarrassed) Um... Yeah. I did.

MISAKI: Thank you... You're really gentle.

AINA: I am? That's a first. [pause] I'll get you something to drink.

[Sound of a coin being dropped into a vending machine, dispensing a drink.]

AINA: You scared me, you know.

MISAKI: Sorry.

AINA: No, it's okay.

MISAKI: (slowly, sadly) I'm not much of a friend, am I? All I do is freak out and need help.

AINA: That's... not true. You're still a friend to me.

MISAKI: ...Why?

AINA: Uh, why? Well, because... Because.

[pause]

AINA: (halting) You're just...nice. I mean, yeah, you're kind of spacey. I get that. But you came out to the party when I asked, and you also don't flinch when I'm close by... We even said hi at school. Do you remember that time?

MISAKI: I had to turn in a paper.

AINA: (slightly amused) I *knew* there was a reason you were just hanging around. Were you looking for the professor's mail slot?

MISAKI: (embarrassed) Yeah...

AINA: So, I mean, you and Ayukawa both. I know maybe we don't have a lot in common. But, I feel like you're a good person, so I'm... I'm grateful. I... I don't know what I'm talking about.

MISAKI: No, no, it's okay. I think I understand... [pause] Where's Nishida?

AINA: (awkwardly, in short clips) Huh? He was. Um. He was here. I mean a second ago... He was looking for you.

MISAKI: What do I do...

AINA: Um. Misaki. Did you and Nishida-senpai...come to the festival together?

MISAKI: (distracted) Huh? Uh...I guess...

AINA: Oh.

MISAKI: What? [realization] Oh. Wait.

[Aina's emotional chorus rises.]

VOICES (AINA): *Confused. Jealous. JEALOUS. Sad. Alone.*

MISAKI: Uh, but...

AINA: (glumly) What?

MISAKI: It's not... We're not...

AINA: Yeah?

MISAKI: How to explain... [clears throat] So...Nishida and I have a lot of history. *A lot.* And things with us are...complicated, and kind of weird, but...there's nothing between us. Really.

AINA: Oh.

MISAKI: So, I mean... You should just be brave, tell him how you feel and...

AINA: Um.

[Aina's chorus abruptly changes direction.]

VOICES (AINA): *Embarrassed embarrassed embarrassed...*

MISAKI: Ah... (defeated) Right. I can never win, can I?

AINA: What do you mean?

MISAKI: Never mind... Wow, your yukata is amazing.

AINA: (shyly) Oh... Yeah, I like it, too.

MISAKI: No, it's beautiful! You look great! (awkwardly) Ah, uh, sorry.

AINA: Thank you... Ayukawa helped me put it on.

MISAKI: Ayukawa? You saw her today?

AINA: Yeah, in the afternoon. She...she's really good at this kind of stuff. I was surprised. But she said she had to go meet somebody, so we split up a while ago...

MISAKI: Meet somebody...(suddenly more alert) Hey, do you know where Nishida went?

AINA: No...

MISAKI: Do you know how to get to the shrine from here?

AINA: It's down that way, up the hill... Misaki, what's wrong?

[long pause]

MISAKI: I gotta go! Thanks for taking care of me!

AINA: You sure you're okay?

MISAKI: Yeah, totally sure!

[Fireworks.]

MISAKI: Have a good festival! Seeya!

AINA: Ah... Bye?

[Misaki runs.]

<END SCENE 02>

<BEGIN SCENE 03>

[Misaki walking quickly on a dirt path..]

NARRATION: *This is it. I have to clear things up. Nishida doesn't know what's going on...and, neither do I, honestly... But I **know** what I felt earlier tonight. What's the point of my powers if I can't use them to help someone?*

[Flashback. Sana in middle school: "Misaki, you traitor!"]

MISAKI: Shut up, Sana. This time's gonna be different. I won't let things get out of control! Just gotta get to the shrine in time...

[She clears through some foliage.]

MISAKI: (quietly) Okay. I made it.

[Slowly walking up to Nishida.]

MISAKI: (whispers) Nishida. Hey.

NISHIDA: (startled) Jeez!

MISAKI: Shh!

NISHIDA: What are you doing--

MISAKI: Quiet. [pause] Heh. Got you back.

[Sound of Ayukawa and Rina walking around the stone courtyard of the shrine on sandals.]

AYUKAWA: This is a good spot.

RINA: Yeah. It's beautiful...

[Ayukawa and Rina's emotional choruses are intermingling here.]

VOICES (AYUKAWA): *Happy! Wonderful!* (quieter) *Stressed, frustrated.*

VOICES (RINA): *Calm. Happy. Great, wonderful.* (quieter) *Scared, afraid.*

NISHIDA: Nothing's happened yet...

MISAKI: Nothing's going to happen.

NISHIDA: Huh?

MISAKI: Just...trust me. Watch.

[One big firework explodes. Rina's voice is quiet and wavering, and very gradually becomes stronger.]

RINA: ...Those are books.

AYUKAWA: Hmm?

RINA: The fireworks. They pack them with the paper from old books.

[Fireworks continue.]

RINA: Weird, right? We're watching the explosions of people's dreams. But they're already

long gone.

AYUKAWA: Rina. You know why I'm here, don't you?

RINA: (trying to sound amusing) Let me guess... You wanna find out how I'm doing in Fantasy Quest? I'm pretty high-level now. It took a lot of work.

AYUKAWA: [sighs]

RINA: (nervously, like she's afraid) Sorry. It was just a joke.

AYUKAWA: You haven't been answering my calls.

RINA: You mean to talk about the song? The school's already made their decision... I can't do the duet with you.

AYUKAWA: It's *your* song. You wrote it! (quieter) Do you know how horrible that is for me?

RINA: (trying to sound upbeat, but discomfort sneaks in) But you sound good! Really. And you won't be alone.

AYUKAWA: Half the music department already thinks I'm a monster. I don't know why they didn't just expel me... But making me play your song now is almost worse. It makes me sick.

RINA: I heard you're going to be playing with a famous violinist? That's kind of an honor for me, honestly. And it'll be really good for you. He's famous, so maybe this'll be good for after graduation...

AYUKAWA: (snaps) This isn't okay.

[pause]

AYUKAWA: (mumbling) Sorry.

RINA: (shaken) No, it's all right.

AYUKAWA: [heavy sigh] Why is everything still so hard?

RINA: I'm...really sorry. Please.

[pause]

RINA: The harassment was so bad, I thought if I just left, things would get better... I know that you did a lot.

AYUKAWA: (darkly) No. I didn't do nearly enough.

NISHIDA: I've had it with this.

MISAKI: (whispering) Nishida, wait!

[Nishida steps out from the foliage.]

NISHIDA: Hey!

MISAKI: Oh, no...!

RINA: [gasps.]

AYUKAWA: Who's there?

NISHIDA: We've got you, Ayukawa. You're finished.

AYUKAWA: What? (angrily) What's going on here?

MISAKI: Um, uh...

NISHIDA: I could ask you the same thing, but I already recorded it.

MISAKI: (meek whisper) Wait, Nishida, that's not...

AYUKAWA: Misa?

[Misaki tries to hide in the bushes.]

AYUKAWA: I can see you. Stop hiding and come out.

MISAKI: We... we can explain.

NISHIDA: (interrupting) But it'd be in your best interests if *you* started explaining first.

AYUKAWA: What are you talking about?

NISHIDA: Misaki and I heard everything.

AYUKAWA: Misaki, you...were spying on me? For this scumbag?

MISAKI: But I wasn't! No, I mean...

NISHIDA: Who's scum? You already hurt my sister once, and now you're trying to get her to fix your reputation? I can't believe this.

RINA: Wait, that's not right...

NISHIDA: It's okay, Rina. I got this. Ayukawa's getting what she deserves.

AYUKAWA: (interrupting, getting louder) How dare you? You already threw me to the wolves once, Haruka Nishida! Do you think you have *any* idea what's going on?

RINA: Please wait...

AYUKAWA: Rina, listen, your brother is nothing but a deluded...

RINA: *Kiki*. [pause] Kiki, please.

[Pause. Ayukawa is fuming.]

AYUKAWA: Fine. You talk to your brother if you want. But I'm done.

[She walks away, stopping in front of Misaki, who's standing in the middle of the path.]

MISAKI: Um...

AYUKAWA: Get out of my way.

MISAKI: Ayukawa, I...

AYUKAWA: No. Not one word. [pause] (bitterly) I really thought you were a nice girl, Misaki.

[Ayukawa walks away.]

MISAKI: (quietly, to herself, n the verge of panicking) I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I... I don't know what happened.

NISHIDA: Rina, are you okay? I got it all recorded, so...

[Rina starts hitting Nishida on the chest.]

NISHIDA: Ow! Hey, what are you doing?

RINA: How could you? How could you say that to her?

NISHIDA: She's *blackmailing* you! I've got her threatening you on video! What was I supposed to say?

RINA: No, she's not!

NISHIDA: ...What?

RINA: She's not doing any of that! You have completely the wrong idea! She's... [hesitates]

NISHIDA: She's...what?

RINA: (quietly) She's...my...friend.

[Night sounds, with Rina's inner voices slowly rising as the narration ends the scene.]

NARRATION: *I can sense it... My god, it's so clear. [pause] Rina. I can hear your voice.*

VOICES (RINA): *Love, love, love her SO MUCH... Scared.*

To be continued in Chapter 4, July 2015.