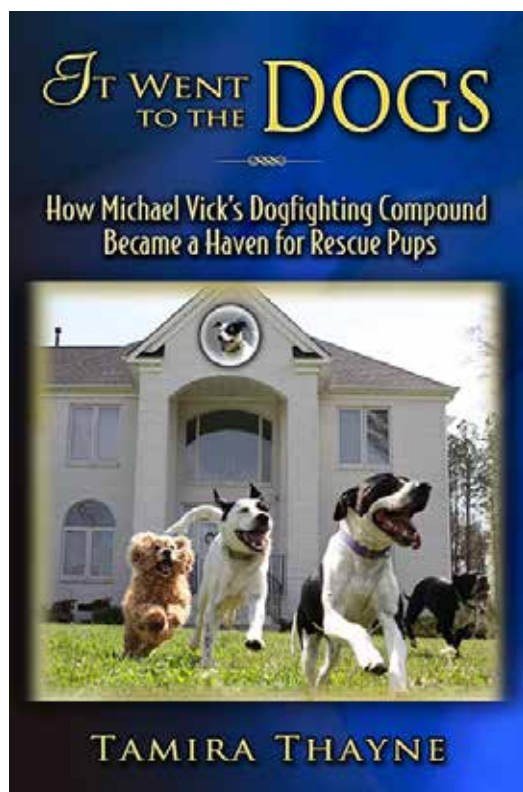


BOOK EXCERPT FOR

“It Went to the Dogs: How Michael Vick’s Dogfighting Compound Became a Haven for Rescue Pups”



INTRODUCTION

“Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable . . . Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.” —Martin Luther King, Jr.

The house sat empty, an eerie white sentinel against the flat winter landscape, now guarding only whispers of the past. A six-foot white metal fence with coded entry gate lined the country road, abandoning its purpose at the property line and allowing passage to all with the temerity and curiosity to walk around.

The bullet hole in the front window went unnoticed.



I was alone, parked across the street, and early for my appointment with the Hampton Roads, Virginia realtor. Today was the day I’d tour Michael Vick’s former dogfighting compound, something I’d never imagined nor particularly wanted to do.

Seemed pretty creepy to me.

I felt the whispers surround me, reaching out. The rescuer in me wanted to rescue the ghosts, too; embrace the broken dogs who lay undiscovered and probably buried on the property, assure them they weren’t forgotten. I shuddered, pulling myself together.

“That’s stupid, Tami,” I told myself. “There’s nothing here but you and this house of torture; I’m sure there’s no actual ghosts.” Maybe I smirked, but was there anything really funny about it? Doubtful.

Maybe talking to yourself is just a recipe for amusement—or disaster, depending on your perspective.



It was the 1st of February, 2011, and I would be exploring Vick’s former dogfighting compound for a surprising reason: the nonprofit organization I’d founded, Dogs Deserve Better, was considering buying the 15-acre property in Surry County, Virginia, and creating a haven for our rescued, formerly chained dogs there.

I fidgeted as I waited, equal parts trepidation and excitement. Would we, could we, should we buy a place not only with a history, but THIS KIND of HISTORY?

There was a lot to ponder. First on the agenda, however, was to ascertain if it was workable for our needs and worth the purchase price.

Soon the realtor, along with Dogs Deserve Better supporter Monica S., a Virginia-based business owner—arrived and I would step onto the property where dogs had lived chained, were forced to fight, and then were brutally murdered for failing to impress Vick and his cohorts.

Was I up for the challenge?

And, more importantly, would I live to regret the decision I would ultimately make that chilly winter’s day?

Maybe. It would all remain to be seen.

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