

Cats and Their Perks

Andrew James Paterson

Butterfingers Becomes Special

1

Butterfingers looked ahead at the old house and recognized the driveway. He did not recognize the car, but everything else looked just the way that he remembered .

He did not like Peter and Sally's new house. It had no back yard and only one floor. Peter and Sally were wonderful people, but he knew he would never enjoy living in their new house.

Butterfingers knew that he had successfully returned to the old house. It had an attic as well as a basement and two floors. It had many neat hiding places.

Unfortunately, he could see a potential problem. Or, rather, two potential problems. The new people had two cats.

2

There was only one new person, and Butterfingers heard the man next door call her Diana. There had once been another person called Chuck, and neither Diana nor her neighbour named Paul seemed to like Chuck very much.

Diana already lived with two cats named Buster and Terwilliger. Buster thought he was the top male but Terwilliger was the top female.

Neither Buster nor Terwilliger wanted Butterfingers to move in. But Diana owned the house so that was too bad for Buster and Terwilliger.

'Hisssssssssss', said Buster and Terwilliger to Butterfingers.

Then Buster and Terwilliger began hissing at each other. They did this for a long time. While Buster and Terwilliger hissed at each other, Butterfingers helped himself from both of their food bowls.

'Hey, Orangeboy! I've given you your own food bowl so please don't steal the other cats food !'.

Diana called him Orangeboy because of his orange tabby coat . He wanted to tell her that he hated that name, but he couldn't.

He would make himself at home first, and then refuse to answer to that stupid name.

3

Two days later, things were still the same as two days ago. Buster and Terwilliger hissed at both each other and then especially Butterfingers. And Diana still called Butterfingers Orangeboy. Butterfingers finally lost it with her.

'Hisssssssssssssssssssss', he said through his teeth.

'Mr.....Yow!', Buster attacked Orangeboy even though Diana yelled at him to control his temper.

Butterfingers ran. Buster was bigger than he was and Buster was in one nasty mood. Terwilliger also looked like she might actually help Buster if necessary.

'That's it!', Diana poured herself something to drink. 'Things will have to change!'.

She swallowed her drink and then walked over to the telephone.

'Chuck! I will forgive you for everything if you do me a big favour!'.

‘What’s wrong, Diana?’, a male voice could be heard on the line at the other end.

‘I need you to look after a stray cat I’ve found. Until we can find it’s owner.’

‘The cat has no tag?’

‘No. It’s an orange tabby. I call it Orangeboy and it hisses at me.’

‘Well, Diana, that’s a terrible name. And good luck finding the owner of an orange tabby.’

‘Look, Chuck. Will you help me or not?’

‘All right. Until I can think of somebody else who might want a cat.’

Diana hung up the phone . Then she picked up Orangeboy or whatever his name might be and then locked him in a carrier case.

Butterfingers was worried. He knew that he was being taken to Chuck’s place and not to the veterinarian, but he was very worried.

4

Chuck lived on the third floor of a rooming house. Chuck lived in one room, and Butterfingers was now very *very* worried.

Chuck poured dry cat food into a bowl and then dumped a bag of kitty litter into a dry paint dish. Butterfingers quickly ate all of the food and then broke in the litterbox.

Butterfingers noticed that Chuck had not yet given him a name.

After eating and doing his business, Butterfingers found a resting spot underneath Chuck’s bed. He would remain under the bed until the next meal , because Chuck had locked the door.

But Chuck had to go out somewhere, so he poured more dry cat food into the bowl before leaving. Butterfingers ate with gusto and then washed his paws and his body. He was not tired and he wanted to do something.

Oh no! Chuck had left him alone and locked the door. Butterfingers wanted to sniff and smell the rest of the building. Surely there were places to stretch out and maybe even some other people who might want to play with him?

5

It was a long time before Chuck returned to his room. Another man named Adam was with Chuck, and Adam wanted to take a look at the orange tabby cat.

‘He’s a beauty, Chuck. Are you sure you can’t keep him?’

‘No’, said Chuck ‘I don’t have room for a cat. I barely have room for myself , in case you’ve never noticed.’

‘I have noticed , Chuck. Well, let me take a closer look. What’s his name?’

Chuck shook his head.

‘Diana was calling him Orangeboy, but he didn’t like it.’

‘I wonder why’, Adam smiled as he petted the tabby cat. ‘I think he should be called Blossom Special. We can leave out the word ‘orange’.

‘Blossom Special? You are so peculiar , Adam’.

Adam petted Blossom Special just above the tail , while ignoring Chuck’s teasing.

‘How are you feeling , Special? You like this, don’t you.’

Adam rubbed his middle right fingers underneath Blossom Special’s throat. Blossom Special hoped that Adam would take him away from Chuck and his tiny little room.

‘ I think he’s your cat, Adam.’

Adam looked at Chuck and laughed.

‘You’re not going to change your mind on me, are you?’.

Blossom Special walked toward Adam and rubbed his coat against the man. He wanted Adam to be his human.

‘Very good. Now I must trick him into the carrier.’.

Adam opened the door to the carrier case before picking the cat up in his arms. He was astonished to watch Blossom Special enter the carrier voluntarily.

Blossom Special was amused by Adam’s wonder. He liked his new human and he enjoyed being called ‘Special’.

‘Here, Adam. I think you’ll need some cat food.’.

‘Right.’, Chuck handed Adam the box of crunchies. ‘Not now, Special. Wait until we get home.’.

And Blossom Special happily purred during the entire ride back to Adam’s apartment. He could tell that it would be a lot more fun to live in than Chuck’s tiny little room.

‘We’re almost home, Special.’. Adam started the car when the light turned green.

Special didn’t meow. He kept purring in perfect unison with the car’s motor.

Jump That Fence!

1

Jin and Jean smiled at each other, before putting on their coats and leaving for the play.

‘I guess we should let Whiskers out, Jean.’

Jean shook her head.

‘I don’t know, Jin. The Rollinses always let their dog out, and Whiskers is afraid of that dog.’

Jin buttoned his jacket.

‘The Rollinses dog is all bark and no bite. Just like Al and Sue Rollins.’

Jean laughed. She also thought that the Rollinses’ were full of hot air.

‘Let Whiskers go out, Jin. We’d better not be late for the play.’

2

Sue Rollins turned the vacuum cleaner off and looked at her husband.

‘What was that, Al?’

‘Napoleon needs to take a walk.’

Sue groaned. It was her turn to walk the dog, and she wasn’t in the mood for it.

‘Okay, Al. But make sure you’re ready to go by the time I get back.’

Al puffed on his cigar as Sue left with the dog. Napoleon had been acting strangely lately, jumping over the Chung’s fence and into their backyard. Sometimes he thought Napoleon was going after the Chung’s cat, and sometimes he thought the dog was afraid of that cat. Al didn’t understand how that could even be possible.

‘Since when are dogs afraid of cats?’, he scowled as he took another puff of his cigar.

3

Napoleon stared at Whiskers and then barked three times.

Whiskers growled at a low volume, and then hissed at Napoleon.

Napoleon now backed off with a whimper.

Whiskers took two steps forward and then hissed again.

Napoleon kept whimpering. He looked at Whiskers as if begging for something.

Whiskers licked Napoleon’s face, then two steps back before hissing again.

‘I wish that dog and that cat would stop fighting’, Mr. Rahim across the street said to his girlfriend.

‘Stop worrying so much.’, replied Mr. Rahim’s girlfriend.

4

When the Rollinses came home from their movie, Al was surprised that Napoleon had gone

out.

'I don't understand, Sue. We locked all the doors and closed the windows.'

Sue shook her head.

'Maybe there's some secret exit up in the attic.'

Al lit a cigar.

'Yes. That attic. It is a mess that must be cleaned.'

'Well, then', Sue looked at him. 'get to work!'

Al blew smoke rings.

'Later, Sue. Later. So I guess Napoleon's out with the Chung's cat. That monster!'

'Yes, Albert. They enjoy fighting.'

'Cheers.'

5

Jin and Jean drank lemonade in their back yard, while Whiskers slept on the kitchen window sill. The weather was warm but not humid and the sky was completely clear.

'Here come the Rollinses, Jean. I wonder what they're after.'

Jean shook her head. She worried that the Rollinses might cause trouble.

'Good afternoon, Mr. and Mrs. Chung. We have to talk about our pets.'

'What's the problem, Mr. Rollins?', Jean turned away from Al Rollins' cigar.

'They fight all the time. They upset each other.', Sue Rollins told them.

Jin smiled. This was somehow not to be unexpected.

'Well, Sue and Al. You must be familiar with the expression 'raining cats and dogs''

'Very funny. We need to keep your cat away from our dog.'

'Or maybe the other way around.', Jean smiled.

'That's easier said than done, Mr. and Mrs. Chung. Napoleon has some sort of secret door that we can't find.'

'Well, then. Perhaps you should look harder.', Jean did not raise her voice.

'Perhaps we should build a higher fence', Sue Rollins suggested.

Jin shook his head, trying not to laugh.

'When cats and dogs want to jump that fence, they'll always find a way to do so.'

'Very funny', Al Rollins walked away angrily as Sue followed him obediently.

6

The Rollinses were home watching sports on television and the Chungs were busy watching a movie, but both Whiskers and Napoleon had snuck out of their homes without being caught. Tonight it was Napoleon's turn to jump that fence, and Whiskers was delighted to see his favourite dog.

Napoleon immediately made a throaty growl that showed Whiskers who was the boss tonight.

Whiskers meowed once.

Napoleon stood over Whiskers, who kneeled in front of the dog.

Whiskers purred. Whiskers was happy being away from Jin and Jean and with Napoleon.

Napoleon barked seven times. Whiskers rolled over and licked Napoleon's toes.

Mr. Rahim and his girlfriend were too busy to pay attention to Whiskers and Napoleon. But both the Rollinses and the Chungs came running after their pets.

'What on earth is happening?', Al roared as Sue held him back.

Jin and Jean watched Whiskers and Napoleon playing, and then smiled at each other.

‘Something that none of us understand. Nothing to worry about, Mr. and Mrs. Rollins. Nothing to get upset about at all.’

Jin and Jean returned to their movie. Al growled at Whiskers, but then Sue led him back to the house.

When the humans had returned to their televisions, Whiskers looked at Napoleon and then the dog and cat began laughing. They agreed that humans were very funny.

Marbles And Freckles

1

Marbles walked gingerly around Mrs. Peabody's garden, making sure that she didn't crush any flowers and cause trouble. Marbles was not in the mood for trouble. She was in the mood for a nice afternoon walk and possibly a snack.

Mr. Hendricks lived on the other side of the Peabodys. Mr. Hendricks was a nice quite man who never scolded Marbles about his precious flowers. He didn't even have any flowers. Mr. Hendricks lived with a cat, or the cat lived with him.

Freckles recognized Marbles and now walked toward her. Freckles licked Marbles and Marbles hissed at him. Then she turned around and walked back toward Grace's house. Grace would be home soon and then it would be supper time.

2

As soon as Grace walked in the door, Marbles hugged her and Grace then served dinner. It was the same flavour that she had eaten for breakfast, but Marbles didn't mind. She was too hungry to be fussy.

Grace washed her hands and then called her friend Edith on the telephone. Grace and Edith always talked on the phone forever. Marbles wasn't very interested in their conversation, but he did recognize the words 'Mr. Hendricks'.

When Grace finally got off the phone, Marbles meowed and Grace let her out the back door. Marbles again avoided Mrs. Peabody's garden before stopping at Mr. Hendricks' back yard. She was looking for Freckles, but Freckles was not home tonight.

3

When Grace prepared for her sleep, Marbles again demanded to go out. Since she had a door especially for the cat and there were no clouds in the sky, Grace said yes. Marbles again ignored the Peabodys and their perfect garden and looked for Freckles.

Marbles was in luck. She could hear Freckles' meow. She could tell that Freckles was out and across the street. That nice Mr. Hendricks had let him out for the night. She wanted to become friendly with Freckles .

Now Marbles could hear a car coming. She wanted the car to speed up so that she could cross the street safely. The car drove slowly. too slowly. Marbles worried that Freckles would go away.

4

On the following evening, Mr. Hendricks came to Grace's house for dinner. He was a nice man with a deep voice and a big appetite.

Marbles liked Mr. Hendricks, but she was annoyed by the weather and also by Grace. It was raining cats and dogs outside , as humans always described it. Grace was worried about Marbles catching a cold, but Grace didn't know about Marbles' favourite little cove in the Woodburys' back yard. Mrs. Woodbury and Grace never spoke, so how could Grace know about this special

safe place.

Boom! The thunder rumbled again and again as the lightning flashed. Marbles wondered if Freckles was allowed out during the storm. Marbles didn't want Freckles to be having fun when she couldn't have any.

5

The next night the temperature was cooler and there were no clouds in the sky. The moon was full and there was a breeze. Marbles felt comfortable as she walked past the Peabody's perfect garden.

Grace had gone out and left the cat door open. Grace was smart enough to know that Marbles could make up her own mind about going out. Grace was a smart human.

Marbles was in luck. She could smell Freckles moving closer to her. Marbles wanted to play with Freckles tonight.

Freckles walked in front of Marbles and the two cats rubbed noses. Then Freckles walked ahead of Marbles, hoping that his neighbour would follow her. As they walked through Mr. Hendricks' back yard, Marbles recognized Grace's voice. It was higher than usual and Grace was laughing a lot. This made Marbles happy.

Marbles followed Freckles through Mr. Hendricks' front yard and across the street. Marbles had never met the people who lived across the road from Mr. Hendricks, but this did not matter. Freckles was now her friend, and they were going to become playmates.

Presents In Bed

1

Linda was not feeling well in the morning, so she stayed in bed. She decided to sleep for another hour and then phone in too sick for work.

As Linda rolled over onto her side, Pebbles leapt onto the bed.

Linda pretended not to notice Pebbles. Yes, the cat was hungry but it wasn't as if the cat was really starving.

Pebbles pawed at Linda's face. She was familiar with this behaviour. She knew that Pebbles would keep pawing at her face until she covered her face with her blankets and then Pebbles would know that she was awake.

Linda opened her eyes and shook her head.

'Hold your horses, Pebbles. It's not as if you're starving. If I have to wait then so should you.'

'Mrrrrrrr....wow"', said Pebbles quite loudly. 'Mrrrrrrrrr...wowwww''.

Linda recognized this meow as meaning 'Here. Look what I've brought you.'. Her face became red.

'Pebbles! Please get that mouse out of here! Now !'.

'Mrrr...wow"', repeated Pebbles. Then she picked the mouse up between her teeth and moved it to the cupboard corner.

Linda closed her eyes. At least Pebbles had removed the mouse from her bed. Hopefully that would be the last of the mouse.

2

After Linda finally got the message and fed Pebbles breakfast before going back to sleep, Pebbles washed her paws and body and then moved the mouse out of the cupboard and into a safe place in Linda's basement.

Then Pebbles walked upstairs back into the kitchen to drink from her water bowl. She would wait for Linda to get out of bed and back to her regular schedule. Linda was too sick for work as well as play.

Pebbles knew that Linda's friend Kim would be dropping over with Linda's medicine. Pebbles never gave Linda presents when Kim was visiting. She knew better.

The water tasted good and Pebbles helped herself to a bite of kibble before sipping more water. She knew that Linda thought that there were several mice, when really there was only one that she kept hidden in the basement.

The most important thing about presents is giving them. Pebbles loved watching Linda's face when she have her presents. But she did not understand why Linda didn't appreciate her gifts. Linda was too sick to get out of bed and make breakfast. Pebbles was only being concerned.

3

Later that afternoon Kim brought over some light food for Linda and Pebbles went out exploring the neighbourhood.

Pebbles decided not to wander too far from home because the O'Briens' terrier Charlie was home and in a nasty mood.

'Mr.....wwwwoooooowwww'., Kim could hear Pebbles wanting to come into the kitchen .

Pebbles entered and helped herself to some water, while Kim and Linda drank herbal tea and talked.

'I wish Pebbles would stop bringing me presents', sighed Linda.

'You might as well get used to it, Linda. Endicott gives me presents. Endicott brings me mice when I'm trying to sleep in.'

'Normally, they think we're their parents. But , when there's a mouse, we become their kittens?'

'That's right', Kim poured more tea for Linda.

' If Pebbles must bring me presents that I've never asked her for, I do wish she wouldn't being them to me in bed', Linda sipped her tea.

'She gives them to you because she loves you', Kim poured herself another cup and shook her head.

4

On the following day, Linda was still sick in bed but she allowed Pebbles to roam outside for several hours.

Pebbles was happy because the O'Briens had gone out for the day and taken their big nasty dog with them. With the dog away, Pebbles could sniff around the O'Briens' back yard before enjoying the field behind the O'Briens.

The back yard didn't offer Pebbles anything other than fertilized grass, so Pebbles ran into the field. The field was always fun and today wasn't any different.

She smelled and then heard the mouse before seeing it. Pebbles had all day to play, so there was no need to rush. Pebbles enjoyed wearing the mouse down before pouncing.

After about an hour, Pebbles made her move. She was just about to bring the mouse home to Linda when she recognized Kim's car approaching.

I'll find a place to hide the mouse in the field , Pebbles decided.

5

Kim finally left after supper time, and now Pebbles saw her chance. She allowed Linda about fifteen minutes to watch television in bed, and then went out into the field behind the O'Briens' back yard.

The mouse was still in the same spot that Pebbles had hidden it. Pebbles enjoyed a small bite and then clenched the mouse in her teeth. It was now time to bring Linda another present when she was sick in bed.

Pebbles was in luck. Linda had gone to the washroom during a commercial for some brand of stupid cat food. Pebbles leapt onto her bed and dropped the mouse at the foot, so that Linda wouldn't spot it immediately.

'Hi, Pebbles. Did you go for a little walk?'

'Purrrrrrrrrrrrrr.'. Pebbles had nothing to complain about. She watched Linda climb back into bed and then inched her way onto Linda's chest.

'Careful with your claws, Pebbles. Here.'

Linda gently moved Pebbles over to the centre of her chest. Pebbles purred quite happily. Then Linda smelled something.

Pumpnel's Reward

1

Pumpnel sniffed around Jennifer's oak tree and then looked up at the sky. There were no clouds and Jennifer wouldn't be coming home for a while yet.

This was not good, since Pumpnel was becoming quite hungry. He meowed and then began walking to his right, toward the McGregors' garbage can. Sometimes Mr. and Mrs. McGregor were generous with their leftovers.

Pumpnel sniffed before knocking the top of the garbage can aside. Things did not smell hopeful. He could see some vegetables but no meat or fish. He didn't have to look very hard because he couldn't smell anything tasty. So, Pumpnel quickly decided to move on.

2

The people next door to the McGregors were called Salloum. Jennifer sometimes talked to them and they had a dog named Bone-A-Part. Pumpnel was afraid of the dog.

He could hear the dog barking in the Salloum's back yard. He knew that Bone-a-Part couldn't leap over the backyard fence, so he sniffed inside the Salloum's garbage can. He hoped there might be some dog food but he couldn't smell anything.

Bone-A-Part barked again and then again. Pumpnel became annoyed at the dog's barking and decided to try his luck at the O'Kelly house. He remembered once finding a hamburger in their garbage without all those vegetables that humans liked to eat.

3

There were no rejected hamburgers or any other kind of meat in the O'Kelly's garbage. However, Pumpnel could smell something that reminded him of fish. So he used his paws to reach the very bottom of the garbage can, and there was a small piece of fish.

Pumpnel could also smell another cat, and he knew which other cat he could smell. There had been an orange female sniffing around Jennifer's house last week. Jennifer had given the orange cat some canned food, and Pumpnel had complained.

'Oh no', Pumpnel meowed loudly. That other cat is still hanging around.

'I hope he doesn't come and visit Jennifer again. I hope she doesn't give him any more of my food.'

4

Pumpnel decided to move away from the smell of the orange stray cat, so he now walked

next door to the Jackson's house. He remembered once catching a mouse in front of the Jackson's garbage, but never any leftover chicken or fish.

He couldn't smell anything. The Jacksons didn't have any pets so their garbage cans were nearly empty. Pumpernel sniffed through their blue box and their newspapers without any luck.

Then, in the garbage can, he recognized a picture of a cat. This picture was not on a can or box but on a small piece of paper.

Pumpernel now heard the sound of Jennifer's car coming home for dinner. He knew that he would also soon be eating but he thought that the piece of paper with the picture of the cat on it might be something Jennifer would like. So he picked it up between his teeth and ran home with it.

5

Jennifer parked her car in the driveway and then called for Pumpernel.

'Here kitty. Here Pumpernel. It looks like it might rain soon.'

Pumpernel ran up to her and rubbed against her trousers.

What was that cat bringing home for her now? Thank God it wasn't a mouse!

Jennifer grabbed the piece of paper from Pumpernel's mouth and read it. Pumpernel had brought her a valuable coupon.

'Come in the car with me immediately!'", Jennifer commanded Pumpernel.

And off they drove.

6

She drove as quickly as possible to the nearest supermarket, and then carried Pumpernel toward the pet food section.

A new flavour of cat food called Seafood Steakette was being offered at a bargain price. Jennifer had brought her coupon in her purse and now she wanted Pumpernel to taste the new flavour. If Pumpernel liked it, then she planned to buy an entire month's supply.

The supermarket clerk asked Jennifer what her cat's name was and then spoke to Pumpernel.

"Here, Pumpernel. I'll bet you'll like this new flavour.'

Pumpernel took a bite and liked it immediately. He hadn't really eaten since breakfast, so Seafood Steakette tasted quite pleasant.

"Do you like it, Pumpernel?", Jennifer looked at him seriously.

He hesitated for a moment, and then purred for a second before eating more of the sample. To be honest, the new flavour didn't taste too different than his other flavours. But Jennifer seemed to want him to like it, and it wasn't as if he disliked it. And he always preferred that Jennifer be happy, so he pretended that Seafood Steakette was as tasty as a mouse.

Cats are happy when their humans are happy, Pumpernel purred as Jennifer drove home as the sky became darker and darker.

Swallowing Pills

1

Tricky sniffed at his food bowl and immediately sensed another one of Peter's vitamins. Peter was always trying to make him eat these pills by mixing them in with his regular canned meals .

At first, Tricky would refuse to swallow the pills. When Peter realized that Tricky was calmly eating around the pills ,he would become annoyed. He would grab Tricky, hold the cat's mouth wide open, and then heave the pill down his mouth. Then Peter would rub Tricky's throat ,making sure that the pill stayed down.

Peter thought he'd been successful in making Tricky take his daily vitamin tablets. Peter thought a lot of other situations were also under control .

2

The next morning, Peter set the alarm for quite early and thus Tricky ate breakfast earlier than usual. Tricky didn't mind this. He preferred to eat breakfast as soon as the sun came up.

' Here you are, Tricky. '

Peter opened up a tin of Feline Foibles with a salmon flavour. Peter had stopped feeding Tricky any tuna, but Tricky wasn't upset about not eating tuna. He knew that veterinarians told people not to feed male cats tuna fish for some particular reason.

While Tricky ate, Peter got dressed and collected his papers. Tricky watched Peter almost forget something , and then remember it.

'Open wide, Trickster. No silly behaviour today, please. I'm in a hurry.'

Tricky opened wide and let Peter gently toss the pill into his mouth. Peter now used this technique, rather than pretend that the pills were cat food. Then Peter rubbed his hand against the cat's throat. Tricky actually enjoyed this rubbing.

'Good puss. Have a nice day, and I'll see you for dinner.'

And now Peter had gone for the day.

3

Peter's apartment wasn't very big and there was no way Tricky could get out to the courtyard. Not that he really wanted to , there were neighbours with big noisy dogs and there were loud people who smoked too many cigarettes.

Tricky washed his paws and then his entire body, and then leapt on to the bed where he could sleep quite comfortably. He napped on the bed when Peter was there sleeping, but without Peter he would take extended beauty sleeps. He was dreaming about eating mice instead of cat food, but then there was a car suddenly approaching so he woke up just in time to save himself.

Tricky realized that he was in Peter's safe apartment and then became bored. He needed to play and run around. Now where was that catnip mouse that Peter had so thoughtfully bought for

him?

Oh pooh! The toy mouse was under the bed. As Tricky crawled under the bed to look for it, he noticed how dirty things were. There were too many boxes blocking the mouse.

Then Tricky smelled catnip. Good, now he could play after all.

4

When Peter came home in time to serve Tricky his supper, he was with a woman named Cheryl. At first Tricky hadn't liked her, but now Cheryl had grown on him. Cheryl was tall with curly hair and spoke in a soft and musical voice, quite different than Peter's.

Peter and Cheryl both petted Tricky for a while and then ignored him.

'Play with your mouse. Play with something. Please, Trickster?'

Tricky did not want to play with the toy mouse right now. He did not wish to be entertaining, and he did not want to look for the mouse underneath the bed.

Peter and Cheryl sat down with glasses of red wine and watched television. Tricky was pleased that their programme didn't have a lot of gunshots and car chases. He was also pleased that there weren't any commercials for stupid brands of cat food.

He watched Cheryl and Peter mating on the bed. Tricky did not understand why they never produced any baby humans.

Then, after relaxing and watching more television, Cheryl put on her coat and left. She kissed Peter goodnight and then spoke to him.

'Peter, you really should clean up under your bed. The dust is bothering me.'

5

Two days later, Peter did feel that a cold was coming on. Or, rather, he wasn't sure if he was catching cold or sneezing because of the dust under the bed that had so annoyed his friend Cheryl.

'Well, there's only one way to find out.', Peter muttered.

He retrieved the vacuum cleaner from the kitchen cupboard and untangled the cord before plugging it in.

Tricky could see the vacuum cleaner before hearing it. He meowed loudly and Peter gladly let him go out and explore the hallway.

Peter glossed over the rug and then set about cleaning up the mess underneath the bed. He realized that he would have to move all of his boxes out of the way before he could vacuum anything.

One of the boxes contained some murder mysteries that he decided to keep rather than throw out. Peter always saved good murder mysteries for a rainy day.

After moving the box of murder mysteries onto the bed, Peter found himself staring at several rows of pills that lay on the floor underneath the bed.

He realized that at least a month's worth of Tricky's vitamins had been subtly spat out onto the floor underneath the bed, and that Tricky had lived up to his name and fooled him royally.

'Oh, Tricky!' Peter gritted his teeth and groaned. 'How could you do this to me?'

Peter decided to take a break and smoke a cigarette. He only smoked when he was either confused or angry.

He realized that his cat had outsmarted him. He decided that spending money on expensive cat vitamins had been a stupid thing to do, and he realized that he would have to spend that money on food with greater nutritional value than the food he had been feeding the cat.

'Not those stupid brands with the boring commercials', he ground out his cigarette. Then he

resumed vacuuming with a vengeance, after scooping up all of the rejected vitamins and thrown them into the green garbage bag.

Then Peter smiled as he continued working. Yet again, the cat had outsmarted him. That's what cats were supposed to do to their humans.

He vacuumed his rugs and then underneath the bed again. No more dust and no more pills, that was his new motto Then he turned the vacuum cleaner off and put it back into the cupboard.

'Here, Tricky. Here kitty kitty. Please come visit me in my nice clean apartment.'

The Great Backyard

1

‘ Are you ready, Dick? The movie starts in twenty minutes.’

‘ Yes, Wayne, I’m ready to go.

‘ It’s a beautiful summer night, so the cats can stay outside.’

‘ I think our dear old Mrs. Brown upstairs has been hearing things. I don’t believe there are any raccoons in our backyard.’

Dick and Wayne jumped into Dick’s red Honda Civic and drove to their movie. Little did they know what was really happening right in their own backyard.

2

Marmalade napped on his usual mat at the top of the stairs. Stripes paced back and forth. Back and forth and back and forth-over and over and over. Then her ears detected something. Some other creature was stirring , and not very far away at all.

Marmalade woke up. He could smell something and now he could also hear it.

‘ Here come the raccoons again, Stripes.

Stripes meowed angrily. Her meow gradually moved from high and squeaky to low and husky. Then her growl became louder and louder until it was now a roar.

Stripes had puffed up into an full-blooded adult tigress. Stripes was now more than three times the size of the father raccoon.

‘ You go back to sleep, Marmalade. I’ll look after the raccoons.

3

Later in the week, on a very hot summer afternoon, Dick and Wayne were enjoying their delicious fruit punch when Mrs. Brown walked down the stairs, wanting to talk to them.

‘ Oh, there you are, Dick and Wayne. I have some excellent news for you.’

Dick and Wayne smiled at each other, then they looked at Mrs. Brown.

‘ The raccoons have all gone away.’

Dick’s face became red.

‘ That’s because there weren’t any raccoons , Mrs. Brown.’

Mrs. Brown’s face did not become red.

‘ You gentlemen are mistaken. The raccoons have all gone away. Your striped cat took care of the matter.’

Mrs. Brown turned around and walked back upstairs.

‘ I think our neighbour drinks when her husband’s away’, said Wayne.

4

On that still very humid evening, when Dick and Wayne had gone out to another exciting movie, Marmalade and Stripes relaxed out on their individual favourite steps. Both cats felt comfortable tonight.

‘ So, Marmalade, you must have lived with a dog before you moved here?’.

‘ Smart guess, Stripes. How did you know?’.

Stripes thought he could hear a robin, then realized that he was only hearing things.

‘ Because you take humans too seriously. That’s what dogs do.’.

Marmalade licked a sore patch near his tail. Humid summer weather always made his skin too dry and itchy.

‘ You’re telling me cats should stay away from humans.’.

‘ No, silly. But cats are different than dogs. Humans like us when we snub them. That’s why they think cats are smarter than dogs.’.

Marmalade scratched his head, and then resumed licking his fur near his tail. Marmalade wanted rain, and a fresh clean bowl of water.

5

Mrs. Brown and her neighbour Mrs. Taylor were playing bridge and drinking blueberry tea on their landing one flight above Dick and Wayne’s. Stripes was confidently approaching Mrs. Brown’s landing, followed timidly by Marmalade.

‘What a beautiful animal’, Mrs. Brown exclaimed as she petted Stripes’ chin.

‘You be careful, Helen.’, cautioned Mrs. Taylor. ‘That cat will always be a wild one.’.

‘Don’t be silly, Mary. Stripes takes care of Marmalade, as she well should. People can learn so much from the animal kingdom. Why, Dick and Wayne certainly don’t take very good care of their cats.’.

‘They both look well fed to me, Helen. Let’s get back to our bridge game.’.

Stripes and Marmalade sniffed around Mrs. Brown’s landing, realizing that it was still too early for any dinner- not to mention any raccoons. Then Marmalade followed Stripes down to their favourite napping spots on Dick and Wayne’s landing. They would sleep until the gentlemen returned from work.

6

Dick and Wayne both arrived home from their jobs at almost the same time, and then agreed to make dinner together. The barbecue was fast and efficient and they decided to cook themselves some chicken, along with corn on the cob.

‘You realize that Stripes and Marmalade will expect some chicken, Dick.’.

Dick laughed.

‘Tell me something I don’t know, Wayne. Like what movie are you taking me out to tonight?’.

‘That’s a good question.’.

Wayne walked into the house and returned with the entertainment section.

‘I suggest Brutal Weather. That movie stars your favourite actor.’.

‘ Oh yes. Him. Let’s watch that one?’.

Wayne served up the chicken to Dick and then to himself. Then he remembered to give the cats one small scrap each.

‘ You are cats. That means you must eat cat food while we humans eat human food.’.

‘Meow!’, said Marmalade.

Stripes stared at Dick and Wayne, and then hissed. They ignored the two cats, since they had heard these complaints before.

‘Hurry up and finish your dinner, Wayne. I don’t want to miss the opening credits.’.

‘Relax, Dick. I would never let you miss your favourite actor.’.

7

Dick and Wayne gave up on the movie after almost an hour. Usually they watched movies right until the very end, but Brutal Weather was brutally terrible . Even Dick’s favourite actor was useless.

When they left the theatre, the gentlemen looked up at the sky. Brutal weather was approaching quickly so they decided to drive straight home.

When they arrived home, Dick and Wayne closed all of their windows . Then Dick sent Wayne downstairs to call in the two cats.

‘Marmalade. Stripes. Get out of the backyard, it’s going to rain.’.

Wayne wondered why the cats didn’t respond to his calls. Usually the cats could smell rain before it started. Usually they were afraid of thunder and lightning.

‘I’ll put out some kibble, Wayne.’, Dick yelled from the kitchen.

Wayne proceeded further and further into the back yard, and then suddenly stopped in his tracks.

He could see Marmalade hiding in the bushes but he couldn’t find Stripes.

What he could see was an adult tigress roaring at an entire family of raccoons. Wayne had never seen raccoons afraid before, but he certainly wasn’t complaining. The raccoons now turned around and ran as fast as they could, out of the backyard and into the neighbour’s garden at a safe distance from the tigress.

‘Dick! Come out in the back yard and take a look at what I see!’.

Dick ran down the stairs and then looked at Wayne as if he had lost his mind.

‘I see Stripes and I see Marmalade finally climbing out of the bushes, Wayne. I don’t see anything I haven’t seen hundreds of times before.’.

Wayne swallowed, and then spoke to the cats.

‘You two come inside right now. Can’t you see there’s going to be a thunderstorm?’.

Tyler and Trouble

1

Mom and Dad were having yet another party where all the guests would be grown-ups, except for that awful girl Tiffany Brownlee. Tyler hated Mom and Dad's parties. He was always expected to say hello early and then either go to bed or else play with the cat down in the basement.

The cat's name was Trouble. Trouble occasionally caused accidents, since he was such a clumsy animal. Trouble didn't want to play with Tyler, although Tyler often wanted to play with Trouble.

'Stay here, Trouble.'

Tyler kept an eye on the calico cat who yearned to do some serious hunting in the Flannagan's back yard. The Flannagans were an older couple who had not been invited to Mom and Dad's party.

'Meow meow Rrrrwoowwww.'

Trouble was about to have an adventure and who was Tyler to try and stop him. Tyler shook his head. Cats could have adventures and little boys couldn't. That was no fair.

2

The last of the guests had finally gone home and now the Hendersons set about cleaning up all the dirty dishes.

'Where's Tyler, Shirley?'

'It's all right, Don. Tyler's sound asleep.'

'So, then where's Trouble?'

Shirley Henderson looked at her husband.

'Your guess is as good as mine. Tyler has to take better care of that cat. Especially considering the way those scary Mulligan boys drive their parents sports cars.'

Don Henderson sat down and lit his pipe.

'You know, Shirley. I've always thought that cat doesn't enjoy living here. He really is an ill-tempered animal. We bought him for Tyler and we gave him a home. And what exactly does he give us?'

'I know, Don. If we hadn't brought him home Trouble would be in the morgue.'

'Or in a scientist's laboratory.'

Don Henderson lit his pipe again. Now he heard Trouble's scratching before his wife heard it.

'Mr.....woowww. Mr.....woowwww.'

'Okay, Trouble. We'll open the door and let you in. But we'd love it if you occasionally said thank you.'

3

Dinner had been cold, and Tyler had struggled to finish it. After dinner he sat in front of the record player while his parents listened to some famous opera singer. Don Henderson was a

serious record collector who believed in saving important records from becoming obscure.

‘This passage never fails to move me, Shirley.’

‘It is truly gorgeous, Donald. I’m going to turn the heat up’.

Shirley stood and walked toward the thermometer in the kitchen. Trouble followed her , definitely thinking about bugging her for a snack. Shirley adjusted the temperature and then poured two shots of scotch without ice.

Trouble realized that Shirley wasn’t about to give him any snack. He was cold and something had to be done about this. He needed to stake out the warmest spot in the house.

‘Things should improve now, Don. Cheers.’

‘Cheers, Shirl. This section is even more beautiful.’

Don began lighting his pipe as Shirley agreed with him. Shirley always agreed with him.

‘Look out! Trouble , get down here!’

‘Ouch!’

Don had burnt his finger when he realized that Trouble had leapt onto the spinning record. Not only had the beautiful music been interrupted , the valuable collector’s item was now worthless.

‘That cat has to go ,Shirley. That cat is a monster.’

Tyler didn’t say a word. He picked up trouble from the floor and began petting him. Trouble began to purr for the first time in what seemed like eternity.

4

Things were tense for at least a week after Trouble had ruined Don’s favourite valuable record. Tyler knew that his parents wanted him to go play with Tiffany Brownlee or Jason Oswald or Morgan Bradley or somebody, but that was the last thing he wanted to do. He didn’t have any friends, except for Trouble.

Trouble needed a new catnip mouse. He had worn his current toy out and now he needed a new one.

‘Can Trouble have a new mouse, Mom?’

‘I’ll have to ask your father. Do you understand , Tyler?’

Shirley Henderson looked very tired. She was smoking a cigarette while watching television. Tyler wondered why his mother didn’t get together with Mrs. Brownlee or Mr. Oswald or Mrs. Bradley.

Actually , Tyler wanted to watch Trouble at work. He knew that Trouble often played outside and caught real mice. Once he had brought one home for dinner , which caused his mother to scream.

Don Henderson now opened the door, kissed Shirley, and immediately began playing another one of his valuable records. This time, he was careful to make sure the top of the antique record player was down so that Trouble couldn’t warm up on the record.

‘Oh, Shirley.’

‘What is it, Don?’

Shirley carried in two bottles of beer from the kitchen.

‘ I’ve placed an ad in The Examiner. Four year old neutered male cat to good home.’

Shirley handed Don his bottle of beer.

‘ It’s all for the best, Don. Tyler will be upset, but he’ll snap out of it.’

Don Henderson looked at Shirley with exaggerated patience.

‘ Getting rid of that damn cat is the biggest favour we can be doing our son. Not to mention

our house’.

‘Cheers.’

5

Tyler was unofficially banished to the basement over the next week while potential new cat-owners all visited the Hendersons’ house in order to take a look at Trouble.

Two young women named Martha and Jane were certainly not impressed with the Hendersons’ cat. They thought Trouble didn’t look like he’d be any serious trouble and therefore the cat wouldn’t be as much fun as the cats they already lived with.

Little did those two silly ladies know, thought Tyler to himself.

But later in the week a soft-spoken older woman named Sylvie Chartrand immediately fell in love with Trouble. It was the cat’s eyes. They were almost emerald green in the mid-afternoon light.

‘He’s all yours , Mme. Chartrand .

Shirley offered Trouble’s new human a glass of red wine.

‘I wish you good luck with that animal , Miss Chartrand. Quite frankly, I don’t think he likes people very much.’

Sylvie Chartrand looked at Donald Henderson and then turned away from him. She decided not to drink wine with the Hendersons since now she had to drive home with her new pussycat.

Not that she had to drive very far. Sylvie Chartrand only lived three blocks west of the Hendersons.

After Mme. Chartrand had left , Tyler came upstairs and realized that Trouble had been taken away from him. He looked at his parents and began crying.

‘Don’t cry, Tyler. you’ll miss him tonight, and then you’ll grow out of it.’

‘He’s a bad animal, Tyler. If that woman is foolish enough to take him , then Trouble is her problem. Not ours or yours.’

‘I hate you!’

Tyler stood glaring at his father for a moment before Donald Henderson grabbed his shoulders and turned him around. Just as Donald was about to spank Tyler, Shirley yelled at him.’

‘There’s no need to spank him, Donald!’

Donald backed off , reluctantly.

‘ Go to your room, Tyler. Go to your room and stay there until I say you can come out.’

Tyler looked at his mother and then ran into his bedroom, slamming the door.

In his room , he cried for a while and then he stopped crying. He knew that his parents were going to a concert this evening and that he would find a way to look up Mme. Chartrand’s address in the telephone book.

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