

The Day I Got Locked Outside

by Rainbow

I had my day planned perfectly when this most horrible thing happened. I was first going to stretch out under the coffee table just out of Daddy's reach and see how far I could draw him off couch. Then I was going to stand by my food dish and meow a few times. That's a favorite of mine because Mommy and Daddy both think I'm starving and feel guilty, which usually gets me some fresh food or some kind of treat. My plan then was to sleep for a few hours on the bed, then up on the cedar chest for a quick nap before moving back under the coffee table for a snooze and maybe a little game of keep-away with the couch.

So I stretched out beneath the table with my belly in the air. A dangerous arrangement because sometimes Daddy thinks I actually want him to pet my belly, and I have to resort to scratching and biting, which is fun, but only never lasts for long. I pointed my head at Daddy on the couch, putting out pet-me vibes, and Daddy reached out to scratch between my ears, leaning so far off the couch that he actually fell completely off and onto the floor.

Victory!

I was full of myself, high on power, and that's when I

decided to change my already perfect plan and add a little danger to my day. I decided to go outside. I know what you're thinking, outside and a nap on the cedar chest? That's crazy. I admit it's a little much, but I'm still young, and one day I'll be old and wish I'd taken more chances in life. I had a quick breakfast--I passed on meowing for no reason, figuring I'd get to it after outside--then padded up to the glass door that led out to the balcony.

If you were thinking that I meant the big OUTSIDE, with grass and rocks and dirt and bugs and cars, then you've obviously never been what I like to call a couch cat. Couch cats like laying on fluffy stuff and licking catnip off little pillows your Grandma made you and seeing how many Ping-Pong balls you can get wedged in your Daddy's shoe. You other guys are into eating grass till you throw up and climbing trees and getting people to think you don't know how to come down. I'm not putting those things down. If that's your lifestyle choice, good for you. I used to be out there with you, teasing the dogs and tasting the lawn. But then I got this new Daddy and Mommy, and I learned that OUTSIDE life is nothing compared to the life of a couch cat. In here, when you vomit, they clean it up for you.

So I sat at the glass balcony door till Daddy let me out. I just stood there for a moment, acting like I didn't know why he came all the way over, just giving him a hard time, then I walked out, and he slid the door shut behind me.

The balcony is a strange place. It smells like OUTSIDE mixed with inside. It's full of smells that can really fill your head if you let them, but seeing how busy my plan for the day was already, I shut them all out. This was going to be a short balcony trip.

I watched a squirrel climb up into the tree outside the balcony screen and hang onto the bottom of a grapefruit. Squirrels are stupid. They don't know how to plan. I curled on my rug and listened for the combination thump and squeak.

But then there was this horrible sound coming from the other side of the house. A huge sound like someone clanging pots together, really big pots. The squirrel ran away chattering, and the hair raised on the back of my neck. I scratched at the glass door for somebody to let me in away from the mean sound. And scratched. And scratched.

But Mommy and Daddy were gone.

They do that sometimes, most of the time, I think. Some days I'll come out from under the bed after my after-

nap-pre-snooze, and the door will open and one of them will come in and ask if I missed them. So they must leave the house at some point, but I get so busy keeping to my schedule I never notice.

So this time, they went off to do whatever they do and left me trapped on the balcony. This was really going to interfere with my plans.

The scary sound finally went away, and I settled back onto my rug. Right then I should have been on the bed, and I was mad at my stupid Daddy for leaving me out there.

It started to rain, and everything smelled like water. A silly bunch of frogs started singing. Despite my agitation, I found myself purring along with them as rain pattered through the trees. I fell asleep with their song rippling in my mind.

I woke up, and it was hot, the sun high in the sky. I moved back away from the screen, further into the shadow of the roof. I drank from the glass of water Mommy had left out there. My whiskers bent back as I poked my nose into the glass. That tickled. Drinking out of the glass was fun because it was special water. Mommy would probably get mad if she saw and swat me away. It was warm and a bit stale, but all the sweeter because it was forbidden. I strutted around the balcony, flaunting my rebellious ways,

but then I remembered there wasn't anyone there to see me be bad, except that stupid squirrel who chattered at me from the tree. I turned around and stuck my tail in the air.

I took another nap on one of the canvas chairs, which should have been the cedar chest. My aggravation returned, and I had a hard time getting to sleep, nearly a whole minute. When I woke up, it was cooler, and the sun was sinking. A breeze blew through the screen, and it brought all kinds of smells. I could smell grass and leaves and mud from far away, the salt of the ocean, all kinds of cooking foods mixed together. The wind was a big stew of wonderful smells all for me. I pressed my nose to the screen and drank it all in.

That's when I heard the front door open and Mommy and Daddy come home. Daddy started called my name and looking for me, then Mommy started calling my name too.

The thing was, now that someone was finally there to let me in, I didn't want to go in. I was having a nice time. But a cat's got to do what a cat's got to do.

I started scratching at the glass. I mean, really laying claw to it like I was trying to dig through. I meowed and moaned like I was in pain. Mommy saw me through the door and ran to open it fast as she could. I zipped

through as she apologized and tried to grab me. I ran to the water dish and lapped at the water. They stood over me and cooed and said they were sorry. I just stood at the bowl and licked at the water, not drinking, just slapping the surface. Then I ran to the potty box and went, drawing it out as long as I could, digging around for a long time like there was something wrong. I had them going. Daddy apologized both to me and to Mommy, and Mommy kept asking if I was okay and yelling at Daddy for letting me starve. When I crawled under the bed, they both got down on the floor and looked in on me. They were really worried, and I was happy. Every now and then people get complacent, and you have to rattle them a little bit. I thought about making myself puke, but that might have been too much. One of them would probably have gotten the brilliant idea that I needed to go to the doctor. Part of being a couch cat is knowing the limits you can push your people.

I guess they learned their lesson, because they haven't gone away and left me outside ever since. For a few days they wouldn't let me go out at all, which is just like people, punishing me for their stupidity.

The first night after being locked on the balcony, I sat under the bed with my people above me, and thought about that squirrel. I pictured him clinging to the

underside of the grapefruit with no plan for what to do when the grapefruit let go of the twig. I hadn't planned on spending my day outside, and I ended up having some great adventures. As I closed my eyes, I thought of the squirrel and wished him luck. Then I went to sleep.

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