

THE ESCAPEE

Living as a cat in a human-dominated world can sometimes be pleasant, but often-times it can be very troublesome, indeed.

I'm a gray-coloured Tabby on the run from the Montreal Animal Shelter.

I did nothing to deserve my present status as an escapee. Well, let me briefly tell you my story.

Currently, it's Friday evening, 8:30 P.M. and I'm slithering through a vast, dark residential neighbourhood in Montreal North.

I was initially captured by an Animal Control Officer on Tuesday at roughly 1:00 P.M., immediately after I'd eaten a very satisfying seafood lunch.

Hank's Seafood Restaurant is a well-respected restaurant. Many stray animals have actually eaten the scraps of fish that are thrown away by restaurant workers. That's how tasty their food is.

I'd made a fatal error; while eating seafood that I'd just snatched from inside the restaurant in broad daylight in the park behind the restaurant. I'd become so brazen, hitting one restaurant after another, and supermarkets every now and then too.

The animal control officer, a short pudgy middle aged woman snuck up from behind me and then shot me with a tranquilizer. That's not the worst of it, I was also netted. Animal control officers can be very intent on capturing a specific troublesome animal.

I'm certain she gave me at least triple the dose of tranquilizer needed to knock me out, but because I was already on the run from previous 'free meal activities' I guess the city had had enough of my escapades.

I don't see anything wrong with a cat snatching a free meal here and there from different establishments; damn, it is tough living on the streets! Besides, cats are an asset to this world. You humans owe us so much for all the 'free good' that we've done for you.

Before I knew it, I'd found myself awakening in a filthy, stinking animal shelter. The food in my bowl consisted of stinky grub. The water was warm, not cool.

I spent just under three nights therein, but planned my escape as soon as the effects of the tranquilizer reached the half life mark.

Just an hour ago, at 7:30 P.M. to be exact, I played sick, inducing a vomiting fit and then 'begging' the shelter worker on duty to come to my aid.

The shelter worker entered our ward roughly a minute after I began my act.

Although the shelter worker was a giant of a man, perhaps six feet five inches tall and weighing over 250 pounds my feline instincts took over.

I waited until he opened my cage and pulled me out to make my move.

As soon as I was within striking range, I gave the shelter worker a right cross that literally knocked him out.

Thereafter, I didn't pause for a single second. There was no time to waste, because the other shelter cats and dogs, many of them in dire straits became envious of me; and when it became apparent that I wasn't going to help them they threw a fit, screaming their heads off.

The envious animals were shouting 'escapee' over and over again. They were trying to jinx me. It didn't faze me one iota.

I ran out of the ward and then through the hallway but met a temporary obstacle. The veterinarian of the shelter, a Dr.

Elvira Robinson charged me with full force, she was glaring and red-faced.

I did what I had to I leaped onto her chest, knocking her entire body backwards and onto the floor.

That was the last obstacle at the shelter. But just a few minutes later, I began to hear police sirens converging upon the animal shelter.

I continued walking southbound and slightly east towards the downtown core. It would be a better place to live in. It's easier for a cat to get lost in the crowd.

It's nice strolling through a clean, quiet residential area on a moon lit night, with stars engulfing the sky.

Most humans think that cats never glance up at the sky; that they don't even notice the sun, moon, stars or other terrestrial bodies therein. That's a bit stupid.

After roughly an hour of walking I decided to shift direction, heading due south. I was now within 'striking range' of the downtown core.

But just as I crossed the street a vehicle with high beam lights turned on approached me. Instantly, I took cover underneath a dark-coloured van, not knowing if the driver of the vehicle had seen me.

To my utter shock, as the vehicle slowly passed me I noticed that it was a patrol car. The Montreal Police were searching the area for an escapee cat. That cat, of course, was yours truly.

I waited until the patrol car was out of sight before squeezing my beautiful body out from underneath the van.

The sheer shock of seeing the patrol car caused me to poop and pee. I pictured the owner of the van throwing a fit the following morning. The stench would certainly be unbearable. Worse yet, part of my poop and pee had dropped just underneath the driver's door. The driver would likely step on my excrement. Well, I certainly wasn't going to clean up after myself.

I had more important matters at hand. Besides, there was likely to be a handsome reward for my capture. I had to continue trekking.

I scanned the area, using my eyes, ears and nose to detect danger. I scented a few dogs in the area but they were likely getting ready to hit the sack. I also scented a lone squirrel nearby.

Squirrels generally don't pose a threat to cats, unless, as in my case, the individual notifies the police after seeing me.

As I continued my trek a lone person called out to me.

"PSST, hey there, come here please."

"Huh, who is that?"

"Kitty, over here, I'm atop this tree, the Maple tree in front of Building #1225."

Before I zoomed in on the building, I suddenly realized that I was no longer embedded deep within a quiet residential area. I was very close to a major street Cote des Neiges Street is busy, indeed.

I zoomed in on the tree, noticing a lone squirrel. She had a walnut in her hand and a big smile on her face.

I glanced to my left and then to my right, crossed the street, pausing midway to take a deep breath and then exhaling. I had no way of knowing if this particular squirrel was stalling for time so I could be apprehended. She'd likely receive a handsome reward allowing her to eat all the walnuts, pecans and whatever else she wanted for the rest of her natural life.

I decided to approach the squirrel with extreme caution. I needed friends not enemies.

As soon as I got to within a foot of the Maple tree I leaped onto the trunk and then scaled my way up to a high-level branch. Now, I was standing beside the squirrel.

The squirrel looked full, having eaten her fill for weeks-on-end. Furthermore, she was really cute and pretty too ... I mean, for a squirrel. Squirrels are rodents though.

"Hi honey, what's your name?"

"Umm, my ... umm ... I'm Zoe Marshall Thomas.

Zoe rhymes with Joey, and like umm ... it's one of those unisex names. But, I'm a male, not a female as you can see."

"Gross, please don't show me your under-parts again! I know the difference between a male and a female kitty."

"Sorry about that. I won't do it again."

"Look, Zoe, how about you and I chomp down on some of these walnuts and peanuts?"

"Wow, I can't remember ever eating this kind of food before. Maybe, it's because of my heritage. My ancestors didn't eat this kind of food."

"Oh, sorry, wait a second. I forgot to formally introduce myself. My name is Brenda Banner."

There was a lull during our conversation, lasting roughly 10 minutes. We chomped down on our tasty snacks. Later, we resumed our conversation.

"Zoe, do you want any more food? I've got much more atop this tree. See that branch way up there?"

I glanced up at the branch and then gave Brenda a nod indicating a 'no' answer. Then, I rubbed my belly indicating that I was full and could not eat any more. I was, for the most part satiated.

"Zoe, did you hear about the maniac roaming the streets of Montreal North?"

"Huh, what maniac, I didn't hear anything about him."

"Zoe, a ferocious lion-like kitty escaped from the Montreal Animal Shelter just a few hours ago. He brutally assaulted a shelter volunteer worker, literally knocking him out.

The shelter volunteer endured a broken cheek bone. As for Dr. Robinson, she's still in a coma. Apparently, the maniacal kitty pounced on her, causing her to land on her back. Her head banged onto the floor too."

"Brenda ... I didn't do that, I mean, that's likely not the full story. Maybe, this so-called ferocious kitty was only trying to escape. Living in an animal shelter is very tough."

"Zoe, you're hurting my feelings! You disagree with me!"

Oh, gosh, I inadvertently hurt her feelings. And that's not all. Brenda was teary-eyed.

"Wait, you know something, Brenda, actually you're right. Any cat that brutally assaults two 'innocent' animal shelter workers is a maniac."

"Zoe, you're so sweet. C'mon, eat another peanut."

Brenda and I conversed until 1:00 A.M. But that was it. Although I really liked her, I had to move on. But not before I made certain that my tracks were covered.

"Brenda, if you pretend that we'd never ever met, I'll pretend love you, how about that?"

"Zoe, I pretend love you too! You're the sweetest cat in the whole world!"

I embraced Brenda and then gave her a big kiss on each cheek. She looked puzzled, but content.

After saying our goodbyes, I continued trekking towards downtown Montreal.

While walking on Cote des Neiges Street it didn't take long for someone to offer me a ride.

A young man of twenty or so, dark-haired and blue-eyed pulled his dark Mazda onto the curb just in front of me.

"Hey, kitty, do you want a lift?"

Initially, I was repulsed and apprehensive about even responding to the young man. His breath was engulfed in Vodka and orange juice, otherwise known as a Screw Driver.

But I was desperate for a lift; in need for a place to stay and to have guaranteed meals and clean water. Being on the move on a busy street wasn't going to do it. So, I accepted his offer.

"Sir, I just want to make sure that you're not a weirdo, okay.

Are you a cat hater? Will you try to attack me if I enter your Mazda? Are you heading towards the downtown area? Will you ask me too many questions about myself? Will you ask me for payment after you drop me off? Do you have dead bodies or dead

animals hidden in your Mazda? Do you have any contraband or weapons hidden in your Mazda?"

"Kitty I answer no on all counts."

As soon as the young man finished his statement he stuck his head out the window and then proceeded to puke his brains out.

After puking all the contents in his stomach the young man pointed his left index finger at me then resumed talking.

"Kitty, I'm sorry, I made a mistake. I answer in the affirmative for one of your questions. I'm going to downtown Montreal and I certainly know how tough it is to be a cat, walking all lone on a busy street in the wee hours of the night.

Kitty, if you can guarantee me good company, I'll take you to the downtown core."

I leaped through the window opening and then sat cuddly in the passenger's seat, but not before I securely fastened my seatbelt. Drunk drivers are dangerous drivers.

The young man put his gear shift into Drive and then continued on his path.

Just a short while later the young man to begin to weep. I couldn't understand what the problem was. Sure, he was a bit wasted off his rocks and he'd just puked his brains out. But men in general don't cry because of that.

"Mister, what's going on here? I didn't say or do anything to hurt your feelings, did I?"

"No, kitty, let me formally introduce myself please.

"My name is Vlad Zakula and I was born in Rumania, in a small isolated village surrounded by a mountain range."

Instantly, I put myself on red alert. His canines were a bit too prominent for a human's. I figured the guy was some sort of a modern day vampire, like a neo-Dracula of sorts but with a modified name.

"Damn it, kitty, I'm not a freaking vampire! I hate it when people call me Dracula. It totally sucks.

Kitty, there's no such thing as a vampire."

I struggled to speak. My adrenaline level had skyrocketed and the muscles of my face were violently twitching.

"Umm, I, like ... umm ... Vlad, I know you're not a modern day vampire. Really, I don't judge people according to their species, race, nationality, ethnic origin, socio-economic level, mother tongue or creed.

Vlad, I think you're a sweet person."

"Kitty, what did you say your name was?"

"My name is Zoe Marshall Thomas, but everyone calls me Zoe.

Vlad, I'm really sorry that people call you a vampire. My people came from North-western Europe. But, I'm so Canadian I don't know much about 'those' foreign countries."

"Zoe, yes, you're right. But there are many ignoramuses around the world that's a fact of nature. Every nationality has its fair share of them.

But still, I know that you don't feel comfortable around me. Your canines are bared and claws are at the ready, ears pulled back and low."

"No Vlad, I'm not uncomfortable around you. On the contrary, you seem like a nice guy."

That statement was enough to put a big smile on Vlad's face.

Vlad continued driving until we reached Sherbrook Street. I was stunned by what followed.

"This is the downtown core, but please don't leave me. I need to drink with someone, a good friend like you.

Let me fix us a couple of mug-sized Screw Drivers. Don't worry, I'll put extra orange juice and ice in your drink. As for me, I like my drinks very strong."

But just when I was about to say 'no' Vlad stopped what he was doing, embraced me, then gave me a 'Slavic kiss' on each cheek.

Besides, I wasn't a baby. I went ahead and waited for my precious drink. I would later regret it.

"Here you go, comrade Zoe. I've placed your mug on the mug holder. If you need any more juice, ice, lime or Vodka the ice box is right there, you'll find everything that you need therein."

"Jeepers, thanks Vlad!"

Although Vlad had pulled over into the curb on a busy street and traffic was slowly becoming more congested he and I were totally oblivious of everyone else.

Roughly an hour later, Vlad tried to turn on the ignition, but failed. He was too drunk to insert the key into the ignition.

"Vlad, let me take over, okay?"

I crawled onto Vlad's lap, inserted the key into the ignition then turned on the engine, shifted into drive and voila, we were on our way. I used Vlad's baseball bat to control the foot pedals.

I drove a short distance then stopped the car dead cold. I felt a need for another swig. But in doing so I ended up congesting much of the ongoing traffic. In my haste I stopped the Mazda in the middle of the street. Although other drivers and even some pedestrians were shouting at me I gave no notice to them. After all, I was a cat and they were humans.

But as soon as I began to consume my next Screw Driver, I noticed flashing lights through the rear view mirror.

"What, I shouted to myself, it's a freaking patrol car! Montreal Police, and the officer was so pissed off he was violently pounding his left fist on the steering wheel!"

"You in the Mazda, put your vehicle into drive, and then slow and easy, pull into the curb, turn off your engine and keep your hands where I can see them."

"Vlad, what the hell am I to do? Vlad, c'mon wake up!"

Vlad was out cold. So I decided to personally solve the 'police problem'.

We were at the intersection of Guy and Sainte Catherine Street. Time had whizzed by like a rocket. It was now 7:00 A.M. Vlad and I had been drinking up a storm for quite some time.

I turned on the ignition, shifted into Drive and then floored the Mazda. I didn't want to be arrested for drunk driving. The interior of the Mazda reeked of booze.

Cats hauled off for drunk driving are initially processed at a police station and then taken to the city's animal shelter. Both case scenarios were out of the question. I didn't deserve that kind of treatment. I was only trying to have fun with my beloved friend Vlad.

"Vlad it's the freaking police! C'mon, snap out of it!"

Instantly, Vlad awakened. He looked glassy-eyed and was indeed hung-over. But as soon as I explained to him my predicament he gently placed me onto the passenger seat, buckled me up and then peeled out. We were now officially on the run from the police.

"Zoe, I'll head due south until I reach Rene' Levesque Blvd. Hang on because I'm going to drive like a mad man, through parking lots and alleyways and even onto the sidewalks if needed."

Vlad, true to his word, did just that. He drove like a maniacal Indy 500 race car driver, in and out of narrow corridors and onto sidewalks, honking his horn obsessively. But there was a problem. Even with all the clatter we could hear sirens converging onto the general area.

Furthermore, the police officer behind us was really nasty, both in tongue and in his incessant drive to stay on our tail. Time was running out and the three of us knew it. Vlad and I had to act fast, or else for this particular series of crimes, we'd be looking at real hard time behind bars.

"Damn it for the umpteenth time pull over!"

"Vlad, I want to you stick your head out of the window, aim your mouth towards the patrol car and then I want you to puke at it. Maybe, that'll neutralize the maniac behind us."

"Okay, Zoe, I'll do as you say."

Vlad stuck his head out of the window, and thankfully because he was already hung over, quite easily shot several bursts of puke at the patrol car behind us.

Vlad hit a bulls-eye each time! Much of the windshield of the patrol car was splattered with puke. But shockingly, it further enraged the police officer.

"Damn you, you bastard! Now, I'm really pissed off! I'm taking it personally, and that's not all; I'm calling the RCMP!"

The officer then pulled out his gun and began to fire at us, not aiming for our tires but at Vlad. Until then, I was still out of sight.

The officer shot at us a total of eight times. After a brief pause He brandished a shot gun. I could see him through the rear view mirror. Boy, did he have a wicked grin.

"Vlad, underneath the stench of booze I smelled a faint scent of donuts. Do you have any donuts in this car?"

"Yes, come to think of it, I hid a couple of jelly donuts in the glove compartment."

I had an idea. Although it was a one in a million shot, it was better than doing nothing. I didn't want to alarm Vlad but we were dangerously low on gas and motor oil. Both gauges were near the red zone.

I pulled out both jelly donuts from the glove compartment and then handed them to Vlad. We grinned at each other, because it was apparent what we were up to.

Vlad slowed down, just enough to allow the patrol car to be parallel to us. As soon as the police officer pointed his shotgun at Vlad, Vlad Frisbee-style tossed the first jelly donut and then the second one into the patrol car.

Thankfully, it worked. The police officer slowed down and then came to a full stop. I turned back to see exactly what'd ensued. As I guessed, he began to eat the jelly filled donuts. I could tell from the expression on his face, there was going to be no more chasing, at least for the remainder of the day.

Vlad parked the Mazda in a relatively secluded area near Atwater Street. We quickly exited the Mazda and walked away.

"Vlad, where should we go?"

"This is Atwater Street let's stay on the west side of town. We can walk to Westmount Park and rest there. It's a relaxing place to be when the weather permits. Furthermore, no one therein will suspect us of being the two wanted criminals.

Zoe, don't think for a single moment that we're not wanted. You're luckier than I am. Neither the police officer nor the camera in his patrol car registered your face."

"But Vlad, we were driving so fast; I'm sure the image of your face was blurred"

Vlad shed several tears and pointed due west. I figured he wasn't in a state of conversation, so I stayed quiet until we reached the park.

"Vlad, let's sit on that bench over there, the one near the artificial pond."

Vlad grinned at me and continued walking. But underneath that grin was an expression of deep sadness. I sensed that he was about to drop an incredible bombshell on me."

The sun appeared to be setting; in summer it sets quite late in Montreal. The sky was beautiful and so was the greenery around us. I was thankful that Vlad and I could rest far away from the chase.

Maybe, the sound of the birds singing, the squirrels playing and the pigeons eating would raise Vlad's spirit, I wondered.

As soon as we sat down Vlad carried me and then pressed me against his chest. After pausing for a moment he kissed me on each cheek and placed me onto the bench beside him.

Vlad's tears were dribbling down his cheeks. I braced myself for some bad news. But then, I realized something. Both he and I were dehydrated from all the boozing we'd done. It was time for some major rehydration.

"Vlad, we need to drink an incredible quantity of water in order to rehydrate ourselves. Both of us are hung over. We didn't even have time to sleep. It will be dark soon."

"Certainly, there's a drinking fountain right there, near the restrooms."

Vlad and I walked over to the drinking fountain, each having our fill and then returning to the bench.

We felt much better. Our hangovers were quickly fading away. But not before Vlad and I closed our eyes and slept until the following day. We were that exhausted.

Awakening the following day at noon Vlad and I began to converse.

"Zoe, I think that I should go back to Rumania. I miss home so very much. I mean, I like it here, but ... it's not home sweet home."

I detected a subtle twitch in Vlad's eyes and a barely noticeable change of tone in his voice indicating that he was likely being deceitful. I had to investigate.

I crawled unto Vlad's lap, gently pawed his face and then gave him a kiss on each cheek. Looking him straight in the eyes I began my investigating.

"Vlad, please don't try to deceive me. I want to know exactly what's going on in your head. Why do you really want to go back to Romania?"

"Okay, Zoe, I apologize for lying to you. It's somewhat embarrassing though.

Zoe, I'm nothing short of a full-fledged loser. I can't get a job, I've never been married, I have a criminal record and I stole that stinking Mazda. Worse yet, I'm on welfare.

Zoe, the policeman didn't see you, nor did the camera in his patrol car film your face. My fingerprints are in the crime data file, so it's only a matter of time before I'm apprehended. If you're with me, they may take you in too."

"Vlad, listen up! You don't have to go back to Romania. We can move to Alberta, British Columbia or even western Ontario. Western Canada is a million miles from here. The mentality therein is different than it is here. You can evade the law.

I have money. We can live together as buddies. No one can come between us, right?"

"Zoe, I wish that were the case. Life's not that simple. I've done hard time before and I don't want to do it again. Please, Zoe, I love you ever so dearly. And as such, I care about you. Let these final moments of us together be happy moments rather than sad ones."

As I was talking to Vlad I noticed a patrol car on the street opposite of where we were sitting. Thankfully, the driver was too far away to have seen us, but it was a warning of sorts.

It was midday, sunny and mild. The park was beginning to fill up with patrons, both young and old also a dog or two here and there. With so many potential witnesses if anyone recognized Vlad it would've been disastrous. In broad daylight and hardly a place to run to Vlad would certainly have been apprehended by the police.

Vlad and I continued to converse, as we understood that this was it, our final meeting, likely forever.

Suddenly, a change of direction occurred. The ice cream boy appeared.

"Ice cream ice cream two dollars per ice cream cone!"

"Kid, my friend and I want some ice cream. Come here, please."

Vlad insisted on purchasing the ice cream, though over my mild objections.

"What kind of ice cream cones do you guys want?"

"We don't care. Just give us the largest and most expensive kind," responded Vlad.

Okay, sir, I'll give you guys the super special, a double-scoop, doused in Hershey's Chocolate syrup with nuts on it. But it'll cost you an additional fifty cents each."

Vlad nodded in the affirmative and then waited for our ice cream cones.

After all was done the ice cream boy rode off on his ice cream wagon. Vlad and I grinned at each other. Unfortunately, that was all the pleasure that we'd have from the luscious cones, not even taking a single bite out of them. Because as soon as we turned our heads to look at our cones a tiny moving object caught our eyes.

It was an obese looking squirrel. Although he was quite overweight his speed and agility were phenomenal. And like a typical squirrel in search of food he made direct eye contact with our cones, shifting his head to my cone and then to Vlad's back and forth.

Vlad and I assumed that the poor squirrel wanted a morsel or two, and certainly we were ready to give him more. But what ensued was outright shocking.

As soon as the squirrel was within a foot of our bench the expression on his face changed. He now looked like a very ferocious rodent.

"You, the human who's hung over, I know exactly who you are. You're Vlad 'Dracula' Zakula. There's a warrant out for your arrest and a hefty reward too, for information leading to your arrest.

I passed on the reward but, I'll be damned if I pass on that beautiful ice cream cone.

You better give it up without a struggle or any kind of a delay. If not, I'll scream my head, in the process telling all these people who you are, especially those two uniforms who happen to be Westmount Security Officers who'll be coming out of the restrooms any second.

Now, carefully place the bottom of your cone into the tiny gap between the wooden planks. You better not drop the cone or even spill a single drop of ice cream. If you do I'll consider it a failure on your part. I'm not pretending!"

Vlad looked confused. He then looked me straight in the eye and shrugged his shoulders.

I in turn, pointed to the tiny gap between the wooden planks, signifying that he had no choice in the matter.

"You better not make any sudden moves on me. I'll bite and scratch you very hard," threatened the squirrel.

Vlad stood up and began to walk away. I had to hold my ice cream cone with my right foreleg while trying to hop away on three legs, but not before the squirrel called out to me.

"You too, kitty, stop where you are! I want your cone too. The same rules apply to you; no double-crossing or else."

I begrudgingly did as the squirrel asked and then leapt onto the ground following Vlad.

As soon as I caught up to Vlad I glanced back at the squirrel. He was feasting his heart out on Vlad's cone while staring at mine.

The squirrel must've noticed me with the corner of his eye, causing him to turn his head and grin at me.

Vlad and I didn't want to make a scene, so I convinced him to walk with me to a semi-secluded corner, behind a congregation of bushes.

Therein, Vlad waved me back a few feet, then bent over and began to puke. It was a horrible scene.

"Vlad, are you all right?"

"Zoe, let's go over there near the tennis courts.

Pointing westward, he indicated a bench. I was all too ready to be the kind and loving friend.

"Zoe, look, I apologize for not being able to be a good friend to you for any longer. I don't think that any human being could ever be your equal. You're an incredible cat who's nice to be around.

Often-times, individuals have to make very painful choices. The world's often a cruel and uncompromising place.

"Zoe, I must go back to Romania within the next 48 hours. Otherwise, I'm going to end up doing hard time behind bars. Now that I'm certain the authorities are after me it would be suicide to stay in Canada. You must walk away from me and never return. Your face 'is unknown' to the police. I want it to stay that way. Please, Zoe, don't argue with me. I've made up my mind!"

Although I too was a hung-over I didn't drink anywhere near the quantity that Vlad had, therefore, I was able to hop onto his lap, stand on my hind legs and cup his face with both my paws.

Just in case, I threw in a kiss and a lick every-so-often. I needed to use my feline charm and soften Vlad. Maybe, it would work.

"Vlad, how about if we move out west; maybe Alberta or no better yet British Columbia; or if you want to move to a closer place, western Ontario.

We don't have to worry about bilingualism considering we're both Anglophones I think it will be a nice change.

Furthermore, no one knows us out west. We can change our names, live in a nice apartment and enjoy the beauty of western Canada; how about it, Vlad?"

Vlad cupped his eyes, paused for a moment and then uncupped his eyes. He was crying; I'm certain they were genuine tears. I knew what was coming even before he spoke.

"Zoe, I know we've only known each other briefly, but, can you please pretend love me?"

"Vlad, I pretend love you. And what about you, do you pretend love me?"

"Yes, Zoe, it's mutual. Let's end it at that. And by the way, if anyone inquires about me, please tell them that you've never met me. It's better for both of us.

Zoe, it's just past mid-day and the patrons are beginning to converge upon Westmount Park. Soon, this place will be full of too many potential witnesses. Someone's bound to recognize me. And if that happens, you'll almost automatically become my accomplice.

Vlad slowly stood up, pulled me towards his face and then gave me a kiss on each cheek. I did likewise to him. After gently placing me onto the bench he turned and then casually walked away. I knew that it was over between us. It was a 'platonic divorce' of sorts.

I laid on the bench for a whole hour, wallowing in my sadness and guilt. Somehow, I felt responsible for Vlad's leaving me. But my wallowing couldn't continue. I had to move on after all I had my own problems to deal with.

PRETEND MOTHER

It was early in the afternoon, sunny and beautiful. The trees and grass at Westmount Park looked lively. Children were playing in the public mini-playground, their parents seated or standing nearby glancing back and forth at them, not wanting the 'boogie man' to snatch them away.

I decided to take a stroll through the park for an hour or so before deciding what to do next.

My stroll was very enjoyable, but relatively uneventful. I spoke to no one except for the casual nod whenever I crossed paths with a child.

The pigeons were once again at it, gorging on food dropped onto the ground by a caring elderly woman, a grandmother type.

Most of the squirrels were on treetops observing the humans, but more intently the dogs. Some dogs can be outright nasty. These are the individuals who consider squirrels, pigeons and other birds as food.

Aside from myself, there were no cats in the park. What a shame. Humans tend to keep their cats indoors or isolated in their yards or in nearby areas. In fact, some cats are kept indoors for years-on-end, only being let out when it's time to see the vet for the annual physical exam. I pity those cats. Nothing beats being free (Viva la Chat).

As soon as I'd had enough of walking, I scanned the area, searching for a spot to sit in or to do something to occupy my time.

Looking straight ahead, I decided to walk to the children's playground.

Upon reaching it I decided to use the slide. I noticed a boy, perhaps five years-old, blond-haired and green eyed staring intently at the slide. His mother appeared to be pre-occupied speaking to someone on her cell phone.

I knew what I had to do. I slowly approached the child, not making any sudden moves or appearing aggressive.

"Hey, kid, what's your name?"

"I'm Toby Barber. I live up on the hill over there. You see?"

"Oh, wow, your mother must've driven here. There's no Metro Service that goes up there."

"That's my mommy. Can you help me please?"

I knew what Toby wanted. He wanted a lift up the mini-ladder to reach the summit of the slide. Naturally, being a kind kitty, I obliged him.

But there was a slightly troubling matter. Toby had sticky buggers and logy (rhymes with boogie) plastered on his face. He had to be told, in a gentle manner of course. Furthermore, I was a bit disgusted by it. Cats in general don't have a logy or bugger problem.

"Toby, you've got some dried up buggers and logy splattered all over your face. Why don't you come with me to the restroom; I'll clean you up really good."

Toby's mother was perhaps thirty or so, blonde-haired, blue-eyed, freckles all over and athletic looking. I figured she'd been a valley girl, a graduate of McGill University with high honours, or maybe down south, like Harvard or Yale, rich (old money), Anglophone and certainly a bit snuff (stuck up).

Although I assumed she loved Toby, at the moment she was busying herself on her cell phone, chatting away like a wild duck. I didn't want to interrupt her.

As soon as I finished speaking Toby threw a horrific tantrum, swinging and flailing his arms, screaming his brains out.

"Mommy, mommy, that kitty called me a bugger face! He wants me to leave the playground. Help, mommy, help me!"

And oh boy did 'mommy' respond. She turned off her cell phone and came charging at me. Then, a humiliation ensued.

"Damn you, stay away from my son you damn cougar! I thought we exterminated you creatures many decades ago.

How dare you call my son a bugger face! And don't you dare try to kidnap him either.

Damn you, I'm calling the police! I'm also going to call the Prime Minister of Canada! I want him to send you way up north to Baffin Island where you won't be able to hurt anyone else! Maybe, a hungry polar bear will eat you for lunch!"

"But madam, I didn't ..."

Neither Toby's mother nor the people beginning to converge upon me would've given me a chance to defend myself.

Before I knew it a large crowd of humans had begun to encircle me. Meanwhile, Toby's mother called the police; shockingly she told them that I physically assaulted her son. An over-kill indeed but the police would definitely take her word over mine. Not to mention the word of that little snot-faced Toby.

I did what any cat would do in his/her right mind; I roared like crazy, temporarily scattering the growing crowd and then scrambled.

I ran through a large gap, chose the shortest target, which in this case was Toby and then leaped over him to show off my agility skills.

I left the park, crossing Sherbrook Street and then running up a steep hill. By the time I'd scaled the hill I began to hear sirens converging upon Westmount Park.

I was so exhausted from the sprint up the hill a long rest was needed. I slowed down, heading westward.

A short while later, I spotted a very large tree situated on a lawn, in front of a large house. Luckily, I was able to scale the tree. Immediately afterwards, I closed my eyes and fell asleep, oblivious to the APB (All Points Bulletin) out for me. I figured things would die out in a few hours.

I awakened just before sunset. It felt really nice being refreshed. But I learned a valuable lesson; humans are unpredictable especially when they're dealing with cats.

I descended the tree in jaguar-like fashion then walked to the sidewalk. After scanning the area and 'scenting around' I detected food, well, right behind me. It was emanating from the large house.

Because I didn't want to take any chances getting caught, I decided to snatch some food from inside the large house and not bother to cook or prepare it. I'd have to resort to my wild beast instincts.

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