

FLASH FICTION

(2)

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The Greatest Success

I'm not exactly easy to get along with; I have occasional quirks I can't control. And Katharina is often out and about, so I'm alone a lot. We live here in a big house. We are staying on the upper floor, but so do others, like Tobias. Tobias gets along especially well with the cats. Sometimes they're all gathered in his room, romping around on his big bed. It's a sleeper sofa that he—perhaps for our sake—usually doesn't convert back into a regular chair. I lie there with the others on the soft padded blanket, and I think... well, I actually don't think about anything for a while. I just feel like I belong. Until at some point my tail starts to get restless and I have to keep glancing over at him, following his movements. I notice how this annoys me. It's actually a bit shorter than the other cats'. I think I lost a piece of it when I was a kitten. But I can't remember. I growl softly at my tail, at first really just very softly. But the growling gets louder, my tail moves more vigorously, and eventually swishes from one side to the other. Back and forth, back and forth. As if struck by lightning, I leap up, chase after him, spin around, spin in a circle, bite into him when I suddenly have him, keep spinning, over and over. I can't find a moment's peace. As if I knew there was no end to it. The other cats flee from the sofa, and I—I flee from my spot too, flee from Tobias's room. I run through the big house, run, run... and finally find quiet in Christa's part, in the hallway that connects her rooms in the side wing to the rest of the house. I know she's not there; I take a deep breath.

I think of Tobias, who has his favorite cat—and it's not me, even though he takes care of me too. The other day I saw his favorite cat outside, climbing all the way up the grapevine on the side of the house into his room. She's a real predator, all muscle and agility. I, on the other hand, am

clumsy, especially with my tail that's too short. And I'm a little chubby, too. I'd never be able to get up there and into his room through the open window. That's what I'm thinking as I head outside through the cat flap, walk around the house, and shortly afterward catch the scent of the grapevine.

Something draws me right there, and then I actually find myself standing beneath Tobias's window. It's very high up, high above me. We live in a manor house, and everything here is big and intimidating. The situation can change at any moment—a person or a cat might cross my path—and I never feel prepared for that.

Once again, I look along the vine, see a few sturdy branches below, dig my claws into them, pull myself up a bit, grab the next twigs, and pull myself higher still. Up here, I can now hear the music coming from Tobias's room. It's still far, far away... But no matter how far, I have to keep going now. I'm surprised at how effortlessly my muscles support my shapeless, round body. Then I look down. And I see: I can't go back now! If I fell, I'd die on the stones below. So my paws reach for the next twigs, the one after that, and the one after that. Somehow my hind legs find their way too and keep up, not letting me down. Up above, I can now see the ledge—the windowsill that juts out a bit—a tricky spot I still have to get past, since I don't expect Tobias to pull me inside like his favorite cat. I make my way up the wall along the edge of the windowsill and suddenly hear the rustling I'm making. I wonder if the people inside can hear me, too? Sure enough, everyone is staring at me when I'm up there and looking into the room! Tobias and everyone else can't believe their eyes. But I just jump onto the carpet and from there straight onto the sofa bed, back to my spot, and fall asleep.