

**CARL GOES TO MOUSE
WORLD**

by

RJ Richards

Dedicated to everyone who believed in me. You know who you are.-RJR

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Living the Life

That mouse thinks he is so clever. I was keeping an eye on the hole in the wall because I knew sooner or later he would stick his little head out to get the lay of the land. He smelled the air a few times in an attempt to figure out just where I might be, but it won't matter. I'm on top of my human's couch and neatly disguised since my beautiful brown coat matches the color of the couch itself. I keep perfectly still as he starts to inch away from his hole. He's nervous, as he remembers how close I came to snatching him during our last encounter. He stops and smells the air again, tempted by the cracker crumbs one of humans dropped on the floor. He darts to the first crumb where he quickly devours it. Oh, this will be too easy. *Keep eating my fat little mouse, it will just make you that much slower.*

I slink down to the arm rest and watch as he moves towards a large crumb resting on the floor. He is farther from his little home than he has been in sometime, but he can't pass up this unexpected treat. The humans usually disgust me with their messes, but at least this is one mess that will serve me well. I drop to the floor as a loud vehicle passes by to mask any noise I might make. It works, as my hungry prey moves to yet another crunchy crumb. Oh, it's hard not think about the little snack I will soon be having. Should I have mouse on a stick? Perhaps, a mouse burger? I could simply showcase him to my human and be rewarded with a nice chicken dish from the can. Oh, how I love wet food. Humans say the canned food stinks, but I think of them as simply heavenly. I inch closer and closer and the mouse still doesn't hear me. My hunting skills are perfect as usual. I am a simple swat away from ending this, when the mouse freezes and smells the air. My superior hearing picks up his heart as it races. He knows I'm close. I unleash my claws and rear back my paw when...

"Carl! Wake up, you sleepy cat!" The human male yells out as he moves in and picks me up. Another perfect dream ruined. I go limp and let him have his few minutes of love. He gives me the usual routine and I just yawn and take it all in.

"You lazy cat, you've been sleeping all day."

"You're getting fat. You fat cat. Are you a fat cat?"

"Kitty going to get a mouse today? Kitty better catch me a mouse today."

"Meow, meow. Come on, Carl, meow, meow."

I do what all cats do and go through the motions. I rub up against his leg and do a little purring. It's not that I don't care for the humans in my home, but the routine gets old. I want a little adventure in my life, as being a house cat can get boring. I look out the window and see the street cats having all the fun. They sing to the lady cats at all hours of the night, they tease the chained-up dogs, and they get to tear up all the flower beds in the neighborhood. Me? I sleep twenty-three hours a day, take a few baths, and eat my usual bowl of dry tuna-flavored food. I'm not exactly Mr. Exciting.

Oh sure, I have some fun. My human family usually likes to have dinner around six o'clock and I make sure to time my litter box visit right about then just to mess with them. The human male likes to cuddle up next to the human female when the kids go to sleep and I always jump between them or walk on them to make sure they know who truly rules this den. The kids are the best. They're usually willing to hold me, even though they just put on their church clothes. It's great, I leave my old hair on their clothes and they get yelled at by the adult human female. Yes, I have my fun, but I'm ready for some new challenges. Oh, and the mouse dream I had earlier? Just a dream, this house doesn't even have a bug in it, let alone a mouse. How's a master hunter supposed to do his thing if there's nothing to hunt? It's pathetic.

You see, it never used to be like this for us. Cats have been honored for centuries, but it seems like the respect given to us lessens more all the time. My mother, the Queen, used to tell me about the Egyptian cats who were honored as royalty. The Egyptian humans of that time must have been extremely intelligent. Cats were recognized as being superior to all other creatures on Earth. They probably praised them for their unique beauty and marveled at their extreme power. Clearly, they knew that we were equals to our cousins the lion and tiger. They were some of the few humans who seemed to "get it." I think of those times and just have to sigh. It must have been so exhilarating to live back in that day.

My Queen had confidence I would live a good life, but there were no guarantees. She said every one of her kittens would be adopted, but it would be the luck of the draw as to where each one would go. Some would go off in a cardboard box to one of the local stores where they would shop for their humans. Some would get lucky and go to a home with lots of food and toys where they would be constantly praised. They might have to put up with an older human female who put clothes on them or kept squeezing them, but at least their bellies were full. Some would get a nice farm where they could hunt mice, snakes, and bugs and be recognized by the humans

as the protector of the land. They had large territories to patrol but always had to beware of dogs and rivals that always seemed to be lurking. Some led horrible lives where they were ignored and given only token scraps. I would hear horror stories where they were filthy and sick, reduced to skin and bones. Most of us fell into the category I called my own, where I selected a human family that basically treated me nicely and for the most part took care of my needs, but... they were extremely boring. Humans usually are boring, in case you didn't know. Thus, my life became extremely boring.

The Queen told me it was a game of chance where humans were concerned. Sometimes you just have to accept the fact that not all of us will strike it rich. I'm just grateful that our Egyptian ancestors can't see us now. They would be disgusted. They would wonder how we could wreck something so perfect.

I shouldn't complain too much. My humans aren't that bad. They showered me with attention when I was a kitten. They knew I was upset to have to leave the Queen and they gave me lots of love and snacks. They complimented me on my brown patterns and my little pink stomach. The kids would always fight with each other so they could hold and kiss me. I was truly beginning to think that I won the jackpot, but then reality set in. I began to grow up and suddenly, I went from cute to fat. Without warning, my late night noises went from funny to aggravating. I went from having a healthy appetite to being compared to a pig. A pig? Can you imagine? Since when is someone who for all intents and purposes is a lion, suddenly a pig? It's insulting to be sure. But what could I do? They were my humans and I was stuck with them. Yes, I could eat them if I desired, but I'm just too nice for my own good.

After much self-reflection, I've decided I need a vacation. I need a little excitement in my life. Maybe I could find a nice tuna factory to visit or perhaps a good old chicken farm would be the ticket.

Oh, who am I kidding? I'm a realist. I'm stuck here and I might as well get used to it. A vacation? Some adventure? Nah, it will never happen.

