

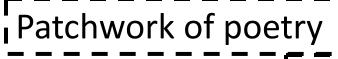
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Wild Goose Chase



Hello readers! It's Maggie, the Mail Cat, here! I've had so much fun knocking your letters off the table with my paws!

(After I read them, of course!) _ Maggie





Maggie,

My cakes keep on sticking to the pan. I use a spray that usually works, but can be irregular. I was recommended by a friend of mine to use parchment paper. Should I give up on the spray and use the paper instead?

- Sara, GA

Sara,

Normally, I would say continue with the spray, because when my human bakes treats for me, whatever sticks to the pan is left for me to lick out. Yummmm. (For this reason I haven't revealed to her the wonders of parchment paper.) Anyway, since I have to be helpful, definitely go with the paper because it consistently prevents almost everything from sticking. Also, a less messy application! Hope that helps!

Maggie, OH MY GOSH I LOVE this magazine sooo much! I always ask for a subscription for Christmas and never regret it!!!! This is my favorite magazine ever!!! You are the best!! I love you!! I love all your responses because they are always so funny and smart!! Every time the mail comes that month, I always am the first to get to the mailbox! Bye!

-Emily, OH

Emily,

Thanks so much! *sniffle sniffle* I always love to know that I'm appreciated! (I mean, I am rather funny and smart. *slaps nerd glasses on face* What's not to like?) I'm so glad to hear you enjoy receiving the Maggiezine so much! (I wish someone would get that exited when I arrive in the office. Sadly, everyone ignores the supreme being gliding through.)

Well, that looks like all I'm going to be able to reply to today! But before you go, one more thing:

I am going to be plodding around the pages, trying to find a suitable place to take my nap of the hour. Your mission is to try to find me. But be warned, I am good at remaining unseen!

Good luck!



Story one:

The Teetering
Tower of
Scholastic

"Read this! And this! And this!" I look up and see my friend's little brother dumping books on my lap with a slap. Darn. I was hoping we could skip story time today. I shove all the books off and move to a more comfortable spot on the carpet.

"Okay, Cal. Which one do you want me to read first?"

Silence. "Cal?" I look around for him. Nope. Not in here.

Then, I see him rounding the corner into the room. Or rather, I see a pair of stubby legs staggering under a ginourmous pile of books. I sigh. This could take a while. Molly, watching the scene unfold from the couch,

"See you in twenty millennia?" she asks with a smirk.

"Or forty," Clare remarks, leaning on the doorframe. Cal sits the books down and plops on the couch. I stare at the mini library of I can read! books in front of me. They stare back at me. I glance at Molly.

"Seems about right."

I turn back to Cal, staring up at his exited face. He reaches over from the couch and grabs a blinding red one from the top of the pile, and deposits it on my lap.

"Let's do this one first," he says. I open it up and begin to read,

"Once upon a time, there was a kitten who could not find her food bowl. She searched everywhere, high and low, near and far, left and right, but couldn't find it anywhere. The next day, she went out again and asked all her neighbors, friends, and family members if they knew where it was. They all shook their heads and said no. She was very sad. Crying, she walked back to her cat bed and plopped down right on something hard. 'MeOW!' She yowled. She shot up and there it was, pushed under her blanket, her precious food bowl. The end."

I start laughing as I remember a very similar story that had happened to me a few years ago. Cal looks down at me.

"What's so funny?" he asks. Molly gives me a quizzical look.

"What's so funny?" Cal asks again, this time more demanding. Clare walks over and sits down on the floor next to me.

"Okay," I say, "who wants to hear a story?"

All hands go up. I clear my throat and begin: "Okay. So this was a few years ago, but anyway, here goes. So Max was running round the house like a chicken with its head cut off-"

"What does that mean?" Cal interrupts.

I take a breath and reply,

"It means he was running around the house like a crazy person. But anyway, he was doing that because he could not find his glasses anywhere. He was running around, checking rooms, drawers, cupboards, everywhere, but he could not find them. Then he came up to me and asked me, 'Maggie, do you know where my glasses are?' I stared at him. Then I sighed. 'Max, did you ever bother to check your face?' he reached up and touched his glasses. 'Oh. Thanks Maggie!' I walked back into my room, thoroughly confused. Maybe it was because he had cleaned the lenses yesterday, and now they were clear and he couldn't see them anymore. That could be it, but I'll never know. The end." I look around, and Molly, Clare, and Cal are all giggling. Then Cal sprigs up, startling everyone.

"Let's go on the saucer swing now!" He exclaims. I sigh in relief.

"But what about-" said Molly, obviously trying to have me there for the next five years reading to Cal.

"Shhhhhhhhh!" I shush her and put on a smile for Cal. "Sure Cal!" I said, "I'll be out there in a few minutes!" Cal dashes out, very excited. I look at Molly, then at Clare, and then at the pile of books. "It's cleanup time."



Story Two:

The Dish-understanding Dilemma

"Maggie!" I put down the book I've been reading. Mom calls up the steps again,

"Maggie! Come down and do the dishes! Remember, today is your day!" I groan. I can't stand dishes! All those little bits of who knows what and who knows how long they've been sitting on the counter pieces. Ew. Also, I have to clean my brother's dishes, and he is so gross with some of the mysterious things he mixes up. Like, for example, the time he tried to make a He took straight, un-whipped egg whites, almond flour, and sugar, then tossed it in the microwave. I know, honestly, aren't your mouths just watering right now? And he dares to call it baking. Anyway, I could write an essay on why I don't like doing dishes, but if I don't get downstairs, my nosy brother, who always has to be in everyone's business and conversations, will be on to me.

"Maggie! Come on!" Ahh, too late. Max is on the case.

"I'm coming" I yell back down.

"What are you doing!?" he yells, "Get down here!"

I walked about as slowly as I could down the stairs just to get on his nerves. Now, since this is taking a long time, I decide to just run the rest of the way down and say to Max as I pass him,

"Thanks, Mr. Impatient." I walk into the kitchen and stare at the pile of dishes before me. Oh gosh. I started to rinse, then wash, then dry, then put away. That process continued for a while. And when I say that, I mean it took a few hours. After the very last dish was rinsed, washed, rinsed, dried, and put away, and the counter tops were clean, I plopped down on the couch to watch a show. I pressed the on button, and the screen flickered on. The light from the screen lit up the entire room and the hallway next to it.

And then I saw something move in the shadows of the hallway. The mysterious creature halted and I could see the top sway. My heart was racing. I stood up to investigate the shadowy figure, but it had scurried off. I heard a giant clatter from the kitchen.

I ran after it and found Max dumping a giant stack of dishes in the sink. Inwardly, I groaned. Max obviously hadn't seen me following him, so I crept up on him to try to scare him. I got closer and closer, and he's still just standing there, humming "it's raining tacos" and sorting the dishes into piles. Also, he cleaned up the shards of some poor plates, victim to a clumsy hand under them, left to suffer a sad death of resting in pieces. 3, 2, 1, I jumped next to him and he uttered a very undignified squeak of terror.

I stared at him. He was a sight to see. All dressed in black, the ski mask on, pure ninja style. He ran upstairs, probably embarrassed that I caught him red handed. Or, should I say, black handed. That must be why I couldn't find my black gloves earlier. I turned away from the empty door way and stared at this new pile of dishes. I started to rinse, wash, rinse, dry, put away, this new pile. After about what felt like four hours and I had only gotten half the dishes done, Mom called downstairs,

"What are you doing?" I put down the pot I was scrubbing and yelled back up, "I'm doing the dishes!"

She paused for a second, then spoke, "You're doodling the bushes?" What?! I thought. I yelled back up,

"No, Mom, I'm doing the dishes!"

She replied, "You're mooing at michies?!" She sounded very alarmed. I sighed an exasperated sigh. She must have forgotten already that SHE was the person that told me to do the dishes in the first place. I walked upstairs to meet a very confused Mom. At the top of the stairs I said, annunciating every syllable,

"Mom, I am doing the dishes."

"Oh." She said. She finally understood. Hallelujah. I walked back downstairs, satisfied now that Mom doesn't think I'm mooing at mitches, wherever that is. I started yet again on the dishes. Rinse. Wash. Rinse. Dry. Put away. 45 hours later, I finished. I crawled into my bed, still in my clothes, and as soon as my head hit the pillow, I fell asleep.





Mission Impawsible
Creeping,
Slowly towards me,
I see him, he pounces,
The brave cat, onward, to

Abominabowl Aiming
In goes the flour,
Flowing towards
the silver bowl,
Too far to the left.

My hair OUR FIVE STAR CHEF CH

defeat

Mom is making dinner,
I've seen how it goes down,
The eggs are black and burning,
The biscuits; alarming shades of
brown.

Mom is making dinner, the salt shaker just broke, The doggo enjoyed our gravy, The house is full of smoke.

Mom is making dinner,
The decision, she bemoans,
Soon, she will surrender,
yup, its Dad she phones.

Mom failed at making dinner,
It's my lucky day,
The dinner is in the dog bowl,
and Dad is on the way!

Patchwork of Poetry

Pitching Practice It starts with a noise, A peculiar "urk!" Quickly followed by another. I run to the steps See the shadow of the cat. The noise stops, The shadow lurches. A brown ball flies. Toward me. My hand shoots up, I feel a gooey splat A lovely spot of Cat throwup. I dash to the sink, Leaving the cat To admire his aim.

Come one, come all! Experience amazing food and great family quality time at the wonderful new Keto Kitchen! You simply have to come! The food is Amazing! Don't wait! Right now, we are having a 30% off everything opening sale!! Find us at 3816 Trewt Dr. in Martintowne, next to Publix. Or, visit us on the web at www.theketokitchen.com. Here's one of our rave reviews!

Last time, my husband and kids fell in love with the pumpkin bread. This time, I went to see what made that pumpkin bread so good. I had been curious since the night when my husband took them to The Keto Kitchen to get something for dinner, and they came back, all talking excitedly about good it was. So, tonight I announced that we will be going out to eat, and all the kids begged to go to The Keto Kitchen, so off we went. It turned out, they were right. The food was delicious, the floor wasn't sticky, the waiter was cheery, and the speed of the service was amazing! I ordered a plate of pumpkin bread with whipped cream. I dipped it in, took a bite, and then it was like I was in those chocolate commercials where the lady takes a bite of chocolate, than, poof! Her hair is flying everywhere and she has her eyes closed as she is chewing that miraculous piece of chocolate. Well, my experience was kind of like that. When I opened up my eyes, the first thing I saw was my family trying their hardest to stifle laughter, and then I realized that my hair was indeed flying around. I slowly turned my head to the side so that I could see my hair better, and that was when I saw what was happening. The toddler in the booth behind me was messing with my hair and making it "float" in the air. I had felt it, but I thought it was the air conditioning. It took a little bit for me to coax the toddler to let go of my hair. All together, it is definitely a fun, family friendly restaurant! If you are looking for an inexpensive, healthy, and delicious treat, go to The Keto Kitchen! My family loved it, and yours will too!



Baking the Cut

A short story

"Alice! There's mail for you!" I sat up and stretched.

"Coming!" I yelled back to Mom. As I got dressed, I could smell maple bacon muffins, my special recipe. I scampered down the stairs, almost tripping over my feet a few times. I was so exited! I never get mail! I always thought that was weird. People should be mobbing me in the street for my signature recipes.

All my life, I have wanted to participate in the Florida baking championship, showing them who's obviously the best. It's me, of course. I've watched as these kids who don't even know the basic techniques are chosen! Why don't they choose me, a worthy opponent? While thinking about the unfairness of it all, I jumped the last few stairs. "Now, where's the mail?" I demanded, sticking out my hand for her to place the envelope.

Mom handed it to me and walked off. I couldn't wait! I dashed into the kitchen, grabbed a muffin, and flew up the stairs, again almost tripping over my own feet. I jumped onto my bed and tore open the envelope. The sight I saw made me gasp.

For the longest time I had only longingly looked at pictures of these on Google. The shimmery gold paper, the twisty, curvy type, the smiley face stamp, it could only be one thing. It was an invitation for the baking championship! I was so exited, I squealed so loud people in Washington State could probably hear me. And, saying I was in Florida, I mean my shriek was pretty loud. A second later I heard footsteps pounding up the stairs. Mom barged in, out of breath.

"Alice, honey, are you okay?" she demanded, her eyes flickering up and down as if to spy any injury. "I heard you scream!" she exclaimed, grasping my hand tightly. I rolled my eyes. Mom always gets so worried about little things, like a scream. But, I have to say, the on why I screamed was not little.

"Honestly, Mom, I just got excited. But, you won't believe it! I got invited to be a contestant in the Miami baking championship!" I stared at Mom, ready to see her overreact like she always does. Her eyes widened as she processed what I had just said. After a few minutes of shocked silence, Mom jumped up and squealed almost as loud as I did. I sat on my bed, wincing at the sound.

"I knew it!" Mom danced around and did her weird little jig she does when she's exited. "I knew they would choose you eventually!" she stopped her dance (thank God) and sat down beside me. "Oh, honey, I'm so proud of you!" she exclaimed, "Can I see it?" I nodded and handed her the shimmering ticket. She held it up to her face (she forgot her glasses downstairs) and read it aloud: "You are invited to participate in the Florida baking competition. It will take place on June 3rd thru the 5th at the Florida baking center, 1427 Walnut Dr., Miami, Florida. You will compete in three different competitions, each one harder than the last. You will be competing against three others from the state of Florida for the grand prize of \$1,500 in cash and prizes. Can't wait to see you there!" Mom threw down the invitation and nearly broke my ribs hugging me so tight. She let go and I could see tears of joy sparkling in her eyes. "Well," she said, "I'm going to go book the hotel." She then walked out of the room, leaving me to think about all the techniques I could impress the judges with. It wasn't very hard to think of them. Also, I knew so many recipes; this competition was going to be a walk in the park.

The next few weeks flew by. I memorized recipes, put together my "thank you for choosing me as the winner" speech, and packed. Mom tried to get me to actually try out the recipes, but I protested, always saying I was fine, because I knew all of them very well. Sooner than I expected, the day came. We left from the house early, so that we could check into the hotel

and have time to relax and spend the night there.

We woke up in the morning and headed over to the convention center. Mom left after making sure that she knew what time we would be done, so that she could pick me up, and I could tell her that of course I'm moving on.

Only the judges and one other competitor were there yet, so I sat down and inspected the area. The kitchen was clean, nice spacious counters, and, yes! A stand mixer! There were pots, pans, cake tins, muffin liners, enormous areas of shelving with all the ingredients and supplies anyone could ever need. The judges table sat at the other end of the room. A few minutes later, the other two contestants got there. We all stared awkwardly at each other for a few minutes, until one girl broke the ice

"Hi, I-I'm Mary." She mumbled "I'm 11 and I'm from Fort Myers." She smiled at us shyly, showing off a row of bright pink braces gleaming on her teeth. The other two kids introduced themselves. There was Sam, age 10, from Naples, and then there was Marianna, age 11, (she goes by Mari) from Marianna. (I'm not kidding. I couldn't help laughing at this one!) I was happy to find out that I was the oldest. Then introduced myself to them.

"Hi I'm Alice, I'm 12, and I'm from Coral Springs." We started chatting about stuff until the judges stood up. The lady on the right shouted to us,

"Hey kids! How are ya'll doing today? Are you ready to flex your baking muscles?" All of us yelled,

"Yes!" She looked very happy at the exited noise we were making, while the guy cringed. We *were* pretty loud. Then the guy spoke up,

"I'm Robert, and this is Sara" he gestured over to Sara. She smiled and waved. "We are going to be your judges," he continued, "Today is a very special day for her because It's her birthday! She is now, well, let's just say she's 29 years old. Your challenge today is going to be to make the perfect cake to celebrate this special occasion." Sara picked up the conversation from there,

"You will have 2 hours to complete this task. Also, so that you are not completely lost

for what to do, I love animals, bright colors, and my favorite flavor is dark chocolate. Alright bakers, your time starts... now!"

I scrambled over to my station, determined not to lose too much time. I got together the ingredients for a simple white cake, mixed it up, and separated the batter into two bowls. To one of the bowls, I added cocoa powder to make it dark chocolate, and then to the other I added raspberry puree to make it raspberry flavor. I then got out three muffin pans, and poured a little bit of each batter into the pan.

I took a tooth pick and swirled them to make marbled chocolate raspberry cupcakes. I then ran back to the pantry and grabbed fresh raspberries. I took the raspberries and stuck them in the middle of the cupcake. I hurried the muffin trays over to the oven, where I stuck them in to bake. I sighed a sigh of relief. Whew. One thing done. I was running back to my station when Robert stood up, carrying a tray of white plastic molds. Crap! I forgot about the twist! I braced myself.

"Bakers!" he called out, "Can I have your attention please!" Everyone looked at him. "For a little extra bling to the cake, I brought out these chocolate animal molds. First come, first serve!" I dashed up there and grabbed a random mold. On the way back to my station, I grabbed the colors of the rainbow in melting chocolate, because Sara said she liked bright colors. I checked to see what animal I got. Yes!!! I got an owl! I love owls! I melted my chocolate in a pan and filled some owls with each color, and put them in the blast chiller.

I then ran over to the oven and checked on my cupcakes. They were done! I pulled them out and set them in the cooling rack. I looked at the clock. It read: 45:00. Holy cow! I only have 45 minutes! I hurried up and started on my butter cream. Luckily for me, it was really easy and was finished in no time. I separated the icing in half, and then put raspberry extract into that batch so that it would not mess with the coloring and texture, like if I put in raspberry puree. I then made it a grass green, and put that bowl of icing to the side.

I grabbed the other bowl of icing and put cocoa in it to make it chocolate flavor. I mixed that up, and then I ran over to the blast chiller to get my owls. On my way back, I snatched some edible black paint to put details on the owls, like eyes and feathers. I dashed back to my station and popped out the owls from the molds. I took a paintbrush and painted eyes, feathers and teeny talons. They were so cute!!! I checked the clock. Holy cow! I only have 15 minutes left! I grabbed a cookie sheet and snatched my cupcakes off of the rack were they had been cooling. I felt them to see if they were cool. Yes!! They were ready! I shook them out of the cupcake pan and arranged them on my cookie sheet in the shape of a tree. Next, I took some of my brown icing and put it into a piping bag for branches. I put that aside. I took an icecream scoop and scooped a dollop of chocolate icing onto each cupcake that was going to be part of the trunk. I took a knife; spread it all out, making an almost smooth surface of the icing. Then, I did the same thing with the top. I spread out the green icing, took a spoon and placed it on the icing and lifted it up to make it look like leaves.

After that, I took my brown icing in the piping bag and piped branches onto the green leaves. I placed all the little owls on the branches. Then I pulled out the edible dark brown paint, and put streaks and knots on the trunk to make it look more realistic. Robert yelled out, "bakers, you have one minute!" I started to stare franticly at my cake. Is there anything I can still do to make it more spectacular than it already is? I decided that there was nothing, and then the countdown began.

"10...9...8...7...6..." shouted Robert. I could see the others scrambling to get everything onto the cake."5...4...3...2...1...bakers! Your time is now up! Hands up!"

I held my hands up in the air, staring proudly at my beautiful creation. Looking around, I could see that the other kids were going to be a pushover. Their cakes looked boring and dark compared to mine. Against these kids, there was just no competition. There was only one person that could possibly win. Me.

Mari, Sam, Mary, and I filed into the waiting room and sat down on the couch to wait for the judges to call our name. Looking around the room, I could tell that the other contestants were worried. Mari was chewing on her nails. Mary kept twirling her finger in her hair. Sam was squirming like a worm out of soil.

He was doing it so much, a few times when I glanced over at him; I wanted to ask him if he needed to go to the bathroom. I couldn't blame them. They had a big reason to be worried. They were battling the most talented kid baker in Florida. And no, I don't mean one of the other kids, I meant ME. But, I have to admit, I was a little bit nervous. Repeat: a *little* bit nervous. We all sat on the couch, facing each other.

"Mary!" Roberts's voice traveled into the room. Mary got up from the couch, trembling, and walked out the door. We waited five minutes, an anxious silence blanketing the whole room. Finally, after what seemed like forever, she walked in.

"They liked it!" Mary exclaimed,
"They loved the flavor, and the creativity in the
design...." She trailed off, smiling so broadly a
kitten could have fit in her mouth. Mary plopped
down on the couch next to me, making the whole
couch bounce. Sam was called out, and then Mari,
and they both came back in smiling like they were
kind of worried. After Mari came back in, I
thought, crap; they're going to be calling me in
any minute now! Are they going to like my cake?
Did I do my best? Are they going to like my
flavors? Thousands of questions like those swirled
around in my head. They really did NOT help the
butterflies in my stomach.

I pushed those thoughts out of my head. I was going to win this competition. If the judges loved the ones the other kids made, they were going to adore mine. I have to say, mine was nothing short of amazing.

"Alice!" I took a deep breath. There was my cue to walk out and amaze the judges! I stood up, and tried to look confident as I walked out of the door into the kitchen. "Hey Alice!" said Sara, "What have you made for us today?" she smiled warmly at me. Robert just sat there. I straightened up and cleared my throat.

"Today I made for you raspberry dark chocolate swirled cupcake cake. For the twist, I got an owl mold, so I made the cake into a tree, and put the owls on the branches. The icing is raspberry and chocolate butter cream. Also, I made the owls in the color of the rainbow because you said you liked bright colors."

Sara and Robert looked impressed. Well, looking at my cake, it would make anyone want to eat it all at once. I handed them each a cupcake and a little owl. I stood there nervously as they started sampling my creation. Sara bit into it, and a little river of uncooked batter flowed out. She raised her eyebrow at me and placed her cupcake back on her plate. Crap! I forgot to check them with a toothpick! Robert was the first one to say anything.

"Alice, I love the décor, and how the owls are on the tree, but I'm not tasting any raspberry in the cupcake, all I taste is the chocolate. Also, it is a little bitter. And, these are way underdone." he picked his up, and tilted it. A steady stream of batter came out. As I listened to what he said, and watched the batter pool under his cupcake, my shoulders slumped. How had I messed up so bad like that? Sara spoke up.

"It is flavorful, but when you say there is raspberry, I want to taste raspberry. But, your butter cream is probably the best I've had in a while. There are no lumps, and it has good flavor, not too sweet. Good job!" I was confused why they did not just usher me out the door there, but then of course they need to embarrass me in front of the other kids.

"Thanks!"I said as I walked out the door. All three sets of eyes were on me as I strolled into the adjacent room and plopped on the couch. Mari was the first one to speak.

"How'd you do?"She asked. I shrugged. They seemed to get that I didn't exactly have the best time in front of the judges.

"They loved my décor, but they couldn't taste one of my flavors, and my cupcakes were kind of bitter. On the bright side, they loved the flavor and consistency of my butter cream, and how I used my animals." We all sat in silence after that. Ten minutes later, we got called back in.

"Hello bakers! All of you did great today, but there was on we loved above the others." Sara paused then to take a breath. I could hear the other contestants chanting underneath their breath, "please be me, please be me." I started to drum roll on my jeans with my fingers.

"Mary!" Sara exclaimed, "Today, your dark chocolate, raspberry, and white chocolate layer cake blew us away! Congrats!" Mary looked shocked as we patted her on the back and whispered our congrats. After the congrats for Mary calmed down, Sara continued, "You three, your cakes were good, but they all had their flaws. "Sam, your cake was too sweet, and your butter cream was lumpy." Sam nodded. "Mari, your cake was over baked, and the butter cream was also lumpy." She moved her gaze over to me, making the butterflies in my stomach flutter like they were trying to force up through my throat.

"Alice, your cake was adorable, and we loved how you used your animal, but the cupcake was bitter, and we could not taste the raspberry. Also, your cupcake was *way* underdone." I nodded. I was going home. I just knew that. Sara continued, "Unfortunately, the person going home is.... Alice. Alice, we loved having you here. You keep on baking, okay?" She smiled at me sympathetically.

I walked out of the door in a trance, hardly hearing the words of my competitors and stumbled straight into Mom. She looked shocked to see me so forlorn looking, but she seemed to get the situation. She helped me into the car and we drove halfway back to Coral Springs before she started a conversation. "Honey, you tried your best. I was watching you on the hotel TV. Your cake was so cute!"

Hearing Mom talk about the good stuff that happened, I relaxed. I had been pressuring myself too much. I did do my best. I sat in the backseat, thinking about what fun I had had at the competition. I had been arrogant; I was one of the best, not THE best. And as that thought crossed my mind, I realized that I had learned two important things. Number one, always check your cupcakes with a toothpick, and more importantly, I had learned that I wasn't the best. I believe that's called humility. Exhausted from the day, I fell into a peaceful sleep.

The Epic Quest of Gilbert Le Cat

I, Gilbert, run longingly through, Through halls and stairs higher, Over hardwood and green carpet, Chasing my heart's desire.

After a long journey, my bowl, My bowl, my love, in sight... Empty... my tears begin to pool, There's not even one bite.

I leave, going yonder to beg, To beg, to plead, to fight, For food, I will do anything, I need it, it's my right!

An exhausting climb, to the place, The place, my food source, shifts, I'm here! I say, paw on her face, She wakes up, my heart lifts.

Her hand emerges to pet me, Pet me, but food? Where is it? I'm hungry! Give me the food! I'm not here to visit!

She lies back down to go to sleep, Sleep? Not now! I complain, This fast I can no longer keep! She ignores my great pain. For hours, the Jeopardy song plays, Plays loudly in my head, My stomach, the accompaniment, Until when I am fed.

I poke, lick, rub her. No answer. Answer me! I try again. Nothing. I sadly lick my fur. I thought she was my friend!

Hunger is my very being, Being hungry. I'm doomed. I lick the spots I missed, and think, I'm doomed, but nicely groomed.

I wait, for food to sound its call, Fields are becoming lakes, Civilizations rise and fall, Then, it happens... she wakes!

I race downstairs, eager, ready, Ready to now conclude, She is running down, my savior, Listen... the sound of FOOD!



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.baker. _

Dutch

Shh. Tell no one were you got these directions. Last week, a team of my best code breakers were able to hack into the Mayors' email and uncovered these descriptions of the traps she has laid. Proceed with caution. Before this discovery, we lost many a good man to her traps. Don't let yourself be the next victim. The Mayor likes to stroll around town undisturbed with her greyhounds. She loves to avoid at all costs us towns people and to stop us from bustling around and wrecking havoc (driving and walking and everyday life) on her beautiful morning. To solve her problem, she has placed traps all around town to catch us and send us back home to not disturb her and her greyhounds. The traps are only able to be seen if you know about them, and know what to do, so I will give you these instructions. Follow them directly, and remember, tell no one were you got them from, or she might arrest me. These are directions from my house. If you have made it here already, to my house, congratulations! Now, about the location you seek. The Lil Dutch bakery is one of the last remnants of when life used to be carefree and simple. It is now the headquarters of the resistance. If you succeed, see you there!

Head west on Loblolly Tr. Stop and get out of your car, walk up the hill, and lay a cookie at the foot of the garden gnome. He is gray with a green pointy hat. But this cookie can be no ordinary one. It has to be a medium sized white chocolate macadamia nut cookie from McDonalds, precisely 3 minutes and 7 seconds old. You have to do this or else he will topple the tree next to it onto you and your car. Once you have safely passed Larry, (the garden gnome), Turn left onto Oregon Tr. After a few yards on Oregon Tr., you will see a beautiful and majestic cat in the middle of the road. It will be bleeding and yowling, but do not stop your car and get out. The cat is an illusion. If you get out, thieves will come out of the bushes and hijack and steal

Turn right onto Clark Pointe. You will be driving for a little bit down the road and suddenly, out of the corner of your eye you will see a gleaming metallic statue. Whatever you do, do not stare at it. If you do, your car will be glued to the road and you will be glued to your seat, and you will sink into the road. If you are unsunken, Turn left onto Riverwatch parkway. You will start seeing signs for the speed limit. The speed limit is actually a fourth of what it says. For example, if it said 80, it would be 20. If you are caught speeding, you will be pulled over by a platypus with a horse tail, then locked in your car to watch reruns of My Little Pony and Dora the Explorer for the rest of your life. If you are not watching Swiper sneaking behind a bush, Turn right onto Baston Rd. As you are driving down, stick your tongue out at every squirrel you see. That is the squirrel equivalent of you bowing to them. If you forget, they will mob you and feed you nuts with gas in them to make you pass out. Then, they will style your hair in a permanent 8os do.

If you are not suffering from mulletitus or another 80s malady, Turn right onto Washington Rd. There will be a giant red shirt flying in the wind toward you. You cannot dodge it. It will land on your windshield. You have to get out and fold it, then set on the side of the road. You cannot just pull it off and toss, because it fly back and be stuck there permanently. After doing the laundry, turn left onto the plaza where you have your destination. As you are driving past the smiling sun on the sign for the Sunrise Grill, roll down your window and comment loudly, "Isn't that sign

J. do not, the sun will open its mouth u with a plume of fire. It loves its

FOR YOUR

Finally, you have arrived at the Lil'13

where you can get almost any kind of

'

How To: Make a birthday cake for your cat

Is your favorite furry feline's birthday coming up? If so, you have to try out this recipe proven to be loved by cats worldwide! With wholesome ingredients, your cat is happy and healthy devouring the cake you crafted! WARNING: Lock your cat out of the kitchen unless you want him to lose his mind when you open the tuna can.

Line a small, rimmed baking sheet with wax paper. Open the tuna can and drain all the water out, then scoop into a bowl. Add in 1/2 cup finely diced cooked chicken, then stir in 1/2 cup pure sweet potato puree, adding just enough to keep the mixture together. You may not need the entire 1/2 cup.

You can try a fancy chef thing and place a 1-inch round cookie cutter on a plate, then scoop the mix into the cutter, smoothing it to the edges. Lift the cutter and voila! You have a perfect little mound of "cake."

For frosting, you can get even fancier and pipe on mashed potatoes, or just dollop a bit on top.







A Short Story

"Hey Addie! We got a cat yowling on the porch! It's so cute!" I recognized the voice of my little sister squealing at me from the bottom of the steps. Then the comment processed in my brain.

"Wait, what?" I demanded as I raced down the stairs. Izzie met me at the halfway point, chattering excitedly about this cat on our front porch and that we were going to keep it and she had already decided to name it Goose. We stumbled down the last few steps and she pushed me out the door, right into an enormous fluffy grey cat. I stopped in my tracks and fell into a squat.

"Hey kitter." The kitter, christened by Izzie as Goose, rubbed her face on my knuckles, then sort of honk-sneezed. Izzie giggled at the noise.

"That's why I named her Goose!" she said, "I think she has a cold or something." I reached out my hand and scratched her behind the ears. She LOVED that.

"She's so soft!" I remarked.
Izzie nodded, "I know, right?" she said,
scooping up the cat and snuggling her. Goose
honk-sneezed again. I heard footsteps echoing
behind us and Mom strolled out onto the
porch.

"What exactly do you think you're doing?" she asked, staring pointedly at the cat having a blast in Izzie's arms. Izzie stood up and held onto Goose tightly.

"We're going to keep her." She declared confidently. Mom raised an eyebrow.

"Are we now?" She mused, scanning the cat disapprovingly.
I found myself becoming oddly attached to the yowling ball of fluff, so I intervened.

"Please, Mom! Just for a bit until we find her a forever home?" I crossed my fingers. She sighed and muttered,

"Oh, kids." Then she shrugged.
"Why not. Just as long as I'm not the one taking care of it."

And so three months passed, and even Mom grew to love our Goose.

I scooted out of the car and out onto the parking lot. Goose was yowling loudly in the backseat. I popped open the door and scooped her up, clipping the leash onto the harness as she violently squirmed in my arms.

I carried her to the start of the sidewalk and set her down, then started walking. Goose was having none of that. She plopped down and refused to budge, even when I gently pulled the leash.

"Having trouble?" asked Mom, only now emerging from the van. I carefully nudged Goose with my foot and snorted.

"None at all. Our kitter here is only embracing her inner bag of bricks." I drawled sarcastically. "This lump of a cat refuses to move an inch." I tried again, this time with a bit more success. She heaved herself up off the pavement and started awkwardly trotting. I picked up the pace and began walking faster. She did not like that at all and quickly and successfully managed to squeeze out of the harness, bolting away. I lunged for her, but too late. She was gone in a flash.

We searched for hours after, with no results. She had simply vanished. We drove home from the park in shock. Finally, Mom struck up a conversation. "We can make signs and put them up around town." she said. I nodded numbly, not really paying attention. When we arrived home, I ran upstairs to the computer and crafted a flyer for Goose, printing a bunch of them.

When we had just completed pinning them up, the sky chose that exact moment to turn ugly and it started to pour. Rain drummed loudly on the roof of the van. I sighed.

"Well, there goes all of our posters." Mom nodded sadly.

"I hope she can be found another

way."

inquired,

Mom's voice wafted up the stairs, "Addie, someone's on the phone for you!" I clambered out of bed and charged down the steps, only to have to impatiently wait to answer while Mom checks who it is. I put the phone up to my ear just in time to hear a woman's voice announce:

"Hello, we saw your sign inquiring about a lost cat, big, fluffy, and grey, and we spotted a cat that fits her description in the window of the local cat café, the Catfe on Fifth St. in downtown. Hope this is helpful in finding your cat!" That was the message I had been waiting for!

"Thank you so much!" I said happily, "That info is great! Thanks!"

The lady on the end of the line replied, "Well, I'm glad I could be of help!", then hung up.

Mom walked over next to me and

"So, what happened?" I could hardly contain my excitement. "A lady spotted Goose in the window of the cat café downtown! Can we go now?," I pleaded. She checked her watch. "Not tonight, honey." she said, shaking her head. "I have to get dinner going and Goose will be there tomorrow." I

sighed and lumbered back upstairs for a long night of waiting and worrying.

I woke up to Izzie yelling at me. "We slept in! The cafe opened two hours ago!" I was still half asleep and this took a moment to process. When it did, I scrambled out of bed and we dashed out the door five minutes later. Mom was waiting in the car. I hopped in, and we sped on over to the Catfe. Reaching our destination, I jumped out of the car and ran to the door, flinging it open. A startled attendee looked up from the front desk.

"Hello, what can I help you with?" he stuttered.
Izzie piped up,

"Can we see the cats?"

He nodded.

"Sure thing." He opened the door and I was immediately assailed by four adorable kitters begging for attention. But I only had eyes for the cat I wanted to see the most. However, Goose was nowhere to be found. The worker noticed me scanning the room and asked, "Looking for any cat in particular?" I nodded. "Yes, actually, a big, fluffy, gray cat. He pursed his lips and said,

"Well, I'm afraid someone just stopped by and picked up a cat that fits the description you gave me perfectly. I'm sorry." Walking out of the café, I spotted a lady eating lunch on a picnic table in the park. And on the table next to her was a huge, fluffy, gray cat. GOOSE!! I started running over to her and then regained my senses. What was I supposed to say? Hi, that's kinda my cat, you know, she got loose in the park and now you adopted her but she's still kinda my cat? Thanks for her back! That would be a disaster. I took a deep breath and continued on the way. When the lady at the table saw me coming, she waved and said cheerfully, "Hello!" I shyly waved back and then shuffled awkwardly the rest of the way.



"Umm.. hi.. so this is going to sound really weird, but that's my cat." I muttered, pointing at Goose. Her smile faded into a confused frown.

"No, she's *my* cat. I just had to get her out of that cat café over there. I gave her to my neighbors to watch while I went on vacation, but then Little Bit escaped and they weren't able to find her."

I was utterly befuddled. Mom and Izzie chose that moment to come running towards me, then Izzie came to the same conclusion I had.

"GOOSE!" She exclaimed. Goose turned around and pranced over to where Izzie was waiting. She rubbed against her hand and began to purr loudly. The woman was now trying to figure stuff out.

"So, I see you know each other." Izzie scratched Goose behind the ear and said,

"Of course we do. Goose is our cat. We found her on our porch about 3 months ago and Mom said we could keep her." A light of understanding dawned in the lady's eyes as she understood what had happened.

"So, Little Bit escaped, and you found her and took her in. That's why my friends weren't able to find her." She smiled at us. "Thanks for taking care of her. Unfortunately, she technically is my cat, so I am going to have to take her back." Izzie burst into tears. The lady pursed her lips and thought for a moment. "Well, I could let you

keep her for a month or two more, if you would like." She proposed.

Izzie raised her head and wiped away her tears.

"Really?" she asked incredulously. I was equally pleased.

"That sounds amazing!" I exclaimed. Having Goose for a whole another month or two? That would be awesome!

But when I saw the look in her eyes, I could tell she just wanted her cat. In my heart, I knew the best thing to do. "Thank you so much for the offer, but you can have Little Bit back." The lady smiled sadly, acknowledging my answer. Izzie started sobbing again and glared at me from under mom's arm.

"I know that was hard, thank you." Then she brightened. "Well, I know you have loved her dearly, so when she has her kittens, you can have the pick of the litter." She announced.

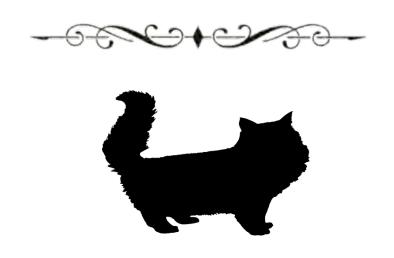
That caught Izzie's attention. "Wait. Kittens!" she squealed. The lady broke into a grin.

"Have you not noticed how she was getting progressively fatter?" I studied Goose's underside. She *was* pretty round.

"Thank you so much!" We chorused in unison.

Mom sighed contentedly.

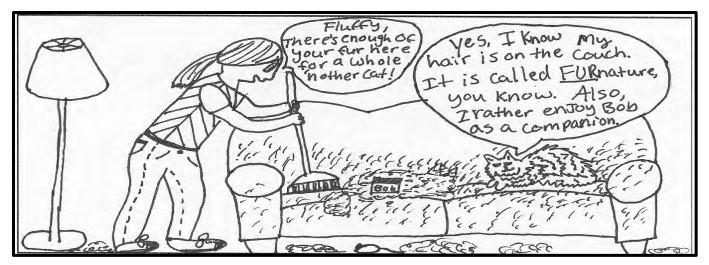
"Well, at least it wasn't a total wild goose chase."



PATCHWORK **GILBERT** G reedy, pensive, I love him anyway. Low on attention, B utts his head on everything. E ndearing, annoying, R oars when hungry (always) The absolute chonk of Hurried Huppenings The baker, rushing, Dumping the last component, B cups of salt-... oops.

KFC's Dark Secret Women screamed, Babies cried, Grown men gasped, Children wailed, The building erupted, Doors belching out sound, Of the terrified people, Who received quite a shock, When their food had fur. The secret was out. KFC was serving

deep fried rats.



Life of Fluffy: a comic





How many times could you spot me?

If you're curious, I tried out many napping places, but found them not to be comfy enough. I tested pgs. 1, 3, 8, 11, 14, and 16. No matter how many times you found or missed me, you get an air high paw from me! And now, I have to say goodbye until next time!