

It all started with my vet.

I brought the cat, Patches, in for a check-up. The vet put the cat on to table and petted it until it purred. I began somewhat jealous as the cat never purrs for me. He picked up the cat and cuddled it like a baby within his arms.

"You have an obese kitty."

"Really?"

"Yes, how often do you feed it?"

"Once a day."

"What do you feed it? People food? Cats aren't suppose to have people food, you know."

"No, I feed it cat food."

"What kind?"

"I don't know. It comes in a bag, the one with the cat winking, if that helps."

"Hmmm..."

"Hmmm... what?"

"Kittys need organic food just - like people. What you are feeding it, that generic crunchy cat food, is equivalent to junk food. No wonder she is so fat. You would be too if you had McDonald's every day."

He put down the cat to retrieve a bag from his counter.

"Here."

He threw the bag to me. It was cat food.

"It's organic kitty food. It will help her lose weight. That's what Patches needs to survive."

I looked at the stupid cat. I swear it gave me a devious grin, the type of a grin a kid gives while standing behind his mother, after getting his/her sibling in trouble.

"How much does this bag cost?"

"\$99.95"

"How long will it last?"

"7 days."

"That's \$400 a month. I can't afford that. Doesn't it come in bulk, or something?"

"No, unlike your generic cat food, these come in speciality bags. You have to be prepared to pay a little more in order to eat healthy."

"I'm not spending \$400 a month on a cat. I don't even spend \$400 a month on me."

"Well, you have no choice. Welcome to the responsibilities of kitty ownership."

"Actually, it's not my cat. My girlfriend, I mean, ex-girlfriend, left it behind when she moved out of the house. I didn't even know she was leaving me - she just left one night while I was work. You know, maybe it's time for me to stop having a cat. How much does it cost to put down?"

The vet walked to the table and stood between the cat and me with his arms crossed.

"How dare you suggest I murder your kitty. Patches has done nothing wrong. Patches didn't buy the cat food. Patches can't even shop."

He picked up the cat's file and scribbled his diagnosis.

"You need to purchase that speciality kitty food every 7 days starting today. And because you have threatened to kill your kitty..."

"I didn't threatened."

"Because you THREATENED to kill your kitty, you will need to bring Patches with you every Friday to pick up her food. If you and/or Patches do not appear, I will call the police to report you for animal cruelty. Do you understand me?"

"Yes." The cat grinned at me again.

"Now it's \$125 for the check-up and \$99.95 for Patches' food."

I wrote a cheque as the vet played with the cat. I exchanged the cheque for cat and walked towards the door carrying the cat under my arm like a football.

"Oh, and also, you need a kitty kennel to transport her in the car. I expect to see it next Friday."

"Okay."

"Oh, and I leave the office at noon on Fridays so you will have to bring her in the morning."

"Okay."

"And remember..." he waved the cat's file "I know where you live."

For the next eight weeks, I made regular weekly visits to the vet. Each week I paid the \$99.95 for the cat food. By the Week 9, I was fired from my job because my boss became tired of me going to the vet every Friday.

Unfortunately I was unable to secure another job because A) hardly anyone would let me have Friday mornings off and B) the ones who considered it, were horrified when I explained the reason why. I learned a valuable lesson when looking for a new job: Employers don't hire people whose vets think they are trying to murder their cat.

I explained to the vet that welfare simply does not provide enough money for \$99.95 weekly cat food. The vet disagreed.

"If a single mom can hang out in the Bingo Parlour for hours at a time, you can afford the cat food."

I couldn't handle the pressure of no-job, no-money and \$99.95 a week for cat food. The lack of revenue caused to me to cut back on my expenses and forced me to find new sources of revenue in order to survive.

Week by week I pawned my possessions - yet I still bought the cat food. Week 37 I started walking everywhere, as I could no longer afford gas - yet I still bought the cat food. Week 40 I was forced to sell my car - yet I still bought the cat food. Week 42 I was forced to declare bankruptcy - and yes, I still bought the cat food.

The most ironic thing happened as my situation lengthened. Although I was growing thinner and thinner from lack of food, the cat was gaining weight, ever so slightly. I told the vet but he reasoned that the cat was just healthier.

The Monday of Week 47 changed everything. My idiotic friend, Chucky, came for a visit.

"Wow, where's all your furniture man?"

"I pawned it for cat food."

"What?"

I explained my tragic story.

"That's nuts man. Just lose the cat. It's simple."

I explained the vet's combination of reasoning and blackmailing me to buy cat food.

The Thursday night that week, I had the most amazing dream. I was walking the cat along the sidewalk in front of the jail. In one of the windows was the vet, locked up for committing a crime (I think it was fraud). I waved at the vet yelling mocking statements to

him like "How's the furniture in there?", "Do you have a waterbed?" and "How much is the cat food in there?". Through the window bars he shook his fist at me. "Patches should be with me, she likes me more." He yelled. "You want it, you can have it." I picked up the cat and punted it to him, then skipped home. It was blissful. It was great. I was free.

The next morning I awoke to a sense of peace that I had not felt since my girlfriend lived with me. It was a new peace, a new beginning. I had to keep this feeling - at all costs. I would roll the dice, call the vet's bluff - I would not buy cat food that day.

I walked downstairs to find the cat in its Friday ritual. It was lying in its kennel, waiting to be walked to the vet. I opened the back door to smell the fresh autumn air of a new day, a new era for myself. Inside my screen door was a tin can with a note.

"Hope this helps, Chucky."

I examined the can. My idiotic friend had purchased a can of dog food. Apparently he did not see the giant dog's face on the label.

I closed the door and put Chucky's gift on the floor where my cupboard had been before Week 29.

The phone rang constantly that morning. I never answered it. They couldn't even leave a message my answering machine was pawned in Week 19. It didn't matter as I knew it was the vet checking to see why I hadn't bought the cat food.

As noon approached the cat realised we would not be going to the vet. It slowly wobbled out of its kennel, out of the kitchen, through the empty dining room, past the bathroom towards me in the living room. I was sitting in an old lazy boy that I found on the curb (pawned my lazy boy in Week 33). I was looking at the space where my television was located (before I pawned it in week 23).

The cat stared at me.

"Not today, you ungrateful cat."

I went back to staring at the wall.

All of a sudden I heard a loud hiss, an evil loud hiss from the cat. I looked at it as it continued to stare at me.

"Ha ha cat, not today. It's a new beginning in this house and I'm taking charge. To celebrate, you know what I'm going to do? Well I'll tell you, I'm going down to the cellar to fetch that bottle of champagne, the one I stored downstairs for when I was going to ask your former owner to marry me. But she left me long before I could use the champagne, but you know that. Ah, but you know what, I'm going to drink it today to celebrate my new beginning."

I walked past the cat, to the trapdoor in the kitchen. I walked down the old wooden steps to the unfinished cellar.

The cellar had been dug long after the house was built and consisted of 2 "rooms". The walls and floor were cement but it was unsuitable for living quarters. Inside the furnace room was a panel, 6x8, leading to a dirt dugout about 2 feet high located underneath the original part of the house.

I opened the panel door to a horrible stench. Did my champagne turn sour? I turned my flashlight on and shone it in the dugout. There to my right was my champagne bottle intact.

"Good. It's still good." I reached in and retrieved it.

But what was that smell? I shone my flashlight deeper into the dugout. To my horror I saw thousands and thousands of dead rats. I jumped back and screamed.

"What else can possibly go wrong with my life? This is suppose to be a new beginning."

In frustration of the last forty-seven weeks, my girlfriend leaving and the fact I couldn't afford to hire someone to remove the rats, I threw the bottle of champagne into the dugout. The bottle ricocheted off the pile and crashed on the cement floor in front of me. The pile dead rats followed the champagne from the dugout to the floor. I examined them closely but from a far. Each dead rat had two little bite marks on its neck.

I examined the pile again. I saw a hand sticking up through the pile. I looked around, quickly finding a long stick. I poked at the pile of death, pushing rat after rat (all with two bite marks on their necks) to find a women, roughly my age. It was my girlfriend.

At first I was relieved. She hadn't left me at all. I'm not a loser. She was only murdered and buried in the dugout of our house. Then I came to my senses. I looked down at her. She had two tiny bite marks on her neck.

I ran up the stairs to call the police.

Stretched out in front of the phone (phone stand pawned in Week 17) was the cat. It stared at me. As we had our stare-off, everything came into perspective. The size of the two bite marks on all the rats and my dead girlfriend were the size of a cat's bite marks.

The cat stood up and moved towards me. Each step it took forwards, I took backwards. We reached the kitchen, where the cat stopped and grinned. It did not grin that evil grin it had in the vet's office those 47 weeks ago. No, it had a different grin - the type of grin it had when I put food in its dish. Then the cat did something terrifically spooky: it grew 2 fangs.

Holy Cow! I had a vampire kitty in my house. A vampire kitty who had killed over a thousand rats. A vampire kitty who had killed my girlfriend, its owner. A vampire kitty who was about to kill me.

I backpeddled quickly, causing myself to crash to my kitchen floor. The vampire kitty slowly approached me, its fangs getting longer with each step. Suddenly my back door was kicked open.

"Patches, I have come to save you."

It was the vet. He had assumed since I had not come to see him that day, that I was killing the cat. He stepped into the kitchen to see me lying in the corner.

"Ah, I see Patches was too much for you to handle. You couldn't kill her, could you? Why Patches, come here, Let me pet you."

"Umm..." I said.

The vampire kitty ran at the vet.

"That's a girl Patches. Com'on."

She leaped into the air, straight for the vet's neck. The vet went up against the wall, screaming. The vampire kitty hung onto his neck, feasting his blood. Once drained, the vet dropped to the kitchen floor, dead. The vampire kitty licked its lips and turned to me. Its fur was stained red with blood.

The vampire kitty climbed onto me, looking at my neck. I had to think fast. What is a cat's garlic? I turned to my left and found my answer. As the vampire kitty stood on my chest, licking its lips, I grabbed Chucky's can of dog food and shoved it in the vampire kitty's face.

It jumped back with such a fright of the dog's face that it hit its head on the fridge, knocking it unconscious. I jumped up, ran to the phone and called 9-1-1. I didn't tell them I had unconscious vampire kitty lying on my kitchen floor. I simply said I had two dead bodies in my house.

After the phone call, I could hear the vampire kitty starting to meow-moan - it was gaining consciousness. I had to think, "what would be the stake through a cat's heart?" I looked to the bathroom and had my answer. Quickly, I filled my bathtub with water. I ran into my kitchen picked up the vampire kitty and ran back towards the tub. The vampire kitty came to, just as I reached the bathroom. It took a last desperate swing at me as I threw it into the bathtub.

The vampire kitty screamed a screeching meow as white smoke fizzed from the bathtub. Within seconds, the vampire kitty had disappeared under the water, then made one last effort to escape the tub, only to have its claws slip off the tub's enamel shell. The smoke vanished leaving the vampire kitty at the bottom of my bathtub - dead.

Even though there were thousands of dead rats with my dead girlfriend in the basement, my nemesis, the vet, dead in my kitchen doorway and one dead vampire kitty in my bathtub, I still jumped in the air for celebration.

I think I was celebrating the fact that I no longer had to buy \$99.95 cat food.