

Tales from the Stormthrower
Lala, Gone Fishing

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All the chores had made her get an appetite for fish. She knew, however, the adult cats would never allow her to stalk the fish, hanging out beside them. So she sneaked up the mountain slope, jumping from rock to ledge, hiding behind boulders, abiding her time, until she arrived at the needed height. Crawled onto the narrow ledge, fully utilizing her camouflage. Paw after paw she slowly bridged the gap, fully visible for the village below, yet, she had seen other cats do it and if you moved slow enough, the others would only see a rock lying against the face of the mountain.

Behind the boulders on the safely out of sight she could speed up, jumping from stone to stone rather than running avoiding the gravel piled up on every shielded horizontal spot on this slope. Staring at the green pasture just a bit out of reach, she slowly put one paw into the gravel, shifting her weight onto it, tip-toeing over the tricky surface, hiding under an overhang watching the sun slide by a few trees on top of the mountain, until she could race over the grass, taking a giant leap into the dense bushes lining it. Making use of the gap she kept clear ever since she was big enough to swim and hunt.

Between the rock face and the bushes she could round the hill, already feeling the moist rising up from the cascades, until her secret path emptied out on the river. She looked up and down the river, seeming to flow so calm and peaceful, while the thunderous roar of the falling water screamed danger.

Putting two paws into the river she crouched down and let herself slip over the wet flat stones into the water. Paddling with only her nose above the water towards the big rock, guarding the border between calm flowing river and foaming rapids down towards the cascades. Found a foothold on the rock and struggled to climb on it, watching out for debris blocking her path and stones dislodged since the last time she sneaked this way. Found the route still valid and made speed on the few feet of rock to leap far into the turning water, staying streamlined she used the speed to reach the big round stones lying just underneath the surface, pushed off from them to jump over the water into the stream leading to small cascade she was aiming for. Paddled hard to resist the pull tugging her towards the big drop, until finally the stream pushed her over the ridge into the pool just in front of the cascade drop.

Finding her bearings in the deep pool she swam across it to climb out onto the rock hugging the waterline straight onto the cliff. Waited for the wind to blow the mist over to cloak her fall, then took a few small jumps over the slippery stones towards the middle of the water rushing over them, adjusting her last jump to let the pull take her over the edge down to the pool below.

Splashed backwards into it, knowing the noise was drowned out by the big drop beside her. Quickly she turned, paddling down to stay under water, finding the ridge and groping for a foothold, only then, slowly bringing her head above the surface to check out the lake below. Saw the familiar sight of cats stalking on every stone or piece of wood, sticking out far

enough above the water, to be useful. Just the regulars were to be seen, leaving the narrow beach empty for everyone to use, climbing out of the water after a lunge at one of the passing fish.

Utilizing the mist once more, she took a plunge into the next stair of the cascade, rolling herself into a tiny ball, as the next few steps offered no foothold. Letting the water take her through the channel over steps following each other shortly, now and again looking up and clawing at the slippery bottom of the shallow pools to avoid a hard encounter with a big rock. In the end gliding into the pool on the last step of the cascade, big enough to dissipate the pulling power of the water.

She swam towards the great slab, sticking out. Making the water ever more shallow, until she could swim no more and paw after paw she had to find her way over the slippery rocks, ever conscious of the water pulling at her legs. Finally she reached the highest point of the slab, close to the boulder overgrown with moss and hanging plants. Pawing at the plants, draping them over her body, she crawled to the edge until she could just look down into the lake. Her claws out all time to prevent the water toppling her over the edge.

The sun moved another tree while she stared into the lake, searching for the dark shapes moving in and out of range, she flexed one paw at the time, knowing the water moving through her thick coat would otherwise make her relax, loosening on her grip.

The only cat she could see, an old, graying, friend, was eying for her hideout, had probably seen her topple over the ridge. She knew he would hold his tongue, as with her dive, fish usually shot past his hideout and more often than not he had taken one from the bunch.

Shadows, counting more than one, came so tantalizingly close, she tensed her muscles, only to see them shoot away. A loud deep thump told her one of the fishers next to her had struck. The sound of him panting, distorted by the fish in his mouth.

Picking up on her routine again, she knew it would take a while for another chance to arrive. Another thump, however, scared the fish into her part of the lake and soon she was tensing her muscles again, jumped, then saw the smaller fish she was aiming for being replaced by a huge one. Could do nothing but whack at its head, skillfully dozing it. Turning, efficiently killing the fish by biting down its gills. Adjusted her grip and pushed her catch towards the surface. Letting go of it shortly to catch a breath. Dived down and slowly dragged the fish, almost as long as her, towards the beach.

Looked up and saw her father looking down on her. Had been searching for her and, knowing her taste for fish just waited by the lake, out of sight. Amazingly she never got a lecture over whatever fathers usually were hammering about. Just a knowing smile, all the way down towards the village, carrying the biggest catch of the day. Bagged by his brave tiny daughter following his paw imprints.

The end