

**Tales from the Stormthrower
Meeka & Lala, The great escape**

I

Her head pressed between her paws, small rocks on the stone floor pressing into her. She was angry at herself, for letting stupid men capture her. Waiting for the drugs to wear off on the sandcat next to her, trying hard not to let a memory of the river valley between the mountains back home, affect her mood. She shook her body deliberately. Daydreaming was for the time she was lying again on the cliff eyeing fish to score. She stretched her paws turning her head again towards the cascade. It looked scalable, not worse than any she had done back home. Doubted if she would get the chance to inspect the many terraces on possible ways up.

An image of the wet secluded vale she was in, was sent into her head. She understood the gesture. Her female friend was awake. The flashes of her traveling in a crate, however astonished her. The immature sandcat had fooled everyone. Had been awake long before she was put in this prison. She eyed their guard putting food through a slot low to the ground. No need to lose a few nails over a hole she couldn't squeeze through, even if she would have been ten moons younger.

The food smelled funny, but before she was able to take a bite, she got a warning from Meeka, the sandcat, to only eat it in a certain way. Filtering out the pills. Meeka stretched, yawned and stumbled to the food, made it look like she was still under the influence of the drugs, and slowly worked her way through the pile of chopped meat and vegetables. Lay down again, protecting her head from view with her body. Spitting out the pills in secret, crushing them to dust with her nails.

She took tiny bites out of the stockpile. Found a pill in the third bite and kept it moving through her mouth, while eating the rest of her meal. Finally crept close to Meeka and let her crush the pills she found. Got a cheerful good night back, then dozed off into oblivion.

Her small friend clearly hadn't found all of the drugs, still sleeping when she awoke. So she stayed in her place, eyes almost closed, checking out the walls on one side, with the water throwing itself into the deep, down towards them, breaking over cascading dais'. Then disappearing into the unknown chasm on the other end. Only the sun, threatening to overheat her body made her stop telling the waking Lala, stories from back home, glorifying the raging wind, the hunt and the stalking from the air. She gave a big yawn and pushed her smaller compatriot to discover their temporary prison.

The terraces they climbed on were as Lala described scalable. Her friend jumped from stone to stone easily getting to the grass covered first step of the stacked dais' forming the waterfall. Lala pushed her to climb on, getting a cheerful abort image, a bit higher. She saw Lala deliberately contracting her claws, slipping, stumbling back down, bouncing happily on the grassy ground. She let herself fall down in the same way, finding it not much different then landing after a hunt back home.

When she was gaining speed to jump down further, she realized why Lala did not want to climb higher and put her paws deep in the grass, still overshooting, going over the edge, ungracefully sliding down to the wet banks of the waterfall pool. To walk to the other side and stare over the edge of their prison. Felt the wind and calculated the distance she could glide. Wouldn't make it to the rocks on the opposing wall of the canyon.

She still did not like the drop down as much as the cascading steps up. Knew from the stories told, Meeka probably liked to utilize the strong wind when it came from a favorable angle. Send a picture of an elf riding a horse and got back an image from a stone falling from four jumps up. It would be faster than climbing. Gone in just a few jumps. The hellish swim through the canyon not much worse than scaling these stupid mountains.

Walked back away from the drop and started pacing next to the glass wall. Had heard a story, animals would behave like that in captivity. Scratched at the rocks and loose sand on her path, adding to the shallow ditch she had created in between the glass and the discarded rocks.

Every time she passed the two elves, staring at her walking hence and forth, she stopped, turning, facing them. Staring back at them for a little while, then continuing her pacing. During these short stops, she could catch parts of the conversation. The men were sometimes wondering about their behavior. Hoping they would settle in soon, enabling them to start their tests. She pushed herself to keep on pacing, acting like she never heard anything. Only stopping because of sore paws. Sauntering back to Meeka.

The images from Lala depicting the bits of conversation she overheard, meant to her, they should go as soon as possible. Pondered about the best point to jump from. Then got an idea, jumped up, climbed to the stone a few jumps higher from the grass covered dais. Ran to the edge and stretched, gliding down, adjusting to the wind, circling back to the spot where Lala was resting in the sand.

The two elves had their faces pressed against the glass and only ran away when she bounced off the hard rock, one jump away from her companion.

With their guard gone she wondered at Meeka's plan. Got images from the wall scaling down to the river and the very small ledges in the flow of the waterfall. Agreeing to a request for a dual trial run she jumped up the wall to the stone she had seen Meeka jump from. Waited for her heavier friend and jumped on Meeka's back when she had recovered a bit from her climb.

They headed towards the glass wall descending faster. But she could hold her place easily, waiting for the inevitable bounce off the rock below, rolled over to soften the hit, then got back up. Turned, still puzzled about the sandcat's motivations, seeing the elves return. Warned her friend and together they made a perfect bow as farewell. Meeka then climbed back up ever higher to the huge stone sticking out many jumps over the canyon. Being used to this kind of terrain she overtook Meeka and searched for the best way up leading her struggling friend.

A third elf jumped easily onto the cascade, using air magic, directing the other two to the waterfall. Actually was faster onto the large stone above them than she had hoped for. Quickly she climbed to the dais above them and invited Lala to jump on and grab hold. Gained speed and jumped, giving Lala images of the door and the wet pool down below. Managed to steer, circling back, losing height faster still. Crashing in the shallow bit of the pool, rolling through the water until she felt her paws again beneath her body, jumping up high, following Lala, racing through the now open door.

Throwing off all caution she jumped down the stairs, gliding past Lala, staying close to the wide rough steps, and crashed on the flat grassy patch in between two stairs, seeing the mage jump down, making himself a short cut, to head them off.

She jumped over Meeka just before she had recovered from her landing and made a sharp right over the grassy edge down the gravel laden slopes, away from the mage jumping to the lower end of the stairs. Sliding, breaking, running and jumping over small ditches. Small stones overtaking her, always revealing Meeka was still hot on her trail.

Down on the valley floor, after jumping over the loose rubble, she had time to look around, waiting for the bouncing sandcat. The two elves on foot were still staring at them

higher up. The mage, however was already running their way. Set herself in motion, calculating she could just barely match his pace. Sending the image to her friend.

Being five times bigger than Lala she overtook her only jumps from the steep descend, and ran on towards the natural bridge, forming a gateway out of this valley. Stumped her front paws into the dirt, turning, showing Lala the mage, still running, was shortening the gap in between them, but panting heavily. Pushed off, using the momentum to get her head again towards the big stone arch, smelling the river better every jump she got closer.

In the last image of Meeka, before she carefully jumped down, the mage was desperately using magic to boost himself from the ever closing walls of the valley. She noticed his paling face, but also the gap he had almost bridged. Hoped for a bit of luck, reaching the archway just when the mage had manage to get in front of her. Jumped, and shot through his legs, over the edge, into the moistly air of the river canyon.

The steep slope still was easy to handle. Lala needed a few moments to gain control over her sliding body, but soon she held on an irregular pattern, always gone, when a gust of wind was trying to snatch away her grip, bringing her ultimately to the big rock she used as cover. Tensed her muscles and jumped as one with the mountaincat, flying, without hesitation, over the edge, down to the foaming river. Missing the dozens of rocks by only a few whiskers. She turned with the raging waters, pawing frantically at it, following Lala. Breathing, every time they managed to jump off one of the stones skimming the surface. The little cat incredibly managed to paddle underneath the twisting foam, out of the mages reach, leading her into the treacherously calm middle of the basin. Making her paddle hard to keep up on the surface, avoiding the pulling waters underneath and toughing out the magical winds above, getting closer to the big rock marking the drop. Lala suddenly jumped her length out of the water, getting a grip on the moss covered rock. Quickly she looked around, feeling the pull of the fall tugging on her, to see the slab she needed, just in time to get enough lift to crawl on top of the rock.

Looking at the mist filled valley, she found Lala hugging the rock, to give the mage as little grip on her as possible. She turned and looked at him, hanging on a stone, wriggling his fingers slow enough she could discern the pattern. It encouraged her to crawl to the edge of the rock, sharing the glorious view with Lala.

She followed Meeka, crawling backwards past her big frame. Turning to look into the misty deep. Letting the little remaining force of the mage push them over the edge, to be engulfed by the mist. Never losing grip of the falling sandcat beneath her, until she was pushed down on her back, when Meeka stretched out, gliding them down to the freedom of the deep waters of the river below.

The end