

How I outwitted an escapist cat

I live out in the desert. It's beautiful and quiet but with the critters surrounding my home, I'm determined not to let my cats stray beyond my backyard.

The problem is, for a long time my male bengal was just as determined to get out.

There's just something about that wide open desert sky which he found irresistible. The moment I took my eyes off him he prepared for launch.

Still, I'm the human in this relationship and (theoretically at least) I have a much bigger brain than his. Last year, I decided to use my monkey smarts to install cat fencing around my yard.

It was a huge undertaking and it took me days out under the hot sun, but when I finished I congratulated myself with the thought that, **finally** I could relax outside with my feline escapist safely confined to my backyard.

Or so I thought.

Somehow, he always found a way to escape.

He figured out that he could jump up on a window sill and then make a five foot horizontal leap across to the outside world.

I saved him (several jumped fences and a skinned knee later) and installed a barrier along the window sill.

Unperturbed, he devised an elaborate series of jumps from an outdoor faucet to an air conditioning unit and then once again, over the fence to the big world outside.

I took him into custody (twisting my ankle in the process) and installed a barrier around the air conditioner.

He figured out a climbing method I can't even describe, where he kind of... wedged his back legs into the corner of two walls and somehow shimmy-hopped a ten foot vertical expanse before I could get to him.

I retrieved him from my neighbor's back yard, still wearing my Star Wars pajamas (and later bought them an apology gift basket).

I just couldn't figure it out.

He was desexed. He had a ridiculously happy home life. I lavished all manner of food on him—the best that surf and turf had to offer. I just couldn't convince the little ... ahem ... rascalion ... to let it go!

Then it finally dawned on me. The answer lay not in technology—but *psychology*.

I realized my crazy little escapist wasn't looking for an escape, but a challenge. He just wanted to see if he could do it!

So, I set up more towers for him. I began hiding his food around the house. I placed ledges in difficult to get places and took it upon myself to ambush him more often (which is our favorite game).

Sure enough, the escape attempts stopped.

He still looks longingly off at the horizon from time to time, but for now at least it's a case of monkey-brain 1, cat-brain 0.

...OK maybe it's a tie.

