

The Mysterious Case of the Disappearing Cat Food

By Marilyn Reeves

Of all the cats I ever had, Boots was my favorite. And she wasn't even my cat. She lived at Jim's place, so technically speaking, she belonged to him. The love I felt for that particular kitty made her almost mine, however. And apparently she thought so too, because when I came out for the weekend, she would cuddle up with me whenever I sat down and follow me around the house from room to room. The fact that I spoiled her rotten had nothing to do with it, I assure you. It was just love, pure and simple.

I just recently learned that her breed is known as the "Maine Coon" – a rather unappealing name for a very beautiful cat. Her smoky grey fur was long, thick and luxurious. She had a pretty face with a white nose and a white bib on her chest. And her feet were covered with white boots – hence the name.

Her diet, consisting mainly of those rather expensive little cans of gourmet cat food, was supplemented with dry nuggets of Purina Cat Chow, which were kept in a bowl out on the enclosed back porch, as she liked to sit out there on the picnic table when we went out for the evening and watch through the big windows for us to come home.

At the other end of the porch were tall metal shelves holding pottery molds and green ware. Jim, being a bit of a hoarder and unable to pass up a bargain, had bought out the remaining supplies of a pottery business from a friend of his, thinking he would resell them someday. Which, of course, he never did.

One particular evening, as we headed out to go to dinner, Boots elected to stay in the house. I thought nothing of it, but when we got back home, walking through the back porch, I noticed that her bowl for the dry cat food was completely empty. That seemed a bit odd, as I thought I had filled it earlier that day. But I simply refilled it and forgot about it ... until the next time.

That night as we headed out, I glanced at the bowl to reassure myself that it was indeed full, even though Boots had again opted to stay in the house. But once again, upon our return, the bowl was empty. What's going on here? While neither of the porch doors were locked, they were latched tight. No cat or dog could have possibly opened them.

Then we heard a rustle from the metal shelves, and there, peeking out from behind a big clay pot, were a pair of big brown eyes peering at us through a black mask. Rather than make a fuss and scare the poor creature, Jim simply propped open the porch door, and at some time during the night the raccoon let himself out.

After that Jim kept both doors of the back porch locked at night, and Boots no longer had to share her dry cat food with a masked bandit.