

A Small Escape

HC Lee

It was pouring when I took Data for a short walk this morning. Much shorter than usual on account of the rain. Nevertheless Data got thoroughly soaked. Hence a perfect opportunity to give her a bath, a good rub down.

Data likes water, only in the wild, and only up to just below her tummy. She hates baths. Perhaps soap got into her eyes once.

For Data's bath I had to close the bathroom door to stop her from escaping. This I never do otherwise, being the only human being living in the apartment.

The bath went without much fanfare.

Then I discovered that I had locked myself in. This happened once not long ago in July when Ceaga, San, her husband Iain and his father Neal spent a few days here after our China trip. I remember then opening it from the outside. This could happen because the door lock had gone loose, turning the doorknob from the inside did nothing to the bolt. Perhaps also for any number of other stupid reasons. The reality is that I was inside, and could not get out.

There was an air vent low on the door. I took the grating off and tested whether I could squeeze through. Got an arm and my head and half a shoulder out, but could not go further. Thought about various possible contortions, but decided against it for getting stuck in that vent would have certainly made a bad situation worse.

What then? Ah, the window. It was high and small, but it could let me through.

Lucky stars: a plastic stool used as a small table for my bathroom library, and a low Japanese stool for sitting when bathing Data. Thank God the "table" top was just big enough for balancing the J stool on it, just so.

First try. Got on the contraption and peeked through the window. It opened to the laundry-balcony. Drop to the tiled floor: 5 feet. Not good for a hard landing if one went head first.

Ooops! This moving about caused the J stool to slip and the stacked contraption to collapse under my feet. A fall. Luckily cushioned by one hand hanging onto the window ledge. Jaw banged up a bit coming down but nothing serious.

Had to rebuild the contraption. Must get it (i) higher and (ii) more stable. Ahh! My stack of NY Review of Books, which usually rested on the table anyway. This time I put a moist towel between the table and the J stool to prevent slippage, then on top of that, a dozen or more copies of NYRBs, flattened and meticulously laid one on top of another.



727



728

This added perhaps three precious inches of height to the device (#727). The escape route was now ready (#728).

At the bottom of the window opening are metal window runners. It was no fun, during my first try, to have had my body balanced on these protruding pieces of metal. So now it was lined with layers of news-papers (thank God for my library in the bathroom), a towel, and dirty clothes (#728, #732).

Stood high enough now to reach the stepping stool with the broom. Used the sweeping side to maneuver the stool to get it close under the window. The intention was to get my hands reach the stool on my way down, before the free fall would take hold (#731).



#731



#732



#733

Threw a towel on the floor just in case unintended body part came down first (#733).

OK. Nothing left to do but to do the drop now. Once my bum passed the window there was no going back. Opened my legs to get some friction as my hands stretched for the stool.



Yes! I got it! Good! In a heap on the floor but none the worse for it; all pieces still intact.

Everything back to normal now: outside (#734); inside (#736), the pale blue J stool, Data's bath tub leaning against the wall, the library-on-the-table close up (#738), current issue of my beloved NYRB on top.

Got to fix that lock.

All's well that ends well.



#734/ #738

#736