

## Chapter 1: The Hunter and His Prey

The pain was worth the reward. The reward was worth the risk. The risk was worth the kill. This time he would not give up. He would not fail.

His entire leg was aching. The lithe muscles from his shoulder to his abdomen were tight and shaking. His foot was punctured and bleeding. He didn't care. All of his senses locked onto his prey. It would not get away.

With every break he took from clawing at the creature in the cave, he felt the subtle vibrations of the trapped animal bouncing off the finely tuned vibrissae on his forearm. As he pressed his face closer to the tiny in-ground cavern, he could smell the layers of minerals packed into the damp Earth. The scent of his prey penetrated his sensitive nose. A flood of endorphins filled his body. The excitement was almost overwhelming. He began to salivate at the thought of crunching into the creature.

The mud from the creature's tiny tunnel-home was now in his face, yet his golden eyes remained wide open. For this hunt to be successful, he needed to utilize all five of his physical senses: touch, taste, sight, sound, and smell. Fiercely focused onto the creature who continued to fight back for its life, he knew this was the moment he would win. There would be no defeat this time.

Sharp, powerful pinchers dug into the pads of his feet again. The pain pierced deeply. He yanked his foot out of the long, narrow, dark and damp earth tunnel. Licking his foot vigorously, he tasted his own blood. Frustration filled him. With as much energy as it took to remove his leg, he thrust it back into the burrow.

Fiercely grabbing the trapped prey in the tiny passageway, he felt another sharp painful stab to his foot. This time he did not let the pain distract him from the hunt. He would capture and kill this clever creature. What an adversary the tiny beast was today! This would be a hunt to remember long after he devoured his earth-dwelling foe. His adversary would soon be plucked from the subterranean dwelling and thrown into the mighty jaws of death. Nothing could distract him. This was it. He would finally win!

“Beaux, get away from that crawfish hole!!” a loud voice boomed from above him.

Without thinking, he instinctively extracted his leg from the tiny tunnel in the ground. With all four feet planted firmly on the ground, Beaux looked up to see his person staring down at him from the second-floor window with a furrowed brow and exasperated expression. Beaux blinked his eyes, attempting to appease his impatient person.

Turning his attention back to the matter at paw, Beaux silently stared into the dark narrow hole in the ground. Thinking to himself, he dejectedly admitted, “Cat versus crawfish, match 2. Cat 0: Crawfish 2. Location: Cajun Country.”

Beaux withdrew himself from his prey’s safe haven but stayed within striking distance. He found a warm spot on the grass directly in the sunshine where he could relax his mind while his keen senses kept a look out for potential opportunities to succeed next time.

Hunt. Capture. Kill. Consume. To cats like Beaux, *that* is living life to the fullest on the Bayou. There is no thrill to be had by playing it safe. Safe is boring; that is emotional death to felines. All cats know that life is all about risk versus reward. And Beaux loved to take risks. A life without risks was no life at all.

Humans, though, always had a way of hindering him.

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