

Regina's Diary
by Marilyn Reeves

Today was my worst day. I lost my temper and did a bad thing. It didn't seem so bad to me, except there was a lot of screaming and the two-feet came and beat on me with sticks and one of them hurt me with a sharp pointy thing that made me feel dizzy and then I passed out. Now I am lying here as close to him as I can get with those bars between us and I breathe in his smell and feel comforted. But I hurt. I hurt all over. My anger and rage have turned to sadness.

I remember when I loved the two-feet. They were my mothers. They would hold me and my brothers and sisters and play games with us. Some of the two-feet were bigger – they were the fathers. I don't know how I know, I just know. They were stronger, tougher, rougher in their play.

But when we got bigger, even the fathers stopped playing with us. They pushed our food in through a little door in the cage. I looked at their hands. They looked tempting, but I held back. I bided my time. Until today, when I grabbed the hand of that stupid two-feet woman and all hell broke loose!

While I was sleeping I had that dream again. The one about running, chasing, grabbing, crushing! ... gnawing! I can even taste the blood, but it is not the blood of my prey, it is the blood of my enemy that lingers in the back of my throat – the two-feet who taunted me. What was she thinking? That I am not fierce, just because I lie here listlessly in the shade, day after day?

I know I am beautiful. I don't know how I know, I just know. I look like my brothers and sisters, but I am the favorite. I can't see my own face, of course, but I can see the flowing muscles of my body; my long, sinuous tail. All those lovely shades of gold and black and white, interwoven.

I love looking at my beautiful white paws and those long, sharp claws I can pull in and out. Perhaps it is because of my beauty that they put me in next to him. Next to Raj.

I was terrified! He is so enormous, so magnificent, and even more beautiful than I. I screamed at him and hissed and spit, but he just lunged at the bars and roared at me to shut up! So I slunk to the far side of my cell and hid as best I could under the rock ...

That rock, which goes clear up to the sky. I have tried to jump up to the top many times, thinking I could get free, but it is too high. I always fall back down again. Perhaps some day someone will leave the door of the cage open and I can run free. Or perhaps I can go in and curl up next to Raj. As much as he frightens me, I am drawn to his warmth, his strength, his beauty. And he loves me. I don't know how I know, I just know.

But for now I just spend my days lying in the shade and wait. I bide my time.