

“How’d he get in there?” said Amy, peering into the opening in the basement wall with her hands cupped around her eyes.

“Got me,” I said, taking a look. Barney, our 18-pound Maine Coon, peered up at me with his yellow eyes. The cat had squeezed his massive frame through an opening in the wall that an animal half his size would have had trouble with. He was trapped.

“What are we going to do?” said Amy. “We can’t just leave him there.”

A metallic aroma, the scent of panic, perfumed the damp cellar air. She was right. We couldn’t leave him. But we wouldn’t get him out without tearing down the wall, and we were only summer tenants.

The cat let out a mournful meow.

“Barney’s going to die!” Amy cried.

So, I brushed the tears away from her little cheeks and grabbed the hammer from the toolbox.