

a breakfast serials story

Keep Your Eye on Amanda!

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Chapter 2 Inside the House

The Story So Far: Amanda and Philip, twin raccoons from Boulder, Colorado, sneak into an abandoned house in search of food. But as it turns out, someone is there!

Hearing Amanda's call, Philip scurried across the smooth floor into the next room, a kitchen. It had a small refrigerator, stove, sink, counters, cabinets, plus a stool next to the counter.

"Can we leave now?" Philip asked hopefully.

"Totally killer!" Amanda said. Nearby sat an open paper sack labeled "Dog Food." In the palm of Amanda's paw was a mound of brown pellets. "Didn't I tell you it would be worth it?" she cried. She gobbled the food and grabbed some more. "Be better if I wet it," she said. "Ah, cool, a bathroom."

The bathroom had a sink, a toilet, and a large bathtub standing on claw feet. Amanda lifted the toilet seat, washed her food, and ate more pellets.

Philip returned to the dog food bag. "Phoey!" The pellets tasted like old fungus. He lifted his nose and

sniffed. The scent of something delicious filled the air. Following the smell, Philip bumped against a counter. On top of it were a few boxes, a bottle of peanut oil, and a bag labeled "Granola."

Granola. Philip almost swooned. Toasted oats, rice bits, raisins, maybe even nuts! Philip loved *nuts*. Using the stool rungs as a ladder, he reached the counter. Once there, he paused and reminded himself that there was a person in the house. Wasn't taking the food—he asked himself—wrong? Well, maybe, he thought, it was the people who had moved out who had left it: so it wasn't wanted. Besides, he *was* hungry. Unable to resist, Philip opened the bag, plunged his nose inside, took a deep sniff, and all but swooned. "Nuts," he murmured. "Awesome!"

As Philip stuffed his mouth, his tail swished with so much excitement that he knocked the oil bottle off the counter. It hit the floor with a crash. Oil gushed out.

"What's happening?" Amanda called.

"Just a bottle," Philip managed to say. His mouth was too full to say more.

Amanda returned to the dog food while Philip kept stuffing his mouth with granola.

Suddenly the house lights flashed on, followed by the sound of someone descending the spiral steps.

It was the man who had been sleeping on the bed.

Amanda bolted into the bathroom. Philip leaped off the counter onto the floor, hit the puddle of peanut oil with a splat, and skidded into the big room—just where he did not want to be. He dove behind a box just as the man reached the first floor.

Peeking from behind the box, Philip saw a man in a dapper brown suit and necktie as well as sunglasses, which looked like a mask. Philip gasped: the man looked like an enormous raccoon.

Terrified, Philip watched as the man stepped into the kitchen. "Well, I'll be!" Philip heard him say. "Looks like I've been visited by thieves!" The next moment there was an awful crash. The man had slipped on the oil.

Philip panicked. He tore up the spiral staircase, trying to reach the entry window. To his horror, it was shut. The bit of wood holding it open lay on the floor. *When I crawled through I must have knocked it out, he told himself.*

Hearing the man coming back upstairs, Philip flung himself under the bed.

The man pulled on his shoes. "Thieves . . ." he murmured. "Just when I was going to work. I'll get them."

Fearing for his life, Philip burst out from beneath the bed and plunged down the steps, moving so fast that he tripped and somersaulted over the last spiral.

"Stop! Come back!" the man shouted.

Woozy but desperate, Philip ran from window to window in hopes that one would be open. None were. Galloping and skidding, he shot into the bathroom and hurled himself under the bathtub, where Amanda was hiding.

"It's a man!" Philip panted. "He's after us."

"Hey! No problem," Amanda said calmly. "I can talk myself out of anything."

"But what about *me*?" Philip cried, pressing as close to his sister as possible.

Amanda rolled her eyes. "Chill, Philip, chill!"

"*Chill*?" Philip screeched. "Amanda, he's going to catch us and kill us!"

"Philip," Amanda barked, "calm yourself!"

From the sound of his tread, the raccoons were certain the man had entered the kitchen. There he stopped. Then he began to move toward the bathroom.

"Amanda . . ." Philip pleaded in a whisper, squeezing behind his sister and covering his eyes with his paws.

"Let me handle this!" Amanda replied.

The man peered under the tub. "Ah! There you are!" he said, and hurried out of the room.

"Where's he going?" Philip asked in a quavering voice.

"Probably running away," Amanda said with a giggle.

But the next moment the man returned. He stuck a broom under the tub and poked it at the two raccoons.

"Go away, thieves!" he called. "Get!"

"Look out!" Philip cried.

"Ouch!" Amanda screeched as the broom smacked her paw.

"Amanda," cried Philip, "run for it!" Bursting from under the tub, Philip wiggled between the man's legs. The man tumbled.

"I'm being attacked!" he cried as he scrambled to his feet.

Philip careened madly through the kitchen toward the spiral steps. But as he approached, he realized the front door had been opened. The man must have done it.

With a burst, Philip all but flew out of the house, onto the porch, and into the snow, landing chin first. Behind him the front door slammed shut.

"We made it," he panted, and turned to where he assumed his sister would be. But Amanda was not there. She was still inside the house.

Next Week: What Happened to Amanda?

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