

## The Top Shelf

Kevin Pabst

He stood in the middle of the kitchen with his head tilted ninety degrees back. His mother was in the living room, vacuuming, so he knew he would not be heard. The cookie jar rested on the top shelf of the kitchen cabinet, glowing with the radiant beauty of fluorescent light-bulbs reflecting off its smooth ceramic surface. His eyes were fixed hungrily upon the jar, the fate of its contents already decided upon in his mind. This time, he would be victorious, unlike his previous attempts. He would not fall off the counter, knocking his head on the corner of the rectangular foot stool and consequently spending three hours in the emergency room getting stitches just above his eye. He would not dislodge the cabinet shelf, sending a small fortune's worth of valuable china to an immediate death on the white and black tiled floor. He most certainly would not step on the cat's tail, setting off a nasty chain reaction which, in the end, also consequently would require spending three hours in the emergency room getting stitches just above the eye. No, he would be victorious.

He set his plan in motion. First, he put the cat in the laundry room, where it soon became traumatized by the roaring of the drier. After checking to make sure his mother was still preoccupied, he proceeded to remove the new set of china from the shelves and place it on the table, just in case, and then pulled the kitchen chair next to the counter. The stable chair, not the one with the wobbly leg from the time his father tried to kick the cat (with a decent amount of force), but missed, instead making contact with the cheap piece of furniture. Climbing on top of the chair, he carefully manipulated his extendable Inspector Gadget grabber claw to remove the lid from the jar, grab it by the rim, and retrieve his prize. His tongue stuck out of the corner of his mouth in concentration, and a single bead of sweat rolled down his forehead. Though as he was retracting the claw, he lost grip of the jar, dropping it to the ground where it shattered and sent chocolate chunk cookies flying across the dusty, unswept kitchen floor.

The vacuum stopped abruptly, and footsteps approached from the adjacent room. In panic the boy ran to the laundry room to hide from his mother, releasing the now thoroughly-tormented cat. The feline flew straight into the fold-out leg of the table, toppling it over and sending the new inventory of fine china to its predictable death on the white and black kitchen tiles. The door opened, and his mother stood in the entryway with her mouth agape at the collapsed table, shattered china, and scattered cookies. As the boy tried to restrain the cat from doing any more damage, he tripped, landing face-down in the ceramic shards.

He spent the next three hours in the emergency room, getting stitches just above his eye.