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Date

Checkers' Gym

The night before Christmas my cat, Checkers, spies the most tantalizing conglomeration of items she has ever encountered. She spies a six-foot-tall jungle gym in the shape of a blue spruce sitting majestically in front of a frosted bay window. This new toy offers endless possibilities in its various layers. There are many aspects of her new toy to be discovered; each one is tantalizing with the mystery evoked from its sheer presence.

Slinking around the base of the tree, Checkers inspects all of the multicolored wrapped packages. On this lowest level, she encounters new wonders. As these packages are stealthily ventured over, they generate peculiar sounds that entice an occasional swat or two from her paw. The metallic ribbons beckon to be played with as their spiral streamers flag down their momentary playmate.

Checkers inspects the white-lace trimmed, red velvet tree skirt to ensure herself that nothing could be lurking under the edges. One single stray thread at the edges could be mutilated if discovered. Upon deciding that nothing is amiss, she decides to venture up what she considers her personal climbing pole.

As she scales the layers of this complex toy, she first notices the feel of slightly brittle bark beneath her feet, a familiar feeling associated with a completely different environment. The small, springy branches attached to the base contain decorations of all kinds. When the branches are stepped on, the glass and metal ornaments seem to dance and come to life, inviting closer

inspection. As she stretches her paw out to claim a shiny red glass sphere hanging from the branches, long silver streamers attach themselves to her jet-black fur. Unsure about what she should do, she momentarily freezes to give herself time to decide what this new protector of glass spheres is possibly going to do to her. After one or two brief moments, she decides it is unworthy of her fear and starts to attack it. She bites this foreign intruder and disposes of it on the next lower branch.

Advancing to the next level, she spies an electric cord winding itself upward around her tree. This cord is like no other she has ever seen. All along the cord, there are hundreds of tiny lights, twinkling at her, inviting her to go ever higher. Sniffing the lights, she decides to investigate the location where these twinkling invitees are heading. Upward she advances, noticing that her gym seems to sway more the higher she goes.

Finally, upon reaching the uppermost level, she spies a magnificent plaything worthy of all of her curiosity. Sitting atop her newest jungle gym is a multi-pointed, shining star. She figures this has to be the most important aspect, since it is the hardest to reach. She decides she wants to conceal this new toy in a special hiding spot. However, trying to untangle her newfound toy seems to be more difficult than anticipated. As her jungle gym sways precariously, she decides to abandon the mission, leaving her adventures with the multi-layer toy for another day.