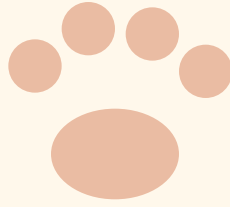


GARFIELD AND THE CASE OF THE FORBIDDEN FENCE

An illustrated comedy for grown-ups



LISA BIRKETT



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A fictional story. All events and characters are invented for comedy.



Garfield had a routine. Breakfast at home. Second breakfast next door. A brief inspection of the bins. Then a patrol of every garden within a radius he declined to disclose.



He considered himself a public servant. The public, broadly speaking, considered him a nuisance with whiskers.



At 7:43 one Thursday evening, Garfield arrived at the fence. It was a perfectly ordinary fence. He took this personally.



He checked left. He checked right. He checked behind him, because experience had taught him that right was sometimes behind him.



Then he sprayed it.

Not a great deal. Just enough to sign his work.



“AHA!” cried a voice from the hydrangeas.

Garfield froze. He had never trusted hydrangeas. Too many heads. Too little accountability.



Constable Pickles held up a badge. Sergeant Socks held up a notepad. Neither had brought a ladder, which made the arrest somewhat less commanding.

“Do you know why we’ve stopped you?” asked Pickles.

Garfield blinked. He had several working theories.



“Unauthorised spraying,” said Socks. “Trespass. Disturbing the peace. And yesterday’s incident with the birdbath.”

Garfield objected to the last charge. The birdbath had started it.



Pickles produced a pair of pink fluffy handcuffs.

“These are ridiculous,” said Socks.

“They’re departmental issue,” said Pickles.

Garfield sat down on them.



The officers escorted him to the station. It was a cardboard box behind number twelve, with POLICE written on it in marker pen. Garfield had slept in it on Tuesday.



At booking, they asked for his name.

“Garfield,” he said.

“Occupation?”

“Freelance.”

“Doing what?”

Garfield stared at them until they wrote down consultant.



The evidence was presented: one damp fence post, three offended neighbours, and a blurry photograph in which Garfield looked rather handsome.

“I’d like a copy of that,” he said.



His solicitor, a tortoiseshell called Brenda, arrived carrying a briefcase full of treats.

“Say nothing,” she advised.

Garfield ate the briefcase.



The hearing began at nine. At nine-oh-one, Garfield lay across the judge's paperwork. At nine-oh-two, the judge postponed lunch to eleven.

Garfield was delighted with the pace of proceedings.



“How do you plead?” asked the judge.

Garfield considered this. Guilty seemed unhelpful.
Innocent seemed ambitious.

“Hungry,” he said.

The court took a short recess.



Brenda argued that Garfield had an excellent character, provided the court ignored most afternoons. Pickles admitted that the NO SPRAYING sign had only gone up after the incident.

Socks quietly crossed “premeditated” off the charge sheet.



The judge found Garfield guilty of poor fence etiquette and reckless confidence. The sentence was community service: two weeks of keeping pigeons away from the vegetable patch.

Garfield requested payment in chicken.

The judge granted it. She was tired.



By sunset, Garfield had chased off one pigeon, supervised a second, and fallen asleep beside the courgettes. The neighbours called it progress.

Garfield called it exhausting.



The next morning, someone found a fresh mark on the other side of the fence.

“Garfield!” shouted the neighbourhood.

Garfield looked up from his chicken breakfast. He was, for once, entirely innocent.



Constable Pickles examined the scene. Sergeant Socks found a paw print. Brenda adjusted her glasses.

“Well,” she said, “this changes everything.”

Across the road, a small grey cat smiled.

THE END



A MOST SERIOUS FELINE CRIME

Garfield has been accused of a terrible crime against a perfectly ordinary fence. The evidence is damp, the police are tiny, and his solicitor has brought snacks. Can the neighbourhood's most self-assured cat survive a trial, a cardboard-box jail, and two weeks of community service? A cheeky illustrated comedy for grown-ups who know that cats are never as innocent as they look.

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