

Rapunzel, Rapunzel ... Let Down Your Fur!

A humane officer scales an apartment building to the balcony of a yellow-haired damsel in distress

BY ALEXANDRA KLEINKOPF



An officer from the Washington Humane Society recently went to great ... heights to rescue a pooch in need of shelter.
ANN RUSSELL/WASHINGTON HUMANE SOCIETY

“**A**t first, all I could see was a set of eyes staring back at me from a third-floor balcony,” says the officer from the Washington Humane Society (WHS), who wishes to remain anonymous so as not to jeopardize future investigative work.

It was a freezing and windy night last December, and the officer was responding to a complaint in the Southeast part of the District of Columbia. A dog had been left without shelter in bad weather for a long time.

When he arrived on the scene, neighbors pointed him to the balcony where a 6-month-old yellow lab mix named Brandy was confined. He got into the building, but his knocks on the apartment door went unanswered. Using just

railings and ledges, he then scaled the building to the second-story balcony below the dog to get a closer look.

The dog was curled up in a ball on a chair, trying to keep warm in the sharp wind. The balcony was covered with her urine and feces, which the officer could smell from far below. He photographed the site and prepared to impound the dog, but the owner’s daughter arrived, and took Brandy inside. “I advised her and issued an official notification—a written warning with requirements for compliance—for her mother. I stressed the fact that her pet could be removed from their custody if she’s not provided with proper care,” he says.

It wasn’t the first time Brandy had been on the wrong side of the balcony door; WHS had responded to the situation

before. And when the officer returned the next day to check on the dog, he was not surprised to find Brandy in the same filthy spot. Again, no one was home.

At that point, he says, he decided to seize the dog. He met with the maintenance crew at the apartment complex and called the fire department to borrow a ladder tall enough to get him up to the balcony.

With fire department officers on hand to help, he and another WHS officer climbed to the balcony, where they leashed, secured, and lifted the dog over the railing. He carried her down, and they left a notice for the owner.

Brandy got good treatment by a veterinarian, and WHS held her for the 21 days required by law before adopting her out into a better home. **AS**