

BY PADDY



KEEPIN WATCH

If you've visited ComfortDelGro's headquarters in Singapore, you would have probably stumbled upon a phlegmatic, wily, old tom cat. He can usually be found sprawled on the cool marble floor in the lobby, or hiding under one of the more than 150 cars parked in the compound. His name is Paddy and this is his story.



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As far as your eye can see, over the buses and the taxis, this is my land and my humans ensure a constant supply of food. Welcome to my humble 66,000 sq m home.

I have lived here for about 12 years, since I was six months old. That makes me older than the Company, which is leasing this place now. ComfortDelGro may be one of the largest passenger land transport companies in the world, but it is only 10 years old.

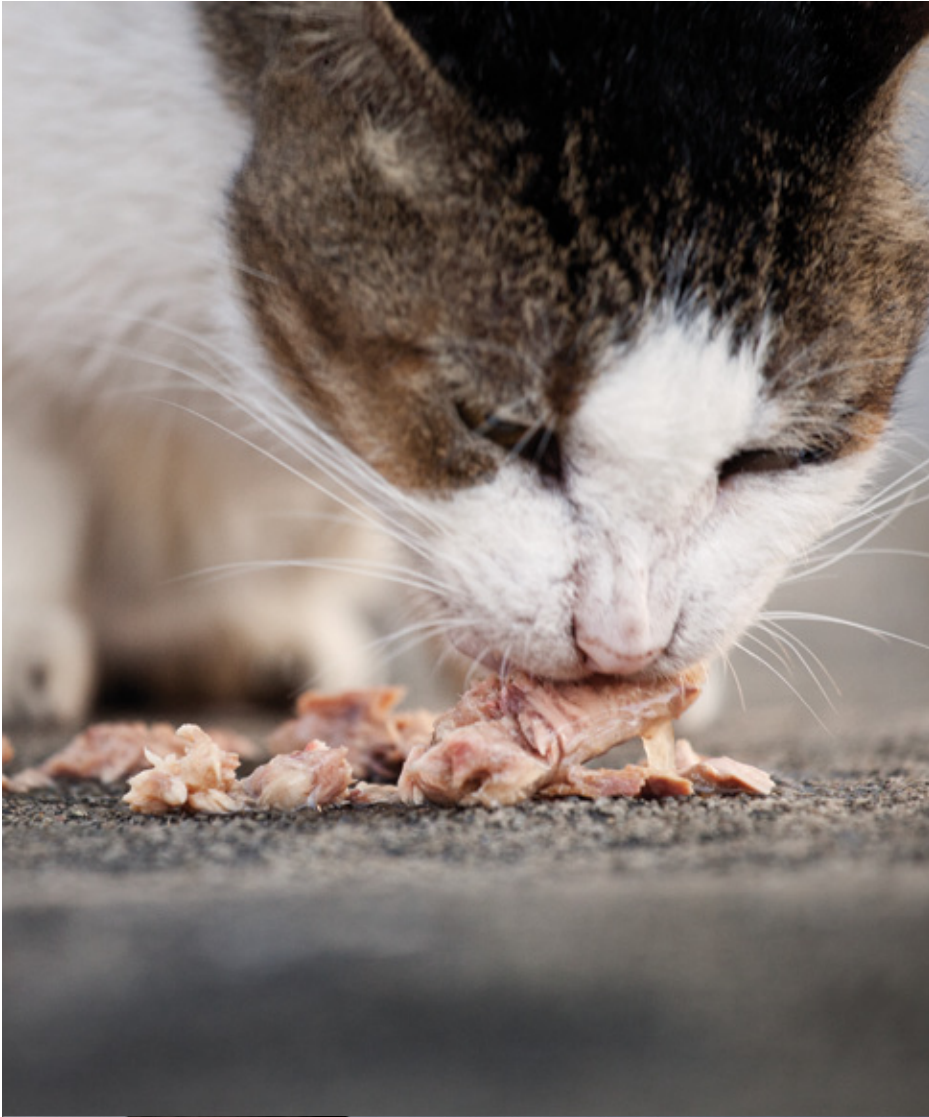
In the day, this is a nice, dreamy place, with more than 150 cars providing shade for my naps. When it gets too hot, I nip into the air-conditioned buildings where the floors are oh-so-cool! True, it has its inconveniences such as noisy humans scooping me up and patting me. But I bear these trials patiently – one has to perform for one's audience.



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Some days, as I walk along the different little rooms, I can see some humans whose hairs are standing up, like they have been tearing at it with their paws. Oh, but wait, they have no claws so they do not succeed. Their faces are grim and their muscles tense. If I'm in the mood, I'll sidle up to them, and let them stroke and pat me. I can see them immediately relax as they make weird cooing sounds. I'm beginning to think I should start charging them for services rendered – cat food works for me.

"You are good for stress, Paddy," they whisper.

Yes "Paddy" is what they call me, and I condescend to respond, especially when they bring food. Lunch is usually tinned fish, dried biscuits and choice nibbles. Most days, I have more than my fill, although I must say there are a few odd offerings – nasi lemak with chilli is definitely not cat food, but not all humans are trained.

I am a nocturnal animal so when people come back from lunch, they will see me taking a snooze. Instead of having the

manners to tiptoe quietly past, they will laugh. "Look at Paddy sleeping! I wish I could take a nap after lunch too!" Well, my dear, I don't see you up past midnight, patrolling the compound and scaring away the rats.

It is a jungle out here and I must also defend my territory at night. These young Toms have to learn the hard way, and I must admit that once or twice, I have had to fight harder than I expected. Once, I had my throat punctured and blood running down my chest. Most unsightly!

But a female human brought me to the vet, and she cleaned me up. For a while after that, I had to stay at her very small house which, to my horror, had already been populated by dogs! I soon made it clear to her that I need to be back living in a style to which I am accustomed.

She told me too that many people have been asking about me. Quite naturally, of course, since my duties are many and heavy.

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On my land, there is an engineering workshop, and a diesel kiosk where taxis can get discounted fills of diesel. Often there are visitors to my home, many wearing ties and shiny shoes. These are not my usual humans because they will look at me with surprise and say: “Wow, a cat! They allow cats here.”

This is a patently foolish thing to say. First, cats are not allowed – there is only ONE cat. Me. All other cats are subordinate and have to go to the outlying buildings, where there is no food, and no air-conditioning. Second, I need no allowances, this is my home and I was here first.

I am used to people pointing cameras and phones at me. I know what they want, and I oblige. Walking, sitting, yawning, staring, I’ve done them all. Even vendors and delivery men know me and they will always give me a pat or two when they come by to deliver things.

It is a big house and every once in a while, some new human wanders in. I hear that there are many mysterious departments

like human resource, internal audit, investor relations, but the important thing is, all these new humans are soon trained. They know not to drive near me when I am sleeping, they know how to wait until I am out of the parking lot before reversing in. The smarter ones are soon trained to bring my food and water.

My favourite time of the day is the evening, when a few small humans come to pick up the larger ones.

The small ones are great fun because they are always good for a run, and they wear sensible shoes with no sharp points. They keep me entertained until the larger humans are ready for pick up.

At night, my buses return from all over the island. During the day, they come in and out, to be washed, refuelled and have their coins emptied. But they sleep here, all 238 of them. I count them to make sure.

Someone has to keep watch on things around here, you know.

COMFORT DELGRO

