

Catherine, the Cat Speaker

By Olivia P.

Prologue

Dear Diary,

Today, June 15th, 2024, I just found my destiny. Me, my brother, Liam, and my parents went to have a picnic in the woods close to my house. There were so many cats there, I couldn't count them. After eating, Liam and I went into the trees to explore. We split up just because *he* wanted to, and I found a little rundown shack that had clearly been abandoned years ago. There were cats everywhere! Slipping through the holes in the walls, sunbathing on top of the roof, and carrying mice or other little creatures back to the shack.

"Woah," I breathed. I couldn't believe it. One cat, small, and a golden brownish color, like a perfectly toasted marshmallow, brushed up against me and meowed. At first I thought it was just a normal meow, something cat owners hear every day, but I realized, I understood it. "Hello, Catherine," she said. "We haven't seen humans in a very long time. Do you care to join us?" Now, I'm not sure how I knew the cat was female, or how I could understand her in the first place, but I knew it wasn't normal. "Is this a trick?" I asked warily, doubting the cat would answer. Maybe it was just the wind, or my head. But I had heard a voice, and it hadn't been mine. "No, it's not a trick," the cat answered. "You have something very special. A gift only two other individuals are known to have."

"Are?" I asked. That meant the people were alive. How did the cat know them if she hadn't seen people in what I was starting to think of as decades? "Well, I'm not sure if they are alive now," the cat answered, "But I try to think they are. It makes me feel less lonely. Come inside! It's quite cozy."

"How am I supposed to fit through there?" I asked skeptically. "I don't know if you've noticed, but I'm like, ten times bigger than you."

"Don't you know how to transform?" The cat questioned. "Have you had any training at all, dear?"

"Training?" I said, wondering if I was missing out on something. "What are you talking about?"

"Oh." The cat said quietly, so I had to strain my ears to hear. "Oh dear. You have no idea what's happening, do you?"

"Nope. None at all. Am I supposed to?" I answered, getting really worried now. Why would this strange cat think I knew anything about this crazy fantasy I was imagining? Why could I speak cat, and why was this cat being friendly to me? What was happening to make this all feel totally real?

"Cathrine! Cathrine! Come here! I found this *suuuuuuper* cool bug, and it has, like, two thousand *trillion* legs! Look at it! Oohhh it moved! Do you think it can see me?" All the cats in the clearing scampered away from the sound of my brother's voice. "Who is that?!" The brown-tan cat beside me hissed. "What is *he* doing in *our* woods?! Do you know that boy?!"

"Yes," I said, confused. "He's my brother. Why are you scared of him?" The squealing sounds Liam was making were startling, but not so that the cats should all scamper away as they had. More confusing, the cats hadn't been scared of her at all. "But I'd better go, or he'll go tell my parents I ran off. He's kind of dramatic that way. By the way, what's your name?"

"T-Tangelent." The cat answered. Goodbye. I will see you again soon.

I walked away, toward my brother, but I had a feeling I would be seeing much much more of Tangelent.

"What took you so long?" My brother asked, thankfully not waiting for a response. "Isn't this bug just the coolest thing you've ever seen?"

“I think it’s called a centipede, and we should probably get back to Mom and Dad.” I answered. Somehow, Liam was nine years old, even though I sometimes think he has the brain of a five year old. I’m almost twelve, and am in the most advanced classes sixth the grade will offer at my school. Even though I’m smart, I don’t really like school. It’s just a pile of assignments, one after the other, and I think most of them are just so unnecessary. I still get straight A’s in all my classes, and I try to stay as optimistic as possible. I grabbed Liam’s hand and partly dragged him away from the bug, him wailing the entire way.

As we drove back home, I kept thinking about Tangelent. Suddenly, her voice was in my mind. “Catherine, this is your destiny. To live along me and my brothers. Be in both worlds, human and feline. If you do it right, you could be able to fix both realms. You don’t understand how important you will be to the lives of hundreds of humans and cats. I will be your mentor as you learn your abilities. I wish you good luck, Cat Speaker.”

TO BE CONTINUED