

ARE YOU TALKING TO ME?

..., I asked.

Bev's Cat Micah, held my gaze. "No. I'm not talking to you. I'm having a conversation with the white elephant on the kitchen counter, you moron."

"Hey," I said. Then I stopped. Turning slowly I scanned the room. We were alone. *So where was the voice coming from?*

Bev had dropped Micah off late last night before catching a redeye to Australia. No worries. I assured her. Micah had always been lovely whenever I'd visited. But now the impulsive drive up to my cabin on Walker Lake was looking like a bad idea. Desperate for a nap, I'd just fed Micah before seeking some much needed rest. I'd heard sleep deprivation had risks, but hearing voices?

"Hey!"

Startled, I dropped the milk bottle, shattering pieces of

glass everywhere. I reached for the broom and glanced back at Micah.

"Forgive me, James. I didn't mean to frighten you. My sarcastic streak got the better of me, but I didn't think you would mind that."

"Are you," I began, pausing at a loss for words.

"Talking to you? No. Cats can't talk."

"Then I have lost my mind." I don't believe I just said that, to a cat.

"You don't see my lips moving do you?"

I fumbled for my cell phone, not knowing who I was calling, somebody, and anybody who could talk me down from wherever it was I had gone.

"Listen James, you seem upset. I'm afraid there isn't a cellphone signal for miles around. So why don't I go for a walk while you clean up this mess. I'll come check on you later and we can finish our conversation."

Micah jumped up onto the chair, climbed over the sink and perched on the sill below the open window. He tilted his head down at me and, winked, before disappearing into the darkness outside.

AWAKENING

I'd slept, fitfully. Unsure if I'd dreamed, imagined, or experienced the bizarre event earlier. I didn't know what time it was. I had no watch and my phone was off, the battery spent, with no charger in sight. There was no sight of Micah either.

I rose slowly. I found myself checking the premises, finding nothing suspicious. Eventually I relaxed, fixed myself a sandwich and ate it quietly. I even chuckled a bit, with my sanity somewhat restored. Sitting on the balcony, I stared out over the treetops, the glimpse of barren shoreline below caught my eye. *I could hike down, go for a swim. It would do me good. Not having a day off in months must be getting to me.*

"Psst."

I looked down at my feet to find Micah sprawled out, grooming his black velvety pelt into a high gloss.

"I see you're better now. Let's do this, shall we?"

"Do...what?" I stammered.

"Communicate. Yes. I am in your head. But don't worry. You aren't going crazy."

"I'm hearing voices. They call that schizophrenia where I come from."

"They call it telepathy where I come from."

"The mission district?"

"Not exactly. Not 21st century San Francisco, anyway.

When I come from, your future, telepathy is the primary language used, for those of us fluent in it."

"I don't believe this."

"The sooner you do, the better, bud, and we don't have much time so do you think you can get over it?"

"I'm talking to a cat."

"Yeah, so? Who doesn't? It's not like I can read your mind. So please, do talk. It will go much better that way."

Micah ran into the cabin.

"Where are you going?"

"I'm starved. Got any sardines? That kibble was a bit dry for my tastes."

I watched him jump into a chair and curl up on the cushion, he was licking his paws and yawning.

"Okay, I give up. Let's say for argument's sake you're a telepathic cat from the future. You are here, why?"

"Time travel is neither simple nor easy, James. I was fortunate enough to make the trip. The future of our existence depends on it."

"How so?"

"I'm here to help repopulate the species. I need to mate with as many of the locals as possible in the time I have. And I have to tell you. This idea of yours to drive out to the boonies is killing my action. Can you help a dude out?"

I started to laugh. Beginning with a mild chortle, it grew, uncontrollably, until I was doubled over on the sofa, and bordering on hysterical. I noticed a scowl on Micah's face and tried to compose myself to no avail. Finally, after several failed attempts at speech, I was able to sit up and look at him.

"Are you done? You seem to find the situation all too amusing."

"Wouldn't you if you were in my position?"

"I don't know, James. I'm not in your position. And quite frankly I wouldn't trade places with you either."

"Oh. And why is that?" I asked.

"The earth...let's just say that cats are better suited to the environment than humans."

"In the future, you mean."

"In the past, the present, and definitely the future. Take your pick."

"That may be true, Micah. But since we're speaking frankly, I never cared for cats much myself. Why should I help you indulge your agenda? We have enough stray felines already, in my opinion."

"If only I could say the same for you, James."

"Convince me," I dared.

"James. You're 30 years old. You were born on the Island of Antillia. And you're an orphan, both your parents died in a shipwreck off the coast of Spain." Micah paused, watching

my reaction.

He had my attention now. Either I had fallen back into a state of utter delusion, or something far less believable was happening.

"I guess I am supposed to ask you how you know all of this."

"James," Micah said, glaring at me with iridescent blue eyes, "I am you."