

Boo Cat!

When Margo was six years old, she found a kitten. She was drawing with chalk on the sidewalk in front of her house, when she heard a loud *MEOW* coming from underneath her porch. She bent down, and peered between the wooden slats. Two bright eyes peered back. Then the blurry shape of a white kitten began to form. At first, she thought it was a ghost cat.

"Mama, mama!" she cried, running inside, "There's a boo cat under our porch!"

"A what?" her mother asked, smiling.

"A boo cat!" Margo said, "A cat that goes, 'boo'!"

Now Margo's mother understood, but she just laughed.

"There's no such thing as ghosts, Margo, go back and play," she said.

Margo went back outside, but she didn't play. Instead she crawled under the porch and found the kitten curled up, sleeping. Margo sat very quietly, waiting for him to wake up. He opened one eye, and then the other. Then he stretched, stuck his tail up in the air, and walked over to Margo. She gave him a soft pat on the head.

"I'll call you Boo Cat," she said.

Margo's mother let her keep Boo Cat as her very own, as long as she promised to look after him.



Boo Cat grew and grew, until he was almost all grown up. He was a very playful cat. During the day he would chase butterflies in the yard, or climb trees, or roll in the grass, or hide under the couch. He ate lots of food, and always knocked over his water dish.

Margo would often play with Boo Cat. She would hold his paws and dance with him, or dress him up as a prince. Every morning she would greet him with, "Good morning, Boo Cat!" and he would reply, "Meow!" And every night she would sleepily say, "Good night, Boo Cat," and he would crawl under the covers and snuggle up with her, purring until he fell asleep.

One day, Boo Cat was playing outside when a fly flew in front of him. He chased the fly. He ran in circles, jumped in the air, twisted on the spot, rolled over, and soon followed the fly up a tree. Once he was in the tree he couldn't see anything but leaves and bark, so he lay down and took a nap. He was soon awoken by the *vroom vroom* of an engine. He looked down over the fence, and there was the garbage truck. Boo Cat was a clean cat who did not regularly enjoy dumpster diving, but today he smelled something good coming out of the back of the garbage truck. He jumped down from the tree onto the fence, and then from the fence onto the ground. He sniffed his way over to the edge of the truck, and then took one giant leap, and landed in the pile of garbage.



He followed the scent to the darkest corner of the truck, where he found an opened can of sardines! He munched on the little fish, and was in the process of licking the can clean when he felt the truck begin to move. Boo Cat had never ridden in a car before, so he didn't understand what was happening. He just lay down, full of little fish, and fell asleep in the rubbish.

The truck came to a stop, and Boo Cat awoke. Light poured in as the back of the truck opened. A man in a vest looked in and saw Boo Cat covered in trash.

"Hey, cat! Scat!" he said.

"Meow!" said Boo Cat, and he leaped past the man, and landed on a sidewalk.



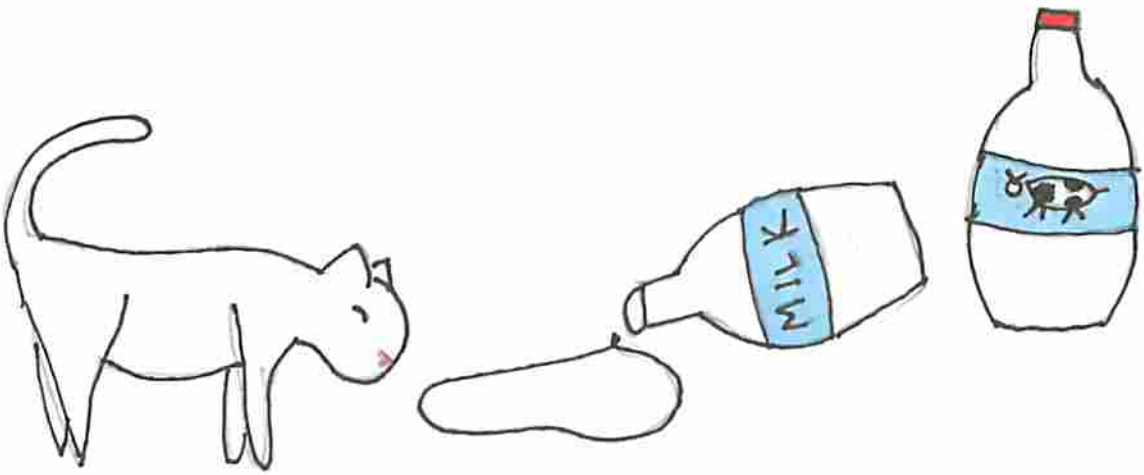
No sooner had Boo Cat's feet touched the ground than he smelled something delicious. He followed his nose down the street, around a corner, and into an alley way. A door stood open straight ahead. He could hear the faint sound of voices, and he could smell the tasty smell coming from the building. Boo Cat tip-toed closer and peered inside. The room was loud and hot, and filled with men wearing funny hats. He sniffed the air, and followed his nose inside, and onto a counter, to a bowl of steaming meatballs. He was just about to grab one when a man saw him and began to wave his wooden spoon in the air.

"Cat! Cat! Shoo, cat!" he said.

"Meow!" said Boo Cat, and he jumped down to the ground, and out the door, and into the alley.



As soon as he was back outside, Boo Cat smelled his favorite treat – milk. He ran back to the sidewalk, where he saw a milkman loading bottles of milk into the back of his truck. When the milkman moved out of the way, Boo Cat jumped up to the crates full of milk. Lucky for him, one bottle had been knocked over, spilling milk all over the floor of the truck. Boo Cat happily lapped up every last drop. His belly full of milk made him very sleepy, so Boo Cat curled up and took a nap. When he finally awoke, he looked outside the back window of the truck, and there was his house! Boo Cat must have been so tired that he hadn't even realized the truck was moving. When the milkman opened the back door to get some milk, Boo Cat jumped down onto the ground, confusing the milkman who said, "How'd you get there, Cat?"



Meanwhile, Margo had been at home, very worried about Boo Cat. She had looked under her bed, in her closet, behind her doll house, and beneath her covers, but she couldn't find him anywhere. Next she tried looking outside. She stood in her back yard and called, "Boo Cat! Boo Cat!" but there was no reply. Margo was very sad.

Suddenly, Margo heard a, "Meow!" coming from behind her.

There was Boo Cat!

"Boo Cat, I missed you!" Margo said.

"Meow!" said Boo Cat, and he jumped into her waiting arms.

