My Life as a Cat

Carlie Sorosiak

Also by Carlie Sorosiak

I, Cosmo

My Life as a Cat

Carlie Sorosiak

nosy crow

First published in the UK in 2020 by Nosy Crow Ltd
The Crow's Nest, 14 Baden Place
Crosby Row, London, SE1 1YW

www.nosycrow.com

ISBN: 978 1 78800 608 8

Nosy Crow and associated logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Nosy Crow Ltd.

Text copyright © Carlie Sorosiak, 2020
Cover artwork © Ben Mantle, 2020

The right of Carlie Sorosiak to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted.

All rights reserved

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, hired out or otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the prior written permission of Nosy Crow Ltd.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.
Typeset by Tiger Media

Papers used by Nosy Crow are made from wood grown in sustainable forests.



1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

To Mom, who filled our home with love
– and with cats.

"Look again at that dot. That's here.
That's home. That's us."

Carl Sagan

1

Humans have it all wrong about aliens. Sometimes I see images of us on television – with enormous eyes, with skin the colour of spring leaves – and I wonder, *Who thought of this? What reason could they have?* Olive always tells me not to watch those shows. "You'll just give yourself bad dreams," she says. So we switch off the TV and curl up by the window, listening to the gentle hush of waves.

But the truth is, I really don't belong here – not permanently, not forever. That's why we're travelling in this camper, zooming down dark roads at midnight. Olive is wearing her frayed overalls, and she's cradling me in her arms.

I don't squirm. I don't scratch. I am not that type of cat.

"You won't forget me," she says, pressing her forehead to mine. "Please promise you won't."

She smells of cinnamon toast and raspberry shampoo. There are daisy barrettes in her hair. And for a second, I consider lying to her – out of love. The words are right there: *I will always remember. I could never forget.* But I've been honest with her this whole time, and the rules of intergalactic travel are clear.

Tomorrow I will forget everything I've ever felt.

In my mind, Olive will exist only as data, as pure information. I'll remember her daisy barrettes, our Saturday afternoons by Wrigley Pier – but not how it felt to share a beach towel, or read books together, or fall asleep under the late-June sun. And Olive doesn't deserve that. She is so much more than a collection of facts.

Half-heartedly, I summon a purr. It rattles weakly in my chest.

"You get to go home," Olive says, the ghost of a smile on her face. "Home."

The camper speeds faster, then faster still. Outside, the sky is full of stars. And I want to communicate that I will miss this – feeling so small, so *earthly*. Am I ready to go back? Half of me is. And yet, when I close my eyes, I picture myself clinging to the walls of this camper.

Olive sets me down on the countertop, the plastic cool under my paws. Opening her laptop, she angles the keyboard towards me, a gesture that says, *Type, will you?* But I shake my head, fur shivering.

"You don't want to talk?" she asks.

What can I say? I owe it to Olive, not to make this any harder. So I won't use the computer. I won't tell her that I've been hoping to maybe carry one thing. Maybe if I concentrate hard enough, a part of Olive will imprint on a part of me, and I will remember how it felt. How it felt to know a girl once.

"OK," she says, shutting her laptop with a sigh. "At least eat your crunchies."

So I eat my crunchies. They're trout-flavoured and tangy on my tongue. I chew slowly, savouring the morsels. This is one of my last meals as a cat.

I haven't always lived in this body. Leonard wasn't always my name.

Olive pats my head as I lick the bowl clean. "I know you didn't want to be a cat," she says quietly, so quiet that my ears prick to hear her, "but you are a very, very good cat."

I want the computer now. My paws are itching to type: *You are a very, very good human*. Because she is. And she will be, long after I'm gone.

If you allow yourself, you might like our story. It's about cheese sandwiches, and an aquarium, and a family. It has laughter and sadness and me, learning what it means to be human.

On my journey to Earth, I was supposed to be human.

That is where I'll begin.