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Opening extract from

The Language of Cat

Written by

Rachel Rooney

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I.M. Elizabeth Quinn

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THE LANGUAGE OF CAT

AND OTHER POEMS

Poems by

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FRANCES LINCOLN
CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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Who?

Who cast the **P** from a spell
sold it for profit as sell,
then kept what was left
in a locked letter chest?

And who sucked the **O** from a hoop,
hopped off with that loop
which she balanced for fun
on the tip of her tongue?

Who stole the **E** from a cheat
in the street when they met for a chat,
slipped her hand in a bag
and made off with the swag?

Then who plucked the **T** from a thorn,
carved an ivory pen out of horn
and dipped it in ink...
Well, who do you think did that?



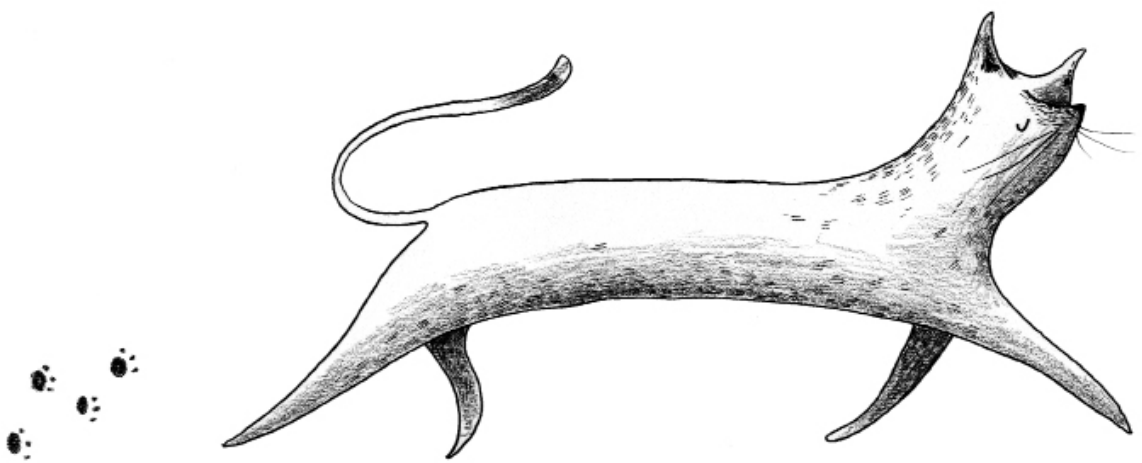
The Language of Cat

Teach me the language of Cat;
the slow-motion blink, that crystal stare,
a tight-lipped purr and a wide-mouthed hiss.
Let me walk with a saunter, nose in the air.

Teach my ears the way to ignore
names that I'm called. May they only twitch
to the distant shake of a boxful of biscuits,
the clink of a fork on a china dish.

Teach me that vanishing trick
where dents in cushions appear, and I'm missed.
Show me the high-wire trip along fences
to hideaway places, that no-one but me knows exist.

Don't teach me Dog,
all eager to please; that slobbers, yaps and begs for a pat,
that sits when told by its owner, that's led on a lead.
No, not that. Teach me the language of Cat.



Nought to Nine

A ring made of gold, a doughnut and hole,
something that's nothing that's easy to roll.

A periscope raised, a walking stick,
the cut of a cake and a candle's new wick.

A swan on a lake, a nun knelt in prayer,
an FA Cup handle raised in the air.

The pout of a mouth, a bird flying over,
a bra on a line, two leaves of a clover.

A neatly pressed ribbon, a kite without string,
the nose of a witch and an arm in a sling.

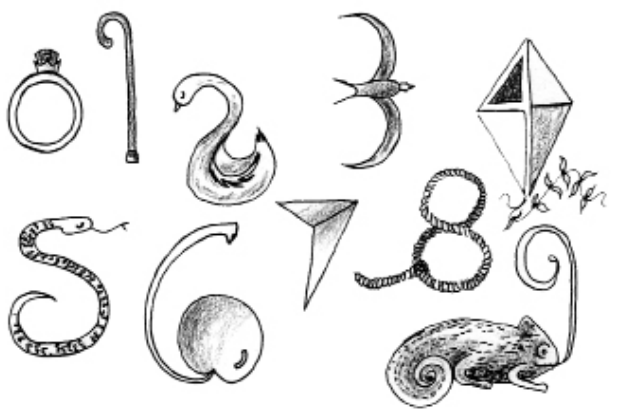
The hand of a pirate, a flat-headed snake,
an apple divided, the latch on a gate.

A teardrop to wipe, a cherry and stalk,
the speech mark to use when your words start to talk.

Half a triangle, a fox's ear tip,
an arrow, an arm of a hand on a hip.

Balancing balls and a circular kiss,
a hoop with a waist and a rope in a twist.

A hook in a curtain, chameleon's tongue,
the whistle to blow when this poem is done.



Sonnet for a Sphere

Take an apple. Chop it into quarters.
Count out three. These represent the lakes
that nestle inside countries, all the snaking
rivers joined with seas – the blue that's water.

Put them aside. This last remaining slice
stands for the land. Divide it into eight.
Discard the barren: the distant icy waste,
the thirsty desert, rocky unreached heights.

What's left? Just one last sliver of a sphere.
Unpeel its skin. Hold up that patch of green
between your thumb and fingertip. It's here
the soil is rich and seeds take root. The crops
we need to harvest, where our livestock feed
are all in this. Be careful now – don't drop it.

O the wonderful shape of an O

