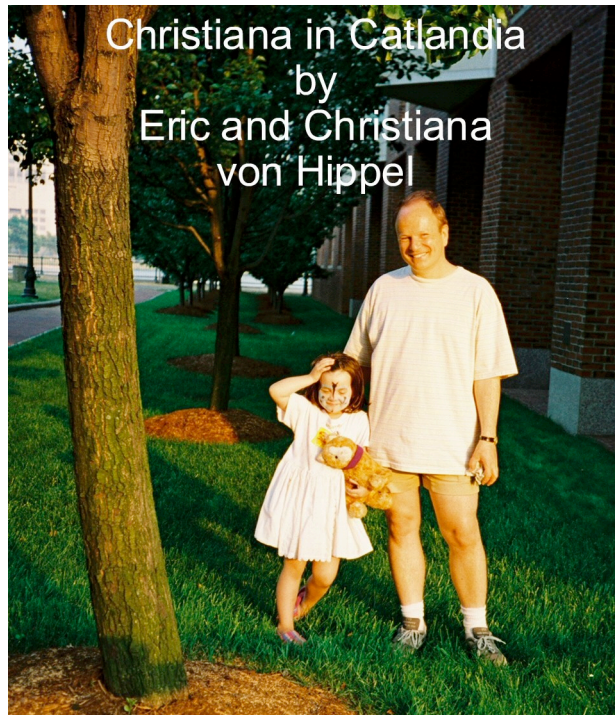


*CHRISTIANA IN CATLANDIA*



(A series of bedtime stories)

by

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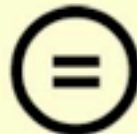
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## Chapter One: A Chocolate Plane Appears

Christiana is a little girl just about your age. She has beautiful long brown hair and striking green eyes. She lives in an apartment building with her parents in the city of Cambridge, Massachusetts in the United States. She is very nice. In fact, I think you would like her if you met her. She would probably like you too, and you might become good friends.

One day Christiana wanted to go to her bedroom to read right after dinner because she was reading a *very* good book. There was chocolate cake for dessert that day. Christiana decided to take hers into her room rather than sit and eat it at the dinner table while her parents talked.

The cake Christiana took to her room was actually not just a piece cut from a larger cake. Instead it was a nice, round, complete cake. It was small, but bigger than a cupcake and all for her. It had very tasty-looking chocolate frosting with chocolate squiggle patterns on the sides. It also had a rather strange pattern on the top that wasn't very noticeable unless you looked carefully.

Once in her room, Christiana dived right into reading her book – and forgot all about the chocolate cake. When it was bedtime she still didn't remember, although I think I would have. Probably she wasn't very hungry. Instead, she just brushed her teeth, got into her bed, turned out the light, and cuddled up with her favorite stuffed animal, a beautiful orange and white cat named Amy. Then she went to sleep.

Several days passed before Christiana noticed her chocolate cake again. When she did, the cake was sitting on her shelf, just where she had originally put it. She thought – “Oh dear, now it will be stale. What a shame; it looked so good!” But when she peered closer it didn't *look* stale – in fact it looked still quite fresh and delicious. THAT couldn't be right!

Christiana took the cake down from the shelf and gave the frosting a light swipe with her finger just to get a bit to taste. No frosting came off. “Oh, no! It *is* stale!” she thought. But just to be sure, she made a second, harder swipe at the frosting. Again nothing – not even a tiny bit of frosting to taste. Maybe the cake inside was still fresh by some miracle? (This time she *was* hungry.) She pressed down hard on the strange design on the top of the cake to find out. Suddenly her finger seemed to break right through the

odd pattern on the chocolate frosting and slip deep into what felt like the cold emptiness of outer space. Then it was instantly on the surface again, and there was no mark on the cake at all. That was very strange!

Before Christiana had time to think much about that puzzle, the cake began to add MUCH bigger puzzles for her to think about. It began to shake rather alarmingly. Then it grew in size and began to change shape – until suddenly it had changed into a beautiful airplane made entirely of chocolate! The plane was so large that it barely fit into her room. In fact, the plane’s tail touched the door of her room, the nose pressed up against her window, and the wings stretched right from one side of her room all the way to the other side.

Well, Christiana was amazed! That’s a pretty natural reaction, you will have to admit. In fact, I’ll bet you would be amazed too if the same thing had happened to you. But probably you haven’t had a similar experience – at least, not yet.

Just then Christiana noticed that there was a passenger door on the side that was about her height. As soon as she noticed it, the door swung open and her cat Amy, dressed in a light pink stewardess’ uniform with gold buttons down the front, was standing in the doorway and politely asking her to enter.

Amy was speaking cat language of course, but for some reason what she said was perfectly understandable to Christiana. Possibly it was because, if you love someone a lot, you can understand what they say even when they are not speaking perfectly clearly.

Well, what would *you* say if your favorite stuffed animal asked you to climb into a chocolate plane that had not been in your room a moment before? Christiana’s parents had always told her never to enter a vehicle with a stranger. But, of course, Amy was not a stranger. Still, just to be on the safe side, Christiana said “No, thank you.”

Instantly the chocolate plane disappeared and the cake was back! Amy was again a stuffed animal on the bed where Christiana always put her when she got up in the morning. In fact, everything was back just as it had been before.

Puzzled, Christiana began to wonder, “Was I just imagining all this?” Still, for some reason she carefully put the chocolate cake back on her shelf again rather than taking it out to the kitchen to throw away. She also decided not to mention what had happened. No one would believe it! In fact, she decided, she didn’t believe it either.

Do you believe it? Maybe you should dream about it tonight and then decide. Tomorrow I will tell you another bedtime story.

## Chapter 2: Emergency in Catlandia!

The next morning Christiana woke up very suddenly. Amy, her favorite stuffed animal, was standing by her bedside and shaking her arm to waken her. Without pausing to think how strange that was, Christiana saw the urgent look on Amy's face and quickly said, "Amy, what's wrong?" Amy, speaking cat language, then began to tell Christiana an amazing story.

"Christiana," she began, "Two years ago, your parents took you to live in Australia for a few months, remember? The house you lived in was in Coogee right by the shore of the ocean. (Coogee is a funny name for a town, I know. It means something like 'Stinky Seaweed' in an Aboriginal language, but it wasn't at all smelly when we were there.)

"There was a big park with grass and beautiful big rocks next to your house. On sunny days, you would walk through that park on your way down the very steep hill to the beach. Sometimes you would mention to your Dad or your Mom that there seemed to be a *lot* of cats walking around in the park. Your Mom and Dad didn't seem to know what you meant – *they* didn't see any cats. You thought that they were just being unobservant, like most grown-ups."

"You also noticed that many of us were quite beautiful and graceful and had many different patterns on our fur. I must tell you now that, sometimes, when you were not carrying me with you, I was not on your bed where you put me each morning. I was one of the cats you saw walking in the park!" (When she said this last part Amy blushed a little. She did not want Christiana to think she was conceited or thought herself especially beautiful. She just wanted to remind her of what she had seen two years ago.)

"One day – do you remember? – you found six newborn Kittens next to a rock with no mother to care for them. They were very sick and very hungry. Our Catlandia Emergency Team had noticed too, and we were about to take the Kittens to Catlandia Hospital when you came by. As soon as you saw them, you scooped all the Kittens right up into your arms and asked your Mom if you could take them home to nurse them back to health. Your Mom was worried that they might have something catching, but finally said "Yes. But, we have to take the Kittens to a veterinarian for a checkup before you can bring them home."

Our Catlandia Emergency Team saw you pick up the Kittens and also heard what your Mother said. They were very surprised that you had noticed the Kittens at all, and that your Mom could see them too. Only a very few, very special humans are able to see the cats living in Catlandia. The Emergency Team was also worried about letting you take the Kittens to the vet. Sometimes vets will decide that cats are too sick to cure and must be put to sleep, and we didn't want *that* to happen.

I explained that you were a very special human and that we should trust you. I said I knew you very well – I had been your most special cat since I was born. I told them that you loved cats very deeply. I also said that you possessed amazing CatMagical powers that you didn't know about yet. With Christiana as the Kitten's guardian, I was sure no veterinarian would even *think* about putting our Kittens to sleep. Christiana's special CatMagical powers and the vet's medicines would cure the Kittens, I was sure.

So, you remember that you took the Kittens to the vet, and that she gave you some medicine for them. After that, you brought the Kittens home and took good care of them. You knew the Kittens were much better when they began to play and chase each other around the house!

After the six Kittens got entirely better, suddenly your Mom could no longer see them. She thought they had run away! You were surprised by this, because *you* could still see them perfectly well. (I must explain that a Catlandia Citizen Cat can only be seen by ordinary humans when it *wants* to be seen. Your Mom had been able to see the Kittens when they were sick because they wanted to be noticed. They knew they needed help right away.)

The next day, you took the six Kittens back to Catlandia and released them where you had found them. We all were very pleased to see them again, and happy to see them restored to health. Today those Kittens have grown up and are adult cat citizens of Catlandia. They remember you fondly and still go by the names you gave them when you were younger and they were Kittens. In fact, every one of us remembers you kindly for your very good deed.

The cats of Catlandia were very sorry when, a short time later, your parents brought you and me back to America, and they didn't see you walking through the park anymore. But, you remained in the thoughts of every Citizen Cat of Catlandia as a very special human who could be relied upon.

Well – you probably wonder why I am telling you all of this. The reason is that there is now a *major* emergency in Catlandia and we need your help! (I keep in contact with Catlandia by using Catlandia.Net – that’s how I heard. I sometimes use your computer at night when you are asleep to check my CatMail – I hope that is OK.)

As soon as I heard about the emergency, I knew we had to find a way to get you to Catlandia right away, so I asked the Acting Chief Cat of Catlandia to put the magic plane into your chocolate cake. I hope you don’t mind.” (Christiana thought about this. She wasn’t quite sure whether she minded or not. On the one hand, now she couldn’t eat her delicious cake because it had a plane inside it. On the other hand, she was always up for a good adventure.)

“Please jump aboard the chocolate plane and come with me to Catlandia. We need you to come *today* or Catlandia will be totally destroyed!” Christiana really wanted to help, so without thinking much about it she said “Yes, I will come right now!”

Amy was delighted and greatly relieved. She said: “ I *told* them we could count on you! Quickly, get the cake, hold it in your hands, and press your fingers against the top just the way you did yesterday. Christiana did as Amy asked. As soon as her fingers pressed against the top of the cake there was that funny feeling of outer space again tingling on her fingertips, and then the cake wiggled and the chocolate plane appeared. The passenger door quickly opened, and Amy was standing in the doorway in her pink flight attendant’s uniform with the gold buttons. Christiana climbed up the steps into the plane with a determined look on her face. The door closed behind her, and the plane vanished from her room with a soft swoosh.

I wonder what happened next, don’t you? Maybe we will find out when we have our next bedtime story.



### Chapter 3: Flying to Catlandia

When Christiana stepped through the doorway and into the Chocolate Plane, she didn't know what to expect. What she found was eight handsome seats, arranged in two rows, one on each side of the airplane. On the left side there were 3 seats obviously made just for cats and then a front one made for a human. In fact, that one seemed to be made just for Christiana because, as she now saw to her surprise, it had her name written in gold on the back. On the right side there were four more seats for cats.

Amy, in her pink flight attendant uniform, quickly ushered Christiana to her seat and helped her fasten her seatbelt. Then Amy settled herself into the front cat seat and fastened her own seatbelt for takeoff. (Just in case you have never seen a cat airplane seat before, I should mention that it is very much like a beautifully padded cat bed with sides. You can climb in (if you are a cat) and then stretch the seat belt across the top and buckle it for safety.)

As soon as they were settled, the plane took off with no fuss at all. One moment Christiana could see her familiar bedroom outside of the plane's windows, and the next moment the plane was soaring into the air – and then it began to go *very* quickly forward.

When the plane was underway and the seatbelt sign was turned off, Amy unbuckled her belt, rose from her seat, and came over to Christiana. Would you like a snack, she said? “Well, yes thank you” said Christiana. “What do you have?” “Chocolate cake and chocolate milk.” “Wonderful! I would like some please.” The food was delicious – dark chocolate was Christiana's favorite, and the plane had just the right kind.

The Catlandia Airlines plane continued flying silently for some hours at great speed, crossing both land and ocean. At first Christiana tried to ask Amy about the emergency in Catlandia, but Amy would only say “You must ask the Acting Chief Cat about that” and then she would look very serious and worried. Christiana wanted to scratch Amy behind the ears to calm her – that is what she usually did when Amy was upset. But she was not quite sure that it would be proper behavior to scratch a flight attendant wearing a pink uniform with gold buttons behind the ears. So she contented herself with looking out the window. The view of clouds was interesting for a bit but then, I must confess, it got rather boring. So Christiana was relieved when the plane

finally began to descend. “We are arriving at Catlandia Airport,” said Amy, “Please buckle your seatbelt, and bring your seatback to an upright position.”

As soon as they arrived at the Catlandia Terminal the door opened, and Christiana climbed out of the chocolate plane, followed by Amy. When they had exited, Christiana noticed that Amy’s pink flight attendant uniform with the gold buttons began to fade until it was entirely gone. Next the plane itself shrank back into the shape of Christiana’s small chocolate cake. Amy looked totally unsurprised, as if this happened everyday (which maybe it did!). She just picked up the cake, dusted it off a bit, and put it into a small backpack she was now wearing.

Christiana now found that the Acting Chief Cat had come to Catlandia Airport to meet her along with a crowd of Catlandia Citizen Cats. They all looked very anxious and pointed with their paws towards the boundary of Catlandia. Christiana looked to where they were pointing and instantly understood the problem without any explanation being needed. Catlandia was surrounded by bulldozers! Each was staffed by a driver and they were clearly waiting to drive in and flatten Catlandia! The Acting Chief Cat explained that they were planning to build seaside apartments in the park. (Do you remember that Catlandia was located in a park on the seashore of the Australian town of Coogee? Of course, many people love to live at the seashore – maybe you do too. As you can understand, that made the park a very desirable place to build apartments.)

The people wanting apartments could not be blamed, of course. After all, they did not know Catlandia was magical and special to cats. However, very clearly something had to be done right away! Christina turned to the Acting Chief Cat and said: “What are you going to do? The Acting Chief Cat just looked at her and said – “I have no idea! But I am not worried, because we in Catlandia believe that *you* will know how to Save the Day!”

Well – Christiana did not have the slightest idea what to do. But just then the engines of the bulldozers started up, so she clearly had to do *something* – but what? Well, I must say, this is a real emergency! I am sorry to say I have no idea what Christiana should do next. Do you? Well, we will find out what happens when we next talk about Christiana’s adventures. Now it is time to go to sleep. Sweet Dreams!

## Chapter 4: Christiana Saves the Day

Do you remember that, in our last story, there were bulldozers surrounding Catlandia? The bulldozer drivers had been told to flatten the seaside park so people could build apartments by the ocean. The drivers had no idea that they would be flattening Catlandia too. As you remember, Catlandian Citizen Cats are invisible to all but very special people. In fact, Christiana was the only Human who knew Catlandia existed!

Do you also remember that the Acting Chief Cat told Christiana that he had no idea what to do about this emergency? However, he said he was sure that Christiana would Save the Day. Then he calmly began to lick the backs of his paws and relax. Unfortunately, Christiana did not have the slightest idea what to do. Just then the engines of the bulldozers started up and the machines began to clank towards the precious borders of Catlandia. Christiana clearly had to do *something* right away!

Suddenly, without planning it, Christiana discovered one of her CatMagical powers. An image of a beautiful pink rose began to form in the center of her mind. She found her attention being drawn deeply into it and as she focused upon it, it began to glow a very bright pink. (Possibly if this happened to you the flower would be of a different color, but pink was Christiana's favorite color.)

The glowing flower in her mind gradually brightened until it was *very* bright. Suddenly the onlooking Cats could see the glow too. First it seemed to surround just Christiana. Then it began to expand and touch each of them. As it did, the image of Christiana's pink rose entered their minds and their minds joined Christiana's to strengthen its glow even further. Everyone watched with amazement as the glow moved out to the borders of Catlandia. To Christiana and the watching citizens of Catlandia, they all now seemed to be inside a beautiful, glowing pink bowl that covered Catlandia completely.

The bulldozer drivers paid no attention to the bright pink glow in front of them as they tried to push across the borders and into Catlandia. Then they discovered that somehow the glow was totally preventing them from pushing forward. Even the most powerful of the machines could not move ahead. Well, this made no sense to any of the workers. For that matter, it made no sense to Christiana and the Catlandian Citizen Cats either. But it seemed to be working so they kept focusing on the beautiful pink rose in

Christiana's mind – and the bulldozers remained completely blocked. Finally, deeply puzzled, the bulldozer drivers went home for the night.

Well, holding back bulldozers is hard work for a young girl – even one with CatMagical powers. Amy, who loved Christiana very much and knew her very well, saw clearly that Christiana was tiring. Christiana could rest till morning, but Amy knew that in the morning the drivers would certainly be back with still more powerful machines. So she spoke urgently to the Acting Chief Cat who spoke urgently to others. An emergency call went out to *all* Citizen Cats in Catlandia to come *immediately* to the Catlandia Airport to assist Christiana. Of course, everyone came. All night long young and old Catlandian Citizens, even the littlest Kittens, streamed to Catlandia Airport. They all wanted to help Christiana in her struggle to save Catlandia.

In the morning, as Amy had feared, the puzzled drivers returned and brought along some *very* powerful machines. After having coffee, the workers again started their bulldozers. Christiana and the cats quickly again concentrated on the beautiful pink rose in Christiana's mind, and again created the brightly glowing bowl over Catlandia. At a signal, all the machines started to push in against all landward sides of the glowing pink bowl at once. Under Christiana's leadership all the Catlandian Citizen Cats concentrated *hard* to keep the glow in place. Suddenly there was a sharp crack! The bulldozers' hard pushing had actually pushed Catlandia several feet from the mainland – Catlandia had become an island!

That sudden result startled everyone – both bulldozer drivers and Catlandia Citizens. But what happened next was even more startling. Without a sound, Catlandia simply and instantly disappeared from Human view! As far as the construction workers could tell, there was now a new seashore where the boundaries of Catlandia had been just a moment before! What they now saw was a steep cliff directly in front of their machines, with only the ocean beyond. Obviously, they had to stop trying to press forward. After all, they did not want their machines to fall into the sea!

Well, I guess you agree with me that all this is very strange. However, please don't worry. I assure you that Catlandia is not really gone. I also assure you that Christiana and the Citizen Cats of Catlandia, although very surprised, were quite safe. Now, please go to sleep. Maybe you will find an answer to this mystery in a dream. If not, I will explain exactly what happened in our next bedtime story.

## Chapter 5: A mystery is solved

Well, from our last bedtime story, you will remember that the workers' bulldozers had pushed so hard on the borders of Catlandia that it suddenly broke away from the Australian Mainland and become an island. At the same time, what was now Catlandia Island had instantly and totally disappeared from the view of Humans!

In the first instant after Catlandia broke away, Christiana and the Citizen Cats of Catlandia had no idea of what had just happened. One moment they were concentrating hard on helping to strength the glow of the CatMagical pink rose in Christiana's mind. The next moment they were all tumbling about from the jolt of Catlandia separating from the mainland. Of course, that jolt also broke their concentration, so the bright pink bowl shielding Catlandia from the bulldozers had completely collapsed.

Christiana and Amy noticed this first, and feared the worst. Oh, no! Had the bulldozers crossed the borders? But when they looked up to see what the Humans were doing, they were astonished to see that all the drivers had gotten out of their machines and were simply staring! What on earth were they staring at? Had the Citizens of Catlandia suddenly become visible? No, it didn't seem so – the Humans were not looking directly at them. Instead they seemed to all be looking in different directions.

To make sure the Humans could not see them, Christiana asked the cats near her to wave their tails and meow to see if they could attract any attention. The adult cats immediately did exactly as she asked. Unfortunately, however, I must tell you that some of the younger cats took this opportunity to be rather impolite. Some started making faces at the Humans. A few even pressed their paws against their mouths and made very rude noises! (I am sure you would never do that!) When there was no reaction from the Humans, Amy and the Acting Chief Cat of Catlandia knew that they were all still quite invisible – which was a great relief!

But why had the bulldozer drivers suddenly stopped trying to push across Catlandia's borders? The Catlandia Chief Geologist was the one who finally solved the mystery. (A geologist, in case you are wondering, is someone who knows a lot about the earth and rocks and islands and similar things.) She noticed the break in the land at the border and quickly understood that Catlandia was now an island. She also knew, largely through the impolite efforts of the Kittens, that Christiana and the Cats were still invisible to Humans. Her next thought was the key to solving the mystery. When Catlandia

became an island, she decided, what must have happened is that the individual CatMagical invisibility powers of each Citizen Cat had suddenly stopped leaking outside of Catlandia's borders to the mainland. What would happen if all of that invisibility power stayed within Catlandia? It *must* be enough to make the whole (rather small) island of Catlandia suddenly as invisible as the Cat Citizens themselves! That was it! That was the solution to the mystery!

The Chief Geologist quickly explained her solution to the Acting Chief Cat – who agreed and then quickly announced it to all the Citizens of Catlandia. Immediately there was great joy! All Catlandia's worries seemed suddenly solved!

Of course, perhaps you were thinking that Catlandians had no worries aside from the rather urgent matter of the bulldozers I have been telling you about. Actually, there are always things to worry about when Humans and cats share the same dwelling ground. For example, Humans often strolled across the park on their way to Coogee Beach. But, of course, as *we* know, the park was *also* Catlandia, although the Humans didn't know that. Sometimes a Human crossing the park would suddenly trip over an invisible Catlandian Citizen Cat. In fact, this happened rather often as Citizen Cats frequently took their afternoon snoozes on the park's warm, sunlit paths. That clearly wasn't anyone's fault. (Certainly, the Cats could not be blamed. As everyone knows, a warm, sunlit bit of pavement is just too tempting!) But, still, a collision could hurt both Humans and Cats. Now at last Catlandians no longer had to worry about such things – for the first time they had their very own island nation entirely to themselves! The best part was that no human knew it was there – even though, really, it was only three feet away!

For several hours the Catlandians celebrated their new independent Island Nation by frolicking in the grass and meowing with great joy! Of course the younger Kittens began to jump on each other, hoping for a successful surprise. Some even risked jumping on the older cats just for fun. After all, everyone was much too happy to tell them to please mind their manners!

Then, quite suddenly, everyone's attention again focused on Christiana! She was the one who had led them in their surprising and successful effort to save Catlandia! She was a heroine and the true founder of their new Island Nation!

At a signal from the Acting Chief Cat, all the Citizen Cats quickly organized themselves into two long lines along the path leading from the Catlandia Airport to the Center of Catlandia (which was actually not too far away). Members of the Department

of Celebrations then passed along the lines handing out mouse-shaped noisemakers to everyone.

A procession then formed with Christiana and Amy and the Acting Chief Cat at the front. They marched along the path as all the Catlandia Citizen Cats cheered wildly and blew on their noisemakers. Christiana, of course, appreciated their thanks. Still, she blushed to the roots of her dark brown hair several times as she walked along the path towards the Royal Palace of Catlandia.

When they finally arrived at the Palace, they climbed the grand staircase, waved to the crowd one final time and went in. After that, the crowds quickly went home for the night. After all, everyone was very tired from all they had been through. Christiana was especially tired, of course, and as soon as the Acting Chief Cat showed her to a bedroom, she washed her face and hands, brushed her teeth (there was a nice new toothbrush laid out for her), said good night to her parents in her mind, and immediately fell into a deep sleep.

Now it is time for you to turn out the light too and go to sleep like Christiana. I will tell about what happened next when we have another bed-time story. Sweet dreams!

## Chapter 6: Christiana learns about her Royal History

In the morning, after a long and lovely sleep, Christiana joined Amy and the Acting Chief Cat for a breakfast of warm milk. The Acting Chief Cat and Amy drank their milk from beautiful saucers. Christiana drank her milk from a crystal glass decorated with the Royal Crest of Catlandia which the Palace Chef Cat had thoughtfully provided.

After talking over the wonderful events of the day before, Christiana asked the Acting Chief Cat *why* he and the other Catlandian Citizen Cats thought she was special and *why* they had been so sure she would be able to help them in their moment of need. The Acting Chief Cat then told Christiana an amazing story.

“Christiana,” the Acting Chief Cat said solemnly, “Now that you have begun to discover your CatMagical Powers, you must also learn about your Royal History. After you understand this history, you will also understand why we asked you to come to Catlandia, and why we knew without question that you would Save the Day.

Let me start by saying that many Humans have magical Cat qualities somewhere in their family trees. No Cat knows why this happens, and Humans are entirely unaware of it. Of course, sometimes Humans will say things that *should* give them a hint. For example, they might say: “When Uncle George smiles, he looks just like the Cat who ate the Canary!” Or they might say that “Aunt Edna really walks with an incredible Catlike grace!” (At this example, Amy blushed a bit. She was not vain, but deep in her heart she knew that *she* walked with incredible Catlike grace. Of course, Amy *was* a Cat, so perhaps we should not be too surprised about that.)

In any case, most Humans inherit very little in the way of magical Cat qualities from their ancestors. But on *very* rare occasions, qualities from a Human’s ancestors will combine in such a way that a Human child is born with *very strong* CatMagical powers!

When a child is born with very strong CatMagical powers anywhere in the world, we in Catlandia know about it instantly. I don’t know why that is so, but I do know that all Citizen Cats of Catlandia have been aware of your CatMagical powers ever since the day you were born. This is so even though we live in Australia and you were born far away from us in America.



As I said, children like you are very rare and precious. Indeed the last child born with powers like yours was born over 200 years ago! Throughout the long history of Catlandia, Humans with CatMagical powers have Saved the Day when Catlandia was in danger. *That* is why I was so confident that you would somehow be able to save us yesterday. And, you must admit that you really did save us in a most wonderful and unexpected way!

Christiana was totally speechless when the Acting Chief Cat finished speaking. Finally she said: But I am totally Human – I am not a Cat! Of course, I love Cats and especially I love Amy, but I don't want to *be* a Cat! I don't even want to be *part* Cat! (Then she turned to Amy and asked forgiveness in case she had offended her. But Amy said she completely understood. After all, she loved being a Cat and would not want to be even part Human!)

The Acting Chief Cat then said, “Christiana, having CatMagical Powers simply means that you are a Human with an unusual ability to help Cats and all other living things when they are in danger or distress. It does not mean you are in any way less Human. In fact, *I* think that a Human who is especially able to help other species is showing wonderful Human qualities – don't you?” Amy, who had been listening carefully, nodded her head enthusiastically. Christiana was happy to agree, and felt much more comfortable with her CatMagical Powers after that.

After a pause to refill his saucer of milk, the Acting Chief Cat spoke again. He said, “Christiana, have you ever wondered why my title is *Acting* Chief Cat?” Christiana replied that she had wondered - a little. (She hadn't, really. She just thought it might be polite to say that she had.) “Christiana,” he said, “I have that title because I am only *acting* as the ruler of Catlandia until *you* are old enough to have your Coronation and rule as Queen of Catlandia!” In fact, right now you already have the title of Princess of Catlandia!

Christiana was astonished! “Me, a Princess of Catlandia?! How wonderful!” Amy was again nodding her head in enthusiastic agreement. That *would* be wonderful! After all, there might be special privileges for the Princess's favorite Cat! Perhaps large bowls of Catnip every day? Christiana was daydreaming too. “Just wait till my friends hear about *this*! I can invite them to sleepovers at the Palace! No parents will be allowed! We can stay up all night! We can learn to live like Cats! Do Cats have to go to school? Maybe not!!!!?...”

Suddenly Christiana had a question. “If I am a Princess of Catlandia, doesn’t that mean that my Dad and Mom are the King and Queen of Catlandia?” No, said the Acting Chief Cat, your parents are not the King and Queen. Royal Catlandian Titles pass only to Humans with very strong CatMagical powers – it has nothing to do with Human families. In fact, when you return to your family from this visit to Catlandia, you will find that you are the only Human who knows Catlandia exists! This secrecy is necessary for our safety. If humans knew about Catlandia they would want study us. Or they might discover oil under our land and ask us to move, or something like that. Humans are often very nice to cats, but they can also be difficult sometimes.

“But, wait,” said Christiana, thinking about how she could possibly be expected to keep *this* secret. “Does that mean I can’t tell my *friends*? Telling them I am a Princess would be awesome!” When Christiana again managed to pay attention to what the Acting Chief Cat was saying, she found he was saying that of *course* she could invite her friends to the Palace for sleepovers – it was *her* Palace after all – but that after her friends went home again they would remember nothing of the visit or of Catlandia. Nor would they remember that she was a Princess. But the good thing was, he said, that each time she invited them to Catlandia and told them she was a Princess they would be amazed all over again!

Well, of course Christiana had more questions. Could she tell her parents about Catlandia? “Unfortunately not,” was the answer. Could she still live at home? “Of course,” was the answer. She could live wherever she chose, because the Acting Chief Cat would be happy to manage things in her absence. He would always inform her when there was an emergency in Catlandia. On those occasions she could hurry back to her Kingdom to assist her Loyal Subjects.

There were many more questions and answers as you may imagine. It is not easy to learn how to be a Princess all at once! I am sure we will learn more about it in bedtime stories to come, but not now.

By the way, before you go to sleep I want to ask you a question. Do you think that *you* might have some CatMagical Powers you are not aware of yet? For example, do you feel a great fondness for Cats that you can’t really explain? If so, that might be a hint that you will develop CatMagical Powers some day! Anyway, it might be worth dreaming about just in case. Sweet dreams!

## Chapter 7: Princess Christiana tours Catlandia City

You may remember that, during our last bedtime story, the Acting Chief Cat revealed to Christiana that she was actually Princess Christiana of Catlandia! He also said that some day when she was older, she could become Queen! After that amazing news, you may remember there was a lot of discussion about the rules for being a Princess. In fact, the talk had lasted till well after lunch! All this was quite necessary, of course, but a little boring too!

The Acting Chief Cat could see that Christiana had gotten tired from all the serious talk. So he kindly asked if she would like a little walk around Catlandia City Center before dinner. It might be fun, he said, for her to see a bit more of her Kingdom. Christiana agreed, so they strolled to the Grand Staircase and began to walk down to the beautiful pathway below.

As soon Princess Christiana could be seen from below, three great Meows went up from thousands of Citizen Cats of Catlandia that had gathered there! Christiana was astonished, but the Acting Chief Cat and Amy just smiled. They had been in on the secret!

After Christiana got over her astonishment and looked more closely, she found that her subjects had made banners and flags in the Royal Colors of Catlandia (Light Pink and Gold) The background of each banner was light pink and the gold had been used to spell out “Long live Princess Christiana!” on each and every flag and banner.

It was an amazing sight! Almost every Cat had two flags, one in each paw, and was waving them madly! Each building had big banners draped across the front. Even the paths had been painted pink in her honor!

Christiana blushed when she saw that all this had been done just for her. But the Catlandian Citizen Cat subjects looked so happy that she quickly became very happy too! Also, she felt really very proud of herself. Yesterday, she really *had* saved the day! Maybe she would learn to become a wise and just Queen some day, and truly worthy of her subjects’ appreciation. She would try her best! Meanwhile, she was beginning to get a good feeling that it could really be fun to be Princess of Catlandia!

As Christiana toured the Capital City of Catlandia, she began to learn more about how her Citizen Cats lived. She saw that most of her subjects lived in Tree Towers. These looked a bit like the cat furniture you probably have seen in pet stores, but of

course they were much larger. Each Tree Tower was a large upright pole like a flagpole and was as tall as a big tree. But, unlike trees, each was wrapped with green and brown carpeting for easy climbing. The colors allowed the Tree Towers to blend in nicely with the actual trees in Catlandia City.

On the branches of each Tree Tower, platforms in bright colors were attached like fruit or flowers. These were the cat apartments. Each had a carpeted scratching post, a big Storage Chest for cat toys, and all the other things cats need to have a comfortable home. Because the platforms had big open porches in front, Kittens and adults could just step onto the porch and meow to each other whenever they wanted to. The more adventurous Kittens could even visit each other by jumping directly from platform to platform rather than by climbing the carpeted central pole as the adults did. (Of course, the Kittens had to be careful not to jump right on top of someone by mistake. And if they did, they had to be sure to say “excuse me” very politely. Probably your parents have taught you to say “Excuse me” too whenever you jump on people unexpectedly?)

Further out from the City Center, there were all the other things that Catlandia Citizen Cats needed. There were beautiful farms with neatly tended crops of Catnip. By the cliff-side where Catlandia ended at the sea, there were neat rows of fishing poles that anyone could borrow in order to catch a nice fish for dinner. There were also wonderful Cat-parks with special structures where Kittens could practice jumping from high places, steering with their tails and landing on their feet. That looked like fun. Christiana wondered a bit whether she could learn to always land on her feet even though she didn't have a tail. She decided to try it one day.

All in all, Christiana found that Catlandia Citizen Cats seemed to live well and peacefully together. That was very good to know.

After walking most of the afternoon, the Acting Chief Cat, Christiana and Amy came back to the Palace and climbed the Grand Staircase again. Then they had a delicious dinner of air-dried grasshoppers and timothy grass spiced with catnip for the Cats, and cheese and catnip pizza for her.

After dinner was over, Amy suggested that it was time to go to bed. After all, as she pointed out, they had not stopped to take a Cat Nap all day! Come to think of it, it is time for you to go to sleep too, Precious One! We will have another bedtime story very soon!

## Chapter 8: How Christiana and Amy met

Next morning at breakfast, the Acting Chief Cat asked Christiana whether she had given any thought to appointing a Right Paw Cat to help her with her official duties. He said that Christiana would have to make a careful choice – the job of Right Paw Cat is a very important one in Catlandia. She needed to choose somebody very mature and loyal. Without hesitation, Christiana said that she would like Amy to be her Right Paw Cat. When Amy heard this, she did a complete somersault of delight right at the breakfast table! Then she remembered that a Right Paw Cat was supposed to be very mature. Luckily, everyone pretended not to notice the somersault.

The Acting Chief Cat said that Amy was likely to be a very good choice. However, before even the nicest Cat could be appointed to the very important position of Right Paw Cat, the Catlandia Parliament was obliged by law to learn everything about that Cat's early history. So the Acting Chief Cat very politely asked Amy if she would mind telling him the entire story of her life before she met Christiana. Amy laughed and said she *had* no life before she met Christiana. In fact, she was *born* to be Christiana's special Cat. Still, she said, she would be happy to tell the story of their first day together.

So that you will know the story of this special day too, let me tell you about how Amy and Christiana discovered each other and became inseparable friends.

Every child has a very special bond to some kind of animal – but often they do not discover this right away. (Have you discovered your very special, favorite animal yet?) In Christiana's case, she was born with a very special bond to cats. Of, course, when she was a baby she didn't know about this special bond. But she was destined to find out in just a few years!

One day, Christiana suddenly began to beg her mother to please, please, *please* buy her a “very special stuffed animal cat to be her special friend.” Her mother was surprised, because Christiana had never shown a great interest in cats before. Still, her Mom said, “Yes, of course she could have a special cat if she could find exactly the right one!”

Christiana and her Mom made many trips to explore *all* the toy stores in Cambridge – even the tiny ones on little streets that very few people even knew existed. They carefully looked at *all* the different kinds of stuffed animal cats each of these stores had for sale. Surprisingly, none of them seemed at all right to Christiana. She didn't

know why she was being so picky – she just knew that none of the cats she had seen was the *right* cat. What if *no* cat was the right cat! That would be very sad indeed!

One night Christiana had a very vivid dream about a place where special companion cats come to life and are given special qualities that fit them to their new owners. Let me tell you about her dream.

At the start of Christiana’s dream, she was walking with her parents by the Charles River near her home in Cambridge. She was dressed in her favorite dress, a pink one with a line of small white cats embroidered around the hem. She also had on her best white party shoes. It wasn’t windy when they started the walk, but suddenly the wind rose, and an image of a cat seemed to form in a cloud. From where Christiana was standing the cloud cat seemed to be resting on a tree right next to Christiana. Christiana knew that cloud cat was the right cat for her – the one she had tried to find for so long!

As the wind blew, the cat image moved rapidly away, as clouds will do, and Christiana began running after it shouting for it to stop! Naturally, her parents called out and tried to run after her, but for some reason she just ran faster and faster! Suddenly a mountain appeared directly in front of her. Thinking she could catch the cloud from the top of the mountain she began to run right up the side of the mountain to the very top. (Of course, really there wasn’t a mountain near her house – remember this is just a dream.) At the top of the mountain Christiana reached for the cloud cat, but when her hand passed right through (as will happen with clouds) she lost her balance and fell right off the top!

Of course, that part of the dream was pretty scary as you can imagine! But at the end of her fall Christiana found she had landed quite gently onto cushiony soft moss. Looking around she saw she was in a very small valley just below the peak of the mountain – she had not fallen very far.

Right next to her in the valley Christiana saw a grove of trees. When she walked over to the trees, she saw that some of them had what looked like large, apple-shaped glass balls hanging from their branches. The glass apples were of many different sizes, and of many different colors. The largest seemed huge – as big as she was. The smallest were just big enough to hold a Kitten in comfort. All the apples seemed to be transparent, but still you couldn’t see in. There seemed to be some kind of mist swirling about inside of each one.

Somehow Christiana knew that she was supposed to pick one of these balls – but she had no idea why or how she should do this – or what would happen after she did. She didn't even know how to pick one – they were all much too high for her to reach. She began to focus her attention on a big glass apple hanging high up in a tree near to her. The apple seemed to shake a little as she looked - and the mist inside seemed to swirl faster. Then she heard the tiny roar-meow of a lion cub. (That's right, lions are cats too.)

Next she gazed hard at a small blue one. It seemed to respond with the hint of a friendly wiggle. But, really, her favorite color was pink, so she looked around to see if she could spot a pink one. There seemed to be just one pink glass apple that she could see near the top of a huge tree. She focused on that one – and as soon as she did, it glided down to her and landed right beside her. (If you ever happen to go to the same mountain valley, you should remember that, when you focus on just the right glass apple for you, it will come right to your hand!)

The pink glass apple split open very neatly, and out stepped Amy! When they looked at each other, Christiana knew right away that Amy was her One Special Cat – and Amy knew that Christiana was her One Special Human! Suddenly, as they were looking at each other, a second ball drifted down from a tree and landed at their feet. At first, Christiana wondered if Amy had a twin, but then the second apple split open too, and a pink suitcase popped out with the name, “Amy von Hippel” neatly embroidered on the outside. They both knew that this meant that Amy had permission to go home with Christiana to live with her. As you can imagine, this made them both very happy!

Amy somehow knew exactly what to do next to prepare for her new life with Christiana. Without hesitating, she took her pink suitcase and went to each of several big flowers scattered among the trees. At each one, she opened the suitcase, put it under the flower, and then shook the flower vigorously. From the first one, dozens of hearts fell from the flower into the suitcase. This was love. Then she went to the next flower and shook it, and many stars fell into her open suitcase. These represented courage and intelligence, Christiana knew. Other flowers Amy visited gave her the very important qualities she needed to be a wonderful friend to Christiana - loyalty and a spirit of fun and many other important things. After she had visited the last flower, Amy closed her suitcase and told Christiana she was ready to go with her to her new home. “OK,” said Christiana, “Then let's go home together!” As soon as she said those words, her dream ended. Christiana then slept on, and dreamed no more that night.

When her mother woke her for school next morning, Christiana lifted her head and saw that Amy really was on the pillow next to her. She looked just the way she had looked in the dream. She was Christiana's perfect Special Cat! Christiana's Mom looked at Amy with astonishment and asked where the beautiful cat had come from! Christiana just smiled, and said her new special cat's name was Amy. Amy seemed to smile too!

After hearing the story, and hearing of all the good qualities Amy had put into her suitcase, the Acting Chief Cat said that he was entirely satisfied that Amy would make an excellent and loyal Right Paw Cat for Christiana. He was sure that the Catlandia Parliament would approve. He *also* said that Amy's history told him that Christiana had another, very important CatMagical power. Good things that she wished for very strongly could sometimes come true. That would be important to remember.

We will hear more about that CatMagical power in a later bedtime story. Now it is time to turn out the light and go to sleep! Sweet Dreams!



## Chapter 9: Danger! Dogs invade Catlandia!

You must not think that Catlandia is frequently in danger. Actually, life there almost always goes along quite smoothly. Smoothly, that is, if you don't think about the little problems like visible people tripping over invisible cats. However, one evening, only a few days after Christiana had Saved the Day, another, quite unexpected problem arose.

The problem began with a small stray cat named Angel. Angel was often chased across Catlandia by a rather large and unkind dog named Bowser. (Angel was a visible cat, not an invisible Catlandian Citizen Cat.) Bowser never did manage to catch Angel, but for some silly reason he kept on trying!

Every time Bowser began a chase, Angel would rush to the edge of the park we know as Catlandia. Long ago, she had discovered a narrow tunnel in the rock just at the park edge. It was just her size, and had two open ends that were far apart. Fortunately, Bowser was much too big to fit into the tunnel. So Angel would race into one end of the tunnel. Bowser would rush to the same end, and then stand there trying to squeeze in, and barking in frustration. When Angel was sure Bowser was not looking her way, she would silently creep out the other end of the tunnel and escape.

Unfortunately, Angel's vital escape tunnel was at the very spot where Catlandia had broken away from the mainland. So when Bowser chased her on this evening, her frightened rush to safety failed. The rock at the border had been destroyed, and her escape tunnel was entirely gone! Angel was running at totally top speed when she suddenly saw that there was now a cliff where she had expected her tunnel to be. She had absolutely no chance to stop or even slow down – she ran straight off the cliff to what she was sure would be certain death in the ocean below! Bowser couldn't stop either and so followed her off the cliff also still running at full speed!

Much to the amazement of Angel and Bowser, they both landed, still running as fast as they could, on the invisible shore of Catlandia Island! (Remember that Catlandia Island, although now invisible, had only been pushed 3 feet away from the Australian mainland by the big bulldozers.) Running at top speed, both Angel and Bowser had easily crossed this gap. Of course, once on Catlandia, both quickly stopped in total confusion. Although they could still *feel* solid land beneath their feet, they could only *see*

water and crashing ocean waves far below. It was as if they were suspended in midair on an invisible platform.

Angel was badly frightened. However, she could not jump back to the Australian mainland because Bowser stood between her and safety. Worse, Bowser suddenly got over his confusion and began to chase her again. It seemed that the feeling of solid land beneath his feet was good enough for him! So, Angel had no choice but to run too.

Of course, the Catlandian Citizen Cats who lived in Tree Towers near Angel's escape tunnel saw everything that was happening. Angel clearly needed help quickly. As she rushed around, she was often bumping into invisible obstacles like the pole of a Tree Tower or an invisible rock and then having to run another way. She was clearly getting confused and tired and running more slowly. Bowser was hitting invisible obstacles too, but he was much bigger and stronger and he was not tiring as quickly. Things did not look good for Angel!

Quick as a flash, several invisible Catlandia Cats rushed down their Tree Tower poles to help Angel. They each made themselves visible for a few seconds and made really loud meowing sounds to attract his attention. As soon as Bowser turned and rushed towards a visible cat, it would become invisible again and escape. Then another cat would become visible in another spot! This did confuse Bowser. "Where *are* all these cats coming from?" he wondered. "And how do they keep disappearing?"

Other Catlandians still on the Tree Platforms also tried to protect Angel. They started dropping invisible cat furniture onto Bowser from their platforms whenever he came near. Soon cat scratching posts and big cat toy storage cabinets and cat couches were raining down. Through sheer bad luck, none hit Bowser. The Cats were very disappointed!

Finally Bowser did become confused enough to give up the chase. Angel had by then found an invisible Tree Tower by luck and had climbed partway up the pole. She now seemed to be suspended in midair above Bowser's head. Also, Bowser's sensitive nose could tell that there were *many* cats in the area, not just Angel. Things were not only confusing, he decided, they were downright alarming!

Bowser began to howl a call for help in dog language – "Help, Help!! Dog in trouble, many Cats here, Dog in trouble, many Cats here!!!" Twenty other dogs on the Mainland heard this strange cry for help and ran to Bowser's aid. It was now dark night so these dogs were not distracted by the invisibility of Catlandia. After all, in total

darkness everything is invisible! Since dogs have good hearing, they simply rushed towards the sound of Bowser's barking. Since they were running at full speed, they easily jumped the gap into Catlandia without even knowing they had done so!

Oh, Dear! 21 dogs were now roaming around loose in Catlandia! Of course, Angel and all the Catlandia Citizen Cats were safely in their Tree Towers. But, still, having lots of dogs running around can be a major problem for Cats, don't you think? Think of the messes they would make on the clean Catlandia paths! Think of the danger to the Kittens!

The Acting Chief Cat quickly learned what had happened from some Citizen Cats who lived near the border. He knew this was a serious problem, and that they would have to get those dogs out of Catlandia somehow. Right now, however, it seemed to him that the best idea would be to go to bed. That way the Cats could get a good night's sleep while the dogs tired themselves out rushing around all night. In the morning, some Cat would doubtless think of a good plan. After all, Catlandian Citizen Cats were very creative. And, of course, in a real emergency, they could always call on Princess Christiana for help.

Now it is time for you to go to sleep too. Maybe during the night you can think of a good solution to this serious problem. If you do, let me know before our next bedtime story. Then we will be able to see whether Princess Christiana and her friends had the same idea you did!

## Chapter 10: The dog invasion becomes *very* serious

In the morning, the Citizen Cats at the border woke up to consider what to do. Things were not too serious at the moment, even though 21 dogs were wandering around in the border regions of Catlandia. The Citizen Cats and Citizen Kittens were all safely in their Tree Towers, and of course the invading dogs could not climb trees. But still, things could not stay this way for long. After all, a Catlandian Citizen Cat has many important reasons to descend to the ground on a typical day. The Kittens need to go to school – even though they don't *want* to. The adults need to shop for food and go to work and go to visit each other. And, of course, they *all* need to descend to take Cat Naps during sunny afternoons.

The Catlandian Cats in the Tree Towers near the border quickly discovered that the tricks they had used to confuse Bowser yesterday did not work very well today. Yesterday, they had thrown a *lot* of their invisible cat apartment furniture down to distract Bowser. (Actually, they had been trying to *hit* Bowser with a couch or something. They really didn't like him very much.) That trick had worked, but now there was not much furniture still in their apartments to drop.

Their second trick from yesterday - flashing into visibility and then quickly disappearing to confuse Bowser – didn't work at all today. The dogs had learned to rely on their noses instead of on their eyes. They had learned they could track a Catlandian Citizen Cat by *smell* even when they could not see it. So there were some near escapes when a dog lunged at an invisible cat and barely missed!

Worse, during the night the dogs had learned where most of the invisible Tree Towers were by bumping into them. Then they had stationed a dog to wait under each one in case a Cat tried to descend. In their minds, they now had the Cats helpless in their Tree Towers. They knew that they would win eventually, because eventually the Cats would have to come down to get food and water. And when they did, the dogs would be ready to attack! (Actually, the dogs weren't quite sure *why* they wanted to attack. They just felt it was the kind of thing a dog should do. Personally, I think that is a pretty strange and unpleasant goal. Maybe their parents can teach them to chase balls and sticks instead? What do you think?)

The Catlandian Citizen Cats were not ready to give up and ask Princess Christiana for help. After all, they had good brains and were self-reliant. They just needed to come

up with some good new inventions. Some began to stretch invisible ropes between the Tree Towers. This created pathways so that Cats could safely travel above the ground from Tower to Tower. In fact, this is how the Kittens got to school that day. (As you can imagine, the Kittens were very disappointed – they had hoped for a day off!) Some other Citizen Cats attached the 6 remaining Cat Toy Chests onto invisible ropes. They then carefully and silently lowered them, open end down, and managed to trap 6 of the dogs waiting on guard underneath the Tree Towers!

The trapped dogs quickly found they could not escape by digging a tunnel, because the soil of Catlandia is very rocky. All they could do was howl in frustration. But the 15 that remained free smiled unpleasantly. They knew that the Cats would have to come down eventually for food and water. They were sure their time to for revenge would come soon.

In the afternoon, when it was time for the Kittens to come home from school, they returned to their invisible Tree Towers by walking upon the invisible ropes. Of course, being Kittens, they also thought of tricks to annoy the dogs standing guard below. One especially effective trick was to walk out on a rope until standing right above a dog, and then pee right down on his head. The dogs could not see the ropes and they could not see the Kittens – but suddenly a stream of liquid would fall from nowhere. The dogs could smell that it was Cat pee, and that really made them mad!

Of course, the Kittens thought this was wonderful fun and just what the dogs deserved. (And, of course, the dogs did deserve it, don't you think? They had no business invading Catlandia. After all, the Cats had not attacked them!) When the Kittens ran out of pee they didn't want to stop the fun. Instead, they went home and took tomorrow's milk from the cupboards and dumped that down on the dogs too. Maybe the dogs would think the milk was pee. That would be fun! Of course, when the Parent Cats discovered what the Kittens had done they were very upset. Now the problem of the dogs was getting worrisome. The milk was gone. What would the Kittens have for breakfast tomorrow?

Then, very suddenly, the dog problem got *much more* serious. Two Kittens teasing the angry dogs below laughed so hard that they fell right off the ropes and down to the ground! Luckily they were not hurt by the fall, and they were still invisible. However, the angry dogs heard them fall and smelled them too. They rushed to the spot to attack! One Kitten managed to run up a Tree Tower to safety, but the other was caught

and badly bitten by a very large dog. (Let's hope that dog did not know he was attacking a young Kitten. Maybe he thought he was attacking an adult Cat. After all, the Kitten was invisible to him.) In any case, the wounded Kitten now lay on the ground, unable to move while his captor stood guard, snarling at the Citizen Cats that tried to rush down to help.

This was terrible! Of course, Princess Christiana immediately felt the wounded Kitten's pain and knew what had happened. I hope she does something quickly, don't you?

I know this is a terrible point to stop our story for the night, and I don't want you to worry. I am confident that Princess Christiana will find a way to save the Kitten. Anyway, I am glad you are safe at home in your snug warm bed. Turn off your light now and go to sleep, Dear One.

## Chapter 11: Catlandia asks the King of the Cockatoos for help

Princess Christiana does not like to Save the Day for Catlandia unless it is absolutely necessary. She knows it is much better for the Citizen Cats of Catlandia to find a solution on their own, even if they have to struggle very hard to succeed. That way, they will continue to be strong and self-reliant, instead of growing dependent upon her. For this reason, Christiana did *not* immediately act to get the invading dogs out of Catlandia. Instead, she had waited to see what her Citizen Cats would do to solve the problem on their own.

But now there was a seriously wounded Catlandian Citizen Kitten lying on the ground guarded by a big and very angry dog. The Kitten urgently needed medical care, but the dog was preventing any Catlandian from rescuing him. Christiana decided she could no longer wait for the Citizen Cats solve this problem on their own. She had to do something *right now*. Christiana talked urgently with Right Paw Cat Amy and the Acting Chief Cat. They all decided that the best thing to do would be to summon the Merlin to Catlandia right away.

Now Merlin is not a fierce warrior who could rescue Catlandia from the invading dogs. Actually, he is Christiana's pet cockatiel. A cockatiel, in case you have never seen one, looks sort of like a miniature parrot and is about the size of your hand. Cockatiels are not at all fierce, but they are often very pretty. Their feathers can be many different colors. Merlin happens to have grey and white feathers over most of his body. He also has a very nice yellow crest on the top of his head and orange patches on his cheeks. He lives at home in Cambridge with Christiana and stays in a cage in the family room. Often, she takes him out of his cage for a ride on her finger or on her shoulder.

At the time it was decided to summon Merlin to Catlandia, it was afternoon and Merlin had just woken up from a nap. He was thinking that he might hop over to his food tray and eat a few nice seeds for a snack. Of course, he had absolutely no idea that Christiana was in Catlandia. He thought she was cozily sleeping in her bedroom!

Christiana focused her thoughts into the center of her mind, and sent out an emergency call to Merlin. The call was actually much more powerful than it needed to be. CatMagical Powers were still new to Christiana, and she was still learning how to use them properly. Christiana's call gained even more power as it quickly traveled halfway around the world from Coogee in Australia to Cambridge in the United States. When it reached Cambridge her call was so powerful that it actually blew a hole right through the

outside wall of the family apartment near Merlin's cage, and shattered his cage into a thousand fragments!

To Merlin the call sounded like a clap of thunder followed by words. He heard Christiana cry out, "Merlin, come to me, I need you right now!!!" And of course he came. The shattering of his cage had freed Merlin. The next thing he saw was an Image of Christiana's hand reaching through the hole in the apartment wall and extending a finger to him to perch upon. He hopped right on – that is what he always did. The hand then gently withdrew back through the hole in the apartment wall, carrying Merlin with it. The next instant Merlin found himself in the Royal Palace of Catlandia, perched upon Christiana's finger.

Merlin immediately saw that Christiana looked very distressed and angry. She was feeling the wounded Kitten's pain at each instant, and that pain was very great! So he did not ask any questions, even though he wanted to. He wanted to ask why her stuffed special cat Amy suddenly seemed to be alive and was standing next to her. He also wanted to ask why there were several rather *large* Cats standing near Christiana who might eat him up at any instant! (After all, Cats do eat birds!) Merlin's crest stood straight up in fear, but he stood his ground bravely and waited for Christiana's instructions. After all, she was his one Special Human.

"Merlin," said Princess Christiana, I must ask you to go to Alexander the Great, King of the Cockatoos. King Alexander lives nearby in Coogee in a grove of Eucalyptus trees. He is a very good friend of your mother's. In fact, at your mother's request he agreed to become your Godfather when you emerged from your egg. You have not met King Alexander because you left your mother's nest very early to come and live with me. However, I am sure he will remember that he is your Godfather. I hope he will be willing to come to Catlandia's aid because of his fondness for you. But I am not sure that he will help us. I hope you can convince him.

Tell King Alexander that I am Princess Christiana, newly arrived in Catlandia. Tell him that I beg him to immediately assemble his Cockatoo Warrior Birds. I have heard that they are very strong and fierce and know how to attack dogs by swooping down from the sky. I ask him to drive the dogs now invading Catlandia back to the Australian mainland or into the sea. If he agrees to help us, then please add a second request. Tell him there is a small, seriously wounded Catlandian Citizen Kitten being held captive by an angry dog. He will find the Kitten lying under a Tree Tower near the



Catlandia border. We ask him to please fly that Kitten to Catlandia Hospital Emergency Ward. Tell him that speed is essential. Our Citizen Kitten is severely wounded will soon die without medical care!

Merlin immediately flew out of the Catlandia Palace window to search for King Alexander the Great of the Cockatoos. Within minutes, he found the King standing on the branch of an eucalyptus tree in his Royal Eucalyptus Grove. (A eucalyptus tree lives in warm climates. It is very tall and has many branches. Cockatoos love to perch in eucalyptus trees.) King Alexander looked magnificent and at first Merlin was a little afraid of him. He was a large white Cockatoo with a bright yellow crest and wings as wide and strong as an eagle's! He was surrounded by his Royal Assistants. They all looked fearsomely big and strong, and they all had very sharp-looking talons.

When Merlin introduced himself, King Alexander was very happy to see him, just as Christiana had hoped. He asked how Merlin's mother was, and then asked whether he could do something to help Merlin. Merlin then told him about the fierce dogs that had invaded Catlandia, and about the Kitten that had been wounded. He also told him that his Special Human, Princess Christiana, was urgently requesting his help.

King Alexander, the Great King of the Cockatoos frowned. He said that of course he was concerned about the fate of an innocent Kitten. But, he said, Merlin must understand that cats and birds are enemies. This is not the fault of the birds, he said. Birds do nothing to harm cats. Cats, however, often attack and kill and eat small birds. They even think it a sport to do this! He himself has observed adult Cats creep up on unsuspecting baby birds and then pounce on them and kill them!

"Merlin," he said, "Since cats are the enemies of birds like you and me, why should I risk the lives of my Cockatoo Warrior Birds to save the life of a Kitten? It is true that this Kitten is very young, and all adults want to protect children. But the Kitten will doubtless soon grow up, and then it will hunt and kill many of our bird cousins."

Well, it seemed to Merlin and it seems to me too that King Alexander certainly had a good point. Do you think the wounded Kitten might grow up to kill birds? Do you think the King should agree to rescue Cats that eat birds? Maybe the King should ask Catlandia for something in return before he decides to help. What do you think he should do?

Anyway, it is a very difficult problem. I hope we will learn what King Alexander does when it is time for our next bedtime story. Turn out your light now. Sweet dreams!

## Chapter 12: The Battle of the Warrior Birds

You remember in our last bedtime story, that Princess Christiana had asked Merlin to go find his Godfather, Alexander the Great, King of the Cockatoos. Princess Christiana hoped that his brave Cockatoo Warrior Birds would be willing to free Catlandia from the invading dogs. She also hoped they could save the wounded Catlandian Citizen Kitten.

You remember that King Alexander told Merlin that he saw no reason for Cockatoos to help Cats. Birds and Cats are enemies, he said, because Cats often *eat* birds. Merlin knew this was true. Sometimes Cats looked at him with a very hungry look, and he always tried to avoid them.

Then King Alexander thought for a while. Next he consulted his Royal Advisors. They finally decided on a plan that would benefit Catlandian Cats and birds too. He would agree to rid Catlandia of the invading dogs – *if* Catlandians would agree to sign a Treaty of Friendship and agree to never hunt and kill birds again. He told Merlin to return to Princess Christiana with his answer.

Merlin told King Alexander – with much trembling – that he did not think there was time to discuss the matter and come to an agreement with Catlandia before acting. If the King delayed sending aid, the little Kitten would surely die. He suggested that King Alexander should consider attacking right away to save the Kitten and defeat the dogs. Then, he said a grateful Catlandia would be very likely to sign a Treaty of Friendship in return.

Instead of being angry with Merlin, King Alexander was pleased with his Godson for daring to speak up. He thought for a moment, and then decided to do as Merlin suggested. He told Merlin to return to Princess Christiana and tell her that help was on the way!

King Alexander next sounded the Cockatoo War Cry. (As you may know, Cockatoos have an *extremely* loud call. It sounds rather like a parrot's screech.) The King's call was so loud that it could be heard across all Cockatoo land. Upon hearing the call, 1,050 fierce Cockatoo Warrior Birds immediately stopped whatever they were doing. They then all rose into the air and converged on the Royal Eucalyptus Grove at great speed. Within five minutes all were assembled into a great War Flock. The King then told his Generals what needed to be done, and ordered an immediate attack on the dogs in Catlandia!

What happened next was fearsome. I must tell you that you would *not* want to have been a dog in Catlandia on that day! Can you imagine? *Seventy* fierce Cockatoo warriors swooped down on each of the 15 dogs that were free. Before the dogs knew what was happening, many sharp talons had locked strongly and painfully upon each dog's legs, ears, sides and tail!. Flapping their strong wings in unison, the Cockatoo Warriors then lifted each of the dogs – now howling loudly with pain and fear - high above the trees. They quickly carried them beyond the limits of Catlandia Island and out to sea. Then they dropped the astonished dogs straight into the waves.

Next, the Warrior Birds returned and lifted the Cat Toy Chests from the six trapped dogs. These 6 tried to run away to hide in the bushes where the birds would find it hard to capture them. But the Warrior Birds were too quick and soon had them in their talons. These dogs too were carried to the sea and tossed in to swim with the others. Not one of the now very frightened dogs was allowed to swim to land until he had sworn on the honor of his ancestors that he would never again cross into Catlandia for any reason!

Finally, the Cockatoo King received reports from all his Generals that the battle was safely won. The King then spread his huge wings and flew to Catlandia. He spotted the wounded Kitten, swooped down and gently picked him up with his talons just as a mother cat would do (by the scruff of the neck). He flew the Kitten quickly to the Catlandia Hospital Emergency Ward, and placed him right at the entrance. The Kitten weakly mewed his thanks and King Alexander graciously nodded before flying away.

Well – I am certainly glad the Kitten was saved, aren't you? But I do wonder what the Catlandians will do about King Alexander's request. Do you think they will agree to stop eating birds? Would that be too big a sacrifice for Cats to make? Maybe we will find out during our next bedtime story. Good night, my Dear Child!

## Chapter 13: A Treaty of Friendship

The battle between the Cockatoo Warrior Birds and the invading dogs had been won, and the invading dogs had been forced to leave Catlandia. After the battle, King Alexander the Great of the Cockatoos flew the wounded Kitten to Catlandia General Hospital. Next he flew from the Hospital straight to the Royal Palace of Catlandia. You may remember that he had important matters to discuss with Princess Christiana and the Catlandian Government.

When he arrived at the Palace, King Alexander did not bother climbing the Grand Staircase. Instead, he flew directly in through a Palace window and came to a graceful landing in the center of the Royal Meeting Hall. Here, Princess Christiana, Right Paw Cat Amy, and the Acting Chief Cat of Catlandia were waiting to officially greet him. His Godson Merlin the cockatiel was also there.

When the King arrived, he first told the grateful Catlandians about the outcome of the battle. All dogs had been removed from Catlandia by the Royal Cockatoo Warrior Birds. Some of the dogs had attempted to bite and claw. Fortunately, the Warrior Birds had been able to dodge the dogs' attacks and none had been injured. All invading dogs had been lifted off the ground by the mighty Warrior Birds, carried away from Catlandia's boundaries and then dropped into the ocean. No dog been allowed to swim to safety until it promised never to bother Catlandia again. The Warrior Bird Commanders reported that all the dogs had given their solemn promise.

Princess Christiana then told King Alexander that she and all Catlandia Citizen Cats were *deeply* grateful to him for removing the dog invaders. She also told him that the doctors at Catlandia General Hospital had said that the wounded Kitten would get better quickly, and would be playing with his friends again soon. The King said he was pleased to hear that.

After this exchange of information, Princess Christiana asked how she and the Citizen Cats of Catlandia could repay him King Alexander and his Countrymen. The King said that he had initially *not* been willing to rescue Catlandia from the invasion of the dogs, because Cats ate birds. But his Godson Merlin had persuaded him to help, saying that Cats were basically good creatures. He therefore now asked that the Catlandians agree to sign a Treaty of Friendship with the Cockatoos. The Treaty must say that Catlandian Citizen Cats would never again hunt or kill or eat birds of any type.

Of course, you and I would be able to agree to King Alexander's request quite easily. After all, Humans do not eat wild birds. (Well, actually, that's not quite true. In the old days of Knights and Castles, Humans did hunt all types of birds, even tiny hummingbirds, and ate them for dinner. Today, some Humans still hunt and eat big wild birds like ducks and geese and turkeys.)

But to not eat birds ever again was a very difficult promise for the Catlandians to make. Catlandian Cats, like all other cats, are carnivores. That means they need to eat meat to survive. Of course, no Catlandian ever ate a Cockatoo – they are much too big. But small birds were a good source of food for Catlandian Citizen Cats along with fish and insects and mice and other small animals. The Cats also had to admit that hunting birds was fun for them. All Cats greatly enjoy creeping quietly through the grass and then pouncing on an unsuspecting bird. (Of course, Cats had never really thought about bird-hunting from the bird's point of view. When they did, they could understand that a bird would not think it much fun to be pounced upon and eaten.)

Still, despite the difficulty of the promise, Princess Christiana say "We agree to your request," without any hesitation. She told King Alexander that Catlandians must continue to eat meat – they would die without it. But their food needs could easily be satisfied by eating fish and other animals without eating any birds at all. All Catlandian Citizens would feel that they owed this return favor to the King of the Cockatoos for what he had done for them and for their wounded Citizen Kitten.

Then Princess Christiana said, "Right Paw Cat Amy, please inform the Chief Clerk of Catlandia to draw up a Treaty of Friendship with the Cockatoos!" The Acting Chief Cat then informed the King of the Cockatoos that he would bring the Treaty to the Catlandian Parliament next morning. He was sure it would be approved right away. Of course, this friendly response to his request pleased King Alexander.

Princess Christiana then invited the King of the Cockatoos and all his Warrior Birds to a great victory banquet that very night. Cockatoos are vegetarians, and so their banquet menu would have plenty of seeds and fruits. The menu for the Catlandian Cats would have plenty of delicious raw fish appetizers followed by spicy deep fried mouse nuggets. But of course there would be no birds on the menu!

By next morning the news of the Treaty of Friendship between and Catlandians had spread far and wide. All birds appreciated what King Alexander had done for them. They also knew they could now visit Catlandia without any fear. No bird had previously

dared to feed in the Human park that was also Catlandia. Some small birds had tried to hunt for food there in the past. But they almost always had mysteriously disappeared almost as soon as they landed on the ground. Some birds had thought the park was haunted. In fact, of course, as they now knew, small birds had been disappearing down the invisible throats of hungry Catlandian Cats!

Next day many small birds flocked to Catlandia to pick up the plentiful seeds that were scattered on the ground there. This created an unexpected problem for the Cats. The problem was not that the birds ate Catlandian seeds. Catlandian Cats have no use for seeds, and do not mind if birds eat them. The problem was that now many birds were strolling on the ground in Catlandia quite near the Cats. They all looked so delicious and so tempting! Catlandian Citizen Cats knew they had promised not to hunt birds any more, but to see a bird stroll freely within a paw's reach – that was really hard!

Of course, because there were many Cats in Catlandia, birds would sometimes bump into an invisible Cat while searching for seeds. Sometimes one would land and discover it had perched on an invisible Cat's head or back! Doing this on purpose became a game for the more daring young birds. It was a wonderful way to get a free ride around Catlandia as the Cats strolled along the paths and climbed their Tree Towers. The Catlandian Citizen Cats decided they didn't really mind. Later, the Cat-riding birds learned to wiggle their claws as they rode to give the Cats a really nice back scratch and head scratch. Of course Cats love being scratched, so after that everyone had fun.

Most important of all, no bird was ever hunted or eaten in Catlandia after the Treaty or Friendship was signed!

Well, things now seem to be really calm in Catlandia. Do you think that Princess Christiana will decide to go home to her parents now that all is well? Maybe we will see about that tomorrow. Now it is time for you to go to bed, Dear One. Dream of wonderful, peaceful, sunlit days of friendship between Cats and birds – and you!

## Chapter 14: Leaving Catlandia – for now

Christiana had now been in Catlandia for one week. It may seem like she had been there a much longer time. But probably that is because so much has happened. I think it has been a very exciting week, don't you?

Do you remember when Christiana first discovered the Chocolate Plane in the small chocolate cake that was just for her? She was really surprised. Then Amy told her there was an emergency in Catlandia so she bravely climbed aboard the Plane to travel there. She had discovered that bulldozer drivers were about to flatten a seaside park in Coogee, Australia to build seaside apartments. The drivers did not know Catlandia existed in the same park and that they were about to destroy it!

Luckily, Christiana soon discovered the first of her CatMagical Powers. She was able to use it to stop the bulldozers and Save the Day. Then, in a lucky accident, the bulldozers pushed so hard trying to cross into Catlandia that they actually pushed the park away from the mainland, do you remember? This made Catlandia into an island invisible to Humans. The Catlandian Citizen Cats felt much safer when Humans were no longer strolling on Catlandia and falling over invisible Cats.

Next Christiana found out that she was Royal Princess Christiana of Catlandia! This was because of her rare CatMagical Powers. The Acting Chief Cat of Catlandia said that when she was older, she could be crowned Queen of Catlandia if that was her wish.

Meanwhile, as Princess she was told she has the right to invite her friends to Catlandia, and to have as many sleepovers as she wants in the Royal Palace. She can also tell her friends that she is Princess of Catlandia. That will be fun! However, her friends will forget everything as soon as they return home. Too bad, but we can understand the reason. To protect Catlandia, Christiana must be the only Human to know it exists.

Then we learned how Christiana found her One Special Cat, Amy. Amy told the Acting Chief Cat about all the special qualities she had packed into her pink suitcase when she went to live with Christiana. She had put in wonderful qualities like intelligence and friendship and loyalty. When the Acting Chief Cat and the Catlandian Parliament heard about those, they agreed that Amy was well qualified to become Right Paw Cat. That way, she would be able to help Christiana with her Royal duties.

When Amy heard she was going to be Right Paw Cat, she turned a somersault at the breakfast table. Then she tried to look mature, remember? I thought that was pretty funny, didn't you?

Then things got very dangerous! The dog Bowser invaded Catlandia chasing a stray cat named Angel, and he was followed by 20 other dogs who loved to chase Cats. The dogs seriously wounded a Catlandian Citizen Kitten and endangered all Catlandians. Then King Alexander the Great of the Cockatoos and his fearsome Warrior-Birds drove the dog invaders back out, remember? The dogs swore they would never enter Catlandia again. (I wonder whether I really trust them. Do you?)

Next, a Treaty of Friendship was signed between Catlandia and the Cockatoos. The Treaty says that Catlandian Citizen Cats will no longer hunt and eat Birds at all, *ever*. So birds feel safe in Catlandia now, and many are visiting Catlandia Island to hunt for delicious seeds. Some are even enjoying themselves by taking rides on the heads and backs of Catlandian Citizen Cats. The Birds wiggle their claws as they ride, and the Cats *love* getting head scratches and back scratches from their bird passengers!

Lying in her Palace bed the morning after the Grand Victory Banquet with the Cockatoos, Christiana thought about all these things. She was very proud of how she had helped Catlandia in her job as Princess Christiana. But it was also very nice that things would now be peaceful, at least for a while.

Next she began thinking about her parents. She found that she was really missing them a lot, and had an ache of homesickness in her heart. It had been a wonderful to discover her connection to Catlandia and have lots of adventures, but now she *really* wanted to go home.

Suddenly she began to worry. She and Amy had been gone for a whole week! Her Mom and Dad must be going crazy! And to top it all off, two days ago a big hole had been blown in their living room wall and Merlin's cage had shattered into a thousand pieces with a big bang. Then Merlin had disappeared too! What must her parents be thinking! They must be turning heaven and earth to try and find her! The police must be out searching for her and who knows what else! This was terrible! Oh Dear!

Christiana decided that she must return home to Cambridge immediately. She jumped out of bed and ran to wake up Amy who was sleeping in the Palace bedroom next door. "Amy," she said, "Wake up! We must go home right away! My parents must be frantic!" Amy agreed, and the two of them then rushed to wake Merlin. Christiana put



Merlin on her shoulder and then they ran to find the Acting Chief Cat. Fortunately he was working in his Palace Office that morning, and they found him easily.

Christiana told him that they had to rush home right now! Her parents must be looking for her frantically! Amy added she was sure Christiana's parents were looking frantically for her and Merlin, too.

Well, I think Christiana is right, don't you? Think how frantic we would be if *you* suddenly disappeared for a week! Try to never worry us that way, OK?

Now it is time for you to go to sleep. I hope we will find out what Christiana's parents are doing to find her during your next bedtime story! Your Mom and Dad love you very much – here is a goodnight kiss for you. Sweet dreams!

## Chapter 15: Coming home to Mom and Dad

In our last bed-time story, Christiana had woken up and suddenly realized that they must go home right away! Her parents must be frantically searching for her and for Amy and Merlin. Maybe they thought she had run away from home, taking her special pets with her! Christiana and Amy and Merlin had then rushed in to see the Acting Chief Cat to tell him they had to go home right now!

When Christiana and Amy and Merlin finished telling the Acting Chief Cat why they had to go home immediately, they expected him to be alarmed too, and to suddenly start rushing around. Surprisingly, he didn't do that. Instead, he smiled gently and told them sit down and stop worrying. One of Christiana's CatMagical Powers, he said, had automatically made sure that her parents had *not* missed her or Amy or Merlin at all. They were astonished to hear this, so the Acting Chief Cat carefully explained how that particular CatMagical power worked.

Whenever Christiana decided to visit Catlandia, he said, her Image (and Amy's and Merlin's too) would stay back at home, and do all the things Christiana and Amy and Merlin would do. If it was a school day for Christiana, for example, her Image would pack Christiana's schoolbag and go to school in her place. If her Mom asked Christiana how she was feeling, her Image would say, "Fine, thanks." If her Dad asked her to go on a walk with him, her Image would say "OK, but only to the mall." At the mall, Christiana's Image would order the chocolate soufflé Christiana usually orders, and then would eat it and say it was delicious.

Of course, continued the Acting Chief Cat, there can be a few difficulties. Your Image will have learned things while you are gone that you will not know. For example, if your Image went to school in your place, you will not know the things that it learned. So you will have to learn those things all over again when you get back. This is too bad, but it cannot be helped.

Also, some parents who really understand their children may spot some small differences between your Image and the real you. Generally, he said, your Image is not as lively as you are. Whenever your parents ask about this, the Image is trained to say "I am feeling a little under the weather today." (When people say they are under the weather, they mean they are feel just a very little bit sick or tired. But not sick or tired

enough to stay home from school or visit the doctor.) Generally, parents are satisfied with that answer.

Later, by the way, when you become a teenager, your Image will probably be trained to answer: “It’s none of your business!” when your parents ask how you are feeling. Then it will probably slam the bedroom door. That is a natural answer for many teenagers. Of course, you may act differently.

“Well,” said Christiana, “I still think I had better go home right away. Please understand that I am not leaving forever. I will always return to Catlandia to Save the Day. And, of course I will often return for fun and for sleepovers. The Acting Chief Cat said that he understood. “All Citizen Cats of Catlandia will miss you when you are not here, but we all understand that your place is at home with your parents while you are growing up. We also know that we can count on you to come when we need you. That makes us all feel very happy.

So, she and Amy and Merlin shook the paw of the Acting Chief Cat and said goodbye for now. Amy went back to her bedroom to get her small backpack. Then they all descended the stairs to the Royal Garden. “We don’t really need to go to the Catlandia Airport to use the Chocolate Plane,” Amy said. “It works anywhere, so we can fly home right from here.”

Amy took the Chocolate Cake with the strange design on the top out of her backpack and handed it to Christiana. Christiana pressed her fingertips on the top in just the right way. In a flash, the cake began to wiggle and then the Chocolate Plane appeared in middle of the Royal Garden. Once again, Amy was standing at the passenger door dressed in her pink Flight Attendant uniform with the gold buttons down the front.

Christiana quickly climbed aboard the Chocolate Plane. Merlin needed a little coaxing to get on, but that was understandable. The first time Christiana had boarded the Chocolate Plane everything had seemed very strange to her, too. This time everything seemed perfectly natural. She almost wanted to say, “Doesn’t everyone fly on a Chocolate Plane?” But of course, I don’t think many people have done that – at least, not yet.

Christiana then sat down in her special Human seat and fastened her seatbelt. Amy sat in the front Cat seat and fastened her seatbelt too. Merlin sat down on a perch that had suddenly appeared for him, and put on his seatbelt too. Instantly, the Chocolate Plane took off. After a snack of delicious chocolate milk and chocolate cake for

Christiana, seeds for Merlin and mouse lollipops for Amy, they arrived back in Christiana's very own bedroom. Once they were there, the Plane quickly turned back into a chocolate cake. Christiana turned to carefully put the cake on a high shelf in her closet so no one would find it. When she turned around again she discovered that Amy had turned back into a stuffed animal, and was lying on her bed where she always put her. Merlin was perched on her bedpost, preening his feathers.

Christiana then sat down on her bed, feeling rather shaky. She could hear her mother and father talking calmly in the living room. Should she just go in to join them as if nothing had happened? What if her Image was sitting in there with them right now? *That* would cause a fuss!

Out of habit, she glanced at Amy for her advice. Of course, Amy was now a stuffed cat and not alive, but somehow she seemed to wink. That was their secret signal that everything was OK. So, feeling more confident, Christiana got up, put Merlin on her shoulder, opened her bedroom door and walked into the living room to see her parents for the first time in a whole week.

Trying to sound as casual as possible, Christiana said "Hi." She put Merlin into his cage – a new one, she noticed - and then sat down on the couch near her parents. Her Mom and Dad glanced up and smiled and said "Hi" back. Then suddenly her Mom took a longer, careful look at Christiana. "Christiana," she said, "I know you have been feeling under the weather this past week, but suddenly you look healthy again! How do you feel?" "All of a sudden I feel great!," said Christiana. "I guess I am finally all better!"

"Well," said her Mom, "I think we have all been feeling the shock of that funny lighting bolt that knocked a hole in the wall and shattered Merlin's cage. It was a miracle that he wasn't hurt! Actually, I have been a little worried about Merlin. He hasn't sung a note since we put him in his new cage. But look, now he is suddenly singing again!" Christiana looked over at Merlin and said, "Yes, I guess he is back to his normal self too!" and gave Merlin a secret wink. Merlin winked back, and then went right on singing!

Maybe Merlin was thinking about all the new adventures he and Christiana and Amy would have when they next went to Catlandia. Or maybe he was just glad to be home again. What do you think?