



Cedric the Brave Knight



This is a story of bravery, of knights in shining armor, and of cats. But mostly, it is a story of bravery.

Like all tales of bravery, it is also a tale of fear, for a person can only be brave if there is fear to overcome.

Our hero, Cedric, was known as the bravest knight in the entire kingdom. In fact, on the night that this story begins, Cedric had just won an important battle and was being honored with a banquet at the castle.



Cedric looked at the crowded banquet room. People had come from near and far to honor him. Knights and princes filled the room. Even Queen Jane was there with her cat, Princess Purr, who was her pride and joy.



The room quieted as Queen Jane rose to speak. In glowing terms, she described Cedric as a fearless knight.

“And that’s not all,” the queen went on.
“Tonight I’m bestowing a new honor upon him.”

All eyes turned to Cedric. What would this new honor be? Even Cedric didn’t know!

“Cedric will run my new Training Center for Young Knights, teaching them to be as brave as he is!” the queen stated proudly. The people cheered.

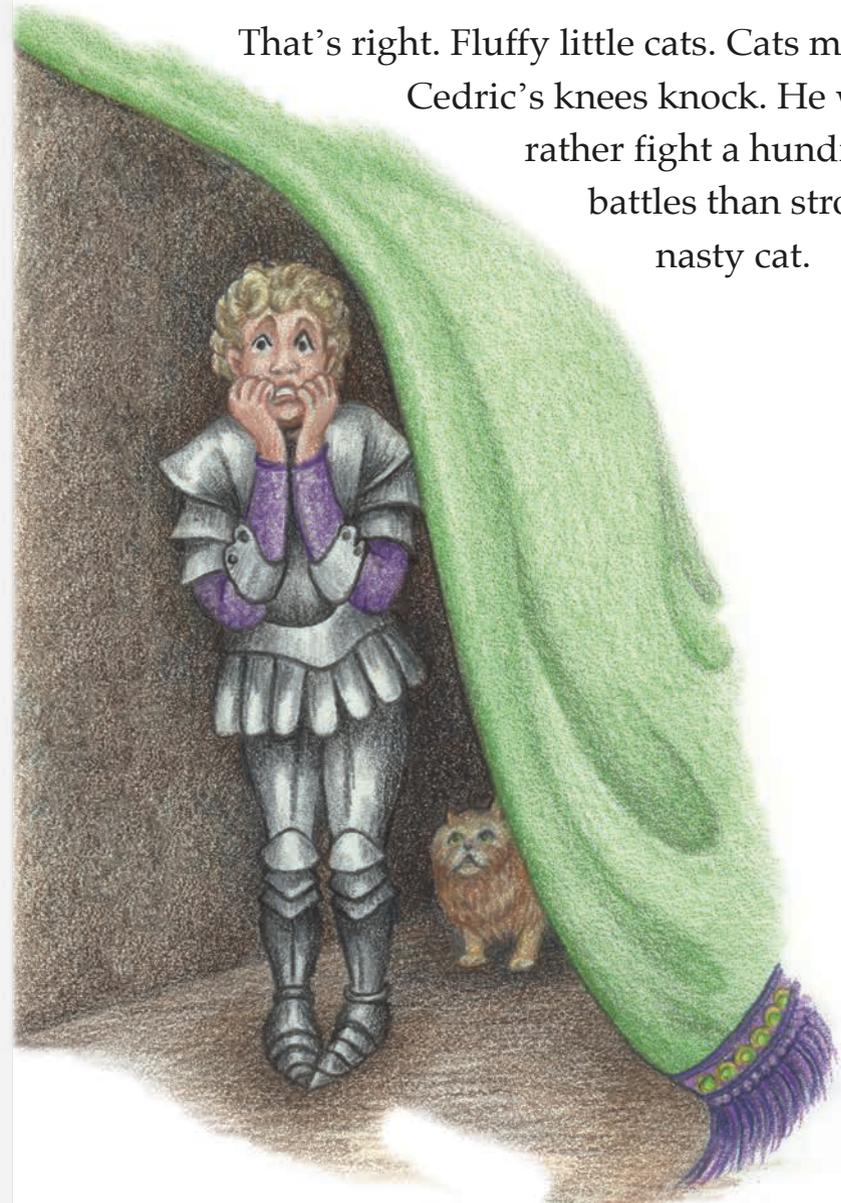
Cedric stood and thanked the queen for her kind words, but he could hardly hear the cheering. Inside, he felt that he didn’t deserve such an honor because he had a secret fear. And that reminded him—where had the queen’s cat gone? His gaze darted from corner to corner.

Where was it? Did no one else notice that it was missing? Was it under his chair? Did it just rub his boot under the table? His hands got sweaty just thinking of it. Oh, why did the queen keep such a horrid beast?

Have you guessed by now what Cedric’s deepest fear was?

Cats.

That’s right. Fluffy little cats. Cats made Cedric’s knees knock. He would rather fight a hundred battles than stroke a nasty cat.



No one in the world knew of Cedric's fear of felines. He had kept it hidden for years.

That night, Cedric barely slept. He tossed and turned in his bed. He pondered his problem. How could he teach young knights to be brave when he himself was so scared of cats?



The next morning, a young page knocked on Cedric's door.



"Princess Purr is missing," said the page. "She escaped at the banquet last night and Queen Jane is asking all knights to join in the hunt to find her."

Cedric's face grew pale.

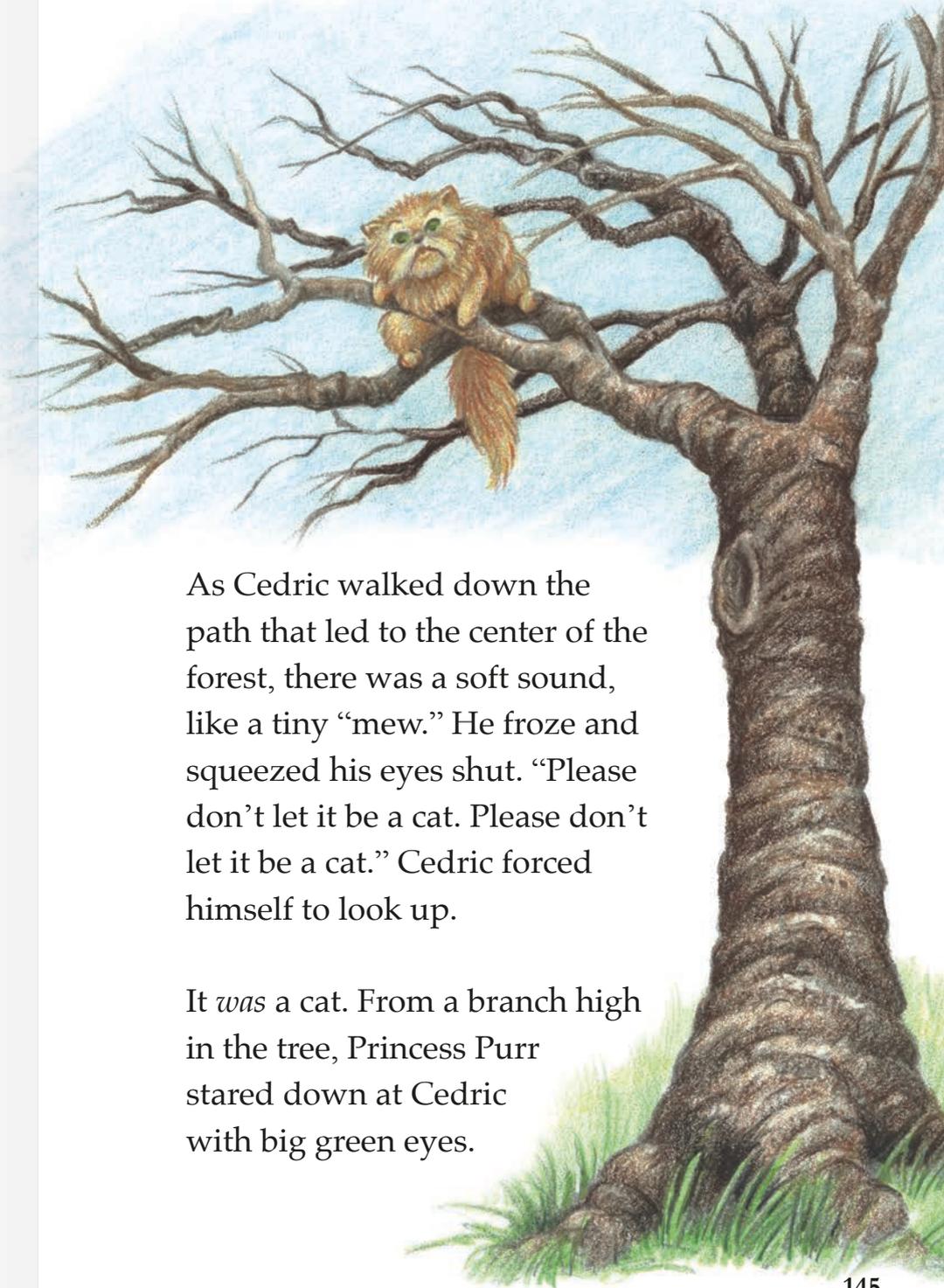
The page kept speaking. "The queen is beside herself with worry. We must find her cat soon! Can you look in Jackknife Forest?"

Cedric swayed and gripped the doorknob so tightly that his knuckles turned white. It would not be good for the page to see him faint.

“I will look for the cat in Jackknife Forest,” Cedric squeaked. He couldn’t think of anything worse than looking for a missing cat, except maybe finding it. But he couldn’t betray the queen.

Jackknife Forest was filled with danger, even during the day. Robbers, snakes, and traps seemed to hide behind every tree. But Cedric wasn’t scared of those things. Instead, he came up with a plan to catch the cat without having to get near it. He stuffed gloves, rope, and a pillowcase into a knapsack and set off.

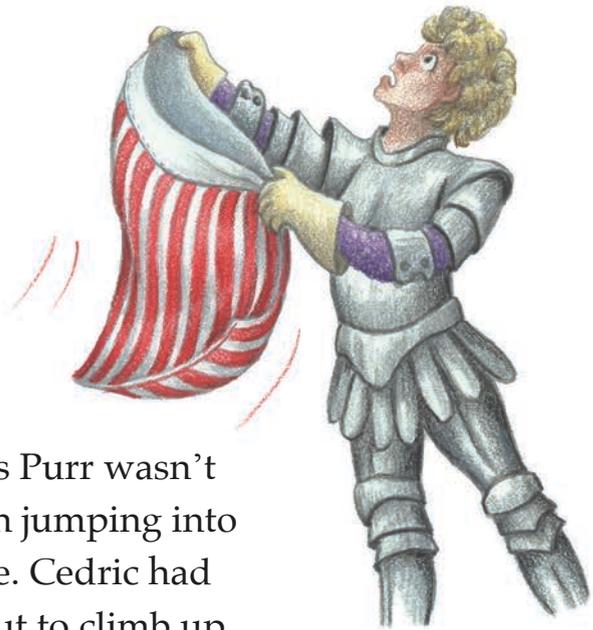
Cedric could hardly grasp the fact that he was hunting for a cat. A cat!



As Cedric walked down the path that led to the center of the forest, there was a soft sound, like a tiny “mew.” He froze and squeezed his eyes shut. “Please don’t let it be a cat. Please don’t let it be a cat.” Cedric forced himself to look up.

It *was* a cat. From a branch high in the tree, Princess Purr stared down at Cedric with big green eyes.

Cedric stared back, filled with dread. He kept one eye on the cat as he slowly reached into his knapsack. He put on his gloves and pulled out the pillowcase. “Here, Princess Purr,” he whispered, holding the pillowcase as far from his body as he could. “Come down now. Jump into this pillowcase.” He was glad that no one could see him trembling.



But Princess Purr wasn't interested in jumping into a pillowcase. Cedric had no choice but to climb up the tree after her. With weak knees and shaky hands, he grabbed one branch after the other, inching closer and closer to the cat. Princess Purr hissed and backed up, staying just out of reach.

Cedric tried to scoop the cat closer to him using the rope. Princess Purr panicked and hooked her needle-sharp claws into Cedric's glove. She hung on for dear life.

“Ah!” cried Cedric when he felt that scary cat hanging from his glove. “Nightmare!”



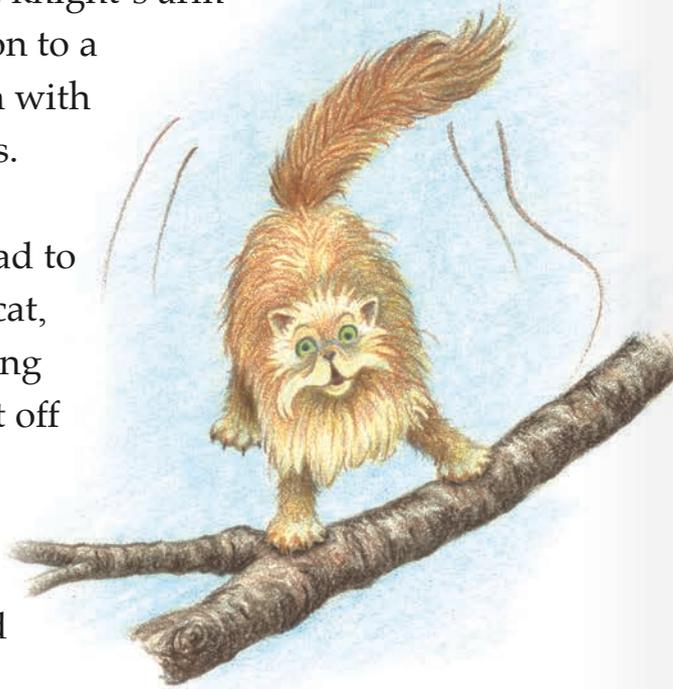
When you have something scary clinging to you, your first instinct is to shake it off, and that's exactly what Cedric did. He shook Princess Purr off his sleeve just like you would shake a creepy spider off your coat.

The cat didn't stand a chance. She flipped off the knight's arm and grabbed on to a nearby branch with her front paws.

Cedric was glad to be free of the cat, but he had flung his glove right off his hand. He watched in dismay as the glove tumbled to the ground.

Now how would he get the cat for the queen? He surely couldn't use his bare hands.

Cedric stared at the horrid dangling cat and plotted how to get her.



“Kee-kee!” A loud screech startled Cedric and the cat. A black hawk soared over their tree, looking for its next meal. Princess Purr puffed her tail in fear and scrambled to get her hind legs on the branch.





“Kee-kee!” the hawk screamed once more as it went right for Princess Purr. The cat cowered as the hawk stretched out its talons—but Cedric beat the

bird at its own game. He grabbed the cat and hugged her tight to his chest. The surprised hawk soared off without its dinner.

Still clutching the trembling cat, Cedric climbed down the tree as fast as he could.

Even after both feet were on the ground, he held the cat tightly. What would happen if he relaxed his grip on her? Would she rip him to shreds? Would she bite him with her sharp, pointy teeth?

Then Cedric remembered the look of panic in the cat’s face when the hawk tried to grab her. He had never seen such fear. He started to feel sorry for the helpless cat.

Cedric took a careful peek at the furball in his arms. Princess Purr was a mess, her fur sticking out every which way.



Cedric spoke softly to her. “I can’t bring you back looking like this. Let’s get you cleaned up for the queen.”

The brave knight sat by the base of a tree. Taking a deep breath, he rubbed the cat's head. He was surprised at how warm and soft she felt. The cat blinked sweetly and purred.



When Cedric had smoothed every bit of the cat's fur, he picked her up and took her safely back to the castle.



Trumpets and cheers rang out as Cedric and the cat neared the castle. The knight kneeled in front of the queen and placed Princess Purr in her arms.

“You saved Princess Purr!” cried Queen Jane, hugging her cat close.

“I was glad to do it,” said Cedric.

On his way home, Cedric ran and shouted. Those who saw him smiled at his excitement. He was ready to start the queen's Training Center for Young Knights! His first lesson for young knights would be “Feel the fear, then do it anyway.” Yes!

When the training center opened, Cedric made Princess Purr the mascot. No one in the kingdom knew why Cedric selected the cat for this honor, and he wasn't telling.

But we know the reason, don't we?



The End



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