

Cat Tales

Book One: Pirates (4,790 words)

Chapter One: eye

A salty breeze blows against a small kitten's whiskers as a dark, ominous shadow falls across the sky. She freezes as she sees her parents swept away by a cacophony of screeching and scratching. Out of the corner of her right eye she sees a glimpse of a fat, black cat, and immediately thinks to run, but she's hesitant knowing that she could totally murder this cat if it did come closer. The cat looked directly at her, and she instantly regretted not running. Suddenly, a beak snaps, and the kitten feels an eerie pain in her right eye. She can't see. She's been blinded. She runs, hissing at anything and everything that she can't recognize, until she finds a suitable bush to hide in. The shadowy figure continues to swoop around her from overhead. She sees no more of the rotund cat, although she still can barely see anything, so he may still be there watching her struggle.

"What a jerk," she thought to herself.

Through the thickness of the ferns, she is able to recognize the devil bird as an unusually large crow, and catches a glimpse of her parents' grey and orange fuzzy faces for the final time. The horrified cat, known as Tuvia, sat on the dry leaves and stared at the dark sky through her newly singular eye. Sadly and dreadfully, she eventually falls into a heartbroken slumber.

Chapter Two: dead mouse

Tuvia awakens the next morning to a lonely cry from deep in the underbrush. As she approaches the sound out of curiosity, she finds a small, scared parrot, and hears her stomach start to grumble.

"Breakfast," she smiles to herself.

She approaches, creeping down as low as she possibly can in the tall grass, inching closer and closer to the parrot until she's able to see he's wounded. The parrot lets out a rather annoying and pathetic squeak, and Tuvia is immediately reminded of the dreaded crow. She sticks out her little claws for the first time, ready to take her revenge on the helpless bird, and, to her luck, a small mouse scampers into her path. The mouse looks at her in horror, and immediately drops down dead out of fear.

"Two for one, a great deal," she grins maniacally.

A small crow spots her from a nearby tree, and chirps aggressively to alert the rest of his flock. The squad of noisy delinquents take to the sky to avoid being next, alerting the parrot that a feline monstrosity is stalking him from somewhere in the grass.

"Squawk," peeped the parrot, trembling. "Who's there?"

He looks over, expecting a huge tiger, but instead gets a fuzzy surprise. He finds an itty bitty kitty cat with claws outstretched and a half-full belly. Tuvia hesitates, taking in the parrot's damaged wing, and decides it wouldn't be fun to eat him because what she really likes is the chase. Tuvia's claws unclench, and she settles down to have a little visit with the parrot.

"Squawk!" The parrot screams. "What are you trying to do here?"

Tuvia says nothing. The bird notices her damaged eye and settles. Knowing this, the parrot is no longer afraid, and stops trembling.

"I am Perrito," the parrot says. "We're both injured, so maybe we can help each other!"

Tuvia is impressed by the little bird's bravery, and decides that she will savor the bird when he is well enough for her to hunt and eat him. Little does she know, though, Tuvia will never be eating this peculiar little bird. Ever.

Chapter Three: tentacle

Over the next few weeks, Tuvia and Perrito found their way out of the dark forest, towards a white sandy beach that they decided to call home. While Tuvia and Perrito were out hunting near the water one afternoon, the two came across a delicious sight. Slowly, they inched closer to get a better look and devise a plan. Tuvia was drawn in by the fishy aroma that was coming from what looked to be a slimy, red jellyfish floating on the surface of the ocean just a few feet away.

Perrito, reading Tuvia's mind as usual, exclaims, "that's a very weird looking jellyfish."

Tuvia sighs disappointedly, "ugh. It's already dead!"

"So?" Perrito retorts.

"I wanted to kill it!" Tuvia hisses, slapping the surface of the waves with her paw.

"You know what," Perrito huffs. "I'm starving. I'm just going to e—"

Perrito was rudely interrupted as a huge tentacle leapt from the water near the bobbing "jellyfish" and clutched his feathers, dragging him out into the ocean.

"Ok," Tuvia says. "Now I'm hungry."

"What in the flat world does that mean?" Yells Perrito before he's pulled under the rough waves.

"The world is not flat, you bird brain!" Tuvia screams as she runs into the water to help her friend.

As the jellyfish's (not jellyfish) grip got tighter and Perrito's life got shorter, Tuvia realized that this was not a jellyfish. This was the Kraken. The Kraken from her parents' stories. The most dangerous monster in the whole world.

A tear ran down her surprisingly furry cheek. Her parents! How she missed them. She wouldn't be able to stand it if she lost her new friend Perrito, too. She sprung into action, leaping towards the monster's pinhead and remembering what her parents told her so long ago. "Go for the eye," she smiles to herself.

As she lands on the top of the Kraken's head, Tuvia outstretches her claws (her new favorite activity), going directly for the eye. Perrito is still struggling in the Kraken's grasp as he starts moving farther out to sea. Tuvia doubles down, scratching through the Kraken's huge, ugly eye and blinding him completely. The monster roars in fury, and makes the move to devour Perrito whole, but Tuvia kicks him in the neck, and he falls back into the ocean. The Kraken screeches in pain, not from Tuvia's doing, but from the substantial amount of salt water that was now enveloping his wounded eye. Tuvia can relate, of course, but she doesn't care.

Suddenly, a mysterious dog appears to the side of the motley crew, surfing on top of a tire that has popped and is slowly disintegrating into the salty sea. Perrito calls for help, but Tuvia, who enjoys being the

hero even when she really does need help, screams, “we don’t need you!” The dog ignores her, seeing that the floundering pair was in real danger, and slowly makes his way over.

“It seems that you do,” the dog laughs, and Tuvia scowls.

The dog closes his eyes and focuses on the unruly, struggling Kraken, energetically sending more and more salt into his sorry face. Slowly, the Kraken’s grip on Perrito loosens as he loses steam and retreats to his cave on the ocean floor. The wet, orange dog turns to Tuvia and Perrito, allowing his tire to disappear beneath the choppy waves.

“I am Tobo!” The dog exclaims in a goofy voice.

Before Tuvia and Perrito could reply, a huge wave tramples the trio, knocking Tuvia and Perrito completely unconscious.

Chapter Four: anchor

The water around the unconscious Perrito and Tuvia starts to tremble and ripple, and suddenly, a pirate ship begins to emerge from the depths of the sea. As the ship roars to the surface, Perrito and Tuvia miraculously find themselves right in the center of the poop deck, saved from drowning just in the nick of time! They slowly wake up and start to get their bearings, immediately noticing a peculiar group of frog people emerging from below the deck in every direction. A purple-ish frog with bulging eyes leans over to Tuvia, asking with reverence, "what is your name, Fair Maiden?"

Tuvia, still shocked, retorts, "why should I trust you?"

Unbothered, the frog explains, "This is Tovo's ship. His spirit lives on in the sails, directing us towards adventure, scalawags like yourselves who need our help and, most importantly, flies!"

"Ew, what?" Tuvia hisses. "I still don't get why I should trust you."

The frog ribbits in dismay. "Well, you don't have much of a choice. We are your crew, now and forever. You don't want to? Too bad. If you don't claim us as your crew, we will leave, and you will drown."

"What about me?" Squawked Perrito, much louder and with more fear than he intended.

The frogs all erupted into a cacophony of laughter that shook the entire ship. "She clearly brought you here as a feast, ye matey!"

"My name is Tuvia, so don't call me 'ye matey'" Tuvia thundered, ready to take control of the crew. "And he is NOT for dinner, so BACK OFF!" She hissed, and viciously scratched the air with her paws, terrifying the frog crew.

"Whoa!" Said a teal frog as he backed off from the angry Tuvia, inspiring the rest of the frogs to shrink back, as well. "We don't want any trouble!"

A small frog, seemingly unafraid, hopped forward. "You're going to be a great captain."

Tuvia stared down, annoyed at the teeny, groveling frog. She was surprised he wasn't still a tadpole. He looked so pathetic, and Tuvia didn't feel that he had what it took to be a real, mean pirate. "Do we have to keep that one?" Tuvia implored. "On my ship, we will be ruthless. We have no time for babies and losers."

"Absolutely, Captain Tuvia," said the purple frog, quickly grabbing the teeny disturbance by his webbed foot. "We are fully at your discretion."

"No!" The teeny frog cried. "I promise! I can be angwy too!"

Tuvia chuckled as the little frog put on his best pouty face, and decided to change her tune. She would be a ruthless captain, but she would also be forgiving.

“Fine,” Tuvia said. “You may stay, and I hope that none of you frogs ever forget my generosity! Next time, I won’t be so nice. Now, let’s set sail!”

Chapter Five:

Tuvia and the weird frog people, known as the Fly-Eyes, which offended Tuvia greatly, had many adventures together on the open ocean. Still, every few weeks, the crew had to take the time to stop in nearby frog towns to refuel and murder flies. Tuvia and Perrito were still not interested in eating flies, even though the frogs begged them to try it just once. Tuvia said she preferred eating the rats on the ship, and Perrito was fine with the fruit the frogs kept on board just in case the crew started to come down with cases of scurvy. This, of course, never happened, since they're frogs, but how would they know? It's better to be safe than sorry. Overall, Tuvia was starting to accept her life as a pirate, and Perrito was very grateful that Tuvia convinced the crew that he was not to be feasted upon.

The frog town that was the largest the pirates stopped in was called Toadstool, though it was still a pretty quaint village, all things considered. Tuvia loved coming here because she thought it was the best place to pillage, and was very excited for the ship's stop there one seemingly normal Friday afternoon. Once the crew docked, Tuvia leaped from the boat, landing on her feet, as all good cats should. She was ready to go on a looting spree and didn't have the patience to wait for Perrito and the rest of the crew to join her. They would just slow her down, anyway. Tuvia was starting to think through her first targets of the day when she was abruptly interrupted by a large, jolly Tuxedo cat wearing full fishing gear. The cat had a large fish dangling from the hook on his pole in one hand, and an overflowing cooler full of other fish in the other. Tuvia was impressed, but also believed she could do better if she had a fishing pole herself. She was simply the best at everything, even things that she hadn't tried before.

"Welcome to Toadstool!" The large cat announced. "My name is Julio! It's great seeing another cat around these parts, and I know you're going to love it. They have great catnip just east of the village, and the best kitty litter at the Croak-tel down yonder. Maybe we—"

Tuvia interrupted Julio by snatching the large fish off the end of his hook, swallowing it whole and then spitting out the bones at his feet. "This is just too easy," she thought to herself. "I don't even have to search for food, it just comes to me now!"

"Hey!" Julio cried, stomping his feet on the ground and shaking the entire dock. "That was my biggest catch of the day! That's not very nice. You should at least pay me for it!"

"I don't pay for fish," Tuvia said harshly. "I don't pay for anything. You clearly don't know who I am, Mr. Julio, but oh boy are you gonna learn today."

Julio shuffled side to side, starting to feel wary of the one-eyed, rude, mysterious kitten. Julio had never met anyone who didn't want to be his friend, so he was confused by the cat's gruffness with him. Of course he wanted to learn who she was! She was the first cat he had seen in ages.

"My crew and I," Tuvia gestured broadly as Perrito and the frog people started in to file in behind her on the dock. "We are here to pillage this village."

Freddy the Frog, who rather annoyed Tuvia, licked his eye in agreement.

Tuvia rolled her eye, "I thought I told you to walk the plank last week, Freddy!"

One of the orange speckled frogs stepped forward, "Sorry, ma'am, but too many of us have walked the plank recently. And Freddy here? He's the fly collector! We'd starve without him!"

Tuvia sighed. "You're right — I've been very cruel. Freddy? Can you swim?"

He shook his head, looking nervous. "Well, figure it out," Tuvia screamed. "Go get the rest of the crew. We need everyone here and ready to pillage as soon as possible!"

Freddy slinked off into the water, simply hoping for the best.

"Well," the enormous, and very cute, Julio finally responds. "I grew up in this village! You're not going to take my home away from me!"

"Watch me," Tuvia said, motioning to her rambunctious crew to follow her into the village to officially start the pillage.

Chapter Five-and-a-half: fish bone

Julio immediately started hatching a plan. However, he was pretty sure the village was going to be destroyed, so it felt like a lost cause. Then, he remembered, he was hungry. He was always hungry, but the one-eyed cat distracted him for a good five minutes. Now, he was really hungry. This was more important. He zoned in on the fishy aroma emanating from the cat's ship, and decided that he would float on over and come aboard. Julio easily climbs aboard the ship, helping up the poor Freddy the Frog on his way. Freddy decides to go take a nap, thankful for his feline savior, and immediately starts snoring. Julio takes the opportunity to explore the ship on his own while Tuvia and the frogs are away.

It doesn't take Julio long to find the piles and piles of juicy, salty fish. He's in heaven. Julio decides, for the first time on his life, that he snack on the fish instead of feasting. After spending forty seconds on his first fish, he decides to explore the ship more to see what that evil cat was planning on doing in Toadstool. As he lumbers across the floor, a few of the floor boards creak, and he looks back to see Freddy the Frog still snoring loudly. The boat was made of several pieces of long wood, curving up to the deck, and a flight of stairs that leads him out of the hull of the ship. On the deck, he sees three tall masts holding many flags,

more than Julio can count. Mostly because he doesn't know how to count. The deck is super sticky due to the frogs constant licking or "cleaning" of it, unbeknownst to Julio. His paw made an unusual sticking sound, noticing that his foot was going upwards on a rising wooden beam.

He quickly puts both feet on the rising board, though his front paws are still stuck to the ground. He outstretches his claws on his front leg and, in an immediate pulse of gravity, he does a front flip and hits his head on the sticky ground. He slowly lifts his head up and looks around. He notices the rising wooden plank has revealed a secret tunnel that has the most delicious scent coming from inside that Julio has ever smelled. He can't help but venture inside...

Chapter Six

It had been almost five years since Tuvia had become captain of Tobo's ship, but Tuvia never forgot her parents and how she lost her eye. Although they had docked in Toadstool a few times, Tuvia and the crew had never ventured all the way to the forests. Tuvia immediately had a strange feeling come over her, one that she hadn't felt in five years.

"Stop!" Tuvia yelled, and all of the frog people stumbled over themselves. "This is where it all began. I know this pla—" But she was rudely interrupted by a "CAW" that literally shook the air around them. Tuvia outstretched her claws, jumped to all fours, and broke into a sprint after the horrifying sound. In her mind's eye, she sees her parents' fuzzy faces as the dreaded crow's "caw" continues to echo through the dark bog.

"Where are you going in such a rush?" Asked a local, salesman Toadstool frog, hopping close to Tuvia's tail. "...without buying our new and improved fly catcher! Catches flies and —"

But Tuvia wasn't listening. She bolted to the familiar underbrush that shielded her from danger as a kitten. She bumped into a fly, completely ignoring it without hesitation. "Wait!" Screamed the little fly. "Please help to protect me!" Tuvia started at him. He was wasting her precious time when she was so close to avenging the deaths of her parents. She swatted him and he yelled, "Don't go near the crow! He'll eat you if you're not a frog! Or have wings! And especially if you're a fly who's all alone!"

Tuvia laughed. "Luckily, I'm not alone. I have Perrito and my frog army, you poop for brains!

"Hey!" The fly grimaced. "That's what I had for dinner!"

"Well," Tuvia smiled. "You are what you eat!" And then, she ate him, right there on the spot. She shrugged and Perrito, who was accustomed to Tuvia's cruelty and lack of impulse control, just chuckled. "You ate a fly!"

"No," she said. "I AM a fly!"

And, with that, she sprouted wings and took flight, ready to take on the crow. Perrito took off behind her, unsure about what he was getting himself into as usual.

Chapter Seven

"I see the big tree!" Perrito yelled over the rush of the wind.

"I know you see it, bird brain," Tuvia scoffed. "It's right in front of you!"

All of the sudden, Tuvia started falling. "Where are you going?" Perrito shouted, looking down on Tuvia for the first time in their friendship. A moment he would surely not forget. "I forgot how to fly!" She yelled as she continued falling down, down, down.

"You should've eaten more flies," Perrito yelled desperately.

"I know," Tuvia cried out. "Well, whatever. We might have to go on foot!"

Perrito sighed and yelled down to Tuvia who had landed safely on her feet on the ground. "I'm already at the tree. I'll just fly up there now and you can catch up!"

"Don't leave me!" Tuvia yelled, but Perrito was already gone.

"Well, that's out of character," she thought to herself, embarrassed. Perrito squawked down, "hurry up! Just climb up the tree," looking down at her for the second time in their friendship. Wow, what a wonderful feeling. Tuvia sighs, stretches out her claws and starts the long, difficult climb up the huge tree to the dreaded crow's nest.

When she finally makes it to the top, Perrito squawks, "whoa — took you long enough!"

"I can't fly!" Tuvia managed, as she collapsed, exhausted in the top branches of the huge tree. Perrito laughed, and the friends slowly made their way to the entrance of the nest once Tuvia was able to catch her breath.

"Whoa, those are some huge eggs," Perrito noted as he and Tuvia started to peer into the nest.

"No, you're just small," Tuvia retorted, though she knew that they really were enormous, but would never admit to Perrito that she was scared of anything. Even the crow who took the life of her parents.

Chapter Eight

The stick walls creaked as Tuvia and Perrito made their way to the titanic eggs at the nest's center.

"Don't go near my eggs!" Screamed a booming voice with a distinctive British accent. Perrito immediately screamed and Tuvia shushed him, annoyed that Perrito wasn't strong enough to conceal his fear in the face of real danger. Without hesitation, Tuvia looked up at the crow, who was facing in the other direction, unsure where the intruders were coming from in the dank darkness.

"Where are you?" The crow squawked. "I am going to smash you with my talons!" Unfortunately for the crow, he had been napping in the darkest section of the nest, and seemed to be in a blind rage so destructive that he couldn't get his bearings. But, with a deep breath, the crow gathered himself and stepped into the light. The crow shouted, "Now!" And with the loudest "caw" Tuvia and Perrito had ever heard in either of their lives, followed by a slightly quieter CRACK! A large cage made out of sticks identical to those comprising the nest fell down on the pair, trapping them underneath.

"Let us out!" Perrito pleaded, but the crow only laughed.

"Nope," the crow shrugged. "Now, I need to get back to my nap and wait for my eggs to hatch."

The crow walked over to his darkened sleeping area, plopped down, and resumed his snoring.

"What now?" Perrito asked, and Tuvia slapped her face with her paw.

"You can slip through the bars," Tuvia said slowly, not hiding her annoyance, "Then, unlock the door and we'll be free."

Perrito looked at the door, confused. "But the lock is made of wood! I can't open the door!" Tuvia couldn't contain her anger. She screamed. She screamed so loud that it woke the crow. The crow swung his head around so carelessly that he smashed it into the cage hard, nearly breaking it in half. Perrito launched backwards into Tuvia with his feathery butt.

"Get your feathery butt out of my face!" Snapped Tuvia.

"Get your face out of my feathery butt!" Squawked Perrito. Tuvia outstretched her claws to remind Perrito where he stood, and he immediately stepped back, apologizing profusely. He was scared stiff of Tuvia, and knew the only way that they could defeat the terrifying crow is if he followed her orders exactly.

Reestablishing her dominance, Tuvia smiled and turned her attention back on the very dizzy crow. "Now's the time," she said to Perrito as she pushed him out of the parrot-sized crack in the cage that the crow opened with his huge head. "Peck through the lock and open the cage door so I can get out!"

"Couldn't you just claw your way out?" Perrito asked.

"Yes," Tuvia sighed. "But that sounds like too much effort."

The crow seemed like it was starting to regain its composure, so Tuvia and Perrito went back on the alert. Then, he plopped down and immediately started snoring again. Perrito and Tuvia shrugged at one another, and Perrito quietly opened the cage with his beak. The crow, who was fake sleeping, jumped up and started flapping his wings and cawing wildly.

“Time to go,” said Tuvia, as the two watched the crow starting to tear apart his nest due to his confusion and extreme flapping.

“I’ll take you up on that offer,” Perrito agreed. They run to the opening of the nest, but Tuvia tripped on a twig at the exit and started to fall down, down, down. She really wish she found another fly to eat right about now, but, luckily for her, Perrito flew down, down, down to grab her by the tail about twenty feet from the ground.

“I thought those talons were just so you could pick up a grape,” Tuvia said.

“Hey!” Perrito yelled. “I can pick up two grapes — one in each talon.”

“Just don’t drop me,” Tuvia interrupted.

“I saw the ship when I was flying down,” Perrito said. “It’s right this way, up the beach!” He pointed his talons to the east, where he was just able to make out the dot of their ship in the choppy water. But, he quickly realized this pointing made Tuvia once again, fall down, down, down.

Chapter Nine

Luckily for Tuvia, she landed right on top of a giant palm tree! Perrito swooped down and started apologizing profusely. Tuvia couldn't even look at him, "I just told you not to drop me, bird brain!" Tuvia was really angry this time.

"How is it really my fault?" Perrito asked.

"Because you dropped me!" Tuvia screamed.

Suddenly, Tuvia caught a whiff of something very peculiar, yet oddly familiar. Perrito, relieved that Tuvia was no longer laser-focused on his error, started following her to the center of the extremely large palm tree. Following the scent, Tuvia pushes through the large palm fronds, and is surprised to find a number of fur balls, still wet and warm to the touch. Tuvia went in for a nice, long sniff, and Perrito couldn't hold back his disgust.

"What are you doing?" Perrito screeched, hiding his face under his colorful wings.

"Shush!" Tuvia cautioned, though not angrily, for she was all of the sudden in a surprisingly good mood. These hairballs smelled of something very familiar and comforting, something that reminded her of the home that she lost so many years ago.

Chapter Ten

She took another big whiff of the hairballs. Her parents! That's what it was! Her parents had definitely been here.

"Tuvia," said Perrito as he noticed her wobbling back and forth, but it was too late. Tuvia had already been swept away by an absolute tsunami of childhood memories...

Tuvia's eyes looked focused on the palm tree, but she was dreaming, so it was more of a blank stare. She feels a rush of wind, and grey and orange fur starts whirling around her like a tornado. She looked up to the stars above her, and they start to rearrange themselves into her parents' smiling faces. The image shrinks and changes so that she sees them standing on a mushroom, hawking up some of the fur balls that she saw strewn throughout the huge palm tree. Then, her parents turn directly to look at Tuvia, saying, "I'm so happy that we got away from the crow, but we will never stop searching for our baby! Our poor baby Tuvia we miss her more than anything!"

Tuvia stood in awe, trying everything possible to try to get closer to the mirage in the sky. Then, the stars started to shimmer and the image of her parents drifted away in the fur ball tornado. Tuvia was greeted by the familiar voice of Tobo, who told her, "scents bring back memories. These scents will help you unlock the secrets of your past!"

"Tuvia!" Perrito yelled, shaking her from her dream state and bringing her back to reality. "Wake up!" Tuvia startles awake so abruptly that she knocks Perrito out of the palm tree, but he immediately flies back up. Sometimes it's nice to be a bird.

The palm tree started moving down into the earth, bringing Tuvia to stand firmly on the ground as it went. She examined the world around her and asked Perrito, "Where the heck are we now?"

"I think you mean WHEN are we..." Perrito says, slowly.

"No" Tuvia rolled her eyes, refusing to believe such nonsense. "Where?!"

Tuvia quickly picked up a scent, and told Perrito to follow her. Perrito says he'll fly along beside her because there's no need for him to walk. Tuvia is about to tell him she doesn't care what he does when a huge roar breaks out in the distance. Tuvia is then forced to consider that Perrito may be right — something was very different about this place. This was the land of the dinosaurs.