

## **Cat Sister**

**By Terri Mullholland**

My mother gave birth the same night as the cat, pushing me and my sister out into the world accompanied by feline cries. The cat insisted on being in the same room, arranging her litter around my mother's feet. My mother didn't mind; the cat was a single parent too.

I heard whispered conversations over the years, pieced the information together. I learned my aunt had found my mother nursing only me, hadn't realised that there were two babies. My twin sister had been discovered the next day, buried among the litter of kittens, suckling on the mother cat. Her eyes, bright blue and open, giving her away.

My sister was late learning how to walk. While I was toddling around, she was still crawling. Even after she learned to stand and move on two feet, she would drop to all fours as soon as our mother left the room. I never told anyone; it was our secret.

Her furry brothers and sisters would take her out into the garden to teach her things. She learned how to retract and extend her claws, how to climb, and how to hunt. My sister would show me her new skills and I would watch in fascination. I'd try and do the claw thing myself with my bitten fingernails and fail.

As a teenager, she went off the rails. She missed school to sleep most of the day, curled up in a ball in our shared bedroom. Every night my sister disappeared, climbing out of the bedroom window, jumping down to the fence below. In the morning, she would appear on the window ledge, wiping blood and feathers from her mouth.

The teachers said she must have got in with the wrong crowd. They suspected drugs.

I knew this wasn't the case. I loved my sister. I missed her when she went out at night. I'd leave her a saucer of milk under the bed for when she got in, and she'd lap it up before telling me of her adventures.

She got pregnant at fifteen. Refused to tell anyone who the father was. Late at night, she whispered it to me. We watched him from our bedroom window. Every morning, he'd pace back and forth outside the house, until my mother chased him away and he never came back again.

My niece is beautiful. She has bright blue eyes, like my sister, and sleek black fur, like her father.

END

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