

The Boy and the Cat

The boy was awakened by a cat who had climbed in through the slightly open window, jumped onto his legs, sat down, and began staring intently into the child's eyes.

The boy lay in a hospice ward for those terminally ill with cancer — after chemotherapy, which hadn't helped, only delayed death, prolonging the suffering.

Through the hospital window, a starry summer night sky could be seen, and the cicadas sang loudly and peacefully.

"Hi, cat," the boy whispered faintly, happy for the visit of an unexpected friend. The cat kept staring without blinking — as if hypnotizing — and didn't move.

An ordinary black-and-white fluffy cat with orange eyes, in which stardust shimmered.

"Don't speak. Don't waste your strength," the cat said mentally.

The boy thought for a moment that it was a dream.

"No," the cat replied. "Not yet. Come with me."

And before the boy could open his mouth, he was already standing — dressed and astonished — beneath a clear blue sky, in an endless green field, where not far off bloomed and shone like the sun a single sunflower.

"Yes, my young friend, I see — you're surprised, and you have a thousand questions for me," the cat said, still speaking into his mind.

"But believe me, soon you won't need them — after you see the door. I'll teach you, if you want, of course." The boy felt the cat smile. And he nodded.

"Then let's go," said the cat, and before them appeared a door — just an ordinary front door.

"Will you open it?" the cat asked, his tail twitching.

And the boy opened the door. A door to another world. What he saw next — cannot be put into words.

Petals of star-flowers unfolded at his feet as soon as he took the first step into that world, and he froze in silent awe at the unearthly beauty.

"This is not just beauty — this is what you carry inside," came the soft voice of the cat in the boy's mind. And he created a new door.

"There are worlds where imagination gives up.

And no dream can reach them, my young friend. And this is only the beginning. I'll show you more — and you'll decide. Let's go."

How many moons hung in the starry sky of that world — the boy didn't manage to count. The cat opened a new door and looked back, eyes twinkling: "Quickly now." The boy laughed and ran toward a new world.

"This is the Realm of Star Gardens — the center of all creation," the cat said. "This is where everything begins. This is not the end, my young friend — this is the source."

They walked along a path paved with light, soft as the gaze of someone who loves without conditions.

The space above them stretched into a shining scattering of stars upon the winding branches of galaxies.

Stars were flowers: they shimmered and pulsed, as if in rhythm with the boy's heartbeat.

He walked, breathless from the beauty, feeling the breath of that world, and it seemed to him that every star sang its name — and in every star, a fragment of his soul.

The cat followed him with the calm look of a local resident. Only the stardust shimmering in his eyes revealed him as a bearer of cosmic wisdom.

Every night spent there was a salvation from pain, and every morning awakening — torture for such a young being.

And only the faith and knowledge that there existed — eased his suffering and gave him strength to see his mother and father — and say goodbye.

Because the boy grew weaker every day, and his days in this world were numbered.

He could no longer lift his arm — thin as a twig, with blackened veins. He spoke to his parents in a faint whisper, and smiled sadly, looking at them with wet eyes, where the light of all the star gardens still gleamed.

“Don’t cry, mom. It’s going to be okay,” the boy whispered, falling asleep from the exhaustion of enduring the pain devouring his body.

“Children, sick with cancer...

Who needs children to suffer like this? What kind of god must one be to torture children like this?...” ...thought the father — a silent witness to the betrayal of reality itself — watching his dying son and his wife sobbing from helplessness.

How does one explain this evil, which has become normal in this world? How can those with pure souls — rot in hospital beds under IVs and wither from chemo like cut flowers?..

These questions remained unanswered in his heart, where his faith smoldered — consumed by the quiet fire of rage.

That same night, when they met again — stepping through another door into yet another incredible world — the boy made his choice.

He heard the music of that world. It wasn’t complex, but it sounded as if someone deep inside him remembered what it was to love — before birth.

And — the sad, inexplicable silence between the notes. When you feel sorrow... but can’t explain why.

“I’m not going back,” the boy said aloud.

“Are you sure?” the cat asked, narrowing his eyes, looking up at him.

“You can talk?” the boy was surprised.

“Well, you know... I had to keep the mystery alive,” the cat answered playfully and rubbed his side and tail against the boy’s leg.

“You already know how to open doors. From here — you’re on your own,” he said in farewell.

The boy knelt, gently stroked the cat. And in the next instant, the cat vanished.

Yes. From here — I go alone, the boy thought, and created a door with his mind, just as the cat had taught him. And beyond that door — other worlds were calling him.

The boy passed away quietly in his sleep. And the cat sat on the windowsill, watching the shimmering stars in the bottomless night sky.

August 23, 2025

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