

CAT WOMAN



a short story for **English**
reading and speaking

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Introduction

Can people turn into animals at will?

Are there any folk tales or urban myths of people turning into animals in your country?

Would you like to turn into any animal at will?

What animal would you be?

Cat Woman

James thrust his hands deeper into his coat pockets and wrapped himself in the heat inside.

He clenched his hands into two fists and pulled his shoulders up.

The station platform was deserted.

Just at the far end, someone rummaging through a bin. At least they had more suitable clothing on than him. What looked like a big comforter being used as a scarf to cover their head.

He glanced up at the station clock.

One minute and the train would arrive. Hopefully, on time.

These late nights in the office were beginning to get to him. He was starting to feel like a rat on a wheel.

He got home and was then too wired to go to bed immediately.

So he sat up for an hour or so, scrolling through useless stuff online.

Then the following morning, he felt like death. And do it all again.

“This is the last train.”

James jolted and turned to the voice.

There in front of him, the homeless person collecting trash from the bins.

He was surprised to find that it was a woman.

“Oh, yes,” he said. “Right.”

How did you engage with a homeless person? What kind of things did you say to them?

And this woman was ancient too. Dozens of lines ran across her face.

She opened her mouth and beamed a smile at him. She had no teeth.

“The last train,” she said again.

“Yes,” said James.

Was she waiting for him to give her something? He had some change. He could give her that.

James pulled out his phone.

An easy distraction and he could just stare at the screen until the bag lady left him alone.

He checked to see any messages from anyone and saw a news link. He clicked it.

A news story of another killing in the city. This time an old

man was out walking his dog. The usual lurid details.

How the lacerations resembled that of the claws of a large cat.

But no wild animals had been reported missing from the city zoo.

James clicked something else. But in the corner of his eye, he could still see the old woman staring at him.

He turned to her.

“Can I help you with something?” he asked her. Not altogether unfriendly, but said with just the right amount of authority to imply that he wanted her to leave.

“Are you alone?” she asked him. Her eyes twinkled in the light, a yellowy-green colour. And her smile. Not exactly an open, friendly smile, more predatory, waiting for an opening.

James was taken aback by this question.

He let out a laugh. A single exhalation of air.

“What? Yes, I’m alone.”

The woman nodded back at him, grinning her toothless smile at him.

James turned away. He looked at the clock again. Checked the same time on his phone.

Where was this damn train?

Then he heard cackling.

He almost turned. But he knew it was that crazy old bag lady.

Don't pay her any more attention. Just keep walking to the far end of the platform.

Hopefully, she wouldn't get on the train. She was just here to rummage through the trash cans.

He had a strong urge to look over his shoulder and make sure she wasn't shuffling along behind him. Instead, he pulled his phone up and clicked on the screen.

A video link was sent to a group he was in.

He clicked it, and it showed a news anchor at the scene of the latest attack. A dark, deserted street — *well, usually deserted, now filled with news people, cops and paramedics* — and the anchor with perfect hair and a serious tone and expression.

She droned on about the latest attack.

James pulled the screen away from his face. The cops would catch him. No doubt. They always found these maniacs.

“Why you on your own?”

James spun around and there she was again.

Grey bird-nest hair sprawled out from her head. Her grey-green eyes twinkled back at him.

“Look, I don’t mean to be rude,” said James. “But what do you want?”

She grinned back at him.

But this time he noticed teeth.

Maybe he missed that before. But he was sure she was completely toothless the first time he looked at her.

Whitish little stumps, like sawn-off molars in her mouth. All the same size. All near identical.

And her tongue. Large and pink with stubs on it.

She was grotesque.

“But why...”

The woman’s mouth opened wider, and the words dissolved into a wailing kind of cry.

James backed away from her, unable to comprehend what exactly he was looking at.

He glanced around the station platform, hoping to find another person. Someone to walk up to and start talking to.

The woman edged closer to him, taking tiny steps that made him feel less safe, less secure, even though he towered over her in height.

"All alone," she purred back at him. Her grin spread wider

across her face.

Her teeth.

This time whiter than before, and sharper. Like perfectly arranged knives filing out from her bright red gums.

And the tongue, it flicked across her teeth, the barbs like tiny little cups to catch every drop of fluid in her mouth.

James' back hit the barrier.

He was at the end of the platform. And the woman continued to creep towards him, toying with him, enjoying his vulnerability.

“Get away from me,” James tried to call out. But his words came out of his mouth like a tiny squeak.

The woman's tongue flicked across her fangs. Bigger and sharper now. Like daggers.

Then she reached out with one arm, and her hand, covered in fine greyish hairs, flicked out her fingers. And from the fingers flicked sharp claws like curved blades.

James tried to scream.

Then the woman pounced on him.

Reading Comprehension Questions

Who are the characters in this story?

Where does the story take place?

What time of day is it?

Is it cold or warm during this story?

Does the train station platform have many people waiting there?

Who can James see at the far end of the platform?

What is this person doing when James first sees them?

Why is James going home so late?

Does he enjoy his lifestyle?

What is the first thing the homeless woman says to James?

What does James notice about her teeth?

How does James react?

Why does he pull out his mobile phone?

What news does he see on his phone?

What is the next thing the homeless woman asks James?

Describe the old woman's hair and eyes.

What happens to the old woman's teeth?

How does the story end?

True or False?

Look at all the statements below and say if they are true or false.

The station platform was crowded

The homeless person was rummaging through a bin

James was dressed appropriately for the weather

James felt tired due to late nights in the office

James was not able to sleep when he got home

James went online until late when he got home every night

James felt fresh in the morning

The homeless person was a man

James had a conversation with the homeless person

The homeless person was young

James offered money to the homeless person

James checked his phone to avoid conversation

There was a killing in the city mentioned in a news story

The killing was thought to be done by a wild animal

The homeless person's smile was friendly

James laughed when the homeless person asked if he was

alone

James heard cackling behind him

James wanted the homeless person to get on the train

James turned around and saw the homeless person had teeth

The homeless person cried loudly

Check your answers at the end of this lesson plan!

Essential Vocabulary

thrust	clenched	platform
deserted	rummaging	comforter
wired	scrolling	jolted
engage	ancient	dozens
beamed	distraction	lurid
lacerations	resembled	authority
imply	twinkled	predatory
exhalation	cackling	urge
shuffling	news anchor	deserted
paramedics	droned	maniacs
spun around	sprawled	grotesque
dissolved	wailing	comprehend
glanced	towered over	purred
grin	barbs	fluid
barrier	creep	toying
vulnerability	squeak	fangs
daggers	blades	pounced

There may be a lot of new or unfamiliar vocabulary to you in the story. This is the perfect time to get to know these new and strange words and phrases.

Write down all the new words and phrases in your vocabulary

notebook. Look up the meaning of the new vocabulary in a dictionary or online and write down the meaning next to the word or phrase.

It should look something like this:

Thrust – *force used to push or drive something forward.*

Clenched – *tightly gripped or held.*

Then write a sentence of your own that uses the new word or phrase correctly.

John thrust forward through the crowd of people.

Charlotte clenched her fists in anger.

If you do this correctly, it will help you learn many new words and phrases. This will build your English vocabulary and writing down all the words and phrases, making sentences of your own, will all help you to remember all of this new vocabulary.

What Is The Meaning?

This is a big test on all the Essential Vocabulary from the story.

Match the words below with the right meaning on the right.
There are 50 words!

Check the right answers at the end of the lesson plan...

Word	Meaning
Thrust	Very old or from a long time ago
Clenched	Excited, overstimulated, highly-strung
Platform	Person who presents the news on television
Deserted	The act of breathing out
Rummaging	Shocking or sensational in a disturbing way
Comforter	Crying out loudly or making a long, high-pitched sound
Wired	Strong desire or impulse to do something
Scrolling	People with extreme or uncontrollable behaviour
Jolted	Cuts or tears in skin or flesh
Engage	Raised surface used as a stage

	or base
Ancient	Strange or ugly in appearance or shape
Dozens	Suggest or hint at something indirectly
Beamed	Relating to preying or hunting for food
Distraction	Stretched out or lying in an awkward or untidy way
Lurid	Spoke or made a sound in a monotonous tone
Lacerations	Moving with a dragging or shuffling sound
Resembled	State of being open to harm or damage
Authority	Wide smile showing teeth
Imply	Flat, thin, cutting objects, such as a knife or sword
Twinkled	Point or pointed part projecting backward from a main point
Predatory	High-pitched, short, sharp sound
Exhalation	Radiated or shone with happiness or pride
Cackling	Quickly looked at or cast one's eyes over
Urge	Playing or messing around with

	in a casual manner
Shuffling	Abandoned or left with no one else
News anchor	Substance that flows easily and continuously
Paramedics	Disappeared or vanished into nothing
Droned	Understand or grasp the meaning of
Maniacs	Force used to push or drive something forward
Spun around	Short knives or blades used as weapons
Sprawled	Structure or obstacle that blocks or separates
Grotesque	Power to make decisions or enforce rules
Dissolved	Stood tall and imposing over
Wailing	A type of bed covering for warmth
Comprehend	Long, sharp teeth, especially in a snake or other animal
Glanced	Move slowly and quietly in a stealthy or frightening way
Towered over	High-pitched, harsh laugh
Purred	Searching through disorganized items to find something

Grin	Something that takes one's attention away from something else
Barbs	Participate or become involved in an activity
Fluid	Sudden, forceful movement or shake
Barrier	Moving upward or downward through text or graphics
Creep	Shone or sparkled with a glint of light
Toying	Jumped or sprang suddenly to attack or catch prey.
Vulnerability	Made a low, vibrating sound
Squeak	Tightly gripped or held
Fangs	Group of twelve
Daggers	Medical professionals who provide emergency care
Blades	Similar in appearance or character to
Pounced	Turned in a circular motion

Discussion Questions

What do you think of this story?

Is it possible for an old woman to turn into a cat? How?

What animal does James refer to himself as? Why does he think this?

What kind of city does the story take place in?

If you were James in the story, how would you have reacted to the old woman?

Do you think James could have escaped? How could he do this?

What is the old woman's story? How did she become a cat?

Assuming it is possible for the woman to turn into a cat, what happened to her for her to do this?

Was she born this way?

Did something happen to her?

What challenges do you think the woman faces with her condition of turning into a cat?

How do you think she adapted to being a cat creature?

Do you think she lives alone? Why/why not?

How has being a cat-woman affected her relationship with

others?

Do you think she is concerned about all the killings in the city?

Is she worried about the police finding her?

Is there a moral or lesson to be learned from this story? What is it?

Would you like to have the ability to turn into another animal at will? What kind of animal would you like to be? Why?

If you could become an animal, what kind of things would you do?

Would you do good things or bad things?

Writing

This is a creative writing exercise.

The Cat Woman Strikes Again!

Write a story in the first person (this means you use the words I and ME in the story, the story is told by you) about a close encounter you had with the cat woman.

You were walking home and it has just turned dark. You were making your way down a quiet street when you see an old woman.

She looks like she is having trouble walking.

At first, you approach her, with the view to helping her.

But then, you see her face change.

Her eyes, her teeth...

You have read and seen enough stories on the news. You heard about the man found dead on the train station the other night.

And you manage to escape.

Now write your story.

Try to make it full of suspense. Try to make the reader feel scared!

When you have finished your story, read it out loud in front of your classmates and teacher.

Or hand it to your teacher for review.

True or False? — Answers

Check all the right answers below!

The station platform was crowded - False

The homeless person was rummaging through a bin - True

James was dressed appropriately for the weather - False

James felt tired due to late nights in the office - True

James was not able to sleep when he got home - True

James went online until late when he got home every night -

True

James felt fresh in the morning - False

The homeless person was a man - False

James had a conversation with the homeless person - False

The homeless person was young - False

James offered money to the homeless person - False

James checked his phone to avoid conversation - True

There was a killing in the city mentioned in a news story - True

The killing was thought to be done by a wild animal - True

The homeless person's smile was friendly - False

James laughed when the homeless person asked if he was
alone - True

James heard cackling behind him - True

James wanted the homeless person to get on the train - False

James turned around and saw the homeless person had teeth -
False

The homeless person cried loudly - True

What Is The Meaning? — Answers

Check all the correct answers below!

Thrust: force used to push or drive something forward

Clenched: tightly gripped or held

Platform: a raised surface used as a stage or base

Deserted: abandoned or left with no one else

Rummaging: search through disorganized items to find something

Comforter: a type of bed covering for warmth

Wired: very excited, overstimulated; highly-strung

Scrolling: moving upward or downward through text or graphics

Jolted: a sudden, forceful movement or shake

Engage: participate or become involved in an activity

Ancient: very old or from a long time ago

Dozens: a group of twelve

Beamed: radiated or shone with happiness or pride

Distraction: something that takes one's attention away from something else

Lurid: shocking or sensational in a disturbing way

Lacerations: cuts or tears in skin or flesh

Resembled: similar in appearance or character to

Authority: the power to make decisions or enforce rules

Imply: suggest or hint at something indirectly

Twinkled: shone or sparkled with a glint of light

Predatory: relating to preying or hunting for food

Exhalation: the act of breathing out

Cackling: a high-pitched, harsh laugh

Urge: a strong desire or impulse to do something

Shuffling: moving with a dragging or shuffling sound

News anchor: a person who presents the news on television

Paramedics: medical professionals who provide emergency care

Droned: spoke or made a sound in a monotonous tone

Maniacs: people with extreme or uncontrollable behavior

Spun around: turned in a circular motion

Sprawled: stretched out or lying in an awkward or untidy way

Grotesque: strange or ugly in appearance or shape

Dissolved: disappeared or vanished into nothing

Wailing: crying out loudly or making a long, high-pitched sound

Comprehend: understand or grasp the meaning of

Glanced: quickly looked at or cast one's eyes over

Towered over: stood tall and imposing over

Purred: made a low, vibrating sound

Grin: a wide smile showing teeth

Barbs: a point or pointed part projecting backward from a main point

Fluid: a substance that flows easily and continuously

Barrier: a structure or obstacle that blocks or separates

Creep: move slowly and quietly in a stealthy or frightening way

Toying: playing or messing around with in a casual manner

Vulnerability: the state of being open to harm or damage

Squeak: a high-pitched, short, sharp sound

Fangs: long, sharp teeth, especially in a snake or other animal

Daggers: short knives or blades used as weapons

Blades: flat, thin, cutting objects, such as a knife or sword

Pounced: jumped or sprang suddenly to attack or catch prey.

Credits

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