A gentle breeze swept through the sunny October day. A single golden leaf twisted and turned, caught in the wind’s path. It landed in the blonde hair of a young boy sitting on a bench at the library, waiting for his mother to come. He sat there playing with his magic eight ball, wondering when she would pick him up.

“Magic eight ball, will my mom come soon?” he questioned as he shook it up for an answer.

It read, “Cannot Say.”

He looked across from him where there was a bench with a statue of a little girl petting a pig. The boy thought this was strange so with his magic eight ball in hand he walked across to the bench to examine the statues more closely, as he questioned, “Magic eight ball, is that a pig?”

It read “No.” That was when he realized that it was not a pig she was petting, but a cat! Upon closer inspection the boy decided that the face of the cat looked like an old man.

“Magic eight ball, is the cat an old man?”

The magic eight ball did not give a reply so the boy asked again, “Magic eight ball, is the cat an old man?” and he shook it up with all his might, squeezing his eyes shut.

When he reopened them he was no longer standing, but sitting on a bench opposite a girl about his age sitting on a bench talking to an old man.

The boy looked around him in amazement. The wind blew a gentle breeze with a golden leaf swirling around. The boy ran his small hand through his hair and pulled out an almost identical leaf. He looked for the library but could not find it.

“Magic eight ball, do you know where I am?” he whispered, but received no reply. He decided not to panic and to think of what was happening as an adventure.

He walked over to the little girl and the old man on the bench to talk to them. However, no matter what he did, he was invisible to them. He could not hear what the girl and the old man was saying so he sat on the bench and watched them.

Suddenly clouds rolled in, covering the sun. Rain drops began to fall, slowly drenching the girl and the old man as they ran for cover, but the boy was not affected. Deciding to follow the two, the boy ran to catch up as they disappeared into a small house. The boy slipped through the doorway, just before the door was shut.

He looked around, examining his surroundings. There was only one large room, divided into different sections. In one corner there was a sink, a stove, and a small table, in another was a single bed with sheets on the floor. A curtain was up in the third corner, which the boy decided was a changing room and bathroom. The last corner consisted of cabinets, which the boy figured had food or clothes in it.

The girl and the old man were drying off with towels near the stove that the girl had just turned on. There was pounding and shouting at the door and their faces were immediately engraved with fear. The old man pushed the girl behind the curtain as she protested and then went to peer out the door. Even though the boy knew he could not be seen, he dove under the bed, magic eight ball in hand.
“Magic eight ball, will everything be okay?” he whispered with a hint of fear in his voice, but as usual, there was no response. He hoped that if it did work it would read, “Yes,” or at least, “For Now.”

The little boy watched as a woman pushed the old man aside and entered the room. Watching the scene unfold, the young boy felt like he was watching a silent movie, all he could see were their gestures and facial expressions for he could not hear them.

Thunder roared in the distance and lightening flashed as the woman took off the shawl that was covering her face. It revealed a scar from her eye to her lip. There was more thunder and another bolt of lightning that shook the house. Suddenly the boy was able to understand what was being said.

“Where is she?” the woman urgently questioned, looking around the room and heading straight to the curtain.

“Mom, is that you?” the girl cautiously pushed the curtain aside. “What are you doing here? Won’t we get in trouble?”

“No sweetie, but we have to move fast, they’re searching for me as we speak. I just came to say goodbye. You’re grandfather will be looking out for you from now on.”

“That’s what he always did though,” the girl had a puzzled expression on her face, “Where will you go now?”

“I don’t know sweetie, somewhere where it will be safe and no one can find me.”

The old man, who was the girl’s grandfather, began to speak, “You shouldn’t have come here, scaring us like this. What if you were followed? You weren’t thinking of your daughter’s safety. No one has bothered us since you left and now rumors will be circulating again and we will be at risk.”

“No one saw me coming and my scent cannot be picked up because it has been washed away with the rain. I just wanted to see my daughter again one last time to say goodbye and to explain to her what’s happening and why. I don’t want her to grow up not knowing why her mother is in trouble and on the run so cannot be with her.”

“Very well, but make it fast before our house is invaded with a search party.”

“Come, my child, sit with me on the bed so I can explain. A few years ago I was accused of stealing cloth from an old woman in town. I was captured and held in a cell until I told the truth, which is when you started living with your grandfather because you were very young, and still are. The truth is that she stole the cloth from me but when I told my side of the story, people laughed in my face because she was a respected elder. She threatened me and said she had powers that no one could imagine, and if I were to continue ranting that she was a liar then she would turn all of us into pigs or cats.”

During the conversation, the little boy stayed under the bed listening and waiting. At the mention of pigs or cats, he put the pieces together and decided that the little girl was the statue on the bench and the old man must have been turned into a cat that resembled a pig and an old man.

“I think it is time for you to say goodbye to your daughter and leave under the cover of the storm. Please be careful,” the grandfather said as he handed the mother her shawl.

“Yes, I suppose you are right. Goodbye sweetie. Take care of your grandfather for me.”

“Mom, how did you get the scar?”
“I tripped and fell the first time I tried to escape. I cut my face on a stick that was laying on the ground.”

“Oh,” the young girl exclaimed as she hugged her mother goodbye. Once the mother had gone, the little girl and the old man went to bed, only to be awoken in the middle of the night by someone at the door. The girl hid behind the curtain once more and the old man went to see who was at the door while the little boy stayed under the bed. This time it was an old woman with flaming red eyes. “I know she came to see you. Where did she go?”

“I don’t know what you are talking about,” the old man stated, holding his ground. “I’m sure your granddaughter will speak after she sees what I do to you.”

There was a flash of lightning and in the old man’s place there was a pig. Another flash and he morphed into a cat.

“Grandfather!” the young girl cried, running from behind the curtain. “How could you do such a thing,” she asked the woman as tears welled up in her eyes. “I’ll do the same thing to you if you don’t talk. Now tell me where your mother is.”

“I don’t know and I wouldn’t tell you if I did,” she kicked the old woman, grabbed her grandfather and ran out the door with the young boy at her heels. They ended up at the bench where the boy had first seen the girl and the old man. She sat down for a breath and petted the cat. That was the last thing she did before there was a flash and she was frozen in time along with the old man.

The young boy closed his eyes and when he opened them again he was on a bench on a sunny October day. He looked around and saw the library and the statue of the girl and the cat. He ran his small hand through his hair and took out a golden leaf.

“Magic eight ball, did that really just happen?”

It read, “What Do You Think.”

His mom arrived to pick him up. “I’m sorry I’m late. What have you been up too?”

“I was asking my magic eight ball questions about the statue of the girl and cat and suddenly I was transported to another time where magic existed. I was afraid at first but then it was like an adventure where no one could see or hear me. There was this nasty old woman who turned a girl and her grandfather into statues but first she turned the old man into a pig and then a cat and there they are,” he pointed, out of breath, to the bench of the statues.

“Wow, you have some imagination.”

“I bet you a fifty dollar bill that I’m right.”