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## Inside Feral is "Fear" — A Cat Story

by Amber Cairo September 22, 2016

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There is much to fear. Especially now that most of my friends and family are gone. It happens that way. We disappear and few, if any, notice. I am a catnapper. When I can no longer run, no longer roam, no longer shiver

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myself alert, when the fear slips from my muscles, that's when my eyes weigh and wave as does an apple-heavy branch in a breeze, the kind of branch that creates a damp cool patch in the grass, and I drift to a time of mother, sisters, brothers, my own wriggling babies that one by one turned still.



I am Amber Cairo. Amber Cairo. Amber Cairo. The lady always repeats my name. I like its sound, its meaning—for the jewels of my eyes in the afternoon light and the narrow shape of my Sphinx-like face. I have never been to Egypt; it is the lady who tells me these things as she puts out a dish of smelly meat or fish or liver in the exact same spot in front of her house by the juniper bush. If she places it in a different spot, maybe just a cat's length one way or the other, there is

much to fear, and I hiss at her and run home.

Home. I do have a roof over my head: a long, low-to-the-ground ceiling of steel pipes, machinery, fans, and four wheels to hide behind when the winds blow in the cold. I know I am nearing home by the smell of oil and gasoline drip and urine and kibble. They call my home the "Cadillac," and it has never moved from the spot of gravel behind a gated fence where I can be safe and let my eyes hang like a heavy apple branch.

The humans at this house named me The Gray. It is my distinction from the many others who have lived here over decades. I am not spotted, but one color among the five generations of tuxedoed, mottled, bi-colored, and all-black cats. There are stories of the old dark-skinned man feeding some of his favorite felines over the years. He would shuffle to the patio squares in his yard, shake kibble into a dish every night when the light was fading, and we'd all push our heads in to snatch a bite. Because I was and still am small, sometimes I got nothing. The old man no longer comes out with his past regularity.

I have only been touched by humans once, quite recently, when they trapped me in a cage and took me away for two days, sliced out my center where my babies grew last year. Now, a short, raised, lickable line runs toward my tail. Those humans named me Feral. Or, maybe it was Fear-al. They did return me to my home, released me from the cage and set me free. Since then, the big neighborhood toms leave me alone, and, although I miss the touch of cat, I am thankful. Humans sometimes speak soft, kind words to me, but I do not trust them. I'm not sure why. It is something I simply know. My best friend Blackie rubs against the legs of humans, and they feed him. He is not afraid to be touched and stroked. He sleeps—in my opinion, dangerously—inside someone's house as of late, and I am here alone under my roof, with even more to fear.

Where I roam, on this one city block in a place called Denver, is a yard with a loud, square-headed dog that shook my mother to death. I am also afraid of raccoons, foxes, coyotes, cats larger and stronger than me, large steel roofs that speed down the streets, alive, wheels spinning, trunks thumping. Poisons that I must lick off my paws. Starvation that hangs around, circles me, as if I am its territory. At night, giant birds fly overhead, hover and roar and light up the sky. The sky is often to be feared, for it rumbles and shakes the earth and flings water and ice balls. From the sky comes hot and cold, both to be feared. This time



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Cat Charities  
Cat rescue  
Cat Story  
Donations  
Feral  
Fostering  
Halloween  
Helping cats  
Kittens  
Marie  
Mila  
Stray

of year the rain gutters are dry, but at least it is   
 warm and moist bites of bug jump through the  
 grass. I am not a great hunter. My delicate paws can only catch crickets, rarely a field mouse. I depend on humans  
 to open their doors and leave me crumbles of hard food or dishes of smelly things. I fear white cold will fall from the  
 sky again and the world will crystallize and become still, like my babies did. I have only roamed here for two cycles  
 of warm and hot and cool and cold and warm again.

I can sense that the cold will return. I wrap my tail around my paws with the thought of it.

PS You can see a video of me slinking around in the evening to eat the food the lady puts out. As a feral cat, I feel most safe when darkness sets in.

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Amber Cairo  
Author

## 2 Responses



Lulu Moore  
April 06, 2017

This is lovely, Marie. I think I am part feral cat . . .



Mark Vezina  
August 25, 2016

Beautiful story. It paints the picture in my mind of the cats I see on a regular basis while I patrol in my Police car. I sometimes try to communicate with the cats I see, but they always run off in fear. They overreact to every strange sound. Yes the poor furry sweethearts live in constant fear.

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### Cat Lover is a Heartbroken Foster Mom

by Marie O. November 20, 2016

About nine months ago, I fostered two unweaned kittens, taken from their feral mother cat at five weeks and two days. How they were taken is a gruesome tale, better off told in another blog. And, on first glance at my shaky hands, I may need therapy before I tell that story. You see, I've never had children. I blame my "failure" as a foster mom on that, or maybe my attachment issues, or maybe just my love of cats since childhood. Some of you chill-hearted cat-lovers may excel at fostering. Me? The process almost killed me.

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### Black Cats and Halloween

by Marie O. October 02, 2016

So, I'm sitting in the chair of a new hairdresser yesterday, October 1st, and, as hairdressers always make polite conversation, she asks me, "So, do you have any fur babies?"

I chuckle and said, "Yes, in fact, I do. I care for a number of strays and ferals, and have kind of become the crazy cat lady in my neighborhood."

She responded that she'd be taking in her sister's black cat for the two weeks around Halloween because they were afraid for the safety of the cat in the Denver neighborhood where the cat lives and likes to roam at night.

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### Cat Lovers Website Donates to Cat Charities

by Marie O. September 22, 2016

Welcome to Quote Kitty, a new website that donates 9% of the *retail* price of every product purchased to save cats. That's 9% for each of cat's 9 lives. It's the website for cat lovers because every item sold is cat themed and helps support community cats across the United States. At Quote Kitty, we sell cat apparel and accessories for people, as well as products for your feline friends. The Quote Kitty motto is "Curiosity Saves the Cat."

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