



CAT

By Bastet

CHRONICLES

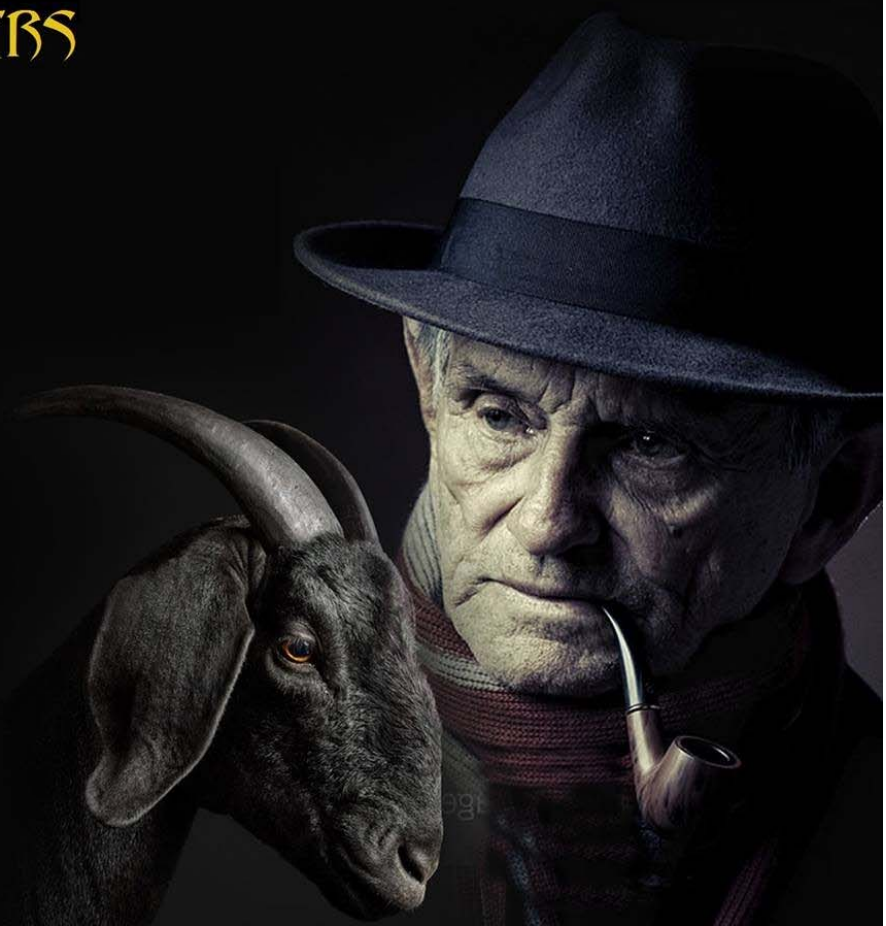
A Collection of Short Stories from John Parham

THE OLD MAN AND THE THREE-LEGGED GOAT

THE TOWN THAT DREADED HALLOWEEN

THE VALLEY OF GHOSTS

INTERSTELLAR TRAVELERS



Cat Chronicles by Bastet

A Short Story Collection by John
Parham

Featuring:

*The Old Man and The Three-Legged
Goat*

The Town That Dreaded Halloween
The Valley of Ghosts
Interstellar Travelers

The Old Man and the Three-
Legged Goat
Cat Chronicles by Bastet
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This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events, locales, and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

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CAT CHRONICLES BY BASTET SHORT STORY COLLECTION

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Written by John Parham.

I dedicate this book to my loving wife, Mindy. Without her these stories would still be rolling around in my mind never seeing the light at the end of the tunnel.

You are my light.



The Old Man and the Three-Legged Goat



IT WAS A COLD FALL morning, and the trees were shedding their coats. The sky cranked up its brilliance, sharpened by the cold, clear air. Curly Bama loved the park bench where he could sip his coffee, look at the crystal blue sky and stare far across the ruffled lake to the city.

He sat at the bench at least once a week, and more often when he could. Life had twists and turns, and his had more twists than turns. Peggy, the love of his life, told him they had grown apart, and she was leaving. Maybe they had. That same day, he lost his job, and now he sat in misery on this cold park bench. He sipped his hot coffee and looked across the lake and wondered what had happened to his life.

Lonely, broke and soon-to-be homeless, Curly took refuge from life on the park bench. This was his domain, and he watched as the large trees shook the summer out of their heads and shed their leaves. *My park bench and my time; just me and my thermos of hot coffee.*

Curly sat there and let his confused emotions escape to the cold air, trying to find answers to his life. He was twenty-six and still young but on his own. His parents had been killed several years ago in a horrible automobile accident and he lived far from any remaining relatives. He sipped his coffee and mused; even Peggy was now out of his life although he was not sure how bad that was.

Curly thought of his dismal future and sipped his coffee. He tried to weigh his options for tomorrow and beyond. Today was a bad dream, and he welcomed the clean and chilly air as it revived his spirit.

Curly took another sip of coffee and watched an old man shuffle by wearing a trench coat and a fedora and smoking a pipe with little clouds of smoke floating into the air. He shuffled a few yards, hesitated, turned around and came back toward him.

He didn't want to have his remorseful day interrupted, but Mr. Interruption was coming his way regardless of his wishes. Curly's parents taught him to respect folks, especially the elderly. He looked at the old man and asked, "May I help you?"

The old man halted a couple feet from the bench and replied, "Excuse me sir, but perhaps you may have seen a three-legged goat pass by?"

On any other day that might have sounded strange, but today, it fit right in. He was sitting all brokenhearted and feeling sorry for himself, but the old man had jerked him back to reality. *A three-legged goat? Who has a three-legged goat for a pet*, Curly wondered?

"No sir, I have not," he replied. He looked more at the old man. Little wisps of breath floated from his mouth as he breathed out into the cold air.

He felt sorry for the old man and asked, "Would you like to have a cup of hot coffee and sit with me?"

The old man walked up, extended his hand and said, "Pleased to meet you. I am Bartholomew Jackson."

Curly shook his cold hard hand and replied, "Nice to meet you. They call me Curly Bama. Please sit and I will pour you a cup of coffee, then tell me about the three-legged goat." He had brought a full thermos of coffee; it was one of few luxuries he could still afford. Bartholomew seated himself. Curly poured the coffee into the thermos cap and handed it to him. He said, "Bless you, Curly. I am freezing looking for Rambo." He took a long sip of the hot coffee.

Curly sat there and looked long and hard at the old man and realized he liked him. He was not sure why since he had met him only five minutes ago, but he made him feel secure. It reminded him of his mom pick-

ing him up with a scraped knee saying, “Everything will be okay.” He had always believed her.

That is what he felt with Bartholomew sitting next to him. It was uncomfortable, yet it gave him a warm, relaxed feeling he had been missing for so long.

“So Bartholomew, what is the story on the three-legged goat?” he asked.

The old man turned to Curly and held the thermos metal cup between his calloused hands. He said, “Rambo saved my life and I must find him. I am indebted to do so. Besides, he is my life companion.”

Bartholomew looked across the lake with great sadness. He turned to Curly and said, “I used to go to the mountains in search for gold. I never expected to find any, but it kept me busy as I had no family or kin to visit.

“Some days, I got lucky and found gems, agates, turquoise, amethyst and such.” He perked up and said, “I sold gems for a pretty penny, I must tell you!

“Anyway, one fine day, I went way deeper in the mountains than ever before and figured I would find the mother lode of something. I scrambled across a rough and steep ravine when I slipped and fell. I landed at the bottom of the ravine, struck a rock and everything went black.”

“It was like I was swimming in a fish bowl looking out to see from within. Do you know what I mean?” the old man asked.

Curly shook his head in agreement, but he’d never had any experiences in a fish bowl.

He continued, “I lay unconscious for a long time and was brought back to life by a loud bleating sound. I thought I was delirious and attempted to shut the sound out, but I heard it again, only louder this time.

“I forced my eyes open, and a black goat stared at me with a white patch on his forehead. I attempted to sit up and fell back but tried one more time with success. This time, the goat assisted me by pulling on my sleeve to help get me up.

“I got on my knees and the goat scooted under my arm to assist. I stood up on my legs, but they felt like they were made of jelly. I turned around to take inventory of where I was, but I was still too much in a fog to know.

“The goat bleated and walked five or ten yards then came back and repeated. After a few times, my addled mind understood he wanted me to follow him.

“The goat led me out of the ravine. Near the exit, hidden behind some large boulders, was a natural spring. By then, I understood he was trying to lead me to water. I fell face first into the life-giving spring. It was a hot day, and I had not noticed how dehydrated I was. I drank the cool, sweet water and revived somewhat,” the old man said.

“My savior, the goat, lay before me and stared at me with crazy eyes. The eyes were a cool blue with glittering sparkles in them.” The old man turned towards Curly and said, “If you gaze into my hazel eyes, you may see the same golden flecks.”

Curly focused on the old man’s eyes and sure enough, he saw the golden flecks. He thought this was one weird story, but he also felt better having listened to Bartholomew’s story. “So, what happened next to you and the goat?” Curly asked. He refilled the old man’s coffee cup since he had drank the coffee.

The old man took a sip and continued, “I felt much better and could stand up with sturdier legs. Other than some crusted blood on my forehead, I felt great. I looked down at the goat and asked, ‘Where to now?’

“The goat bleated a couple times and started down the ravine. Every couple minutes, he would stop, look back and bleat again,” the old man continued.

“Oh, so you want me to follow you, right?” I asked. ‘You know I fell off a cliff, not a turnip truck!’ I yelled, but I followed him. Several minutes later, we walked out of the ravine and came to a place with small shrubs. The goat sniffed and investigated the shrubs.

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“All I could see was Rambo’s hindquarters as he poked through the dense shrubs. Then I heard a sound I will never forget. There was a loud clang then a sickening bone-crunching sound. Rambo screamed, not like a goat but more like a mother losing her only begotten child.

“I rushed the best I could the fifty yards to Rambo and found his leg caught in a wolf trap. His left leg was almost severed and his tongue flopped around his mouth as he squealed. I opened the trap to free him and wrapped his limp body in my coat.

“I tried to staunch the bleeding leg best I could, and we left that cold-hearted ravine. When we exited the ravine, I knew our location and carried Rambo the two miles to my truck. I placed Rambo in the passenger side floorboard and drove as fast as I could to connect with US 69.

“I turned left and headed to Dumas as fast as the old truck would go. Rambo lay in a growing pool of blood, and I prayed Dumas would have a vet. I was sure there would be a vet clinic since it was a small mid-size town. And sure enough, I found the Dumas Animal Hospital on Main Street and pulled into the parking lot, screeching to a halt.

“I picked Rambo up from the floorboard, terrified he was dead. He had lost so much blood and felt like a limp, stuffed animal. Here is where I caught a break: I believe the greatest vet in the world worked at that animal hospital that day. Because of Rambo’s weak condition, she immediately tended to him.

“Dr. Jessica Ellen went right to work on Rambo. She placed him in a small room and prepped him for surgery to address his wound. I waited in the lobby for what seemed like an eternity. She advised me before the surgery that the chances of Rambo surviving were slim, but she would try her best.

“After what seemed like hours, Dr. Ellen came out, looked at me and said, ‘You have one tough billy goat, Mr. Jackson! The surgery went well, but I had to amputate the rest of his limb. The good news is goats adapt well to missing limbs, and I expect for him to recover.’

“I did not know what to say. I had only met the billy goat a few hours earlier. But I felt a *binding*, or a unique connection with him. I sensed there was just something special he had, and I felt it. I thanked Dr. Ellen profusely, paid my bill and drove around back to pick up the goat.

“I placed the goat on the seat. The vet had wrapped him in a blanket and was thankful he was not bleeding. He was still under sedation from the surgery and seemed to be resting or soundly asleep. Dr. Ellen had taken time to create a list of items I needed to pick up to take care of the goat, along with the proper care instructions.

“I glanced down at the floorboard at the thick pool of blood as it slowly congealed. I was not concerned with cleaning up the blood and thought I would take care of that later. I stopped on the way home to purchase the supplies instructed by Dr. Ellen for the goat. We continued to my house, and I said to the still sleeping goat, ‘I shall name you Rambo because you are one tough goat!’”

Curly asked, “Did you have anywhere to keep him at your place?”

Bartholomew replied, “No, but I thought I could make something work. I had a large back porch, and a fenced backyard.” He continued with his story after taking another sip of coffee.

“I made a makeshift bed for Rambo on the back porch. I thought he would be safe there, and the weather was hot with warm nights. I checked on Rambo every few hours to make sure he had plenty of water and the prescribed food.

“A couple days later, I sat on the porch and Rambo bleated and struggled to rise. That caught me by surprise. He then staggered over and rubbed his head against my knee. He still wobbled with only one front leg but it did not take him long to discover centering his front leg would allow him to gain stability. No more rock wall climbing for him, but it was good enough.

“The days went by and our *binding* became much stronger. I never played the state lotto but sitting on the porch with Rambo, I had the urge

to buy a ticket. I made sure Rambo was okay and drove to the local Quick Stop and purchased a million-dollar lotto ticket.

“The next day, I discovered I won the lottery! I celebrated with Rambo. I swear he winked at me for my great fortune. I took proceeds and had a small cottage made for him in the backyard with automated food and water dispensers.

“We were both happy and sat on the porch and enjoyed life. I was now rich beyond my wildest desires, and Rambo chewed on his favorite cans. Life was ideal, my health was even improving and Rambo was strong and playful.

“Then late one night, a huge thunderstorm passed over with damaging winds. The winds knocked down the fence, and Rambo reacted naturally and fled. That was two days ago, and I have yet to find him.”

Curly felt immensely sad for the lonely man and could relate to his loneliness. He too had just lost someone, so he sympathized with Bartholomew. “I wish there was something I could do for you, Bartholomew,” Curly said. “Would you like for me to go with you to search for Rambo? I have nothing else to do today or tomorrow.”

Bartholomew looked at Curly and handed him the coffee cup and said, “No Curly, this is my quest. And it was nice of you to offer a cold old man a cup of hot coffee and to listen to his story.

“Thank you for your kindness Curly, but I shall go alone,” Bartholomew said. “But here is my card in case you happen to see Rambo. I would like to give you \$100 for caring and for offering help to find Rambo. Since I won the lottery, I now have more money than I will ever spend by myself.”

Curly held his hand up and said, “No, you don’t owe me anything. I wish I could do more for you.” Although a hundred dollars would be a small fortune to Curly at this point in his life, he thought it would not be right to take the old man’s money in his time of grief. That was not the way his parents raised him.

Bartholomew replied, “I bought this lotto ticket the other day before Rambo escaped and have not bothered to check on it. At least accept this. I am sure it is not worth anything, but who knows until you check it?”

Bartholomew handed his card with the lotto ticket wrapped around it too Curly. He retrieved his wallet and placed the card and ticket in it and said to Bartholomew, “I hope you find Rambo, and the best of luck. You are a good man.”

Bartholomew smiled at Curly and shook his hand warmly. He pulled his fedora lower, lit his pipe and continued on his search. Curly decided it was time to head back to his apartment and ponder what to do for his future.

The next day, Curly woke late in the morning and knew he had about a week before he would be on the street. He looked into the mirror for answers but found none. He only saw a lonely and sad face staring back at him. He pulled out his wallet to take inventory of his financial situation.

He laid the contents on the table and counted out \$35 dollars. *That’s it*, he thought, *my entire fortune and life savings. What to do*, he wondered, *what to do?* While he fretted over his situation, he glanced in his wallet and saw Bartholomew’s card. He realized he had never read it.

He extracted the card from the wallet, removed the lotto ticket and read the card’s inscription. He expected to see a name and maybe an address or phone number, but what he read baffled him.

The card said: *Bartholomew Jackson -Angel of Life-Savior of Souls.*

That was all that was on it except for a picture of Bartholomew wearing his fedora with his pipe and Rambo. Curly thought Bartholomew was a little different, but the card inscription was more than his fragile psyche could handle right then.

He picked up and unfolded the lotto ticket. The draw date was two days ago, so he thought, *what the hell?* He would check it. The winning numbers he found on the internet were 2-8-23-26-41-54. Curly looked

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at the lotto ticket numbers. He had a double take as his heart raced since his lotto ticket had 2-8-23-26-41-54.

“Holy cow!” Curly shouted at the top of his lungs. “Bartholomew gave me a winning million-dollar lotto ticket!”

Curly jumped up so fast he nearly passed out when he heard a strange sound out his open window. He staggered over to the window left partially open for the breeze and heard a strange bleating sound. The sound was like a woman screaming.

He looked down at the sidewalk beneath his window and saw an old man wearing a fedora with a pipe. Next to him was a three-legged goat; they both looked up at him. The old man tweaked his fedora at Curly and the goat pranced once, then they both turned and disappeared around the corner.

Curly yelled down to them, “Wait, please wait!” but it was too late; they were gone.

He ran down the stairs as fast as he could, turned right and spun around the corner. A long alley presented itself without an exit, but there was not an old man or a three-legged goat anywhere. Curly was dumbfounded. What had happened to them? How could they have disappeared?

A strong gust of warm wind came up the alley and blew over Curly as he heard a loud bleating sound before the wind dissipated into the sky.



The End

*The Town that Dreaded Hal-
loween*

Cat Chronicles by Bastet Collec-
tion



A Flash Fiction by John Parham



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Town That Dreaded Halloween



THE LIGHT FLICKERED to life, casting shadows across Police Chief Spivey's desk. He arrived at his desk much earlier than usual. He sighed, "Another Halloween, and he suspected another murder."

The City of Mt. Ida descends into hell on Halloween the past five years. Chief Spivey looked at his monitor and knew murder was a nasty business. Heinous murders had cast a spell on Halloween.

Gruesome murders on Halloween and all bloody. Shot, stabbed, bludgeoned to death and burned. Different with no clues, not even fingerprints. How is that possible?

He re-examined the police reports, how is that possible without leaving a clue? Some folks swore it was the Halloween boogeyman. He would appear on Halloween and vanish with dawn's light.

Chief Spivey's 25 years in law enforcement told him otherwise. It was some crazed killer who passed through once each year for Halloween. Conduct his business and move on. He was so efficient it was like he knew what to do, was he in law enforcement the Chief wondered?

But not this year, this year it ends, I I will prepare us. As he sat in the sickly glow of the desk light he thought who am I kidding? Halloween now spooks everyone and only a few kids trick or treat. Several parents now band together for extra protection on Halloween.

He looked up, stared across the dim office and said "Hell, the City Council approved additional funds for extra police protection on Halloween." "And what good has that done, two more murders since I placed extra officers on duty."

He shifted his focus back down to the screen and reviewed the reports once more. Somewhere within the reports there is a clue, but where? The reports outlined a person familiar with police investigative procedures and how to avoid capture.

Could it be an officer of the law, some maniacal rogue cop he wondered? If that is true, we need to adjust our investigative methods. The key is to discover what happened rather than what we believe happened. Maybe the killer counted on gruesome murders to create a smokescreen for the crime.

Have everyone focused on the horrendous crime to escape and leave unseen clues. That could work, it threw everyone including myself off track.

Chief Spivey had renewed vigor and confidence in a plan. Explore the simple elements of the crime scene for a clue. That is where they are he decided, we have to investigate from a different angle.

He felt confident as he rose from the desk and walked to the bathroom. A pull on a chain lit the small bulbs that cast dim lighting over the sink. In the dim light he splashed cold water on his face. He raised to stare in the mirror.

Wild blood-shot eyes glared back at him. The picture in the mirror displayed a menacing maniacal grin that drooled through yellow pointed teeth.

He snarled at the mirror saying "Happy Halloween!"



The End

The Valley of Ghosts

Cat Chronicles by Bastet Collec- tion



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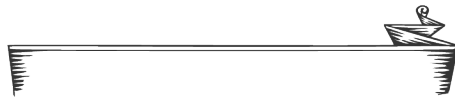


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The Valley of Ghosts



Bobby looked at the clock and thought, *its 2AM and my shift is over, now the pain begins.*

He worked the late shift at Premier Boat Manufacturing in Mt. Home, Arkansas. His night shift began at 5:00 PM and his job was to spray layers of gel coat to the boat hull mold. Each layer he sprayed made the hull layer for the acknowledged best sports fishing boat in the industry.

Bobby took pride in his work and was the best sprayer at Premier Boat Manufacturing. He took pride in his work and every night for the past three years he would give it his best, but the work began to take a toll on him.

He had to wear a breathing aspirator to filter the noxious fiberglass resin fumes. At first the fumes did not have any detrimental effects, but over time the fumes began to leave him light-headed at the end of his late shift. The light headedness would typically dissipate quickly when he exited the manufacturing plant and got fresh air outside.

Bobby had to drive thirty miles each night through the Boston Mountains to his small rental house in Cotter. It was not a great distance but took time since the drive wound through mountains the entire trip home. At times the road

would rise 2,500 feet over the top of the mountains then drop 1,500 feet going down the valley on the other side with many hair pin curves.

The nightly drive would be more challenging when weather did not cooperate. Heavy rain, fog and occasional snow storms could easily double or triple his drive time.

He dreaded the nightly drive, not because of the mountains, nor the weather. He dreaded the time it afforded him while he was cooped up in his car. Bobby would reflect on his wasted life the entire drive, night after night.

Bobby was a highly ranked athlete with superior grades at Mt. Home High School, top colleges swooned him with offers of a free ride through college. They promised free education and fame, all he had to do was lend the school his talent for four years.

Bobby decision was to move away from Arkansas and attend the State University of Florida. He was a star athlete on campus and had it all. His date for the biggest game of the year was Cindy Smith, the State University Homecoming Queen. His team won by three touchdowns and he was the king of the homecoming party. The Golden Boy had arrived.

Bobby was golden during his freshman season but in the off season became tarnished. His wild partying lifestyle began to overtake him. Booze flowed freely and drugs followed. Then he discovered crystal meth.

His addiction became his life. The drug was practically given to him by drug dealers for access to the Golden Boy. And access they had. Bobby could not get enough of the drug and

the drug loved him. His 3.8 grade point began a rapid decline to where his eligibility for the team came into question. This caught the coach's attention.

The head coach began to take notice of Bobby's extracurricular activities. He reviewed Bobby's grades and sensed something was wrong. The coach noticed his football skills quickly eroded along with his easy going personality. The coach sat at his desk and thought *something is not right with Bobby*.

The coach called Bobby in for a meeting to discuss any problems he may have. Bobby reassured the coach he was okay and explained the wildly successful season he just had put a lot of pressure on him to follow up next season. There was even talk of him being a leading Heisman candidate next year as a sophomore.

Bobby left the coach's office after he delivered promises to improve his grades and better manage his lifestyle. The coach arranged for a tutor to work with him to bring his grades up. He left assurances for turning his life around on the coach's desk when he exited the coach's office and shut the door.

He left the athletic facility with one thought in mind; he needed to smoke a bowl of meth. Smoke a bowl and he would be on top of the world and all would be right. That night he had a date with Cindy and she wanted to talk to him about something. On the way to pick her up, he pulled over and smoked another bowl of meth.

She had something important to tell him and wanted to go to their favorite parking area near Lake Okeechobee. They

parked at their special secluded spot and she turned to face him, began to cry and said “I am pregnant.”

In his meth high condition, Bobby could not process what she just told him. His first thought was *this is not my baby, it can't be*. He thought he could not be a star football quarterback and father at the same time. This could not be his future, he had too many games to play, maybe even win the Heisman Trophy.

Bobby finally replied and asked Cindy “I know of an abortion clinic where we can get an abortion. We have to get an abortion, right?”

Cindy snapped her head to him and shouted “No, I will not give the baby up! If you don't want to man up and do the right thing, I will raise the baby on my own. I will not have an abortion!”

Bobby fueled by meth turned his anger into a rage. He screamed back to Cindy “How the hell do I even know it's even my baby?”

Cindy's voice trembled, and she sobbed back “It is your baby Bobby, there is no one else and I only love you!”

Bobby was shaking with rage, and sure he liked her a lot and she was one of the prettiest and most popular girls on campus. But he did not want to become a father. *There was no way he could be a father and a football star at the same time* he thought.

What he wanted was to smoke another bowl of meth but resisted the urge. He swore not to smoke drugs in presence of certain people, and Cindy was one of them. Bobby looked over at Cindy and she was sobbing uncontrollably, all he

wanted now was to get her out of his car. Cindy was being selfish he thought. She could get an abortion, it was now like having your tonsils removed. No big deal!

His rage grew more he thought about her not wanting an abortion. He now hated her, she was going to ruin his life. Bobby decided he had to get her out of his car so he could smoke and clear his head. He fired up the Mustang Fastback provided as a courtesy by the local Ford dealer and whipped the car out of the parking spot.

He entered the highway, floored the Mustang and swerved all over the road. Rather than slowing down, he gave it more power. Bobby looked over at Cindy, still crying and sobbing, and floored the car. This was a high performance Mustang Fastback and all 460 HP kicked in.

The car slid into a curve sideways as the engine revved up. All the power transferred to the rear wheels caused Bobby to oversteer and lose control. The car slid through the curve and hit a large cypress tree dead on the passenger door.

Cindy never had a chance. In her distraught state she had not fastened her seat belt. Even if she had fastened her seat belt, it probably would not have helped much due to the extensive damage to the passenger side of the car. Cindy was killed on impact and she was gone as was their baby.

Bobby was knocked unconscious, his seat belt did save his life. He received multiple broken ribs, broken right shoulder and a concussion.

There is an inquiry into the physical condition of the driver and deceased passenger after the accident. The investigation

resulted in Bobby being charged with Vehicular Homicide and DUI driving under influence of drugs. The deceased female was found to be clean of any chemical influence and five weeks pregnant. He had it all, and it went up in meth smoke. He not only lost everything but was sentenced to four years in prison. His college was over, the Heisman Trophy gone and his life basically over.

Bobby was fortunate to be sent to a progressive Georgia Corrections prison. Their philosophy was to empower and rehabilitate inmates through learning new skills and athletic competition. He went through crystal meth detox and survived all the wicked withdrawal symptoms to become clean of drugs.

Bobby vowed to turn his life around and became an exemplary prison inmate. He used his athletic skills to coach other inmates in intramural sports and also learned the skill to spray paint. He found his specialty was to work with spraying fiberglass resin.

He now accepted full responsibility for Cindy and his baby's death, it was his burden to carry the rest of his life. At his parole hearing he was fortunate to gain his release with five years' probation. He was an exemplary inmate and helped many others to survive prison life.

Bobby was contacted by the warden who had become a friend and was told he may have an opportunity for employment in Arkansas. He had a buddy with a boat manufacturing plant that specialized in fiberglass fishing boats. They needed someone experienced with spraying fiberglass hulls for their boats to work the late shift.

The warden assured his friend that Bobby was not dangerous, he only became a victim of drugs and lost in life. He was now completely rehabilitated and paid for his sins and in addition, the best fiberglass sprayer he had ever seen.

Bobby was both excited and terrified about the job prospect. The warden advised him the job would require him to work in his home town of Mt. Home. He was thankful to find employment but did not know if he could live with his shame in his home town.

Now he worked the night shift and arrived when most folks were gone and left work late at night. He saw his aging parents ever now and then but mainly kept to himself. But he proved to be a valuable employee for the company and the owner was glad to have him on the payroll.

Tonight on leaving the plant at 2 AM, the air was much thicker than usual. February brought heavy rain and fog to the Boston Mountains and maybe snow or ice. They peaked at 2,500 feet then would drop 1,500 feet into valleys. The circuitous road home would rise and dip practically the entire thirty miles.

Bobby leaned against his car door and tried to breathe deeply the night air to clear his mind before the mountainous drive. The air was thick with heavy rain and fog, not what he wanted to drive in. It would take more time for the drive and it would always torment him. Cindy's ghost cried and screamed in his head all the way home, it would haunt him the rest of his life.

He resigned himself to the drive and entered his car. It too was a Mustang but an older 2003 GT with a much smaller engine.

He exited the plant's parking lot and entered US 65 for the drive home to Cotter.

He had driven the mountainous road many time in the past year and a half but never under these conditions. The fog was so thick the headlights could only slice through about fifty feet of highway. The fog lessened somewhat on top of hills but would become impossibly thick going down into the colder valley.

After a couple of hours fighting the weather, Bobby began to wonder what would happen if he turned his lights off. He thought maybe it would be best if he traveled the road without lights on, *maybe this time I will hit a tree on the driver's side and end my sad life.*

Bobby turned his head lights off and drove for a few moments then for some reason had the urge to turn them back on. When the lights came back on they illuminated an old man wearing a long trench coat and a fedora on the side of the road. He was not traveling fast, and the apparition caused him to hit the brakes, the car fish tailed for several yards before coming to a full stop.

He looked in his rear-view mirror and thought who the hell is out in this weather?

Bobby slowly backed the car until the man's outline in the fog appeared. He pulled over to the man, lowered his window and asked "Do you need a ride?"

"Yes, it would be preferable to standing in the rain," he replied.

He unlocked the door and the mystery man shook the rain from his fedora and trench coat then sat in the passenger seat. Bobby thought *I have not had anyone in my passenger seat since Cindy.*

The stranger looked at Bobby with dark sunken eyes over a hawk billed nose and said “Thank you friend, I was about to freeze out there, this is not a night for man nor beast to be out in. I am fortunate for you to come along, I have been on the road in this rain for hours.”

Bobby wondered why the old man was standing beside the road in the rain and fog. He asked “Mind if I ask why you are standing on the side of the road this time of night and in this weather?”

The old man looked at Bobby and replied “Mind if I ask you why you decided to drive in these conditions then turn your head lights off?”

Bobby shook his head and tried to think. *How did he know my headlights were off* he thought? I guess he saw them reflected in the fog then go out. He asked “How did you know that?”

The old man replied “Bobby, you have had one disastrous accident, don’t have another.”

Bobby was totally confused and started to reply when he looked up and only saw a fog bank. Not a road, nor stripes, simply dead cold grayness. He concentrated on the road and felt a shiver run up his spine. The road now headed up a mountain and the fog lifted somewhat.

When the fog lifted, he felt comfortable enough to look back at the old man and ask “How did you know my lights were off? And how do you know my name, do I know you?”

The man looked at Bobby and replied “Bobby, you have done horrible things. You have taken the life of another person, and worse the life of a person to be.”

“Who are you?” Bobby shouted.

“My name is Bartholomew Jackson,” the old man replied.

Bobby slowed the Mustang and asked “What do you want?”

“It is not what I want, but what I can give you,” he replied. “Bobby you made a terrible mistake six years ago. You have lived with it ever since and paid heavily with guilt and a destroyed life. You now have attempted to live a better life but cannot get free from the shackles of guilt.”

“What the hell does that mean?” Bobby asked.

“What do I want, you ask, I want to deliver absolution for you,” the stranger said.

“Bobby, I know why you turned off the headlights tonight. I understand, the burden of grief has become too heavy a load to carry,” the old man said.

“I want to offer you deliverance from your pain. You did a horrible thing but have paid your dues, both to society and your soul. I offer you salvation, I am giving back your life, live it to the best of your ability but more importantly help make other

lives better,” the stranger said. “And make sure and watch the road, you have a lot of good life to give back to society.”

The old man turned to stare ahead and Bobby did likewise. He did not realize he had been looking at the old man and not the road. When he looked at the road, the fog lifted to reveal it was blocked by a land slide.

Bobby hit the brakes and began to slide towards the fallen boulders. The cars slow speed halted the Mustang before impacting the large boulders in the road. The car stopped, Bobby began to shake and then turned to ask the old man if he was okay.

When he looked at the passenger seat the old man was gone.

He was confused, walked around the car to find the old man then got back in without success. Bobby wondered *was this all a hallucination?*

If it wasn't, how did the stranger know so much about me and that I would even be out on this road on such a lousy night at 2 AM? And how did he know of the rock slide? *Did this just happen* he thought?

Bobby turned on the cars overhead light to search for the stranger. He did not see anything but a damp passenger seat. Something caught his eye in the crease of the seat. He reached over and extracted the object which was a card.

He was not sure how the card became stuck in the seat. He lifted the card closer to the overhead light and read it. Bobby was taken aback by what was printed on it.

The card said: *Bartholomew Jackson -Angel of Life-Savior of Souls.*



The End

Interstellar Travelers

Cat Chronicles by Bastet Collec-
tion



A Short Story by John Parham



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This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events, locales, and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

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Interstellar Travelers

STARMAN RA TURNED TO Bastet and asked “Are we ready to exit the wormhole?”

Bastet gazed at the Star Map projected in front of him and replied “Yes, I set the calculations and should begin to exit in fifteen minutes. I estimate the exit point to be 30.0–31.2 degrees and altitude at 100 miles.”

“Are you sure?” Ra asked.

“Oh, I am confident on our location. I lowered the window, stuck my head out and located Earth’s sun. We are right on course,” Bastet said. “Sniff my ass Ra, I think we have arrived on the mark after 450 light years of travel, so if you don’t mind I will roll up the window and lick my dry nose.”

Ra looked over at Bastet and replied “I thought cats sniffed their own ass?”

Bastet thought it was a good thing this trip was not too long or she would use Ra’s bed for a litter box. She looked at the 3D holographic projection of their journey in the wormhole to Earth. She knew they were right on the money and asked Ra “Can you park this ship without hitting the curb?”

Ra looked over to Bastet and flipped her off with a finger. They had studied Earth’s habits, mannerisms and language and Bastet had not seen this gesture before. Ra thought since Earthlings had so many digits this was a good way to make a point.

They came from the Orion's Belt constellation. Their planet Centauri orbited the star Betelgeuse, and the star was near the end of its life cycle. They expected in the next five to ten thousand years it would become a supernova and if it exploded would destroy Centauri.

The ruling body of Centauri, the Directorate of the Centaurians, tasked Ra and Bastet with the mission to travel to the planet Earth. It was assigned to them to build giant power generators orientated to Orion's Belt and specifically Betelgeuse. They disguised the giant power generators as pyramids. The hope was to link pyramids across Earth and generate tremendous power focused towards Betelgeuse and to re-energize and extend its life.

Among the many challenges to their mission was to travel 450 light years from Betelgeuse to Earth. Betelgeuse radiated 10,000 times brighter than Earth's Sun but was smaller, more dense and getting brighter. A good indication the star approached a super nova condition.

Their mission had two components:

1. Build Earth power generators called pyramids and focus their power towards Orion's Belt and Betelgeuse. Their goal was to focus all the energy to Betelgeuse and extend its life for another 100,000 years.

2. Protect life on the planet to assure Earth's continuity in case the pyramid plan failed and Centauri had to be evacuated to Earth. The Directorate hoped their people could co-exist with Earth's inhabitants and live in harmony. The Centaurians were a benevolent race and composed primarily of pure energy that allowed them to assume any shape required. They did not want to conquer, only to survive.

Ra exited the worm hole ninety miles above earth and asked Bastet "Did you sharpen your pencil, we are ten miles off?"

Bastet replied "No, but I have a hairball for you, I will give it to you when you're asleep."

The special anti-gravity shield enveloped the starship and buffered it from the extreme energy field inside the worm hole. The shield would also protect the starship upon landing but it would make a crater on touch

down. The landing blew a meteor sized hole in the Egyptian desert 120 feet in diameter and became known as the Kamil Crater.

Ra scattered chunks of an iron meteorite around the crater to disguise the landing as a meteor impact. The impact area appeared as an object had fallen from space and although rare, it had been seen at times across the vast desert.

They exited the ship and unloaded their supplies for the 1,000 mile journey to the Plains of Giza. Ra wished they had arrived closer to their objective close to the Nile River. But he was pleased with their landing site after traveling 450 light years and knew Bastet did well navigating. Besides, he thought the remote area would generate less curiosity from any inhabitants that might be in the area.

Ra programmed the starship to return to space and await further instructions. The organic starship received the command to orbit and hide within the trillions of space objects until recalled. Its anti-gravity drive could generate power from the high-energy galactic cosmic rays in space and maintain all the ship's necessary systems. It could even protect itself from small asteroids and meteorite collisions thanks to its anti-gravity shield. The ship initiated the anti-gravity drive to lift off and would appear as a shimmering ghost of air rising in the heat of the Egyptian desert.

Ra and Bastet made their way across the desert until they arrived at the Great Plains of Giza. They required little nourishment or rest, only enough to sustain the organic body they lived in. The long journey was relatively easy for them even when considering the distance traveled. In the areas where sand dunes were prevalent Ra would carry Bastet in her specially designed back pack.

Bastet asked Ra "Make sure and wake me up when we arrive." She then curled up in her little compartment and went to sleep. If Bastet had looked up, she would have seen Ra rising his hand over his shoulder with the middle finger extended. *I like this salute* he thought.

Bastet blended in on their journey as a female black cat with a unique white star on her forehead. Ra appeared as a large man with flowing white hair and a drooping mustache. He miscalculated the native Egyptian inhabitants' appearance, his organic body did not exactly blend into the background. He compensated for his appearance by wearing a white linen cloak along with a turban and hoped not arouse too much suspicion.

They decided it would be best if Bastet stayed in Egypt and assist the Pharaoh to build the Great Pyramid of Giza. Ra would travel around the globe and build pyramids in key geographical areas across the planet. The plan was for the pyramids to be built on an axis that created a straight line around the center of Earth. The pyramid on the Great Plains of Giza would be the lynchpin of their power generation scheme. It would orient towards Orion and as the largest and most powerful pyramid, it would focus all the other pyramid's energy to Betelgeuse.

Their aim was to teach the builders how to harness the Earth's harmonics and levitate the huge building blocks to build the pyramids. Both Ra and Bastet had the ability to levitate objects, regardless of the size or weight. Once each pyramid was constructed, Bastet or Ra would then energize the pyramids with their cosmic powers and bring them online.

Bastet mingled around Cairo and used her telepathic abilities to better understand the hierarchy of the Egyptian people. Her long range observations from Centauri allowed her to comprehend most of their language but required more specific information on their culture. She had to find the number one person to establish a link with to build the Great Pyramid. That one person turned out to be King Khufu.

While Bastet formed her plan to bond with King Khufu, Ra was on his own mission. He needed to travel to North America and worked to obtain passage on a large cedar plank and papyrus ocean-going vessel. The ship was being constructed in the Cairo docks where Ra used his own telepathic power of persuasion to find employment.

He had been tanning his thin skin covering to better blend in with the natives. He still had a problem with his white hair, but decided there was nothing to he could now do about it so made it work best he could.

Ra's aim was to gain passage to North America and the Yucatan Peninsula. He needed to build the power generators around the planet and North America was where he needed to start.

The Egyptians toiled to build the huge cedar planked ship required to cross the Pacific Ocean. The ship was based upon a new, radical design and Ra slowly began to exert his advanced knowledge for the construction process. He needed to get to the New World and required a stout ship for the journey.

He gained the confidence of the ship building Minister in order to contribute to the design of the ship. The Minister based the ship on an original previous design commissioned by King Khufu's father, Senefru. Although the Egyptians were competent ship builders because of the commerce on the Nile River, they had never attempted a ship on this scale.

At 150 feet long and 20 feet wide it was the largest ever constructed using primarily inter-locking cedar planks along with papyrus. The massive main sail of cotton and linen stood at 75 feet with lesser sails for various sea conditions.

The ship Minister felt confident of the construction quality but had one gnawing worry. He was confident the ship would hold up on the journey across unknown waters, barring any calamitous storms. And he felt their provisions would last for the journey. But what he was not sure of if they could find North America. They had never attempted such a journey and worried their navigation skills were lacking. Once again Ra proved to be most resourceful.

Ra's advanced knowledge of star navigation reassured the Minister they could find their destination. In fact, Ra plotted their route to arrive at 18.8067° N and 89.3985° W, which should bring them to the Yucatan

Peninsula. The Minister was so impressed he named Ra as the Navigator of the ship, a highly respected position.

Their date for their crossing the ocean to the New World was fast approaching, and all had some trepidation. Egyptian sailors had never attempted to sail such a great distance. Although they were experienced sailors that only encompassed the Nile and maybe the Red Sea. Comfortable waters and mostly known water routes. This journey was to unfamiliar waters that had countless unknowns. The Ship Minister enlisted only the bravest of men for the trip, and that included Starman Ra.

Ra thought it was time to reach out to Bastet with a telepathic link to determine his progress on the pyramid. Bastet updated Ra with her progress with both King Khufu and the giant pyramid construction. Bastet explained how she worked her way into Khufu's confidence after she was found on the plains near his royal tent. She used her telepathic abilities to establish a strong bond with him and King Khufu brought her into his tent and provided shelter and food.

Bastet asked Ra "When will you be begin the journey across the ocean to the New World?"

Ra replied "Soon, to map out our journey I had to develop a solar calendar for my star navigation. The calendar consists of 365 days that represents a solar year, so based upon my calendar in about thirty solar days the journey should begin. The ship is about ready now, we are installing the final riggings and loading our provisions."

"Let's keep our telepathic link connected on your journey, so I can send you updates on the pyramid construction. The Yoruba workers on the pyramid are developing their levitation skills quickly and making excellent progress. King Khufu has complete confidence in me and conveys my instructions how to levitate the massive stones to the workers. It did not take long for he, then the Yoruba, to master controlling Earth's harmonics and bend the sound waves for the levitation," Bastet said.

She added “I also then can save your ass when you get lost on the seas, you are not the navigator I am.” Ra told Bastet to sniff her own ass and sent her a middle finger salute then ended the connection.

The departure day approached and Ra reached out to Bastet one more time. “Bastet, I think we may need to meet one last time before I leave. Can you get away for a meeting tomorrow, I will come to you.” Ra was about fifty miles from Bastet and thought he could travel faster and arouse less suspicion than a black cat.

They decided day after tomorrow to meet near the pyramid construction.

Bastet always accompanied King Khufu to the pyramid site and on occasion would do her cat thing and explore around. She was confident being gone for a while would not raise any concerns.

Ra traveled to the Great Pyramid construction site and received few questioning stares since he wore the attire and jewelry of a Royal Ship Navigator. The level of clothing and jewelry worn by Egyptians established their stature and he would not be challenged except by the select few of higher rank.

They met at an abandoned limestone quarry picked by Bastet. Ra arrived first and sat on a large broken chunk of granite. Bastet strode up and leaped on the rock and sat by Ra, then licked her paws. They both stared at each other before saying anything.

Bastet connected first. “Well, do you think you know your route to the New World?”

Ra looked at Bastet and replied “Do you think that big pile of rock you are working on will not collapse?”

With their pleasantries out of the way, they both took a serious tone. Ra spoke first. “I believe our mission is going well, we shall know soon enough.”

Time and age was not a consideration for either of them. As far as they knew they would not age. Their alien core fueled their bodies and maintained cellular activity far beyond that of a normal human. The con-

stantly regenerated their body organs and outward appearance so did not age.

Ra rubbed Bastet's ears and thought *I will miss you*. With all their banter aside, he knew they were fellow interstellar travelers. They had each other and knew any relationships they might have with humans would erode with time.

Bastet replied "I think I have cut King Khufu's pyramid construction time table from thirty years to ten years. We should place the capstone with the next seven years. Hopefully that will give you time to begin construction on your temple pyramid in North America." "What is the name of the place you chose for the construction site again?" she asked.

"The Yucatan Peninsula, the native people are the Mayans. They are an advanced race and I don't think I will have too much of a problem on selling the idea for the construction/" Ra answered.

"I have leveraged all my star navigation skills for this journey and estimate it will take about 150 solar days. I am confident for myself to survive the trip, not so much for the other thirty men. But I will do my best to get us there. I would be more confident if I had my navigator with me," Ra said as he looked down at Bastet.

Centaurians did not have real emotions, but with the bodies they now possessed they experienced a new emotional sensation. They both tried to understand their feelings for one another. They understood the human relationship of brother and sister yet struggled to understand how they now felt. *Are these human emotions* Ra wondered?

Bastet replied "I know you Ra, you will get them there and all alive. But the most important thing is to succeed, we have to get the power generators up and running on this planet to save Betelgeuse and Centauri. This planet is the only one we have ever found with the potential of saving our race. Earths location to their star, its strong gravity, human inhabitants and even its environment is conducive for our survival. This planet is our best and only hope for our race to survive."

Ra and Bastet both sat in silence for a few moments. Ra reached down and tweaked Bastet's ears one more time. She looked up and laid her paw on his leg. They both looked deeply at each other, then Ra stood up.

"Farewell my friend, hope to see you the next hundred years," Ra said.

"Well, keep in touch and don't get lost and become a stranger." Bastet replied.

Ra gave Bastet the middle finger salute.

Bastet replied "Sniff my ass" then jumped from the rock and headed back to the construction site.

Ra watched her slowly melt into the horizon, then turned and headed the opposite direction back to the Cairo ship yards.



NEITHER RA NOR BASTET could know they would become Gods in Egyptian lore. Ra would become known as the Sun God, a traveler from the skies. A Sky Navigator that led the Egyptians on the longest journey of their existence across the seas to a land called North America. He would prove to be one that never tired, possessed immense strength, stamina and keen intelligence. The men he traveled with all respected and loved him. As the navigator his knowledge of the stars awed his fellow crewmen, including the Captain. Before leaving Egypt he created the Egyptian Solar Calendar, taught navigation by stars to the sailors, the middle finger hand salute and countless other skills.

Bastet would be revered as the Protector of Pharaohs and Goddess of Cats. King Khufu depended on Bastet so much that he made a black onyx ring with her likeness engraved set with a huge diamond in her forehead. He proclaimed he would forever pay homage to Bastet and gave the ring the highest honor and wore the ring over his fourth finger of his left hand. This finger was considered having a vein directly connected to

the heart. King Khufu wore the ring to his dying day, forever thankful to Bastet for her tremendous abilities and guidance building the pyramids.

Ra and Bastet did not know their mission on earth would be interrupted for several thousand years because of a pyramid mishap. They then would engage in a battle in New Orleans to save not only Centauri but Earth.



The End

The Binding

Volume 1



A Novel by John Parham



Coming soon!



FOLLOW THE CONTINUED adventures of Starman Ra, Bastet the Cat and others in an epic battle to defend America against the Russian Mafia in their plan to release a crop killing nanovirus in New Orleans.



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About the Author

I was born in California in 1949, lived in Arkansas most of my life and now retired to the sunny beaches of Florida. I have been a cherry picker, welder and CEO of a computer technology company. And now an author.

I graduated with a BA in Journalism and finishing my first book, *The Binding*. *The Binding* characters include 5,000 year old telepathic cat Bastet, Starman Ra and Mindy the Voodoo Queen.

I created the Short Story series *Cat Chronicles* with the first story *The Old Man and The Three Legged Goat*.

My Flash Fiction short story *Town That Dreaded Halloween* recently won a national writing contest. This story was selected to be read on the 2018 Halloween Special Edition AIARWIP podcast.

I have been married to Mindy for 25 years and been in love with her for about 50. And no she is not a Voodoo Queen!

We travel with two independent cats, Juno and Loco. Juno was the inspiration for Bastet and Loco will be in the next book.

Oh, and I think it should be noted for the past 50 years I have been known as Crazy. I think it goes well with my stories!

Read more at <https://www.johnparhamauthor.com>.