

# Kitty

*By Khaelenmore Thaal, Inspired by the game from Mioirel*

A tiny ginger kitten stretched cutely and opened his eyes, looking around. He was all alone amidst, as it seemed to him, an endless field. Tall stalks of corn rose high above the astonished child up into the whitish haze of the sky.

The kitten quickly sprang up and rushed forward. He was running at full speed with no regard to his surroundings, every now and then dashing through the stalks that dissipated in showers of green sparks. Suddenly he stopped in front of a huge ruby heart, softly pulsating to the rhythm of the child's breath.

```
> What is this?  
: A heart.
```

Still puzzled, Kitty carefully touched it with his paw. It immediately turned into a shower of red sparks rushing into the child. Pleasant warmth filled his body and he closed his eyes and purred, stretching sweetly.

```
> What do I feel?  
: Happiness. A tiny bit of it. You want more, don't you?  
> Yes!  
: Continue, then. For a start, collect one hundred hearts.
```

The child sat on the ground, confusedly looking forward.

```
> One hundred is too many!  
: One hundred – is just the right number, my little friend.
```

Kitty thoughtfully examined his orange paw. "One hundred is definitely too many," he thought. "On the other hand happiness is pleasant," he continued thinking, curling up on the ground.

```
> Will I feel happiness from every heart collected?  
: Yes. And when you gather enough I promise to give you something else.  
You'll like it. But let's keep it a surprise for now.
```

Decisively standing up, the child resumed his running, expecting a heart behind each and every stalk. But, to his surprise, none were there.

```
> You lied to me! There are no more hearts here!  
: No, I did not lie.
```

The kitten returned to his thoughts, "I've been running in one direction for quite some time already, and the field does not end. Nevertheless, I haven't found any more hearts. I need to make a *map*," a thin shroud briefly covered his surroundings and the word appeared in the kitten's mind out of nowhere. He started scratching a primitive chart on the ground, "I have passed 1382 stalks". The child looked around and carefully examined the plants. They were placed as if on a grid — all stalks were equidistant from their neighbors and completely indistinguishable. Even the wind swayed them in absolutely the same way. In some cells of this imaginary grid the stalks were missing. "I can use this as a landmark," without any regard to what he looked like, Kitty started to make a map of places known to him. Then he stumbled upon a nearby stalk. The stalk dissipated in green sparks, only to appear again as soon as the cheeky beast stepped away. "This won't do, the map is lost under the stalks and there's not enough place to draw everything. I need to think". Without noticing this, he started to slowly walk in one direction. He looked downwards as he tried to estimate how much space is needed to map the whole world. Suddenly, he stumbled upon a drawing on the ground. His own drawing. "So, I passed 123 stalks and four more empty cells. 127 in total," Kitty erased the map and started to draw it again. "128 cells in total, and then everything repeats... I don't really need a map!" The child turned to running, changing direction from time to time. He quickly got to the next heart. And then one more, and more and more. Until he finally counted: "One hundred!"

: Well done! Keep it up! Collect one hundred more more hearts!

And then gray fog covered the world.

\*\*\*

A tiny ginger kitten stretched cutely and opened his eyes, looking around. He was all alone amidst, as it seemed to him, an endless field. Tall stalks of corn rose high above the astonished child up into the whitish haze of the sky.

Examining himself, Kitty found a bag with several pockets on his girdle. "I wonder, why do I need this? Is it the promised surprise?" Thought the kitten, but was immediately distracted by a reddish light between the stalks.

Obliviously he collected hearts one after another. Suddenly, he saw something unusual: a butterfly fluttering around one of the stalks.

```
> What is it?  
: A butterfly.  
> What is it for?  
: I don't know.  
> Don't you know everything?  
: No, child. Far from everything.  
> Can you learn this?  
: I can. But it will be better if you do it yourself.
```

“Myself... How can I do this? I’ll ask the Voice!” The butterfly continued its way around the stalk ignoring the kitten while he was watching with his mouth ajar.

> Do I have to collect the butterfly?  
: You don’t <have> to do it.  
> <Can> I collect the butterfly?  
: Try it!

Without a word, Kitty carefully reached to the butterfly. It momentarily moved to a new place. Instincts took over and he quickly caught the butterfly with his paws. “Catch you! It means I *can*!” The child put the butterfly into his bag.

> What do I feel?  
: What is it like?  
> Happiness.  
: It’s good.  
> Do I need to collect more butterflies?  
: It’s up to you.

“I’ll try then. How many do I need? They seem to be quite rare, and I need to keep them somewhere. Five will be enough... Yes, I *want* to gather five butterflies,” he skipped to collect more hearts...

And once again one hundred!

: Well done! Keep it up! Collect one hundred more more hearts!

And then gray fog covered the world.

\*\*\*

A tiny ginger kitten stretched cutely and opened his eyes, looking around. He was all alone amidst, as it seemed to him, an endless field. Tall stalks of corn rose high above the astonished child up into the whitish haze of the sky.

> How many hearts do I need to gather?  
: One hundred, as I said.  
> And in total?  
: Patience, my child! You’ll find everything out yourself!

Kitty frowned and just stood, looking through the stalks for some time. But he forgot about everything as soon as he saw not one, but two butterflies. Without much thinking, he captured them and put into his bag. Pleasant sensation once again filled his tiny furry body. “Just a tiny bit more!” Flickered in his mind as he dashed across the endless corn field.

Only twenty hearts were left, when Kitty caught his fifth butterfly — the last one. He purred cutely to the feeling once again rising in him.

> Where does happiness come from?  
: Patience, my child! You'll find everything out yourself!

Getting a repeated answer, the kitten pondered.

> Do you know, where it comes from?  
: No, I do not.  
> You are lying to me!  
: No, I'm not.

The Voice lied. At least Kitty's thought so. Nevertheless, he decided to proceed. "I feel happiness when I gather hearts or catch butterflies. The Voice told me about happiness in hearts, but not in butterflies. But it is there. Or did I imagine this?"

> Is happiness from the butterflies real?  
: I don't know.

"Surely it's real. The Voice won't tell me that, but I can trust my feelings. Or not? I need to collect five more butterflies... No five is too few, let's try... Twenty? Yes, twenty should be just right. If I feel this once again, then it's real. Otherwise — it's my imagination." Suddenly, Kitty saw something unusual. It was a butterfly, but it was of a different, emerald, color. In a moment it was already in his bag.

: I can fulfill a wish for you if you collect ten emerald butterflies.

"A wish... And what do I wish? What do I *have to* wish..." Kitty broke off and corrected himself, "What *can* I wish?" Lost in thoughts, he continued to scour the field in search for more emerald butterflies, but sadly, none was found. But the rest of the hearts did not take long.

: Well done! Keep it up! Collect one hundred more more hearts!

And then gray fog covered the world.

\*\*\*

A tiny ginger kitten stretched cutely and opened his eyes, looking around. He was all alone amidst, as it seemed to him, an endless field. Tall stalks of corn rose high above the astonished child up into the whitish haze of the sky.

Things repeated like this a few more times, until Kitty finally collected twenty butterflies. The

feeling of happiness overwhelmed him so much that he gathered one, two, three hundreds of hearts not even noticing it.

Only when he collected ten emerald butterflies, he stopped to think. “Now I can test if there is happiness in the butterflies,” flashed in his head, and his mind already reached to the Voice with a request.

> I want to become a butterfly.

And then gray fog covered the world.

\*\*\*

Amidst an endless field of corn, a lonely blue butterfly fluttered, from the first sight — a most usual one. Then it soared into the haze of the sky.

From up there both hearts and butterflies, usual and emerald, were seen. The butterfly rose higher and higher. Soon it became obvious to it that the field is stretched on a surface of a giant donut suspended in all-encompassing whitish haze. And it still continued to fly upwards.

Looking downwards, Kitty found out that the distance from the donut-shaped field does not increase. “Now I see everything. Except one thing. There is no happiness in butterflies. Where does it come from when I collect them? Should I become a heart?” Thoughts rushed into the child’s head until he made up a plan, “I’ll collect fifty more butterflies — will I feel happiness after that? Then I’ll collect ten more emerald ones, and become a heart. If they contain happiness, I’ll become happy.” At the same time, he returned to gathering hearts.

: Well done! Keep it up! Collect one hundred more more hearts!

And then gray fog covered the world.

\*\*\*

Amidst an endless field of corn, a lonely blue butterfly fluttered, a most usual one from the first sight. Once again it soared into the haze of the sky.

“So, the field is different each time! This explains new hearts.” Kitty had flown around the field once more and counted everything. “One hundred hearts, nine blue butterflies and one emerald one. Let’s see what the next field has.” On the next field there were one hundred more hearts, but there was eight blue and two emerald butterflies. Field after field, Kitty learned more and more about fields, butterflies and hearts. There was always exactly one hundred of the latter — exactly as much as the Voice asks, but the number of butterflies was always different, but never more than ten. Of emerald ones there were usually only one or two.

Soon, Kitty collected fifty butterflies. The child had never felt such happiness ever before. He circled the field for a long time, devoting himself to cheerful thoughts, until the feeling worn off. By that time, his bag already contained ten emerald butterflies.

> I want to become a heart.  
: Hearts are not alive, you cannot become one.  
> Then I want more happiness.  
: I cannot fulfill this wish.  
> Why?  
: Patience, my child! You'll find everything out yourself!

Kitty was frustrated. He wanted to feel this pleasant warmth more than hearts or butterflies allowed. Maybe there is some other way? Suddenly, things became crystal clear for him. But even before he formulated the question, the Voice called to him.

: Time to go home!

The child looked around and noticed a huge two-story house nearby. The door was ajar and gentle light was flowing from inside.

> What about hearts?  
: You can collect one hundred more hearts.  
> What if I don't want to?  
: Then you can skip this.

Kitty ran up the wooden stairs and whisked into the doorway.

\*\*\*

— Mom, I want a kitten! — Ika stretched her hands to a tiny ginger kitten on the shelf.

— It's more than a toy. Our robotic animals are as good as real ones, look, — young saleswoman in an accurate suit took the kitten from the shelf, referring to the girl as much as to her parents. She found a switch on the back of the kitten's head and clicked it. Green eyes of the toy lit up, and he jumped on the floor.

\*\*\*

This world was totally different from anything Kitty had seen. There was no field, no whitish haze, no corn stalks. When a little girl stretched her hand towards him, the child recoiled, but feeling the touch of the cool palm, he purred sweetly. Familiar sensation filled him once again.

— Hi! I'm Ika, and you?

— I'm Kitty. Glad to meet you, Ika! — seemingly even the saleswoman was surprised at the sound of the kitten's voice.

— We'll take it, — said the girl's father.

THE END