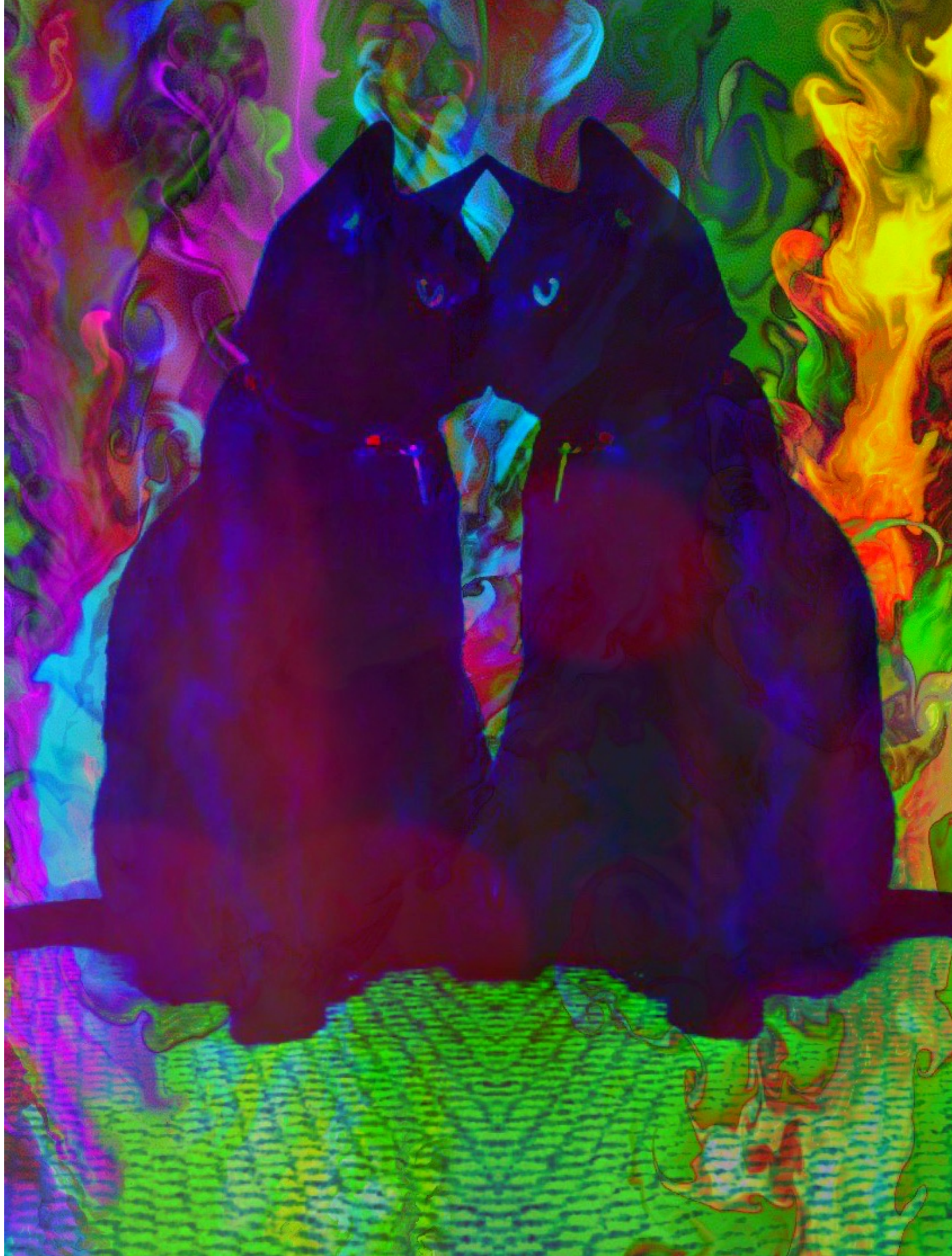


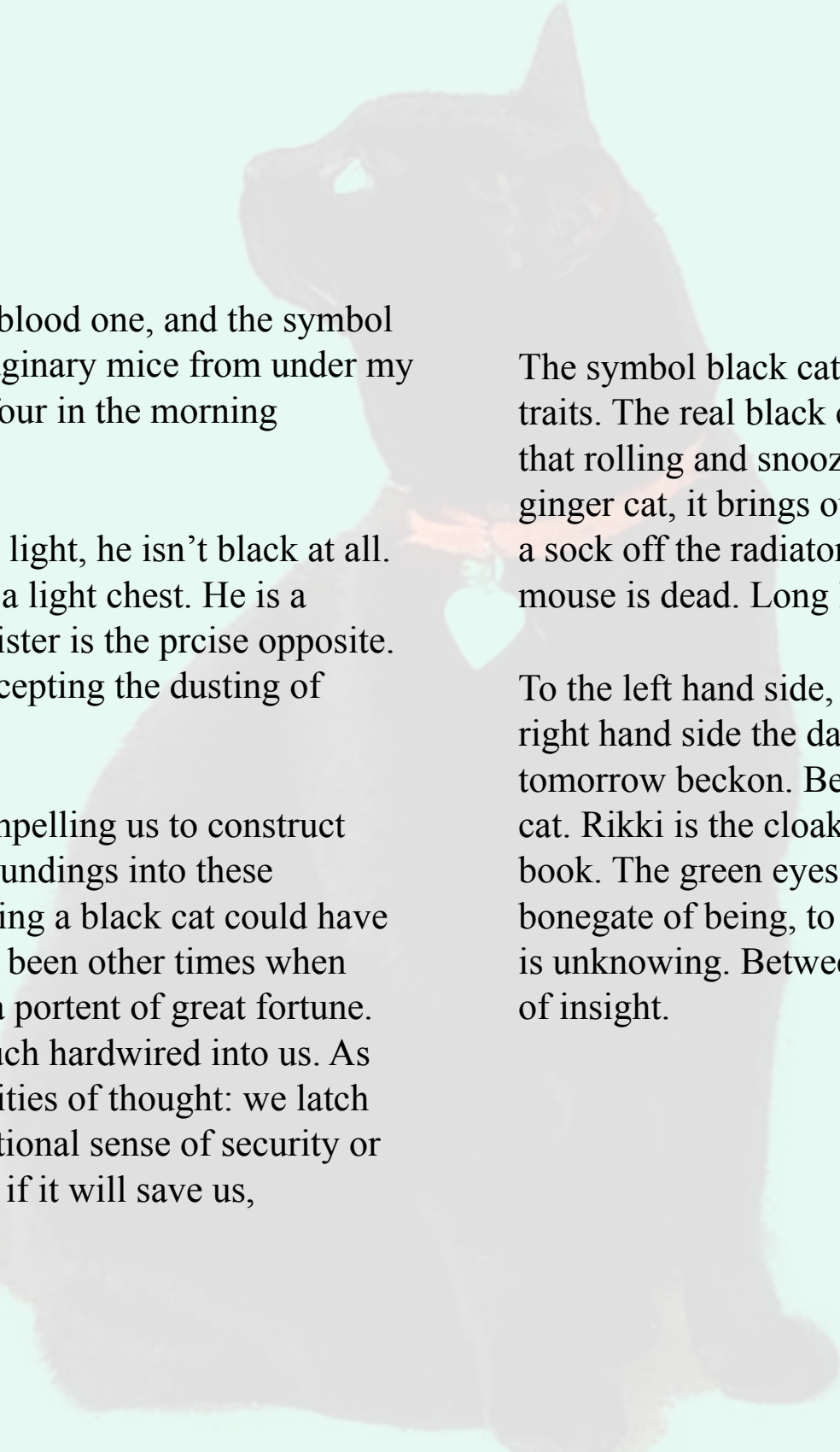
THE BLACK CAT AND THE CROSSROADS



WHEN MY BLACK CAT WAS BORN ...

...he was – likely or not – oxygen starved. He's a rescue cat, so his earliest days can only be surmised. Suffice to say, he struggles at some of the basics of cat behaviour. He finds jumping difficult, only occasionally washes himself and wanders around looking dazed, meowing and meowing to himself. He habitually chews on plastic. Given everything, he is an indoor cat. He is also the friendliest, cuddliest little pet.





These two beings – the flesh, fur and blood one, and the symbol from thin air one – stalk the same imaginary mice from under my bed. They both wander the house, at four in the morning mowling for food.

If you look at him closely, in the right light, he isn't black at all. He's a ginger tom. He has stripes and a light chest. He is a melanistic ginger cat. Curiously, his sister is the precise opposite. She is a leucistic ginger (all white, excepting the dusting of orange the right conditions reveal).

What force is it within us humans compelling us to construct fraudulent realities and drag our surroundings into these fantasies? There are times where owning a black cat could have been punishable by death. There have been other times when owning a black cat would be seen as a portent of great fortune. Symbolic wish fulfilment is pretty much hardwired into us. As for cats, so too for all manner of rigidities of thought: we latch on to something which creates an irrational sense of security or surety, and keep hold, keep tight... as if it will save us, somehow.

The symbol black cat who lives in my house, has such curious traits. The real black cat, likewise, has oddities of his own. All that rolling and snoozing in the sun reveals not only his inner ginger cat, it brings out the playful kitten lurking there. He grabs a sock off the radiator and kicks it with his back legs. The sock mouse is dead. Long live the sock mouse.

To the left hand side, the blinding light is here and now. To the right hand side the darkness and silence of yesterday and tomorrow beckon. Between them is the invisibility of the black cat. Rikki is the cloak and the hiding, he is the candle and the book. The green eyes and black whiskers tremble through the bonegate of being, to the hollow between. Up is forgetting, down is unknowing. Between is the tail twitch and the sharpened claw of insight.

Just before sunrise my cat comes alive. This is his time, the not quite hours. He moves between states, part the real cat, scratching his wicker pole, part the symbol cat, summoning beings from the ether. The history of my cat is many thousands of years old. I'm aware of him running around. I wait for him to come and fetch me. He will do, once he's realised his food bowl is empty. I'm mainly dreaming. He comes from out there, in the fields where he has spent the night, avoiding the wolves and the jackals. I wonder if he will make my home his one day. It would be good to have him around the place.

