Partha lived in a small house with his parents. His cousin, Mimi, lived in a big house. Her parents were rich. She had lots of clothes and toys and a new computer.

Every year, Mimi visited lots of exciting places. She went to France, England and Japan. She learnt many new languages.

One day, when Mimi was away, Partha found a scrawny kitten on the path and took it home.

The kitten was weak, but made a loud noise. Partha carried him into the kitchen. He filled a bowl with milk and put it on the floor.

The kitten stepped into the bowl and lapped up the milk. Soon his stomach touched the floor.

Partha laughed.

‘Can I keep the kitten, please?’ Partha asked his mother.

She agreed and Partha was thrilled.

Partha washed and combed the kitten’s fur. He sprinkled it with powder. The kitten played on the mat, while Partha did his homework. Then the kitten fell asleep on his pillow.
Something strange happened that night. Partha heard a noise and sat up. He turned on the light. At the bottom of the bed there was a large, black cat staring at him.

Partha was going to shout for his father. But just then the cat said: ‘Don’t be afraid. I’ve come to see my son.’

‘I found him,’ said Partha, looking at the kitten. ‘You’re not going to take him away, are you?’

‘No,’ said the cat. ‘I have no home. I can’t look after him.’

‘I’m sorry,’ said Partha.

‘You are looking after him well. You can keep him,’ said the cat.

‘Thank you,’ said Partha.

‘But, allow me to visit him once a year,’ said the black cat, ‘and I will grant you a wish every year.’

‘May I have a wish now?’ asked Partha.

‘Yes,’ said the black cat. ‘Any wish.’

‘I wish you find a good home,’ said Partha. ‘And I ...’

‘Ah!’ said the cat. ‘Only one wish! That’s a kind wish. I’ll see you next year.’
In a flash, the black cat disappeared.

‘I could have wished for anything,’ sighed Partha.

Partha thought about the black cat, then fell asleep.

A few days later, Mimi returned from a trip to Spain. She had many new toys. Partha wished he had some too, but there was no black cat to grant his wish.

Mimi spoke to Partha in Spanish. He didn’t understand her.

After some time, Partha changed. He stopped looking after the kitten. He stopped playing with Mimi.

‘She thinks she knows everything!’ said Partha.

But Mimi had not changed. She was as sweet as ever.

A year later, the black cat came into Partha’s room again. He looked old and tired.

‘Where is my son?’ asked the black cat.

‘In the kitchen,’ said Partha. ‘There’s no room here. I want my wish. I want a bicycle, better than Mimi’s.’

‘Yes,’ said the black cat sadly.

In a flash, a shiny, new bicycle appeared.

The black cat disappeared into the night. The next day Partha showed off his new bicycle.

‘My bike is better than yours!’ he shouted to Mimi. Mimi said nothing.
The following year the same thing happened. Mimi returned from Germany, spoke to Partha in German, and he did not understand.

One night the black cat returned. He looked sick. Next to him was his son.

‘I’ve been waiting for my wish!’ Partha shouted angrily. ‘I want to speak a language that no one else can speak.’

‘You don’t ask about me?’ said the black cat. ‘You have stopped looking after my son. But I made a promise. So, you have your wish.’

Both the cats went off into the night.

In the morning Partha went straight to Mimi’s house.

‘Hello, Partha,’ said Mimi. ‘Why are you here so early?’

‘Ugimplo rawin brotas? Shigam namitor!’ said Partha.

‘What?’ asked Mimi.

‘Marabuchi patonos quempitir,’ said Partha.

‘Are you mad?’ asked Mimi, closing the door.

Partha was puzzled. He ran home to his mother.

‘Amma, Amma!’ he shouted. ‘Parabilos bomabom!’

His mother did not understand. In fact, no one understood him for a long time!

And the black cat? Well, he came back. But he was old and deaf, so it couldn’t hear what Partha said in any language!

Nicholas Horsburgh
WORDS TO KNOW

cousin  a child of somebody’s uncle or aunt  
deaf  not able to hear  
disappeared  to stop being seen; to be gone from a place  
grant  to allow; to permit or give  
scrawny  thin and bony  
visit  to go to see and spend time with somebody; to go to see a place

COMPREHENSION

Answer the following questions.

1. Who lived in a bigger house, Partha or Mimi?
2. Where did Mimi go in the holidays?
3. Why do you think the kitten drank so much of the milk?
4. What strange thing happened that night?
5. Why did the black cat grant Partha a wish every year?
6. Why was the black cat pleased with Partha’s first wish?
7. In what ways did Partha change?
8. Why was the black cat sad when he visited Partha again?
9. What was Partha’s third wish?
10. Why did nobody understand Partha for a long time?

WORKING WITH WORDS

Each word ends with -ain. What are the words?

1. It is long and carries a lot of passengers.
2. It falls on us, sometimes gently, sometimes fiercely.
3. It means to get.
4. It means once more.
LEARNING ABOUT LANGUAGE

SENTENCES

Following the instructions below, write sentences of your own. Use all the words given.

Example: One verb beginning with r. One noun with s. A preposition with o.
Answer: Shaily ran over the bridge.

Now make up your own sentences.
1. One verb (b). Two adjectives (s). One pronoun (h).
2. One verb (b). Two nouns (b). One adjective (m).
3. Two verbs (s). One noun (p). One adjective (d).
   One pair of inverted commas.

LISTENING AND SPEAKING

Say each of the following aloud a number of times.
1. The rain in Spain stays mainly on the plain.
2. My father's car is a Jaguar,
   And Pa drives very far!
3. How much wood would a woodchuck chuck,
   If a woodchuck could chuck wood?

COMPOSITION

What happened to the black cat and his son? Did the black cat grant any more wishes? Write about it.