

PEGU



Text by Malinda Mayer
Illustrations by Jill Vowles

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This book is lovingly dedicated
to Kitty Davy and Jane Haynes
whose encouragement made these books a reality,
and to their most dearly beloved,
Meher Baba.

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Guruprasad

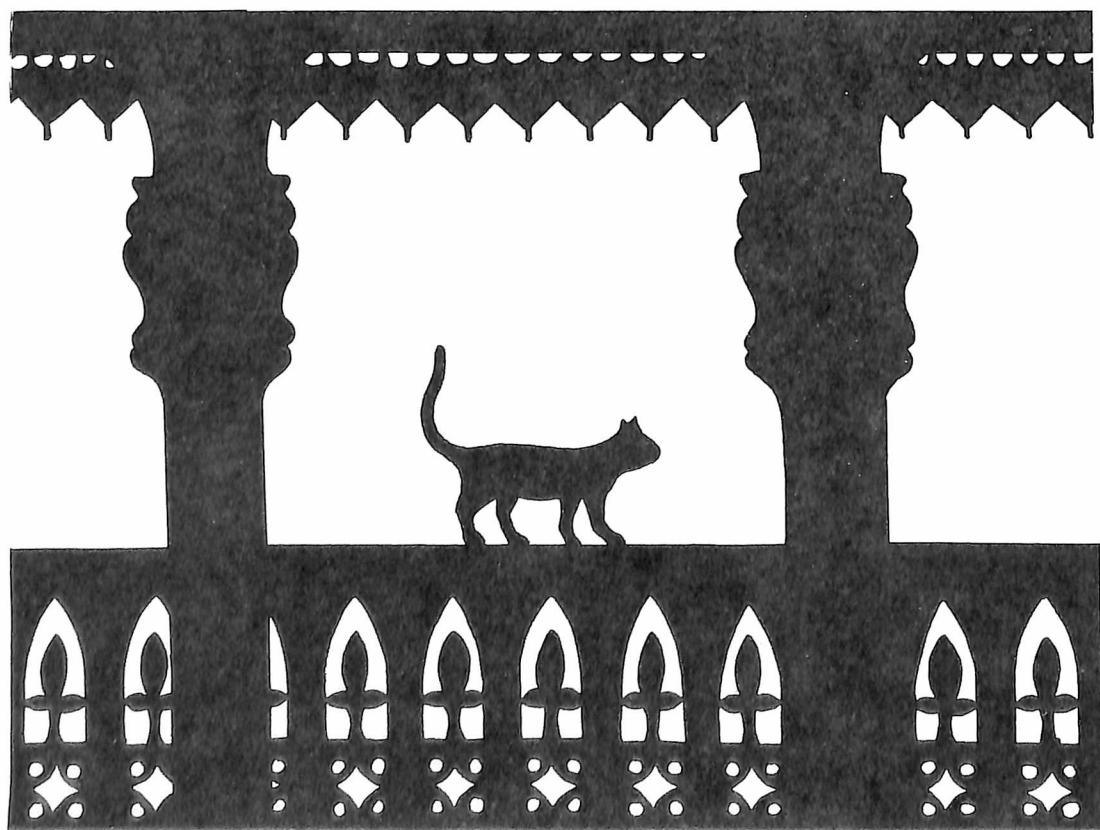


The stories in this book are about a cat named Pegu. He was a Siamese cat, and a very beautiful one, but the thing that made him special was his complete devotion to Meher Baba. In fact, he was so devoted to Baba that a whole family came to know of Meher Baba and to love him because of Pegu.

Meher Baba was the Avatar of our age, God in human form. Baba was the perfect father and mother, friend and teacher. For most of his life he didn't speak out loud, but the people who lived with him understood him by the expressions on his face and the way he moved his hands.

Most of all, people heard Meher Baba, and still do hear him, speaking in their hearts. He was so full of love for all creation that everything and everyone who came to him felt that he was not silent at all. Even animals felt Baba's special way of communicating, which is why not only people, but animals like Pegu, loved him.

One person who loved Baba with all her heart was an Indian princess, the Maharani of Baroda. In India, where Baba lived, the summers are very hot, so hot that people long to spend the summer season in the mountains where it is cool. The Maharani of Baroda owned a palace in a mountain city named Poona. She knew Baba needed a cool place to do his work, so she gave the palace to him to use during the hot months. She called the palace Guruprasad, which means "a gift for the Master," because the Maharani gave the palace as a gift to her master, Meher Baba. It was at Guruprasad that Pegu first found Baba.

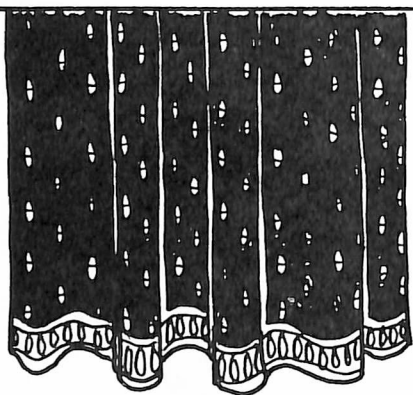


The Mandali

Meet Pegu

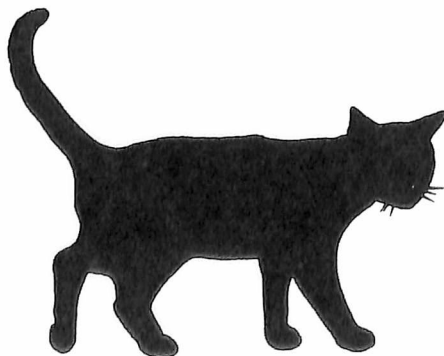
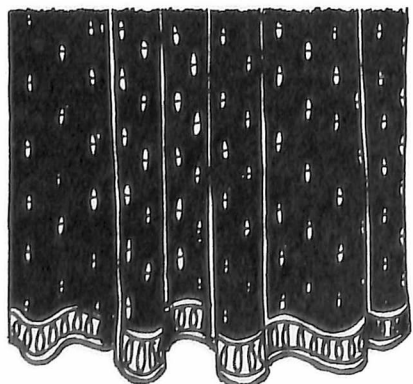
Baba had moved to Guruprasad for the hot summer months and his mandali had come with him. “Mandali” was the name Baba gave to the people who lived with him. The word “mandali” means “companions,” but Baba’s mandali were more than just companions to him. The mandali were a special group of men and women who followed Baba as their master and did their very best to please him and make him happy. This was not always an easy thing to do, in fact it was sometimes very difficult.

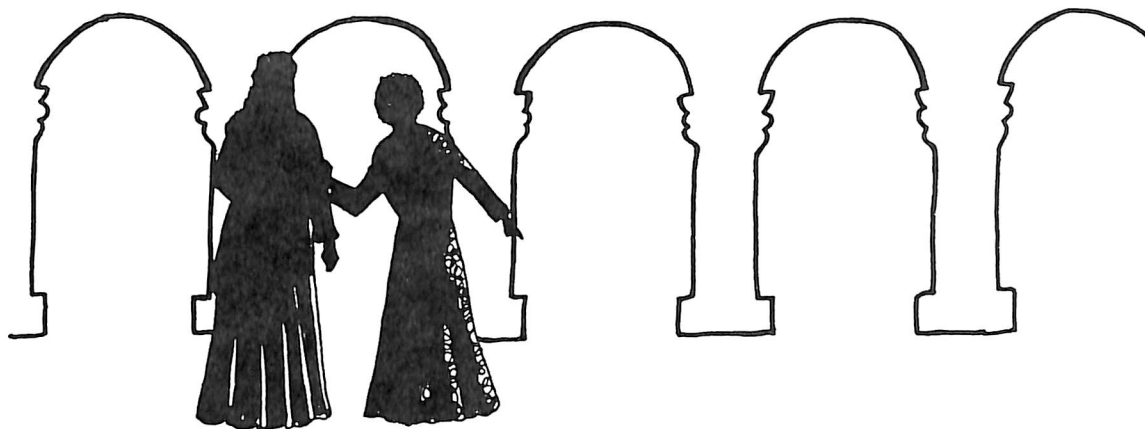
For example, if one of the mandali was feeling unhappy and in a nasty mood, Baba would tell him to be cheerful and not worry. Tasks like being cheerful when you feel grouchy were much harder than jobs like cooking Baba’s meals or driving his car. The mandali tried as hard as they could to do everything possible to make Baba happy because they loved him more than anything or anyone in the world, and when you love someone, you want most of all to make that person happy.



This summer there were some men mandali and some women mandali living with Baba at Guruprasad. In the middle of the palace, dividing it in two, was a great hall. The men mandali slept and ate on one side of the hall, and the women mandali slept and ate on the other.

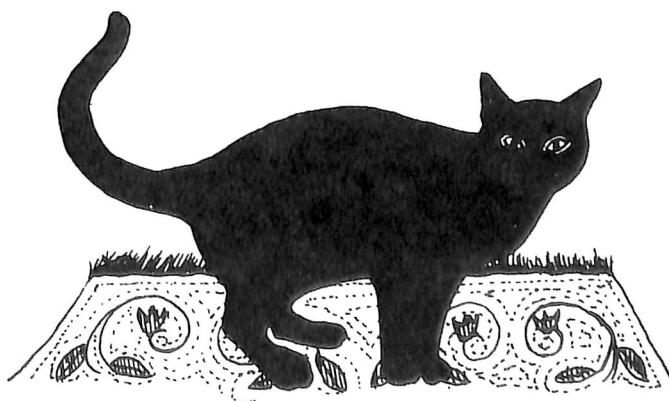
The great hall in the center of Guruprasad was where Baba met with people who loved him. He listened to their problems, answered their questions, and gave them his blessings. Sometimes Baba's lovers would sing to him or recite poetry or tell jokes. When Baba was not seeing visitors, however, the hall was deserted.





Out on the men's side of the veranda, near the door to the great hall, Eruch, one of Baba's men mandali, had set up his office. Eruch sat on the ground at a low table and typed letters that Baba wanted to send. One day, as he was working busily, he noticed a cat passing by on the veranda. Eruch was very busy with his work and forgot all about seeing the cat.

It happened on the women's side too. Later that morning Mani and Mehru, two of the women mandali, were talking. "Did you see a cat?" asked Mani. "I saw a shadow pass by earlier. I thought it was a cat."



“I saw it too,” said Meheru, “From the corner of my eye, I just noticed something flicker by. It did seem like a cat.”

By the afternoon, everyone had seen a cat, or thought they had.

“What’s that?”

“It’s a cat.”

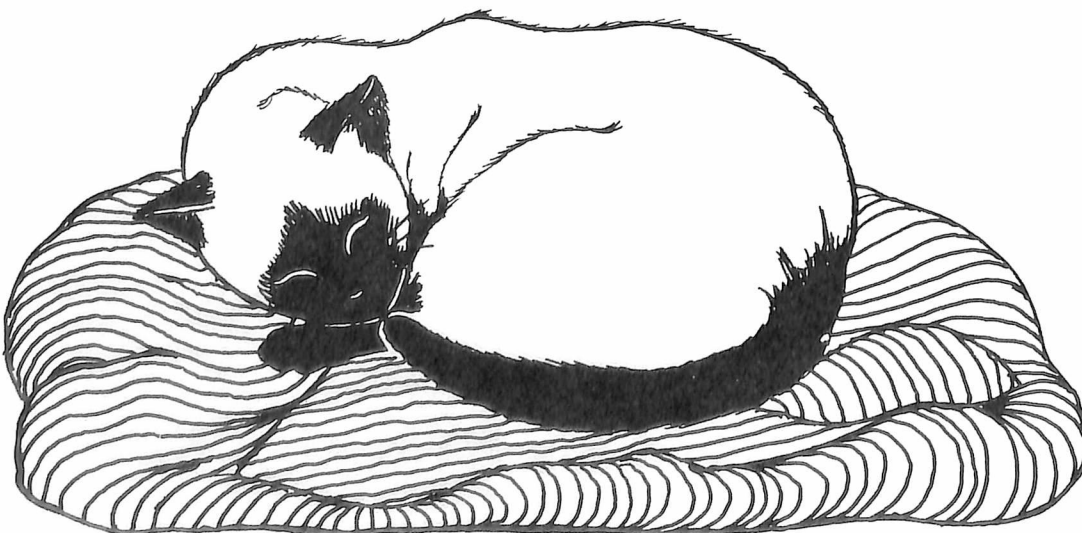
“Yes, it looks like a cat, but what sort of a cat?”

“It doesn’t look like an ordinary cat.”

“It seems to be a cat.”

“Well, we don’t own a cat. There aren’t any cats here.”

Then there was the cat again. And again. Little by little, as the cat lost his fear of the mandali, he began to show himself more and more. And by late afternoon, he had made himself at home in the palace.



Baba Meets Pegu

Pegu was walking back and forth on the veranda. He looked majestic as he strode along with his tail up, and he purred and purred.

Eruch thought he should tell Baba about the new guest, but when he went to Baba, Pegu followed and slipped through the door of Baba's room before Eruch could say anything.

"Baba," said Eruch, "this cat has been on the veranda all day. He seems to be making himself at home. Should we drive him away?"

Pegu ran directly to Baba and began purring and rubbing his face on Baba's feet.

Baba laughed. "No, no," he said. "He is here. What can we do? Leave him. Leave him. Don't drive him away."

"What about food, Baba? Should we feed him?"

"Give him what you can. Take care of him."



Baba and the mandali didn't usually eat meat, and there was not much in the kitchen to feed a cat. Eruch found some rice and dal, a sort of lentil stew, and gave that to Pegu along with some milk.

Pegu sniffed the rice and dal. It smelled funny. Not at all like the raw fish he was used to at home. He tried it. No, definitely not like the raw fish at home. Pegu was not a vegetarian cat. He tried the milk. He liked that. But he ate as much as he could of the rice and dal. After all, it was prasad, a gift from Baba, and he knew he should try to eat it all up.

Pegu Goes Home

Pegu spent the night with Baba and the mandali at Guruprasad. The next morning a car drove in at the front gate and a lady got out. Eruch was sitting on the veranda at his work and saw her come in. She came toward Eruch timidly.

“Hello,” he said to the lady. “Can I help you?”

“Oh, I’m so sorry to bother you,” said the lady, “but have you seen a cat around here? My cat is missing, and we don’t know where he’s gone. He’s a Siamese cat, and a friend told me he thought he had seen the cat around this palace.”

“Yes, yes,” said Eruch, “there has been a cat around here since yesterday.”

“Oh, yes,” she said. “He’s been missing since yesterday morning.”

“We don’t know where he is now, though,” said Eruch. “He’s disappeared, and we couldn’t call him because we don’t know his name.”

“May I call out for him?” asked the lady.

“Yes, of course,” said Eruch.

The lady sat down on a nearby sofa.

“Pegu!” she called. “Pegu! Pegu! Pegu!”

Pegu heard his mistress calling. He came running to her and jumped into her lap.

“Oh, Pegu,” said the lady, “we’ve been so worried about you. I’m so glad I found you!” She turned to Eruch and said, “This is my cat. I’m sorry if he caused you any trouble.”

“He’s been no trouble,” said Eruch. “I’m glad you found him.”

“Thank you for taking care of him,” said the lady. She picked up Pegu, got into her car, and drove away.



Pegu Comes Back

When the lady had gone, Eruch went to Baba and told him that the cat's mistress had come and taken him home.

"Are you sure it was her cat?" asked Baba.

"Oh, yes, Baba. She called him by name. 'Pegu! Pegu!' And he came running to her."

"Well, he must be her cat. Very good."

But that evening, Pegu was back! Eruch saw him, and so did Mani and Meheru. And so did Baba! Pegu sneaked into Baba's room again when Eruch went to tell Baba that the cat was back.

Baba laughed as Pegu rubbed his face on Baba's feet and purred and purred. "Feed him again," said Baba. "Take care of him."

The next morning, when the mandali and Pegu were all with Baba in the great hall, the lady came back again in her car. This time she brought her daughter along. Baba sent Eruch out to greet her and bring her inside to meet him.

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The lady had heard that a great man was staying at Guruprasad, but knew nothing about Meher Baba. She was embarrassed to impose herself on a stranger, especially since this man seemed to be so very important.

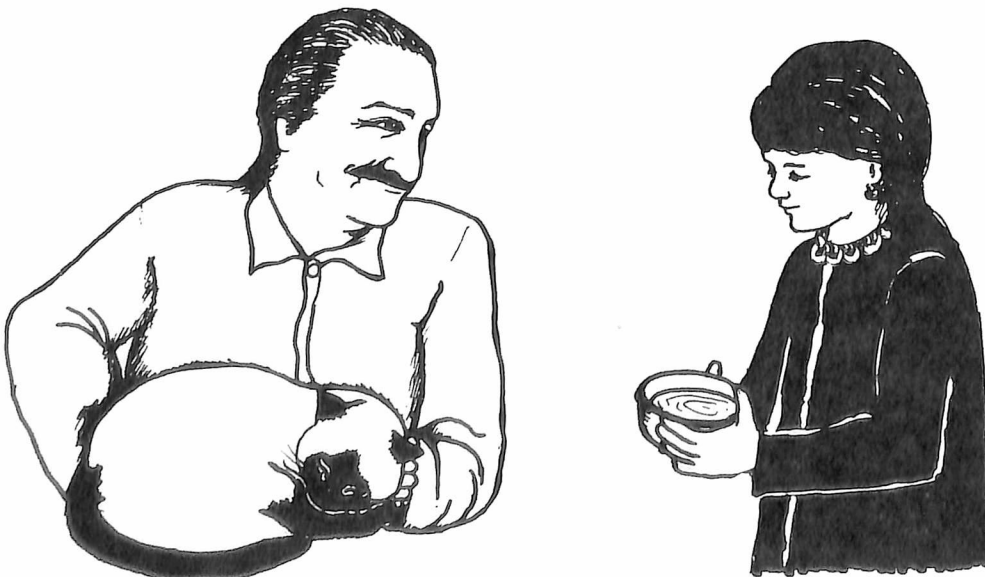
"I'm so sorry to keep bothering you like this," the lady said to Eruch, "but has the cat come back? He's missing again."

"Yes, he has come." said Eruch.

"May I take him away?" she asked.

"Yes, of course. He's your cat. Baba says to take him with you."

The lady turned to Baba and said, "I'm so very sorry to impose upon you like this. I'm sure you value your seclusion. Please forgive me and accept my apologies for intruding."



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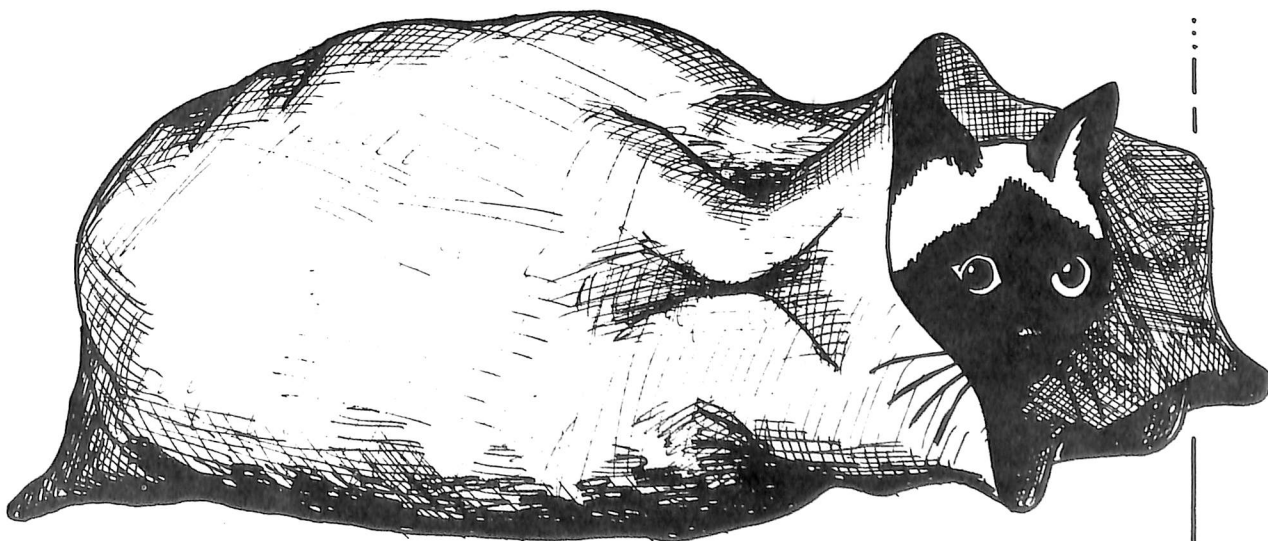
Baba nodded and smiled, accepting her apologies and telling her not to worry.

The lady called to Pegu, and Pegu came to her and looked into her face. She picked him up, thanked Baba, and left with her daughter.

And what do you think happened? That evening Pegu was back again, rubbing Baba's feet with his head and purring and purring.

The next day the lady came for the third time. This time she brought her son. He had a sack with him. After apologizing to Baba once more for the disturbance, she called Pegu. When he came, the son caught him and tied him up in the sack. "I will put Pegu on a leash at home," he said. "That way he won't be able to run away again."

So Pegu finally left Guruprasad.



Pegu at Home

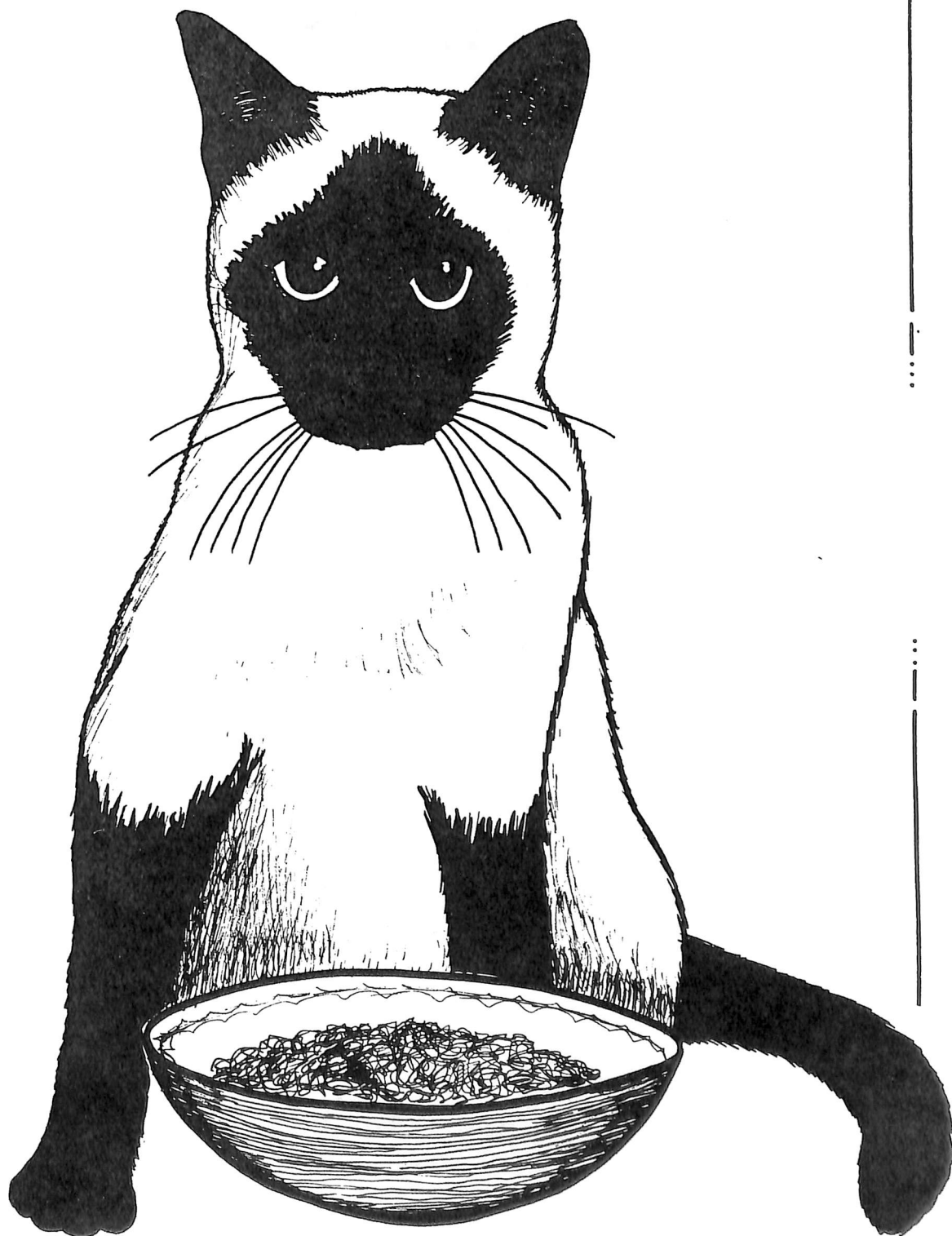
Pegu wouldn't eat. He lay on the ground in his leash and stared off into space. He didn't purr, he didn't meow, and he didn't strut back and forth the way he used to. He just lay there unhappily, and occasionally he sighed.

For two days the lady tried to tempt him with special food, but nothing would please him. She offered him raw fish and cooked fish, liver and chicken, even sweets. But Pegu didn't even notice what she put in front of him.

The lady knew what was wrong. Pegu was pining for Baba. He wanted so badly to be with Baba that he would rather die than be parted from him. The lady loved Pegu so much that she decided to let him go. If Pegu needed Baba that much, then he must go to Baba.

Sadly, she removed the leash. At first Pegu didn't notice, then suddenly he did. Slowly, for he was weak from not eating, he stood up and looked around. He looked lovingly at his mistress as if to

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thank her for her understanding, and turned immediately toward Guruprasad.
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Pegu Stays

Pegu ran up the steps of Guruprasad and across Eruch's feet. "Pegu!" Eruch called in surprised.

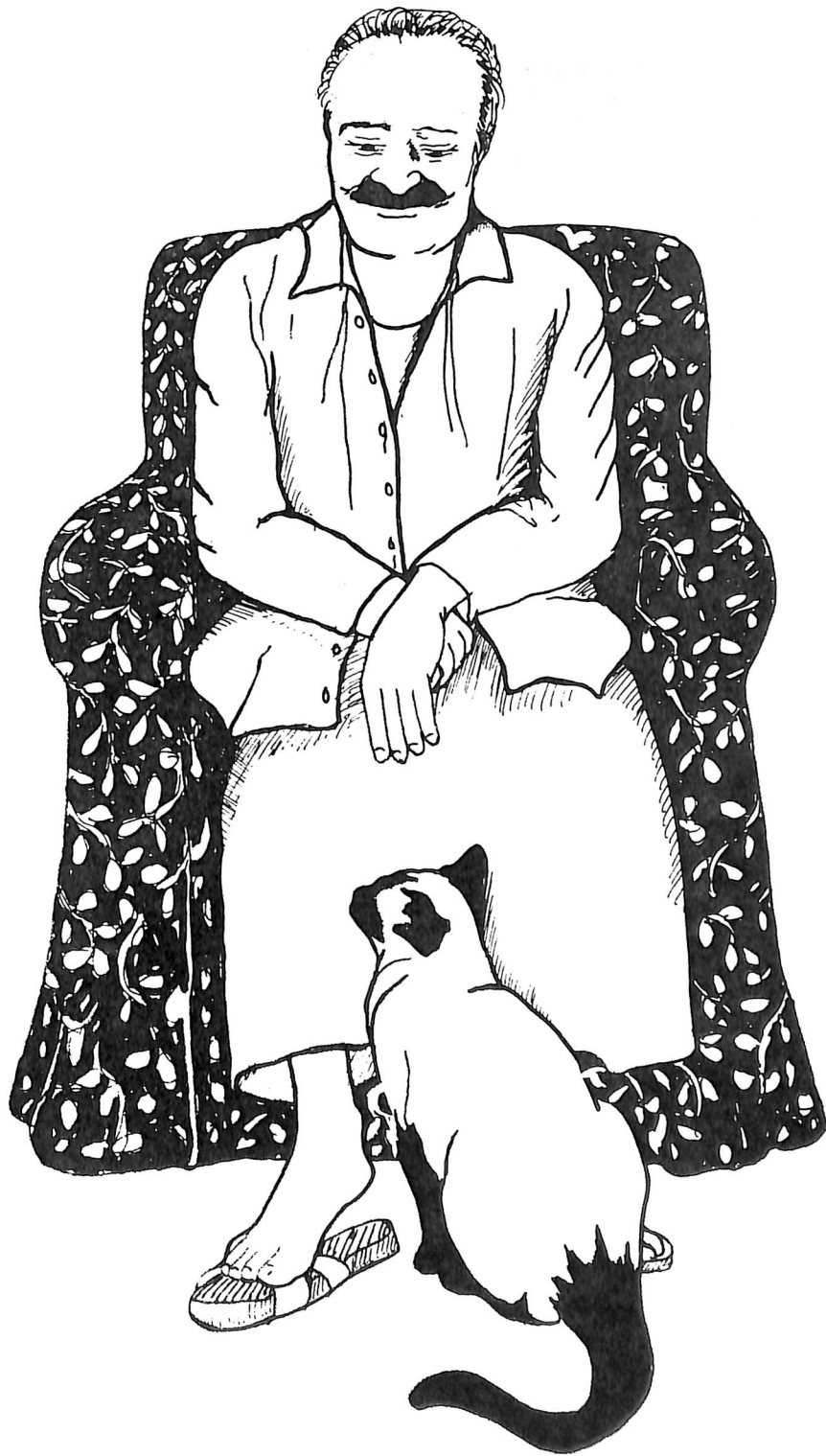
Pegu ran into the great hall with Eruch running after him. Baba wasn't in the hall, so Pegu ran to Baba's room.

Eruch was out of breath when he got to Baba's door. The door was closed and Pegu was pacing in front of the door meowing and meowing. Eruch knocked on the door, and Baba clapped to say that he could come in.

As soon as Eruch opened the door, Pegu raced inside and threw himself at Baba's feet. "What's the matter?" asked Baba.

"It's the cat," Eruch said breathlessly. "He's come back."

"So I see," laughed Baba. Pegu was purring and purring and rubbing his head all over Baba's legs and feet. He had never been so happy in his whole life.

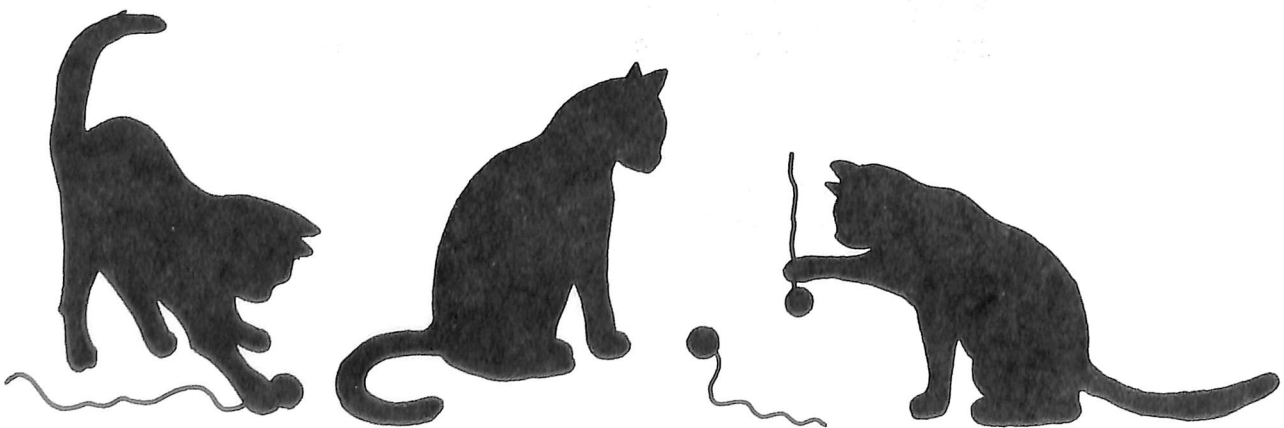


Pegu's Family

Soon after Pegu's return to Guruprasad, the lady drove up in her car. She was so embarrassed about her cat that she felt very shy of all the people at Guruprasad.

She apologized to Eruch as soon as she saw him, and continued to beg his pardon while they were walking down the hall to Baba. When she saw Baba, she began apologizing all over again.

"Oh, I beg your pardon for this terrible cat," she cried, "but I don't know what to do! For two days he has lain in the yard without moving, without eating. If I hadn't let him go, he would have died. He wants to be here with you, and not with us."



"It's all right. It's all right," Baba reassured her. "A cat in the house is no trouble to us. It seems he wants to make his home here, so what can we do? We must let him."

"Perhaps," the lady asked timidly, "you would allow me and my children to visit Pegu here. We could bring him food and play with him and be no bother to you."

Baba nodded, "Yes, you may come."

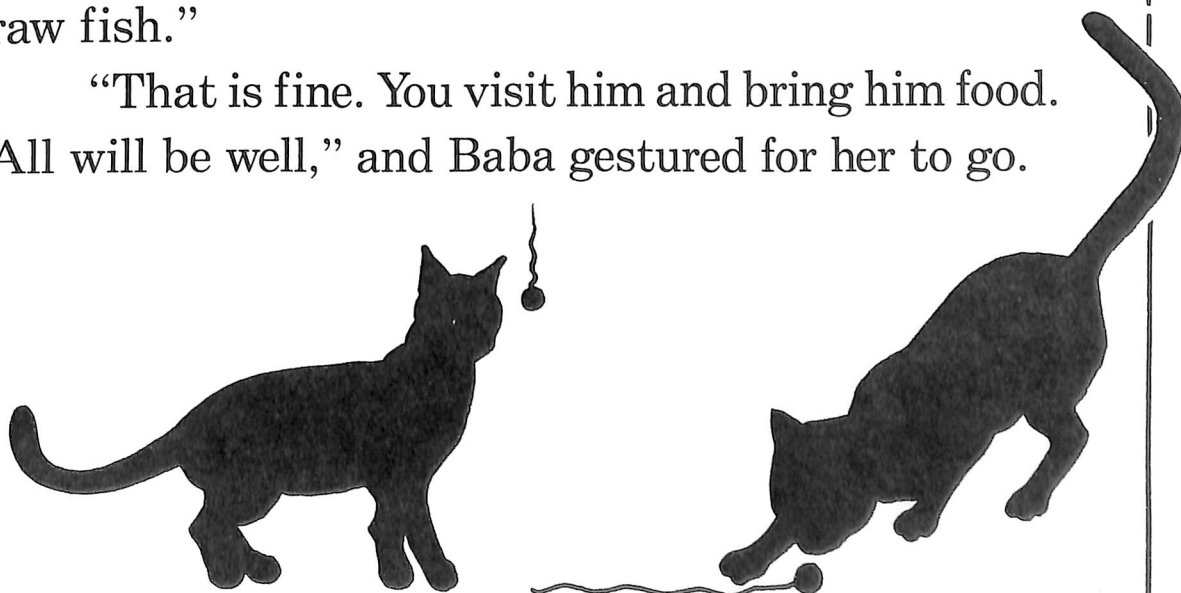
The lady turned to Eruch and whispered, "Why doesn't he speak? Is there something wrong with him?"

"This is Meher Baba," Eruch replied.

He would have said more, but Baba interrupted him, "You can feed the cat on the porch."

"I hope it will not offend you," said the lady, "but we must feed him nonvegetarian food. He eats raw fish."

"That is fine. You visit him and bring him food. All will be well," and Baba gestured for her to go.



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After that, every day Pegu's family came to visit him and bring him food. Different family members came — sometimes the lady, sometimes her daughter, sometimes one of her two sons. Someone came twice a day to feed Pegu and to play with him.

Ten days later, the lady came and asked Eruch if she could speak to Baba. Eruch asked Baba's permission, and Baba told him to call her. The lady came into Baba's presence very humbly and spoke in a soft voice to him.

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“I have been coming here every day, my children have been coming here every day, to feed the cat. I have a desire that has grown since we have been coming here. I see you here with your followers. I see the love they have for you. I have a desire to serve you in some way too. May I bring food for you as well as for Pegu?”

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Baba smiled knowingly, “Yes, fine. That would be very nice.”

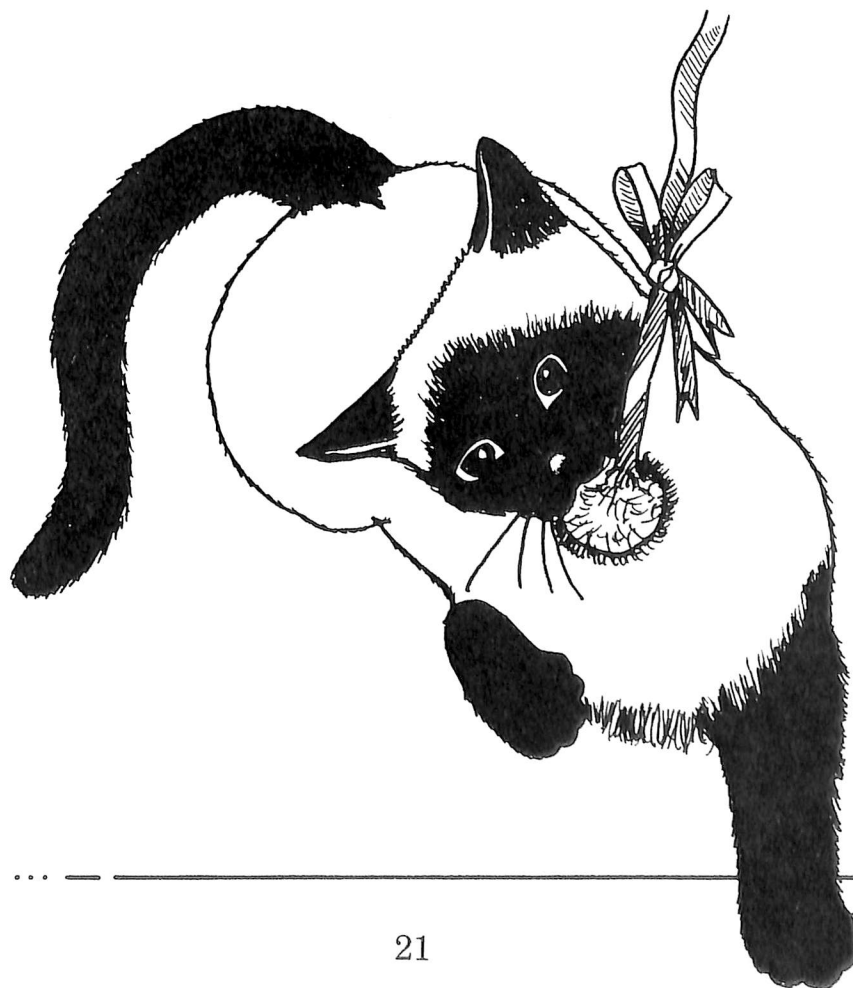
“Are you vegetarian or nonvegetarian?” asked the lady.

“Oh, we eat anything,” laughed Baba. “Gather your family and bring us food! I promise you we will eat it!”

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That evening the lady returned with her whole family bringing wonderful food for Baba and the mandali. In loving and serving their precious Pegu, they soon began to love and serve Meher Baba.

As the summer went by, the whole family came to love Baba and to follow him as devotedly as Pegu did. Pegu never went back to his old home, but stayed in the place he had chosen, near his beloved Master.



Pegu First!

Of all the mandali who loved and served Baba, Mehera was the one most cherished by Baba. Baba said that Mehera loved him perfectly, the way we all should love him, and she held a special place in his heart. The other mandali took special care of Mehera because they knew that this would please Baba.

When Baba finished his afternoon rest, he would ring a bell to let the mandali know he was ready to get up. One of Mehera's duties was to answer the bell and see if Baba needed anything.

But Mehera's devotion to Baba meant nothing to Pegu. As far as Pegu was concerned, *he* was the one who loved Baba best, and he should be the first one to greet Baba when he arose from his afternoon rest.

All during Baba's rest, Pegu would pace the hall waiting for the bell to ring. When the ring came, Pegu dashed to the door and sat by it so that no one could go in or out without tripping over him.

When Mehera answered the bell, as soon as she opened the door Pegu slipped in and ran to Baba. Baba was first in Pegu's heart and Pegu made sure he was first in Baba's presence.



Pegu in Trouble

Every year after the hot months were over, Baba would return to his home in Meherazad and Pegu would stay to watch over Guruprasad until Baba returned the next summer. While Baba was away, members of the Jessawalla family — Eruch's relatives who lived in Poona and loved Baba — would come to the palace to take care of Pegu, playing with him and making sure he had enough to eat.

Pegu had been living at Guruprasad for four years. This year, as Baba was preparing to leave to return to Meherazad, he became very concerned about Pegu. He asked Eruch one day, "Will Pegu be all right while we're away? Will he be safe? Will someone take care of him?"

"Yes, yes," said Eruch, "it will be done. All will be done as usual. Pegu will be taken care of."

"But will anyone feed him?" asked Baba.

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“Yes, of course, Baba,” Eruch replied. “My mother, my brother, my cousins will come. There is nothing to worry about. He will be fine.”

In the car all the way from Poona to Meherazad, Baba continued to worry about Pegu. “Will he be fed? Will he be looked after?” And Eruch continued to assure Baba that Pegu would be taken care of as he was every year.

But Baba went on and on, asking the same questions over and over. Eruch thought Baba would never stop worrying about this cat!

Finally they arrived in Meherazad, and in the bustle of unpacking and settling down, Pegu was forgotten.

But sure enough, Baba knew all along that Pegu was about to get himself into very serious trouble!

Eruch had many relatives in Poona, and they all loved Meher Baba. After Baba and his mandali left Guruprasad, the Jessawalla family came to the palace to clean it and pack up anything that had been left behind. Eruch’s cousin Khorshed oversaw the final cleaning and packing every year. When all the work was finished, she closed the palace and joined Baba in Meherazad.

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This year, Pegu was feeling especially frisky while the packing was going on. While all the Jessawalla brothers and sisters and cousins and aunts and uncles were busy in the palace, Pegu played around, jumping here, running there, and getting in everyone's way.

After such an exhausting morning, Pegu was tired and decided to take a nap. He found a comfortable spot in the bottom of an empty cupboard and fell fast asleep. No one noticed where he'd gone, but no one thought to look for him either.

The palace was all clean, except for the carpets, which would be cleaned later. Everything was packed away, so Khorshed went through the palace and locked all the doors and cupboards. She didn't see Pegu sleeping in the cupboard, so by mistake she locked him inside.

Khorshed traveled from Poona to Bombay and sent the key for Guruprasad to Eruch's mother in Poona. Eruch's mother kept the key in her house in case anyone needed to get into Guruprasad.

It wasn't until two days later that the carpet cleaners arrived. While they were busy working, they heard strange noises but didn't know what they heard. When they began to clean the carpets in the

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room where Pegu was, they realized that the sounds were coming from a cupboard. They heard scratching and banging and a funny little cry, but they still didn't know what it was.

They tried to open the cupboard, but it was locked tight. It sounded like an animal was in there. They were right! Poor Pegu was exhausted with crying and scratching and trying to get out of his prison.

One of the cleaners ran to Eruch's mother to tell her of their discovery.

"Mrs. Jessawalla!" he cried. "Something is in one of the cupboards at the palace."



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Eruch's mother was alarmed. "What is it?" she asked.

"We don't know. The cupboard is locked up and we can't open it, but it sounds like some kind of animal."

Eruch's brother Merwan grabbed the key and ran back to Guruprasad with the cleaner. He had a feeling that it might be Pegu locked in the cupboard, and he was frightened that Pegu might be harmed. When he opened the cupboard, Pegu jumped out and raced around the room. He had been scared and lonely in the cupboard for two long days and nights, and he was overjoyed to be free.

Merwan wrote to Baba to tell him what had happened and to assure him that Pegu would be well looked after so that nothing like this could happen again.

When Baba heard the news, he turned to Eruch and said, "See! Didn't I tell you something was wrong? I worried something would happen, and you said that you would take care of everything. And you see what has happened?"

Baba acted very surprised that Pegu had been in such danger, but Eruch realized that Baba had known all along, and that this was all part of Baba's work with Pegu and with the mandali.

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Pegu Goes to Baba

Pegu lived the rest of his life at Guruprasad. In the summer, when Baba came to Guruprasad for the hot months, Pegu was in bliss. He sat with Baba as often as he could, playing with his big toe and massaging Baba's feet and ankles with his head. When Baba returned to Meherazad, Pegu stayed at Guruprasad and guarded it until Baba's return. He was very serious about keeping the palace in good order until his master came back to live in it.

One day, Pegu was outside the front gate of Guruprasad on guard duty. He had paced regally up the street and back and was just about to cross the street to enter the palace gate.

Just as he was crossing the street, a truck came rumbling down the street. The driver didn't see Pegu in the road and the truck hit the cat. Pegu was hurt very badly.

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The truck driver realized he had hit something and stopped the truck. He was upset when he saw that he had injured someone's pet cat. Gently he lifted Pegu up and carried him through the front gate of Guruprasad.

As soon as he stepped onto the grounds of the palace, Pegu gave a feeble cry, calling Baba's name, and died.

Sadly, Merwan Jessawalla sent a cable to Baba telling him what had happened. When Baba recieved it, he sent a message to Merwan to take Pegu's body and bury him in the compound at Guruprasad.

Everyone who had known Pegu was sad that he had died and missed him. Baba comforted them by telling them, "Pegu stayed at Guruprasad and missed me when we were not there. Now my devoted Pegu is with me summer and winter, taking my darshan all the time."



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