

# Ken Can Communicate

By C. Jade Wyton

*Kenneth Bloom is hiding away in his study, avoiding the gathering that his girlfriend Isa'vanna has gotten together with her friends and their families. Then, out of nowhere, a voice he's never heard speaks to him. When he discovers who this new voice belongs to, he finds himself in a state of shock.*

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Ken could hear laughter downstairs, and it made him glad that he wasn't down there.

Isa was having another one of her gatherings and Ken had, upon seeing his friend Baran Grimalkin wasn't there, convinced Isa to let him retreat upstairs to work on hemming up a pair of pants Becky had bought for Russ last week.

He had been *sure* Isa was going to ask him to stay downstairs and socialise—citing how it was good for him to talk to people— but then Jareth had swooped in and saved the day, asking if Ken could take Harley upstairs and settle him down in Becky's old bedroom for a nap.

Ken was more than happy to do it. He understood *exactly* how his grandson felt and he thought keeping away from the worst of the noise, even just for a while, would help them both cope.

So now Ken sat in his office, door wide open so he could hear into his daughter's childhood room where his grandson slept.

*It was nice*, Ken thought. *Almost nostalgic.*

He could recall a time, back when his wife was still alive, where he would avoid *her* friends by offering to take Becky upstairs when she got fussy.

Ken put the knee of the pant leg he was working on in his mouth to hold it, freeing up his hands so he could rethread his needle.

He still couldn't believe what a social butterfly his daughter had become!

Back when she was little, she'd had so much trouble making friends. And then, as the years went by, she'd found it easier and easier.

Now it was a matter of dragging her away from any new faces in town before she exhausted herself....

*'Mr Bloom?'* the voice of an older woman, seemingly both very familiar and completely new, spoke from his office door.

Was that... *noooo*. It wasn't Polly.... Or Mrs Grimalkin.... No. It must have been one of Isa's other friends; he kept losing track of who was who at these get-togethers they all kept having. Especially now that it wasn't just Isa and Becky's friends and their families coming to the meetups— It was the friends of everyone's grandchildren, too.

They honestly might as well have invited the whole town, Ken thought!

*'Mr Bloom?'* the voice repeated.

Ken's ear twitched in acknowledgment, though he didn't take his eyes off his work. *'Mhm?'* he mumbled through his mouthful of fabric.

*'Mr Bloom!'* the voice called again, louder this time. *'Miiiiister*

*Blooooooooom!*

Ken spat the fabric out so he could speak. 'Yes? What is it?'

*'Hello, Mr Bloom!'*

Something brushed against Ken's leg, and he looked down to see Catthrine was rubbing affectionately against him.

How odd for her to take him by surprise! She very, *very* rarely came in without announcing herself!

'Oh! Hello, mon ange!' Ken exclaimed, reaching down to pick up his cat and place her in his lap. He turned in his seat as he did, moving to face whoever was at his door, and found....

Nobody?

*'Mr Bloom!'* the mystery voice spoke from Ken's lap now, and his eyes widened as he looked down to Catthrine. *'Mrs Bloom wants you to come downstairs!'*

Ken blinked dumbly as his cat spoke to him.

'Mrs Bloom...?' was all he could manage.

'Yes, Mrs Bloom,' Catthrine replied. *'She said lunch is ready!'*

'You mean Isa?' Ken clarified.

With his cat talking to him out of the blue, he wasn't completely sure that he wasn't dreaming.... And if he *was* dreaming, he wasn't sure why his brain would be referring to his girlfriend as if she was his wife. It was just as likely, if not *more* likely if he was dreaming, that Catthrine was talking about Barbra— He'd had enough dreams where she was just inexplicably back in his life to know his brain liked to play nasty tricks on him.

*'Yes, Isa! She and her friends have finished cooking and—'* Catthrine cut off, her ear twitching, as Ken stared down at her. *'You can understand me?'* Catthrine asked. Then when Ken nodded she lit up in joy, her tail lashing excitedly from side to side. *'Oh! Oh this is marvellous! It's been ever so long since I had a proper conversation— Proper, proper, I mean. With someone who isn't Becky or her litter. Not that there's anything wrong with Becky or her litter when they come over, of course! The conversations are just a little bit too... kitten, to be fully stimulating. Ah! I'm so looking forward to the the things we will talk about!'*

'Um... oui,' Ken managed. Then the corner of his mouth twitched, and he felt himself scoff a laugh of disbelief. 'This must be how Becky felt, the first time she spoke with Mimi!'

*'Happy? Overjoyed?'* Catthrine purred. *'Excited?'*

'Like I need to sit down.'

*'You are sitting down, Mr Bloom,'* Catthrine pointed out.

'Oui, I am,' Ken agreed. Then, he gripped the edge of his seat and began slipping off of it and onto the floor. 'But I think I need to sit down *more*.'

Catthrine jumped from his lap and paced beside him. *'This must be very strange for you,'* she said, simply.

'Oui.'

*'I remember the first time Han used Speak with Animals,'* Catthrine recalled. *'Oh, it was the start of something beautiful! I was just a kitten, back then, and he was trying to cast another spell entirely! It backfired, but then when I asked if*

*he was alright he answered me. It was a rush for the both of us!*

‘Oui,’ Ken nodded as Catthrine rubbed lovingly against him. ‘Oui.’

*‘But, oh— I’m not to forget!’ Catthrine quickly padded over to the door of Ken’s study and stood by it. ‘Mrs Bloom wants you to come downstairs and eat with everyone! She asked me to come up and get you. And I wouldn’t want to disappoint her. Not after she has given me so many nice treats today!’*

‘Ah, uh, oui,’ Ken heard his voice break as he pushed himself to his feet. ‘I will be... right down.’

*‘I’ll walk with you!’ Catthrine declared, keeping pace with Ken as he stumbled out of the room. ‘Oh! I am so excited about this! Do you think its going to be permanent right away? Or do you think I’m going to fade in and out? Becky has told me about her experiences learning how to speak with animals.... I hope it’s permanent. I miss having real conversations, and I really do enjoy spending time with you, Mr Bloom.’*

‘I uh... I enjoy your company too, Cat,’ Ken said, still feeling like he was in a daze as he made it to the stairs. ‘You are a good girl.’

*‘I try,’ Catthrine purred. ‘Now let’s pick up speed, hm? We don’t want to leave Mrs Bloom waiting!’*

‘Mrs Bloom,’ Ken echoed, quietly.

He liked hearing those words.

Mrs Bloom.

Even if it was wrong, and he and Isa were still only dating, it made Ken’s skin prickle and his heart beat faster.

*Imagine if she did become Mrs Bloom....*

Ken almost sighed aloud as he made it to the bottom of the stairs.

The thought of marrying Isa wasn’t exactly a *new* thought, but it was the first time he’d heard anyone else mention the idea....

‘Dad!’ Becky’s exclamation was followed by her arms around him, and he embraced her back tightly. ‘Hey! I haven’t seen you, like, all day!’

‘I’ve been hiding,’ Ken admitted. ‘How, uh.... How have you been?’

‘Oh, good! Good, I’m just taking some food up to Harley,’ Becky explained, pulling away and holding up the handful of lunchbox-style snacks she was carrying— The preferred food of her picky-eater son. ‘He was sure he was going to want Lunchables this morning before we left, so lets hope he’s still, like, feeling them.’

*‘If not then I’m sure we’ll have something he’ll like!’ Catthrine reassured; regaining Ken’s wide-eyed attention.*

‘True, true,’ Becky chuckled, bending down to stroke a hand down Catthrine’s back. ‘So. Any news with you, girl?’

*‘Mr Bloom?’ Catthrine mewled, looking up at Ken. ‘Would you like to tell her?’*

‘Tell me what? Dad? Catthrine said that you have something to tell me—’

‘Yes. I uh. I know what she said,’ Ken cleared his throat, then, awkwardly rubbing his hands together. ‘I, uh... I heard her.’

‘You heard her?’

‘Yes, I heard her.’

‘Okay...’ Becky’s brow furrowed. ‘So, like, then what did she want you to tell me?’

'I *heard* her,' Ken pressed.  
 'He *heard me*,' Catthrine echoed.  
 'He heard you?'  
 'Yes.'  
 'You heard her?'  
 'Yes. I heard her.'  
 'Okay. So.... What is it that you wanted to tell me...?'  
 'Becky. I *heard* her.'  
 'You...' Becky paused, looking deep in thought as she processed the conversation.  
 'I... *heard*... her,' Ken repeated very, very slowly.  
 'You heard.... *OH!*'  
 '*There we go*,' Catthrine purred with humour.  
 'You heard her!' Becky exclaimed.  
 'Yes.'  
 'You can hear her!'  
 'I can hear her.'  
 'Oh! Oh wow!'  
 'Oui, "wow."' *"*  
 'Wow.'  
 'Oui.'  
 'Wow.'  
 'Oui....'  
 Ken and Becky both went quiet, staring at each other for a moment and seemingly not knowing what to say.... Until Becky let out another "wow" and Catthrine quickly cut in:  
 '*Becky, dear? Why don't you head upstairs? You don't want your little one waking up fussy!*'  
 'Oh! Yes, good point!' Becky exclaimed, hurrying past her father. 'But oh my god! Dad! I'm like! So happy for you! You have to, like, tell me if you can understand, like, Don and stuff!'  
 'I uh. Yes,' Ken nodded. 'I will have to test it out....'  
 He hadn't thought of that.  
 If this was the same power as his daughter... then... he *might* be able to understand her mimics.  
 He would at least be able to understand other animals. Like dogs, and cats, and birds....  
 And... *everything*.  
 Ken swallowed as he realised his world was about to get a whole lot louder.

—END—

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