



The Cat Lover's Circumstances

Chapter 4 *Transcript*

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Illustrations by Aiwa and © Chromatic Press

Cast:

Misaki: Tara Burke
Aina: Elissa Park
Nishida: Anthony Sardinha
Ayukawa: Sarite Harris
Rina: Courtney Lunn

Special Thanks

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Note: Due to last-minute changes, transcript may not match final audio exactly.



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[Begin fantasy sequence: Fantasy MMORPG. Nishida narrates this time, in an appropriately legendary tone.]

NISHIDA: Last time, on the Cat Lover's Circumstances!

[Typical RPG fanfare music plays.]

NISHIDA: Misaki Tanabe has set off on a quest to save the kingdom! But is our brave hero ready for what's ahead?

RINA: Please, save us, Misaki! Find the Legendary Crystals!

MISAKI: Piece of cake, your majesty!

[Typical RPG cave music plays.]

MISAKI: Hm. Map says the crystals are in this cave...

[monster growls]

MISAKI: Oh god.

[Monster roars. Misaki screams, which is abruptly cut off.]

[Typical RPG inn music plays.]

AYUKAWA: Good morning, hero! I healed your wounds! Time to get back to work!

MISAKI (hoarse and flustered): Gaagghh! What just happened?

AYUKAWA: The monster was too powerful!

MISAKI (confused): Okay...

NISHIDA: But is our *brave* hero ready for what's ahead?

RINA: Please, save us, Misaki! Find the Legendary Crystals!

[Cave music plays.]

MISAKI (huffing and puffing, talking as she slashes her sword): Doing, stupid, grinding, killing, stupid, wimpy, monsters! I...*hate...grinding!*

MISAKI: [sigh] Okay, I think that's enough...time to face the boss again!

[Monsters roars, but Misaki slashes her sword this time. Misaki wins.]

MISAKI: Ha! Got ya!

[Victory music plays.]

[Inn music plays.]

AYUKAWA: Good morning, hero! I healed your wounds! Time to get back to work!

MISAKI: Huh? But I won!

AYUKAWA: Yes, and now you must face an *even tougher* challenge!

RINA: Please, save us, Misaki! Find the Amulet of Power!

MISAKI (exasperated) Agh, this is *bullsh--*

[scene transition music cuts her off]

[Cave music plays.]

MISAKI: [swinging her sword at the monster roars] Hoo! Take that! Whoa, haha, I'm almost there! Now--

[sound of an arrow flying and hitting flesh]

MISAKI: Ow!

[Inn music plays.]

AYUKAWA: Good morning, hero!

MISAKI (despairing): I was so close...

AYUKAWA: You were hit by friendly fire!

MISAKI (stark and unamused): *What.*

AYUKAWA: It's PVP now. Better watch out!

NISHIDA: But, is *our brave hero* ready for what's--

MISAKI (angrily interrupts): Hey, Mister Narrator! I'm *clearly* not! You keep changing the rules on me! I'm done with this, I want out!

AYUKAWA: You can't.

MISAKI: Huh?

AYUKAWA: You wanted to go on a quest, brave hero. You can't back out once you've started.

MISAKI: I...but I...

AYUKAWA: The kingdom is counting on you. Good luck!

[Cave music plays, monster growls.]

MISAKI: NOOOO!

[monster roars, cutting off the music]

[End fantasy sequence.]

NARRATION: *My name is Misaki Tanabe, and I'm... stuck.*

[Fade in to the shrine at night, the sound of crickets. End of last chapter replays.]

RINA: How could you? How could you say that to her?

NISHIDA: She's *blackmailing* you! I've got her threatening you on video! What was I supposed to say?!

RINA: No, she's not!

NISHIDA: ...What?

RINA: She's not doing any of that! You have completely the wrong idea! She's... [hesitates]

NISHIDA: She's...what?

RINA (quietly): She's...my...friend.

VOICES (RINA): *Love, love, love... Scared.*

[Footsteps on the grass as Misaki, Nishida, and Rina walk out of the shrine.]

NISHIDA (in a serious tone, worn out): Misaki. I'm taking Rina home. You gonna be okay?

MISAKI (a little dazed): Yeah. I'll be fine.

NISHIDA: All right. Listen... Sorry about this. I'll see you at school.

[footsteps in the grass]

RINA: Hey.

MISAKI: Huh?

RINA (quietly): Could you get this to her?

[Rina slips Misaki a folded piece of paper.]

MISAKI: To Ayukawa?

RINA: I didn't get the chance, and I can't go back to the music department... (whispering) Please.

MISAKI: O-okay.

[Sound of Rina's footsteps as she goes back to her brother. After a pause, Misaki unfolds the piece of paper.]

MISAKI: It's sheet music. [pause] Rina... How far away do you have to be before I stop hearing your feelings?

VOICES (RINA): *Love...love. Scared. Sad. Anxious...*

MISAK (annoyed): Oh no, you don't... Misaki, no.

VOICES (RINA): *Sad. Anxious... (brighter) Love!*

MISAKI (mad at herself): Stop it, Misaki. Don't even think about it. You've done enough! No more meddling!

[Flashback. Ayukawa: "I really thought you were a nice girl, Misaki."]

MISAKI: I'm not. I'm just a traitor. [sighs] (tired) I just wanna go home and pass out... [begins walking in grass] Sebastian? Sebbaaastiaaaaan... Are you there?

MISAKI: [clicks her tongue] Come on, kitty. Come back so we can sleep...

NARRATION: *I love sleeping. I did it a lot, when I was supposed to be going to high school. When I wasn't playing games or reading, I was usually in dreamland. (pained) It was...well, better than being awake.*

NARRATION: *But my dreams can get dicey. If I'm not careful, I start to remember things I don't want to.*

[Begin dream sequence: middle school.]

MISAKI (younger voice): He likes you, Sana! I could feel it.

SANA: You think so, Misaki?

MISAKI: Haru Nishida? I can hear his feelings *all* the time. He's in love! You should go for it!

[scene change]

SANA: Um, Haru, there's something I wanted to tell you...

NISHIDA (younger voice): Sana, you're a really cool girl, but... I'm sorry.

[scene change]

SANA (crying): You said you could feel it in his heart! Misaki! You lied to me!

MISAKI (upset, trying to calm her): I'm sorry... I don't know what happened!

SANA: Can you feel my heart now? Are you *judging* me?

MISAKI: No... I mean, I can, but... I'm sorry...

SANA: Just go away!

SANA: Misaki, you traitor, I hate you!

[Dream sequence is cut off by Misaki's alarm clock, which has hilarious cats meowing in a song.]

[Misaki groans and turns off the alarm.]

MISAKI: Sana... Why are you still haunting me? Is it because of Nishida? But he abandoned me... Both of you did.

[Misaki turns on her computer. Clicking. The music of Fantasy Quest begins.]

MISAKI (talking to herself as she clicks away, to the sounds of a battle): Grinding, grinding, grinding... I hate grinding... Where *is* my buddy? He's been gone for-e-ver. Don't tell me he quit playing and didn't tell me. (bitterly) Hah, abandoned again. Can't even trust the game world, can I? Everybody's just out for themselves.

[She gets up, walks across the room. Her foot brushes against an envelope.]

MISAKI: Hm? Did someone slip this under my door? [picks up envelope] Huh... What cute paper... And cute handwriting! Wow... [unfolds paper and begins to read] Dear Misa...

AINA (voiceover): Dear Misa. I know it's weird, writing you a letter when I could just knock on your door. But I have plans today, and I heard you snoring pretty hard... Anyway, I thought about what you said the other night, about being brave. I think...I really want to be like you. I want to run everywhere...chasing cats, I guess...doing everything with all I've got. Today, I'm gonna try it. I'm gonna just be myself, and...tell Nishida-senpai how I feel. So this is my thank-you note. No matter what happens, I wanted you to know that you inspired somebody. Aina. P.S.: Enjoy the candy.

[Misaki takes out candy from the envelope, unwraps it.]

NARRATION: *I don't know how everything became so complicated. I went out into the world, and now it's like an endless quest to get out of other people's problems. I lost my cat, I lost Ayukawa's respect. But...*

MISAKI (quietly): I inspired somebody, huh. Makes me sound special.

[Misaki eats the hard candy Aina left her.]

MISAKI: What time is it? [pause] Afternoon... [stretches] Fine! Rina asked for my help? I'll do it... (louder) I'll do it! I'm no Haruka Nishida, and I'm no Sana. I'm not gonna abandon *anyone*, Sebastian!

[silence]

MISAKI (sadly) Oh, yeah. You're not here. (pumped up) W-well, I'm gonna deliver this sheet music, and talk to Ayukawa, and then I'm *finding* you, kitty! So... So let's go!

[Misaki leaves her room and slams the door.]

[Outside, college campus in the afternoon. Misaki is talking to herself, fast and nervous.]

MISAKI: Okay. Campus. Right. I've done this before. I've done this before. Don't panic. I'm just walking around school, like everybody else. It's totally normal, totally cool, haha...

[Misaki makes an uncomfortable noise. Then she abruptly turns around and starts walking toward the exit.]

MISAKI: Nope, nope, nope. I can't do it. I can't face her. I don't even have class, I don't know

where I'm going, this is stupid, I should've gotten more sleep. Did I take a bath yesterday? Oh god, I don't think I did. I need to go back. I totally need to...

[Misaki abruptly stops again. Turns around.]

MISAKI [deep breath] No. You're not Misaki. Not right now. Right now... You're a hero! You're the most awesome hero of them all! You're awesome, and super powerful, and you've got a mission. You've got to find Ayukawa!

[Misaki walks fast.]

MISAKI: Yes! Okay! A strong warrior to set things right! You gotta do it, girl!

MISAKI: Hi-yah! Hoo-ahh!

[A group of students pass by in the background.]

BOY 1: Dude, is that Tai Chi? That's so rad.

MISAKI: Wait. Where am I going? I need to find the music department... Where is that again?

[Yoshimura approaches.]

YOSHIMURA: Heyo! Miss Tanabe!

MISAKI (nervously): Huh? Uhhh...

YOSHIMURA: I remember you! (imitating Misaki from earlier) "Mi-Mi-Mi-Misaki Tanabe!" Right? I'm Yoshimura! [pause] Um, from the takoyaki stand?

MISAKI: Oh. Um, hello sir.

YOSHIMURA (friendly): You look lost.

MISAKI (talking softly, slowly trailing off): Yes, well. Thank you, sir, but I'm not lost, exactly, well, I'm looking for someone, because I have this thing that I have to give to her, so...

YOSHIMURA: Hmm? Sorry, didn't catch that.

MISAKI (louder): C-could you perhaps tell me where the music department is?

YOSHIMURA: Music? Sure. Meeting somebody there?

MISAKI: Kiki Ayukawa?

YOSHIMURA: Oh. [pause] ...Are you guys friends?

MISAKI: Um...right now, probably not.

YOSHIMURA: [sucks in his breath, like sympathy pain] Oooh. Definitely don't want to piss *her* off... Well, come on, let's go.

[footsteps as they walk off together]

MISAKI: Thanks. Sorry for the trouble...

YOSHIMURA: Nah, it's my duty! I'm a student council officer. (coyly) Your boyfriend was one, too.

MISAKI: Huh? Boyfriend? Um... I think there's been a misunderstanding...

YOSHIMURA (interrupting): But seriously, I'm glad he's with someone like you. After what happened last year with his sister, you know... Ahh, we all really liked Rina, too. What a shame.

MISAKI: You know Rina, too?

YOSHIMURA: Oh, Nishida wouldn't shut up about her! Rina's a genius, she's writing a song, she's gonna do a big recital, she's gonna be famous, and on and on...

MISAKI: Hmmm.

YOSHIMURA: It was nice. But it meant that when she dropped out, he took it really hard--he got really depressed and just quit everything. So I thought, maybe if he met a nice girl... (quickly) Ah, hey, not to put any pressure on you or anything! I just thought you guys looked so comfortable together. You seem really down to earth, Miss Tanabe.

MISAKI (puzzled): You think we look *good* together?

YOSHIMURA: [pause, like he was caught off-guard by the question.] Well... Of course!

MISAKI: Why?

YOSHIMURA: Some people...you meet, and they just feel *right*.

[They step inside the music center.]

YOSHIMURA: All right, here you go, music! Nishida's in the building across the way, if you want to see him.

MISAKI: Thanks! Um... Hm.

[Yoshimura leaves.]

MISAKI: [deep breath] Okay, now I'm here, no turning back, just gotta find...

AYUKAWA: Misa?

MISAKI: [yelps] I-I-I have something for you!

AYUKAWA: Well, hello to you, too.

MISAKI: From...someone.

AYUKAWA (skeptical): Someone.

MISAKI: Um...it needs to be private. Are you busy? You've got all those papers...

AYUKAWA: Just photocopies! Our recital's next week, so I've got to copy all the sheet music.

MISAKI: Recital... Is that Rina's song?

[Ayukawa's emotional voices rise.]

VOICES (AYUKAWA): *Angry, sad, frustrated! Pointless. Depressed. Stupid!*

AYUKAWA: Yeah. It is.

[Misaki hands over the folded paper.]

MISAKI: Here. This is from Rina. [pause] Sh-she gave it to me last night, after you left.

AYUKAWA (suddenly shocked): From Rina? It's something for me?

[Ayukawa takes the paper and unfolds it quickly. She tuts under her breath as she reads the music. After a moment, she puts the paper down.]

AYUKAWA (stunned): It's the last page.

MISAKI: Huh?

AYUKAWA (breathless, getting excited): Wow, so this is how it ends... I just made something up, but I knew it wasn't as good, I knew *her* ending would be perfect. Right, of course, this makes so much sense... I can hear it... I, gosh, I need to copy this.

MISAKI: Okay... (fake cheerful and fast) Great! So now you've got it, so I'll just be...uh... going back to the dorm now... Gotta track down my cat...

AYUKAWA (friendly; not exactly cheery like her fake self, but pleasant): Hey, wait a sec. You came all this way to deliver this. Would you like to get a late lunch with me? My treat.

MISAKI (hesitantly): Oh, no, I had...some chips earlier.

AYUKAWA: Come on, that's not food. Let's go! I bet you haven't been to the cafeteria on this side of campus.

MISAKI: Well, but, I...

[Open to the sounds of the cafeteria.]

MISAKI (talking to herself) Oh no... Oh no! What am I doing here? How'd I let this happen?! I even got a curry ramen... This feels like a trap.

AYUKAWA: Mmm, I was starving... [pause] Hm? You're not hungry?

MISAKI: No, um, that's not it... I thought...

AYUKAWA: You thought what?

MISAKI: That you hated me.

AYUKAWA (casually): Yeah. I did. You really set me off.

MISAKI: Oh.

AYUKAWA: But...I thought about it. You must think I'm a horrible person, after hearing their side of the story.

MISAKI: Their side?

AYUKAWA: Nishida and Yoshimura. I saw you walking with him outside the building... They were the ones who took me to the dean. I almost got expelled because of them. [laughs incredulously] Honestly. They interviewed the whole music department about the harassment...except for me! Everyone said *I* stalked Rina and wrote those messages. I didn't have a chance.

[Ayukawa's inner voices rise again, coinciding with her dark mood. Angry, depressed, etc.]

MISAKI (interrupting the voices): I don't think you did it! You and Rina are...um...

AYUKAWA (eating): Mm?

MISAKI: [fidgets quietly]

AYUKAWA: Me and Rina are what?

MISAKI: You look...very happy together?

[long pause]

AYUKAWA: Happy, huh... All I can remember is fighting.

MISAKI: No! Before that, you were watching the fireworks, and...it felt... (quietly) Cute. You know. For a second. Kinda.

AYUKAWA (a little sad, a little relieved): So how'd you figure it out? That me and her are a couple. (hesitantly) Did somebody tell you?

MISAKI: Nobody told me anything! I can just tell...somehow. I'm sorry, that's the only way I can describe it.

AYUKAWA (thoughtful): Hmm. No, I appreciate it. You're that kind of person.

MISAKI: What kind?

AYUKAWA: Quiet, always watching... You remind me of myself last year. [groans] But if *you* get it, why is Rina's *brother* still oblivious? Is he just that dense?

MISAKI: He's always been like that...

AYUKAWA: Ugh. Poor Rina.

MISAKI: Um...

AYUKAWA: Yes?

MISAKI: I want to know what happened. Last year. With you two.

AYUKAWA: Wow.

MISAKI: What?

AYUKAWA: Nothing. It's just that you're the first to ask me about it straight out like that. Well, where to start? I suppose--

[Misaki interrupts by loudly digging into her noodles and gracelessly slurping them up.]

AYUKAWA (amused) Hungry?

MISAKI (mouth full): Sorry...

AYUKAWA: I kinda figured you don't eat until you see food right in front of you... How is it?

MISAKI: Mmm.

AYUKAWA: Right?

MISAKI: I'm sorry, when I said I ate chips before... [swallows] I lied.

[Misaki slurps more noodles.]

AYUKAWA: Were you scared to hang out with me?

MISAKI: (mouth full): Uh-huh.

AYUKAWA: Because I'm a stalker, or because I'm a lesbian?

MISAKI: [almost spit-takes, covers her mouth with a napkin] Um!

AYUKAWA: Sorry, that was bitter... I actually never dated anyone before I met Rina. Music was the love of my life--or more like my only friend. (uncharacteristically nervous) So, I mean, I couldn't tell you what I am now! I wish I could.

MISAKI: Who you date doesn't really bother me...

AYUKAWA: It does to everyone else, though. Am I wrong? They find out and they start looking real hard at everything you do, seeing if you're giving off secret gay signals. [pause] You know, I got hate messages last year, too... People calling me a dyke, and a slut. And worse things. Just because Rina and I got the scholarships that everyone else wanted, *and* we became a couple. But people accused me of sending hate mail to myself. Like I wanted the attention.

MISAKI (horrified): That's terrible.

AYUKAWA: Everything was worse for Rina. She was scared to go home at night, but every time I walked with her, those jerks would just hide. We could never get anything on them. And then...her brother accused me.

MISAKI: He was worried for her.

AYUKAWA (getting angry): *I* was worried for her. I finally found something good--someone who didn't just see me as my talent, or my connections. And I can't even fight the thing that's been tearing it apart, because I don't *know* who it is! What does Haruka Nishida even know about me--

[Ayukawa's phone rings.]

AYUKAWA (calming down): Excuse me. (answers the phone in a cool and professional tone) Hello?... Not yet, sensei. I have them here. I'm at lunch right now, but I'll bring them as soon as I'm done... Yes, I apologize. You've been a great help to me... (a little strained) Yes, it's a great honor to perform with Mr. Nakamura, I know it's a once in a lifetime chance... I look forward to practicing with him too... Thank you, sensei. [hangs up.]

VOICES (AYUKAWA): *Stressed. Sad. Frustrated! Stressed. Stressed. STRESSED.*

MISAKI: Ayukawa...

AYUKAWA: [deep breath] (cheery again) Thanks again, Misaki. This last page is exactly what we needed. Now I can perform Rina's song just as she intended it to sound.

MISAKI: But you'd rather do it with her.

AYUKAWA: Yes... [pause] Yes, exactly. I know it's selfish. But I feel like if we don't perform that song together, then the people who attacked us... They've won. [pause] I can't stand it.

MISAKI: Have you talked to her since the festival?

AYUKAWA: No... It was all such a mess. I got so *angry*. I wouldn't know what to say.

MISAKI: Do you...want to, though?

AYUKAWA: You're asking if I want to talk to my girlfriend? Do you even have to ask? [pause] Of course I do.

MISAKI: Then...leave it to me.

AYUKAWA (skeptical): To you?

MISAKI (getting pumped up; her rambling is now positive.) Yes. We're going to get her to see you, and then. There's only a week left, but I'm sure we can figure something out! It's just, I really think she wants to play the song with you, too. We just need a little help... [pause] What?

AYUKAWA: You're sweet, Misaki.

MISAKI: Oh, uh, I...um... I don't know about that. I mean, it's just an idea...

AYUKAWA: [sighs, but contentedly] You know what? I'm just happy I got to tell someone.

MISAKI (mumbling): Right, well, Rina asked me for help, and I couldn't abandon her, and

you're my, um, my f-f-frien...

[Aina's voices, from elsewhere, interrupt Misaki's mumbling.]

VOICES (AINA): *Scared. Nervous.*

MISAKI: Huh?

VOICES (AINA): *Scared. Nervous.*

AYUKAWA: What is it?

MISAKI: Oh, nothing...

NARRATION: *I can feel something. Not here, somewhere else. It's faint, but I can make it out if I focus and just... (in dread) Oh no.*

[Aina's voices rise, louder and louder.]

VOICES (AINA): *Scared. Determined. Scared. Scared. **Help.***

MISAKI: Aina...

AYUKAWA: Hm?

[Misaki stands up.]

MISAKI: I'm sorry, can we talk at the dorm later? I have to go right now!

AYUKAWA: What's wrong?

MISAKI: I'm not sure...but I have to find out. Ayukawa-senpai, thank you for lunch!

AYUKAWA (surprised and flattered): "Senpai" ...

MISAKI: See you soon!

[Misaki leaves quickly. Door bursts open, Misaki runs outside.]

NARRATION: *It's not something I like to advertise, but...I've watched a lot of people asking people out. Not really meaning to! I don't creep on people intentionally or anything, just... When you're in junior high school, it happens a lot, I guess? And it doesn't feel that different, the older you get. The hesitation, the fear...all feels exactly the same.*

MISAKI: Aina... Aina, where are you? Come on...

[Aina's voices are still strong, echoing around Misaki.]

VOICES (AINA): *Scared. Nervous. Nervous. Scared.*

MISAKI: She's back on campus! She's so scared... Aina, hang on! I'm coming. I'll be there soon, okay?

[Misaki starts running.]

VOICES (AINA): *Scared. Nervous. Scared. Nervous!*

MISAKI: Argh, I'm so full... (to herself) Come on, hero, you can do it! For justice! Go!

[Misaki opens a door and bolts for the kickboxing club.]

MISAKI: Yoshimura said it was here... Kickboxing club. Where is she?

[Sounds of people doing exercises, walking on padded ground.]

MISAKI: Aina--

[Misaki stops. Aina is talking to Nishida.]

AINA: I... I just...wanted you to know.

NISHIDA: Look. I'm flattered you like me, but...it just wouldn't work out. You're not right for me at all. Someone like you shouldn't be with me.

AINA: Oh.

NISHIDA: You get what I mean?

AINA: Yes. Right. Of course, it was silly. I'm sorry.

NISHIDA: It's all right.

VOICES (AINA): *Nervous, nervous, scared...* [The voices shift and become intense, tearful, full of despair.] *Sad. Angry. Hate myself. Ugly. Alone. Why?*

AINA: I'm...going to go clean up.

[Aina runs to the door, bumps into Misaki.]

MISAKI (pained): Um...Aina?

AINA (surprised and tearful, but trying to cover it up): Misaki.

MISAKI: Um... Are you okay?

AINA: I-I did it. I was brave.

MISAKI: You...

AINA (faking cheerfulness): Yep! I was honest about my feelings! Oh, I have your cat.

MISAKI: You found Sebastian?

AINA: Yeah! I saw him right outside as I was leaving. He's in my room, so just come over...
[suddenly breaks down into tears] Thank you for being my friend. I have to go now.

MISAKI: Aina, wait!

[Aina runs off.]

[long pause]

MISAKI (quietly, to herself): Terrible... You're *terrible*. This is just like the last time.

[Misaki kicks off her shoes and steps inside.]

MISAKI: Nope. Nuh-uh. You're not getting away with it this time, *Haruka*.

[Misaki marches through the padded room. Nishida is on the other side, talking in a hushed voice to another club member.]

CLUB MEMBER: What was that all about? You couldn't have let her down a little gentler?

NISHIDA: What are you talking about? I thought it went okay.

MISAKI (interrupting): Hey.

NISHIDA (surprised): Misaki.

MISAKI (quietly angry): You and me. We need to talk.

NISHIDA: Right now?

[Misaki takes a deep breath. Exhales.]

MISAKI: Yeah. Right now.

To be continued in Chapter 5, September 2015.