



Carag's Transformation: The Woodwalkers: Book 1

Katja Brandis

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In Katja Brandis's imaginative novel *Carag's Transformation*, a shapeshifter leaves his family to live in the human world.

Carag is a shapeshifter, or a woodwalker, who lives as a puma with his family outside of Jackson Hole. At eleven, he becomes fascinated with humans and decides to live on his own as one. He does not enjoy it, but after two years he can't find his family and he cannot survive in the wilderness alone.

Carag meets another woodwalker, Lissa, who tells him about a boarding school for woodwalker children. He also draws the notice of a powerful woodwalker, Andrew, who is also a puma; Carag is afraid of him, but their connection proves significant nonetheless. The pull between Carag's instincts and his desire to please those around him is compelling, and his interactions with Andrew are crucial to determining where the story will go.

With the help of Lissa and Andrew, Carag enrolls in his new school. There he learns to embrace both of his forms—after he figures out who he can trust. His attempts to understand his new settings are sympathetic.

The book's beautiful illustrations capture the strength and grace of Carag's puma form, with images that are sometimes no more than a swishing tail or a paw print. And the many other woodwalkers whom Carag meets form a vibrant cast. Each incorporates animal traits into their human personality: a shy boy who's afraid of his strength transforms into a bison; a friendly girl becomes a pine squirrel who's prone to stealing. There are also unfriendly woodwalkers in the book, though, including a bullying pack of wolves.

Carag's Transformation is an entertaining fantasy novel in which a boy with supernatural gifts navigates self-discovery and makes friends in a new school.

CATHERINE THURESON (January / February 2023)

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