A Discourse On Cats

DOROTHY WILSON

A cat is an animal. Zoologically speaking, a cat is a *Felis domestica* belonging to the family *Felidae* of the phylum *Chordata*. According to Webster, a cat is a carnivorous domesticated quadruped. The encyclopedia exposes the fact that the cat receives its heritage from a long line of tigers, lynxes, pumas, leopards, and cheetahs. Sardonically speaking, a cat is a woman. To me cats are not discernable, and I find that in any size, shape, or form, cats annoy me. In the first place, cats make me sneeze. That is, the *Felis domesticus* make me sneeze; the *Homo sapiens* irritate me only from within.

Cats find their habitats in the most peculiar places. Under my window at two o'clock in the morning is one of their more secluded havens. Another tantalizing spot of heaven seems to be on my bed; their kittens like that place too. The kitchen table is nice, except the food is usually inconveniently placed, so that sitting and supping is almost an impossibility, so they must be content with just supping. I have come to the conclusion that under my feet, though, is the most pleasant of all refuges. It must be the coziness of the situation. I usually end up meeting them face to face this way. Of course, some cats haunt sorority houses, but this kind do not sup on the table, or crawl beneath my legs.

In the spring cats usually fall in love. They gaze at the moon, and they gaze at the stars, and then they proceed to tell their troubles to the world. It is said that the remote ancestor of the common cat was a species known as *Felis libyca*, or the Egyptian cat. I have often meditated the thought in my fevered brain that possibly Cleopatra had somewhat of an influence over these feline descendants of the *libyca*. After all love first bloomed in Egypt, but then each spring cats fall in love whether they are in Egypt, or whether they are in Alaska. All types of cats fall in love. We sit each noon and Wednesday night, and listen placidly to why we are no longer hearing about Bill but why Tom is the man of the moment. As the moon comes stealing stealthily over the hill, poetically speaking, we also listen tolerantly to the cats, and hear their wailing due to the fact that Joe is no longer with us. Oh dear, where is Joe? The last we heard he was on the sandy grounds of Egypt. Perhaps he is spending an entertaining evening with a *libyea*; on the other hand the cat probably is wearing a skirt.

Perhaps my aversion toward cats dates back to my first impressions during my childhood, even before they made me sneeze. But then on the other hand, the feeling might be from a prenatal impression. They tell me my mother enjoyed bridge. Of course, it is really probably due to the fact that kittens always scratched me, cats ate helpless canaries, and cats always spelled out “candy” and “ice cream” over my head while slipping a piece of cookie to the kitty, under my chair, so that my tender ears should not hear what my stomach should not have. Nevertheless, cats have made a lasting impression, and I dislike them all.

However, I am not nearly as cynical as you might suppose on this topic of cats, for I own a lovely, large Persian (at least that is what we think she is, but
her father was the black sheep of her family, so we have never been absolutely sure) who at this very moment is lying idly at my feet, looking reproachfully at me with her large amber eyes. It is amazing how it is possible for one to damn a race, excluding one certain individual, who is definitely an exception. My cat is the exception in this case. She never howls—it is always the neighbor's cat which I hear so early in the morning; she never falls in love; is it her fault that men find her so lovely and irresistible that they cannot help falling at her feet and worshipping her? Her charms are dazzling, and her character unquestionable.

Cats have their place in the world just as castor oil and spinach. There are quite a number of cats who are doing more than their share in the modern world today. Cats still go about catching rats, and in our changing universe there are many rats to be caught. Thus, cats are very distasteful in many instances, I must admit, but the world would not be the same, if it were not for cats.

Smokey
JACK STAUCH

“IT won't be long now; the zero hour is approaching. Where can that crew chief of mine be? He is probably down at that pub with that O'Brien girl he met the other day. He should be here to supervise my feeding. Ah! here comes my dinner.”

A long gray-green petrol truck pulls alongside and disgorges its volatile contents into Smokey's wings. Next come the low slung ammunition trucks bearing the solid food in one ton and fifty caliber packages of lethal death. Hurry up with the loading; Smokey's off on a mission in twenty minutes.

“Well, it's about time he got here. What's that he's got around his neck? Oh, I see; it's a green scarf, probably a gift from that O'Brien girl. Ah! This is better; a full load and I'm rar'in' to go. Here comes the gang, Joe, Jimmy, Tommy and Kitty too. Good old Kitty!”

“Easy there, don't twist my nose so hard, I'm a fragile hunk of stuff. Now for a little exercise. I'll race you. Up and up into the clear cold sky we go.

My but that cold air feels good rushing by my gills. Look out, paperhanger, here I come.”

Faster and faster, farther and farther he races through the darkness. Hamburg, Berlin, Stuttgart are the targets for tonight. Heavy flack is encountered over Stuttgart, and Smokey is shaken up a bit.

“Gee, it sure is hot up here tonight. Ouch! That one got me in the tail feathers. I sure hope I stick together.”

“Pilot to bombardier, pilot to bombardier. Over target; bomb bays open; good hunting.”

“Ah! There they go. I'm lighter now. Watch me go. Look at those explosions. It won't be long now, Shickelgrueber. Ouch! There went my right lung. A direct hit! Well, I guess it's home on one now. I'm sure glad those people at Lockheed know what they're doing when they make my brothers. We're close to home now; I can see the white cliffs of Dover. I can rest now, for these boys will get me home.”