

Cats

by Ann Bogle

They climb on you and get their claws stuck in the purple lace tablecloth on which is set your laptop, and you imagine euthanizing them if what she says is true, that she is leaving them to you in her will. Not that you didn't at one time like cats, even wrote of them, in eulogies of parting, the family as it once was. It's just that you can't imagine driving dying cats to the veterinarian as you once did in an elaborate gesture of pro-life. Really, it was love for them that drove you. Love that's all right. The kind of love that's not forbidden now but treacle. It was dust in the toolbin. Twenty-year ashes in urns. It was hair on the kitchen chair. It was a rash above your lip and below your nose that lasted from the day the boy cat came home until the season he died and for which a topical steroid ointment was prescribed without any warning from the HMO doctor that it might lead to promiscuous hunting, as it did. The woman dermatologist advised you better, even though her concern was not with promiscuous hunting—you never looked like a promiscuous hunter as you sat in the exam room—but with broken capillaries on your face, something that could devastate (so strong a word) a woman's chance to marry. After all, keeping cats might devastate the same chance. Better to keep a large dog to bite men or show off your churchgoing to tame the senses.

