

A Band of Feline Brothers

by Con Chapman

(Upon the poet learning that his cats had chased off a pack of coyotes)

You wish for assistance?
No, my cousin Okie.
If we die, it is our master's loss,
But if we live, the fewer cats,
The greater share of honor.
With God as my witness,
I wish not one cat more.



I am not covetous for catnip,
Nor care where I sleep at night.
It irks me not who takes my
Favorite chair, or swats me off a table
That I have leapt upon.

Such things get not my dander up.
But if it be a sin to covet honor
On the field of battle,
I am the most offending cat alive.



No, coz, wish not a cat from Wayland
Over yon stone wall to climb and save us.

I would not lose so great an honor
As one cat more would share with me.



O, do not wish one more.
Rather proclaim it presently
To the host of coyotes before us
That we've the stomach for this fight.
Let them depart. Dry catfood pellets shall
Be put in their purse to ease their convoy
Back to the hills from whence they came.

This day is called the feast of St. Gertrude
The patron saint of cats.
He that outlives this day, and comes safe home
Will stand on hind legs when the day is named
And rouse himself at the name of St. Gertrude.



He that shall live this day, and see old age,
Will yearly on the vigil feast his fellow-cats
And say "To-morrow is Saint Gertrude's Day."

Then will he part his fur and show his scars
And say "These wounds I had on St. Gertrude's Day."

Old cats forget, yet all shall be forgot,
But he'll remember with advantages
What feats he did that day: Then shall our names
Familiar in his mouth as household words—
Okie the King, Rocco the Prince,
Spooks, Chewie and Chester—
Be in their flowing cups freshly remember'd.



This story shall the good cat teach his kit,
And St. Gertrude's Day shall ne'er go by,
From this day to the ending of the world,
But we in it shall be remember'd.

We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
This day shall gentle his condition:
And gentlecats in Weston now a-bed
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,
And hold their cathoods cheap while any speaks
That fought with us upon Saint Gertrude's Day.

*Available in Kindle format on amazon.com as part of the collection
"Cats Say the Darndest Things."*

