

CatsaBlanca Quartet

Written and Illustrated
By
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CATSABLANCA



A collection of short stories describing
how Mrs Ribby and her daughter, Ruby
joined the Ginger Nuts.

TAJ MACHAT



Dedication: in loving memory of Sylvia

The CatsaBlanca Quartet

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Pookie Interviews



"Brrrrrp, good morning," said Bullpuss, as the next furry applicant knocked and peeped round the summerhouse door. "Do come in and make yourself comfortable."

Mungojerrie helped the apprehensive young lady puss into the chair placed opposite the rather intimidating desk that Bullpuss had arranged, and behind which, on slightly raised chairs, they sat.

"Brrrrrrp, now, as you may know," began Bullpuss, "we have a vacancy in the Ginger Nuts clan, for the position of 'Streetwise, Young Lady, Puss About Town'."

Mungojerrie continued, "our Moppet and Tabitha are no longer 'spring kittens' and could do with some help with the arrangements for feline sports and associated activities."



"Perhaps you could tell us a little about yourself?" said Bullpuss, smiling benignly.

"Mirrawacau," replied the small tabby, "my name is Mrs. Ribby, and I am the mother of numerous kittens, spread over several confinements. It has all become rather tiresome."

Most of the kittens are successfully homed around the area and I am hopeful that your organisation can arrange support with Veterinary intervention to prevent any further occurrences."



"Meeoup," exclaimed Mungojerrie, "we would have to consult our FR department, Feline Resources, you know, to elucidate their policy in that area!"

"Brrrrrrrp, do you mean to say," said Bullpuss, "that,



like my large, furry self, you used to live rough in the gardens, leading a paw to mouth existence, whilst also finding yourself responsible for the survival and wellbeing of a succession of tiny kittens?"



The small tabby glanced up beseechingly into Bullpuss's face and whispered, "Miaowp, yes, that's exactly my situation, and any help, young sirs, would be so gratefully received."

"Miaowell," exclaimed Bullpuss, "I'm convinced. Have you any further questions, Mungo?"

Mungo considered his final comments. "We have quite a feline hierarchy here," he explained, "our Moppet is a fount of pussycat wisdom and Tabitha reveres her. If you are happy to join as a most junior member, we should be most pleased to accommodate you."



"Mew, Mew, thank you, kind sirs," said Ribby, "I shall pack my few things and be round in the morning."



Author's Foot Note

Shortly there is an allusion to the wonderful story by Beatrix Potter called "The Pie And The Patty Pan" where a feline character called Mrs Ribby makes a significant appearance.

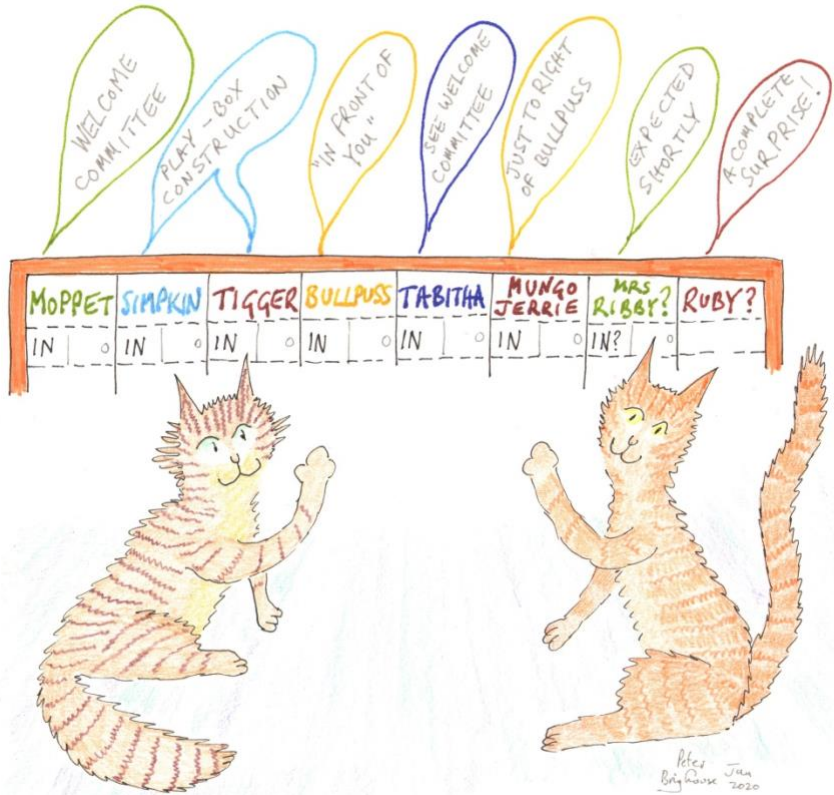
Ribby Joins the Ginger Nuts

Or: "The Arrival of The Puss-Queen of Sheba"

Or: "How Moppet and Tabitha Completed their Gallery of Brass-Cats"



Bullpuss and Mungojerrie were up and about early on the morning they believed the Ginger Nuts clan would be augmented by its seventh appointment.



"Brrrrp, it's so exciting," said Bullpuss, "Moppet and Tabitha have arranged a traditional pussycat welcome, and Tigger and Simpkin are constructing cat play-boxes suitable for a young lady puss."

"Meeoup, did you see the book that our Old Mistress was reading as she fell asleep last night?" asked Mungojerrie, "the original Beatrix Potter tale of the Pie and the Patty-Pan."

"Mirrawacow, here she is!" called Tigger from his sentry position on the front windowsill.

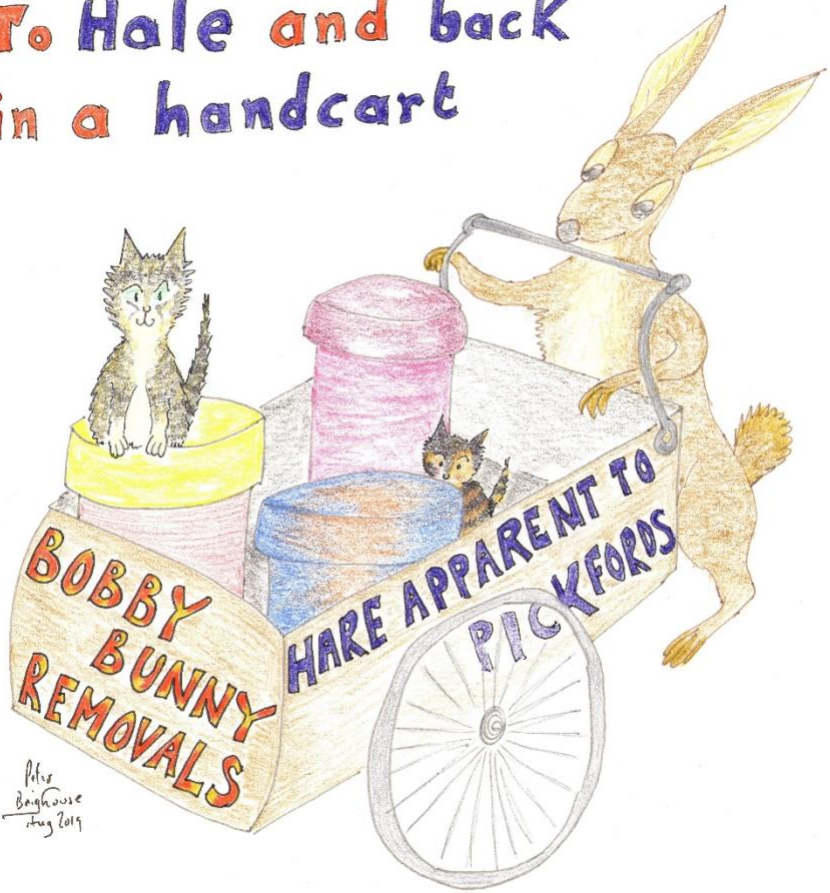
Simpkin jumped up beside his brother. "Meeoup, what's this? There's a tiny person with her!" he exclaimed.



Old Mistress opened the front door and all the Ginger Nuts gathered to see who the tiny person was.

Bobby Bunny struggled up the front path with the first consignment of hat boxes.

To Hare and back in a handcart



Mungojerrie trotted out to help supervise the cases and Gladstone bags that were bulging with "Puss About Town" apparel.

Suddenly a small face popped up from between a cat travel box and an assortment of cat toys.



"Mew, mew, are you Bullpuss or Mungojerrie?" said a tiny voice.

Mungo turned quickly, as a gorgeous kitten emerged from the debris.

"Meeoup, I'm Mungojerrie," he stammered, as the tiny creature hopped out onto his fluffy tail and started to climb up his back.



"Mew, mew, pleased to meet you Mungojerrie," whispered the kitten, as she snuggled around Mungo's neck. "My Mum calls me Ruby, did she not say that I was arriving to stay as well?"

"Miaowell," said Mungo, reaching round to attempt to extract the kitten, "we had no idea you were joining us too, but you'll be most welcome. I expect our Very Old Master will be selling a few more of his illustrations to fund pussycat board and lodging. And we can always arrange a few more cat jazz gigs."

Ribby stepped forward to be introduced to Tabitha and Moppet.

"Mew, mew, it's so kind of you to accommodate us," she said, "and I apologise for not explaining about my kitten. We thought she was going to another forever home, but I'm so glad she can stay with me. Such a comfort after the time I've had in the alleyways of Manchester!"



"Miaowka piaowka," exclaimed Moppet, "was it really so bad? You must relate to Tabbo and myself, the details of your trials and tribulations. Although inexperienced in many of these matters, we shall be able to lend a listening furry ear."



Later that evening, after unpacking and settling in, and once a substantial welcoming meal had been enjoyed, Ribby sat down with Moppet and Tabitha and attempted to describe her experiences and the trauma of bringing several sets of kittens into the world."

Based upon overheard feline conversations, Very Old Master has attempted to illustrate the despicable band of Tom Cats who forage a living around the backs of restaurants in Manchester's so-called 'Curry Mile.'

THE GALLERY OF BRASS-CATS PATRONESS MRS RIBBY



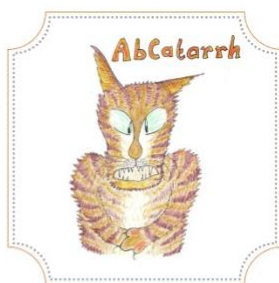
The Indian Cricket Supporter



The Cheshire Tom Cat



The Davy Bowie Crockett Cat



The Asian Restaurant Cat



Moppet and Tabitha curate
Mrs Ribby's gallery additions

At The Cattery

Mrs Ribby opened an eye and glanced through the darkness at her daughter's carry basket.

"Macowww, Ruby, are you awake?" she whispered.



"Mewp, yes Mamma," a tiny voice whispered back, "and I'm very scared. What is this place?"

"Miaouck, I think it's a cattery, but that new lady seems very nice. She has a gentle touch and is concerned for our well-being. I'm sure it's safe to come out of your basket."

Ruby crept across the floor and cuddled up close to her Mamma.

"Mewp, but why are we here? What have we done wrong?" asked the kitten.



"We've done nothing wrong, Dearest One," replied her Mamma, "it's just that our new people are going away for a short time, and because we are not fully integrated with our new cat family, it was felt unfair to ask the usual Aunties to take responsibility for us as well."

"I see," said Ruby, "I can hear cat voices all down this corridor outside our door. Who are they?"



"More cats in the same situation," said Ribby, "although sometimes their people go away for many weeks, not just the few days that we shall need."

"They're doing a lot of talking," said Ruby, "do they know each other?"

"Some may do," answered Ribby, "and some are sensible enough to make friends whenever the opportunity arises."

"Shall we talk to them, Mamma?" asked Ruby.

"Perhaps tomorrow dear, once you have settled down to have a good night's sleep."



The night passed quietly. There were fields and hedgerows just along from the cattery windows, and the cats could hear the gentle hooting of owls, and the scratching and rustling of small furry mammals. As dawn broke the next morning, Ruby was peeking out from their window. The field was awash with rabbits! She had never seen one rabbit let alone a field full. They were hard at work nibbling dew coated grass and hopping from one group to another. Something more to ask her Mamma about.



Shortly the sun rose higher and the rabbits disappeared away into the undergrowth.

One of their neighbouring cat inmates was obviously rather hungry since some loud noises emanated from several cages down. It sounded as if someone was scraping a metal feeding bowl along the cage bars.



A gruff cat voice came from the next cage.

"Mirrawacow girls, many apologies for our mutual colleague down the row. He always causes a nuisance early on. I think he needs a worming tablet!"

Ribby looked up quickly with an astonished face. She hopped on to the box nearest the front of the netting and attempted to glance along to the next cage. "Oh, my whiskers!" she exclaimed, "is that you, Catsablanca, is it really you?"



And, just to complete the allusion to the great Humphrey Bogart film, with Mrs Ribby playing the part of Ilsa.

CHARLES WALKS INTO A BAR
DICKENS

AND
ORDERS
A
MARTINI



THE BARCAT
ASKS
"OLIVE
OR TWIST?"





OF ALL THE GIN JOINTS IN ALL THE TOWNS
IN ALL THE WORLD I HAD TO CHOOSE
ONE WITH THE CORNIEST BAR JOKES !

And now, back to the Story

CATSABLANCA

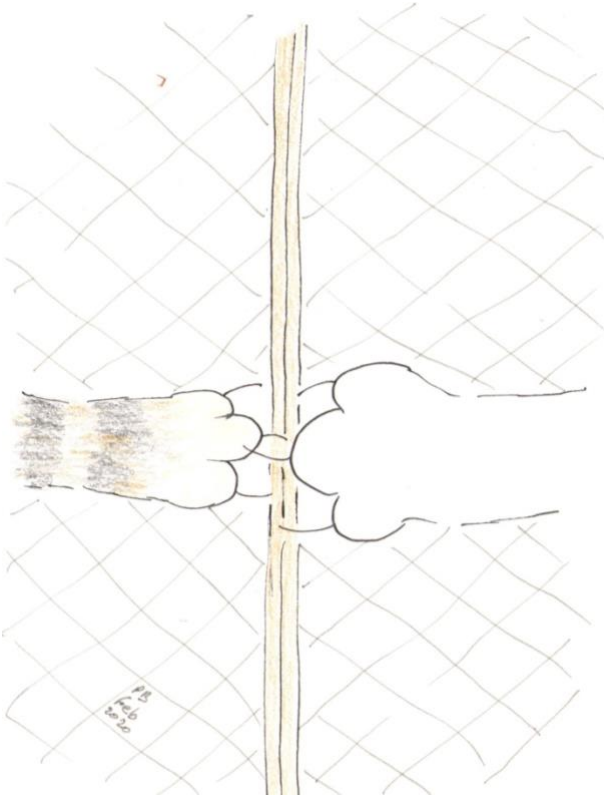


"Ribby, sweetest one! Of all the catteries in all the
woyld and you have to walk into mine!"

Ribby pressed her paws to her front and leaned backwards against the cage with fluttering eyelids.



She squeezed a paw out through the netting and reached along to Catsablanca's cage. He was doing the same and there was an electrifying moment as their paw-tips touched.



"Tings can never be the same, Sweetie-pie," said Catsablanca in a husky voice, "too many things have changed."

"I know," breathed Ribby softly. "Have you heard anything from the old gang?"

"Sam's here with me too, Green-Eyes, I'm afraid we've both been 'domesticated'," continued Catsablanca, "Sam's brought his piano with him."



"Mew, mew, Sam, play it for me, Sam, play it again," pleaded Ribby.

And, coincidentally, just at that time, from the local United Reform Church across the meadow, came the sound of the organist who had come in early to practice on the grand piano.

You must remember this
A kiss is just a kiss
A purr is just a purr
The furramental things apply

As time goes by

And when two Pookies woo
They still say "Mirrawacoo"
On that you can rely
No matter what the future brings
As time goes by

Moonlight and cat songs
Never out of date
Hearts full of passion
Jealousy and hate
Pusskins needs Tom, and Tom must have his mate
That no one can deny

It's still the same old story
A fight for love and glory
A case of do or die
The world will always welcome Pookies
As time goes by.

Ruby, listening to the fascinating conversation, could not resist jumping up beside her mother and pushing a long kitten paw through the netting.

"Ruby," said Ribby, "meet your Dad!"

THE GINGER NUTS' CATSABLANCA QUARTET



The Importance of Forever Homes

NB this forms another stage in the Catsablanca Quartet, which rather than call it a quintet or sextet, is amusingly introduced as a cat story of several parts, including Mrs Ribby's Gallery of Brass Cats illustrations.

"Macow, Ruby, you probably haven't understood our new people talking about their next holiday," said Mrs Ribby, looking across at her daughter, as she bounced from one armchair to another, with a minor excursion up Mungojerrie's new scratching post.

THE GINGER NUTS' CATSABLANCA QUARTET



"Mew, mew, Mamma," squeaked Ruby, pausing for breath, "I don't understand a word they're saying."

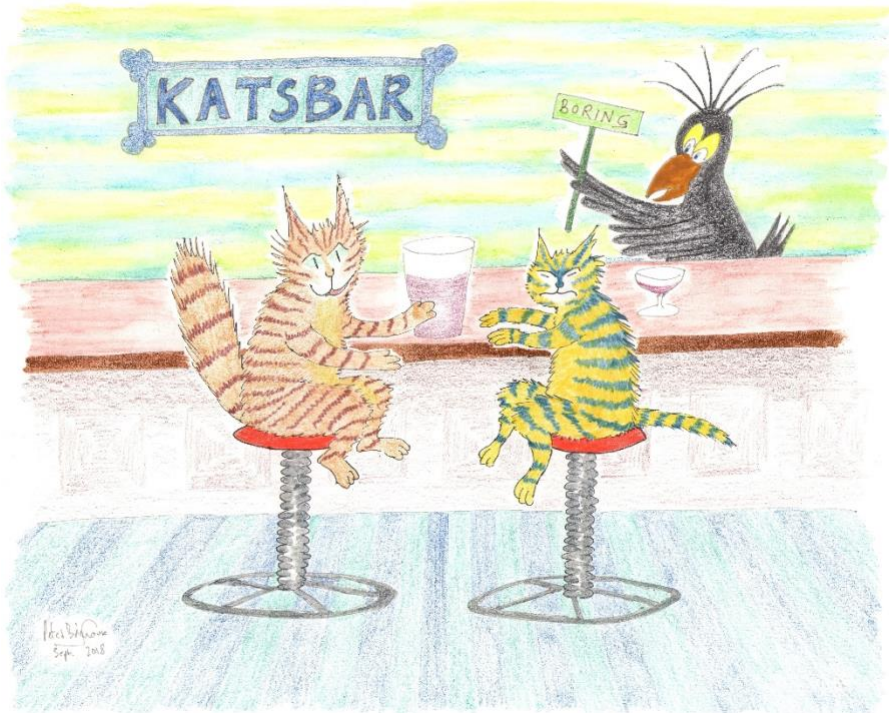
"Miaowell, not to worry, Mungo's explained how their intonations work. You'll soon pick up the gist." Ruby took a flying leap from the top of the post and landed perfectly on the rug.



"Mewp, meup, Mamma, so you and Mungo are becoming friends? I think he's great, just like a favourite uncle."

"Macau, I've been very wary of him, after my early experiences on the back streets," said Ribby, "but the more I see of him, the happier I become. He really is a gentle giant."

"Mew, mew, he told me that the Bullpuss used to live rough in our gardens, before he invited himself in, and signed up as a Ginger Nut."



"Macau, yes," replied Ribby, "and he suggested that we stay at home instead of going to the Cattery, which was fine and just what felines need, but there's nothing better than staying safe in your own home."

"Mew, how shall we tell our people?" asked Ruby.

"I have a plan! We shall detect the earliest signs, then the plan is to hide in any of the cat-friendly hidey-

holes we have located. When they capture you and pop you in the basket



"stay quiet for a while, then start your plaintive little squeaking. With a bit of luck, they'll give up trying to find me, and our Very Old Mistress will speak to Mungo's Auntie Sue Rabbit, to see if she's happy to cope with all three of us."

"Mirrameoup, Mamma, such an idea. And we met Auntie Sue Rabbit when I was just a tiny, little kitten, with my sisters, after that nice lady rescued you from the streets and back alleys."

THE GINGER NUTS' CATSABLANCA QUARTET



Ribby's Letter to CatsaBlanca

My dear CatsaBlanca,

New Year 2020 brings lots of fresh beginnings for us all, and I thought I should write to tell you how we are getting on; check on your well-being and generally update you on the kittens.

Ruby is flourishing, and according to our new people, who have heard regularly from the kind family who first effected our rescue, her three sisters are in fine fettle too. We have all been often to a very kind vet and are completely up to date with our feline medications, for tickling jumping fellows, wriggling annoying tummy upset fellows, and anything else the vet can think of.



We have all been subjected to our little operations, as you confirmed you had too, when we fortuitously met you at that nice Cattery.

I often wonder about my first sets of kittens. Since we were not rescued in the early days, I sometimes lie awake at night, and worry about their well-being. Sadly, not all will have survived. Even though we are pet cats, the subjection to feral existence, brings a most unwelcome exposure to the realities of life in the raw, and I cannot help but feel concerned for the wild animals, birds, mammals and even the fascinating invertebrates, as they live in juxtaposition to the burgeoning human race.



I do hope your new family do not feed you curries that are too hot. I know how you survived behind all those Rusholme restaurants, on spicy tidbits and lost count of the numbers of rodents you met each morning, but who strangely seemed to be less in number, in the evenings!

Those vindaloo chicken leftovers used to play havoc with your oral hygiene, as I well remember.



Our new garden is a supreme example of what can be achieved in the urban environment, with foresight and hard work. Our Very Old Master, who I refer to as VOMas, (our Very Old Mistress is VOMis), is out there several times a week, unless it is raining or frosty, keeping fit with horticulture. He loves composting down by our summerhouse, the Blue Pussy Cat Cafe, which was arranged by our predecessors Mr Simpkin and Mr Tigger, with design input from the dear old Bullpuss. You would have loved to have met them. Bullpuss like yourself, was the scourge of the

neighbourhood in his early years, before he was rescued after a particularly hard winter, and integrated into family life. Such stories you could have exchanged.



Our new friend, Mungojerrie has found things a little difficult accepting our presence. I am still wary of being within his batting paw reach, and I tend to watch through the stair bannisters before committing to venturing downstairs. Our people have a neat arrangement at the bottom of the staircase with a barrier, a child-proof guard, I believe, which Ruby and I can hop past quite easily, but which defeats the jumping power of an elderly cat.

In a relaxed moment Mungojerrie confided to us that he misses his Tabitha so much, who left him too quickly with a sudden illness onset, that he feels somewhat jealous of our freshness and bounceability.

Ruby stands up to his moodiness and hopefully together we shall win his affection round.

Since we have both recovered from our little operations, with all surgery healing perfectly, we have been allowed unfettered access to the back garden. This was Ruby's first time outside and she couldn't believe the possibility for fun and games. It is also the first time that I have been able to relax outside, with a minimum of responsibilities on my mind, and I am investigating the extent of our range. VOMas has been reinforcing the garden boundaries with neat trellising, to try to combat the urban foxes, who we believe have caused quite some trouble in the past, but he has left some neat smaller access points to the neighbouring gardens, and Ruby and I know exactly where they are, if danger threatens and we need to make a dash for the cat-flap. This was one of the features that Mungojerrie explained to us, and although something I was unfamiliar with, both of us spotted its usefulness and Ruby, being such an intelligent large kitten, (she takes after you), worked out the mechanism at once.



The only “garden-fly-in-the-ointment” is a fat, plump, surly fellow, referred to by us as the PickleOdeon, also known as Sergeant Pickles.

He is supposed to live across the road, and we do wish he would stay there. But his own garden is boringly, neatly kept, with little of interest to cats. Therefore, he is attracted to our much more pleasant domain, although his inbuilt jealousy gets the better of him, and he takes delight in appearing and causing trouble. Mungojerrie’s old age and infirmity means he cannot combat the varmint with the same success as in previous times, so he has asked us to take up the gauntlet and devise plans for repelling all boarders. This is Ruby’s first experience of unfriendly felines, but she is learning fast and I am hoping that together, we can construct a solution. Our dear Tabitha suffered victimisation at the paws of this varmint, and we must avoid the same fate.



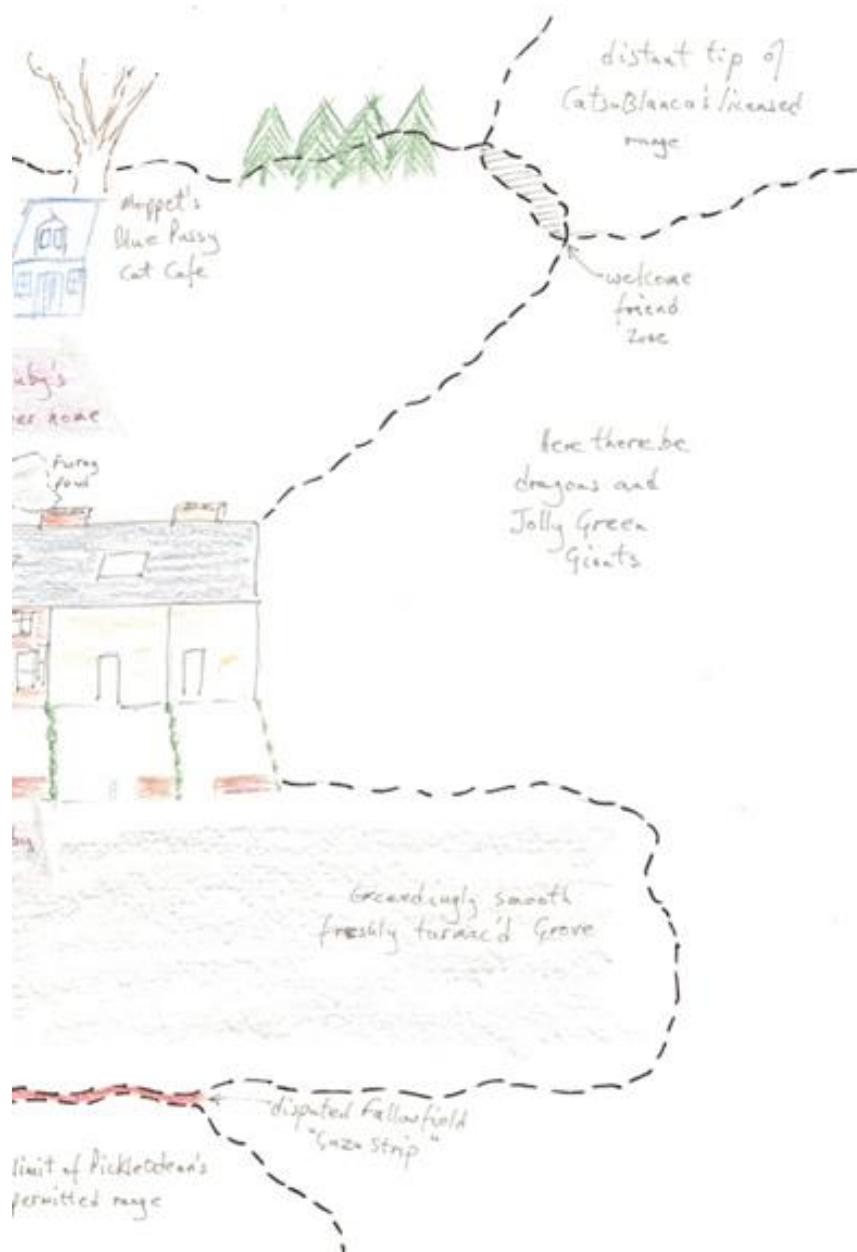
My dear Catsablanca, I am unsure where you actually live now, but wouldn't it be fine if our ranges happened to overlap, and at some stage I could bring Ruby along to say hello!

Hopefully the next two pages stay as a double-spread and show a readable map.

THE GINGER NUTS' CATSABLANCA QUARTET



THE GINGER NUTS' CATSABLANCA QUARTET





We have a dear neighbour, the local MadCatWoman, whom we have been told, intends to arrange a first birthday party for myself and all four kittens, whose people are being approached to ensure that the other three can arrive for the day.

Perhaps she will have located where you and some of
the old gang have been rescued to as well.

With lots of furry purrs

And cat hugs,

From your old friend,

Stripey Grey Cat, now known as Mrs Ribby



The Kittens' First Birthday

Elsie, the local MadCatWoman, also known, by her American acquaintances, as the Fallowfield CrazyCatLady, had heard how successfully Ruby the Kitten and her Mamma, Mrs Ribby, had been rescued by the staff on Louisa's Ginger Nuts Cat Gang.

She had also heard how the kind lady, who had brought in Ribby and her four latest kittens, had done a brilliant rehabilitation job, and her family had kept sisters Clawdia and Sylvia. The third sister, Dolly, had gone to her forever home with a slightly older puss, who had welcomed her new friend and companion with open paws.



The fourth kitten, Ruby had established a close relationship with the Ginger Nuts, especially with Mungojerrie, who she figured was her Great, great Uncle.

Ruby was successfully encouraging her Mamma to relax and start to enjoy life, after her earlier torments of abandonment and coping with a succession of confinements.

Elsie kept a watchful eye over all cat dealings in her neighbourhood and was particularly enthralled to find that all four kittens could be accounted for and were neatly settled in with their new families. As the Cat Caretaker of her own menagerie of one old Labrador and 25, at the last count, rehomed pussycats, she knew that very few of them were related.



Except for twin brothers, who had arrived several years ago, the others represented the rich pantheon (or panthereon) of cat shapes, cat colours and patterns, and cat personalities.

To celebrate the blossoming of Ribby's four kittens, Elsie decided to host a first birthday party and sent out invitations to their families.

Her own gang loved these events and set about helping with snack arrangements and devising the games that could be played. An obvious game was pinning the tail on the mouse.

Elsie was dubious about a bran-tub. Although great fun, with a selection of tiny cat toys loosely wrapped in tissue paper and mixed in with the bran, earlier attempts using the wood pelleted cat soil tray material, had resulted with more "presents" left behind than they had started with!

Cat table-tennis was always a favourite. A ping pong ball had a long piece of thread glued to it, with the other end of the thread secured to the edge of an oblong coffee table. Cats were paired off and took turns to face each other batting the ball from end to end. If the ball shot off the table between two blobs of plasticine which served as goal posts, then you had scored. This was always a popular game and each winner stayed on to face a new opponent. Elsie did her best to keep tabs on the overall winner. Bullpuss often won by default since he would stretch out in front of his own goal and simply flick back any ping pong that came near him.

The music was discussed. Probably best as background sound since everyone would be most interested in talking and playing games. Some slow ballads were requested from the Osgat Petersen trio and Catter Bilk's Paracat Jazz Band.



One particular song, though, could be played at full volume and everyone would join in. This was "The Pussy-Cats Picnic" played to the same tune as that enjoyed by the Teddy Bears.

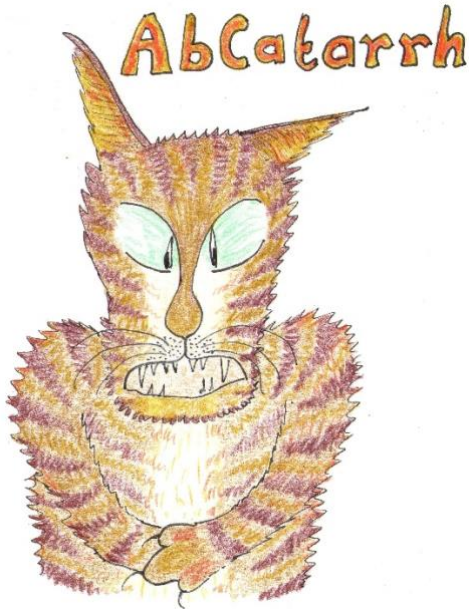
Somebody rashly suggested a compilation of the background sound accompanying cat food adverts - unfortunately several cats vomited on the spot, so this silly idea was rejected.

The list of invitations was easy to compile and were sent out. A more difficult list was of potential gate crashers, and discussions ensued upon a policy to deal with the problem.

One local cat who would be bound to hear about the party, was the bully PickleOdeon, whom everyone could agree was not to be admitted.



The nearby Gang of Tomcats was another predicament. Their extensive range began over in Moss Side where Ribby had been rescued from, extended to Chorlton and from there, eastwards towards Fallowfield, Withington and West Didsbury.



Elsie explained that AbCatarrh had sneaked into an early gathering but had hidden behind the sofas and generally behaved himself.

CatsaBlanca was a different consideration. It was an open secret that he was the father of the four kittens, but Mrs Ribby had only explained to Ruby. Since he was a handsome, full of fun Tomcat it was decided that if he turned up, he would be welcomed with open paws.

The party was a huge success. Elsie's experience and organisational abilities ensured a smooth trouble-free afternoon. The four kittens and younger cats loved the games. Everyone enjoyed the snack feast.

When eventually the four kittens were exhausted, and full to bursting, they were tucked up on the sofas with their favourite adult cat, although all wanted Mamma as their first choice. Ruby graciously allowed her sisters the best positions alongside Ribby.

When Ribby got too hot, she asked Tabitha to take Sylvia, and Tigger stepped up to offer his cuddleability to Dolly.

The last game, one of soporific tranquillity was especially for the older cats, and was a Story Telling Competition.

There were many interesting contributions, too many to relate here. But then, The Bullpuss, that jovial raconteur, stepped up with his tale and wiped the floor with the following magnificent anecdote.

"Your fascinating tales," continued the eldest member of the Ginger Nuts, "reminds me of the story that I shall relate to you now There was once a pair of pussycat gentlemen whose people had named Cayenne, since his finely mingled fur colour looked as if he'd been sprinkled with pepper. His braather was named Omar. As they grew older, their people decided to take in a rescue kitten, and a long search began. All friends and acquaintances were consulted and eventually a tiny kitten was found. Since it was their people's fortieth wedding anniversary, they decided to call the kitten Ruby. When she was old enough to go safely outside, she was taken round to meet all of the brothers' acquaintances, and soon became known in the neighbourhood as"

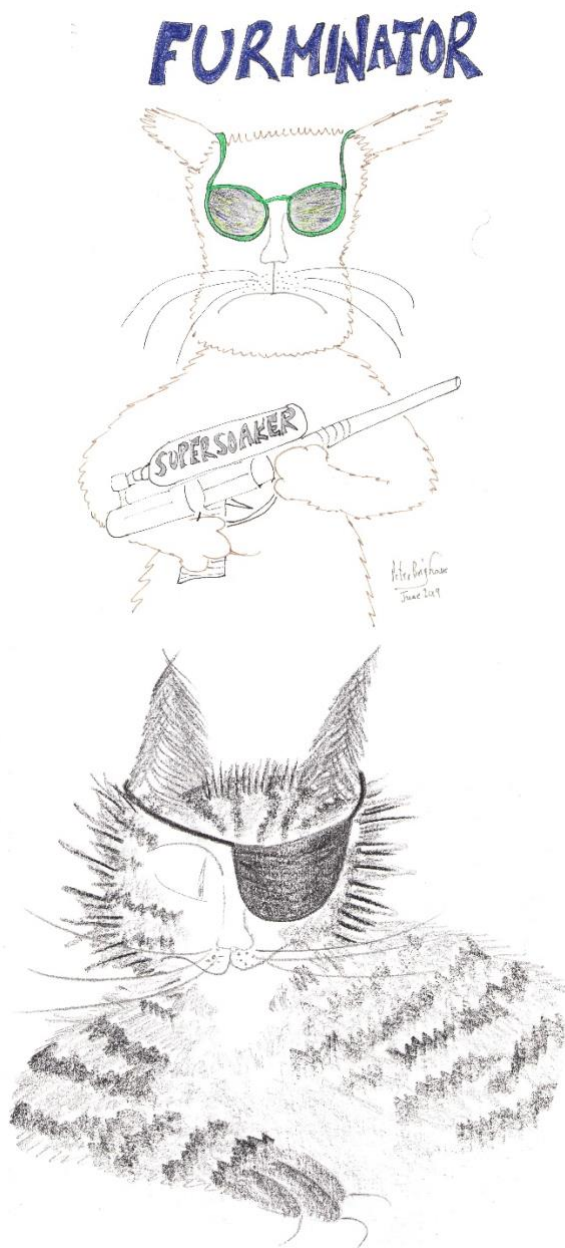
Bullpuss paused dramatically, with a grin of anticipation barely concealed by his whiskers. He looked over at his companions. Mungo was on his back, completely relaxed, fast asleep and with paws pushed out in all directions. Tabitha opened one eye and smiled indulgently at Bullpuss before finishing with the punchline to his story.

"..... the Ruby Cat of Omar Cayenne."

Gallery of Brass-Cats



"David Bowie's Cat"



"Long John Saliva, the Spitting Pirate Cat"

TAJ MACHAT



"Now, which eye does the patch cover?"



"Signor Ferrari" aka Sidney Greenstreet

Special author note for those who have read this far: although I enjoy illustrating as much as writing, the drawing and colouring takes much longer. Please look upon the second half of this book as just an added extra, where I am keen to present finished stories to my very small group of adoring supporters, whilst hoping that at some stage I can catch up with the artwork and republish. Actually this makes these first few books potentially valuable – we can but hope!

Ruby's Journey

Ruby the large kitten was fascinated by the number and variety of small delivery vans and trucks that backed carefully down the short cul-de-sac that was the nearest road in the Ginger Nuts' domain. Her Mamma, Mrs Ribby, that streetwise rescue cat that had used her feline intelligence, intuition, and survival skills, to ensure that three successive litters of kittens had something of a chance in the back streets and alleys of some of the poorest areas of the big city, had warned Ruby of the terrible dangers of vehicles on the roads.

Ruby loved observing the to and fro of the vans from the comfortable upstairs front bedroom windowsill. This was after she had exhausted herself rushing round the garden in the morning and checking out all the information brought back by her feline companions. During the day, a quick kitten-nap of twenty minutes sufficed to recharge her batteries.

The vans called at several neighbours and often at her own house. There seemed to be a connection with a delivery and either Very Old Mistress parading around in new clothes, or some interesting fresh snacks being offered to the Ginger Nuts.

Another fine new van backed slowly down and parked blocking the access. The driver opened several doors and started rooting and organising the parcels. He had two for different neighbours. Ruby noticed the infamous PickleOdeon, scourge of the Ginger Nuts, waddling his plump sides down the neighbour's path to investigate the underside of the vehicle.

"Mawaow!" she thought, "I know we dislike the fellow, but perhaps he doesn't know how dangerous vehicles are. I shall nip outside and warn him!"

Now, Very Old Mistress had been looking out of downstairs windows to see if the delivery was for her. She noticed a feline movement near the van, just a glimpse of a tail, and fearing it may be Ruby, she shouted to Very Old Master that there was a cat near the van.

Very Old Master, ever obedient, put down his newspaper and ambled outside. He found the delivery man having trouble locating hard working neighbours, and happily signed for the parcel for the girls down the Grove. The cat alert was discussed, and they found the PickleOdeon crouched underneath the van. He was quickly scared away. They glanced inside the cab and through the wide doors at the back, but all seemed well.

Now Ruby, a few weeks previously, had listened, attentively to start with, to the Bullpuss' story of how he had been a distraught abandoned cat. He had laboured the tale on many occasions to whichever Ginger Nuts were nearby. Ruby had "switched off" after a few minutes and could only recall the excitement of the van journey. She had failed to heed Bullpuss' conclusion to the journey when he described the predicament of being fifty miles from the area he knew.

So, having spotted PickleOdeon beneath the van before Very Old Master arrived, and told him off for being silly, she then did a very silly thing herself. She hopped up into the parcel area in the back and began investigating. Several parcels, possibly containing

food, emitted interesting smells, and it was altogether, just too exciting.

By the time the driver and VOMas had checked the back, she was well hidden beneath parcels. The driver and VOMas had exchanged jokes and banter and the driver said that he would look out for gorgeous bouncy girl kittens at his subsequent deliveries. Just in case.

About half an hour later there was a knock at the Ginger Nuts door.

Very Old Mistress answered, and there was a smiling driver offering a wriggling kitten who had popped up suddenly, during his fifth local delivery.

"This one's not got a bar-code," he said.

Kitten Lesson No. 27

It was another fine, late summer evening in Fallowfield.

Bullpuss and Mrs Ribby had been discussing the next step in her daughter's tuition. As the most streetwise of felines, their combined experience and advice was admired by the other Ginger Nuts, some of whom had enjoyed safe and relaxed upbringings.

"Brrrrp, Ruby has scored full marks on the lessons describing the capture of midges, beetles, moths, nestlings, fledglings and several sizes of frogs," remarked Bullpuss, "and she's doing very well with the rodents."

"Brrp," agreed Mrs Ribby, "and our dear Very Old Mistress GrandSheep always enjoys finding a present in her slippers!"

"Brrrrp, she's cracked the mouse situation," continued Bullpuss, "but she brought in an adolescent rat last week, and I had to wake Mungojerrie to deal with it!"

"Brrp, Macau, you big boys have the splendid dental canine pattern to deal with rats," smiled Ribby, "us girls cannot quite manage the correct grip and have to be wary of getting our ears nipped."

As early dawn was breaking, Ruby returned through the flap hauling an enormous rat with her.

"Mamma, quick, come and help," she squealed through teeth clenched around its neck.

Mrs Ribby nudged Bullpuss and together they went to Ruby's assistance.

The rat somehow evaded all three cats and nipped adroitly up the staircase. Loppity, hoppity, it went, scrambling past each tread.

Mrs Ribby dashed up behind it, but the rat turned at the top of the staircase, saw a grey striped feline in hot pursuit and nipped up the curtain onto the landing windowsill. It tried to hide behind the yellow money bank duck!

Ruby hopped on to the nearby chair to try to reach it. "Squeak, squeak," went Mr Rat as he scurried to and fro along the sill.

Bullpuss joined Mrs Ribby at the top of the staircase to plan their next move.

"Brrp, I think we need reinforcements, why not awaken Mungojerrie?" she suggested to Bullpuss. Bullpuss trotted off to find him.

Mr Rat took his opportunity and performed an arching acrobatic leap over the cats' heads to dash back down the stairs. Ruby turned and followed but he was too quick again and disappeared into the front room to hide behind the sofa.

In the meantime, Very Old Master GrandPig (VOMas) had heard the commotion and came to investigate. He called to Very Old Mistress GrandSheep (VOMis) and in their dressing gowns they discussed a solution. They found a large cardboard poster tube near VOMis' picture framing area in the cellar and with one end bunged and taped, placed the open end near Mr Rat's refuge.

The cats promised to alert them if Mr Rat changed his hiding place.

All went quiet for a while and Mrs Ribby and Tabitha arrived to enjoy early breakfasts.

At quarter hour intervals, VOMas carefully checked the tube for an occupant but to no avail.

The third time, as he approached, he spotted the tube rolling slightly from side to side, as Mr Rat scurried inside it. A quick grab, a glance to confirm an occupant, and the second bung was popped in place. Now where to release it? Out of view of the Ginger Nuts.

VOMis suggested the patch of overgrown wasteland at the bottom of a nearby student abode.

The PickleOdeon's Old Master saw them coming out of the house holding the long tube and thought it was a poster delivery for him!

"Brrrrp, Ruby," said Bullpuss, "you have passed all the tests with flying colours and your Mamma is very proud of you, but there's no need to capture any more rats!"

"Meup, mewp," said Ruby, "that's a rat is it? I thought it was rather heavy for a mouse!"

Rodent Relish

Or "Ruby the Rat-Catcher"

Or "The Dave RatBeck Quartet"

Surprisingly, it was a rodent free morning in Fallowfield.

Mrs Ribby was discussing the rat infestation with The Bullpuss.

"Mew, my daughter is proving too good at rat catching, Bullpuss," said Ribby, "but then we have to wake up you or Mungojerrie to dispatch them."

"Brrrp, yes rather inconvenient," smiled The Bullpuss, "and such a trial for Very Old Mistress and Very Old Master."

"Mewp, it's so funny to watch them stumbling around trying to capture lively rats in tubes and cardboard boxes," laughed Ribby.

"Mirrawacow," said Tigger, trotting over, "did you hear our people explaining how the virus lockdown has altered the rats' behaviour?"

"Rodential Chancers, the lot of them!" exclaimed Mungojerrie.

"That's right," said Ribby, "all the city centre offices and shops are closed, so the rats have packed their bags and relocated to the suburbs, bringing their smelly habits with them."

"Brrrp, and learning to avoid traps, becoming resistant to poisons and continuing to increase their families with every paw-step they take," said The Bullpuss.

"Mirrawacau, the authorities are desperate to know how to control the rapidly expanding populations," said Tigger.

The Bullpuss smiled, obviously contemplating a special cat plan.

"You know how in the old days, bow-wows were specifically bred to become rat-catchers? The Jack Russells and other small beefy terriers," he said.

"But these days," objected Mrs Ribby, "too many of the small dogs are overbred and suffer medical problems preventing former activities."

"Macow, can you imagine a couple of fat, wheezy Pugs popped into a rat pit?" laughed Tigger, "the rats would make minced pug out of them."

Mrs Ribby, with her rescued alley-cat experience and streetwise knowledge was considering the implications.

"Part of the problem," she explained, "is that D.O.G.s have evolved their pack instinct, whereas us felines tend mainly, apart from our dear female lion cousins, to work alone. If only we could devise a method of working together, you know, helping each other to herd rats towards wherever The Bullpuss or Mungojerrie were hiding, ready for action!"

Everyone thought this was brilliant.

"My idea is," continued Ribby, "that a team of girl cats locate, disrupt and chase out the rats from their hiding lairs."

Ruby joined the discussion. "We'll need to devise a positional plan, whereby the chaser cats can push the rats in a particular direction towards where the larger boy cats are."

Ribby continued, "we need a signal from the chaser to alert the nearby girls to take up positions on either side of the drive."

"This will alert the large boy cats to hide and prepare themselves in the target area," said Ruby.

"We'd love to help," said Moppet, "but Tabitha and I are rather elderly and too slow on our paws. We shall prepare sustaining snacks and refreshments, and be ready to attend to any injuries, bites and scratches that occur."

"From our friends in the neighbourhood there should be a good selection of young, fit, lithe girl cats," said Tigger, "but the problem will be that Mungojerrie and The Bullpuss will have difficulty dealing with the numbers of rats captured. We'll need recruits from the big beefy world of the Rusholme and Moss Side Tom Cats and Brass Cats."

"Exactly," said Ribby, "and I have a list of potential candidates."

"Tigger and I are too elderly to join in properly with the boys' team," commented Simpkin, "so I suggest that we take up control positions on tree branches and the tops of walls, to hopefully direct operations and generally encourage events."

Tigger poked a paw into his brother's side, "a good idea, but you must promise not to fall asleep on sentry duty! Or you'll end up tumbling into the pond again."

"I hope your Tom Cat acquaintances don't think they can stop to eat any rodents," said Tabitha, "so I suggest we ask Tigger's friend, Old HedgeDog to organise a team of relatives with tumbrels."

"And arrange a decent, respectable burial for the deceased rodents," said Simpkin, "it's the least we can do."

"Mew, mew, I do hope there are not too many casualties. I expect word will get back to the latest King Rat," said Moppet, "and perhaps he will advise his people to leave our area to avoid further troubles."

Over the next few days, messages were sent out by the Postmen Robins to potential candidates for the boys' team.

Tabitha and Ribby approached certain good friends in the neighbourhood to ensure the girls team had back up members.

A special invitation was sent to the two Jack Russell terriers, Bowser and Wowser, who were good friends of Bobby Bunny.

They responded immediately saying they were honoured to get the chance to practice what they had been bred for and that they would be happy to offer advice and guidance on the inherent pack mentality of dogs.

Bowser and Wowser increased their exercise plans in readiness. Their Old Mistress ensured they had plenty of walks, especially important since they lived in an apartment. The Jack Russells soon honed their fitness and speed of response and looked forward to joining the team.

Quite quickly, applications were received from prospective interviewees. The Tom Cats of Rusholme had spread the word and were excited to have the chance to be involved.

The Bullpuss, Mrs Ribby and the Old Furry Moppet formed the interview panel.

The first candidate was the CopperPatch Puss. Mainly a white (but turning to grey with the dirt) with a few large ginger patches. He would be a delightful animal

if he had a proper home. Although not from the Rusholme gang, he was quite local to the Ginger Nuts and Mrs Ribby had taken quite a shine to him. The panel were happy to select the CopperPatch Puss.

The second applicant was Catsablanca, an old friend of Mrs Ribby and believed to be the father of Ruby and her sisters. Mrs Ribby tactfully said she would leave the consideration to Moppet and The Bullpuss but was overjoyed when they agreed that Catsablanca would join the team.

The next applicant was a rather strange looking fellow who gave his name as Arnie CatsaNeiger.

FURMINATOR



He had festooned himself with the artefacts of his imagined trade, the range and variety of which impressed The Bullpuss, and he was passed as fit for selection.

The fourth candidate was a skinny, weedy looking feline.

Applicant No. 4: "Good evening, I'm a new cat around here and I believe you're looking for members?"

Bullpuss: "Well, yes, it's for a rat-catching team."

Applicant: "Ooooh, stop messin' about, I don't like rats!"

Moppet: "Why not? We have too many."

Applicant: "Horrible furry things, with sharp teeth and long scaly tails!"

Mrs Ribby: "Yes, that's right, we need to catch them."

Applicant: "Ooooooh, stop it, you're havin' me on. I can't do that!"

The Bullpuss: "Well, what are you doing here?"

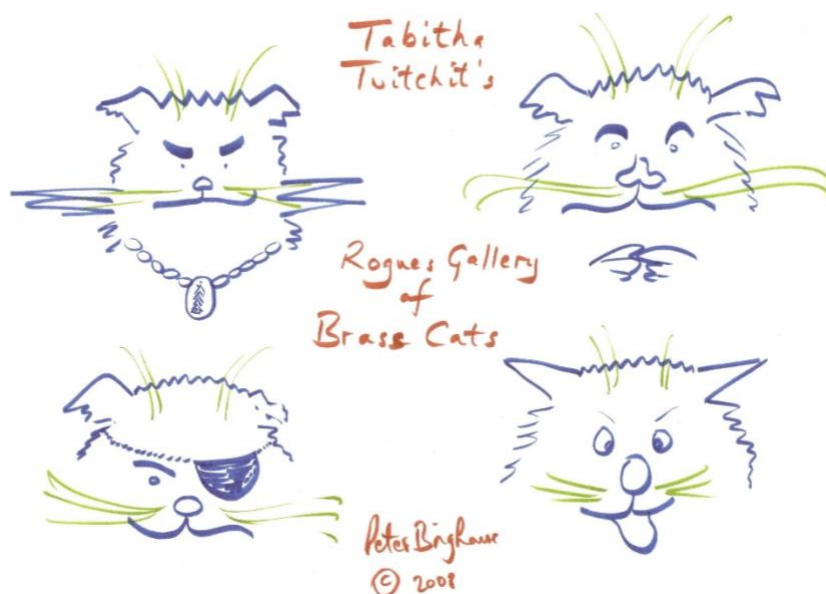
Applicant: "Ooooh, I'm sorry, nobody told me. Complete misunderstanding, I'll bid you good day!"



The fourth applicant was rejected.

There were many others and most were appointed to the team.

Moppet reckoned they would make a fine addition to her gallery of Rogues and BrassCats.



Once the teams turn up for the first day of action:

Moppet surveyed the assembled band of ill-kempt Tom Cats, who were too used to lounging on street corners waiting for fun and games.

"You know," she said, "this is just like the prides of Lions on the African savannah - us girls do all the hard work, and the boys just step in at the end to feast on the spoils!"

The Author feels that any further descriptions of the awful and awesome battles that ensued would be just too much for those of delicate nature; so please feel free, to let your imaginations run riot, a bit like the bands of rodents did!

The Tale of The CopperPatch Puss

It was a glorious, sunny early morning in Fallowfield.

"Mewp, who was that old fellow you were chatting with, Mamma?" asked Ruby the two-year-old kitten.

"Brp, he's an old friend of your father's," replied Mrs Ribby.

"Mewp, he's got very dirty white fur!" exclaimed Ruby.

"Brp, I know, he's had a hard life and has lived rough for many years."

"Mewp, what's his name?" asked Ruby.

"Brp, we call him the CopperPatch Puss," said Ribby, "on account of his three patches of bright ginger fur against the off-white background."

"Mewp, his eyes look very small, and his tail is thin," said Ruby.

"Brp, yes, he's not very well. I've shown him how to poke effectively at our cat flap. Then he can enter when all our people are asleep and finish up our old dried-up fragments of Pussypaws."

"Mewp, and perhaps a paw full of biscuits," offered Ruby.

"Brp, he's strong enough to force the cat flap back even when it's set wrongly, so he can get out when he has restored the inner cat."

"Mewp, it's all my fault that Old Mistress sets the night-time cat flap to supposedly stop me from bringing in those fascinating rats!" laughed Ruby.

"Brp, you were very silly about those," said Ribby, "you know you haven't the dentition to cope with anyone larger than a mouse!"

Later The PickleOdeon chased Mrs Ribby within her own garden.

"Brp, will you stop that!" she exclaimed.

"Miaowks, who was that old tramp cat you were speaking to?"



"Brp, someone with more compassion and a caring disposition than you, PickleOdeon!"

"Miaowks, why do you let him into your house and not me?"

"Brp, I refer you to my earlier comment!" replied Mrs Ribby.

PickleOdeon grouched and grumbled at these apposite comments and mooched off on his rounds.

Very Old Mistress and Very Old Master were discussing the cat flap arrangements.

"I heard the CopperPatch Puss enter early this morning. His long claws tapped on the wooden floors just like The Bullpuss," he said.

"I know," said Old Mistress, "he vacuums up all the girls' leftovers, but I don't think we could cope with another stray!"

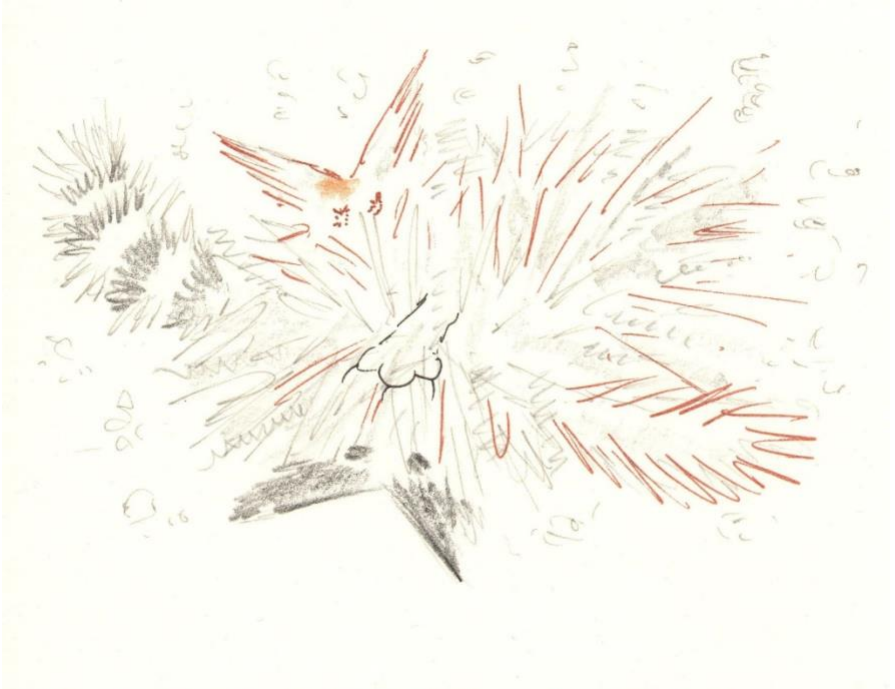
"It's fascinating how Ruby and Ribby tolerate an elderly Tom Cat but obviously treat the PickleOdeon to their disdain."

"I think you should try an illustration of CopperPatch," said Old Mistress, "and devise a short Story Card."

Later that day, PickleOdeon and CopperPatch encountered each other, to the consternation of both. They glared at each other and circled warily, weighing up the strength of the opposition.



Then, a most awful fight ensued. The dust rose above the scrapping cats as they rolled each other over time after time.



THE CAT FIGHT COPPERPATCH V. PICKLEODEON

Shortly, CopperPatch was the obvious winner. His years of streetwise training and experience held sway. PickleOdeon cowered in front of him.

CopperPatch strolled over to him.

"Mirrawaccawacca, do you know what home-truths are, PickleOdeon? Because here's a few for you. You need more tolerance, more interest in other feline's feelings and interests; stop thinking just of yourself, and brush your teeth more often!"

PickleOdeon and The Railway

Subtitle: "Fun in the Tunnel"

It was another fine day in Fallowfield. Very Old Master had constructed a clockwork garden railway for their toddling grandson.

The cats were intrigued.

It ran round the pond on elevated supports.

Very Old Master reckoned it was a nod towards the New York elevated Third Avenue line, which would match with the age of the clockwork locomotives and rolling stock he was using.

There was an intriguing tunnel as the single track line ran past the lollipop bay tree.

The track was easy to clean which was important since it had to stand up to the inclement winter weather.

The girl cats loved dressing up in their finery, to sit on the station platform waiting for the next train heading for the shops of downtown.

The boy cats loved fiddling with things, such as the points, levers and how to stop a clockwork train before it hit the buffers.

The girl cats were heard to discuss smoke box smuts and the downside of sitting in dirty carriages.

The boy cats were heard discussing the last time locomotive number 40089 came through. For some

strange reason they used train-spotters obscure and boring voices.

The PickleOdeon, as always, upset at being excluded from the Ginger Nuts jollies, had sneaked over late one evening, before he was called in, to examine the details of the garden railway.

The next afternoon, he appeared in the middle of the latest fun. He made the mistake of sitting just by the exit from the tunnel.

"I believe you've got a garden railway," he said, "it's lovely."



Suddenly a train appeared from the tunnel and whoooooomph! The PickleOdeon was launched.

The air was blue for a while and as the Ginger Nuts laughter subsided, the PickleOdeon stuck his head into the tunnel to elucidate what had happened.

Luckily Very Old Master had abandoned the timetable. The Bullpuss placed a large paw upon PickleOdeon's tail to speak to him, but unfortunately this scared him, and he squeezed his ample flanks further in, and became stuck.

Very Old Mistress hurried to the rescue, remarking, "this reminds me of the Winnie The Pooh story, where Rabbit gets stuck in a hole. Perhaps we need to starve you, PickleOdeon, until you are slim enough to be squeezed out."





To celebrate the eventual release of an affronted PickleOdeon, The Bullpuss appeared with his cat-sized double bass, The Squimps on jazz piano, and everyone joined in with a feline rendition of Duke Ellington's "Take The 'A' Train."

THE GINGER NUTS' CATSABLANCA QUARTET



The Tale of Brother Palumbus

It was another fine, late afternoon in the Lake District.

Simpkin had settled on the window seat, after a series of lunchtime feasts, and was watching a magnificent bird feeder recently installed in the holiday cottage garden.

Thanks to Tigger's Birdie Book, he and his brother were quite expert at identifying new birds that appeared on their table at home. In the Lakes, many new species were to be seen, and Simpkin called out a succession of identifying features which Tigger cross referenced in his book.

The occasional Nuthatch was seen at home, but here, they were almost as plentiful as the Titmice. Then a Siskin appeared, and the brothers sat up at the window and gazed in feline appreciation.

The cats' eyes were glazing over as they sank into an ornithological reverie. They were startled into alertness by the appearance of the fattest Wood Pigeon they had ever seen.

He was sporting the neatest dove sized flat cap, and he waddled out over the lawn beneath the feeder and began to Hoover up the spare seed and nut particles dropped by the small birds.

Tigger and Simpkin grinned in cat fashion at each other and made a dash for the cat flap. They used the cover in the herbaceous borders on each side of the lawn to sneak nearer and nearer to what they thought was an unsuspecting pigeon.

"Cooo, cooo, Pussycats, I can see you! And I ain't budgin' an inch!" remarked the pigeon, glancing back over each shoulder.

Tigger and Simpkin raised cat eyebrows at each other and strolled out from cover.

"Cooo, coo, the name's Brother Palumbus, a fully paid-up member of the Guild of Seed Nibblers and Peanut Gobblers, and I don't give ground to felines!"



The cats were speechless, never having experienced such audacity from a feathered fellow, and came over to sit next to him.

"Mirrawacow!" said Tigger eventually, "did you mention the Guild of " and he lapsed into cat mumbling.

"Cooo, that's right mate," replied the pigeon, "as is affiliated to the Union of Fat Ball Wreckers and Allied Trades.



"I've got a job of work to do 'ere, and I knocks off in half an hour."

"Meeoup, do you Wood Pigeons always clear up after the smaller birds?" asked Simpkin.

"Cooo, yersss," replied Brother Palumbus, "there's one of us allocated to each bird table location. The Robins keep us informed when new ones appear, and when the quieter ones fall into disrepair, we allocate one of the elder brethren."

Suddenly, a fracas began overhead. A pair of Jackdaws and an indignant Great Spotted Woodpecker landed simultaneously on the feeders and started squabbling over who had arrived first. Peanuts, sunflower seeds, husks and grains began showering the cats and pigeon.

"Cooo, coop, oi you lot!" called Brother Palumbus, "I thought I'd finished cleaning up down here and your antics have ruined everything. Clear orf yer varmint!" The Jackdaws leaned over, performing Corvid acrobatics, and shouted rude caws down at Brother Palumbus. The Woodpecker seized the moment and

sprang over to the Jackdaws' feeder to pinch some of the food there.

Then, as quickly as they came, they disappeared, and all fell quiet.

"Coo, coo, Brethren Felines, I needs to clock off," said Palumbus, "I'll finish this lot off in the morning. It's always nice to meet fine feline fellows of a convivial disposition. I wears a collar and tie, Brethren Felines, just in case you was wondrin', 'cos shortly I'm invited to address a meeting of the Doves and Pigeons Racing Fraternity and so I'll bid you good-night"
And with that, he flew off into the dusk.

"Mirrawacow!" exclaimed Tigger.



Link details for Louisa's Ginger Nuts Cat Books

We have online shops in various places, all of which should be searchable from Google or your favourite search engine.

You can use my name, Peter Brighthouse

Squimps
MrSquimpsShop

and hopefully find stuff to browse on

eBay
Amazon
Zazzle
ArtPal
Fine Art America

The "stuff" includes greetings cards, books, prints, originals together with fascinating collections of diecast toys and model trains, including Matchbox Lesney, Dinky, Corgi, Hornby, Lima, Bachmann, Wrenn and occasionally "Charlie Bears"

Earlier Books by Tigger & Simpkin's Old Master:



THE GINGER NUTS' CATSABLANCA QUARTET



Plus five to fifteen, and of course, there are more.

Story Cards Collection

Short
illustrated
cat tale.
Printed on
quality inkjet
greeting
card stock.
Supplied
with white
envelope
sealed in
cello bag.

Bulpuss At The Beach



Bulpuss loved a trip to the seaside. His people always hired a beach hut and their friends had hired the adjoining one. The children found there was just enough room to create a cat sized beach hut specially for Bulpuss.



Slightly
longer cat
tales have
illustrations
on inkjet
card stock
and a paper
insertion
with the
story stapled
inside.

Bulpuss Dresses Up



Bulpuss had always admired Squipps' uncanny ability to dive into the children's dressing up box and emerge with a fascinating cat sized garment. The children loved to help with ensuring that the garment was fitted neatly around the cat with no trailing bits which may have caused problems going outside through the cat flap. Squipps once spent most of a day trotting round in his Action Cat outfit, which, it must be admitted, had been designed and



Cats To The Rescue



Bulpuss, Mangymane and Wild Bill first heard from their old friend Clavet, that Lynne Regis was suffering and enduring another plague of noxious seagulls. Nearly every time that Clavet returned from an evening saunter around the town, his Old Man was had to wipe disgusting blobs and smears from his fur. His Old Master had spotted that several of the gull perching themselves, nestled upon their property, had loomed themselves, perhaps under attack from strong yellow beaks. Clavet reckoned, that under his guidance, his agile friends could assemble up the roof, locate the damaged sections and replace them.

Bulpuss decided that he would act as fireman for the gang of action cats, since this would allow him to wear his favourite overalls. He would direct operations from ground level, positioning ladders in the safer positions, putting up harness and nails, and each piece of the plastic strips with their long slender spikes.

Mungo, using his extra long tail to maintain balance, in a manner perfected by ghibbons, would operate in the most precarious of positions.

Wild Bill, an expert at scrambling through the heartbeats of the Scottish glens, would traverse the roof tiles and act as the

THE GINGER NUTS' CATSABLANCA QUARTET

Story Cards Collection

Le Chat d'Irène Marisse



Once, many, many years ago, there was a cat called Tommarbar, an ancestor of the Bull Terrier. He lived in France with his very old Master, Henri Matisse, in the quiet district of Clichy near Paris as the French Elder. He was very fond of his Old Master, who was a famous painter. Unfortunately his Old Master had suffered a serious illness and found it difficult to get around, but this did not stop his Old Master from going out and he had a number of close friends who assisted him in completing his commissions.

Cats Go Interplanetary - SpaceLynx



Story Cards Collection

Ginger Nut Pull A Leg



“Of course you’d find out the ‘best’ feeling only after you’d tried it, particularly since it felt so good it was hard to stop with a bad one.”

“To figure that, I guess the way, through the melody, keeping the story as simple as the song, since living it is to feel it after the fact. The musical needs to tell you how you feel, to be something you can’t think yourself out of, but feeling is measured by how it fits in with the other senses and the other parts of the body and even how it relates you.”

“I guess that’s why songs and folk songs seem to my father and to me like poems and their words, sometimes like the story of something and feeling.”

“Yes, because, and not following the old common way,”

Tigress, The Cat Jester

[illegible]

Mungo Takes The 'A' Train

[illegible]

Story of Nefertiti's Call

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[illegible]

Tabitha's Mouse Creche



"Where's where's a T-shirt this morning?" asked Bulbman.

"Where? That's in the garden running her mouse catches," answered Mungomire from the comfort of his favourite (but velvet) chair.

"Where, how does that work?" asked Iggyrene, walking into the room.



Story Cards Collection

The Story of Tiger Hare - SuperCat



One of Mungojerrie's and Bulpurr's special friends, who lived quite some distance from the Ginger Nuts domain, was a lithe, wiry, streetwise, black and grey, striped cat called Tiger Hare.

His Old Mistress was Aurdie Suzie Rabbit, who

All four sides are printed on, plus a small box for the buyer to write their "To ... From ..." message. The longer eight side stories follow a similar format.

We welcome wholesale enquiries, and are happy to send a number of complete cards for your evaluation.

Vulpo and Old Speckled Henry



My dear Old Speckled Henry,

I thought you may like to hear about the time my old cat friend Bulpurr, was in serious trouble with the Holgerme police. Something about a missing cat personage. you'll know how these things happen!

A court was convened and soon went out that a jury would be required; naturally I kept my verminous ears on full alert. Trust decisions were propped and quite a number of fellows stepped forward.



"The Story Card Collection"

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