

THREE CATS COLLAPSE

upon the seafoam
surf of the quilt, floating
after lunch without a
map or compass,
sailing the long yawn
of the afternoon into
the evening, curled
against one another
like ebony cupcakes,
while lawnmowers chant,
crows hold a prayer
meeting in the grass,
and the neighbor's dog
yaps his pleasure to
mourning doves dangling
from the roof, while
the cats continue to bob
like three rowboats at
eventide, as if they knew
their destination, as if
a peaceful journey
in life is simply a matter
of drifting silently,
side by side, with all
that is divine.

THIS ISN'T A POEM

about the black bear
that roams New Jersey
neighborhoods with her
cubs in the summer-
time, splashing across
backyard swimming
pools like three ebony
satellites and climbing
porch railings as easily
as evergreens, but it
could be. Instead,
it is Tuesday, and my
energetic cat rolls on
the floor, wrestling with
a gym sock, wrapping
it around her head,
stopping at last to nap
on her back, the sock
an ivory veil covering
her face, convincing the
dark lake of her stocky
body that it is as fully
hidden as if she were
a black bear wintering
in the dimmest cave.

HEAVY RAIN

sweeps the kohl sky with its white
bristled broom, trembling the oleander,
quaking its lemon blooms, chasing
us from the garden to the front porch,
as lightning scorches the clouds.
Grasshoppers cling to wooden railings
like early peas, while thunder plows
cavernous furrows above our heads,
the cats scampering through the
hallway, burrowing beneath the bed.
When the storm passes, my youngest
cat is the last to emerge on shivered
legs, grateful for the crimson spray
of setting sun; for squirrels skittering
across the roof; for the gilded dance
of the pinewoods bellowing its brand
of poetic verse, as if it were the
mystical glue binding the spirit to
the soul, this wild mantra scribbling
the sky every day with the leafy
language of twig, beak, and wing.

PANSY

Beneath the bowing
branch of an oak, she
creeps only five feet
away today, her eyes
round as platters,
cautious, but no longer
afraid, as I fill the bowls
nestled among lichens
and crabgrass. I have
decided to name her
Pansy, the latest flower
from the pinewoods to
sparkle in my wild feline
garden. The delicately
striped petals of her face,
the leopard-spotted coat,
her opal paws, the way
she folds her petite tail
as neatly as a satin sash,
waiting patiently for
breakfast: such beauty
and sweetness in a stray
kitten should be rewarded
with the cherished name
of an elegant blossom.
And I can see in her blue-
bell eyes and muted cries
that she has given me
a new name too: Our
Lady of the Cat Food.

We hope you have enjoyed these sample poems from the book *The Year of the Cat*, by Laura Stamps.

Nominated for the Pulitzer Prize, this beautiful book by award-winning poet and novelist Laura Stamps features 59 new poems sure to delight any cat-lover. Written for readers of all faiths, this mystical collection of cat poems is the perfect gift for anyone blessed by housecats or strays. The book contains three sections: “Cat Pause” (poems with housecats), “The Stray Kitten Chronicles” (poems about stray cats), and “The Year of the Cat” (a long poem, which first appeared in the prestigious literary journal *Poetry Midwest*).

The Year of the Cat is available in paperback for \$12.95. You can purchase the book from our website or from www.amazon.com. You may also purchase the book from your local bookstore. If your bookstore does not carry the book ask them to order the book. Bookstores can order the book directly from us or from our distributor, Baker & Taylor.

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