



TALES OF
LOVECRAFTIAN CATS



FOUR NEW HORROR STORIES
OF CATS, DONE IN THE STYLE
AND MYTHOS OF H.P. LOVECRAFT

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By William Baldwin and David Haden.
Being the first ever English novel (1584).
A gothic horror story of talking cats,
freely adapted and modernised
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SAMPLE

ONLY

Tales of Lovecraftian Cats

Being old and obscure fantastical works on cats, adapted for the modern reader by David Haden in the style and mythos of the author H.P. Lovecraft.

BEWARE THE CAT

by William Baldwin and David Haden.

Being the first ever English novel (1584), a gothic horror story of cats written by William Baldwin of London – here freely translated, adapted, modernised, and made Lovecraftian in tone and manner by David Haden, for the compleat enjoyment of the modern reader.

Originally written in 1552, and first published in London in 1561, then in 1570/1 and again in 1584.

For my sanity I have penned the tale Mr Gregory Streamer told me last Christmas holiday, and which my physician asks to have reported as if told by Mr Streamer himself. I am unable to pen or speak of it so firmly and learnedly as he did. Yet I have tried to keep both the order and the very words as he spoke them. I have decided to set down his words in several parts, and have used such scribbled notes as my asylum keepers have allowed me to make during the last months. I doubt whether Mr Streamer will be content that other men have set pen to the dreadful things he spoke of -- therefore I will let you learn his mind from this text. In the meanwhile I beseech you to accept my good will, and learn to beware.

1

It chanced that at Christmas last I was lodged at the New London University with Ferrers, who was helping the masters to prepare a student theatre for the New Year. We spent much time discussing the type of play needed, in anticipation of the return of the bulk of the student body. We were soon busy devising and suggesting lines, among many other theatrical exercises. We returned nightly to our lodgings to talk of sundry things. For the purpose of pursuing the conversation, it pleased Ferrers to make me his bedfellow. I soon found I was not alone. The next night he threw down two old mattresses to lodge Mr. Willot the astronomer, and Mr. Gregory Streamer the casual scholar of ancient literature. Our talks often went on past midnight, and on many nights our conversation wandered toward strange and nebulous realms of lore and speculation.

It happened that on one particular night -- which I think was the twenty-eighth of December 1798 -- Ferrers stamped up the icy wooden steps from the University buildings, and clambered into bed as usual. There then developed a controversy between Streamer -- who with Willot had already slept their first sleep of the night -- and Ferrers. The controversy was: whether cats and certain birds had reason, and the cause of the talk was this. I had heard that the Players were to learn an ancient play of Aesop's "Crow", in which most actors were birds. I said it was not comical to make speechless things speak, or brutish things to communicate reasonably. In a fictional story it might be agreeable, but to bring them on stage to be *seen* to speak, to

do, to reason? It was just not seemly. Streamer, being far more learned in literature than I was then aware of, would not agree. He was sure that that cats and birds such as crows have reason, and as much or more than men do. Ferrers the astronomer was woken up by our heated talk and listened to us, but would take no-one's side. He grunted when Streamer gave for his proof some talk of elephants in the far mountains of India that walked upon hempen vine-mats across rivers, and that hedgehogs always knew what weather would come.

Streamer then said also that foxes and dogs, after they had been all night abroad killing geese and savaging sheep, would come home in the morning and put their necks into their collars. Parrots bewailed their keepers' death. Swallows opened their young ones' eyes with Eglantine flowers, and a hundred things more -- all of which I denied come from reason. I put these actions down to instinctive nature, and as proof used the authorities of grandest and most learned natural philosophers. "Well" said Streamer, "I know what I know, and for once I have proven certain matters to my own satisfaction". I gasped and asked if he had real *proof* of the reason of cats and birds? Yes, he replied. He had heard them once, as well I could hear him then in that bedroom -- and could still, in certain places and under certain moons, understand much of both their speech and reasoning.

At this I was silent, and Ferrers laughed. I almost laughed too. But I remembered what glimpses of marvels I had read of once in the works of an obscure medieval Hebrew philosopher who had laboured in a great library as a slave of the Arabs, and I thought of all the things that I and that our great new works of natural philosophy did not yet

know. So I pressed Streamer -- what cats or birds he had heard, and where and when? At this he paused awhile, and then at last said: "If I thought you could be content to hear me, and without *any* interruption until I have finished: then I will tell you such a story. Just one piece of my own experimenting, such as should make the world wonder and put you out of doubt concerning this matter. But first I promise you this -- as soon as any man's curiosity interrupts me, I will leave this room and never speak to any of you again."

We promised to hear him out. He turned on his bed so that we might best hear him, and he spoke the following account.

2

I often lodged at a friends' house, which had roomy Chambers within but which was ugly and garish without. It stood at the Saint Martin's Lane end of the city, and hung precariously upon the old crumbling town wall now called Alders Gate -- which the ancient men of the City had built, in the manner they had build Bishops Gate, of never-rotting Alder trees, which then grew plentifully in the marshy gardens round about. Those misty common gardens became bare of trees and well-grazed, but Alder saplings became strangely abundantly around where the gate was built. Alders Gate is of course the most ancient gate of the City of London, and its uses lend a pungent rotten smell to certain crooked streets that far run beyond its dark arches.

I lodged many times at my friend's house, and for sundry reasons. Sometime for lack of other lodging, and sometime while awaiting a

printing of certain pamphlets, to quickly see what of my latest tract needed correction or what was new on the public sale table. And to my shame I was like all young English men -- I had little skill with other tongues or foreign manners. Thus I also took there -- in the decrepit yard beneath that crumbling wall -- lessons in a little Latin, and how to handle a French racket and a pair of six-square bowls, feeling that thus I should more quickly obtain a good living by friendly favours and a semblance of learning, rather than by becoming the most learned scholar in the whole City. What a young fool I was.

There is a pleasant chamber hard by this Printing House, with a fair and bright bay-window that opens onto the garden. Beyond the garden is a pleasant high view over the smoke and steeples of London. But at the other end of the Printing House there is a queer little side-door and a short path running to the Leads of the Gate, a dark and wide mossy place where the quartered bodies of loathsome and abominable villains are left to stink and hang from tall poles for the sport of the crows. I call it abominable because it is against nature -- after the sun goes down, all that were hanged or otherwise put to death should be buried, lest the sun touch their skin the next day. It is a pity that men have not learned this, for in my studies I have read of old demonic old things with half-remembered names such as Misanthropi or Molochitus. They feed upon a man's blood after they have been butchered and left by heathen tyrants. All men should bury or burn all executed bodies, and refrain from making such abominable sacrifices and spectacles.

That was why, every bright moonlit night, many cats of all kinds assembled at the Leads of the Gate. These cats made such a noise that I could not sleep for their wailing.

... read more in the full book.

HOW THE GRIMMALKIN CAME

by Padraic Colum, re-written and adapted by David Haden

2

The next day Randolph Carter walked far and came to wide beaches and places where he saw no man nor woman nor living creature in all the land around. But coming back he saw a bird of prey sailing in the air above. He walked on and the bird sailed above, never rising high in the air, and never swooping down. Then one far feather from it fell before him. He picked the feather up. It was a blue feather. Then Carter thought of Fidelimi's bird—of the blue bird that flew above them when they rode across the hazy Meadows of Brightness in the Land of Mist. Perhaps up there in the wild blue there was some way back to the Land of Mist. But the bird was not to be seen now.

That evening he stood with Art who was watching the fishing boats slide in from far deep waters. And Art after a while said, "I should tell you more about the how the Grimmalkin came into the Land of Dreams"—

The Grimmalkin waited on the branch of the tree until the moon was in the sky—and she called out certain words and yet still no cat came to do her abeyance and service, not even from far Ulthar. She was vexed, I tell you, at the want of respect shown her.

... read more in the full book.

THE SENDING

*A Lovecraftian adaptation from a story by Rudyard Kipling, by
David Haden.*

It was in the year 1901 on the fetid docks of New York, when a childish set of pranks began a vague new religion. Broken teacups, a missing brooch or two, a hair brush, were hidden in dark yards or stuffed into holes in the harbor walls. Then amid the hoots of the great harbor whistles some old women on the dockside were regaled with tales of invented gods, and the crude incantations of these gods were then used to “find” or “mend” their hidden things.

At that time the credulous mongrel population of the shoreline streets were growing and spreading into Red Hook, and they readily acclaimed the new gods -- alongside the babel of a thousand other creeds. The new religion never seemed to get much beyond its first organized manifestations; yet even today, on the worn steps of old houses in hot summers, the street priests of other religions sometimes sneer at youths and old women who shiver and softly sing strange half-remembered dirges to those unworthy gods. And some old people still call on one particular astrologer who visits a shabby basement flat, when they find that small valuable things have gone missing.

This religion had quickly become too much of a hybrid thing for ordinary use. Its few originators, mostly unschooled and greedy, had embraced pieces of everything. It stole from Freemasonry; looted the Rosicrucians of half their pet words; took any hoary fragments of Egyptian philosophy that it found mentioned in the encyclopaedias; took up the con-tricks of Spiritualism, palmistry, fortune-telling by cards, hot chestnuts, double-kernelled nuts and tallow droppings. Voodoo and Oboe and darker necromancies it warily omitted, happy to hear only rumors of terrible rites brought by sailors to fetid dens under the creaking wharfs of New York.

When this religion was cobbled together, with all the machinery set and the subscriptions and obligations complete, Dana Da came from nowhere, with nothing in his hands and no ancestry to his name, and wrote a chapter in the history of New York which has hitherto been unpublished. His name was strange and unknown in the languages of the local Kurds, Armenians, Levantines, and Syrians, and would have been unknown to any ethnologists at the universities had they bothered to take any note of this wild eyed new prophet. Nor did the Negro sailors know of where such a name might originate. He was simply Dana Da, and declined to give further information. He might have been the head of some ancient order, only now emerging from the darkness of centuries. Some people said that he was; but Dana Da smiled and denied any connection with such cults; explaining that he was an “independent experimenter.”

As I have said, he came from nowhere, and studied the newly invented creed for three weeks; sitting at the feet of those best

competent to explain its dubious mysteries. He supped from their soup kitchen with the others, and was friendly enough. Then one day he laughed aloud and went away, but the laugh might have been either of joyful devotion or derision.

When he returned he was without money, but his pride was unabated. He declared that he knew more about the things in the stars and under the earth than those who taught him. And for this he was thrown bodily out of the makeshift dance-hall temple which served the new religion as a meeting place.

His next appearance in public life was at a large and squalid lodging house in the Red Hook section of Brooklyn, and he was telling fortunes with the help of three lead dice, a very dirty old cloth bag, and a little tin box of opium pills. He told better fortunes when he was allowed a slug from a bottle of sailor's rum; but the things which he invented on the opium were quite worth the money. He was in reduced circumstances.

Among other people's fortunes, he told the fortune of the learned scholar Robert Suydam, a youngish man who still managed to keep up his old family mansion near Martense Street in Flatbush. Suydam was of a respectable Dutch family, and had inherited some small independent means which allowed him to take an interest in all manner of immigrant folk customs and the strange lore of older worlds.

... read more in the full book.

THE CASE OF THE SAVAGE CAT

*Being three stories by Bram Stoker, Allan McLane Hamilton,
and Algernon Blackwood — rewritten, re-combined and adapted
by David Haden.*

1

Dr. Robert Suydam was regarded by his German acquaintances as an eccentric—because he was an American with independent income by birth, and because he was by choice a scholar. That a man of independent means should devote his time to dusty papers and obscure mysteries—this passed the comprehension of peasants and playboys alike. And then after a few moments more of acquaintance, his dark hints and obscure words quickly irritated them, so they left him to his own devices.

He did however set himself up in Nuremberg as a “Psychic Doctor”, giving advice to the confused and mystical, simply in order to earn enough spare income to afford the most expensive and arcane books that only the most furtive book dealers of Northern Europe could supply him with. His sufficient but simple income would not reach to

the purchase of rare tomes—books such as the *Animalium Mythosium*, *The Fixed Stars*, and *Marvells of Science*.

What precisely his training had been, or where undergone, none in Germany seemed to know. But the mood of the times and the nation was then in favour of strange and often charlatan pseudo-scientific investigations of “the mind”. There was a Mr Freud in nearby Vienna, for instance, whose newly-published *The Interpretation of Dreams* was obviously the work of a categorical quack. Yet no-one ever thought of calling Suydam “quack”, for he spoke with great seriousness of his strange quest and attainments, and was learned in many matters.

Of dusty Spiritualist nonsense preached to old maids and the confused fertility customs of the German peasantry he now had very little tolerance. “It leads nowhere, and after a hundred years will lead nowhere. It is playing with the wrong end of a rather dangerous toy,” he had once explained in a café to a startled young visitor from London. Yet he knew that sometimes such matters were convenient and easily understood cloaks, which hid deeper and more unknowable horrors.

Suydam was then in the prime of his life, but although his eyes shone with the light of knowledge and self-confidence, yet there was also now a touch of the fear of the type sometimes seen in the eyes of animals. A close beard concealed the mouth without disguising the grim determination of lips and jaw—yet few could have guessed the strength of purpose that now burned within him like a great flame. He lusted for knowledge of the most obscure kind.

... read more in the full book.

It seemed suddenly that there were many cats in that room. Softly moving on to chairs and tables, passing like shadows to a fro from the end of the room, all black as coal, with brilliant green eyes flashing fire in all directions. It was like the reflections from a score of mirrors placed at different angles. Nor could he make out why the size of the room seemed to have altered, grown much larger, and why it extended away behind him where ordinarily the wall should have been; the ceiling seemed to have raised itself so much higher than before, and much of the furniture had changed in appearance and shifted back to merge with planes from unspeakable dimensions.

It was as though the little room had become merged and transformed into the dimensions of quite another chamber, one that came to him as a sort of fever dream of incarnate darkness. He had made a half movement forward when a veil that was denser than mere fog seemed to drop down over the scene, draping room, walls, animal and fire in a mist of darkness and folding also about his own mind. Other forms moved silently across the field of vision, forms that he recognized from previous experiments, and welcomed not. Wild thoughts began to crowd into his brain, sinister suggestions of evil presented themselves seductively. Ice seemed to settle about his heart, and his mind trembled. He began to lose memory—memory of his identity, of where he was, of what he ought to do. The very foundations of his strength were shaken. His will, powerful though it was, seemed paralysed.

The dimensions of the place altered and shifted again. He was in a much larger space, and all about him the things flew busily to and fro, silently playing their tearing, rushing game of evil, weaving the pattern of their dark purpose upon the floor. If there was a floor. Suydam strove hard to collect himself then, and remember some words of shielding power he had made use of before in similar dread; but he could recall nothing consecutively; a mist lay over his mind and memory; he felt dazed and his forces scattered.

He was caught momentarily in the same vortex that had sought to lure the cat to destruction through its delight. He had stepped into another region where floats all the wastes and drifts of other dimensions, a limbo populated by the shells of abominations that are gibberingly mad, yet maddeningly seductive.

And then quite suddenly, there slowly rose up the thing, and it permitted itself to be half-seen among the smoke. It seemed at once a furry wreck of a vast dark slime-mold, and yet was also a kind of frozen glistening fire. And there was no reasoning with—for it had no reason, only the power of an evil creeping seduction.

... read more in the full book.

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