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## **Zoo Doings**

### **Détente, or Something Like It**

The chatter 'round the coffeepot  
Is that the cats and dogs have got  
Together, and with birds as well,  
In peace and harmony to dwell—  
A fine occurrence, one might think  
While sipping at one's morning drink—  
Except if one is paranoid,  
And fears that kitty, pup, and boid  
Are in collusion, plotting doom  
For others in the coffee room.

### **A Doggy Whiff of Happiness**

While all you two-legs types are mired  
And wallowing in wintry fear,  
I see spring's hints and am inspired  
To smell the happiness from here  
What gain or merit mankind finds  
In only frigid, dormant joy,  
When you could wag those sad behinds,  
Dance forward, every girl and boy—  
Hold on to sorrow if you must,  
While I lap up those thrills made dear  
By breaking through the frozen dust:  
I smell the happiness from here!

### **King Chameleon**

We spend our time gazing at each other at the zoo,  
he and I, across the glass partition.

I am only human (this much I claim) and he  
is a sort of benign sovereign here.

He contemplates me, his science project,  
from where he lounges, stiffly hugging a limb,

armor-plated in his natural green birthday suit.

I admire his tail, which he keeps  
coiled into a tight spring, and his  
flat, sewn-on button eyes that stare at me.

He smiles the inscrutable pointy smile  
of an Etruscan tomb-god, unblinking,  
so I cannot help but wonder  
how I look to him.

### **One Lovely Afternoon**

Basil Bunny went to town  
Dressed in her finest furry gown  
To go into the little shops  
And buy some dainty carrot-tops,  
She met two cats along the way,  
One quite aloof, one wont to stray  
Along the path where Basil trod—  
So two then gave a friendly nod  
Of fare-thee-well to Mercer Cat,  
Who coolly tipped his black silk hat  
And on they toddled, arm in arm,  
Miss Basil with her bunny charm,  
Miss Ruffian in tortoise fur  
(A style quite flattering to her  
More Rubenesque, curvaceous form)  
They strolled to town along the warm  
And sunny path in happy thought,  
Came to the shops, and there they bought  
Both carrot tops and carrot cake,  
For what could nicer eating make  
Than a high tea between two friends?  
And so, before this story ends,  
I'll say they dined, and that was that  
For bunny dear and darling cat.

### **Flee, Flies! Fly, Fleas!**

Those pestilential bugs that pry  
Into my nose, my ear, or my  
Ice cream are bound to get a swat  
With every ounce of speed I've got,  
And, loudly cursing, I will give  
Them every reason not to live

Because they irk me when they teem  
On nose and ear and in ice cream.

### **Snack Sneaker**

Dry toast, water and blackberry jam,  
No one's more careful of fat than I am—  
So how can it be that my innocent tabby  
Is slung on my lap all a-blubber, all flabby—  
Unless I admit to myself and my cat  
Her between-meal breath stinks—say—

Do I smell a rat?

### **Cat + Mouse**

"Why must you be so difficult?"  
Sighed Willard to Florene,  
"I wish you'd just accept my love—  
Why must you be so mean?"  
Florene sighed, too, and plaintively  
She blinked her teary eyes,  
"I've tried to tell you, Willard, dear,  
That you don't realize  
How it appears to other folks  
That you and I should pair,  
But we have got to face the fact  
That our mixed-race affair  
Still raises eyebrows everywhere."  
This piece of truth still stung,  
But though Florene was clear with him,  
Willard still blindly clung.  
She bit her lip and gazed awhile  
Upon her lover's face,  
But saw he was still mystified  
At his reprov'd embrace,  
So, slowly, she stepped back inside  
Her house and shut the door,  
And Willard knew his blandishments  
Would further him no more.  
Florene still pines for Willard,  
Just as he for her, but nice  
As their dreams were, folks don't accept  
True love 'twixt cats and mice.

### **Short Term Shelter**

Under the porches of the house,  
amid the floor joists, posts and beams,  
cobwebs and dust, dead mice and dreams,  
there is a corner one last mouse  
still nests in, where a little light  
leaks underneath the latticed edge  
that skirts the porches, where the hedge  
holds lots of insects that by night  
fill up his little rodent sides  
and round his belly with their crunch;  
this nest of his, I have a hunch,  
will soon *not* be where he resides,  
because, although he's now grown fat,  
it's been discovered by the cat.

### **Shore Enough**

I am too smart for you by half; you think *you're* bright? Don't make me laugh!  
You think me infantile and boisterous, but cannot crack an oyster  
With no knife? Ha! Silly chums: no fingers, no opposing thumbs,  
And yet, I've dined on oysters thrice before you've opened one. How nice  
That you consider yourselves wise to have your thoughts and synthesize  
Them into action, yet still fail to see that mine makes yours seem pale,  
When you consider that you've got advantages that I have not,  
And still I'm able, while you strive and strain to merely keep alive,  
To caw this jeering little poem at you from this, my beachfront home.

### **Crowing**

Let me never be so craven as to be hubristic, crass,  
Boastful as my cousin Raven, who (though he's a silly ass)  
Calls himself the Wise, the Clever, poses as a sage and wit—  
I should hope that I would never be so wildly full of it—  
All my fellows know my talents and my intellect and skill  
Well enough that, on the balance, bragging would be overkill.  
I prefer a steady diet of humility and style,  
Being modest, cool, and quiet, and yet brilliant all the while.  
Nah! Just kidding! I'm as happy as ol' Raven is to brag;  
I'm as boisterous a chappie, yelling out from crag to crag,  
Tree to tree, tunnel to tower; I'll announce my greatness, too;  
Any reason, any hour, tell you I'm better than you!  
Don't assume because I'm smaller I'm less dazzling or less proud—  
I'll be glad to give a holler, shout my excellence out loud!

### **The Bird Gets the Last Word**

You stay down there, and I'll just sit

Up on my perch, whistle and chirp  
And warble 'til you throw a fit  
Because I'm being such a twerp—  
I'll flap and flutter, cheep and caw  
And drive you right out of your tree  
Until you want to break the law  
And take a shot or two at me—  
But I, no matter how you squirm,  
Won't quit my pestering; so far,  
I'm winning, you poor lowly worm,  
And soon I'll also strafe your car.

**Whistle a Happy Tune  
While Sitting in  
the Catbird Seat**

About six million starlings  
Roosting on the overpass  
May pass the evening pleasantly  
By dumping on the grass  
While singing chirpy little tunes  
Of evening's charming cheer,  
But just remember their first task  
If you should drive too near.  
Their cat companions lie in wait,  
Meanwhile, beneath your couch;  
When you come home, they like to roam  
Right in your path, then crouch,  
Paws up, complaining with a scream  
If you should chance to trip  
Upon their fine reclining place;  
They'll fly right off to rip  
That couch to ribbons, smithereens,  
On this remote pretext,  
And if you scold or turn them cold,  
They'll turn and rip you next.

**My Preference, by a Hare**

Next to a soft warm rabbit, I  
Love naught so much as a broad bright sky  
A picnic under a chestnut tree  
A bunch of kids in a spelling bee  
A crazy quilt on a big deep bed  
Sweet summer breeze playing 'round my head  
Cashmere and silk, or a good night's rest,

But in truth, I still love bunnies best.

### **Murderous Mack**

I prowl the alley on dark nights, looking for trouble spots and fights  
And hissing, spitting, yowling, loud, my claws and fangs splitting the crowd,  
So don't be fooled if I look fine: wildfire is in my feline line—  
My zoot suit is as cool as ice; my blood, though? Hot, not cool; not nice—  
I'm fast, I'm fine, the cat that has searchlights for eyes, wild stripes for jazz,  
A heart of iron, soul of steel, and toughness that's dead deep, for real—  
I'm fuzzy, but I warn you that I ain't no prissy pussycat;  
I'm lean and mean; I'm slick and sleek. But sweet? I'll kick you to next week!  
Get me riled up, it won't be pretty—Bad Cat, yeah, but *never* Kitty—  
All the same, at home a tub of cream is nice; a belly rub;  
I'm tiger tough, to say the least, but hey! I ain't no senseless beast—  
Don't cross me, 'cause I'm fierce, although I'm not an *animal*, you know!

### **Biting Remarks may be Rewarded in Kind**

Do not call me a scaredy cat or other catty names;  
Don't have a cow, but I refuse to buy into your games  
Of calling me bull-headed, big fat cow, a silly goose,  
Or loosey-goosey, bird-brained, or a dumb sheep. What the deuce  
Do you think you are doing? For—sheepish as I may be—  
I'm not so woolly-minded as your image is of me,  
And once you've riled me up enough with childishness so tryin',  
I may just turn around and bite *you* hard, and I ain't lion.

### **Zoo Zooming**

I'm off to see the monkeys now,  
The ibex, the Tibetan cow,  
The tortoise, hippo, kangaroo—  
But if you think it's to the zoo  
I'm heading out, you're incorrect—  
I'm off to feed my intellect  
Not in the jungle nearby found,  
But where the animals are bound  
In paper quarters, for you see,  
I'm headed for the library.

### **Do or Die**

The ancient Archaeopteryx had never turned a wing  
Or lifted her substantial claws to help with anything;  
She wielded her impressive bill, but only to express  
Disdain for any task but what advanced *her* happiness  
Exclusively, for she believed herself the focal point

Of all existence on the earth; her nose got out of joint  
When anyone would question her supremacy as Queen.  
You'll notice, now, that she's extinct, and never since been seen.