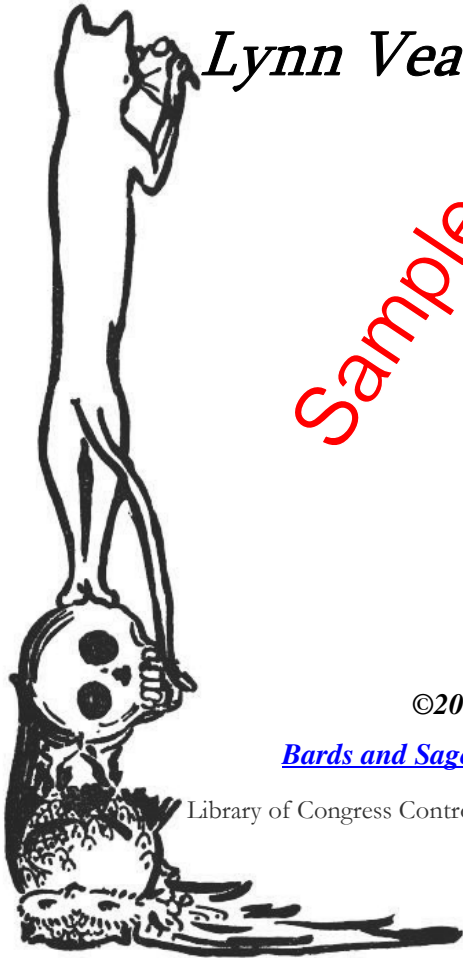


*Not Dreamt of in
Your Philosophy*

Lynn Veach Sadler

Sample file



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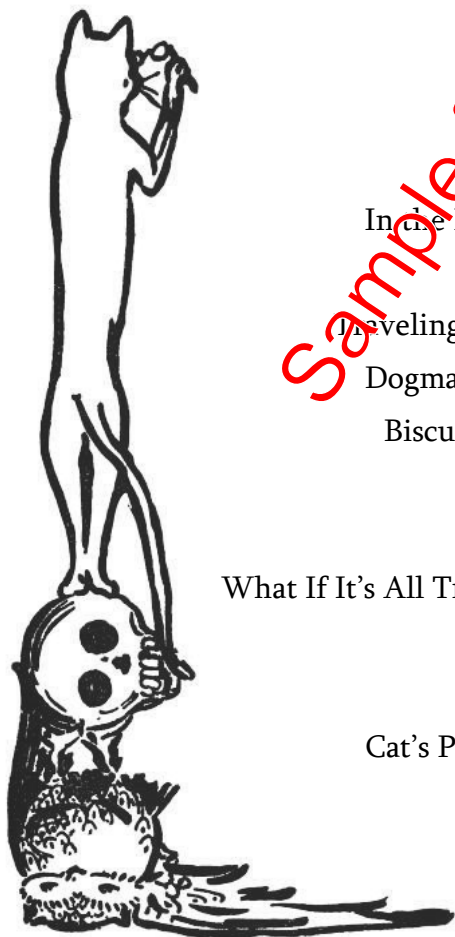
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Sample file

Equus Felinus

Like much of the world, we watched on television the Northern Alliance soldiers in Afghanistan leaping on their horses and heading out hell-for-leather waving their guns over their heads. It was the old glory-days movies come again. It made us want to laugh. Then cry. (Yes, cats can laugh and cry. You already believe in the Cheshire Cat. Crying and laughing, with your other discoveries herein, will require only small leaps.) We went on-line, found a Khyber Pass website devoted to “Victorian Era Colonial Wargaming” with a lot on the Afghan War and Kabul. Vintage 1879 it may be, but Afghanistan hasn’t changed all that much, particularly Afghan horses. I hope somebody in President Bush’s Cabinet is aware of this website. The professor who constructed it knows whereof he speaks.

A bit of background. My alias, which is all you will get, is “The Pea-Green Cat.” You may have heard or read of me before. My pseudonym sounds playful enough. Do not be misled. My umbrella organization is the Cat Brigade. For centuries, we cats have effected change from behind the scenes. Permit me two examples. We gave the world electricity; its secret resides in our fur. The mouse who taught Mr. Franklin learned it from us, one of the early alliances between mouse- and catkind. More germane for our present purposes, in London’s famous Highgate Cemetery, one of our most intellectual members, a relative of mine, took up residence upon the tomb of philosopher Herbert Spencer in order that he might commune with and influence that bright mind. Once suitably fortified, he stared across the way at the tomb of Karl Marx—until the Soviet Union dissolved. Similarly, we helped the Afghans purge *their* Russians. We have an interest in Afghanistan. Please ask yourself why as I move toward the answer.

Over the centuries, we have persuaded many to join with us. Many not of our kind. The mice, as you have learned. A few dogs. Some humans—humans have been easier altogether, though we have helped them along. Our epics are Christopher Smart’s fragmentary *Jubilante Agno*, in which we pretend humility, and T. S. Eliot’s *Old Possum’s Book of Cats*, both ghost-cat-written. We turn to Andrew Lloyd Webber’s *Cats* for sheer escapism when the fit of shedding is

upon us.

There now being a new crisis besetting catkind, we sought another alliance. We perceive this situation as worse than Israelis vs. Arabs, Protestants vs. Catholics in Ireland, Muslims vs. Christians, even Mr. Bush vs. Iraq. I refer to Kurds vs. Turks. The Turks stand accused of launching a drive to exterminate, by poison, all Van cats (*Van* for the area of Turkey where they live) because they are a unique feature of Kurdish culture. Indeed, of *all* culture. Two Vans were with Noah and left the Ark when it beached on Mount Ararat, which is some hundred miles northeast of the city of Van. Their fur is snow-white, and they have one blue and one green eye. They swim in Van's lake, and their behavior is generally more *dog-* than cat-like. In addition to all else that they represent, they can be seen as a bridge between inveterate enemies, cats and dogs, and thence an emblem for how the most implacable opposites can work together. While I feel obliged to point out that the SOS Van Cats Rescue Action has recently formed, it limits itself to Turkey, but Kurds and the cats descending from the Vans are not limited to that country.

We chose Afghanistan as *our* first target not only because of our long-standing interests there, but because more than the annihilation of the Van-descended was emergent. First, the Taliban killed even the "temple" cats in Bamiyan when they destroyed the Great Buddhas enclosed inside those shrines carved out of its cliff walls. Second, *all* kinds of cats (and many *mice*) in Afghanistan were being eaten for food by the drought- and war-harassed population prior to the aftermath of September 11, 2001. Third, on the basis of a single small accident, the Government of the United States of America in effect declared war on the cat population of Afghanistan. A hapless feline, fleeing the ravenous mob, happened upon a "flash-bang," one of the warning devices on the perimeter of the US Embassy in Kabul. She lived but waxed exceedingly frightened and had to submit to countless taunts about her curiosity, the shedding of *x* number of lives Though I know for a fact she was a Van émigré, she had to endure the further indignity of having a gaunt short-hair, being detained for fattening, stand in for her on the Al Jazeera satellite network. As you can easily imagine, thereupon, the CIA was put to the ignominious task of hunting down all remaining Afghan cats in order to train them for bomb-sniffing or, if they should prove intractable, give them up to be eaten. We began direct intercession at approximately the point of learning that operatives were trying to persuade Afghan horsemen to substitute cats for the calves and goats

that had in turn been substituted for the heads of their enemies in the national pastime, *bozkushi*, the forerunner of polo.

As you will have gathered, it was the horses with whom we now sought to ally—the horses at large as we are the cats at large. We needed their help in Afghanistan; we will need their help beyond Afghanistan. We knew, of course, that they had their own organization. We also knew that it had cracks.

We would have preferred to approach initially either Bucephalus or Traveller. The former was some two years in Afghanistan with Alexander the Great, who headquartered at Balkh after his invasion in 328 B.C. Yes, Bucephalus should have been perfect as our *entrée* into the World of Horse, only *entrée* of a different meaning was at the heart of the matter. Legend has it, you see, that Bucephalus, prior to his miraculous taming by the boy Alexander, was a literal *man-eater*. We did not know how to put a good face upon that in presenting our case to the horses. The other dominant legend was also hardly likely to advance our cause, for it had the youthful son of King Philip II of Macedon tame the horse by noticing that he was afraid of his shadow. Before mounting, Alexander took care to turn Bucephalus so that he could not see same. How could we appeal to the horses through one of their kind who was afraid of his own shadow? Nor was the etymology of the name any more helpful: Bucephalus means “ox-head.” (I have some credentials in philology and intend, when the pressure is lessened, to explore possible connections with the Oxus Basin, where the Afghans first played *bozkushi*.) All we could hope for was dropping in the indisputable fact, somewhere in the coming negotiations, that “the valiant Bucephalus” had been wounded many times in battle, finally succumbing in India.

Our other first choice, Traveller, though almost universally adjudged as reasonable and sweetly noble as General Robert E. Lee himself, had fallen into disfavor among the inner corral because he had authored that weighty volume on the Civil War as seen through equine eyes. He was also likely to be too busy with book signings. That was a stroke of bad luck indeed from our point of view, for it was General Lee himself who had insisted upon that clause in the surrender terms at Appomattox permitting every Confederate cavalryman to take his horse home with him. General Grant had accepted when the reason was explained: that no spring crops could be planted without the aid of the war horses.

Having been appointed emissary to the horses, for I have the reputation, however wrongheaded, of being both learned and tactful, I

fortified myself with a nip of catnip brandy; took up the burden of solemnity, which meant giving up for the nonce such expressions as “horse’s mouth,” “horseplay,” “horse feathers,” “horsing around,” and “horse laughs,” not to mention “heroin,” and submitted as my opening ploy a poem linking our two kinds and appealing to the hauteur and prowess Swift bequeathed horses in Gulliver’s fourth destination (which is *not* the land of the Brobdingnags, one of the satirist’s many inside jokes). I knew that my own kind would be averse to my verse offering. It would not pass muster with them, first, because I had substituted *felinus* for *felis*, believing that the horse audience would recognize the former more easily, and *Felinus domesticus*, being a misnomer, is not favored among cats. Second, it reduced our genus to the level of species—and *horse* species at that. But cats were being killed, and, nine lives notwithstanding, action must be taken. To wit.

Equus Felinus

Canny as cats.
Legs defying artists
until photography.
Cool as cats.
Houyhnhnms sucking
the imagination from Swift.
Familiars like cats;
of those deep ^{know}wedged,
of Western stars,
of Lady Godiva,
of children,
of the stricken in general,
of Arabs—
horses could tell us how to make peace.
Sleek as cats.
Aroma earthy, evocative, proud.
Giving themselves as cats give:
they own you.

The French would eat them for knowledge.
(The Afghans, to quench hunger.)
The writer would fly them.
All worship at the horse’s mouth,
at the unimpeachable horse’s mouth

where the cat is let out of the bag.

Had either Traveller or Bucephalus been available, I would have proffered this “higher” testimony equating metaphor and horses and establishing the latter as the link back to Paradise:

The Great Steed Metaphor

... though what if earth
Be but the shadow of heav'n, and things therein
Each to other like, more than on earth is thought?
Milton, *Paradise Lost*, V. 574-576

Prose strains after the horseflies of logic.
Poetry flies The Great Steed Metaphor into the empyrean,
recreates the pre-lapsarian world
where imagination and choosing were the stirrups,
where imagination and choosing were unbridled,
where roses had no thorns and total darkness was never.
The Great Steed Metaphor can catch a shoe on *like* or *as*
but flies on as the sparks fly up.
The Great Steed Metaphor cannot be enticed into your stable.
The Great Steed Metaphor is not *like* a horse.
The Great Steed Metaphor *is* The Great Steed Metaphor.
Poetry is The Great Steed Metaphor's only rider.
Poets are The Great Steed Metaphor's only readers.
As The Great Milton knew,
earth was supposed to be *all-metaphor*—
earth the Shadow of Heaven.
Reaffirm, re-achieve, receive—
The Great Steed Metaphor!

We finally decided that I would put our case for an alliance to Comanche, the favorite mount of Captain Myles Keogh and the only survivor on the losing side of the Battle of Little Big Horn. Comanche was so esteemed that he was excused from duties ever after, except as, draped in black with his stirrups and boots reversed, he symbolized that American watershed event from 1876-1891, when he died of colic. (I chose not to mention that less-than-heroic end as I also eschewed recalling General McClellan's Burns, who, no matter the calamitous situation of the moment, would bolt for his oats at the accustomed time; the fact that those graduated in the lower third of their class at West Point were sent to the Calvary; or Smokey, Lee

Marvin's drunken horse in *Cat Ballou*).

I knew, of course, that, in actual fact, not all horses are quite so high-minded as the redoubtable Comanche and as depicted in my poems, particularly the second. Thus I also cited more plebeian connections between horses and cats, notably in a recent episode of *The Sopranos*, in which the ailing steed purchased by Ralphie Cifaretto, but beloved by Tony, has his own pet goat, getting at the point through the goat-calf-[coming] cat link of *bozkushi* and going on to cite the Hogle Zoo (Salt Lake City, USA) gorilla who bit her keeper for using a broom to herd her pet cat.

Now I also knew that Their Equinesses longed for a horse version of *Cats*. (I do not, you will note, mention "horse opera.") Oh, they had their own literary loftiness after the fashion of Thomas Buchanan Read's "Sheridan's Ride," which immortalized the daring dash of Rieni (thereafter "Winchester") from that town to Cedar Creek, Virginia, to save the Federal troops in the Shenandoah Valley in 1864. I did not intend to mention that his horse received for his valor the honor of having his stuffed body donated to the Smithsonian. Nor did Comanche, though he knew the poem and quoted along with me:

Still sprung from those swift hoofs, thundering South,
The dust, like smoke from the cannon's mouth;
Or the trail of a comet, sweeping faster and faster,
Foreboding to traitors the doom of disaster.
The heart of the steed, and the heart of the master
Were beating like prisoners assaulting their walls,
Impatient to be where the battle-field calls;
Every nerve of the charger was strained to full play,
With Sheridan only ten miles away.
Under his spurning feet the road
Like an arrowy Alpine river flowed,
And the landscape sped away behind
Like an ocean flying before the wind,
And the steed, like a barque fed with furnace ire,
Swept on, with his wild eyes full of fire.
But lo! he is nearing his heart's desire;
He is snuffing the smoke of the roaring fray,
With Sheridan only five miles away.

But when we reached the last verse, I recited the lead-in—

With foam and with dust the black charger was gray;
By the flash of his eye, and the red nostril's play,

He seemed to the whole great army to say,—

and let Comanche play Winchester, née “Rienzi,” grinning to myself over “neigh”—

“I have brought you Sheridan all the way
From Winchester, down to save the day!”

At that point, I brought forth my *pièce de résistance*: a “mounted” (smile to myself) copy of the Read rendering of the famous ride, with General Sheridan, sword raised, astride Rienzi, all four of whose legs are well off the ground. It is the one that was owned by the Grant family and now resides in the National Portrait Gallery of the Smithsonian. (I also presented Comanche a series of “Afghan Post” stamps depicting horses.)

Similarly, I had knowledge of Edmund Clarence Stedman’s poem, “[General Philip] Kearny at Seven Pines [or the Battle of Fair Oaks, May 31-June 1, 1862].” While *bevard* did not get the attention of Rienzi, a word used in the poem was much to my liking. I quote the key lines (*key* from the point of view of the Cat Brigade).

He snuffed, like his charge, the wind of the powder,—
His sword waved us on and we answered the sign:
Loud our cheer as we rushed, but his laugh rang the louder,
“There’s the devil’s own fun, boys, along the whole line!”
How he strode his brown steed! How we saw his blade brighten
In the one hand still left,—and the reins in his teeth!
He laughed like a boy when the holidays heighten,
But a soldier’s glance shot from his visor beneath.
Up came the reserves to the *mellay* infernal,
Asking where to go in,—through the clearing or pine?
“O, anywhere! Forward! ’Tis all the same, Colonel:
You’ll find lovely fighting along the whole line!”

The word to which I refer is *mellay*, “old” (variant) spelling for *melee*. I, at any rate, approached it as such and used it as the carrot to dangle before Comanche and his horse legions. I was now, if I do say so myself (and only to myself and others of the cat persuasion), in the “horse latitudes.” Let me explain.

Mellay was the charger I rode to the horses of Afghanistan, for the *melee* in its sport of *bozkushi* references the swarm of horses and riders trying to grab and take to the flag at the goal line the “ball”—as

we have seen, a dead calf or goat (not quite yet, praise Bast, a cat!). I did point out, however, that, as a “horsehide” was once the ball in the American sport, without intervention from the present Horse Legion, it was not only conceivable, but highly probable, given American ingenuity and opportunity, that horse heads might soon be introduced into *bozkushi*. I could see that I had Comanche’s full attention and proceeded to remind him of the famous (I said *infamous!*) scene in Mario Puzo’s *The Godfather*, every bit as vintage America as *The Sopranos*. Were that to happen, of course, the most promising contemporary avenue for the exaltation of horse prowess would be cut off. (I did *not* say “cut off at the pass” or otherwise allude to the obvious fact that it did not take “horse sense” so to interpret the present and threatened state of affairs.)

Another link with the horses of Afghanistan arose through General Kearny himself. He had earlier served in the Mexican War and equipped his First United States Dragoons with horses of the same color. Indeed, he traveled to Illinois, and Mr. Abraham Lincoln himself helped him complete the purchase of a hundred gray horses, on one of which, “Monmouth,” he was wounded in an arm, which had to be amputated (the allusion of “the one hand still left” in the Stedman poem). I was pleased to point out to Comanche that the Afghans designated their horses entirely by color, viz., white—*boze* and *qezel*, ash blond—*samana*, grey—*t’Aragh*, red—*jayran*, and so on. I then moved on to the Four Horses (white, red, black, and “pale”) of the Apocalypse in the Book of Revelation, which purportedly symbolize War, Famine, Pestilence, and Death. I downplayed the ominousness herein, eliciting a [horse] laugh from Comanche by reminding him of Knute Rockne leading the “Four Horsemen” Offense.

Although I was attempting to enlist horses in general for the cause of the particular ones in Afghanistan on the grounds of their being the last “warrior breed” left in the world to carry on what had once been a proud tradition, I would, if all worked out, cycle back to the steeds of Revelation. War, famine, pestilence, and death are abroad in the land, true, but so, too, is the greatest battle yet known. Yes, greater than the one to preserve cats and horses. It will be between apocalyptic Muslims, who believe that their religious imperative is to conquer the entire world in anticipation of the Day of Judgment, and millennial Christians, who feel equally called to prepare for the messianic kingdom promised in the Bible. At least it is the Red Heifer and not horse or cat (one of the reasons I am “pea

green,” by the bye). Dajjal (the Islamic anti-Christ), The Great Satan—variously the President of the United States, the West in general, the Western media . . . when will the finger-pointing and name-calling stop? (It cannot be *cat*-calling. I am relieved to report that *cat* does not appear in the concordance to my King James Bible! Did I not tell you that we cats work in the background to effect change?)

As I put it to Comanche, there were four groups of horses now in Afghanistan, and all were at threat. First were those (along with donkeys) fleeing the country with the refugees. If the landmines did not get them, abuse, starvation, infections, diseases (particularly that associated with the *Trypanosomiasis* blood parasite) would. Pakistan’s Brooke Hospital for Animals and the WSPA [World Society for the Protection of Animals] were doing their best, even sending out mobile teams of specialists to equine trading camps. It was not enough.

The second group was put to the saving of those humans who had not fled the country. Here I cited Concern’s 2002 convoy of some thousand horses and donkeys sent with supplies to the ninety thousand isolated since December, 2001, by deep snows and horrifically high mountain passes in northeast Afghanistan. Next to helicopters, such horses were the most efficacious means of transportation in this terrain, but airlifts were not used because the aged and children were unlikely to be reached.

Third were the horses especially trained for *bozkushi* (and the *paiga*, a race following the game in which no saddles are used and the riders go bareback or employ only a thin blanket). The great Afghan sport most likely originated as a defense mechanism against the soldiers of Genghis Khan sweeping in to pillage from horseback. The Afghan past is a-weave with tales of famous horses and horsemen. Horses and riders participating in *bozkushi* imitate those great battles much as American re-enactors relive the Civil War today. The current game is especially popular in northern Afghanistan, including that same city of Balkh that hosted Alexander and Bucephalus, was destroyed by Genghis Khan, and was later rebuilt by Tamerlane. With such gigantic figures as these having their way with the country, we can accept that the people would retain a certain wildness of temperament. What other country today is so infested with “warlords”?

The horses admirably match the temperament and spirit of the men who mount them. Both types of horses indigenous to

Afghanistan are trained for the game. In many ways, they are very like Comanche's own peers. They wait, though impatiently, one suspects, when their riders are thrown. They swerve on their own to avoid collisions and do not trample fallen riders. Yet, they also know how to force their way to the center of the *melee* to enable their riders to bend and grab up the "ball" and wait quietly until they do. Once the player has it stowed between his leg and the horse, however, his mount knows to fight to reach the goal. The individual horse is trained for both offense and defense. The *bozkushi* horses are huge, and they have been taught to kick, bite, shove, and generally remove the opposition by whatever means available. "If such horses continue to be used for food," I said to Comanche, "the game that so embodies the culture of Afghanistan will be reduced to men playacting on old sticks with scraps of cloth standing in for manes and trying to imitate your sounds." I did not point out that *bozkushi* horses might burst under the excessive roughness of the game were reduced food and much exercise not practiced a few days prior to the matches to "soften" them.

Finally, there were the some six hundred "war horses" of the Northern Alliance riders under the control of Commander Rashid Dostum who were helping the Americans drive out the Taliban. In the Soviet-Afghan War, such troops had used horses to raid Russian border troops. Now they were surprising Taliban tanks with flanking attacks. It is these who are working so effectively with the United States specialized fighters known as CT's [Combat Controllers] who spot their Taliban targets from horseback with the aid of laptops, GPS, laser goggles, etc. and call in air strike positions. Once the target is addressed, Northern Alliance cavalry ride in to capture the survivors.

The occasion also arose to remind Comanche of a few more personal matters. One was that he, rather than Custer's own mounts (the tempestuous Don Juan, who embarrassed him at the inauguration of President Johnson; Dandy; Vic; etc.), had been elected leader of the horses. (I did not say that the reason was he was "a horse of a different color"!) I pointed out that the white star on his forehead had always hailed righteous and heroic gleaming and, yes, I have to admit that I did sing—"Oh! thus be it ever, when [horses] shall stand/Between their loved home and the war's desolation!" (Comanche was learned and caught my impertinence here with "The Star-Spangled Banner" but was too wise to take overt notice; I liked him all the better and knew that I had made the right choice.) I

asserted that he was admired by his peers (and human kind and cats) not only for surviving Sitting Bull and [Not-So-] Crazy Horse but for speaking out earlier when Custer had ordered the slaughter of all those Indian ponies after the defeat of the Cheyenne on the Washita and urging Captain Keogh to do so. Similarly, he had led the fierce protest that attended the death of the twenty-two ponies and mules on Robert Scott's 1910-12 Antarctic expedition. He was there, too, when the twenty-seven men of the 26th Cavalry platoon made the last charge of its kind against the advance guard of the Imperial Japanese Army in Morong Village on the Bataan Peninsula in 1942. After all, Comanche continued to possess, did he not, the fierce wildness of his mustang heritage? He must obey the pull of his spirit toward the plight of the feisty horses of Afghanistan.

Nor would I have been the husband of the wife I have if I had not put in a plug for the female of all our species. I cited some of the Civil War ladies of horse fame, as "Molly" Bickerdyke, the nurse who usually rode Old Whitey; and Confederate spy Belle Boyd, whose mount was Fleeter. And there were, to be sure, famous mares: General Robert E. Lee's Lucy Long; General Fitzhugh Lee's Nellie Gray; Jeb Stuart's Virginia, who prevented his being captured by jumping a seemingly impossible ditch; Bahrain's Al-Khalifas; the Andalusians; the Puerto Rican Flores and Deseada; Dale Evans' Buttermilk . . .

"Comanche, you assuredly know," I said, "of the plight of women in the Moslem world generally, but do you know that, in Afghanistan, they are permitted to watch *bozkushi* but only from distant rooftops, whereas their men, even those who are not horsemen, are allowed to spread their prayer mats on the very playing field during halftime? Why, mares are not allowed to be trained for *bozkushi*! We *must* do something to alleviate the conditions for women as for horses and cats."

As to the equine generally, I opined that the Civil War would probably have been over in the three months envisioned by President Lincoln had not both sides availed themselves of horses. I reminded Comanche that the great battle chargers were as well known as their generals, for example, Kidron, whom General of the Armies "Black Jack" Pershing rode when he passed through New York City's Victory Arch at the end of World War I. Sometimes they are *better* known, as is the case perhaps with General Meade's Baldy, for his unusual gait and many wounds. Though Stonewall Jackson's Little or Old Sorrel, also known as Fancy, did not surpass his beloved owner

in fame, he is remembered in the name of Little Sorrel Lane in Federal territory, Somers, Connecticut, and was in fact originally captured from the Federal troops at Harper's Ferry. At the 1884 state fair held in Hagerstown, Maryland, Old Sorrel, on display in a corral, lost nearly all of the hair of his mane and tail to souvenir seekers. There was a uniqueness to Little Sorrel, who originally belonged to Mrs. Jackson. Big Sorrel, the General's mount, did not suit. No horse did but Little Sorrel, for Stonewall Jackson was an awkward rider. I was a bit concerned to say this last, but Comanche looked at me and nodded as if to suggest that he had known this heresy about the beloved general but was surprised that I did.

That inference emboldened me to point out that one of General Grant's favorite horses, like Little Sorrel, was not much to look at either. Named Kangaroo for his hopping-jumping style, he was left behind at Shiloh by the Confederates as worthless. Grant recognized him as a valuable thoroughbred nonetheless and had him nursed back to health. He himself was a superb horseman and could ride the bounding Kangaroo even when President Lincoln's spy failed in his duty and let the General get drunk.

What ultimately decided Comanche, however, as I had known it would do, was showing him the tape (12/13/2001) that had been sent to Al Jazeera. In it, Osama Bin Laden states: "When people see a strong horse and a weak horse, by nature, they will like the strong horse." He was using the generic horse to make his case that September 11, 2001 brought wide international approval of his alleged acts and cause. This appropriation of their kind caused Comanche and his compeers to get on their high horse, as it were. (In due time, I will also read them this classical Muslim tradition quoted in Bin Laden's "Declaration of War on America": "The Hour [of Judgment] will not arrive until the Muslims fight the Jews, and the Muslims will kill them until the Jew will hide behind rocks and trees, and the rock and the tree will say: O Muslim, O servant of God, there is a Jew behind me—come and kill him!")

In short order, certainly with no caution to "hold anyone's horses," Comanche and I asked for a sit-down with Commander Dostum's Karzai, formerly Yunus. We have far to go before we and the world sleep peacefully, but our game is afoot. Already, each of the six hundred NA horses, with the compliance of their horsemen—together they are now known officially as the Northern Alliance Horse Guard—has adopted or otherwise protects a family of Vans or other cats. The Americans joined our cause when they realized the

potential of cats' night vision and when we cats offered to do reconnaissance from atop kites flown from horseback by the NA troops. Almost as famous as *bozkushi* in Afghanistan is *gudiparan bazi* (kite flying), which specializes in an unbreakable *tar* or wire. Most of the Afghan cats, particularly in these times of famine, are small. As we point out, small enough to ride the kites, too small to be substituted for the calves and goats of *bozkushi*, which weigh up to 150 lbs. sans their heads, entrails, and legs (which are cut off at the knees).

But I have saved the best. Some two years ago, one of my cat friends participated in a "felid" study conducted by a young naturalist, Dr. Elizabeth von Muggenthaler, at the Carnivore Preservation Trust in Pittsboro, North Carolina (United States) "to determine whether felids produce a purr containing frequencies that correspond to vibrational protocol used in the treatment of bone growth/facture healing, pain relief, the reduction of edema, muscle growth/strain, tendon strength/strain, joint flexibility, the relief of dyspnea [air hunger or difficulty in breathing], and wound healing." In addition to ordinary cats (another misnomer, as you will know), she included cheetahs, caracals, ocelots, pumas, and servals. Although ambient noise distorted signal analysis for the caracal purr, that of all the others contained harmonics sufficiently strong to be within the healing range. Now, of course, we cats already knew that we purred for many more reasons than to vocalize contentment. But you will doubtless be shocked to learn that we purr when alarmed or severely injured. In effect, from long before the advent of veterinarians, we have purred to HEAL OURSELVES! Imagine the implications. The horse world knew them instantly, but, then, horses know how susceptible they are to broken legs (which are not to be healed by "horse pills" or "flogging a dead horse"!). The humans see battle wounds and "domestic" applications, as in the defeat of osteoporosis. Both medical personnel and civilian researchers of the ilk of Dr. Elizabeth are joining with us. Well, as I say fondly to Comanche too often when we are visiting Afghanistan these days, we could really use Pegasus, that flying-horse darling of the Muses, along about now!

I am not Aesop to worship morals. But what if *casus belli*, the occasion of war, could become *catus pax*, cats' peace? A few more unlikely alliances like those herein, and it just might.