

IT'S ABOUT D*&^%D TIME
09/05/07

Forget what I said about anything related to Mama being my favorite thing. I'm mad because she's been neglecting me.

Well, okay, neglecting my blog. But hey, my blog is my intellectual stimulation, so never mind the food, the water, the litter changes, the cuddling (even when it was hot), the HAPPY BIRTHDAY song (I'm 3 now. That's somewhere between 25 and 28 in cat years!) and the playing. She has been neglecting me.

My only consolation is that she has been neglecting Serina, too. Imagine what state Mama's hands and legs would be in if she had been allowing Serina her say without the "fair and balanced" coverage to counteract whatever misimpressions you might get from my pesky little sister.

Uh, oh. Mama's glaring at me. What? "Fair and balanced"? I heard it on the radio. While you were away. A lot. It's not my fault that what passes for radio around here plays awful Uncle Cracker songs and provides Fox News Radio on the hour. I'd rather listen to NPR, but that isn't an option here, is it?

The following dialog should provide a concise snapshot of the way my summer went:

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The Care and Feeding of Me by Apollo Shaver
(It's "The Care and Feeding of US", you big Bozo!) – Serina

Well, she's doing it again. Mama is a most insensitive soul, going off to have fun and leaving us behind to sweat and swelter in the summer heat. Can I file a grievance with the ASPCA?

It's not so bad. She's leaving us in good hands.

You're just saying that because you love Aunt Joanie and because Perry and Gorden helped you invade my territory last year. BUT...Aunt Joanie does take good care of us and neither Perry nor Gorden has brought another THING into my life, so I guess it's okay. I still think I got a bum deal when Mama and I moved here, though. I had my very own kitty vacation spa and lots of lap time with Pat and play time with Tom and Bill... ah, those were the days...

Yeah, well, get over it. Tom and Pat and Bill have another cat, remember? Besides, you're wasting the precious time of busy people. We're not really that hard to take care of, mostly.

That's true. We like our food dish full, our water dish to play with, our litter changed once a week on Tuesday nights and scooped about every other day, and catnip. Mmmmmm... catnip...

It's summertime, though, so if you think the litter needs to be changed on Saturdays too, that's okay. The flies sometimes like the box more than Mama appreciates.

That's true. I suppose we ought to do this in a logical fashion. Do you trust me to do a chart?

No. Let Mama do that.

I shouldn't have asked. Anyway, thank you for taking care of us while Mama is gone. We know you do it because you love her almost as much as we do when she's around and giving us attention.

I love Mama all the time. Well, except when she's trying to clip my claws.

You need to learn to accept that, girl. Life is better when you don't click across the floor. More stealth.

Oh... I'll have to think about that. You can call Mama on her cell phone with any questions. She also says to tell you that she trusts your instincts, so do what you think is best. We can cope. Right, big brother?

So now I'm big brother instead of Bozo, eh? By the way, when we're fighting, it's all play. I haven't drawn blood and I really don't plan to. It's so messy to groom afterward. And I'll try not to draw your blood, but I make no promises.

Band-aids and antiseptic ointment are on the counter to the left of the kitchen sink. You won't need them on my account!

Sissy.

Hey! Come closer and say – YEOW!

HISSESSSS! SNARL YEOWL!

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And that, my friends, is just about how it's been all summer. I just want it to cool off and dry off enough for Mama to turn the air conditioner off in her bedroom. We aren't allowed to sleep in there because SOMEONE WHO SHALL REMAIN NAMELESS BUT IS WHITE WITH SOME VERY SILLY LOOKING BLACK PATCHES can't remember to tug the door to when she needs the litter box in the middle of the night.

Oh, and I wouldn't mind another visit from Bill, either. It was nice to have Lynne here, but I need a good man to wrestle with. Maybe Mama will explain what she means by leaving room for the Holy Spirit but not a cat the next time he comes...

Grouchily yours,
Apollo
(as dictated to my "amamauensis")

My Favorite Things
05/07/07

Catnip. Catgrass. Sitting in the window in the sunshine. Sneaking out on the sleeping porch and scaring Mama half to death. Mama's lap. Mama's bed.

Mama's bed when she and Bill are watching DVDs because then my two favorite humans are where I can go from one to the other with very little effort. Or just stretch out between them, though Mama told me after he left that there's room for the Holy Spirit, not a cat, when I try to do that. I don't actually understand it, but it must mean something to her.

Yes, Bill was here. He wrestled with me. It was FABULOUS. But this time he was in the guest room behind a closed door, so I couldn't sleep with him.

On the other hand, neither could Serina, so that was okay. We both slept outside his door for part of each night, then eventually gave up and went to bed with Mama.

The newly redone bathroom is a favorite thing now, too. It's not quite finished, but it looks really nice. And the painter was very surprised at how curious Serina and I were. I don't think he realized that it

wasn't so much curiosity as proper supervision, though he did have some very interesting tools and some intriguing compounds in his arsenal. Here's a before, during, and after comparison of one corner:



(This was the only place where the mold was truly horrendous.)



Mama is very happy with the changes and she hasn't had a migraine (except for once when she didn't eat when she should have) since the day the mold was treated. Maybe some of her troubles this winter were related to the mold rather than to the altitude like she'd thought.

I'd write more, but I'm tired because Mama wasn't home this afternoon to rest with. I wandered the house looking for her and watching the kids

playing outside. I wish I could go out to play with them, but I can't. Maybe some of my little friends will visit soon.

And maybe Bill will come back soon. That's my favorite thing of all, when I have my Mama and Bill to entertain me at the same time. For now, though, Mama will have to do.

Alpinely yours,
Apollo
(as dictated to my "amamauensis")

Why God Created Cats, or the Feline Right to be King 04/07/07

It is reported that the following edition of the Book of Genesis was discovered in the Dead Seal Scrolls. If authentic, it would shed light on the question, "Where do pets come from?"

And Adam said, "Lord, when I was in the garden, you walked with me everyday. Now I do not see you anymore. I am lonesome here and it is difficult for me to remember how much you love me."

And God said, "No problem! I will create a companion for you that will be with you forever and who will be a reflection of my love for you, so that you will know I love you, even when you cannot see me. Regardless of how selfish and childish and unlovable you may be, this new companion will accept you as you are and will love you as I do, in spite of yourself."

And God created a new animal to be a companion for Adam. And it was a good animal. And God was pleased.

And the new animal was pleased to be with Adam and he wagged his tail. And Adam said, "But Lord, I have already named all the animals in the Kingdom and all the good names are taken and I cannot think of a name for this new animal."

And God said, "No problem! Because I have created this new animal to be a reflection of my love for you, his name will be a reflection of my own name, and you will call him Dog."

And Dog lived with Adam and was a companion to him and loved him. And Adam was comforted. And God was pleased. And Dog was content and wagged his tail.

After a while, it came to pass that Adam's guardian angel came to the Lord and said, "Lord, Adam has become filled with pride. He struts and preens like a peacock and he believes he is worthy of adoration. Dog has indeed taught him that he is loved, but no one has taught him humility."

And the Lord said, "No problem! I will create for him a companion who will be with him forever and who will see him as he is. The companion will remind him of his limitations, so he will know that he is not always worthy of adoration."

And God created Cat to be a companion to Adam. And Cat would not obey Adam.

And when Adam gazed into Cat's eyes, he was reminded that he was not the supreme being. And Adam learned humility.

And God was pleased. And Adam was greatly improved.

And Cat did not care one way or the other.

Which epitomizes my attitude toward Mama these days. I truly don't care if it has been Lent and if people have been in the hospital and if she did have a Passover Seder for Holy Thursday and a tomb with a stone for Good Friday and Easter. She's been neglecting me and I'm not going to let her forget that she's lower in the hierarchy than I am. I am the King of the "Catsle" and I have been dismissed, ignored, humiliated, and otherwise not paid the proper amount of respect.

Which is to say that I have not been the center of Mama's life of late.

I can't lie and tell you that Serina has usurped my place; rather, Mama has spent far too much time working lately. She's been doing very creative worship, which takes up a lot more time than regular sermons, and she's had two funerals as well as three early days at hospitals with surgeries. She's reminding me now that this particular castle is only mine because she works so hard.

Drat. I hate it when she's right.

To be fair: she is getting better at the piano because she's had to play for the church now since Christmas. She says she's doing penance for not practicing enough when she took lessons. She probably still isn't practicing enough, but at least there's noticeable improvement from the beginning to the end of her practice sessions most of the time.

And also to be fair, she did give me several days of amusement as she was cleaning (a bit) and decorating (a lot) the house for spring. The Christmas garland finally got replaced with spring/summer ivy and we all liked the lights so much that she put lights in the ivy on the stairs, too. The Christmas flowers are now spring and summer flowers, which are very pretty, and the front door has an ivy bough

with some flowers instead of a wreath. However, the outside decorations are still, ahem, behind the times by over three months. I can understand her leaving the lights up, though I'll bet she'll have to take them down when the painters come to do the outside trim work. The wreath snow people were probably okay until ... wait, it's snowed the last 2 days and it's supposed to snow today and possibly tomorrow, too. I guess those might be okay for a few more days. BUT SANTA'S SLED NEEDS TO BE AN EASTER BASKET. Like, tomorrow, Mama. Easter Sunday, remember?

She's glaring at me. Of course she knows that tomorrow is Easter Sunday. This has been Heck Week. That's what she calls Holy Week because it's so busy. My friend Catie's mom sent her a birthday card and mentioned that Holy Week must seem like college finals all over again. Mama said she's right.

Okay, so on to the BIG news, which comes in two parts:

1) The upstairs bathroom is getting a professional makeover! Mama is almost as happy as I am. Turquoise is a beautiful color, but not when it's the color on Formica that's over 30 years old. And, as the painter said, once the church installed the replacement windows 2 summers ago and the vent fan decided to get so horridly squeaky at about the same time, the steam from showers had nowhere to go but into the walls. There's a mold/mildew problem in the works which Mama wants to get taken care of now, and since the fan works and she likes to open the windows whenever she can, she shouldn't have the same problem. I'm sure she'll post before and after pictures once the work is done. It starts Tuesday.

2) BILL IS COMING! I can't tell you how excited I am about that. Mama caught me staring at his picture not too long ago. I'd have taken it with me if I could have gotten it out of the frame. That's the picture without her, by the way, though there have been times in the past 6 weeks that I've come close to forgetting what she looks like, too. Anyway, I don't know how much time he and Mama will actually be here at the house, but I do know that nighttime is movie time and that means prime napping accommodations between the two of them where one or the other or both can scratch my ears and my belly. This is, of course, the treatment the King of the "Catsle" deserves.

I've got to stop now so that Mama can have her say. She's exhausted but she's got to keep going until the first part of her vacation starts sometime the week after next. I bet she's going to sleep for three days.

As long as it's here with me, I'll forgive her almost anything. After all, to err is human, to forgive, feline.

Divinely yours,
Apollo
(as dictated to my "amamauensis")

Conspiracy Theory
02/21/07

Mama says her computer crashed.

I don't buy it.

I think she just didn't want to let me have my say.

On the other hand, she was on vacation for a week and then sick for a week after that. I wouldn't have been able to post during that time. I'll cut her two weeks' slack.
The other four?

Not a chance.

Even if the church work is what keeps fed and housed in the manner to which I have become accustomed (including, reluctantly, the little brat named Serina who purports to be my sister), there is no excuse for Mama muzzling me for 6 whole weeks.

So here goes the muzzle blast:

I like Uncle Mike. He roughhouses with me when he comes while Aunt Joanie is taking care of us. He's not Bill, but he'll do in a pinch.

Snow is awesome to watch from a warm, safe perch indoors.

Birds are even better, though I bet they'd be fun to chase, too.

Insects in the house are the best (unless you can get bats). It is, however, embarrassing when Mama catches a fly I've been chasing all day. I wore it out. That's my story and I'm sticking to it.

Serina is a pest. She's taking to stalking me and pouncing on me from strange places, like radiators and stairs. It's like she thinks she's bigger than me. HA! That'll be the day.

I still hate to get my claws clipped, but I've learned that it goes faster and I get treats if I don't struggle when Mama finally catches me dozing long enough to start.

I'm still embarrassed by my new habit of drinking out of the toilet, but I can't stop. Is there a 12-step program for that? (Not to make fun of 12-step programs in any way, of course. Lots of people owe their lives to AA, NA, OA, and the like.) [What? I still listen to NPR whenever I have the chance. I know things.]

I like cheese. A lot. Even though it's not good for me. Mama has learned to be very careful when she's using shredded cheese in her cooking because I've developed a taste for cheese. Especially mozzarella. Mmm, mmm, good! Oh, wait. That's Campbell's Soup. Never mind.

Mama is a better pianist now than she was in November. The piano, however, needs to be tuned. Badly. C# shouldn't be three different notes, let alone nine when she plays them in three octaves!

I miss Bill. And Pat and Tom, too. But I miss Bill a lot. Mama even caught me staring at his picture the other day. I hope he's coming to visit sometime soon. Mama won't say. I don't know if that means yes or no.

Even double hung windows get cold when it's really cold outside. Cat noseprints look very interesting on cold glass. And they stay, too!

There are probably more shells yet in the rifle, but that's a good blast for now. Mama says we may not update for 10 days or so. That's what SHE thinks!

Conspiratorially yours,

Apollo
(as dictated to my "amamauensis")

Winter Doldrums
01/12/07

Well, Mama's at it again. She's played around with the video stuff and posted me at YouTube (at least she did THAT privately) - in addition to embedding me here. And it's still as embarrassing as he**.

(Sadly, the video is not available in PDF format!)

To be fair, she's done the same thing to Serina, and frankly, Serina's drinking problem is much more embarrassing than this silly movie.

Uh, oh. I don't like the way Mama's laughing right now. Please tell me that picture I tried to delete didn't miraculously reappear.

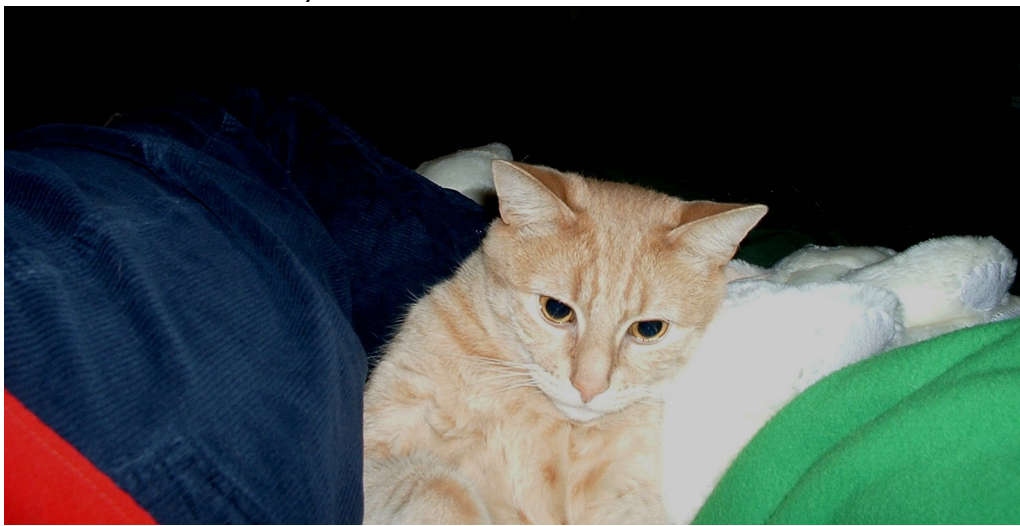


I am SOOOOOO humiliated. I can't believe I've stooped so low.

I can't believe Mama would stoop so low as to denigrate me like this.

She says she'll make it up to me by letting me post an embarrassing picture of her. This isn't nearly so demeaning to her as that thing above is to me, but it's the best I can do.

I call it "Mama's Furry Bun Warmer":



It's a great pun. I'm warming Mama's buns and her stupid "bun"ny slippers, too. I really shouldn't call them stupid, because Bill did give them to her and I did, in a way,

bring it on myself by trying to eat Mama's other slippers. And when Mama's not wearing them, they are pretty much as defenseless as the rest of her slippers...

No matter how we try to embarrass each other, Mama and I really love each other very much. We got to spend a lot of time together over the holidays, and since it's warmer upstairs than down, she likes to do her computer work on her bed. That works for me because that's cuddle time :)



Aren't I handsome?

Anyway, Mama's put away most of the Christmas stuff now, though she hasn't finished undecorating the kitchen and there is some stuff she's leaving up for the winter. She says she's going to get the kitchen done today before her friend Barb arrives, but I'll believe that when I see it. I'm just happy that the tree in the kitchen has been replaced by half of the living room tree. Maybe later today, that half of

the big tree will go where it's going to live until next Christmas and we won't have to worry about avoiding any tree stands at the bottom of the back stairs.

I hope it snows more. When I was a kitten back in Massachusetts, we had a LOT of snow and I loved to sit in the windows and watch it fall. Last year, not so much snow, which was actually okay because I was too big for those windowsills by then. Here, though, I have lots of windowsills to lounge around in all day - without leaky windows! - so it can snow all it wants to. I know we've got plenty of food and kitty litter, so what do I care about being snowed in? Besides, when it gets cold enough to snow, the Asian Lady Beetles come into the house again, and I love to chase them!

With hopes for the white fluffy stuff that has 6 sides instead of 4 legs,
Apollo
(as dictated to my "amamauensis")

Conspiracy Theory
12/31/06

Mama is out to embarrass the he** out of me.

Fortunately, it's not as easy for her to do it to me as it was for her to do it to Serina. She's having compatibility problems, so rather than suffering the ignominy of a video playing here on this site, she's got to set it up as a download.

See, that's my return conspiracy theory. She makes my life miserable, I work with the Evil Empire (aka "Microsoft") to make her life difficult.

It's a fair trade. Even if Microsoft doesn't believe in fair trade and free market.

I digress.

REVENGE OF THE SLIPPERS was posted here; not available in PDF format.

Fair warning, Mama. You aren't always home to wear those slippers - and they might be just as defenseless as the others without you!

Mama thinks the slippers are a very cool Christmas present. I personally prefer the mouse and fishing pole from Grandma and Grandpa and the lambskin (okay, faux lambskin) balls from Perry and Gorden. They're slowly redeeming themselves after their own faux faux of bringing Serina into the house. Mama says I have to be extra nice to them the next time they come over because their own cat died this week.

I can do that. What a terrible thing, to lose someone so close! I wonder if they'll get another cat? I know a white one with funny looking tiger-striped spots who needs a new home . . .

No, Mama, I wasn't talking about Serina. I would never try to give her away. Honestly. But if I did, don't you think Perry and Gorden's would be a much nicer new home than the bottom of a well? I mean, their house has to be in Technicolor, right? A well would be awfully dark.

Mama is cutting me off for DUI - "dictating under the influence." Okay, I got a little carried away with the catnip mouse. But I can give it up! I can.

Next year ^o^.

May you be blessed by the love and presence of a good cat (or 2 if you must, certainly no more than 3 or 4, because you really can have too much of a good thing) in 2007. Happy New Year!

Much love,
Apollo
(as dictated to my "amamauensis")

Christmas is SEVERELY Overrated
12/21/06

I mean, really. The RELIGIOUS holiday aside - because that's very important and not what I'm complaining about - what is Christmas except a great big excuse to go crazy decorating and entertaining and locking up your cats for hours and hours and hours on end?

But before I go there, let me take a side road for a few moments of your undoubtedly valuable time this Christmas (Mama says to be inclusive and say "Holiday") season, to report on the goings on around here since I got over Bill's betrayal.

Mama came home from wherever she went after only a couple of nights, by which time I was more than happy to have her to myself in her bed. Serina slept elsewhere, probably curled up on the rug in the bathroom, for the first couple of nights. I needed that alone time because life was very stressful the entire first part of November, what with all the entertaining we did and then the friends who needed to use Mama's shower while theirs was under renovation. Don't get me wrong - I love having guests for Mama to serve, but it's still exhausting to watch her scurrying around making sure that everyone is happy.

Naturally, Mama was busy when she got back. But Mama wasn't even home for a full week before she was gone again, which meant Aunt Joanie came again. I admit, I sucked up to her a wee bit, but any human will do in a pinch and Aunt Joanie is nicer than most - except, of course, that she fawns all over Serina.

Mama came home smelling like the Richards' Kitty Vacation Spa and Tuckey. Do I need to tell you how much that hurt? But I magnanimously decided to grant her absolution before dinner because, well...because I missed her.

If I'd known what was coming, I'd have started a campaign of petty protest instead.

Mama started decorating for Christmas the day after she got home from her Thanksgiving vacation. She put up lights outside and got the tree set up in the living room. A few days later, she put up a tree in the kitchen. And she replaced the scarves in the dining room windows with lit garland. And she put lit garland on the banister.

And then the ladies came to decorate. They put candles and garland and ribbon and pinecones and glass ornaments in the windowsills and hung pinecones in the windows. They put Santas on the coffee table and greenery on the piano. They put baskets on the kitchen counters and poinsettias on the hutch in the corner. I think the only surface on the first floor that they didn't decorate was the toilet seat in the powder room! They might have if they had thought of a way to do it.

It looked beautiful. Even so, I still think I make better window dressing than the candles and garland and ribbon and pinecones and glass ornaments. I tried to prove the point to Mama, but all she did was scold me and put it all back on the windowsill. I suppose if I'd done it a second time, I might have gotten my point across, but by then Mama had covered the side table with a slippery sliding tablecloth that was just as much fun (and placement of which table allowed a view out a window) as knocking things off the windowsill.

One bit of fun I got to have at Serina's expense came once the house was pretty much decorated to the hilt. We went on our usual morning run through the house, but instead of steering the dear little idiom, kitten toward the sofa, I ran her up into the Christmas tree. I thoroughly enjoyed listening to Mama scold Serina, though when it became clear that I had been labeled as a co-conspirator, I gave her the "talk to the paw" attitude necessary to avoid unjust punishment (Serina was the one dumb enough to run into the tree; she could have changed course) and walked away.

Well, at that point, the company started coming. Church Council came for a meeting and fellowship time. A few days later, after Mama had stayed up really, really late one night to do yet more stuff in the house, a whole bunch of people came and looked at all the decorations. I am still a little wary whenever Perry and Gorden come into the house, but this time they actually greeted me first (proving that you can teach humans new tricks) AND were kittenless. They all left and Mama's friend Sandee came over with

yet more stuff - she'd brought a lot of stuff during the week before, too - and she and Mama made the kitchen look really, really nice.

And then came...

...the ultimate in practical jokes.

At least that's what I thought it was when Mama put our food tray out on the utility porch and took a heaping dish of wonderful canned food out there. Naturally, we followed her.

Imagine my dismay - nay, my horror! - when she closed the door and left us out there.

To make matters worse, for the next four hours, there were unsupervised strangers in MY house.

Mama is not qualified to supervise appropriately, so even her presence in the house didn't make it any better.

I impressed upon the little monster (Mama reluctantly says I can call her that because she called me the Orange Beast of AAAAAARRRRRRGH over at the Underbrush) that Mama was to receive the cold tail and shoulder treatment for the foreseeable future. And when Mama let us out, that's exactly what we did.

During the Open House for church people, I even chose people I didn't know over any attention from Mama, just to make the point. Mama has very nice church people, by the way - people who know how to make a fuss over such a handsome cat as yours truly. Okay, if you must know, over Serina, too. People tell us that we always look so clean and shiny that they know Mama takes good care of us.

We won't tell them about Kitty Spa nights (not to be confused with visits to the RKVS, of course), which are a large part of why we look so nice.

I digress.

I relented when Mama went to bed, long enough to make a short visit on top of her as she settled down, at any rate. But I didn't sleep with her. I figured such treatment would solidify the inappropriateness of her behavior and prevent a recurrence.

I was wrong. And worse, I fell for the food trick a second day! Color me a fool.

I howled for a while before I gave up on getting out to supervise. And then after all the hullabaloo, Mama wasn't home to ignore. By the time she got home, it was pointless to try to punish her anymore, so I gave up and crawled onto the bed with her Sunday night (really, it was Monday morning).



Mama stayed home with her feet up most of Monday, which was very nice. I was able to reassert my authority nicely without doing more than taking a nap:

Funny how Serina blends into the sheets, which are actually sage green.

It's been quiet since Monday, thankfully. Mama says that the entertaining is over for the season, but I'm hoping for a New Year's weekend trai - oops, visitor. (I'm over it, really.)

As you can see, Christmas is a major disruption in my lifestyle. I think that all the decorating and entertaining is just busy work you humans make up to stress you out more - even if I do reap complements from your crazy entertaining schedule. Christmas is overrated.

Except for the Baby in the Manger stuff. That's important. For all of God's creatures, even though we cats don't need any stories like the Nativity or like Hanukkah to bring us close to God. Not because we're cats, mind you - even I won't claim that - but because animals don't have to be taught how to be close to God. In fact, in a lot of ways, when you care for animals as pets or work animals or just in nature when they're hurt, you're really caring for God.

How's that for a profound holiday thought?

Overrated though the human celebration may be, I will say this for Christmas:

The decorations make a stunning set for a terrific portrait!



Merry Christmas and Happy Hanukkah,
Apollo
(as dictated to my "amamauensis")