



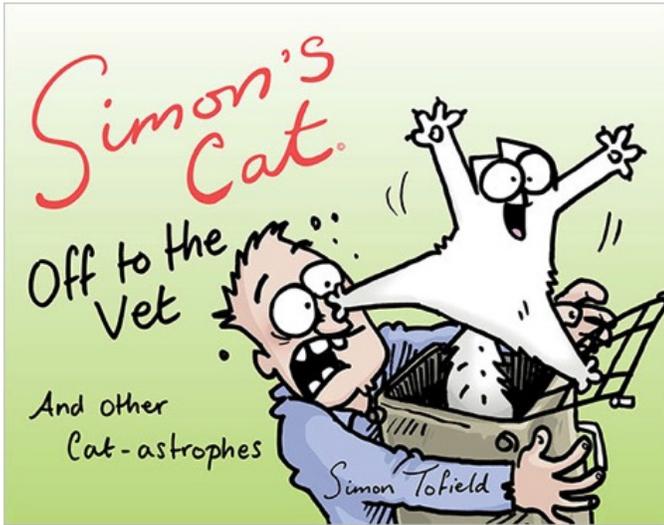
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Simon Tofield's Latest Book Might Make You Wet...Your Pants

Tue, 2015-12-29 17:50 — Robin Olson

How do you define artistic genius? For a painter, perhaps it's through tiny details carefully mastered at the tip of a brush. For a writer, it's via a rainbow of words woven into a tapestry of memorable characters, effortlessly transporting us into another world. Then there's another kind of genius, too, one that can distill an otherwise mundane or even distressing experience and turn it into a handful of hilarious, simply drawn images. That is the gift of animator-cartoonist Simon Tofield.



Simon's Cat: Off to the Vet ...and Other Cat-astrophes ^[1] is the fifth offering in the series of Simon's Cat books; featuring cartoons of none other than the rascally-catbit Simon's Cat. For those not familiar, Simon's cat® ^[2] is eternally hungry and oh-so-obsessed about how he might get himself an extra snack. Birds are his favorite target, yet he reminds us of Wile E. Coyote ^[3], who as brilliant as he thinks he is, he never quite outwits his prey. Meanwhile, it is his outlandish failures that are what keeps readers coming back for more.

What's hooked fans since 2008 when Simon's Cat first appeared in a YouTube video entitled, Cat man Do ^[4], (which has had over 56 MILLION views to date) is how on one level he's relatable and very much like every-cat, but on another, he goes to far more outrageous lengths to get what he wants. Because he's so adorable we hope he'll get it (even if it means a broken lamp or ruined sofa in the process).

Simon's Cat: Off to the Vet... is an energetic romp Tofield renders artfully in pen and ink. He captures the humor in a task cat-parents find completely dreadful—taking their cat to the Vet. With Tofield's genius as a cartoonist, each page turned is another reason to snicker, especially in scenes where Simon's Cat wrestles with wearing the dreaded cone-of-shame. Because Tofield is able to find the punchline in these moments, perhaps we can as well, the next time we're faced with wrestling our cat into the carrier for that dreaded trip to *you-know-where* in the car.



Simon's cat, forever hungry, in his iconic pose. Photo from original drawing donated to our rescue, Kitten Associates.

Simon's Cat: Off to the Vet... includes a return of our favorite characters like the Hedgehog, the Garden Gnome and the Kitten, as well as inviting a few new ones to join in the adventure. **While after four previous books it would be easy to assume we'd see the same thing over and over again, Tofield finds a way to keep the antics fresh and laugh-out-loud funny. I found myself gleefully anticipating what the next page turn would reveal.**

I particularly enjoyed the surprise at the center of the book. It reminded me of the point in the film, *The Wizard of Oz* ^[5], when Dorothy arrives in Oz and the film goes from monotone to full-color. Tofield's simple black and white line drawings are transformed by the addition of dazzling watercolors, creating a dimension not only to the look, but to the effect of the storytelling that was quite appealing.

In 2016, a full-color, fully funded (*record breaking*), [Indiegogo campaign](#) ^[6] sponsored, feature animation based on this book will debut and I can't wait to see it.

I had a chance to ask Simon Tofield a few questions about his life, the loss of one of his cats, as well as his aspirations and inspirations:

CiCH: I'm very sorry to hear of Hugh's passing at the age of 10. How did that effect your work and do you feel there might be some changes to Simon's Cat in the future as a result?

ST: Hugh was very dear to me and so his passing was very sad. I still find myself calling his name at the cat's feeding time by accident. When it rains and my other black cat Teddy's fur gets wet he looks like the spitting image of Hugh, which often catches me off guard when he comes through the cat flap. In relation to *Simon's Cat*, I draw upon all cats I have ever owned for inspiration past and present, so even though he has passed away, its nice to know that Hugh will live on in my work.

CiCH: Do you still have three cats and are you considering adding to your cat-family any time soon? If so, what sort of cat would be ideal?

ST: Yes, I still have three cats, Old jess, big Maisy and fluffy Teddy. I would love to get another cat after Hugh's passing but I also have a little nineteen-month-old boy. So the idea of having new kittens and a toddler running around the house is maybe not a good one. Although saying that, my wife and I have already agreed that when my little boy is old enough we will get another cat or two.

My favourite sort of cat is the giant Maine Coon. I love the fact they grow so big and are so gentle and friendly. Although when the time finally does come to get a new cat I think it will have to be another rescue cat from the centre.

CiCH: If Simon's Cat was a specific breed of cat what kind would he be?

ST: If Simon's cat were a breed he would probably be a British short hair. A moggie of no real breeding but with buckets of character and charm. He would also have a white coat and be slightly over weight, he would be lazy but have a very clever, calculating little mind.

CiCH: Was it after "Cat-man Do" went viral when you decided to focus your career on doing Simon's Cat or did something else occur that made you realise this was your life's calling?

ST: When I saw how much people seemed to enjoy Cat-man-Do, I really wanted to do another one. I had always loved animation and cats, so combining the two seemed like an ideal job. However, It was only when someone came up to me and offered me a book deal that I could start concentrating solely on Simon's Cat.

CiCH: **How has fame changed your life beyond improving your finances?**

ST: I have to say that my life is kind of the same as it has always been; I wouldn't really call myself Famous. I look at it as the cat is the famous one I'm just his owner who has to look after him. My life has been completely turned upside down recently though but It's due to a baby in the house, something my real cats are still coming to terms with.

CiCH: **What dreams do you have for Simon's Cat going forward?**

ST: Well I'm delighted that people still enjoy watching my cat and his antics and in that sense my dreams have already been realised. If I had wish for more, it would probably be for a TV series, I think that would be great to see him on Television.

CiCH: **It's been said you get inspiration for your art from your cats, but are there people who inspire you? Other cartoonists? Other artists?**

ST: As a boy growing up in the 80's I fell in love with the Transformers cartoon series and would often video it and watch it back to learn how to animate. I would go through each frame at a time trying to figure out how many drawings it took to do a certain movement. I used this knowledge a few years later when I discovered the magic of making flipbooks at college. So from quite an early age I was hooked on animation. Having dyslexia I found reading quite a struggle as a child so tended to draw everything instead, this of course has helped me greatly in later life. I tended not really to look at other peoples work as I was too busy scribbling my own stuff but in my twenties I discovered Gary Larson and his Far Side cartoons [71]. It always amazed me how he could create so many funny situations with HILARIOUS CHARACTERS. I certainly looked up to him as an Artist for sure. Another Artist who I greatly admired was Bill Watterson and his charming Calvin and Hobbes [8] series, pure genius.

CiCH: **You have a great gift for being able to take an uncomfortable subject, like the struggle most cat-parents have, to get their cat to the Vet and show the humour in it in just a few images. Are there any aspects of living with cats that you don't feel you'd want to explore in Simon's Cat?**

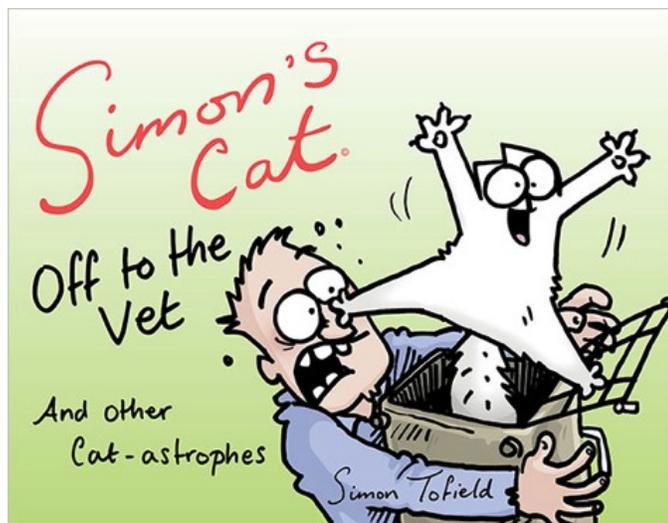
ST: Well there are certain aspects of living with cats that probably wouldn't make great topics to draw. A few years ago I would have said the whole litter tray scenario but I have found myself going there and it's actually quite funny. I have always had a great love of wildlife and birds in particular. I have a little rule that Simon's cat although he tries very hard never actually catches or kills a bird. I would like to say the same about mice but He has eaten a mouse in the past and showed the remains to Simon. I try to base Simon's Cat as much as I can in real life and this is just one of those things cats do.

CiCH: **When will the animation be airing of "Simon's Cat Off to the Vet" ?**

ST: We plan to realise the 'Off to the Vet' in 2016.

CiCH: **What is your favorite body part on a cat? (I love big fluffy cat bums)**

ST: My favorite cat body part has to be the tail; I think it's a window into the mind of the cat. Every emotion can be picked up by the subtle little movements and shape of the tail. I use this a lot in my animations and illustrations. Cats are really great for cartoons because they can say so much with their body language; they are all visual in their feelings, perfect for drawing. You can draw a cat and let everyone know how that cat is feeling with out writing a single word. This is probably the reason why there are so many cartoon felines.



Simon's Cat: Off to the Vet...and Other Cat-astrophes ^[1] is available NOW from your favorite bookseller. It lists for \$27.95 (hardcover) and \$16.95 (paperback).

If you'd like to WIN a copy (paperback) of Simon's Cat: Off to the Vet...and Other Cat-astrophes simply leave a comment here and tell us what your cat does when you try to take him, her or all of them to the vet. Funniest comment judged by me wins. I have TWO copies to giveaway so there will be two winners. Deadline to enter is December 31, 2015 at 11:11 PM Eastern Standard Time. **Please only one comment/entry per person.** All comments are MODERATED to prevent SPAM so it may take some time for your comment to appear, but since they are time stamped I'll know if your entry is within the deadline once you send it in.

FTC DISCLAIMER: I was given a copy of this book to review, but I was not paid for this post in any way. These are my sentiments and opinions only (other than where Mr. Tofield is quoted). Your mileage may vary.

BIG NEWS FOR SIMON'S CAT FANS. We're going to be auctioning off an ORIGINAL SIMON'S CAT drawing, done in-person by Simon Tofield. Proceeds will go to our rescue, Kitten Associates ^[9]. Special thanks to Simon Tofield and Ingrid King for their generosity in giving us this fabulous drawing of Simon's cats (*featuring Hugh!*).

STAY TUNED for INFO ON HOW TO BID ON THIS MASTERPIECE! If you'd like to get on our mailing list to find out when it will be available for bidding, sign up for our Newsletter through the Kitten Associates web site. ^[9] or email us at [info @ kittenassociates.org](mailto:info@kittenassociates.org) (remove spaces after "info" and before "kitten" for proper address.



We are beyond thrilled to be able to offer this drawing for sale to raise funds for our rescue efforts. Sadly we could not get our auction going by the time this review posted due to Holiday insanity but it should be up just after the New Year.

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Links

- [1] <http://simonscat.com/blog/off-to-the-vet-and-other-cat-astrophies/>
- [2] <https://simonscat.com/category/simonscat/>
- [3] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wile_E._Coyote_and_The_Road_Runner
- [4] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0ffwDYo00Q>
- [5] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Wizard_of_Oz_\(1939_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Wizard_of_Oz_(1939_film))
- [6] <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/simon-s-cat-in-off-to-the-vet#/>
- [7] <http://www.thefarside.com/>
- [8] <http://www.calvinandhobbes.com/>
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