

# FAT PETS

BY TERRY TODD

Unpublished Poems, Circa 1983

*Preface: During the late 1970s, Terry and I met and became friends with artist Julie Speed and her husband, the musician Fran Christina, who lived near us in rural Nova Scotia. Fran and Julie moved back to the States as he began playing with the Texas blues band, The Fabulous Thunderbirds, and they later settled in Austin where we also moved in 1983. We spent a good bit of time with Fran and Julie in the 1980s, and somewhere in those early years, Terry and Julie thought it would be fun to collaborate on a children's book that they began unofficially calling "Fat Pets." It was a great idea, but sadly, didn't quite get off the ground. Terry wrote eight poems and Julie created three original illustrations for the sample they sent to Terry's literary agent in New York. His agent loved the project but failed to find a publisher for it, and so none of the poems or illustrations have ever been published until now.*

*Julie and Fran now live in Marfa, Texas, where she is still working on her art which has evolved in extraordinary ways. Her far more sophisticated paintings, constructions, and collages are now collected and exhibited by museums and sold by upscale galleries in New York. To see Julie's current work visit: [www.juliespeed.com](http://www.juliespeed.com). I guarantee you'll be impressed.*

~ Jan Todd



## THE DRAGON

So deep in the woods that he's real hard to find  
Lives a great scaly beast, with a scaly behind  
And a scaly before, and a scaly between  
He's just scaly all over, you know what I mean.

I feed him on motor oil, ten tubs a day  
It keeps his scales shiny; he likes them that way  
He sucks the oil up through a huge hollow log  
And he sometimes blows bubbles and acts like a hog.

But if he gets too many tubfuls you see  
It can make lots of trouble, for him and for me  
For besides the high shine that the oil gives his scales  
It tends to ignite his enormous entrails.

And then you can hear the fire blazing within  
His scales being rather remarkably thin  
And out of his nostrils and mouth billows smoke  
And God help the person who tells him a joke.

Because when he laughs, the fire shoots right out  
Right up through his throat and his mouth and his snout  
It was only last month, when a man with a lisp  
Told my dragon a joke and was burned to a crisp.

So, I'm awfully careful to feed him just ten  
Of those tubfuls of oil, knowing full well  
That when I forget and he guzzles one more  
His laugh will turn into a giant flamethrower

But wouldn't you know it, I fouled up again  
Last Saturday morning, I'm sure it was then  
I'm sure cause of what happened later, you see  
To my family's den and our color tv.

I was groggy, I guess, when I woke up at seven  
And filled up the tubs, cause I filled up eleven  
Which he emptied, of course, amazingly soon  
Then we went to the den to observe a cartoon.

Roadrunner was on, and the coyote as well  
And I got so absorbed that I never did smell





**"The Dragon" by Julie Speed, 1983**

All the smoke pouring out of my pet dragon's belly  
But I'll bet you can guess what became of our telly.

So if I find a dragon that drinks motor oil  
I'll tell you straight off that there's nothing will spoil  
A Saturday morning in front of your set  
Like an overoiled, scaly and chuckling pet.

But still I adore him, the big scaly wart  
He's burned his huge way deep inside of my heart  
And I'll tell you what happened, but please, keep it quiet

It all has to do with his motor oil diet.

What happened began when I went back to school  
And my new teacher made me feel just like a fool  
Whether spelling or writing or finding a sum  
Whatever it was, she made me look dumb.

So next time I knew we would have show and tell  
I oiled my big dragon and oiled him real well  
And I brought him to school, right into my class  
But my teacher just glared and then jumped up real fast.



She shouted at me, and she yelled, "Go outside!  
You can't bring that thing with his big scaly hide."  
But just then I noticed he'd started to smoke  
So I turned him to face her and told him a joke.

We have a new teacher now, Mrs. McBrice  
I like her just fine, cause she treats me so nice  
She's good to the class and she never does yell  
Do you think that she's heard of our last show and tell?

### THE MAGICAT

Come along if you will to a secret place  
Only known to my cat and me,  
We must be quiet, let's all hold hands  
And go there, just we three.

It's not so far, we'll need no car,  
It's right beneath the stair  
Although no matter how you'd search  
You'd never find it there.

You never would, unless of course  
You were wise as wise can be,  
Or you went with old Catullus,  
My Magicat, and me.

Even I could never see it  
When by myself I'd look,  
I'd stare and stare beneath the stair  
At every hole and nook.

But nothing could I find there,  
No hint nor clue nor trace  
To help me solve the puzzle  
And get in the secret place.

And when I asked Catullus,  
His method to reveal,  
He arched his back and said to me,  
"But first I'd like a meal.

So kindly bring a dozen shrimp

And a dozen scallops too,  
And half a pound of good ground round  
And a cup of oyster stew.

And while you're up now, if you please,  
Would answer my last dream,  
If in a silver saucer  
You would pour some Devon cream."

And when I'd finally got it fixed,  
He spread it round just right,  
He nibbled this and sampled that,  
He savored every bite.

He took an hour to eat the food  
And saved the cream til last,  
You see, when old Catullus eats,  
He's anything but fast.

And though I nagged him terribly,  
"Please hurry," I implored,  
He looked at me from lidded eyes  
And lapped his cream still slower.

And when he'd finally finished  
And to the stairs I'd raced  
Catullus stayed right where he was  
And calmly washed his face.

But just when I was giving up  
And going on to bed,  
Catullus strolled out through the door  
With slow and measured tread.

"Come over here," he said to me,  
"And walk just as I walk,  
And be as silent as you can,  
It's not a time for talk."

So with my Magicat I went,  
I made myself slow down,  
And when I took a step too soon  
He'd freeze me with a frown.

It seemed at last we went so slow  
We didn't move at all,  
I felt my head get lighter,  
And thought that I might fall.

So fiercely did I focus  
On trying not to race,  
I didn't even notice  
We were in the secret place.

"Catullus!" I began to shout,  
You clever, clever cat,  
We've come inside the secret place,  
Now how did we do that?"

He looked at me and seemed to smile,  
He fluffed his lustrous hide  
And sat and said, "I'll tell you  
How we came to be inside."

"We got inside," he said to me,  
Because we took it slow,  
We didn't rush or hurry,  
We simply let life flow.

One thing you must remember  
When you come to be full grown,  
Is not to dance to other's tunes  
But only to your own.

Take no man as your master,  
Let no one set your pace  
And you will find the whole wide world  
Can be a secret place."

With that he slowly stood back up  
And fixed me with a wink  
And said, "I'm just a cat, you know,  
So who cares what I think."

And then with regal grace he stretched  
And headed toward the door  
And said, "That cream was splendid,  
I'd like one saucer more."

## THE MOOSE

Some folks have budgies for palling around,  
And some folks have kittens or frogs,  
And some folks keep goldfish and turtles and things  
While some folks own parrots or dogs.



"The Magicat" by Julie Speed, 1983

Some, so they say, gladly spend all their pay  
Buying feed for their horses and goats,  
While others go hungry for bacon and ham  
Cause they form deep attachments to shoats.

It is said that some people keep boas,  
Even cheetahs and leopards and loons  
Not to mention chinchillas and half-grown gorillas  
And beautifully bottomed baboons.

But I've got those folks beat to pieces.  
They just shrug and then say, "What's the use,  
To try and keep up with a man who was able  
To corner the market on moose."

So I never go down to the feed store  
For barley or oats or baled hay.  
I just keep my house loaded with goodies  
Cause I love her and want her to stay.