

Our Siamese Cat, or Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics of Mahra

By Walter Rufus Eagles and Marilu Holmes Eagles, August 1999



Portrait of Her Serenity Mahra Ensconed in Warm Laundry. July 1999.

[MARILU] Walter and I live to please our Siamese (or so Mahra believes . . .) No one would be able to convince her otherwise.

Mahra is, strictly speaking, a cat with an attitude and delusions of grandeur! She kindly condescends to allow us to share her home and provide for her needs. My brother Bill would understand the fact that the Siamese is a different breed of cat that even other cats don't quite comprehend. (Actually our house cats can be downright *catty* toward her.) Walter is absolutely devoted to Mahra and she rides around on his left shoulder like a queen surveying her Queendom. (Of course you probably know that pedigreed Siamese are cross-eyed, which further intensifies her stare -- definitely unsettling when you are on the

receiving end of her scrutinizing gaze. She obviously reads our minds, which convinces me that ESP really means *extra Siamese perception*.)

Walter gets daily workouts, thanks to Mahra. He crumples up paper to form balls, tossing them to her and she bats them back to him -- extending either her left or right paw with perfect precision. She can be very selective, however, and will decide when she considers the "ball" unacceptable or out of her range. Sometimes she will skyrocket after a high flyer and chase it around the room, but it is beneath her dignity to "fetch" those balls that scatter. Occasionally she will return with a mangled wad of paper dangling from her mouth, which she drops close to Walter. (HINT! HINT!) She will patiently sit and stare cross-eyed at him until he surrenders and dutifully retrieves enough paper balls so that they can resume their game. Naturally, Mahra decides when she is bored, then the competition is officially over.

Many people are not partial to cats and many who are partial to them suffer from allergies relating to cat dander, which is sad. Then there are those people who normally like cats, but freely admit that they strongly dislike any version resembling the *Siamese*. (Usually they speak from experience and will mention that those cats are either mean or crazy or both . . .) Having had both the pleasure and misfortune of dealing firsthand with Mahra, I respectfully acknowledge anyone who honestly confesses their hesitation toward cats in general and the Siamese in particular. (Forget ownership if you prefer to control a creature.) Remember, it requires patience and time and effort akin to developing a taste for fine wine. If you don't want to invest that kind of time, get a dog. Dogs, as a species, are predictable, reliable and anxious to please. They also shower you with saliva and *tail-wagging* approval! To each their own. However, if you love a mystery and resist boredom, then you will find yourself enchanted and partial toward the feline species referred to as Siamese. And I wish you **GOOD LUCK!**

- Marilu

[WALTER] Last night, because she is in estrus, I put Mahra in my office: otherwise she wouldn't have been the only one to get no sleep. I had inadvertently left the WordPerfect software open to an empty page (the computer itself stays "on" 24 hours a day). During the night she typed the following letter, which was awaiting me this morning when I let her out to share the usual coffee and scone in bed with Marilu and me:

47

*

]]]]'*???

]]]]]]]]]]9*

Analysis:


Notice the paragraph breaks (extra blank line). Either Mahra entered a hard paragraph return after each and every one of the first three lines; or else she went into the software itself and set the bloody thing on double space. Furthermore, one can only type a question mark by depressing the shift key and then touching the letter key itself. True, the two keys are adjacent to each other. But how does one explain *three* question marks, unless she was more nervous than usual because of the estrus and stuttered? There is something puzzling about the first line. What is the meaning of the cryptic numerological symbol 47? If I apply standard mathematical number theory then the symbol itself is equivalent to the number 21 (47 minus 26) by casting out 26's instead of nines. The 21st letter of the alphabet is the letter U. Where does that leave us? I'm not sure.

The last two characters of the ultimate line do not puzzle me: indeed, I am terrified. There is something apocalyptic about the penultimate character, number 9, the last distinct character of our number system. One is reminded of "The Restaurant at the End of the Universe" from *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. As if this isn't grave enough, the final character is an asterisk. An asterisk! It means only one thing in typography: See *Below*. This invitation for the reader to peer over the lip of the vast abyss into the first turning of the first stair of Dante's Inferno, I find somewhat disconcerting. However, having understood that the bell tolls for me, I think I am going to redouble my efforts to find Mahra a Siamese male. I have been warned.

I should point out that she saved the file as 2222.wpd (she only had to type the two's, but how in the world did she access File Menu and File Save?) Finally, the nearly impossible last thing: the first image on the computer screen this morning was the Print Menu. As it happened, the LaserJet had been out of paper, so the print job had come to naught. In passing I might note that she had apparently ordered only one copy of the letter from the printer (she is uncommonly penurious). When I canceled the print job this morning, I saw the underlying letter reproduced above.

I do solemnly swear before Almighty God and all the Angels and Saints that the above is true, correct and complete to the best of my knowledge, under penalty of perjury (except for the bit about penury), and improbable as it may sound

- Walter

A Siamese cat with dark brown points and a light cream body is sitting on a white scanner. The cat is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a wooden desk surface.

11/5/99

**MAHRA
WAITING**
ON SCANNER
TO CATCH A
WAD OF PAPER