

THE CATS

Last night I walked past my neighbor's cats. They were sitting on the porch steps, hunched up like gargoyles. I was on the sidewalk and I stopped to look at them. One was black and one was white. I stood for a moment and we regarded each other from across the lawn. Then I craned my neck to get a better look. What is happening here, I asked the cats. A little bit of everything, they said.

— Laton Carter

Eugene OR

19th HOLE CONDOM POEM

Failed poet completes "19th Hole Condom Poem," about a light green condom with a little flag on top. For it to work, its wearer must yell "Fore" when he climaxes.

The poem is published and receives attention from an influential group of editors interested in poetry, golf, and kinky sex. It's chosen as one of the best poems of the year. One critic feels it's an "attack on the sensibility of the idle rich;" another views it as a metaphor for the "failure of the American imagination, the symbol of the 19th Hole equal in resonance to Melville's White Whale."

The poet's luck changes; all his work is published. No longer do poems come back wrinkled or with coffee stains. No longer do editors write, "This isn't poetry, it's truth," or "We're not into nature, we publish only working-class poems."

He's even offered a full professorship at a major university. He hardly teaches, and is surrounded by women in black linen dresses who write poems to their dead fathers. He makes friends with other writers, reads his poetry at their colleges for \$1000 a shot. He's frequently interviewed, asked what sock he puts on first in the morning.

He enjoys all this tremendously, until suddenly he's unable to write. He gets fat, develops prostate problems, and talks too much. But he has tenure, a year's membership in the golf club, and new students will be arriving in the fall in search of the author of the now-famous "19th Hole Condom Poem."