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## 2 Poems

John-Michael Bloomquist

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## 2 POEMS

John-Michael Bloomquist

### The Parable of St. Francis and Félicette

St. Francis can talk to animals, but he believes they can read his mind. Sparrows sing his silent psalms, monkeys dance his holy joy, but cats purr the rough waters of his distressed mind, calming him with each caress, dreaming away his worries in their naps.

When French astronomers found Félicette, a stray tuxedo cat, on the streets of Paris, they took her home to their lab and inserted electrodes into her brain, installed a phone socket that protruded from her marble forehead. A cord running from her skull was hooked up to a computer that recorded and amplified her brainwaves as squiggly lines, little white fish swimming and scattering on a black screen.

Félicette was sealed in a snug white plastic box with her head sticking out, a cat carrier bag designed for a long, hard journey. She was inserted into a dark metal tube and secured in the cone of a rocket. The astronomers launched her 100 miles into the air so they could record what five minutes of weightlessness did to a brain similar to ours. Félicette wasn't surprised. She knew we've been sending cats to the heavens since the Egyptians placed their prayers in the paws of their mummified pets, even breaking kitten necks when the call was urgent. After she came back from space, the men who studied the heavens killed her, cutting open her brain to examine the electrodes.

St. Francis wants to know if Félicette felt the same change he did when he went from being the vessel of prayer to the message itself. *It is just as painful to ferry prayers, she says, as it is to be the prayer disseminated and dissected.*

### The Parable of St. Francis and Tetra, the First Cloned Monkey

After his crusade against his neighbors in Perugia, his capture and imprisonment, St. Francis became two men. One terrified of what he had done, another taken up in the raptures of who he was becoming close to. Both lived within him and like nuclear fusion mushrooming a miniature sun; this tension radiated his love for nature and sanctified him.

Half the saint has always thought himself unworthy, while the other half had gone beyond, permeating the world like hot water around a tea bag, seeping out the flavor and color that revives as it enters another body.

Tetra was split in half when she was eight cells old to become two genetically identical sacks of embryos.

St. Francis wants to be like Christ, two natures in one, but he cannot talk to Christ, the echo within the silence living within. So he asks the monkey, Tetra: do you feel the gap of being half of another? Or do you feel as if the two you became is better off with each other in this double life?

Tetra, looking like every other rhesus macaque to those who do not have eyes to see, says, *I am a simian among simians; there is no truer self than that for us, cousin sapien.*

John-Michael Bloomquist lives in DC with his wife, son, and his needy black cat, Zbigniew Herbert the IX. He is the author of the forthcoming collection, *Rocket Celestial (White Stag, 2023)*. He was an editor of *Poems from the Jail Dorm*, a collection of incarcerated men's poetry. His poetry has been published in *Heavy Feather Review*, *The Michigan Quarterly Review*, and *Third Coast*, among others, and he has been anthologized in *And Blue Will Rise Over Yellow: An International Poetry Anthology for Ukraine* (Kallisto Gaia Press, 2023) He can be found at [www.john-michaelbloomquist.com](http://www.john-michaelbloomquist.com).

