

# New Life for Felines and Their Family

BY BOB INGRAM



“Snoepje and the Pizza Box” is the first in a cat-centric series to be known as “The Adventures of Yin & Yang,” who are two aging felines sharing a cozy, loving Minnesota life with Antoine and Sara, a childless couple who “met and married later in life,” according to the book’s first sentence.

Written by Susan Hermse Schaefer, illustrated by Michael Bower Putman, and ably translated into Dutch by Julliet van der Aa, “Snoepje and the Pizza Box” is being published simultaneously in America and The Netherlands, and the text is in both English and Dutch, an unusual and fetching arrangement, much like the book itself, which is a charming, comfortable, and straightforward account of how Yin and Yang get their cat-mojo back with the arrival of a cuddly female kitten named “Snoepje” - pronounced “SNOOP-yuh” - which is the Dutch diminutive for “sweetie.” Snoepje is named by Antoine, who is a Dutch philosopher and a comparative newcomer to the wide, welcoming world of cat-lovers. He makes up for lost time by falling head-over-heels for the cats in his quiet, studious life.

Most cat-owners (although who ever heard of really “owning” a cat?) wish their cats could talk, and Yin and Yang, as drawn by Michael Bower Putman, seem perpetually on the verge of voicing their cat thoughts. Indeed, in one full-page drawing toward the end of the tale, “the boys” tongues form small hearts in their mouths, as if indicating the sweetness of their dispositions. Putman has achieved the double stroke of making Yin and Yang almost human

**Book Review:** *The Adventures of Yin & Yang: Snoepje and the Pizza Box: An Illustrated Book* Written by Susan Hermse Schaefer, [www.MuseRiverProductions.com](http://www.MuseRiverProductions.com) Illustrated by Michael Bower Putman, [www.putmanillustration.com](http://www.putmanillustration.com) Translated into Dutch by Julliet van der Aa Unpaged, Muse River Productions, printed by Dog Ear Publishing Available from Amazon, Barnes & Noble, US: \$14.99

in their expressions and actions while maintaining their essential feline natures. You know he’s a cat guy and what he’s done in the way of character and design verges on high art.

Author Susan Hermse Schaefer has ostensibly penned a tale of feline - and human - rejuvenation, but “Snoepje and the Pizza Box,” like any worthy children’s book, goes beyond its stated theme and enlarges on it, in this case to considerations of human kindness, human cruelty, and the love and caring inherent in both people and animals. It is also about following your dream, as it is the search for the kitten of Antoine and Sara’s dreams that lends the book its dynamic tension.

Schaefer has wisely placed her story in surroundings that are familiar to readers young and old; the denouncement, for instance, takes place in a pizza parlor, a setting that rings true whether in Minnesota or Holland. Pizza has become as universal as cat fancy.

“The Adventures of Yin and Yang: Snoepje and the Pizza Box” is dedicated to both the cats and Schaefer’s late husband, Martijn Anna Antonius Hermse, the model for Antoine, who would agree, Schaefer says in the dedication, with Jean Cocteau’s pronouncement that “I love cats because I enjoy my home; and little by little, they become its visible soul.”

That soul is luminously visible in this warm, touching book.

Bob Ingram is the author of the short story collection “Sun Songs” and is the co-producer, co-writer and narrator of the documentary film “Boardwalk.” He has written for more than 20 publications in a career that spans almost fifty years.