

**The Demolished Man**  
**Richard Corfield**  
**Birman Cat Club Magazine**

I am undone. My beautiful Errol is dead.



It happened on Independence Day 4<sup>th</sup> July 2014 - a bitter irony since Errol was American. Since Easter he had been slowing down and when I found him one day, lying morose in his litter tray, eyes open but too listless to move, I knew that something was seriously awry.

His bowels had not been working properly for some time and part of our daily life together was for me to give him his enema. Something that I would once never have believed myself capable of I did willingly for him. Neither of us enjoyed it, but strangely it seemed to reinforce the bond between us. Such intimacy between two species served to emphasise our commonality as equal citizens of planet Earth.

And then came the peeing in inappropriate places - specifically under my desk. My solution was simply to put down some incontinence pads and let him get on with it.

Once again, it was not the most pleasant of tasks, but I loved - and love Errol - with an intensity that my words cannot do justice too. I did not mind.

Eventually the day came when Errol looked so ill that I took him to the vet. A day later, at 7.20 in the morning on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2014, I got the call that he had had a seizure and had died in the arms of the vet who was trying to resuscitate him.

I am undone.

\*

Errol was born on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1996 to a breeder in Del Ray Beach, Florida. My brother-in-law Andy had fallen in love with him. The breeder made clear that he was not to be used for breeding and so, at the earliest opportunity Andy had had him neutered. Which turned out to be a pity since, a few days afterwards the breeder phoned and asked - since he had turned into such a perfect specimen of Birman masculinity - whether she could use him for stud.

Errol lived in a private community in Palm Beach Gardens in the centre of the PGA national golf course. Community rules meant that he was not allowed out of the house which was probably wise since the area was infested with alligators that lay submerged in the many water features that were part of the golf course.

But Andy would take Errol out for long walks in the Florida sunshine, cuddled in his arms and then they would go home and enjoy the air conditioning together. During the late nineties Errol attended many, many shows all across the south of America from Florida to Georgia to Texas and almost invariably came in the top two. He

really should have been allowed to breed - not least because I would now be scouring America for one of his descendants to bring home.

After Andy's wife left him she tried to send Errol back to the breeder but Andy would not have it. Errol and Greebo (Andy's Persian) had become inseparable and anyhow Andy was not the kind of man to knuckle under to bloody-minded spite. Errol stayed with Andy and even after Greebo died loved him and pampered him until his own tragic death from leukaemia on Christmas Day 2010.

It was then that I arrived on the scene, turning up very late one night at Andy's home to start sorting out the consequences of his death. The house, when I entered, was littered with remainders of the little furry Birman who had lived and loved there; toys everywhere, little rolled up balls of paper, expensive cat food. But Errol was nowhere to be seen, having been taken into the vets who was a personal friend of Andy.

I found Errol at the vets and within moments of meeting him was smitten. Fortunately Andy had made sure that Errol's inoculations were up to date so it was easy for me to bring him home to our house in England.

And for the next three and a half years I had the pleasure of loving Errol. He would follow me around the house as went about my daily business of writing, sit on the end of my desk dozing under my desk lamp and taking his meals there with me. In the early morning, as I woke from my slumbers, Errol would jump in beside me, curl up under the bedclothes and cuddle me.

I felt needed in a way that I had not since the children were young.

I knew of course that he was old and that his days were numbered but I consoled myself with the final line of Ridley Scott's classic movie *Blade Runner*, "We didn't know how long we would have together, but then again, who does?"

And now he is gone.

And I am undone.

-oOo-