

**STAR KA'ATS ARE** members of a highly intelligent race of felines from the planet Zimimorrah. In *Star Ka'at World*, these fantastic felines blast off from Earth carrying two human children with them on their space craft. These Ka'ats look exactly like Earth cats, but they can communicate mind-to-mind (a skill cat lovers have often suspected regular Earth-bound felines of having).

Star Ka'ats are figments of the fertile imagination of Andre Norton, internationally acclaimed author of science fiction, fantasy and historical novels. *Star Ka'at World*, written with Dorothy Madlee, is the sequel to *Star Ka'at*. Both books are part of Walker and Company's science fiction for young readers series. With outer space stories making big entertainment news lately, Ms. Norton's Ka'ats should easily capture the imagination of the eight-to-twelve set.

Andre Norton lives in an unpretentious house in Central Florida with six feline friends (from Siamese to Burmese to Abyssinian to Persian) and a 3000-book library containing many cat-related volumes. She has authored an astonishing 82 books, and her words have been translated into ten languages (including Portuguese and Arabic). Ranked with the great science fiction writers Heinlein, Asimov and Clarke, Ms. Norton received the 1978 J.R.R. Tolkien Award for Achievement in Fantasy. Known as the Gandalf (after Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* wizard), the award statuette is displayed atop the television in her Florida living room.



Andre Norton has used other animals in her science fiction books, but claims "the cats seem to be the most popular." In the book *Catseye*, Ms. Norton said, "telepathic cats are used in the future as spies being planted on people to retell what they see and hear." In her very first science fiction book, *Star Man's Son*, the hero uses "a mutant cat, with whom he can communicate telepathically, as a fellow explorer." A desert cat was used in both of the Andre Norton volumes *The Beast Master* and *Lord of Thunder*.

In *The Breed to Come*, the world is taken over by a race of supercats after man has withdrawn. The premise of *Iron Cage* is that man might one day find himself an inferior animal to another species "and be treated with the same brutality that we treat laboratory animals," the writer told me.

But Andre Norton doesn't have to step outside her door to research the feline character for her writings. She has vivid memories of all the cats who are and were once members of the household.

The first was Timmy. "Timmy was always top cat around here," she explained. He had certain areas of the house staked out as "his territory"—one place being the desk top in the bedroom window. He died in 1974, but the other cats still respect his territory today.

Su-Li is the only cat who fraternized with Timmy. She's a Burmese whose name means "brown girl" in Chinese. Su-Li is a great conversationalist. Once she gets started, it's impossible to get away for at least

fifteen minutes. If you try to escape before she is finished, she will follow you from room to room, talking in a voice as big as Ethel Merman's.

Moses first belonged to Ms. Norton's niece, but he chose to eat and spend his leisure time at the Norton household. "He had been trying to move in, but Timmy wouldn't let him" she explained. When Timmy died, Moses finally came to stay. "The other cats did not resent him at all."

Mei-Li-Te and Mi Tang, Siamese sister and brother whose names mean "beautiful court lady" and "honey sugar" in Chinese, were adopted in 1972.

Punch, an eleven-year-old Tabby Persian, is currently the oldest member of the Norton feline family. Punch is very fond of sleeping on the author's working desk in the library and tends to be shy, although she loves to be petted. Her feet are tipped with white, so she looks as if she were wearing saddle oxfords.


Ping Chu ("icicle") and Chan Shih ("warrior") are two Siamese brothers with interesting Chinese names who came to the Norton home in the spring of 1976. Their favorite pastime, upon finding a file cabinet drawer open, is to file themselves under M for Mischiefous.

Ty and Toth, Abyssinian brother and sister cats, were adopted in May 1977. Their names are Egyptian in origin, Ty having been a queen of the thirteenth dynasty, and Toth the name of the Egyptian god of learning. Before Ty could be spayed, it was found that she was expecting. She gave birth to two females: Neher ("beautiful") and Maat ("goddess of truth").

The Norton cats reside in a lovely enclosed patio, where they can enjoy fresh air and sunshine, but are completely protected from the outside world. Ms. Norton had believed in letting the cats run loose, but the deaths and disappearances of some of the precious ones she had just described to me prompted her to restrict them to this comfortable confinement.

Aside from her busy writing chores, Ms. Norton belongs to an Orlando humane group called Pet Concern. When people can't afford the full price of neutering or spaying their pets, Pet Concern helps out.

"I get a great many letters," Andre Norton told me. "People send me pictures of their cats and say that they read and enjoyed a particular book and they ask me questions about my cats. Most writers are cat-minded and a great many writers write and send me pictures of their cats. The majority of writers I know own cats and even breed cats."

It was time for me to go, and as I prepared to leave, the cats were gathering around their dishes in the kitchen for dinner. I wished then that I had the telepathic powers Andre Norton gave to her Star Ka'ats. Then, through mind contact, I could have told them how very fortunate they were to be in the care of such a loving person. As they looked up at me, I had the funny feeling that they already knew. 

## STAR KA'AT CREATOR: ANDRE NORTON

by Becky Donaldy Pohle

*Meet Andre Norton—writer of fantastic science fiction and a feline fan too—then experience the opening passage from her newest space cat saga on the next page.*



Star Ka'at Mer tells the earth children the history of her space cat race through mental telepathy, in this Dorothy Madlee drawing from *Star Ka'at World*.

## LANDING ON ZIMMORRAH

A WIND BLEW the grasses so they bowed and rustled, while overhead hung a warm sun. But the sky—it was not blue with puffs of white clouds. No, it was instead faintly green. And those grasses which rustled and bowed were a very much darker green than Jim Evans had ever seen, with here and there a blade of bright yellow brown. Topping those were five-petaled flowers as pale as the sky.

The boy drew a deep, deep breath. This air was—different. There were smells he had known all his life that were not there. Others he had not sniffed before were. He looked around him warily. Those many small strange differences more and more crowded out the things he had always known, making him feel, for the first time since he left his home world, a little afraid.

A short distance away, Elly Mae Brown threw wide her arms as if she would like to hug the grass and all of this strange world of Zimmorrah close to her.

"Jus' fine. No dirty buildings, no old smelly places. It's like Granny's place in the country!" she cried out with a soft laugh. "I do believe this here must be some sorta dream! I never no ways 'spected we would come to such a fine, fine place as this!"

"But—it's different," Jim protested

From the book *Star Ka'at World* by Andre Norton and Dorothy Madlee. Copyright © 1978 by Andre Norton and Dorothy Madlee. Used with permission of the publisher, Walker & Co.

uneasily. "You never saw green sky, did you? And look there," he pointed to one of the flowers, "or green flowers either. Now did you?"

"Maybe so, I didn't," Elly agreed. "Only I don't see why one world has got to be jus' like another. This here's Mer's world, an' Tiro's. And I think it's super!"

Jim turned his head a fraction to glance back at the small space shuttle from which they had just crawled into this new day. Tiro, his black coat shining to the last hair, and Mer with her drab grey and white, were watching the children intently from the open hatch. Tiro was not a cat (though Jim found it very hard not to think of him as such). Rather, he was a Ka'at, the descendant of a race—hundreds and hundreds of years old—of space explorers.

Jim, a little afraid of all this strangeness, felt a warm touch from Tiro's mind. "There is no need for worry, cubling. All is right for us—and for you."

He turned his head to look at the big black Ka'at, and Tiro's green eyes were friendly. Jim felt better. Sure, this could be a very strange world in many ways, but one would expect that. Tiro and Mer had promised to look after him and Elly Mae, and he was sure that they would.

Once, a very long time ago, Ka'ats had come to Jim and Elly's own planet

Earth and found people there with whom they could talk mind to mind, so that Ka'at and human could exchange knowledge. Ka'ats came to live with the humans in temples and homes where they were treated with honor and respect.

Then—men had changed. There were wars, and during them the few who could "mind-talk" with the Ka'ats had been killed when their enemy looted the temples and the city. Ka'ats who still lived with men changed, too. They had had to, or they would have all died. They learned to hunt for their food, to fight, to kill—to be more like man and less like Ka'at. Ka'ats who still roamed space thought of Earth as a trap, a place of evil where there were always wars and bad things happening to man and animal alike.

A short time ago a new party had come into power among the Ka'ats. They had re-explored Earth and watched man foolishly poison his air, spoil the land, kill in wars. And they came to believe that it was right to rescue as many of their long-ago kin, the earth cats, as they could.

They had landed their small ferry ships all about Jim's world, hurrying because they were sure that man was heading for a last and terrible war. And from those ships they had sent out field scouts to locate those of Earth who still could receive the Ka'at mind-calls.

Tiro and Mer had been two of those scouts. Tiro had come to Jim because he needed a "home" where he might stay while he searched for those he would rescue. Just as Mer had chosen Elly Mae.

But then something very strange had happened, something the Ka'ats had not counted on. It had been so long since they could mind-talk with men that they did not even try very hard any more. But Jim had been able to pick up Tiro's name, and to know when the big black cat was safe. And Elly Mae had been even easier for Mer to contact.

Perhaps it was because Jim had been so unhappy since his parents were killed in a plane crash, felt so alone in the foster home (even though the Dales had been good to him), that he could understand Tiro a little. And Elly Mae—she had been alone, too. When her Granny died she had no one but Mer.

It was Elly Mae, hunting for Mer through a bad storm at night, who had led Jim to the hidden space shuttle ship and had gone aboard, Jim with her. The other Ka'ats had wanted to make Jim and Elly leave, but when first Mer and then Tiro claimed the children their kin and agreed to accept responsibility for their actions, the children were allowed to go with the Ka'ats. So when one of the big rescue ships had swung out of orbit around the planet Earth, Jim and Elly were taken on board. 