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Chiaroscuro

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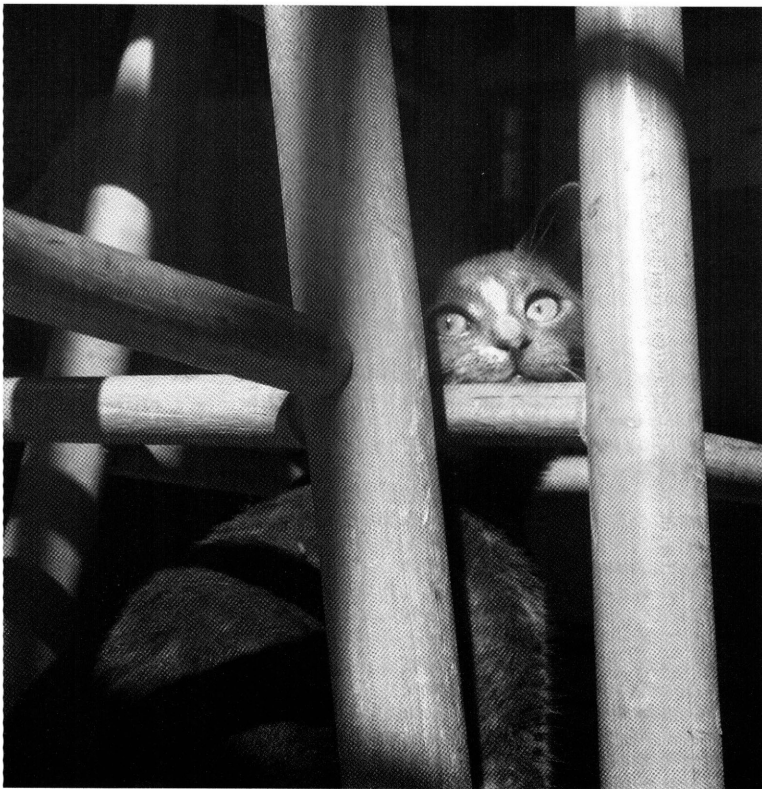
Visiting the Queen

Doris Yanger

Recently, a cat who has faithfully greeted me each morning no longer comes to my door. I am hoping it is only a temporary absence...She manages to make these mystery disappearances about once a year. I often wonder where she goes, however, she always returns in a few days. Nothing appeared any different that day in December as I watched "Calli" quietly walk into the sunset after having her evening meal, as she always does, outside, on the deck. She is feral, and refuses to cross the threshold into the house, and instinctively fears being indoors. For nine years I have tried to bait her with food, using every trick in my bag of bribery and reward techniques, but she

has remained determined to be a free agent...I have no desire to torture the animal by forcing her to remain in the house against her will.

However, this does create complications on the deck at feeding time. An aggressive, and handsome young male feral showed up for dinner about eight years ago, and shared the groaning board, and guarded his harem of Calli and her three kittens. He enjoyed the companionship of the three "altered" ladies for many years, patiently waiting in vain for them to become aroused by his impressive appearance. Calli mourned his passing, last year, when he was killed by a car. Eventually a band of opossums joined the dining table and I found the menagerie of refugees from the lost wilderness an added source of joy



CHIAROSCURO Sabrina Mendoza