Twitter Thread by Annie Gabston-Howell-

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On #CaturdayEve , I was thinking about telling the heartwarming story of the eye-patched curmudgeon who sits around working with a silly sword on his wall and an even sillier cat on his hat.

I doubt anyone would believe it, though. What do you think? Should I try it?



I met the old guy back when he was much younger, over 25 years ago now.

I didn't know then that he was permanent. He was sort of a stray, that I made the mistake of letting in my house and feeding.

You know how that sort of thing goes, right?

I mean, my kid liked him and he showed every indication of wanting to stick around. Next thing I knew, it wasn't just him, but his three kids, too.

Kind of nice actually.

I'm still not certain how it happened, but two more kids showed up. They looked sort of like him and sort of like me. Definitely weird, but they were cute and I let them stay, too.

But then the cats started arriving.

The first time it happened, it seemed reasonable and temporary.

The man came in, soaked from the rain, hunched over and cradling something in his cupped palms.

Everyone gathered around and listened as the, absolutely furious, man explained, using words not at all appropriate for a family that looked like this.



The man had been on the front porch, chilling and watching the rain when a car squealed its tires as it turned the corner near the house. A window opened and what looked like a bundle of paper splashed into the flooded gutter out front of the house.

The car sped away.

The bundled squeaked and splashed in distress. The man went out into the rain to investigate and found a dirtier, wetter version of this. He brought it in, told the story and fed it left-over take-out food.



I was adamantly opposed to having even one more, tiny responsibility. But we had taken it in and fed it. The man and the kids really liked it. It was really cute.

So, of course, he stayed.



I can't blame the man for George. He showed up at the back door and Shredder (aka, The First Cat) insisted that the kids let him in. Although, since the man was responsible for Shredder, George was really his fault, too.



We lived in a 'no pets allowed' rental at the time. The landlord had been told the story of the gutter-kitty and had a heart and pets of his own, so didn't make a fuss about Shredder. George showed up at a time when the man and the landlord were no longer buddies, though.

Mr. Landlord pulled a power move, "Get rid of the cats or you'll have to leave!"

The man's response was some version of, "FU, we're outta here."

Told about the situation, I was NOT HAPPY. I was also unwilling to get rid of Shredder and George, so we moved.

After the move, during which I discovered that staying awake more than about 80 hours will give me minor hallucinations, things settled down for years.

I stopped dreading that the man who had proved not to be a chick magnet, was a cat magnet instead.

As time passed, things changed. One of the things that didn't go well was his mother's health.

She and my FIL lived alone and the man started going out a few days each week to give his dad a break and generally help out.



The man's cat magnet tendencies kicked in almost immediately. I have no photos, because I was in another city when it happened.

He was cleaning a shed at his parent's house one day, and startled a feral cat and her kittens.

Panicked, the family scrambled. Mommy and a couple of the kits scrambled out into the neighborhood, safely escaping. Angel Kitten and her brother Prophet ran the wrong way. They climbed the nearest tall object. That object was the man's body.

His mom liked cats, but had never been one to allow them inside. The babies were cute, though and she couldn't resist. They stayed.

Suffering from illness that would prove deadly within a few months, the babies gave her back her smile and often made her laugh again.

We were lucky enough to have her at home until the end, surrounded by family, fur babies and the man she had loved for more than sixty years.

