



The Meowmorphosis

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“One morning, as Gregor Samsa was waking up from anxious dreams, he discovered that he had been changed into an adorable kitten.”

Thus begins *The Meowmorphosis*—a bold, startling, and fuzzy-wuzzy new edition of Franz Kafka’s classic nightmare tale, from the publishers of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies!* Meet Gregor Samsa, a humble young man who works as a fabric salesman to support his parents and sister. His life goes strangely awry when he wakes up late for work and finds that, inexplicably, he is now a man-sized baby kitten. His family freaks out: Yes, their son is OMG so cute, but what good is cute when there are bills piling up? And how can he expect them to serve him meals every day? If Gregor is to survive this bizarre, bewhiskered ordeal, he’ll have to achieve what he never could before—escape from his parents’ house. Complete with haunting illustrations and a provocative biographical exposé of Kafka’s own secret feline life, *The Meowmorphosis* will take you on a journey deep into the tortured soul of the domestic tabby.

The Meowmorphosis Details

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From Reader Review The Meowmorphosis for online ebook

zxvasdf says

If you awoke one morning to find yourself transformed into an adorable kitten, what would be your first response? Mine probably would be to play with a ball of yarn or to use my sister's leg as a scratching post. Not so our protagonist. He spends most of the chapter attempting to get out of bed while being simultaneously horrified and lethargic about his absurd predicament.

He then proceeds to frighten his parents and his employer (who came to harangue Gregor for missing the ride to work) with his adorableness. Just because he is what he is, he spends a long time cloistered in his room. Eventually he escapes the house.

Outside he is almost immediately accosted by the pompous windbag Josef K, a fellow man turned cat, and is escorted to a trial in which Josef K expounds the qualities of being feline in a long-winded and self-serving manner before squashing Gregor under the proverbial paw. A thoroughly confused Gregor is imprisoned, then told he was never a prisoner and that he was free to go home. Gregor launches in a woe-is-me soliloquy about what awaited him at home and how much his life sucked. Guess what he does? Of course he goes home!

The home he finds is unwelcome as he is almost immediately pelted with apples by his father. He hides out in his room for many days, slowly suffocating to death as he grows into the collar placed upon his neck by his sister when he was but a kitten. After a final debacle, he dies as pitifully as he lived. His family undergoes a sensation of freedom not unlike the shrugging off of a fur coat in sweltering weather. They finally have a reason to smile.

The appendix seems to be culled almost verbatim from the Wikipedia entry on Kafka, combining facts with snarky and sarcastic not-so-facts. It is actually a breath of fresh air after the story. It also offers an insight as to why Kafka wrote The Meowmorphosis.

Being morbid about being an adorable kitten makes this notoriously depressing tale all the more depressing. This tale would be much more sad and harrowing if Samsa was transformed into, say, a cockroach. But he wasn't. He turned into a creature famous for spending three-quarters of its life asleep and the rest of it being catered to by humans. What the hell is wrong with him?

Really, it boils down to Gregor Samsa being one giant pussy.

Hey, what?

I received the book for free through Goodreads First Reads.

Beth Asmaa says

According to the imaginative biography of Kafka at the very end of the novel, the main character Gregor Samsa is a traveling salesman like Kafka's real-life father with whom it's said that he had a troubled

relationship. In *Meowmorphosis*, Gregor's job initially supports the three members of his unemployed family in a high lifestyle with a big apartment in Prague when one night he is transformed after a dream into a kitten. His father, mother, and sister know that the kitten is actually the transformed Gregor, who can no longer be the family's breadwinner. Gregor the kitten runs away, meeting up with urban cats, who had also been transformed from humans or something else. Gregor is mesmerized by their beautiful, dancing, cat movements, their way of communicating. Gregor the kitten thinks that he belongs but he isn't accepted by the cats or by his family. The assembly of cats try and convict him of something like his not possessing enough freedom and his possessing too much memory, but he is bemused by the ordeal and is always wondering what he did to deserve such unwarranted treatment. As a human,

"He had never acted according to his desires alone, but only according to the dicta of his kin, his duty, and that great filial ledger that ruled his life."

His sentence for the unknown misdeed returns him to his family, which is coping well enough without him and which is also isolating him in his room from familial connection. He is unloved and unneeded... Had his family taken him for granted when he was a human as when he was a kitten? Gregor's transformation proves a positive change for the family, which begins to discover a sense of itself and of its desires. Why Gregor was changed into a kitten in the first place is unanswered.

Evelyn says

This seemed long winded and pointless, not at all how I remembered *The Metamorphosis*. I really liked the source book, though I have not read it since, probably 2001. I found it hard to care for the kitten, unlike the cockroach. The whole thing about cat-court was pointless. It doesn't seem like Coleridge Cook likes cats very much.

This "review" is about as poorly written as this book.

Andrew Shaffer says

"One morning, as Gregor Samsa was waking up from anxious dreams, he discovered that he had been changed into an adorable kitten."

In less capable hands, such a prompt would have resulted in a book that simply replaced the word "insect" with "kitten." But Quirk Books wisely commissioned an extremely capable fantasy writer to re-imagine Franz Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" as a work of gonzo literature. I'm happy to report that "The Meowmorphosis" (out this May from "Pride and Prejudice and Zombies" publisher Quirk Books) is more than the one-note parody its early detractors feared.

While the initial chapters stick close to Kafka's well-known novella, the book spirals out of control (in a good way) when Samsa leaves his parents' home to relieve them of the burden of caring and feeding for such a large, adorable kitten. Samsa's adventure is both hilarious and horrifying to witness, and takes meta-fiction to dizzying new heights. The new co-writer absolutely nails Kafka's voice; the new passages integrate so well with the story that it's hard to believe the book isn't entirely written by one author.

Co-author Coleridge Cook (a pseudonym for an award-winning fantasy novelist) describes Samsa's feline behavior in detail, and not a page goes by in which a piece of furniture is not scratched or perched on. Bowls

of milk are lapped at, and humans are snuggled with.

Will cat-lovers enjoy "The Meowmorphosis"? Yes -- there's no doubt in my mind that cat-lovers will find Samsa just as cute and cuddly as his sister does in the story. I'm a dog person, and even I was LOL-ing by the book's end.

Rachel says

I received this book through first-reads. I had tried to read the original a while ago but couldn't quite make it through. When I saw the idea behind this spoof I had thought "kittens! That'll be hilarious". When I read it, I found it wasn't quite what I thought it would be.

As a few others have already pointed out, it doesn't seem like much spoof was added to this aside from the main character, Gregor, turning into a kitten instead of a cockroach. I was also baffled by the issue of size. In the description it's said that Gregor turns into a man-sized cat yet people treat him like a normal sized kitten and his dad keeps trying to step on him. I know people would be baffled with even a normal sized kitten running around, but trying to step on them like a cockroach? Also, if Gregor is supposed to be an abnormally large kitten, why doesn't anyone else say anything when he goes running around town?

I wanted to enjoy this but it left me asking too many questions, and not even the right sort of questions.

Alex Livingston says

This book was a prize – not for me, but for somebody else who didn't want it. It was won in a quiz at an end-of-year philosophy meet-up. When I saw it being passed around, I thought it was Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* and tried to announce proudly that I had read it in the original German (*Die Verwandlung*). The cat on the cover did however seem rather incongruous, and on closer inspection the title resolved itself into *The Meowmorphosis*. Seeing that no one appeared to be determined to take possession of the unwanted prize, I decided to take a closer look, secured the item, and read a sentence or two on a couple of arbitrary pages. Having done so my interest grew and I eventually became convinced that I might just read it. At this point a number of the other mildly interested parties gathered around started to show a little more interest too. To cut the story a little short, I eventually agreed to pass the book on to one of these parties once I had finished reading it (not actually acknowledging that I did not promise ever to do so).

Having made this undertaking I did in fact soon afterwards start reading the book, partly in the hope of relief from the other highly cerebral volumes I was in the process of masticating. *The Meowmorphosis* is, I suppose, a parody of Kafka's work, and I soon found it quite an enthralling read, and so thought it worth my while finishing it so as to acquire some gratification from a grateful reception when passed on. It kept my attention easily until about two-thirds of the way through, when a long sequence of feline monologues became rather tedious, and I had to take a break and go back to something else I was reading a couple of times between snack-sized sections of verbose catty soliloquy, which ultimately petered out, and it became more readable again.

I remember very little of *Die Verwandlung*, apart from its being quite unapologetically bizarre, and I suspect I wasn't worldly-wise enough at the time (decades ago) to appreciate it as much as I did *The*

Meowmorphosis, which I suppose could be considered rather dark humour. Whether Kafka's original had any comedic intent I wouldn't hazard a guess. It didn't elicit any levity in me at the time I read it though.

I find I am imitating to a degree the style of the book I'm reviewing – probably very badly. Or so it seems. You might be bemused that I should suggest that.

At any rate, I've only given it three stars because its tedious bits render it not quite worthy of four. I'd give it three-and-a-half if I could.

Rich Stoehr says

The Meowmorphosis is certainly an oddity. And in the mashup genre - home to books like *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* and *Android Karenina* - that's saying something.

I have to admit that I've never read Kafka's original *Metamorphosis*, so I can't compare the merits of the Quirk Classics version against the original. What I can say is that if *The Meowmorphosis* is any indication of the tenor of the original work, reading it gave me no desire to read the source material.

It took some effort to make it through *Meowmorphosis*, but there are saving graces too, that almost make the effort worth it. There are pages filled with ponderous dialogue and meandering descriptions. There are details about the drudgery of Gregor Samsa's former life and his ungrateful family. There is a trial, held by cats, in which it seems like nothing is really decided.

But there are also clever, funny moments sprinkled in. It was the touches of the ridiculous that kept me going, usually in the form of descriptions of Gregor's new feline awareness, having woken from "anxious dreams" to discover that he had transformed overnight into a rapidly-growing kitten and rediscovering the world.

For example, the passage about Gregor's new needs when leaving one room for another: "He would never have allowed the elaborate preparations that Gregor required to consider the door, consider himself, groom his whiskers, rub his cheeks against the jamb, further consider the natures of both doors and salesmen, and finally sniff at the air of his room, to see if it offered suitable napping opportunities, and thus perhaps, at the end of it all, get through the door."

Or this, which pokes sly fun at the source material itself: "I took you for and educated tom, sir, in which case you would have read your German classics and would be quite accustomed to a narrator who only loves to hear himself speak - you must admit I speak very well, with many masculine and robust subclauses, romantic dashes, and surprising punctuation - and forgets what the purpose of telling the story was in the first place something like two-thirds of the way through. This is considered traditional!"

There are a few of these moments of literary humor throughout *The Meowmorphosis*, but not quite enough to make it enjoyable. The heavy-handed symbolism of the original, turned on its head here but still symbolism nonetheless, weighs the story down and even the attempts to be light aren't quite enough.

Perhaps, fittingly, one last quote to conclude. This passage sums up my feelings on *The Meowmorphosis* well: "I suppose my little incident is symbolic...Nothing else. Symbolism is depressing; its meaning is always deferred. Nothing is what it is, only what it means, and I mean nothing but that the world is ugly and

men are uglier still."

The Meowmorphosis isn't an ugly book, but it's a book unsure of its own identity - parody or homage? Symbol or story? Even in fun, it's a lot of effort for only a little reward.

Nathan says

A reworking of Kafka's Metamorphosis where the protagonist is not turned into a cockroach, but a cute kitten. With a new middle section where the cat Gregor goes into the wider world and seems to wander into The Trial.

Strange book, this. Mostly a direct transcription of the original (with "cat" instead of "cockroach"), which occasionally does not work, with a fresh middle that attempts to tease out the messages of the original and what it means to be a cat all at the same time.

The new stuff read much quicker to the modern eye than the original, I think, and was certainly more entertaining than the morose moping around the bedroom that the rest of the book focuses on.

But it doesn't really take, in the end.

Rated PG for some scary scenes. 2/5

Lolly's Library says

Sorry Quirk Books, but you really quirked up this time.

Kafka is not an author I'd immediately associate with literary mash-ups, seeing as he's neither a fun nor, quite honestly, entertaining read. In fact, he's quite depressing and it's hard to imagine how his works could be spiced up enough to be made palatable to a more general audience. Enter Quirk Books with **The Meowmorphosis**. Okay, I thought, if anyone could make Kafka likeable, it's Quirk; add a cute, fluffy kitty into the mix and you've probably got a hit on your hands. Um, no.

Basically substituting the word "kitten" for "cockroach", Coleridge's writing still leaves us with the body of Kafka's story, which, despite the kitten influence, remains depressing and obfuscating. I'll be quite honest: I haven't the foggiest idea what the moral behind the tale (tail? Ha ha) is. Something to do with Socialism vs. Capitalism I'm guessing? Plus, by using the kitten/cockroach substitution, it actually made the story even more bewildering. We're talking about a cute, fuzzy kitty, right? So why are people running away in disgust? Why are they trying to step on it and kill it just like a cockroach? Then again, it's supposedly a man-sized kitty, but, if it is, when he wanders the streets, why does no one respond to his size? If there's a tiger-sized tabby cat wandering around my neighborhood, I'm certainly going to sit up and take notice. Yet no one does. And while I agree a tight collar on a cat is devastating, an affliction borne by Gregor thanks to his schizophrenic sister (read the book, if you dare, you'll see what I mean), why does it weaken his back legs? Did the collar cause a stroke? And why is Gregor occasionally weak, so weak he has to drag himself around, and then healthy enough to spring up onto the furniture? Quite frankly, by the time I finished this book, I was shaking my head in despair and mind-numbing confusion.

Maybe I'm just not smart enough to appreciate this story. If that's the case, fine. I'll stick with my Terry Pratchett and Ann Aguirre, and leave this to the intelligentsia. So why two stars and not one? Because at the end of the book, Coleridge has provided us with a short, humorous "biography" of Kafka. Let's just say it features more kitties. It's not laugh-out-loud funny, but it's enough to provide a chuckle or two, which I felt deserved a star.

Dara Salley says

I came to this book with a fair amount of skepticism. I'm a big fan of Kafka and not such a big fan of the humorous/parody literature genre. I enjoyed "Pride and Prejudice and Zombies" because the silly conceit of putting zombies into Jane Austen's world actually created something meaningful. The zombies could be seen as a physical representation of the stultifying effect of harsh morality and the refusal of the gentry to acknowledge uncomfortable truths. However, many of the parodies that followed (Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters, Android Karenina) seemed like brainless sequels with little to offer beyond the initial pun of the title.

I picked up the "Meowmorphosis" because it was offered free in a library book bin. Also, I could not resist the picture of a kitten in a top hat on the cover. However, I dreaded reading it. It sat on my bookshelf for years. When I finally forced myself to open it, I was initially pleasantly surprised. Turning all the disgusting, disturbing imagery of Kafka's original into fuzzy, cute imagery was very intellectually pleasing. I found it very funny and also thought that it could engage a lover of Kafka's literature, by putting his nightmare imagery into a different context.

The book lost me again about halfway through. Perhaps Coleridge Cook didn't have enough material from the Metamorphoses to make a full book, because he departs from that text and starts adding scenes from "The Trial" and "The Castle". I like both of those books more than "The Metamorphosis" but the idea of randomly transforming the characters into cats doesn't hold up very well. I found that there was limited pleasure to be had from re-imagining scenes from those novels with cats instead of humans.

One question is: does this book really need to exist? Does the cultural canon need a version of "The Metamorphosis" starring a cat instead of a cockroach? Probably not. Still, I think it's a mark of how far the human race has come that we can support this kind of nonsense. I like living in a world where such flights of fancy are tolerated and encouraged. God Bless America.

Owen says

In compliance with FTC guidelines, I disclose that I received the book for free through Goodreads First Reads.

I have never thrown a book away after reading it before in my life until I read The Meowmorphosis. I will admit that I am not particularly good at reading works of literature and divining the meanings, allusions, and symbolism, but this book has no value at all.

In order to get a good basis off which to judge this book, I read Kafka's The Metamorphosis. It was a very

strange tale; weird, bleak, and depressing until the very end. It is spoken of as an extensively taught short story and a cornerstone of the academic literary world. It is because I read Kafka the same day that when reading The Meowmorphosis I realized it was almost a word for word copy with "cat" in the place of "bug", even when the change made little sense. The quality of the writing plummets in the middle, the section of 'original' writing, and reads like a high school student trying to mimic Kafka. Then Gregor the Cat returns and the book ends with Kafka's lines with the respective changes made to denote the cat transformation; again, even when it makes little sense in relation to the other lines.

Kafka's The Metamorphosis is in the public domain and easily available for free online from a number of sources, or as part of a print collection. What the people/business geniuses/plagiarizers at Quirk Classics are doing is taking a free book, making a few cosmetic changes, adding a rather poorly written middle, and charging \$10-15 for it. Its a great strategy, but in terms of quality it is reprehensible. This book is the equivalent of staging a serious play, say 'Hamlet', and having the actors randomly throw pies and run around like loons while the audience stuffs their face with fast food and guffaws and the silly people on stage.

I will freely admit that there is a perfectly valid use of mocking serious works, but this book takes the tone of "Oh, funny 'literature', lets be goofy, mock it for being serious, and reduce it to a simpleton level" without the skill it requires to be genuinely entertaining.

I had always thought these books started off the same as the classic they mimicked, then went off the rails with crazy ideas and plots. This was a huge disappointment. Advertising this book as an original work is borderline criminal.

usagi ?? says

Quirk Classics, you are one awesome publishing house. Not only did you send me the ARC copy of this book, but you also sent me a poster to go with it. And now I don't know where to put it (see the original review at witchoftheatregoing.wordpress.com to see the picture of said ARC/poster!). That said, I loved the original version (even if it did make me feel extremely anxious and paranoid after reading it), and this version makes Kafka's classic even more palatable with the idea of Gregor Samsa turning into a kitten instead of a cockroach. And a lot less anxious afterward, too.

If anything, this made Kafka's original easier to understand in terms of philosophy. For some reason, using cats instead of cockroaches just makes more sense to me with all of these ideas (especially in the "trial" part of the novel). I can see why Kafka originally used cockroaches (duh), but I just like the idea of a cat salesman better.

Quirk Press puts out a ton of awesome mashups each year, but all of the ones I've read this year so far pale in comparison to the fuzzy wuzzy politics of cat society versus human society. (Seriously though, guys, enough with the Jane Austen and Zombies series. I'm done with it, no more, please and thank you.) Coleridge was very careful with rewriting the original, and basically left most of it intact aside from changing words and people/cats involved. That's hard to do when doing a literary mashup, and I applaud him for sticking to the original as he did.

What I also appreciated was the short but hilarious writeup about Kafka as an appendix after the book. It educates the reader if they haven't read the original, but does it tastefully. By doing this, I hope that those who haven't read the original do. If anything, the literary mashup genre has renewed the interest and love of

modern classics within the Western canon of literature (though I'd love to see them do something with "The Three Kingdoms" or "Tale of Genji" — now THAT's a challenge!) that, over the years with technology booming and print books decreasing/becoming more expensive, has definitely wavered. Here's hoping that a lot more kids (and adults) read the classics after the mashups.

Quirk, you're doing a great job. Keep it up. Now try doing more Kafka, and you'll have my love (and money) forever.

(crossposted to librarything, shelfari, and witchoftheatregoing.wordpress.com)

Mark Flowers says

I can't figure out what the purpose of this book is. Well over half of it is simply the text of Kafka's story with the word "bug" replaced by the word "kitten." Not sure if Coleridge thinks this is supposed to be funny (Kafka's story is already pretty funny) or insightful, or what (after all, there's a pretty huge difference between being a bug and a kitten, we would expect the responses of others and the consequences for Gregor to be quite different - not exactly the same). The middle section is taken up by Gregor the Kitten's escape to the outside world - this is mostly an excuse for Coleridge to try his hand and parodying another Kafka work, *The Trial*. He's slightly more successful at this, but not much, and it has pretty much nothing to do with *The Metamorphosis*. I really disliked *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* as well, and I can't see why I would read another of these. The concepts are rich with potential, but the writers don't seem to understand that potential.

Ruby Tombstone [With A Vengeance] says

They say to never judge a book by its cover.... Fuck it. Have you SEEN the cover? Freakin' adorable.

Amanda says

When Quirk Classics revealed that their latest mash-up was going to be based on Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, I wasn't really sure what to think. After tackling Jane Austen's popular classics and the fairly well-known *Anna Karenina*, I thought this was a very strange choice for a mash-up. Kafka and *The Metamorphosis* don't seem to be as well known, so it makes me wonder why Quirk chose this novel as the next in their classics series -not only that, but cats? Either it was a gutsy decision or a stupid one.

In Quirk's feline mash-up *The Meowmorphosis*, Gregor wakes up one morning and finds that he has been turned into a cat. Gregor now finds that his world has completely changed, and his family can't accept it -even though, of course, he's incredibly cute as a now human-sized kitten. Gregor must escape from his family's home and make his own away -even as an adorable cat.

I have to say, I was pleasantly surprised by *The Meowmorphosis*. I thought it would be painful and downright terrible. Though it does start out a little slow, once the story gets past the initial set up, and further away from the source material and, ultimately, spirals out of control for Gregor, it only gets better and better. Cook, which is actually a pen name for a fantasy novelist, does an excellent job of taking the source material and injecting it with plenty of whimsy and action that makes the story go quickly. Cook did a particularly

good job of describing Gregor's life as a cat and making it feel authentic -not to mention hilarious to the reader.

Though I did have to warm up a little to the idea of using The Metamorphosis as the source material, I quickly grew into this hilarious book -even as someone who prefers dogs over cats. Recommended for fans of the mash-up and the Quirk Classics line.
