

## *La Via dei Cinque Gatti (The Street of Five Cats)*

By Joe Bugden

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*Under a Tuscan Sun, two cats snore, whilst  
two more run from the heat-heavy legs that  
lug up time-weary steps towards the door of our digs,  
wherein, the cool and shade await, suspended.*

*One cat, its sickly eyes secreting fear and hate,  
defies the heat and holds its state as we pound past.  
Still hoping we might be friends,  
I meet its stare but ease my stance.  
But it will kill me if it has half a chance.*

*In this land, which once saw Etruscans run,  
four cats sun themselves, while one  
stray struts, then sways, swinging, sun-drunk.  
It delves into bin-bags; drags one along awhile.  
Another liner lies by, its gaping wound birthing garbage and  
the rotting spoils, from last night's full-moon foray.*

*On the street with five cats  
dogs barely rate a mention.  
On an evening stroll, under tight control,  
still straining on a lead, its privilege unrestrained,  
this lap-dog trucks no street-cred.*

*La Via dei Cinque Gatti is strewn with bones;  
well-gnawed remnants of some gristly joint.  
Thrown days before, now curing 'gainst baking stones,  
the blood-red browns to sepia tones.  
One cat sniffs, then thinks, 'what's the point?*

*The street with five cats is wrought from earth and wind.  
Forged and purged from magma-like liquid,  
when cooled, carved and curved, revealed this mediaeval fortress.  
Its buttress set right,  
its rampart just so.  
Its Church is defended from both weather and foe.*

*La Via dei Cinque Gatti's like a scene from a shoot.  
Set up to capture the light and the shade  
two cats sit, with three more splayed by the  
warming walls. Made all the more god-like,  
their Presence could be an omen.  
Egyptian, Greek and Roman deities define the depth of this tableau.  
In the foreground a Black and White won't flinch; (she knows what I'm thinking).  
The background is staged; an exquisite example  
of how Diana changed form so she could hunt in her Temple.*

*Did Santa Caterina encounter il gatti  
when she paved her way from Siena to Rome?  
Guarded from the glare of the non-believers  
Catherine found shelter in one stone home.  
This Bride of Christ, sporting the Holiest of wedding rings that was manifestly fashioned  
from the foreskin of the Baby Jesus.  
That beats 24 karats - and a full hand!  
This Mystic Nun, this Entrusted One; Protector of  
Solemnity, is as stoic as Mother Cat.  
Her faith will not falter.  
Her conviction won't bend.  
And her fasting is steadfast.  
To the Rapturous End.*