

Simon's Cat vs. the World

Simon Tofield

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Single-panel illustrations distill the essence of cat humor into beautifully rendered full-color pages.

Building from an ever-growing base of fans for his Simon's Cat video and book series, animator, illustrator, and author Simon Tofield pits his feline hero against, well, just about everything, in *Simon's Cat vs. the World*.

Boasting over 360 million hits on YouTube, Tofield's Simon's Cat cartoon shorts have become an Internet phenomenon, and he has published several volumes of print cartoons. *Simon's Cat vs. the World* features the eponymous cat in a number of full-page gags, each specifying the "enemy" in a small caption. For example, on the "holly" page, the cat struggles to scale a large, sharp-edged holly bush in an effort to reach the birds comfortably perched at the top who are flinging berries at him as he climbs. In "the wheelie bin," we see the cat in mid-flight, having leaped up to reach a bird on top of an open garbage bin. His expression, as he realizes he's destined to land in the garbage bin, brings to mind Wile E. Coyote (from *The Looney Tunes Show*), and it's just as funny.

If bushes and bins seem somewhat pedestrian as topics of humor, that seems to be Tofield's point. The laughs are grounded in the reality of everyday life with a cat, and the many mini-adventures that fill their time. Tofield's images capture the funny moments perfectly, from the cat's dead-on curious pawing at objects to its lazy sprawl while sunbathing or enjoying heat from a convenient radiator. Not all of the joke subjects are so obvious, with topics such as "public affection" (one dog sniffing another, as Simon's Cat covers the eyes of an innocent kitten). It's here that Tofield stretches the range of his cat character, expanding beyond the level of common observation of cat behavior.

The Simon's Cat videos are notable for their physical comedy, something that might seem difficult to translate into print. But in *Simon's Cat vs. the World*, little is lost—these single-panel illustrations distill the essence of cat humor into beautifully rendered full-color pages. This is a visual book, with minimal text, and those looking for word-heavy humor such as what's found in the daily newspaper comic pages might be disappointed at first. But if readers take the time to savor Tofield's drawings, the laughs will come.

PETER DABBENE (Winter 2014)

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