

Romy Lee Cork

Romy meets Friends

From Dusk to Dawn

Short Stories from Cork

Book 1

Chapter 1

*This Book is dedicated to all
the People and Animals of Cork.*

Prologue

Meow dear readers.

I am Romy, a cat with special talents. They say I'm 10 years old, but they don't know that for sure, because my previous owners left me at the animal shelter without papers.

The life in the family was already questionable, but when I found myself in the shelter, I really thought I had landed in hell. Well, thank God Anneke found me quickly and saved me. I was so happy when she finally appeared; I was afraid my telepathic abilities had let me down.

As I said, nobody knows exactly where I come from, but Anneke is originally from Düsseldorf, that's in Germany. You can't exactly say that she grew tall there because at 1.57 meters she definitely can't reach the top shelves in the supermarket.

Well, in March 2005 she finally emigrated to Ireland and we both live together in Cork.

I'm full of fluff and when my coat gets too long, I develop dreadlocks. But twice a year a 'Mecki' cut helps against that. 'Mecki' is a fictional German hedgehog character and the namesake for this particular hairstyle is.

It really makes life more pleasant, especially in summer. Not that Irish summers are particularly hot.

My breed is listed as Ragamuffin, but that shouldn't matter.

Unlike Anneke, I'm quite a big cat, with beautiful South Pacific turquoise eyes. Anneke's are brown, but we have in common that we are a bit round around the hips.

Well, what can you do when you enjoy life?

What's great is that Anneke takes me everywhere with her when she goes to visit friends.
Driving is great, especially when I can look out of the window.
And the friends' houses are great too. So much to sniff and discover. The shoe cupboards and pantries are the best.

What I don't like so much is that Anneke has to work all day. Well, someone has to bring in the money for the sweet life, but it's a bit boring during the day.

That's why I learned how Anneke's computer works and now I browse the internet whenever I feel like it.
And since I also want to contribute something to the upkeep, I thought I'd write a few stories.

So, my dear listeners, I hope you have fun.

Meow, your Romy



Chapter One

Romy meets

... Claus, the Comedian Rat



Locations:
Cork Operahouse, Everyman Palace
Crawford Gallery

Meow, my dears.

I am Romy and as I say, I have special talents.

Not only can I see the dead and talk to them and to people and animals if I want to, no, I can also beam myself out of my body. You have to imagine it's a bit like Star Trek. By the way, that's one of Anneke's favourite series, the really old ones with Shattner and Nimoy. William Sweetie is also hanging on the fridge. Man, he was so cute when he was young.

Well, at least when Anneke needs her beauty sleep, she really does go to bed with the chickens, but in the morning, she has to get up at the crack of dawn to wake the birdies, which is annoying, I tell you. Then I get out of my body and go wandering.

Spiritual wanderings, so to speak.

Sometimes there's not so much going on at night, but most of the time it's really hullabaloo. You wouldn't believe how many creatures are out there in the darkness.

Today I am once again in the mood for adventure, so I fly out of my body and head for Cork City.

Cork is situated on the River Lee. It is about 90 kilometers long and meanders through the whole of County Cork. From the source, which is in the Shehy Mountains/Gougane Barra, to us and then it's only a stone's throw to the sea.

A cat jump I would say.

You definitely have to go there, to Gougane Barra I mean. The little chapel on the peninsula in the lake is really romantic and many brides and grooms have their wedding photos taken here.

The spring is a good walk up a hill, but then you're there. It's hard to believe that it will become a river. At the end is Cork Harbour and then off into the Irish Sea.

To be fair, though, he does pick up other rivers along the way, so he's not doing it all by himself, the harbour thing.

The river offers many recreational opportunities such as kayaking and rowing, fish, preferably salmon, two reservoirs and over 40 bridges, 30 of which are in Cork City and the surrounding area. The Lee Valley is beautiful and of course has a great variety of resident wildlife.

You have no way of moving around the city, without running into the Lee again after a few minutes. Imagine it as a combination of Venice and Paris; only much smaller, more manageable.

The original City of Cork, the old city, was built on an island in the river just like the 'Ile de la Cite' in Paris. And Cork used to be known as the Venice of Ireland. You can see this in the crooked streets that follow the old river courses that have been filled in or built over. In some places you can still find the old polders where the boats were moored.

And on the South Mall, you can see the old boat entrances under the stairs to the houses. The residents could enter with their boats under the stairs to the courtyard.

Sometimes it's quicker to cross to the other side of the street through a shop than to walk around the outside. You have to see it to believe it, otherwise it's hard to imagine.

So tonight, I'm flying down Blarney Street, that's where we live and down across the river to the Cork Opera House.

Blarney Street is on the north side and is the longest street in Ireland. It's an old neighbourhood and has very nice little houses, old cottages and lots of old families who live here, and the grandparents' houses are passed on to the children and grandchildren.

And of course, Ireland is full of dogs.

Dogs walking without a master; yes, that really exists and comes across as completely normal here. But there are also plenty who walk their humans, don't worry.

There are also plenty of cats, but they tend to keep their heads down or lie on the windowsill and enjoy the pleasant life on the windowsill cushion.

So, where was I?

Oh yes, tonight I want to see what new events are at the opera house and then I'm gonna check out the Crawford Gallery. At the opera house they advertise Swan Lake with a Russian ensemble. I won't miss that, of course, and neither will Anneke anyway. It's her favourite ballet and she should be able to sing the music by heart if she could sing. Can't hit a note, but no matter, the rest is right.

The Cork Opera House is located in Emmet Square and had some construction phases. Once it was rebuilt after a fire that totally destroyed it in 1955.

I didn't like the rebuilding in 1962, because the outside of the building looked a bit strange, but the full renovation in 2003 was good. I like it and it has something airy and friendly about it.

Well, the original building was erected in 1852 in Anglesia Street for a national fair, but since the fair was only held once and it was no longer used the building was demolished stone by stone and rebuilt on the banks of the Lee at Emmet Place. That was around 1855.

It was quite a slog back then.

At least that's what the ghosts who haunt Lavitt's Quay and the surrounding area told me.

There's nothing like recycling. There are more buildings here in Cork that have been repurposed.

And like so many other buildings in Cork, before it officially became the Cork Opera House in 1877, it had other names. Now, however, it hosts everything from opera, ballet, concerts and theatre. In order to all the national and international artists who perform and have performed here the book is not sufficient.

Oh dear, I'm on the edge of my seat tonight.

Well, I just remember the dates for Swan Lake and I fly over to the Crawford Gallery.

This used to be the Customs House from 1724 to 1979 and then became the Gallery. Besides Irish artists and temporary exhibitions, there is also a section with Roman-Greek

statues, or what is left of them. They were brought over from the Vatican Museum in Rome at some point and have been collecting dust here in Cork ever since.

I love the old building with the creaking wooden floorboards and carvings. The staircase that leads up from the ground floor is magnificent. You must go in there when you are there. Admission is free and in summer the gallery is even open on Sundays.

But the very, very, very best thing is the little café on the ground floor overlooking the garden.

God, the cakes and scones are delicious.

With homemade jam and cream.

Hmmm, my whiskers are trembling again and I have 500 grams more on my hips.

And the meringues, God I don't know where to put my lust.

Okay, I'm flying over the little strip of greenery between the Opera House and the Gallery, actually the small garden of the Gallery, I see a rat.

And what a magnificent specimen it is.

I'd like it with jam and cream too if I knew how to make it.

But all joking aside, I was bred to be a luxury house and sofa cat and taken from my mum too early, I don't know much about catching mice or catching rats.

I get my food from the can and therefore have no need for bloody orgies. As a cat spirit it doesn't matter anyway, the mouse doesn't bite off a thread.

So, I swoop down on the rat for fun and to scare it.

"Jesus," come the slightly angry reply. "Don't you have anything better to do? Why don't you go play with a mouse somewhere and leave me alone. I have to rehearse my programme for tomorrow night's show and I don't really need you."

"Oops," I say, "I'm sorry, no offence, but I've got a lot of excess energy and I need to cool down," I explain to the rat.

"I'm Romy," I introduce myself.

"Hmmm, Romy, I see," the rat mumbles. "There used to be a beautiful German actress called Romy, who unfortunately passed away far too early. She was great, especially in the French productions."

"Yes, I'm named after her," I enlighten the rat.

The rodent makes a slight bow and says, "I'm Claus. I'm an actor on the side, but I'm actually a comedian."

Claus really is a handsome and a very well-groomed rat from top to toe. A bit dandified, perhaps, and with a pipe in his mouth. He puffs away so obliviously, there's something about it.

"Tomorrow night I'm giving a solo performance in the basement of the Cork Opera House for the rodent community in Cork. The big stage at the house is the biggest in Ireland at 12 x 10 meters, the one in the basement can't quite keep up, but we have 100 times more audience per performance. House and travelling rats from all over Cork just to see me."

"Uiiii," I purr, "you must really be a celebrity then?"

"Yes, my dear," Claus throws himself into the chest, "I am the best! I enchant the ladies with my charm like Dave Allen did and the men with my black humour. Well," grins Claus. "The ladies love my black humour too. It's my special charm."

"Dave Allen? Dave Allen!" I murmur, "I think I know him. I mean, Anneke, my flatmate, once told me about him. He used to sit on a stool, smoking, with a whiskey glass and crack jokes about the clergy. Very ironic and sharp-tongued."

"Bravo," says Claus, "you know your stuff. Yes, that's him. Yes, he was very angry with those who were devoted to the church and made them look stupid with their double standards. Especially in Ireland, they did real damage."

"And you," I ask with interest, "you walk in his footsteps?"

"Yes, I have a similar sense of humour and go after the church more in the style of Dave Allen and politics in the style of Volker Pispers. Volker is a German cabaret artist who has a similar wicked tongue. Unfortunately, he no longer performs; has thrown in the towel. Enlightened

people for over 30 years, but no one listened or wanted to get it. Now the mess and the wailing are big."

Claus grins contentedly and only says: "Since I have many relatives in Germany and especially in Düsseldorf, the stronghold of the rats, I am of course bilingual and also offer my programme in the Düsseldorfer Kommödchen."

"Düsseldorf," I sigh, "that's where my human companion is from. Anneke is from Düsseldorf and certainly knows the places, you're talking about. You should come over to our place for dinner and a glass of wine sometime, if you like, and then you two can reminisce," I suggest enthusiastically.

"Ahem, you think I'm welcome at your place?"

"Yes, yes!", I confirm with a vigorous nod of my head.

"Anneke used to have pretty much all the rodents you can keep as pets. From mice to gerbils, hamsters, rats, chinchillas, guinea pigs..... What do I know. Anyway, I'm her first cat, before that there were only rodents, my food, so to speak," I grin.

"Well then," says Claus happily, "I'll come by tomorrow evening before the performance for a snack and you can accompany me to the performance. Unfortunately, your Anneke doesn't fit under the cellar vault, it would be too cramped even for you if you don't appear as a cat spirit. You just have to take me down to the opera house afterwards otherwise I'll get blisters on my paws. I'll get there tomorrow on my own, I have a cousin who drives a taxi here."

"Great," I say happily, "that's settled then."

We exchange addresses and times, and then Claus has already disappears into the undergrowth.

Man, am I excited.

A real comedian!

So I'm counting the hours and minutes until the next evening, all nervous because I don't know whether Claus will really come or chicken out at the last minute.....

Will Claus really come to dinner?

If you want to know how the story continues, why not visit my bookshelf at:

<https://romyleecork.com/a-kort/>

or Anke's website at: ankekorthauer.com