

MUSE RIVER PRODUCTIONS

THE ADVENTURES OF

YIN & YANG

Snoepje and
the Pizza Box



Media Kit



Media Advisory

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The Adventures of Yin & Yang: Snoepje & the Pizza Box

An Illustrated Book

For Immediate Release

October 27, 2010.... In a world beset with tragedies and crises comes a book that celebrates cozy victories and two-legged and four-footed love. Bridging continents and species, *The Adventures of Yin & Yang: Snoepje & the Pizza Box* glows with sweet possibilities rather than the tribulations of 21st century existence. It introduces Antoine and Sara, a middle-aged, transcontinental couple, two charming eponymous older male cats, Yin and Yang, and – from a litter of rescued kittens, a most endearing title character with a tongue-twisting name, Snoepje [SNOOP-yuh]!

An independent collaboration

The Adventures of Yin & Yang: Snoepje & the Pizza Box is an authentic indie collaboration that reflects the best of today's international, virtual and digital life. Written and produced by a self-confessed global citizen, Susan Hermse Schaefer, an American citizen with Dutch residency, *The Adventures of Yin & Yang: Snoepje & the Pizza Box* harnesses the talents and passions of individuals from vastly different cultural heritages, unleashing a visual and aural love-fest upon readers from 5 to 105! The production company, Muse River Productions, is a subsidiary of Schaefer Communications, LLC, of Pompano Beach, Florida, USA. Indie publisher, Dog Ear Publishing, also US-based, prints the book digitally.

The project team includes seasoned illustrator, Michael Bower Putman of Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA, who after years of crafting polished illustrations, advertising and graphic design for corporate and non-profit clients, steps into his own, creating memorable characters and visuals with brilliant texture and color that captivate, proffering a new standard in illustrated story-telling. Schaefer and Putman are long-time friends and collaborators.

Translation newcomer, Juliëtte van der Aa of Amsterdam, the Netherlands, follows in the footsteps of her older brother, veteran English book translator, Ralph van der Aa, providing Dutch audiences with a linguistically digestible banquet of life in America.

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The team agrees: Cats and the humans who love them share universal traits and qualities. This and subsequent books promise to keep that universality alive.

Themes

The first of a proposed series of books showcasing three feline fatales and their humans, *The Adventures of Yin & Yang: Snoepje & the Pizza Box* offers multiple themes. On its surface it is a story that literally illustrates the carelessness of humans towards the animal world. The title character, Snoepje and her littermates are discarded in a dumpster! Every day animals are discarded, mistreated and mishandled. The story is repeated in country after country: domestic animals suffer needlessly. Muse River Productions intends to create an illustrated calendar as a companion piece offered as a fundraiser for animal rescue organizations in their target markets.

“My late husband, Martijn, who inspired this series, believed that humans had to advocate for animals,” confesses Schaefer. “In his memory I have tried to find a way to support the individuals and organizations that contribute to animal well-being. In the US an estimated 63% of households own a pet.”

A second level of the story is subtler: Love happens in the most unique ways. Mature people meet, fall in love, and in spite of differences and even distance, they turn obstacles to opportunities, choosing each other. The character Antoine comes from the Netherlands, (Maastricht to be specific). Sara lives in the Midwest of the US. They do not have children, yet they forge a “family”. In the 21st century “traditional” family life takes on new dimensions. Subsequent books in this series will introduce readers to other countries, friends and animals, such as service dogs. Future themes will examine human rights, animal rights and basic rights, such as education and health care.

Language, learning and imagery

At an entirely new level, Muse River Productions views the illustrated book as a language-learning tool. Schaefer’s background as a teacher of English as a Foreign and Second Language gives her expert insights into how people learn languages. In addition, she has personal experience. “When I taught English in Bogotá, Colombia,” she states, “I read illustrated children’s books to the toddlers of my host family, thereby improving my own Spanish. When I moved to Maastricht in the Netherlands, my husband bought me the beloved *Jip en Janeke* series to help me learn Dutch. It is undeniably beneficial to read two languages, side-by-side, to enhance one’s love and understanding.”

Editor’s note: To arrange for preview copies, images and/or interviews please contact Susan Hermse Schaefer, Muse River Productions, insights@scc.net, ph: 1.262.744.0938, Europe: +31.6.1451.8074.





Book Review

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Book Review:

The Adventures of Yin & Yang: Snoepje and the Pizza Box: An Illustrated Book

Written by Susan Hermse Schaefer, www.MuseRiverProductions.com

Illustrated by Michael Bower Putman, www.putmanillustration.com

Translated into Dutch by Julliet van der Aa

Unpaged, Muse River Productions, printed by Dog Ear Publishing

Available from Amazon, Barnes & Noble, US: \$14.99

New Life for Felines and Their Family

By Bob Ingram

“Snoepje and the Pizza Box” is the first in a cat-centric series to be known as “The Adventures of Yin & Yang,” who are two aging felines sharing a cozy, loving Minnesota life with Antoine and Sara, a childless couple who “met and married later in life,” according to the book’s first sentence.

Written by Susan Hermse Schaefer, illustrated by Michael Bower Putman, and ably translated into Dutch by Juliëtte van der Aa, “Snoepje and the Pizza Box” is being published simultaneously in America and The Netherlands, and the text is in both English and Dutch, an unusual and fetching arrangement, much like the book itself, which is a charming, comfortable, and straightforward account of how Yin and Yang get their cat-mojo back with the arrival of a cuddly female kitten named “Snoepje” – pronounced “SNOOP-yuh” – which is the Dutch diminutive for “sweetie.” Snoepje is named by Antoine, who is a Dutch philosopher and a comparative newcomer to the wide, welcoming world of cat-lovers. He makes up for lost time by falling head-over-heels for the cats in his quiet, studious life.

Most cat-owners (although who ever heard of really “owning” a cat?) wish their cats could talk, and Yin and Yang, as drawn by Michael Bower Putman, seem perpetually on the verge of voicing their cat thoughts. Indeed, in one full-page drawing toward the end of the tale, “the boys” tongues form small hearts in their mouths, as if indicating the sweetness of their dispositions. Putman has achieved the double stroke of making Yin and Yang almost human in their expressions and actions while maintaining their essential

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feline natures. You know he's a cat guy and what he's done in the way of character and design verges on high art.

Author Susan Hermse Schaefer has ostensibly penned a tale of feline – and human -- rejuvenation, but “Snoepje and the Pizza Box,” like any worthy children's book, goes beyond its stated theme and enlarges on it, in this case to considerations of human kindness, human cruelty, and the love and caring inherent in both people and animals. It is also about following your dream, as it is the search for the kitten of Antoine and Sara's dreams that lends the book its dynamic tension.

Schaefer has wisely placed her story in surroundings that are familiar to readers young and old; the denouement, for instance, takes place in a pizza parlor, a setting that rings true whether in Minnesota or Holland. Pizza has become as universal as cat fancy.

“The Adventures of Yin and Yang: Snoepje and the Pizza Box” is dedicated to both the cats and Schaefer's late husband, Martijn Anna Antonius Hermse, the model for Antoine, who would agree, Schaefer says in the dedication, with Jean Cocteau's pronouncement that “I love cats because I enjoy my home; and little by little, they become its visible soul.”

That soul is luminously visible in this warm, touching book.



(Bob Ingram is the author of the short story collection “Sun Songs” and is the co-producer, co-writer and narrator of the documentary film “Boardwalk.” He has written for more than 20 publications in a career that spans almost fifty years.)



Fact Sheet

The Adventures of Yin & Yang: Snoepje & the Pizza Box

An Illustrated Book

Written by Susan Hermse Schaefer, www.MuseRiverProductions.com
Illustrated by Michael Bower Putman, www.putmanillustration.com
Translated into Dutch by Julliet van der Aa

SYNOPSIS: *The Adventures of Yin & Yang: Snoepje & the Pizza Box* is an illustrated book establishing a preliminary set of characters – a transcontinental couple, Antoine and Sara, who meet and marry later in life and their quest to enlarge their four-footed feline family, Yin & Yang. In their search for the perfect kitten they end up rescuing a charming puss, Snoepje, from a restaurant container. At its heart, *The Adventures of Yin & Yang: Snoepje & the Pizza Box* is a love story that is intended as the first of a series.

Muse River Productions intends to produce a twelve-month wall calendar to be bundled with the book, or sold separately. Proceeds from calendar will be tied to National Animal Rescue in both US and the Netherlands

LANGUAGE: The book is bilingual – in English and Dutch. It is the first of a series of books intended to be translated into unlimited other languages that can be used as language learning tools.

AUDIENCE: “Children” from 5 to 105. Cat lovers. Animal lovers. Lovers, period. Language teachers. Language learners. Animal Rescue advocates.

AVAILABILITY: The book is available from Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and to retailers through (inter)national direct book distributors. The printer is Dog Ear Publishing. All rights owned by Muse River Productions.

RETAIL COST: US: \$14.99

WHOLESALE: Discounts to bookstores, gift shops, retailers and groups on a request basis.



Biographies



Susan Hermse Schaefer - Author

Susan Hermse Schaefer is a creative thinker, writer, speaker, teacher, consultant, cat lover and global citizen. She met and married her beloved departed husband, Dutch citizen Martijn Hermse, later in life and together they forged a magical existence alongside their adored cats and deep circle of friends and family – who inspired *The Adventures of Ying & Yang: Snoepje and the Pizza Box*. Born and raised in edgy Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA, Susan's journey has included living in places such as Delhi, India, Bogotá, Colombia and Maastricht, the Netherlands, Martijn's hometown. During her sixteen years in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the location of the book, Susan forged a life-long friendship with illustrator, Michael Bower Putman. Although Susan now resides primarily in Pompano Beach, Florida, where the sea, sun, sand and soft breezes enable her to write, reach and teach in harmony, she continues her international existence.

Susan has been inventing stories and writing since childhood. "I still have my teenage journals," she admits, "and a copy of my first published poem about the death of President John F. Kennedy in my junior high school magazine." In the public eye, she has published articles in such daily newspapers as the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Philadelphia Daily News*, and *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, and in national trade publications like *The Public Relations Journal*. In 1981, she co-founded Philadelphia's South Street Star bi-weekly newspaper, serving as its editor and major contributor. She has published a book of poems, *Ride the New Morning*, and has maintained a popular blog, *Schaefer's Millennium3*, that features personal observations, poetry, essays, book reviews and short self-produced films.

Earning her first master's degree in English Literature from Philadelphia's Temple University, Susan admits to a lifelong love affair with literature. However, a second suitor for her attention is international affairs, so in 2004, she took a sabbatical to attend Maastricht University, earning another master's degree in European Public Affairs, subsequently teaching and administrating for various departments.

In fact, Susan has had a continuous career in higher education on both sides of the aisle – teaching and administering – since the early 1970's when she ventured to Bogotá, Colombia to teach at the Centro Colombo Americano. While still a graduate student at Temple University, she taught writing and held a position as head of the newly formed English Language Enrichment Center at Temple (ELECT), igniting a life-long passion to

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Biographies - Susan Schaefer continued

help students uncover their natural abilities for language. While pursuing her doctoral degree at Temple, Susan was recruited by Camden County College's new bi-lingual English program where she taught, administered, developed curriculum, and managed instructors.

Later Susan served as Director of Communications for PNC Financial Corp of Philadelphia, and after relocating to Minnesota, she founded her independent public relations firm, Schaefer Communications.

Susan states: "The threads that weave these experiences together are a deep love of people, animals, and writing, and a firm belief that only by traveling and experiencing how others live can we create a sane and peaceful world."





Michael Bower Putman - Illustrator

Michael Bower Putman is a seasoned, independent graphic designer, illustrator and painter living in Minneapolis, Minnesota with his partner of twenty years and their two Ocicats. Michael began drawing at a young age, with many of his crayon renderings of Hercules and Cinderella gracing the walls of his pediatrician's office. His love of illustration and storytelling through imagery manifested first in the handmade comic books and graphic novels of his early teens: the precursors of his collaboration with author, Susan Hermse Schaefer, on *The Adventures of Ying & Yang: Snoepje and the Pizza Box*.

It was at Drake University that Michael indulged his passion for drawing in the study of art and design. After a successful career in the advertising industry, Michael turned his focus to his primary loves - illustration and design, founding his independent practice Putman Illustration and Design. His work has won local and national honors, and recently the Farmani Gallery in New York City included his illustration in a major exhibit. Michael enjoys a whimsical view of his inspiration: "My design and illustration work is informed by an enjoyment of industrial design, theatre, current events, fine food, cheesy pop music and comfy clothes," he admits.

Most pertinent to this book venture is Michael's love of cats, which developed at an early age. His life has been enriched by the antic personalities of Siamese, Burmese, Calicos, Abyssinians, Russian Blues...and now his two Ocicats who run the household. "In fact," he purrs, "I am often mistaken for feline, primarily due to my love of long naps and back scratches." He testifies that living with cats all his life has provided unique insights into their personalities and feline perspective - which he hopes translates well to the kitty characters in the book.

Michael met Susan twenty years ago, and they quickly became close friends and creative collaborators. However, it wasn't until the premature passing of Susan's husband Martijn that their collaborations took on this form and voice. Michael's familiarity with their story - having watched much of it unfold in real life - and his sensitivity to the spirit input provided by Martijn, have resulted in a textured, sweet and intimate look at a family built from love and looking to share that love with another little four-legged companion.



Biographies



Juliëtte van der Aa - Dutch translator

Juliëtte van der Aa lives and works in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, where she raises her beloved daughter, Veer and 'grey knight' cat, Jobje. Currently Juliëtte gives guided tours at the famous Anne Frank House.

Like each of the book's team members, Juul absolutely adores cats and recommends that visitors to Amsterdam check out the infamous Kattenkabinet – a museum dedicated to cats. Two of the loves of her life have been her red Abyssinian, Mutlu, who had a big, squirrel like tail, and red striped Ollie.

“I was very honored to be asked to translate this lovely book,” she admits, “because I really know cats, and their humans, so well.”

Juliëtte briefly studied art and cultural management, has been a puppeteer and TV developer of programs for children for the Emma's *Kinderziekenhuis*, and had a brief stint working for AT5 news. At one time she worked as a camp counselor in the US.



Images





