michibelle scissorpaws’s novel WideAwake, translated and illustrated by Michdevilish, is a tale of will and loss, or rather, lack of will, and a foundry.

The main character (?) is a weakling along for the ride (like Tamino); the strong character vanishes and re-appears for a tête -à-tentacle with a mollusk near the end.

I got in touch with michibelle by brain wave in order to ask her some questions about her work. We did the initial interview in miaowese, but she agreed to answer the rest in english, since she considers herself an accomplished translator.

INTERVIEWER

When did you discover your talent for scratching?

MICHIBELLE

In my first life, as a kitten in Siam. My pet there was a famous Chinese poet-philosopher.

INTERVIEWER

The apparent aims of the book are to raise environmental awareness and promote interest in science, but there are conflicting messages to overwhelm those aims: a natural disaster of the urgent/immediate type outweighs the long-term existential threats; the solutions to the long-term threats are mystical/magical/woo.

MICHIBELLE
Well, thank you! The story is, in essence, a commentary on the state of the biosphere in a world undergoing rapid climate change and pollution. It is not an easy story - it makes you think - in a good way. It is full of cleverosities and pokes. And sooo many good ideas. The ideas were just so much cleverer than the characters, you know? That happens a lot with me. But herding ideas is like herding cats. You must just let them run free. And give them lots of attention, and some kibble.

INTERVIEWER

There is no thread of tension that builds, no ‘ticking clock’? The fun factor is sparse.

MICHIBELLE

Au contraire! I had so much fun. I try to stay away from threads. They can be addictive. Ticking clocks? I never say ‘nein’ to life, but then, I have nine. It is right that humans should worry about ticking clocks ; they are sitting on a time bomb of neglect.

INTERVIEWER

The illustrations are dark and ominous (appropriate for the reality, but perhaps not for the target age).

MICHIBELLE

My wonderful illustrator found the story mesmerizing. The artwork is phenomenal - captivating! It certainly opens the mind. I especially like the cover: ambiguous and scary-cute. Kind of like me. And quite busy too.

INTERVIEWER

Will you be taking a pause now?

MICHIBELLE

Pawses are the best. I tend to get restless after an hour or so though. My main challenge now is to improve my word processing...
skills. It is so hard to type with claws. Oh, and research my ancestral poetry roots. Maybe I’ll write some haiku.

INTERVIEWER

Does it bother you having the shelf life of an apple head?

MICHIBELLE

Apples have seeds and I have a few more lives. At least I’m not a banana.

INTERVIEWER

Does being a Wichien Mate inspire your craft?

MICHIBELLE

Wichi provides the basics: mostly great shelves. And internet. The drafts on the back of the broom get a bit challenging sometimes.

INTERVIEWER

What is the point?

MICHIBELLE

I am the point. I’m just having a hairball. I’m a Boermese, after all.