

## The Token Man

AS A SINGLE man whose formerly carefree personal life has been adversely affected by a pernicious book called *The Rules*, I feel ambivalent about adding a new rule to those that women must follow in order to get hitched. But experience tells me that this is a rule that bears no exceptions. Namely, a single woman who wishes to get married must never, ever own more than one cat.

The statistics which purported to show that the chances of a woman over the age of thirty-five finding a husband were smaller than her chances of being killed by terrorists were revealed to be false. But in many of our big cities there really are significant obstacles to finding a life-mate. Otherwise there wouldn't be so many attractive, successful women who are alone and not happy about it. They are confronted by a shortage of men who are straight, attractive, and neither threatened by a strong woman nor obsessed by the company of other males.

In New York, you cannot go to a writing class, health club, or dancing lesson without encountering several unmarried thirty-something women who are beginning to get that *look*. It reminds me of the wolfish, hungry expression you see on the faces of adolescent boys who would do almost anything to lose their virginity. I wore one for years and girls found it a total turn-off. I had to resign myself to a life of monastic continence before a sympathetic lady released me from my condition.

Unfortunately, such resignation doesn't work with women who wish to marry. The next stage after desperation is bitterness. And then abject surrender—a surrender symbolized by the acquisition of cats. Men know this and they therefore associate multiple-cat ownership with desperation, bitterness, and surrender even though a woman who buys cats may do so while she is still happy and attractive.

Two or more cats become an obvious substitute for both children and a male



## Two-Cat Women

Ladies, a second cat will condemn you to spinsterhood, warns  
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companion. They soon dominate the dwelling of their owner. They sleep in her bed. They sharpen their claws on her furniture. Their smell—a mixture of kitty litter, cat food, and wet fur—becomes a permanent and unerasable feature of her apartment, a kind of anti-pheromone, powerfully repellent to the human male.

Among the worst effects are on a woman's bathroom. As a bachelor I have enormous admiration for a (catless) woman's bathroom. It is usually so much nicer than one's own: a haven of hygiene, a place full of feminine mystery, a shrine to the marketing genius of the beauty industry—every spare inch covered by bottles and tubs of sweet-smelling potions. But once cats take over, you can see their hairs everywhere. You don't want to touch the towels. You realize that the cat owner's awareness of dirt and her sense of smell have become severely compromised.

Then there is the character issue. One

might hope that cat owners would gradually become as seductively flirtatious as their feline companions. But for some reason, multiple-cat owners only absorb the less attractive cat-like traits. They become willful, selfish, vengeful, and cruel. They alternate between gross laziness and frantic activity, lying awake at night and dozing during the day. And when it comes to their appearance, multi-cat owners transfer all the attention they ever paid to themselves to their pets. Their cats always have sleek, brushed coats, while the owners get fat or excessively skinny. They take to wearing drab tent dresses or moldy old sweats, and they give up entirely on their hair.

They also become excessively territorial. Any man who might be considering staying for the night soon picks up the vibration from both cats and mistress that there is no room for him. And if cats see their mistress cuddling up to a stranger, they will immediately stage a diversion, either by interposing their own bodies between the smooching couple, or by "accidentally" knocking things off shelves.

The awful thing is that most people assume that lonely, difficult spinsters live with four or five cats because they are alone. They fail to realize that the causal relationship goes the other way. These women are alone, difficult, etc., *because* they live with four or five cats.

I actually like cats, despite being mildly allergic to them. I once delayed breaking up with a girlfriend for three terrible months because I had become so attached to her two tabbies. So it is more in sorrow than anger that I proclaim the two cat rule—one that every mother should tell her daughter: "It is better to be lonely than to have more than one cat; you probably won't be lonely for long. But if you should be tempted by an extra cat, abandon all hope. You will be alone forever." ♦

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