

*Outing the
Cat Lady*

The title is surrounded by several light gray paw prints of varying sizes, scattered around the text.





Introduction

Forgive my forwardness, dear reader, for we are only just meeting in a chance encounter, but I already know you, and I feel that I may speak boldly to you. Yes, you: You, who are standing there holding this book simply because of the word *Cat* in the title, which alone was enough to pique your interest. You, who are at this moment attired, from at least the knees down—but more likely, from sneakers to scrunchie—in a light to moderate sprinkling of cat hair of various colors and textures. You, who ventured out today only after ascertaining the welfare of the various living fur ornaments that share your quarters. You, who will return to those quarters to greet said ornaments and will be rewarded with brittle stares, yet you will love them anyway and speak to them in deferential tones other persons would use to address infants of European royalty. Yoo, hoo! You're a Cat Lady.

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Please do not take offense, dear reader, nor cast this book back onto the shelf (but if you do, please leave it with the cover facing out). I meant no insult. Please do not associate the term *Cat Lady* only with that poor, pitiable creature in your town whose residence was sorted out by the county mental health, animal control, and solid waste management departments. Nor, indeed, associate it with Halle Berry in ten square inches of distressed leather or Michelle Pfeiffer in black shrink wrap (or Julie Newmar in full-coverage Spandex, if your memory reaches back that far). Instead, please associate it with the likeness of Your Humble Narrator on the cover of this book, who is, if I dare say, a handsome and stylish woman of A Certain Age who has but a tiny eccentricity, a minuscule quirk, a wee foible when it comes to little kitty witty boo boo babies ... ahem.

Can it be anything but the highest of praise if I apply the term to myself? I am a Cat Lady who has learned not only to manage the addiction but also to embrace it. My mission with this book is not to cure you, but to coax you out of the closet and raise your confidence so that you may be a Cat Lady with Style. The focus is not so much upon the quantity of cats you have accumulated (although that does factor in) but the quality of your lives together.

In this book I have identified nine characteristics of the contemporary, cosmopolitan Cat Lady, which are thoughtfully listed below. If you can identify with only

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one of them, you are merely teetering on the brink of being a Cat Lady; but if you can tick all nine, you are definitely a Cat Lady, and now is the time to come Out with style.

You need to admit you are a Cat Lady if:

- 🐾 You have ever actually exchanged money for a cat.
- 🐾 Your several cats are all named “Kitty.”
- 🐾 Most of your wardrobe consists of cat-themed fleece.
- 🐾 You have ever selected flooring or furniture to match your cat.
- 🐾 Even though you live alone, you require a king-size bed to find enough space to sleep on.
- 🐾 A cat has ever contracted ringworm from *you*.
- 🐾 You know which cat is the father of the new kittens because it happened under your bed.
- 🐾 You have ever had a dead cat in the refrigerator.
- 🐾 You have learned to have sex in spite of the cat watching—or trying to participate.

Bonus:

- 🐾 You have selected any of the above and you are a man.

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Dear reader, you have been more than kind to read this far. Perhaps I have already shocked you into the admission that you are indeed a Cat Lady. Perhaps I have validated what you already suspected. Perhaps, like your cat, you are standing at the open door, vacillating about your next move. In any case, I invite you to take that first step so that you, too, can be Out (and *stay* Out) as a Cat Lady.

Who wrote the original book on Living Large, if not a cat? Aren't your cats now practicing that at your effort and expense? Then who best to trust for lessons in Cat-Lady-tude than the World's Outest Cat Lady? Your guidebook is in your hand. So pour yourself a lovely cup of tea with milk (on a saucer, please), settle yourself under the nearest cat, and learn to rejoice in your feline obsession and carry it off with style and elegance that would rival even that of—dare I say it?—a cat.



Chapter 1

You need to admit you are a Cat Lady if:
**You have ever actually
exchanged money for a cat.**

As odd as it may seem to those of us with the sophisticated preference for the company of cats, there are plenty of people out there who don't get it. Pity. Any cat is generally a better companion than most people, but, alas, not everyone sees it that way. Therefore, while the subject of whether to have a cat is moot to us, in the interest of educating that other segment of the population, I shall now discuss the acquisition of a cat.

One way to acquire a cat is to purchase one. The trafficking of cats is generally confined among those persons with a preference for a particular breed, such as Siamese, Persian, Rex, Ragdoll, Maine Coon, and so forth. There are dozens of recognized breeds, and for those to whom homogeneousness is *de rigueur*, there



... if you have ever actually exchanged money for a cat.

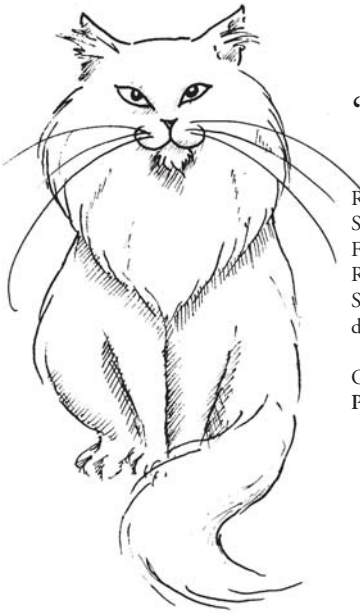
are hundreds of recognized breeders with whom to trade. Cats like these, with genealogies more complete than those of many Latter-Day Saints, will set you back some serious simoleans. If such a cat will have you, may you live together happily ever after in the manner in which the cat would like to become accustomed. If you have ever paid more than a month's wages for a cat of privilege, you are definitely a Cat Lady.

Another way to acquire a cat is to bail one out of an animal shelter or adopt from a rescue organization. This also involves the exchange of financial consideration, though not as considerable a consideration as a breeder cat. Most of the kindhearted folks who run these operations are not trying to turn a profit, but merely to cover expenses. The shelter/rescue is the flea market of the pet world (no pun intended, dear reader, I assure you). Quite often, a person will procure from the endless selection what is at first glance merely a secondhand cat, but when she gets it home and shines it up a bit, it is revealed to be a rare prize indeed. If you have ever paid a humane organization whatever pittance they requested and received what would have been a bargain at twice the price, you are without doubt a Cat Lady—and a damn goodhearted one.

The most common way to acquire a cat is to do nothing. That is correct. You need do nothing to acquire a cat. A cat will acquire you presently, if it hasn't already done so. A series of common scenarios follows, *viz.*

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🐾 It is late at night. It is absolutely pissing rain. You open the front door just a crack to look out and make certain you have rolled up your automobile window. There upon your doorstep is what appears to be a drowned opossum. Your heart melts. You open the door to invite the small, bedraggled visitor in. The cat darts—but in the wrong direction. You chase the cat all over hell and half of North America as the rain changes to sleet. The cat disappears and you trudge home, grumbling and shivering. The cat is waiting for you at the door, and this time, strides happily through with you and makes itself to home. You now have acquired a cat, and pneumonia.






“FREE!”

Rabies shot: \$ 25
Spay: \$125
Flea treatment: \$ 20
Ringworm: \$125
Special diet
due to allergies: \$600 per year


One heartfelt purr:
PRICELESS

... if you have ever actually exchanged money for a cat.

-  You are walking along a city street. Out of the corner of your eye, you spy a small, four-legged creature nonchalantly slaloming between the moving cars. You drop your purchases upon the sidewalk and dash into traffic. Cars and buses screech, spin, and careen precariously all about you. You seize the cat inches from the bumper of a speeding Buick. The cat instantly transfigures into a fur-lined chainsaw and reduces your outfit to tatters and your hands to hamburger. Somehow you prevail and wrestle the miscreant into your genuine unsanctioned reproduction Hermès Birkin bag and hurry home. Safely within the confines of your domicile, you open the bag, and the cat, trailing the confetti that once was the lining of your bag, sails under the bed and growls threateningly. Twenty-four hours later, the same cat is contentedly grooming itself on your pillow and pulling the rope for room service.
-  The cat in Example 1 or 2 turns out to be pregnant. Your one free cat has now turned into six.
-  Your very own cat has gone missing. You've applied posters to every telephone pole in the neighborhood, have patrolled the street with a flashlight peering under automobiles and calling "kitty, kitty," and have knocked on every door to no avail. You steel yourself up and visit the local animal control center. There, at last, you find your fugitive, paws on the bars and

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screaming for his attorney. Joyfully you make his bail and take him home. As well as the friendless, forlorn cat in the adjacent cage. And the two orphaned kittens. And, apparently, the fleas of all the camels in Egypt.

 A co-worker whom you scarcely know sidles up to your workstation and says, “Guess what! My cat had kittens!” Before you can say politely, “You are very kind to offer, but no, thank you, I am sure,” the co-worker produces a flaccid cardboard box lined with smelly, ragged towels and containing tiny, peeping powderpuffs with eyes. Your heart and brain turn to mush. The box and its contents resides in your cubicle for the remainder of the workday and goes home with you that evening. The box and towels are discarded in the next day’s rubbish, but the contents continue to lounge about your home for the next twenty years.

The first and last thing to know about cats is that they are smarter than we are. They have the tools to demolish the most rigid façade of disinterest—the pleading mew, the big sad eyes, the ingratiating ankle rub, the winning purr. Cats are the playahz and we humans are made to be played. If you have ever taken in a stray cat, or been taken in by one, you, dear reader, are indeed a Cat Lady.