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If it has to rain cats, let them be Persians

SOME suburbs are blessed with children. Everyone, it seems, has 2.4. Other suburbs are blessed, if this is the appropriate word, with dogs. Everyone has 2.5 labradors. But in my part of town, laughingly described by cynics as a suburb, remembered by the nostalgic as possessing certain old-world charm, and referred to by rapacious real estate developers as a high-priority development zone, we are blessed with cats. It seems everyone has 2.3.

That's Life

Berwyn Lewis

The smell of croissants from the nearby bakery, roses and cat pee wafts through the quiet and neglected cul de sacs in the early morning. Occasionally, an old derro or bag woman stumbles into the area, regales the air with angst and meths, competes with the blast of stereos possessed by nouveaux Porsche owners and wanders away again unaware that he or she has wandered into a hot bed of cat politics.

The cat business began on a day when, literally, it began to rain cats. Black Persian to be exact.

They belonged to the people who lived above my flat, who, for all intents and purposes shall be known as The Cat People.

The cats, accustomed to sunning themselves on a window sill above, would doze off and fall to the ground. Undeterred and fast on their paws they would blink, hurriedly groom, recover their composure and skelter back, through the garden, up the balcony stairway, through their cat door, to their window sill, and repeat the ritual.

That is when I made my first wrong move. I took it upon myself to inform The Cat People who, unlike myself, were absent during the day at their workplace.

The outcome was that The Cat People began to lock the cats in and, in order to provide them with an alternative to cat free-falling, they left their radio blaring during the day.

Loud rock and roll and tinny commercials filtered through the thin floor above my head as I attempted to contrive sentences and dollars at the typewriter to pay my rent.

My polite entreaties to lower the volume, or better still, turn off the radio and spare the cats and myself, fell upon deaf Cat People ears. In fact, The Cat People responded by turning up the radio.

"This is not a think tank," said The Cat Woman, when I tried to explain the nature of my mental processes. "It's a residential."

When I brought her attention to the fact that I worked at home, she tried to have me evicted by informing the real estate agent that I was "unemployed" and an "undesirable".

Following a brief and restrained verbal exchange, The Cat Woman brought all diplomacy to an abrupt conclusion by suggesting, "Why don't you go back to the trees where you belong?"

This, I can only speculate, was a Darwinian reference to the possible origins of the species of which we are all members.

The radio volume increased and a stony silence between us ensued.

I am not at liberty to reveal how I handled the blaring radio but suffice to say that it had something to do with their fuse box and their absence during the day.

I was no longer troubled by cat fallout or radios.

Neither was I troubled when I perceived mysterious signs of The Cat People's intending departure. It was heralded by violent sawing and hammering sounds into the late hours.

When the removalist truck drew up out the front, I watched The Cat Man macho-ing his way down the path with huge coffin-sized crates in his arms. Red-faced, arteries in his forehead bulging, he loaded them unaided into the truck and drove away.

But where was The Cat Woman? It's too shocking to contemplate, but the thought has crossed my over-active mind that the crates may have contained sections of The Cat Woman.

I began to miss her. The neat little clicks of her heels as she clip-clopped down the garden path on her way to work every morning had provided me with a means of setting my clock.

The Cat Man? The pathway past my bedroom window had always been impeccably maintained by his constant, if not repetitious, sweeping, especially when I had neglected to draw the blinds.

And the cats? The heady fragrance of unadulterated roses and croissants was almost intoxicating without the underlying scent of cat pee.

Finally, motivated by the mountains of mail and bills overflowing from The Cat Peoples' letterbox, along with the sight of The Cat Woman's washing rotting on the washing line in the communal garden, I contacted the real estate agent.

The agent acknowledged the situation deserved attention, especially as their rent was a month overdue.

An inspection took place. I watched from a respectful distance. Screams broke out as the rental manager leaped from one flee-blackened leg to another upon entry into The Cat Peoples' abode.

"They've POQ-ed," the manager reported, meaning, in agentspeak, that The Cat People had "departed quickly".

And now it seems this part of town is deprived of a certain classiness. The alley cats have moved in with all their mates making a mockery of this area which once was blessed with pedigreed Persians raining down past my window.