

Heather
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The cat's meow: Snoozing, schmoozing and cruising for a bruising

Every so often, in the early morning hours of blissful slumber, as I dream of a romantic rendezvous with Brad Pitt, I am awakened by wet kisses in my ear.



"Ooh, Brad, you naughty, naughty boy. You stop that, you're tickling my ear. And I didn't want to mention it, but your breath smells a little of tuna and you might consider getting a shave."

"Meow."

"Damn it, just when I thought my fantasy may be coming true, it's you again."

"Meow."

"Didn't God give you anything else to say? ... Hey, quit licking your butt!"

"Meow."

You will never know the value of sleeping through the night until you have a child or own a cat. I have yet to experience the former, but my furry four-legged feline friend has taught me much about the virtue of patience. (Yes, this is intended to be a column on the joy of cats. Bear with me, it's dead week desperation. If the late, great Lewis Grizzard, columnist extraordinaire, could write about his dog, Catfish, my feline fetish deserves a few lines.)

There is nothing like waking up to a 15-pound cat sitting on your chest, licking your face and meowing. To you, it may be 3 o'clock in the

"I've decided that if reincarnation really holds true, I want to come back as a domestic house cat. They sleep 20 out of the 24 hours in a day. The food bowl is always full. They're constantly being petted ... and they can lick themselves without anybody pointing and staring. What more could you want out of life?"

morning, but to your claw-happy attacker, it's happy hour.

I've often said that it takes a certain type of person to love a cat. My husband doesn't happen to be one of those types. When I leave him alone in the house with the cat, I have to hide all toxic chemicals and ropes. Last time, he said he was just swinging the string in front of the kitty when the string somehow tied itself into a noose. Raja, the Siamese in question, just thought he was getting a new collar.

People can always tell when you own a cat. Every article of clothing you own is covered with fur, and there's often cat food in the bottoms of your shoes. You can own 100 lint brushes and every outfit you own will still look like a mohair sweater.

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back as a domestic house cat. They sleep 20 out of the 24 hours in a day.

The food bowl is always full. They're constantly being petted. They have the uncanny ability to climb drapes, and they can lick themselves without anybody pointing and staring. What more could you want out of life?

Raja has his own special quirks. When they coined the phrase "Curiosity killed the cat," they had Raja in mind. You see, he likes to chew through wires. He's yet to reenact the cat-versus-the-Christmas-tree-lights match from "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation," but it isn't because he hasn't tried. He's chewed through two stereo speaker cords, three telephone cords and a pair of black-market Gucci sandals. He's working on the low wattage appliances before he moves up to the

refrigerator and TV.

We've had to go on suicide watch before, because we were convinced he was trying to off himself. Besides chewing through electrical paraphernalia, Raja also likes to get into small spaces. He heads for the back of the dishwasher the minute it opens. He sleeps in the crisper when I clean out the refrigerator. And he's tried to get into the oven — when it was on.

Cats also have this special gift of making you feel uneasy. If you have ever owned a cat or have gone to the bathroom at the home of someone who owns a cat, you will understand what I mean. Raja enjoys sitting right in front of the toilet and staring at you while you do your duty. Sometimes he even tries to get up on your lap. Friends and family won't come over anymore because they're afraid to use the bathroom.

"Heather, your cat is a pervert. He sat and stared at me the whole time I was going to the bathroom."

"He just likes people, and besides you were sitting on his main source of water."

(Guests leave.)

"It's OK, Raja. They just don't appreciate you. Come here, my little baby. You're such a good kitty ... No, no!! Get away from the plant. That's not the litter box...."

"Meow."

"Yeah, that's what you said before."

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Brent
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And may old traditions be forgot...

Don't you get tired of the same old holiday routines year after year? Don't get me wrong, I enjoy the holidays as much as Jabba the Hut enjoys eating raw snails or whatever

the hell those things were, but sometimes I just yearn for something new to do around this time of year.

So this year, I finally stopped waiting for Martha

Stewart to do a show on new traditions and came up with my own. You can thank me later.

Old Tradition: Christmas tree

New Tradition: Christmas cactus

This is a great change from the usual evergreen tree that you have in your living room, and it has several advantages. First of all, a cactus doesn't need constant watering, and if you forget to water the cactus, you won't have to worry about all the needles that seem to fall out faster than Ted Danson's hair. Secondly, you don't have to worry about the cat climbing the tree and knocking off all of your beautiful ornaments. (At least not more than once.)

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Old Tradition: Leaving milk and cookies for Santa

New Tradition: Leave a big bowl of chili for Santa

I think this only makes sense. I mean, Mr. Claus is out in the cold pretty much all night, so the last thing he wants to consume is an ice-cold glass of milk. Let's give him something hot, like a steaming bowl of chili, to take away some of the chill. And if everyone does this, you should have no problem telling if Santa has been to your house. (Daddy, was that you? No son, Santa's been here.)

Old Tradition: Watch for Santa and his reindeer

New Tradition: Kidnap Santa

and his reindeer

I must tell you, if you don't try this one, you're really missing out. Santa could use a break, but he'll never admit it, so force the issue. Wait behind the Christmas Cactus with a baseball bat, and when he comes down the chimney, whammo! While Santa's out cold, you can take over his job for a while. How hard can it be? You get in the sleigh, crack the whip, check the naughty-or-nice list, and sling a few presents down some chimneys. (Besides, chicks dig a guy in a Santa suit.) And when you get tired of that, just take the sleigh back home. Kris Kringle will probably be up and about by then, and just finishing the delicious bowl of chili you left out for him.

Old Tradition: Roasted duck

and fruitcake

New Tradition: Roasted reindeer and dead skunk pie

I know that these don't sound real tasty, but you'll regret it if you don't give them a chance. Reindeer meat is tender, tasty, and when a big quarter of this tasty creature is delivered from the oven to the dinner table for all to admire, it looks so tantalizing. (You could even say it glows.) As for the dead skunk pie, this is something that I believe is the holiday dessert of the future. Picture this: a dead skunk, sitting on top of a deliciously flaky crust, tail curled around the edge of the pie pan, with a plum wedged firmly in its mouth. Sprinkle a little brown sugar on top, and you've got yourself a party favorite. And if you're concerned about the odor, worry not, my friend. It's not nearly as stinky as you might think.

I hope you strongly consider these alternatives to your average holiday routines. They can really spruce up the old yuletide spirit. And if you get bored with the new traditions listed above, here's one last idea: Sleet shooting for Santa.

Pope is a senior broadcasting major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

