

# ACCUMULATING CATS

## By Kelly Meadows

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She wouldn't give me her number, so I kept showing up at her place of business. For five months I drank coffee while she topped off the late shift at "East of Java." I didn't sleep from May to September. When she got a job at the health food store, I ate soy protein and inadvertently won a weight lifting contest. In Bulgaria. Don't ask.

When she worked at the animal shelter, I wound up with 32 cats and an eviction notice.

Finally I spoke up while signing yet one more adoption form. You would think they'd say I was unfit since I already had 45.

"Have you noticed *anything*?" I asked.

"You seem to really like cats," she replied happily.

"Anything else?" I didn't realize she was stupid on top of it.

"Yeah. You like coffee and soy protein," she said, more incredulous than happy.

"What about *you*?" I was desperate!

"I don't really like soy protein."

And I'm like, "No, I mean I like *you*!" Not that it mattered. I can hardly have anyone over with 51 cats.

She was flattered. "But I don't date my customers."

So I suggested she could give me her number and I'd stop coming by.

But, no. "That would be bad for the cats."

Not really. With 63 cats in the place, there's more animosity in my apartment than on a high school cheerleading squad.

But there wasn't much choice. The only way to keep seeing her was to keep accumulating cats. If I gave up the cats, she'd say I was unfeeling. If I gave up the girl – well, I'd save a lot of money on litter.

Finally, I packed all 84 cats into my car and waited for her to come outside after she got off work. Unfortunately, rather than Brenda, it was a policeman – a rather burly and playfully authoritative fellow who of course wondered, among other things, what I was doing with 96 cats in my car and how I could see out the back window.

I didn't know what to do say.

**(as police officer)** "What's wrong, boy? Cat got your tongue?"

I pulled one off my face and said I was waiting for Brenda Riley.

He looked at me, kind of shocked. We were both doing the same thing, in our own way. **(as policeman)** "I gave her 15 tickets so I could get to know her and then she said she wouldn't go out with a police officer." There was more. "After that I had to give her 30 days. She lost

her job at the health food store doing the time. But at least I could keep an eye on her. When she got out, she got the job here at the shelter.”

Inadvertently, it was this guy’s fault I had all cats and no Brenda. And we weren’t the only ones smitten.

**(still as the officer)** “I know a fireman who burned her house down in hopes she’d go running to his arms. Instead, she escaped out the back door. His romance went down in flames, she was late to her job at the coffee house, and they fired her. You know what her severance was? **(horrified)** Decaf!”

“What an unfortunate girl,” I offered.

“That’s why she didn’t mind spending the 30 days,” he smiled. “They were rebuilding her house and she couldn’t afford a motel.” It was nice apparently. Built-in coffee maker and lots of scratching posts. No soy protein.

Brenda was put on television. Turns out she was a hero because she farmed out just about every cat that was brought in. **(as a TV announcer)** “So if you want to make sure a cat has a good home, just take it to Brenda Riley.”

That wasn’t good for either of us. I had to either stop my cat colony at about 150 or move up to an SUV, and this was just about the time that everybody was bringing in their surplus kittens to Brenda hoping to find them a good home.

**(as a slogan)** “Why spay, just give them away!”

I stopped adopting, and she was beginning to look really bad to her TV following. I didn’t show up for a week. It was hard, but it’s not like I didn’t have any pets to take care of. Brenda was beside herself. Her performance behind the wheel suffered as well.

**(as TV announcer, editorializing)** “Brenda Riley, recently hailed as the savior of this town’s homeless felines, has been pulled over repeatedly for reckless driving. Do we want this woman responsible for our city’s cats? If she holds human life in such disregard, imagine how she feels about the cats we have entrusted her to protect and distribute.”

But the next evening they showed a picture of Brenda with that policeman. **(as policeman)** “From now on, Brenda won’t be a nuisance to anyone. I’ll be taking her wherever she needs to go.” It wouldn’t have been quite so infuriating, but that he was wearing a tux, and she was in a bridal gown.

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