

My Husband, the Crazy Cat Lady

I accidentally turned my husband into a crazy cat lady. He was unemployed; had been for some time. I began to worry about the widening gap on his resume. So I suggested he go “check out” the cat shelter. Newly opened not far from our house, they were actively seeking volunteers. I’d brought a cat into our relationship that my then-boyfriend treated pretty well and seemed to kind of like, so I thought he might go for being a cat-house volunteer, if I framed the proposal the right way.

He started with a couple of shifts a week. I’d usually go along for the one that fell on one of my days off. We’d both have fun getting to know the cats’ personalities and making up our own nicknames for them—Marmalade, Chaplin,...Jerk.

Believe it or not, Jerk was adopted by a lovely family and found his forever-home. It was inevitable that we, or rather—he, would become a ‘foster parent’ and bring home one of the shelter cats to be socialized. I don’t remember who our first foster cat was. I don’t remember who our 14th foster cat was.

I thought I was a cat person. Turns out, I was mostly a ‘my cat’ person, while my husband became a ‘the more cats, the better’ person. While I’d be swatting one or two away from my feet and/or the dinner I was trying to put together, my husband would be picking another one up to gaze intently into its eyes, slowly muttering something to it, trying to teach it human speech. While I was trying to coach our first child into taking his first steps, my husband was off to the side with a cat’s front legs grasped in his hands seeing if he could get it to balance on its back two legs. While I rocked our child to sleep, he would be off with a cat cradled in his arms, seeing how long it tolerated being upended like a flailing beetle and calling it his “kitten baby”. My favorite, in that “made me cringe the most” kind of way, was when I was thinking about arranging a play date for our toddler. My husband suggested I ask the mom if they’d also like to bring their cat for a playdate with ours.

I’d come home from work, having left our child to fend for itself, hoping that when my husband fed the cats it would trigger him to remember to also give the baby a bottle. Desperate for the kind of talk mothers have with other mothers about what their babies did new that day, instead I got stories of the emotional inroads two cats from the latest batch of fosters made towards each other—“you should have seen Harry and Fuzzy today. Harry walked within about two feet of Fuzzy and then Fuzzy went to go lay down, and then Harry came and looked at him for a while, and then Fuzzy got up and went to eat some wet food but it was almost like he was ‘inviting’ Harry to come along. Have you seen them interact this way? You’ve really got to just stop and watch it sometime. Oh, and I’ve got to show you the

pictures I took of BonBon and Sophie sitting together. It starts here—what is this, picture 32, I guess...and ends here: picture 89”.

Years ago, I dumped a financial planner I'd been dating because we had one dinner over which he wouldn't stop talking about his clients their portfolio strategies, blah blah blah. I decided I couldn't stomach fifty years of such dinnertime boredom and I cut him loose. Ask me today whether I'd rather be talking financial strategy or about the grooming habits of our nine cats and how they compare with one another...and I'll tell you there is something to be said for planning your financial future.