

MOLLY: (*Vibrating.*) Uhhhhh! (*She covers her mouth with both hands. She smacks off the switch and quickly steps out. Pause. She gathers herself, fixing her hair.*) I can see what you mean. About the lack of caressing.

EDWARD: (*Massaging the air.*) You just need the squeezing or it's too much intensity on the soles of your —

MOLLY: Umm-hum. I agree one hundred percent.

EDWARD: So you see the problem?

MOLLY: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Ohhhhhh yeah. A definite lack of . . .

MOLLY and EDWARD: (*Whispered.*) Caressing. (*Beat.*)

EDWARD: So when do you get off?

MOLLY: Oh . . . Now's good!

EDWARD: What about Bath, Mat, Towels, Etc?

MOLLY: Good idea! I'll grab some. Don't move.

CAT-TASTROPHY

Mathew and Bridget, late twenties, are newlyweds. They moved into their new home six months ago. So did their cats. Bridget and Mathew love each other. However, Bridget's two cats hate Mathew's cat. For six months now Bridget and Mathew have been trying everything possible to make them get along, including following a structured and laborious routine given to them by their cat therapist. It is now the middle of the night, and, once again, Mathew has been woken up by the cats fighting. He can't take it anymore.

CHARACTERS

Mathew 20s, Bridget's husband

Bridget: 20s, Mathew's wife

SETTING

The newlywed's home

TIME

The present

MATHEW: (*Very sincere and serious.*) Honey, I've been thinking about this all week.

BRIDGET: Oh no. I was afraid of this.

MATHEW: You and I both know we cannot go on like this.

BRIDGET: But Mathew, we just need to be a little more patient.

MATHEW: We've been extremely patient, Bridget. Six months worth of patient.

BRIDGET: The therapist was very optimistic.

MATHEW: Maybe at the beginning, but you heard what she said at our last visit. Not all personalities can make it work together.

BRIDGET: But we didn't try everything.

MATHEW: What? Well what didn't we try? We did therapy.

BRIDGET: We introduced them wrong. That was our fault. We

were supposed to blend their smells on the blanket first before we ever made them meet.

MATHEW: It's not our fault. It's no one's fault. Remember she told us that? And we reintroduced them and did the blanket thing. It still didn't make any difference.

BRIDGET: But that's not true, there was less anxiety. There was less twitching.

MATHEW: Yes, but we had to distract them with the crystal the whole time. Come on, Bridget, you have to accept this. We've done all we can.

BRIDGET: Have we? Have we really? Have we really done all we can?

MATHEW: Yes. We've done the group therapy. We've played classical music to soothe them. Family activity time. Creating self-space and seclusion for each of them. We've kept our play dates. We even drugged them! But it didn't work. It didn't work. Our cats cannot live together!

BRIDGET: Maybe we weren't liberal enough with the catnip? Maybe we didn't play enough on the play dates? Maybe we weren't really united in our front?

MATHEW: Maybe our cats just hate each other. Ever think of that? And besides, I was very united, even when you weren't. It was me who made sure everyone had Friskie treats at all merging times, right? I'm the one who had to spread the pheromones all over — me. You act as if you're the only one who bore the brunt of this.

BRIDGET: I was in charge of just as much as you. The secluded-room switching, I performed every day. The special playtime, almost always fell to me. I think they felt our resentment, our bickering. Maybe we weren't affectionate enough?

MATHEW: Well, it's kind of hard to be "affectionate" when your cats are under you bed, ripping each other's ears off, isn't it? It's hard to concentrate on making love when they're going (*Imitating the screech.*) "Reeooooooooowwww!" as they lunge over you and draw blood from your back as they graze it. Or listening to them knock every precious thing you've ever owned off the mantle.

BRIDGET: It's not that bad.

MATHEW: What? They've become positively acrobatic in their destruction. You saw them. They even dangled from the beads on the ugly lamp.

BRIDGET: (*Gasps.*) That's my grandmother's lamp. You told me you liked it.

MATHEW: See? See what's happening here? They're pitting us against each other.

BRIDGET: You *told* me you liked it. Maybe it's my fault I didn't keep their nails clipped short enough.

MATHEW: You clipped them twice a week. It didn't stop the bloodshed. They just bit each other. Don't you see? We can't keep pointing fingers at each other. This is the beginning of our life together and they are tearing us apart!

BRIDGET: But our therapist was so optimistic at the start.

MATHEW: So were we all, Bridg. So were we all. We wanted this very badly, but it just can't go on. I think you know it as well as I. We must (*Sighs.*) separate the cats.

BRIDGET: (*Beat.*) OK, but why today, Matt? What's so magical about today?

MATHEW: Nothing is magical about it. It's very sad. It's very, very sad. But they'll ruin us. We got very ugly last night. Very, very ugly. Uglier than we've ever been. Aside from the co-construction of the Ikea bookcase and the mounting-the-bike rack incident. Look at last night.

BRIDGET: I know. (*Beat.*) But was it really that bad? (*Cut to last night.*)

MATHEW: (*Running throughout the house, yelling.*) Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!

BRIDGET: (*Just waking.*) Mathew?

MATHEW: (*Running throughout the house, yelling.*) Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!

BRIDGET: Matt?

MATHEW: (*Outside their bedroom.*) And stay in there you rotten little head bangers!!

BRIDGET: (*Looking at him.*) Oh no! Oh God, I thought the spray would do it.

MATHEW: Do it?! They love that Cat-Away Spray. They roll around in it. They bask in it saying ha, ha, ha!

BRIDGET: (*Handing it to him.*) Spray bottle?

MATHEW: It's over. I've closed the door and put them in their cat carriers for the night.

BRIDGET: The carriers? But there's no room for them to —

MATHEW: Exactly! It had to be done, Bridg. Do you realize what time it is?

BRIDGET: The usual I suppose?

MATHEW: No they started earlier tonight. Two instead of three. It is now four AM.

BRIDGET: Was it that loud?

MATHEW: (*Obviously out of control.*) You didn't hear it?! They were head-butting for the last two hours! I think they've moved to full-body slams. They just run and death-dive right into the door. They're possessed!

BRIDGET: Possessed?! Whoa. Time out.

MATHEW: OK, I'm sorry, that was spoken out of anger. That was unfair, honey.

BRIDGET: That's an awful way to put it! They're my cats you know? Remember the therapist said we need to stand united emotionally? We need to stay positive? I've had them since they were little kitties. They were there when you weren't. They helped me through getting fired and my breakup with Jeff.

MATHEW: I know. I know. But you have a job and Jeff is gone.

BRIDGET: You're so mean about it all sometimes. You act as if they're evil.

MATHEW: Honey, they *are* evil.

BRIDGET: Mathew?! They aren't evil!

MATHEW: They rip the soles from your shoes. They steal Dove chocolate from the counter. They steal toilet paper and scratch the paint off the doors *every* night.

BRIDGET: They just don't want to be away from us.

MATHEW: No, they just want to kill Miranda and me.

BRIDGET: Well, that too. But that's natural animal behavior. It's natural to hate the new things you aren't used to.

MATHEW: Well is it natural behavior for cats to open the refrigerator on a regular basis?

BRIDGET: OK, OK, so they're a little rambunctious.

MATHEW: A little? You live in denial, Bridget. They opened up your refrigerator at your old place for a whole two years, spoiling I don't know how much food, and you kept blaming the landlord's "bum" refrigerator. I had to make you witness it to believe it.

BRIDGET: A sight I never needed to see by the way. I would have believed your account.

MATHEW: I think you needed to see it. I think you had to see it.

BRIDGET: I sticky-taped the refrigerator door.

MATHEW: Oooh, and that really worked. (*Beat.*) I know you love them, honey. And I . . . know you love them, but we cannot keep this up. Somebody has to go.

BRIDGET: Well, what does that mean?!

MATHEW: I don't know. Maybe all of them. Maybe all of them should just go.

BRIDGET: Go where? Throw them out on the street?

MATHEW: Not a bad idea! (*She gasps.*) Oh honey, I don't mean to upset you. But one of your cats has to go.

BRIDGET: Oh, my cat? But you wouldn't want to give up your precious little neurotic Miranda who doesn't come out unless you spend an hour and a half cooing and ooohing and trying to coax her from under the bed.

MATHEW: Well, perhaps if she wasn't having her ear torn off by the brother-and-sister terror tag team, maybe it would be easier for her to come out?

BRIDGET: She eats plants and pees all over the bed.

MATHEW: One time! One time she peed. I can't believe you have the nerve to bring that up.

BRIDGET: Two times! I counted. Two! She's evil times two!

MATHEW: Well of course she peed, she was traumatized by them! She comes from an abusive kittenhood. She needs stability, we moved her here. She needs companionship, we brought her devils!

BRIDGET: Uh! And that's my fault? I told you from the beginning we should consult a cat specialist because introducing adult cats is no picnic.

MATHEW: Oh for them it is. A refrigerator feast! They don't even have to pack the basket. They don't even have to hit the park. They don't even —

BRIDGET: OK, OK!

MATHEW: I can't believe you honestly did not hear them tonight?

BRIDGET: Well, I didn't, but I couldn't miss *you* running down the hallway screaming "Ahhhhhhhhhh!"

MATHEW: Well, what? You want to blame me now? I can't help it I'm a light sleeper. I'm afraid they'll wake the neighbors with all that. Our neighbors will hate us.

BRIDGET: And I suppose yelling "filthy runts" at the top of your lungs will endear them to us?

MATHEW: OK, OK, that's why we need to talk about this. This is not good. Do you see me? Do you see my hand? *(He holds out his hand.)*

BRIDGET: Yeah.

MATHEW: Don't you see that?

BRIDGET: What? Did they scratch you, honey?

MATHEW: No! I'm shaking with anger. I'm shaking violently with anger. I am not managing well in this environment. Valium opened the refrigerator again after both Dexedrine and Valium got out just now and I wanted to smash his head!

BRIDGET: *(Rubbing his back.)* But you didn't, honey. *(He nods.)* How's Miranda?

MATHEW: She fine. She's cowering under the sideboard as usual.

BRIDGET: Well that's a good sign. They didn't take a swipe at her?

MATHEW: Oh they swiped. They scratched. They swung. They got me!

BRIDGET: I think I didn't hear it that much because I had my earplugs in. You should break down and wear them too. It's the only way we're going to get through this, honey.

MATHEW: I don't want to wear earplugs! I don't want to get through this anymore, Bridg. I want to end this. I can't sleep through this.

BRIDGET: I'm painfully aware of that.

MATHEW: *(Offended.)* Oh.

BRIDGET: Well, you wake me up. *You*, not them. You say you want to sleep, but you won't wear earplugs. Sometimes we have to do things we don't want to, Mathew. Like I have to sit on your stomach when you're having that little gas problem. Do I want to do that all the time? No!

MATHEW: You never told me that.

BRIDGET: I'm just saying the earplugs work for me.

MATHEW: You said you liked to help me with my little problem.

BRIDGET: I don't. Sometimes, I don't mind. What I don't like is being woken up every night.

MATHEW: Well, I can't help it if I have sensitive eardrums. Maybe I should sleep on the couch if I wake you up so much?

BRIDGET: Is that supposed to make me feel guilty?

MATHEW: Yes! It's me or them, lady. Me or them!!

BRIDGET: Well, I resent that ultimatum. You know they were my little fuzz balls long before you. In fact, I resent *you* more than them right now. Sleep on the damn couch with your little sensitive eardrums if you want.

MATHEW: Fine! I will! And you know what, Bridg? Your grandmother's lamp? It's the ugliest thing I've ever seen in my entire life!! Ever!!

BRIDGET: *(She gasps.)* Well, you're the worse *cat daddy* in the world!
(Cut back to today.)

BRIDGET: *(Calmly.)* You're right, you're right, Matt. It was ugly. I guess I just wanted to forget. *(Tearfully.)* The lucky bamboo dying in the vase next to our picture was a sign like you said.

MATHEW: It's dying because they're eating it, Bridg. They're

... eating our love because it's sitting in the relationship sector. It's their fault it's dying. They're killing it. They're killing us.

BRIDGET: So what are you saying? We aren't working anymore?

MATHEW: No, we're not. And I'm saying maybe a separation is in order.

BRIDGET: *(Even more tearful.)* What?! Really? But I thought we were . . . just over this little . . . but we were just married, Mathew, in . . . when were we married again?

MATHEW: May. *(Patting her back.)* No, no, no, honey! Oh God, no! Not us. Them. The cats.

BRIDGET: Oh. *(Saddened.)* Oh. *(Beat.)* Ohhhh. They love each other too.

MATHEW: Now, now, listen I have a friend, Glenda, from work who just lost one of her kitties. She loves them. She's willing to be a foster care home for one. We could just, we could just see how it goes. She may be willing to adopt and give one of our little ones a nice and less hostile home.

BRIDGET: Oh. And which one will go? *(Beat.)* Valium? *(He nods.)* But he'll be so sad.

MATHEW: Now, this woman is very into Reiki and she'll make him feel so safe and protected.

BRIDGET: What's Reiki?

MATHEW: The laying on of hands.

BRIDGET: How do you know? Has Glenda been laying her hands on someone else I know?

MATHEW: What?! No, no, honey.

BRIDGET: Well, you've never mentioned this Glenda, the Reiki lady before.

MATHEW: Well, we just got to be friends.

BRIDGET: Friends? Um-hmm. Just like that?

MATHEW: Over the cat thing. Yes. Work friends. I'm not attracted to her in the least if that's what you're thinking. Look, it's just a possibility. Please just please, at least consider giving Val to her on a trial basis?

BRIDGET: Trial? Just give him to her. Let's not give her a way out. She may give him back. He'll open her fridge.

MATHEW: Yeah, he's kinda clever to figure that out, huh? *(Beat.)* Wow. That was so quick on your part. I wasn't thinking you'd be . . . I thought we wouldn't decide like right away exactly.

BRIDGET: Why? Are you having second thoughts?

MATHEW: No, no. You know, I hate it when he bugs me in the bathroom. I mean, you have business to do in there and he's always . . . duh-da-duh, walking around slipping and falling on the wet tile.

BRIDGET: Yeah, he's so cute. *(Mathew nods.)*

MATHEW: Especially when he rolls around and bumps your hand to get pet a couple of times. Oh poor Val.

BRIDGET: And she's some weirdo Reiki-freaky lady who's going to be laying her hands all over you — I mean, him.

MATHEW: Yeah. And he's my bud. He's my little big-dumb Valie. Oh. I can't give him away.

BRIDGET: You sure can't! What were you thinking?! *(She hits him.)* I can't believe you even considered such a thing!

MATHEW: I'm sorry, baby. I was just so sleep-deprived.

BRIDGET: I know, honey. But now we're all back together again. Right, baby? *(He nods.)* We'll figure a way through this period of adjustment.

MATHEW: We sure will. Kiss?

BRIDGET: *(She kisses him.)* Night.
(The both lie down. They both sit up straight as if they heard a loud noise.)

MATHEW and BRIDGET: Aaahhhh!

BRIDGET: Do you think that was my grandmother's lamp?

MATHEW: Oh God. We can only hope.