

Ms. Braun and Her Cats
David Olin

After a cynical week of laughter and secret planning, Peter Cyan finally replied to the email from Evalynn Braun. This was not the traditional girl that Mr. Cyan was familiar with, much less ever spoken to. She was an introverted quack, and most importantly did not sound, by e-mail, the least bit attractive. She sounded like a sacrilegious nun with an obsession for the feline species.

Peter considered these probable facts about Ms Braun. He laughed with his friends when asked if he would respond to her message. "Of course not," he agreed. Why should he risk even being seen with this character in public? He needs an ex-cheerleader with a maximum IQ of 90 who drinks flavored rum and cranberry vodka. Ms. Braun probably drinks hard cider on President's Day.

But his response is already in the virtual world of Ms. Braun's fingertips. She reads it while she is in the downtown public library checking out books on rare male cat breeding. She agrees to the date and time in a sentence that reads, "Do not wear cologne or excessive amounts of deodorant because Rosenberg is allergic to strong smells." Rosenberg is her cat.

"There are around three billion women in the world, and this girl is just one," he mumbled to himself on the way up fourteen floors on the elevator. "Great. I didn't even ask how old she is. She could be fifty."

Ding. He takes his breath of regret, walks off the elevator, and directly ahead stands her door.

The door opens awkwardly fast and "Hello, I'm Evalynn." She puts out her hand before Mr. Cyan can even register there is a woman standing in front of him who appears to be Ms. Braun.

"Oh, hey," he said slowly while catching up to the door. "I'm Peter." He noticed there was a cat in her hand. "And is that Rosenberg?"

"No, this is Darwin. Rosenberg is in timeout. If you want to come in, you need to take off your shoes." Her index finger held a stiff order as it aimed at her shoe rack that was built into the wall.

"Okay," he said with a fake grin on his face. He wanted out. He did not care if she—

"Um, unless your . . . let's just leave our shoes on. If your feet smell, Rosenberg could get an itchy nose, and we know he doesn't like itchy noses." She smirked like a virgin sixth grade English teacher, and Peter noticed this with a strange pleasure.

"Evalynn, can I call you Eva? I've always loved the name Eva."

"Sure," she looked in his eyes from across the entryway, "You know, your eyes are such a dark, luring brown. I've never seen brown like that before." She paused and in a new, almost hypnotized voice said, "They are beautiful." Her cheeks turned red and she put her head down. There was a silence and Peter took this moment to visually dissect Ms. Braun.

"The hottest nun I've ever seen," he thought. Her white nurse shoes ended what were Monroe style pale white legs. Her body fit perfectly into a business-like black dress. She was nothing he had imagined. Physically, that is. Her short dark hair lined

her innocent face. There was no makeup. And she had a look that didn't need it. He was ready.

"So, should I come in?" He went ahead and started to step through the door.

"Wait, I think it would be better if you did take off your shoes. There could be dirt on them, and it could come off on the floor and Rosenberg could get into it." She caught her breath and continued to the cat in her arm, "And we know Rosenberg likes to get into everything. Don't we, Darwin?"

"We could just go somewhere if you want. What were you thinking about doing?"

"Well, Rosenberg does need a playmate. You see he's been lonely. That's why he has been getting into everything."

Peter stopped and looked to see if his date was serious. Her eyes were looking at his mouth with rapid blinks as if insisting an answer.

"You want to go cat shopping?"

"No, you can't GO cat shopping. You look in the newspaper for a litter of kittens, then call them to get all the information, then—"

"Is it all right if we go in and talk?" He was getting slightly impatient about Ms. Braun's odd fetish with cats.

"Well, you know, I'm not sure what to do about the shoe thing."

"I'll just take them off; I promise my feet don't stink."

"I know. But I'd rather not take the risk. We have just seen Rosenberg get very sick from even light odors."

"I know," Peter said in a very calm and disappointed voice. "I think I'm going to go, Eva. I'm sorry. I don't think it's going to work out today." He was looking at her with the eyes that she liked so much. He turned around and pushed the button for the elevator.

Ms. Braun gave a sad whisper of agreement. She thought about his radiant brown eyes and looked down at Darwin's eyes. They were not brown. They were not even beautiful. They were just normal cat eyes.

"Peter, wait. I don't care if you take your shoes off or leave them on. Will you please come in? I bought us some drinks. I didn't know what to get and I thought that everybody likes hard cider. Do you like hard cider? Please come in."

He turned around and looked at her pitiful face. She had put the cat down. The elevator dinged behind him.

"Okay, Eva, I'll come in."