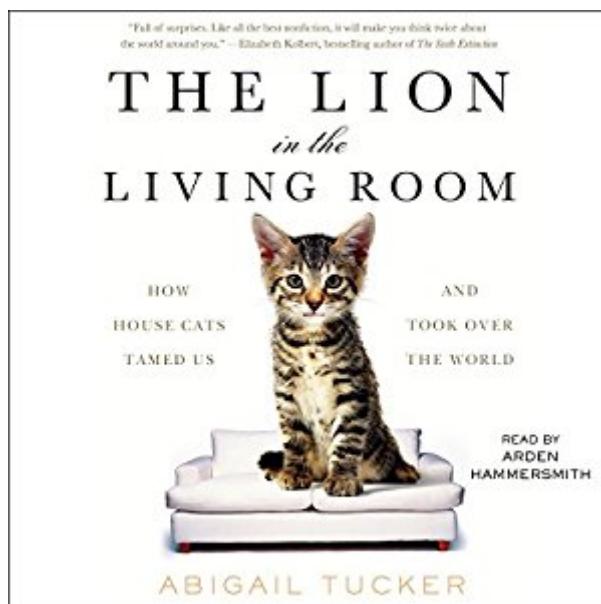


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The Lion In The Living Room: How House Cats Tamed Us And Took Over The World



Synopsis

A lively adventure through history, natural science, and pop culture in search of how cats conquered the world, the Internet, and our hearts. House cats rule back alleys, deserted Antarctic islands, and our bedrooms. Clearly they own the Internet, where a viral cat video can easily be viewed upward of 10 million times. But how did cats accomplish global domination? Unlike dogs, they offer humans no practical benefit. The truth is they are sadly incompetent rat catchers and pose a threat to many ecosystems. Yet we love them still. To better understand these furry strangers in our midst, Abby Tucker travels to meet the breeders, activists, and scientists who've dedicated their lives to cats. She visits the labs where people sort through feline bones unearthed from the first human settlements, treks through the Floridian wilderness in search of house cats on the loose, and hangs out with Lil Bub, one of the world's biggest feline celebrities. Witty, intelligent, and always curious, Tucker shows how these tiny creatures have used their relationship with humans to become one of the most powerful animals on the planet. The appropriate reaction to a cuddly kitten, it seems, might not be aww but awe.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Abigail Tucker's first book looks like it's just about feline pets, but in reality it concerns history, natural history, genetics, epidemiology, sociology, invasive species biology, extinctions, and euthanasia. In fact, it's the best book I've ever read on cats. I learned how cats became domesticated—they domesticated humans rather than vice versa. I

also learned that all domesticated cats came from one species, *Felis silvestris lybica*, the African wildcat, often called the African forest cat. With house cats now outnumbering dogs in American families and in the wild, Tucker tells us why this is so, but still wonders why people love cats so much when, unlike dogs, they don't really do anything useful, like hunt for us, or act as guards, rescue people or track them down, detect tumors or cancers, and in the past, turned spits for roasting over fires. And except for occasionally catching mice and rats, cats sleep fifteen to twenty hours a day. So why do we love them so much? Tucker loves to make sweeping statements like "Cats, though, are self-contained. They don't need people to complete them." I don't know how many cats Tucker has lived with--she only mentions two family cats, both long-lived--but from her photo, I'm about twice her age and have lived with dozens of them. Many of them didn't have the aloofness and independence she ascribes to all domesticated felines. Roswell, for example, who my wife and I have lived with for sixteen years is very much not self-contained. She runs around like crazy, entertains us, and makes us laugh. She does, indeed, need us to complete her. Or at least it looks that way to us. House cats have a wide range of personalities from extreme independence to being pests that always demand attention. Don't get me wrong, despite her occasional generalizations, Abigail Tucker has written an excellent, informative, and incisive book that I recommend highly.

Don't be fooled. Your precious Fuzzykins is a barely-domesticated hypercarnivore who is probably hypnotizing you with its parasite tainted urine-- when not busy hunting endangered species into extinction."Many cat lovers, pondering their blind devotion to a savage little archcarnivore, privately wonder if they might be just a little touched in the head."Well, as a life-long cat lover, I can honestly say I have never wondered this. But author Abigail Tucker did and set out to discover just why people-- including herself-- are so crazy for cats. What caused her to stay awake at night worrying that someone might kidnap her ginger tomcat Cheetoh and what she might be willing to pay as ransom? Why are we so fascinated with internet cat videos? Why do we desire to surround ourselves with this creature-- both in animal and consumer product form (cat pillows, cat mugs, ect.)?Tucker's research takes her to places that might unnerve cat enthusiasts. In a sense, cat lovers talking about cats is supposed to be a "safe space." A place where being a cat lady is a badge of honor. A place free from that co-worker who stops by your desk each week to smugly remind you how much she hates cats-- while looking at a picture of your cat. So I think there's an expectation that a book about cats will take a feline friendly tone tell us all the things we want to hear about our fluffy friends. And this expectation only grows stronger as cats have become "cool,"

and cat people have come out from the shadows. So, in contrast, this book just seems so negative. According to the wildlife preservationists Tucker interviews, cats are an "ecological axis of evil," who are single-handedly wiping species off the earth. Yet, at the same time they are horrible mousers, and thus don't provide any true benefit to humans like dogs do (I'll remember this next time I see my neighbor dragging his fat pug down the block). Cats spread toxoplasmosis, a parasite that causes birth defects and basically eats your brain. It also might hypnotize you into irrationally liking them. And cause schizophrenia. Cats are tricky devils who figured out what no other species did-- that hitching their wagons to humans would improve their outcome. Which means cats are in our homes and our lives on their terms. They could leave at any time and be just fine without us. Pretty much all my reading is done with Hot Fudge Sundae, my dim-witted but infinitely snugly tuxedo cat, curled up beside me. And while I was reading this book, I looked down, meeting those deep amber colored eyes and thought: "why are you trying to *kill* me?" It's best to take Tucker's writing with a grain of salt. After all, it seems illogical to blame cats for hunting endangered species, when said species became endangered in the first place due to human habitation, deforestation, ect. The claim that the rise of insanity corresponds with keeping cats as pets ignores that the same time period corresponds with emerging concepts about mental illness. My favorite chapter had to be "Pandora's Litterbox," where I learned that I am "cat-shaming" my feline by not having a cat friendly living room layout. Poor Hot Fudge Sundae! I pretty much died reading about Doug, the cat owner who moved out of his 400 sqf master bedroom and onto the couch so his pet could have "personal space." No worries though-- he's allowed to sleep over in the cat's room a couple nights each week. This book was a bit of a mixed bag for me, but over all I enjoyed it. Because, you know, cats. Thank you to the publisher and NetGalley for giving me a free copy of this book.

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