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**Connecting**Cathryn Ramin

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**Today's singles no longer chary of buying furniture**

**I JUST GOT OUT** my bottle of Liquid Paper to obliterate my friend Linda's most recent address — and to put in a new one.

We joke about her nomadic life. She moves from glamorous villa to charming beach cottage. These homes are always temporary. They belong to other people. Linda is 34, but she's never had a place of her own. If she did, she'd have to admit to something she hates to recognize:

She doesn't own a single piece of furniture.

That's her choice, but she's a rare bird. Most of my single friends are determined to live as well as their married counterparts, if not better. They don't revel in self-sacrifice. They do not hesitate to buy adult-style furniture. They own gold-leaf plates that match, as well as red and white wine glasses. They own sets of sheets and towels. They own Cuisinarts.

They accept that they might be in this for the long haul. There's no use, they realize, in sitting on metal folding chairs for 10 years, or forever, simply because an eventual spouse might not appreciate their taste in sofa beds.

**IT USED TO BE** that you lived like a monk until you were married. Male or female, you slept on the floor, on a futon left over from college. You used blankets that were, shall we say, replete with history. You cooked meals in one pot and one pan, both of which had lost their handles. You ate off green plastic plates. You used three forks, a knife and two spoons you stole from the college cafeteria some years earlier.

It was temporary, you told yourself. You would manage. You did all this because you didn't want to mess around with Fate. If Fate heard that you had gone out and bought yourself a sofa and loveseat, a coffee table and a bed, she'd use her cunning to see that you stayed single forever.

I lived Spartanly until I faced facts: Despite my expectations, I was not going to be a young bride. I was 26. I'd broken off a long relationship. I felt unsettled and unhappy. I kept waiting for something to change, for a new man to show up on the scene, so I could buy furniture.

For my birthday, my father gave me a check with instructions to make my apartment appear as if an actual person lived in it. He said that he'd always expected to contribute to furnishing the newlyweds' digs I'd share with my husband.

Did he expect to have a spinster daughter?

To stave off depression, I went shopping.

A few months later, I had a place that looked as if a grown-up lived in it. The bed was off the floor. On something I'd never dreamed I'd own — a metal frame. There were sheets that matched the comforter. And six pillows. There was a rug on the living room floor. There was a dining table, with chairs. There were plates. There was a sofa that didn't sag in the center. And a coffee table.

**IN THE MIDST** of this splendor, I stood grinning. I felt spiffy. The life I was living had started to feel like a real life, instead of a pre-game show. I tried my hand at entertaining.

My friends came over and stroked the furniture. They were amazed by my nerve. How, they wanted to know, could I tempt Fate this way? I shrugged. Screw Fate, I said. They gasped. I preached self-image. I became the High Priestess of Gracious Single Living.

A few years later, my place needed sprucing up. I got out the paint and the rollers. I bought a couple of old photographs that I couldn't afford. And I took the big step, the step single people are rarely brave enough to take. I ordered *wall-to-wall* carpeting, deep, thick, extravagant gray carpeting, for the bedroom. It took four men three hours to install it. They assured me that it would be impossible to transport it elsewhere.

Wouldn't it be ironic, I thought as I wrote out the check, if I fell in love with some guy, after all these years, and moved out? Wouldn't that be something?

Four months later, I left that carpeting behind. ■

Cathryn Ramin's column appears on Mondays and Thursdays.