

If you could steal one trait from an animal, what would it be and why?

Why We Need Tails

by **NED VIZZINI**

I confess that I have always wanted a tail for personal reasons. I have long dreamed of waking up in the morning and using my sleek, powerful tail to hit the snooze button on my alarm clock, so I could keep my hands comfortably stashed under my pillow. With a tail, I could write at my computer and drink tea at the same time without stopping my flow.

But I don't just want a tail for myself. All of humanity would benefit from having one.

Tails would help us in three important ways: by reducing traffic deaths, aiding small businesses, and encouraging reading.

First, let's clear up what sort of tails I'm talking about. Bunny tails, while cute, wouldn't add much to the human experience. In fact—and I know this is completely disgusting, but we can't mince words—a rabbit tail might make going to the bathroom more complicated. I envision a long, muscular tail with precise grasping ability—the tail of a New World monkey.

There are two types of monkeys: New World and Old World. Only the New World monkeys, from South America, possess prehensile tails. Among these, the spider monkey's is perhaps the most impressive. Spider monkeys are a little more than a foot high, but their tails are almost three feet long. They use them to swing through trees, pick things up, and hang from branches while they eat. (Using this strategy, they can eat large quantities of food in very short periods of time.)

So now let's talk about driving. America averages over thirty-seven thousand traffic fatalities per year. We can do better than that! No one likes putting his or her cell phone on speaker while driving. The police have attempted to stamp out driving and texting by issuing big fines, but these efforts have been disregarded. With a tail, a person could drive and talk on the phone at the same time and be much safer!

Secondly, tails would cause an explosion of small-business innovation in America and beyond. Like the Internet, human tails would require thousands of new products and services. Bath-product businesses could offer special shampoo and conditioner for tails. (Human tails would, of course, be hairy, so they wouldn't remind anyone of rat tails.) Packaging companies could come up with all sorts of boxes and containers, custom-designed to be opened by tails. The cosmetic and apparel industries would explode. The options for accenting tails are endless. People could get tail piercings. The jewelry would be nuts! People could buy jeans that properly emphasized their tails with slick holes. They could dye their tails. They could