

# Rescue Cat - Written By Will Snow

## Chapter One

He was utterly alone. Stranded on a desolate island of jagged rock amid a hurricane. The wind shrieked, lashing his pale white body with ice-cold brine. The sea heaved around him, and the stormy sky boiled with anger. A flash of lightning temporarily blinded him, and he felt the clap of thunder that followed through to his frozen marrow. Miserable and terrified, he tried to find some corner or shelf of rock that could protect him from the storm. His futile efforts quickly bloodied his bare feet and hands, and he sank to his knees, powerless against the determined fury of nature that sought to erase him from existence.

How long had he been here? A moment? An eternity? Time had no relevance in this place. He had always been here, would always be here, enduring an eternity of punishment. Bill lifted his head in exhaustion, stared into the face of that unforgiving tempest, and pleaded for mercy or release, but he had no voice or power in this place. Beaten, broken, and reviled by the universe, he laid his head on the hard ground and waited for his end as a massive black funnel cloud appeared above his head. He felt himself being roughly plucked from the island as if the wind was tearing his body apart. He knew this was his end; it would only be a matter of moments...

Falling out of bed, his head bouncing off the floor, Bill was abruptly pulled from his dark dream by the insistent sound of pounding. Thump! Thump! Thump!

Groggy and bleary-eyed, he looked around the darkness and tried to remember who, when, and where he was. The pounding became more insistent.

THUMP! THUMP! THUMP!

The sharp pain in his head subsided to a dull ache as he attempted to lurch to his feet, tangled up in a mess of sheets and blankets. What was happening? The pounding was replaced by the even more annoying sound of his front bell ringing.

Ding-dong. DING-DONG! DIIING-DOOONG!

In an instant, his mind booted up, and the memory of his existence flashed into awareness. Gods! What time was it, and who was downstairs at his front door?

THUMP! THUMP! THUMP! DIIING-DOOONG! DIIING-DOOONG!

"I'm coming," he croaked through his desert-dry throat. He extracted himself from his sheets and blankets and stumbled forward, knocking over a bottle on his nightstand. Ugh. That explained some things, he thought.

Unlocking the deadbolt and front latch, Bill yanked open the door and was immediately blinded by the light outside. "Who the hell is it so early, and what do you want?" he demanded, squinting and shielding his eyes.

"Do you always greet visitors looking like this?" laughed the woman at the door. "You might want to put on a robe or something. Did I catch you at a bad time?"

"Oh, God! Sorry about that, Jodi!" Bill grabbed a blanket from the couch and wrapped it around his waist. "We had an appointment. It can't already be noon!" He searched the walls of the living room for a clock.

Jodi laughed again and walked past him into the kitchen. "Yes, Bill. It is indeed noon o'clock and well past time for you to be getting started with the day. Scouring around the kitchen cabinets, she found a metal canister and coffee filters. "Why don't you go up and get dressed? I will take care of the coffee."

Bill scrambled up the stairs back to his bedroom and looked around. Wading through the pile of dirty clothes strewn about the floor and tangled bedding, he kicked an empty bottle and pizza box aside and sniffed a pair of jeans and a t-shirt before pulling them on and clambering back downstairs.

Jodi was in the kitchen, brewing a pot of coffee and scrubbing the pile of dirty dishes in the sink. Bill saw a small animal carrier and a couple of grocery bags on the table.

He grabbed a mug of coffee and said, "I was just going to clean up here. Please sit down. You don't have to do this right now." She continued cleaning up and told him she didn't mind and that he should enjoy his coffee and introduce himself to Cosmo. He peered into the animal carrier and saw a bedraggled-looking cat with point coat coloring glaring at him through the cage bars. The grocery bags were loaded with tins of cat food and toys.

“Jodi ... I meant to call you about this earlier this week. I don’t think I can help you out with this. It’s a super busy time, and my schedule is up in the air. Plus, you know, I don’t know anything about cats. I’m really sorry about this, but I can’t take this on right now.”

Jodi laughed lightly while shoveling the freshly cleaned dishes into the cabinet. “Now Bill, you promised me you’d help, and I don’t have anyone else to look after him. He needs a place to stay for the month while I find him a new home. I can’t keep him at my place, and he won’t be a bother to you. He’s a very independent cat and easy to take care of. All you need to do is feed him twice a day, give him some water, and clean his litter box every few days. Plus, it will be good for you to have something else to do than work, brood, and whatever else you have been doing every night.”

“Thanks for your concern, but I told you that I’m fine, Jodi. I don’t need anything from anyone. Everything is perfectly OK now. Plus, I don’t think he likes me, and he smells bad.” Bill warily sniffed at the cage and grimaced. “Wait ... where did you put the litter box?”

Jodi gathered her coat and purse, walked past a disgruntled Bill towards the front hallway, and laughed over her shoulder. “Don’t worry, you’ll find it. Just follow your nose. I’ll see you next month.”

“JODI! I’m not the right person for this!” he pleaded with her as she headed towards the door.

“Well, man up because you’re the only person for this! I have a plane to catch, and I’ll see you next month. Call me if you have any questions. Goodbye!” With that, she was gone.

Bill looked back inside the cage, stared into Cosmo’s baleful blue eyes, sniffed again, shook his head, and grimaced. “Goddammit! Why did I ever agree to this? Thirty days of hell!”

From inside the close and dark confines of the animal carrier, Cosmo stared back into the bloodshot eyes of the bedraggled human, warily sniffed, and grimaced. *“Ugh, what is that stench? Thirty days of this? Bastet, save me!”*

“Oh well. Cosmo, is it? Well, Cosmo, it’s time to check out your new place for the month. Let’s see if we can get you settled.” Bill set the carrier down on the floor and opened the front latch. He knew better than to reach into an animal’s safe space, so he waited for Cosmo to emerge. When the cat didn’t emerge after a few minutes, he went about making breakfast. Maybe the smell of food cooking would entice Cosmo to come out.

As he was frying up a pan of bacon, Bill tried to remember exactly why he had promised Jodi that he would foster this cat. She was a good friend. One of the few that had bothered to stick around after his challenges. He had lots of friends before, or so he thought. The house was always full of well-wishers and people who swore to support him through thick and thin. Where were they now? Just as well. He had no

need for them anymore and didn't have the energy to make them feel better about themselves. He barely had enough energy to get through the day. But that was all he needed. One day at a time.

Jodi was always trying to get him to come out and take a walk or see an exhibit. She was always on the go and wanted to distract him from going to that dark place where he spent so many days and nights. She meant well but didn't realize that he was fine. He was making it now. One day at a time. He had his work in the day and anime in the evening. He was doing much better and wanted her to stop worrying. That was why he offered to help her when she told him about her new rescue. She had a major gallery opening in New York and couldn't take Cosmo with her because he was still too traumatized after being abandoned. He could relate to how that felt and let his better nature get the best of him. Now, he was stuck.

As Bill was lost in thought, Cosmo cautiously emerged from his carrier and began to explore his new surroundings. The sparsely furnished, high-ceilinged house offered very few places for cover, and there were floor-to-ceiling glass doors on one wall overlooking a green canyon. He had a momentary sense of vertigo in the wide-open space and his fur bristled and back arched in high alert. Though his initial instinct was to retreat into his safe space, he smelled the enticing aroma of something tasty and saw a plate of beige-colored mincemeat on the floor. The human was sitting

at the table, shoveling forkfuls of food into his mouth at a breakneck pace. *"Slow down, human! How can you enjoy it?"*

Bill stopped for a moment as Cosmo was staring at him and mewing. "Oh, do you want to go out?" He went to the back door and opened it up. "Jodi didn't tell me he was house-trained." Cosmo tasted the fresh breeze and took a few curious steps forward, then bolted past Bill, out the door, and into the untamed wilds of Laguna Beach.