

Rescue Cat - Written By Will Snow

Chapter Two

"No!" Bill shouted as he watched Cosmo disappear under his next-door neighbor's porch. Jodi was going to kill him. He had lost the cat after only 15 minutes. As if on cue, Bill's phone began to ring. He looked forlornly at the screen and saw Jodi's number flashing.

"Hi, Jodi. Yeah, everything is great. Cosmo is really settling in. You forgot his scratching post in your car? That's OK, I'm sure he will be fine. No, no need to come back over. Everything will be great. Super, I'll see you in a couple of weeks." After ending the call, he looked around to assess the situation.

His very tiny yard backed to an undeveloped canyon. The views were spectacular, and the maintenance was minimal. That was the reason he liked the place. No hassle living was what he thought when he leased the house. Even as low maintenance as his yard was, he had taken it to a new level of disinterest. He was standing on a strip of barren dirt pockmarked with gopher holes. He couldn't stand the thought of yard work or anything domestic anymore. It brought up too many memories. That was life before. He had to keep looking forward.

Unfortunately, his neighbor's yard was an arborist's dream. Well maintained, grass cut perfectly, bushes meticulously trimmed, and flowers blooming. The last line of order before the wild canyon behind it. It perfectly reflected their overly controlling

personalities. Any loud music or company was sure to meet with disapproving glares or unsigned complaint notes stuffed into his mailbox. His greatest desire was to avoid any interaction with them because every conversation with them made his head hurt. They were so focused on trivial nonsense, and Bill had been shown the pointlessness of it all. It was hopeless to attempt to find common ground because their sense of entitlement was as thick as the brick wall separating their zero-lot lines.

Of course, Cosmo would go there immediately. Now, he would be forced to talk to them. There had to be another way. Any other way. Suddenly, he had a brainstorm. Food! He would entice Cosmo with some more of that awful-smelling pink mush. Bill raced to the kitchen and back to the backyard with a plateful of cat food. "Here kitty! Here kitty! Come and get some more yum yums!" No response. "Here Cosmo! Come on baby! Come get some more breakfast!" he pleaded. Nothing.

Bill left the food, rushed back into the house, and searched through Jodi's bag. There were all sorts of odd mice-shaped toys, feathers, and strings of shiny beads. He chuckled to himself, thinking about what other kinds of toys Jodi might have at home, and then grabbed a blue ostrich feather. He ran outside, waving the feather over his head and calling Cosmo's name.

Cosmo watched all this with great amusement from his hiding spot under the porch. "*What in Bastet's name is that fool doing?*" After a few more moments of

laughter at Bill's plight, Cosmo turned his attention to the intriguing smell that drew him to this place. It had a faint sour odor that sent a chill up his spine, setting all his fur on end. He cautiously padded through the dark, exploring the pails, rocks, and boards of the cluttered world he discovered. The scent grew stronger as he reached the end of the deck closest to the canyon below. "*What is this new prey?*" he thought as he tasted the air and crouched low to the ground.

Cosmo quickly sprang backward as a black-and-white animal suddenly jumped out towards him from behind a pile of rocks, bared its sharp teeth, and snarled. Cosmo immediately arched his back, unleashed his claws, and hissed loudly at his enemy. The black-and-white creature lifted its tail, and that tantalizing odor increased one hundredfold in intensity. Cosmo turned tail and fled, his eyes and nose burning and streaming.

As Bill was doing an Indian war dance with the blue ostrich feather over his head, crying out Cosmo's name, a bolt of white lightning flashed under his legs and into the open door behind him. "Ha! I am the master of cats!" As he lifted his arms triumphantly, he caught the overpowering stench of a skunk and immediately retreated inside. He didn't notice the angry eyes peering at him from behind his neighbor's shades. There would be another angrily worded, anonymous note in his mailbox tomorrow.