

Rescue Cat - Written By Will Snow

Chapter Four

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 all 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.

THUMP! THUMP! THUMP!

Wait, what?

THUMP! THUMP! THUMP!

What? Who?

THUMP! THUMP! THUMP!

Torn from his dream, Bill looked at the alarm clock with bleary eyes, his head pounding. 4:00 AM? What was making that racket?

THUMP! THUMP! THUMP!

Bill looked at his bedroom door and saw a tiny white paw pulling it loudly against the doorframe from below.

THUMP! THUMP! THUMP!

"You have got to be kidding me! Go to sleep, you stupid animal! The sun isn't even up yet!" He pulled his covers up and put a pillow over his head.

THUMP! THUMP! THUMP!

"OK! OK! I'm up!" Bill fell out of bed, crawled to the door, and flung it open. Cosmo was lying on his back outside, his paw stretched towards the now-opened door. Bill glared at the seemingly amused cat. What do you want that can't wait?"

As Bill reached out to Cosmo, the cat unsheathed its claw and raked his hand. "Ow! You son of a bitch! What do you want?" Cosmo walked across the office and stopped, looking behind him anxiously at the angry man. Bill followed him, and Cosmo raced downstairs. Bill cautiously followed and watched Cosmo paw at a large bag Jodi had left the day before. Bill looked in the bag and saw a large empty tray and a bag of kitty litter. "Oh. I get it. Hold on a minute, Cosmo." He put the tray in the bathroom and filled it. "There you go, big guy. Knock yourself out!" Cosmo raced into the bathroom as Bill went to make coffee. As the coffee maker burbled, Bill heard an otherworldly yowling emanating from the bathroom. Cosmo emerged a few moments later, followed by a vapor that brought Bill to his knees. "Oh my god! It smells even worse coming out! How do you live?" Cosmo stopped, glared at Bill, and hissed.

After tying a bandanna around his face and pulling on the rubber gloves from the day before, Bill steeled himself to enter the bathroom and dispose of Cosmo's contribution to his ungodly early morning. "UGH! Jodi should have warned me about

this! How could such a small animal have this much poop in him?" After flushing the nasty mess, Bill brought in several large candles from around the house and lit them all. He returned to the kitchen, scrubbed his hands under a stream of scalding water, and sat down for coffee and breakfast. Cosmo jumped on the chair next to him and started plaintively mewling. "Sorry, Cosmo, I'm not prepared to give you anything more to eat after dealing with that!" Undeterred, Cosmo jumped onto the table, walked over to Bill's plate, sat down, and glared at him. "*Feed me human. Now, or suffer the consequences.*" After thirty seconds with their eyes locked in a titanic battle of wills, Bill capitulated. "Fine. Have it your way." He made Cosmo breakfast and retreated to his office.

After another successful system startup, Bill stared blankly at his screen. With clients all around the world, there was always something happening at all times of the day. He dove into the pile. Filling his mind with other people's issues was far easier than dealing with his own, and nobody would find fault in him making as much money as possible.

After a few hours of mind-numbing immersion into emails, file reviews, and editing, he pushed away from his desk. He felt like washing away this morning before starting his client call schedule, so he headed into his bathroom for his morning ritual. When he got to his bathroom, Cosmo was contentedly curled up in the sink. "What are you doing in there, you silly animal? Can you please get out and give me some

privacy?" Cosmo looked up disinterestedly and remained where he was. *"I am water, human. Born of the Nile. I am speaking with my brethren through your plumbing. How dare you interrupt my conversation?"*

Bill reached out to Cosmo to physically remove him but quickly moved his hand back as Cosmo unsheathed his claw. "OK! You can stay if you insist. Don't say you weren't warned." After Bill sat and relieved himself, Cosmo wrinkled his nose and yowled, *"BASTET, help us! How do **you** live human?"* He bolted from the sink and scurried under the bed. "Oh well, Cosmo, I guess turnabout is fair play," Bill laughed.

After shaving and showering, Bill stepped out to dry off, and Cosmo was back in the room, looking at him up and down in disbelief. Bill looked at himself in the mirror. "What do you think, Cosmo? Still keeping it together in my fifties." Cosmo shook his head softly. *"Oh, human. What have you done to yourself?"* He padded his way back downstairs.

"Are you judging me?" Bill shouted angrily after the retreating cat. "I'm fine! A perfect specimen. What do you know about it anyway?" Maybe he hadn't been as physically active as before, but he was still in reasonable shape, wasn't he? Filled with new doubt, he quickly got dressed and retreated to his office.

Many hours later and with his last bottle of scotch emptied, Bill called it another productive day and shut down his computer. He came downstairs to find Cosmo forlornly looking out the floor-to-ceiling sliding glass doors that led to the

patio overlooking the canyon. Bill walked to the kitchen, refilled Cosmo's water and food bowl, and grabbed a frozen dinner from the freezer. "What do you say, Cosmo? Do you want to watch some *Cowboy Bebop with me?*" Cosmo didn't respond, continuing to stare longingly out into the canyon at the wild world outside his cage. Later that night, before Bill ambled up to his bed, he made certain that Cosmo's litter box was clean and ready for him to avoid a repeat of this morning's debacle.