The Cat Who Came for Christmas by Cleveland Amory

A Warm, Funny Story To Read And Read Again.

Twas the night before Christmas when a bedraggled stray white feline entered the home, and heart, of Cleveland Amory. At first the relationship seemed a clash of two stubborn wills, but despite the battles, Polar Bear did finally recognize his new name, while he settled into a comfortable friendship. A delightful true tale for anyone who has ever been owned by a cat or any pet.

My Personal Review:
Lets clear up any possible confusion from the very beginning: while The Cat Who Came for Christmas did indeed come for Christmas, this is in no way a Christmas book. Thats important because this book is completely delightful, and I dont want anyone who comes across it in July to think he needs to wait five months before he can read it. Animal lovers, especially cat lovers, will find this book absolutely delightful, and those readers who are so unfortunate as to have never had the privilege of being owned by an animal will get a moving picture of the kind of human-animal bond the rest of us are always going on about. Indeed, the book closes with the suggestion that pet-less owners would do well to go down to their local animal shelter and find a faithful friend for themselves.

We first meet the aforementioned cat on a snowy Christmas Eve in New York. Cleveland Amory, the founder of The Fund for Animals, helps rescue a poor feline from the streets of the city and takes him home - temporarily - to care for him until a suitable home is found. Amory is, by his own admission, a dog person, but he quickly falls in love with this poor young cat who has obviously suffered much in his young life: he is terribly thin, his body bears several wounds, his back is obviously injured, he is filthy, and he may well have never known the affection of another soul. Someone has reportedly thrown things at him and hit him in an effort to run him off, so his emergency rescue is a necessity. Underneath all of the dirt, Amory finds a beautiful white cat with magical eyes and a spirit that wins Amory over from the start. He is so beguiled by the little guy that he talks a prospective new owner out of adopting him the very next morning.
The book, as it unfolds, is the story of this special cat and the human he owns over the course of their first year together. Amory describes many of the conversations he has with his lovable but stubborn new friend, expounds greatly upon matters of cat psychology that all cat lovers will immediately recognize, and basically delivers a truly heart-warming story about two curmudgeons, one human and one feline, who magically find each other and develop a deep and lasting friendship. Youll read about the cats behavior toward new people (including the likes of celebrities such as Walter Cronkite and Cary Grant), other animals, travel, veterinarians, and basically life in general. The stories of Amorys behavioral modification techniques and feline communication skills are as insightful as they are funny and do nothing to dispel the notion that cats are very stubborn little creatures. The chapters on the cats domestic and foreign policies are especially instructive and endearing.

Amory is a wonderfully witty storyteller. Some may complain that he sometimes goes off on tangents, but these are most instructive as they invariably relate to early efforts by The Fund for Animals to protect those creatures being brutally exploited by human beings (e.g., whales and baby seals); I must say I dont approve of some of the techniques the group employs, but certainly the groups heart was in the right place. Amidst all of the cat-related humor, Amory is wont to slip in some wonderfully subtle little jokes and literary references, and I would argue one learns as much about human nature as feline nature over the course of the book.

You might notice I have refrained from giving the cats name; this is intentional on my part. A cats name is very important, and the author devotes many pages to the naming process of this cat in particular, so I would be remiss to simply blurt the name out here.

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