



The Cat Who Came for Christmas

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Tis the night before Christmas when a self-described curmudgeon rescues a bedraggled feline from a snowy New York City alley. Thus begins this tale of a man and his cat or, rather, of a cat and his man. A touching, timeless, and inspiring story about the animal/human bond and the spirit of the holiday season.

The Cat Who Came for Christmas Details

Date : Published October 23rd 2001 by Back Bay Books (first published 1987)

ISBN : 9780316058216

Author : Cleveland Amory , Edith Allard (Illustrator)

Format : Paperback 240 pages

Genre : Animals, Nonfiction, Cats, Holiday, Christmas, Autobiography, Memoir, Humor

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From Reader Review The Cat Who Came for Christmas for online ebook

Kaethe says

January 1, 1988

Was there any question that I would have a copy of a book about a grumpy guy who gets a cat for *Christmas*? Or that I would like it? If I had my druthers all grumpy people would be given a new pet. As would all non-grumpy people.

December 27, 2014

For the record, I should point out that Amory is a sweetheart, despite his self-description as a curmudgeon, who has devoted a tremendous amount of his time and energy to The Fund for Animals. I actually liked the bits about The Fund even more than the history of cats or the personal anecdotes. (The anecdotes reveal him to be a bit Andy Rooneyish in his grumbles).

Personal, signed copy.

Jo says

I got about halfway through and had to stop, because I just don't like it. I thought it was going to be about this cat, but most of it is about the author's part in the Fund for Animals, the history of cats and famous cats, and how many famous people the author knows. The author calls himself a curmudgeon, and he certainly is one. He also comes across as arrogant. His writing style is very annoying. For example, here is a short excerpt from the first page: To anyone who has ever been owned by a cat, it will come as no surprise that there are all sorts of things about your cat you will never, as long as you live, forget. A lot of his sentences are very long, and with unnecessary additions that make it hard to follow. Also he does things like talk for two pages of the Beverly Hills Hotel and all the famous people who have been there. I usually finish a book, even if I don't like them, but I just couldn't take it any longer.

Sam says

I learned so much from this book; and so did the main character! The cat reminds me so much of my own cat.

Bev says

It's about 1977 and the night before Christmas when self-identified dog person and curmudgeon Cleveland

Amory finds himself on a mission to help rescue a thin, bedraggled feline from a New York alley. The cat has obviously been on his own for a good while and someone has injured him. The rescue is just for the night...Amory offers to house the poor kitty overnight until someone can come claim him. But the unexpected happens. The cat decides that Amory is who he wants to live with and from the moment Amory finds him staring at him the next morning the die has been cast. Amory discovers what it's like to be owned by a cat....and how much he likes it.

The Cat Who Came for Christmas by Cleveland Amory isn't really a Christmas story. It's a story about the bond between a cat and his human that just happens to start at Christmas. The story follows Amory and Polar Bear (as the naming of the cat goes) through a year of settling in to a life together. The stories about Polar Bear are charmingly told and remind me of the cats found in the Lockridge mystery series. The cat is obviously his own person and that is relayed without making the story too cutesy.

The only part that really didn't work for me was Amory's long-winded section on the history of cat's and cat names. Not that the history of cats might not be interesting in the right context. I just don't think this book was it.

Overall, a very pleasant read and a good one to finish off my Christmas Spirit Challenge reading for 2013. Three solid stars.

This was first posted on my blog My Reader's Block. Please request permission before reposting. Thanks.

Kelley Ross says

I found this book in my grandmother's attic in November and immediately decided that it needed to come home with me. For one, I happen to have a pure white cat. Secondly, it was nearly Christmas and I couldn't help but pick it up.

Some of this book is slightly tedious. I'll be the first to admit that when I first started reading it, I was puzzled as to why it was necessary for the author to name drop nearly every celebrity of his time. And also, why spend dozens of pages describing a conversation between him and his yet unnamed cat over the ethics of certain things or whether or not the cat would come when called? It was a little ridiculous, but I was able to overlook that second bit because I am indeed a cat lover and we happen to do silly things.

The part about this book that really interested me wasn't even really about Polar Bear at all... it was about the personal life of such a prominent animal rights activist. I was a little shocked that Amory was so open about playing a part in the painting of seals and the ramming of Sierra (a whaling boat). Also, that he was friends with the founder of PETA, and would admit being so in a publication. (PETA being such a controversial group and this book is not a best seller that could get away with mentioning something like that without losing readers) I also thought the Fund for Animals office cats description was cute, and also that it was admirable that Mr. Amory fosters strays.

Sharon Huether says

The Author, Cleveland Amory tells how he found a stray cat at Christmas. He expressed the joys of having a

pet and the talks he had with Polar Bear, the white cat. Great story filled with love and humor.

Anne says

It was warming, witty, full of side facts and history, and had the added dimension of being written by someone who grew up in a different age. It was so much more than an animal rescue story yet still a light and quick read.

Samaire says

This memoir is both charming and frustrating. I did enjoy the stories about Polar Bear, but sometimes the tangential anecdotes got to be a bit much. Mr. Amory's style of writing was sometimes hard for me to follow as well, lots of commas and grammar that makes the original subject, verb, and predicate a little hard to follow (the former English teacher in me can't resist). I did find the book an interesting history of the animal anti-cruelty movement. I did not realize that Mr. Amory was such a central figure in it. (Or perhaps I did not comprehend that such atrocities of dropping cats out windows and tormenting dogs was perceived as no big deal back in the 1970s.) Of the book's many anecdotes, my favorite was how Mr. Armory and Paul Watson planned to save baby seals from being clubbed to death in Canada for it explained the genesis of Sea Shepard. (Even though I don't agree with all their tactics, I find them intriguing and I get a kick out of seeing them thwart the Japanese whaling fleet.) I think I will give Polar Bear's next installment of adventures a try, for even with existing literary frustrations, there is enough there to entice and interest me.

C. says

This is a happy cat and man story, minus any clichés and we get far more out of it than we can guess. For example, as someone who has deemed euthanasia unacceptable my whole life, I manifestly avoid reading of it. Delightfully: **Cleveland Amory** repudiated books like that! He updates us reassuringly, ten years from this 1977 story: "*Polar Bear is alive and well, thank you very much!*"! "**The Cat Who Came For Christmas**" does not recycle a non-animal person accepting a kitty. We are treated to a year of Polar Bear's highly eventful arrival, starting and closing at Christmas like the title reads. I am baffled by anyone not appreciating the tremendous originality and quality, with five stars.

An old professional hand is the first thing we notice! I cannot believe I was unfamiliar with **Cleveland**, who informs us: "*He has made his living as an author since before we were born!*"! The two most important traits in books is not getting a worn-out ditty and writing that is gifted enough to stop us in our tracks. I unceasingly laughed aloud, the literal meaning of a tiresome expression, at cleverness commensurate with his writing prowess! Gosh, I see a fund of phraseology that has gone into disuse. Even when **Cleveland** takes up a few historical tangents, his finesse turns every sentence to gold; a pleasure to read! That he is hilarious into the bargain, is icing on an already-impressive cake.

Seeing who **Cleveland** was in the animal activism milieu, bowls me over doubly for not knowing him. He chaired the Fund For Animals, got Paul Watson captaining the Sea Shepherd, and knew the guy who founded PETA. He was well-connected to animal advocate actors, like Jean Stapleton and Katherine Hepburn! Polar Bear was present through some astonishingly historically-pivotal meetings! Merry Christmas, everyone and

God bless you.

Lorraine says

I usually like Cleveland Amory's writing; but I just couldn't get into this book. I was expecting a cute Christmas story about a cat; but this for me was just a too-detailed book about a wild cat who he unexpectedly helped catch and kept. I gave up after a couple of very slow reading chapters since I was looking forward to something it wasn't.

Pages and Tea says

The true story of how the rescue of a stray cat led to the rescuer being adopted (and 'owned') by said cat. The book covers the first year of the cat's (Polar Bear, he is white) new life.

This book was recommended by a work friend and fellow cat owner.

As a cat owner I really enjoyed it. Certain episodes reminded me so much of my own cat that I couldn't help but laugh aloud (trying to give the cat a pill, putting him on a lead to walk him (yes, I did this once, but only because my cat had had an operation and couldn't be let out to roam free. I felt sorry for him being stuck indoors all day!)).

I love the character of Polar Bear, and how he deals with intrusions into his new found home, his responses to other people and other animals, and the way he seems to have his own voice.

An enjoyable read, with a happy ending, as, at the time of writing at least, Polar Bear was still going strong. I always find it really sad with these kind of books, when you reach the end and the animal has died.

Rebecca Foster says

In the late 1970s Amory was a bona fide animal lover (he'd founded the NYC-based Fund for Animals, after all) but didn't have a pet of his own until he was involved in the rescue of an unprepossessing stray one Christmas: Polar Bear, the cat who would introduce his fussy habits to a bachelor's household and complicate his life in all kinds of ways. Cat owners will recognize so many things – the 3 a.m. bowl-emptying snack, testy relations with various other species – but I found the book strangely belabored and irrelevant as it goes into the history of the domestic cat, the business of naming cats, and Amory's travels on behalf of the Fund.

Favorite lines:

"For an animal person, an animal-less home is no home at all."

"The fact is that most cats, most of the time, have already met everybody they care to meet."

Reviewed with four other cat books on my blog, Bookish Beck.

Suzy says

My Mom gave me this book when it was first published in 1987 and I am ashamed to say that I just read it for the first time this year as part of my Christmas book extravaganza. Sorry Mom - I loved it!

Cleveland Amory, a self-professed dog-lover, becomes owned by Polar Bear the cat after rescuing said cat on Christmas Eve in 1977. He writes about his experiences with Polar Bear with great wit and humor, nailing so much others of us experience who are owned by cats.

He also was an early animal rights activist and tells of brave acts to rescue whales, baby seals and Grand Canyon burros. He uses his prominence and his pen to further his cause through his Fund for Animals and Black Beauty Ranch, an animal sanctuary in East Texas. That they both are going concerns today is a testimony to his dedication. <http://www.blackbeautyranch.org/about/> It's touching to me that he developed his love for animals and was set on his path after reading Black Beauty as a boy.

Evelyn Morgan says

I think I read this one years ago, but it was well worth a reread. The true story of how Cleveland Amory, writer and founder of the Fund for Animals, rescued a young white cat on Christmas Eve. It wasn't meant to be a permanent relationship, but they took to each other and learned to live with each other's quirks. A funny and touching memoir.

Judy says

Although the book is obviously "packaged" as a Christmas read, the only Christmassy aspect is the Christmas Eve rescue. However, the feel-goodness contributed to the Christmas cheer.

For me, this was a strange book. I normally gag over books that promote the author's causes, but Amory does a wonderful job of focusing on his cat, not himself and only slipping in his causes where they actually pertain to the story. Unlike other pet memoirs I've read he doesn't grouse about his divorce, pat himself on the back or wallow in other obnoxious behavior.

Another strange aspect of this book is that Polar Bear isn't an exceptional cat by Amory's own admission. He doesn't retrieve like one of my cats, or come when called like all my cats, or do anything that could really be bragged about! :-) But he's not boring thanks to Amory's wit and ability to write about Polar Bear's hijinks in an entertaining way. He even knows how to drop names in a non-repulsive way, ie...Doris Day, Cary Grant. Add to that the fact that he keeps the book short, knowing his audience's attention span for a talentless (but sweet, wonderful) kitty.

This isn't a book that I would re-read, hence no 5-star rating, but I thoroughly enjoyed the first reading and recommend it to other cat-lovers for an entertaining read as well as a blast from the past.

4.0 star-spangled kitties

BJ Rose says

I did not know until reading this book that Cleveland Amory is a lifelong animal activist, and this book was as much about that as it was about Polar Bear, the cat Amory helped rescue on Christmas Eve, the cat he (a dog lover) decided to keep instead of just shelter overnight, and the inevitable discovery that people do not own cats but are owned by them.

GoldGato says

1.) This really isn't a Christmas book. The cat of the title was rescued on Christmas Eve. It has a Christmas name ("Polar Bear"). Methinks it was packaged for the money-spending holiday back when bookstores were bursting with buyers eager for new stories about...cats.

2.) This cat was rescued from a Manhattan street in 1977. 1977! NYC at its filthiest, dimmest, and scariest. Before the Yuppies arrived. Poor grimy cat.

3.) This was written B.C.O.N. (Before Cats On Internet). Cleveland Amory was a pioneer in animal protection and he wrote several engaging books about Polar Bear. If he was writing today, there would be cute little GIFs about Polar Bear, with dancing reindeer.

4.) This is written under chapters titled as, *His Foreign Policy, His Hollywood, His Fitness Program*...you get the picture. Polar Bear OWNED Mr. Amory.

5.) Okay. I really like this book. Any human who sacrifices their lifestyle to rescue a 1977 New York feline is okay with me.

Itty bitty witty kitty.

Book Season = Winter (duh)

Sheryl Tribble says

Always enjoyed Amory's TV Guide column, and, if I remember rightly, I also liked his book *Man Kind?* when I was a kid. This one, however, is a big of slog. Much too cutesy for me, and of the "dog person helpless in the face of a determined cat" variety -- which can be hilarious but this time isn't. Nearly every chapter is either "I want this, cat didn't, I did it my way and it was a disaster" or "I want this, cat didn't, we compromised by doing things cat's way."

He says he's learning to understand the cat, but what I see is him not learning anything about cats except how to avoid trouble spots, if you will. As a cat person, I want to whomp him upside the head regularly for doing stupid stuff that's causing his own problems. Which is probably the whole point of the thing but I suppose I wanted to see growth and an appreciation for how cats actually work. Instead he just develops work-arounds.

Entertaining enough, but not a book I would go out of my way to track down, and not one I'm keeping to re-read (although if I had more space...). Two and a half stars.

Joyce says

'Twas the night before Christmas when a bedraggled white feline enters the heart--and home--of Cleveland Amory. To say it is a friendly takeover is an understatement. For the cat who came for Christmas is clearly of the Independent Type, and Cleveland Amory, curmudgeon or not, is, where animals are concerned, a pushover. Toe to toe they stand--Amory at six feet three, the cat at six inches--and eyeball to eyeball with each other on every issue: whether or not to come when called; to recognize one's name; to take a trip, a pill, a bath, or a walk on a leash; to be civil to New People; or even in an age when Thin Is In, why anyone in his right mind would want to be the Last Fat Cat. We will not spoil *The Cat Who Came For Christmas* by telling you who blinks first. Suffice it to say that in this hilarious battle, nine times out of ten, it is not the cat.

Pamela says

“[Cats] seem to realize, early on, that their task of training us is not going to be an easy one and can only be accomplished with extraordinary resolution and dedication on their part.”

A charming and fun read – for the most part. Thank you, Sharon, for suggesting it. From the naming of “Polar Bear” to an extended stay at the Beverly Hills Hotel to feline fitness regimes (or lack thereof) there’s always a good giggle to be found.

“A cat who dislikes his name can . . . go through his entire lifetime without ever, even by careless mistake, acknowledging that he has ever heard it before, let alone recognizing, in an acceptable manner known to humankind that it could in any way have any possible connection to him.”

The memoir portions of “The Cat who came for Christmas” are endearing and often humorous – in the most persnickety ways of servitude cohabitation with a feline. Anyone who has ever had the gracious privilege of being owned by a cat will readily identify with Amory’s experiences.

“I became convinced, that a cat, unless trained at kittendom, ranked as a fellow traveler on long trips somewhere above alligators and orangutans, but well below . . . quarrelsome children, sick goldfish, and compact automobiles.”

Convenient and not the least bit sly, wedged into Amory’s otherwise lighthearted memoir are dissertations on animal rights and The Animal Fund organization that Amory founded, and a few interesting (though rather dry and long in the tooth) historical feline tidbits. Then too, Amory’s writing style is a bit grammatically catawampus. And there are so many asides woven with copious amounts of commas that it jilts the reading flow – a flow akin to New York City traffic.

In summation, this is what I call a three-star pick-and-choose smorgasbord book: Select morsels that suit your palate and skip over less tastier tidbits.

