

Cat in Space

A Rescued Tail

(Prequel to Similar But Not the Same)

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By A Nation

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Saved

Mary Ann McCarthy rummaged about in the alley dumpster for thrown away bread, recycled or another article of clothing she could wear or sell during the cooler months to come. She was homeless but didn't think she was. She had places she could stay the nights with others in the same predicament as she.

She heard a squeak but brushed the sound off to the creaking of the dumpster as she pushed a cardboard box out of her way. Mary had to hurry. The Montrose garbage truck would be coming down the alley in an hour. Then she heard a faint cry like a baby but much higher pitched against the background noise of the air cars on the street.

"Oh Gawd, I hope someone didn't throw a baby in here," she muttered pulling newspapers away from where she heard the sound.

The tiny cry squealed again. As she lifted up more trash paper there were two dark eyes staring back at her.

"Well, what's this?" she asked, looking down at the frightened fuzzy handful.

"Oh, you poor thing. Someone just threw you away like garbage."

With one hand, she scooped up the tiny black and white body.

"Oh, you may not make it," she frowned as she felt the kitten's rib bones under the thin skin.

Placing the scrawny animal into her sweater pocket, she began pushing her wire cart down the alley toward the busy street.

"I'll find you a safe place. I can't take care of you and myself."

Glancing in both directions down the sidewalk, Mary Ann remembered a veterinary office not far away.

Mary, now in her seventies, couldn't pay the mounting bills of keeping up a home after her husband died a few years ago. Taking to

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the streets was scary at first among thugs strong enough to do honest work who instead tried to steal what little money she carried. Soon she met many more like herself in the safer areas of town. On occasion, she would go to one of the shelters during bad weather for just a good meal to eat but would leave after a few days.

After trudging for three blocks pulling her loaded basket of found treasures, Mary Ann arrived at the pet hospital. She had seen those people who had the means to take their animals into the Downtown Pet Clinic. *"Surely,"* she thought, *"they would take care of this little piece of fluff."*

She looked in her knitted pocket of the old sweater she had worn for years to make sure the kitten was still alive. Two black eyes stared back at her. That was all she needed to walk in through the metal door.

As soon as she entered the sanitary reception office, the girl adorned with an upswept hair style behind the desk, jumped up.

"You can't come in here. This is not a hospital for humans," she said hurrying around the counter. Many times some of the homeless people would want the veterinary doctor to help them with a cut or a broken arm because the cost was lower than at the hospital.

"I ain't here for myself, sweetie. Here, I found this little guy. I can't keep him. Is there anything you can do for him?" Mary Ann asked, placing the scrawny kitten on the counter.

"Oh my, oh, let me get the doctor," the receptionist said, changing her tune as she returned to her desk. She wrapped the black kitten into a terry cloth towel withdrawn from under the counter.

The woman whisked the orphan into the back room, leaving Mary Ann to wait. After a few more minutes, she decided she wanted to leave, when the young woman reappeared without the kitten.

"The doctor will have to treat him for infection and mites. We will have to keep him overnight. If you had him in your sweater, you should get it washed as soon as you can. You can pick him up in a couple of days."

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"Lady, I can't keep the thing. I just couldn't see him staying in that dumpster. You keep him. Maybe when he fills out some, somebody will want to take care of him. Sorry, I have to go."

"But--"

Mary Ann walked out of the door, pulling her cart behind her. The young lady stared. She wasn't going to run after the old woman. She knew many like her couldn't afford to care and feed a pet.

After a few days had passed, the black and white cat began to heal and gained strength under the care of the veterinary. The receptionist couldn't take it home. She had two cats, the minimum allowed in her apartment. The veterinary hospital had a policy if an abandoned cat or dog stays two weeks, the veterinary must take them to the animal shelter. There the employees knew that the animal will have a higher percentage of being put to sleep.

"What do we call him?" she asked the doctor.

"You choose. If we can get him adopted, the new owners may want to change the name. Let the pet store over on Fortieth Street know that we have this little guy. Maybe someone who is looking for a young cat will want him."

"Okay," she said, petting the kitten and placing him into one of the cages for hospitalized animals.

The black kitten stared back at her. He was still too weak to protest his enclosure but the warm soft towel was the best he had since leaving his mother. He curled up and went fast to sleep.

The next day, the doctor's nurse gave him some nasty tasting medicine, a thorough bath, and cleaned his cage. She placed a new white towel down and set him in the middle before latching the wire frame.

The kitten sat up and looked next door and noticed a small animal something like himself sleeping in the other cage.

"Mew"

"Huh?" the hairy critter said, picking up its head to look around.

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The kitten steadied his legs and walked over to the dividing grill between their cages.

"Mew!" he said louder.

"Cat? Oh, I'm too sick to bother with you. Go away."

"What's wrong with you?"

"I don't know. But my rear hurts."

"I miss my mom," replied the kitten.

"You're alone here?" the dog asked, perking up his ears.

"I guess."

The dog struggled to stand and flopped down near the cage edge closest to the kitten's side.

"Uhh, I feel tired. Go to sleep cat."

The black and white kitten sniffed the animal. An antiseptic smell permeated from the dog's body. Wrinkling his nose, he curled up next to the wire divider where the dog's fur stuck through and fell asleep.

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Rescued

A week and a half had passed and the kitten became stronger and more filled out. When cat customers had entered the veterinary, the receptionist would always ask if they would like a handsome male kitten that had been fixed. Most would either say they had too many cats, or they weren't interested. With great sadness, the receptionist called the local animal shelter to pick up the black and white kitten.

She set the cat in a carrier by the door and left the office. She didn't want to be there when the shelter people came to take the kitten away. Returning from lunch, she noticed the carrier with the kitten was gone.

Later that afternoon, a young woman walked in, looked around and came forward to the front desk.

"Yes, may I help you?" the receptionist asked.

"Maybe, I was just over at the pet store on Fortieth and they said you might have a cat I could be interested in. I was hoping they had one I liked but there was only one older one," the young lady said.

"Oh, I'm sorry, but he was just picked up by the shelter," she said. "But if you hurry, they close in an hour."

"Which shelter?"

"The one on Boone Road outside of town."

"Thanks," Alice said and ran out to her rented aircar.

Racing through the busy traffic across town, she listened to her GPS to find the small animal shelter. The time was now 4:45pm.

Five minutes to the hour, she parked the car in front of the older building and turned the handle on the door. It was locked.

"No, you got five minutes. Let me in," she wailed, knocking on the wooden door.

Then she heard the door unlock.

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"Yes? We're almost closed," said an older woman wearing a flowered dress.

"A cat was recently brought over here from the veterinary. Can I look at it?" she said out of breath.

The woman smiled and opened the door further.

"Over here, we were just about to put him in the back."

Alice bent down to the floor and picked up the carrier. Looking inside she could see two tiny black eyes staring back at her. She opened the carrier and scooped the soft kitten out.

"I'll take him. What do you need from me?"

"We were told his medical bills came to \$110. We have a deal with the vet. If you pay half, our grant pays the rest.

"I'll pay all of it."

"First I need to have you fill out this form on your background. Do you work during the day?"

"I do, but I plan to take this little feller with me to work. Does he need anything special to eat? Any allergies?" she asked as she began filling out the form with her name and address.

"Nothing about that was written on his bio, uh, Miss Alice Morgan," the lady said, reading where Alice had written her name.

"Have you ever owned a cat?" the lady asked.

"Long, long time ago when I was a child. I had an all-black cat back then," she said filling out the required lines.

Alice handed the form back and paid the expenses.

The lady gave Alice a copy of the form.

"Please give him a good home," she said to Alice.

"I will. Thank you so much," Alice said looking in the carrier opening at the two black eyes peering back up at her.

"Mew" said the kitten.

"Does he have a name?" she asked the woman.

The older lady just shook her head.

"Okay, thanks," Alice said walking outside toward her car.

The front door behind her closed and the latch locked.

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Alice turned and walked out of the animal shelter wondering what to call her new friend.

Hopping into her rented air car, she placed the carrier next to her. The year was 2412 and she was about to enter the space program. She had studied more about the vocation after her divorce and campaigned for animal studies to be taken in space. When she was accepted, they said yes but only for a cat. Now that she had found one, she'll have to train the kitten on behavior. Chuckling to herself about the release form at the veterinary, she wondered what the receptionist would do if she told her that the cat was going to the Moon.

Talking to the kitten on the way back to her apartment, "I had a funny uncle that loved to get dressed up in a tuxedo for dinner even if it wasn't a formal affair. His name was Frederick. That's what I'll call you, Frederick."

"Mew," said the kitten who heard only blah, blah, Frederick.

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New Home

"Oh, darn, it's beginning to rain. We're almost there, Frederick," the woman said, gearing the wheels down onto the wet pavement.

The vibration from under the carrier was like nothing this young kitten had ever experienced before. Looking out through the carrier's screen door, Frederick could see a blond haired human. He bent his neck looking around and found they were both in a larger carrier. He tried to protest the long ride but the human beside him kept talking in a soothing voice.

"I will have to train you on leg weights, but you'll get used to them. This will be so exciting when we go to the Moon."

He didn't understand what she said but the excitement in her voice sounded happy.

The car came to a sudden stop. After the woman fussed around to add to her shoulders what he thought were additional skins, he felt himself and the carrier lifted out of the vehicle. The human ran through the falling rain causing his body to bump from side to side against the canvas container. His whiskers twitched at the humidity in the air.

"Meow," he bellowed when a few drops of rain splashed against his face through the mesh fabric.

"Almost home, Frederick," he heard the woman say as she ran up the apartment steps into a warmer and dryer location.

Alice pressed the elevator button and stepped into the compartment. Another woman stepped in after her.

"What do you have there?" she said bending down to look in the carrier. "A kitten. Is that okay with the manager?"

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"Yes, I already asked him. We won't be staying long, I have a job coming up and Frederick, here, will be going with me."

The elevator came to a stop.

"That's nice. Good day," the lady said and walked out into the hallway.

A few floors higher, the elevator came to a stop again and Alice stepped out. Her apartment was two doors down. She set the carrier down near the door to locate her room key in one of her pant pockets.

"Ah, here we are," she said, swiping the card through the slot.

Once again, Frederick felt himself rising into the air and carried to a corner of the room.

"Well, here's your water and some food. Now, you be nice so I can let you out," she said, unzipping the door flap.

She knew from experience some animals, that were unfamiliar with their surroundings, will lash out first until they feel safe. At first she noticed the kitten seemed unsure about what to do so she backed away to give the animal some space.

"Take your time. I'm going to get out of these wet clothes," she said as she stripped off her wet jacket to hang it over a chair back. All he heard was 'blah, blah, blah.'

He watched as the woman took off her shoes and placed them near a square slot in the floor near the far wall. She then filled up a water bowl and opened a can of cat food. After scraping the meal into another bowl, she left the room.

He poked one white paw out of the carrier and then another. He sniffed the water bowl and began drinking, and then he smelled the food nearby. The wet food smelled and tasted good since he hadn't eaten for a long time.

After filling his small tummy, he trotted over to the human's shoes, drying near the floor slot. Warm air was rushing from the opening. He jumped back and edged closer to figure out how this could work. He

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turned when the human walked back into the room and left again. He wanted to see where she was going.

This other room was as large as the first one but in the center had a raised platform with cloth draped over the top and down the sides. Giving the billowy material a pat on one corner, he extended his claws without realizing it, and began to climb the mountain before him.

"Oh, no you don't," he heard the woman say who grabbed him around his middle.

"Maybe when you're litter trained. In fact, let's do that now."

She carried him over to a tray filled with clumpy material. After twenty minutes of making him stay and pressing his rear down, she left him alone for a few minutes.

"No sense wearing you out," she said, walking away and disappeared back into the other room.

By the third day of his new found environment, he was litter trained and knew when he would be fed. His human stayed in what she called a bedroom most of the day tapping on something above his head. He had to see what that was.

While she left the room, he found leverage on an open drawer to climb on and from there he managed to jump up to the top of this table formation. On the surface he spotted a flat board with raised bumps. His whiskers could sense heat being emitted as he positioned his body over the object.

"Oh, Frederick. I can't get anything done with you in the way," the woman said, picking up the kitten and placing it back on the floor.

"Meow," he barked.

"Eat as much as you can, for tomorrow we travel," she said, returning to her tapping. "Oh, I almost forgot. Frederick I need you to get used to these weights on your paws."

He watched her stand up to pull out another drawer high over his head. She took out some wraps and began winding them around his legs above the paws.

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"They aren't real heavy now, but in time as you grow I'll add a little more to them," she said.

Frederick didn't like them as he jiggled a paw every time he took a step. He struggled over to his bedding in the main room and lay down while he tried his best to lick them off. The fabric was soft but tasteless.

After a day he gave up on the odd attire. The human said something and vanished behind the door. Every few minutes, he would wander around looking for her. A few hours passed, and the door opened. The woman had returned with large bags and a box.

"Look what I got you, a litter contained kennel. You're getting too big for that little carrier. What do you think?" she said shoving the new container toward him.

He peered into the plastic kennel and backed out. He wanted to see what was in the box. The human left the room and he looked in the mysterious box and jumped in. He felt all the edges and the dark recesses in the corners.

The woman returned from the bedroom.

"I just remembered, we have to make sure I have your permits and vaccination papers handy," she said, reaching into the depths of her large purse to make sure they were secure inside.

The next morning, Alice hurried back and forth while she cleaned the apartment for the next renter. Her cat followed her wherever she stopped. She filled the bathtub with a small amount of water and began scrubbing the sides. Frederick jumped up onto the edge of the tub watching as if he was calculating how many times she would scrub one spot before doing another.

She made sure he had plenty to eat and drink before packing his utensils. She had left the kennel close to his bedding on the floor and today she found him inside with one of his squeaking cat toys.

"I see you are ready to go, too," she said, closing the front gate to his kennel.

"Meow."

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"I know you don't like to be locked up. But in a short while we will be at the airport and heading for the Moon."

She gathered her luggage about the time her comphone beeped. The view displayed a picture of her ex-husband. She closed the device and placed it in her pocket. She had been living alone for a few years and having no children, the divorce was quick and clean.

"Nothing will stop me now, not even you, Richard," she said, picking up the cat kennel.

Stepping out in the hallway she caught the next elevator going down. Alice deposited her apartment key at the front desk and walked out into the sunshine.

"This is going to be a great day, Frederick," she said placing him into her car. Taking a seat, she turned on the ignition and drove down the street.

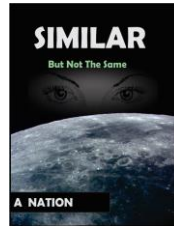
Depositing her rental car at the airport, the airport autobus drove her off to the terminal she needed.

She checked in her largest luggage and showed the official her animal papers. After clearing security, she waited for the biggest step in her life.

Once on the shuttle, she secured the cat kennel by placing it under her seat. The kennel had soft walls inside that would cushion the cat in the strong G force of the take off. About thirty passengers shared this craft with her. Within ten minutes, they were streaming through the clouds above toward the Moon.

Read the rest of Frederick's adventures beginning with the first book in the Domino Series, *Similar But Not the Same* on smashwords.

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We have begun to settle on our Moon and Mars in the 25th century. At the same time, another people are trying to save their once destroyed planet. They have the technology to fly vast distances in space. What will happen when these two species meet? Humans and ahmans approach each other with caution to create a common meeting location to discover their social differences and capabilities. But something goes terribly wrong during a tunnel construction in the small crater on Mars.

As this drama unfolds, the lives and fears on both sides begin to surface. All Alice wanted to do, since she was a young girl, was to work in space. After a failed relationship on the Moon, she packs up her cat and catches the next ship to the red planet. Little did she realize that she would become embroiled between the aliens and humans. Mars can be a dangerous place where murder and accidents can occur.

Chapter 1

Three jubilant youngsters tried in vain as they ran down the dirt road to capture a jumping insect. There under a large shade tree, they noticed a young adult sitting beneath it; but their urgent quest drew them back into their catching game.

The tall slender person under the tree watched the three run by and smiled as they faded down the road into the distance.

The early morning walk, during this spring season, felt good as the cool breezes lightly brushed upon young Dobi's smooth tan face. The ahman's narrow oval eyes, above upraised cheek bones, witnessed the sun rising over the planet Ahmantec's horizon as it painted a soft orange and pink color against the early lavender sky. Many small

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farms, visible throughout the valley below, extended toward the distant industrial city of Andera. A collection of various factories, dedicated to producing consumable products for many new settlers, silhouetted against the morning vista like a row of teeth in a monster's jaw. Nearby the city was a gathering of cottages and farmlands sweeping down through the valley just like a river would meander into the low lands.

Rising upward from a crouching position, Dobi's lean muscular body stretched upward to about six feet in height to begin the long trek home. The dawn air was cool, and the sun was warming the land up quickly. Most ahmans, as what Dobi was, wore only a small wrap around their waist during the heat of summer. Many workers wore very little in their effort to stay cool while they worked in the fields or the hot factories. Settlements had been established in warmer latitudes where crop production could be optimized.

The piathian, one of the species of ahmans, was now twenty years old. Dobi loved taking the early morning walks through the clean air of the countryside. The fresh climate helped clear thoughts of current obligations that could be postponed to a later time. A light breeze momentarily passed the ahman's face, as yellowish hair gently lifted up, then glided down again.

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Books Written by

A Nation:

Similar But Not the Same*

Saga One - 2422 A.D.

Deflection A Race Against Time

Saga Two - 2407 A.D.

Crossroads-A Moment of Decision*

Saga Three - 2424 A.D.

Found The Lost Ones

Saga Four - 2426

Return-There's Never An Easy Way

Saga Five - 2428 A.D.

Desert Shock – Secrets Never Stay Hidden*

Saga Six - 2429 A.D.

Fatal Error – Death by Innocence*

Saga Seven - 2430 A.D.

Where Did They Go? The World of Vesda

Present Time Urban One

The Pottery Sale What Lies Beneath

Urban Two

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For more insights to how my stories progressed, see my blog at:
bloggingwrites.weebly.com.