

A Rescue

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A ten minute play

Written by AJ

Directed by Christina Ledbetter

Performed by Anna Medley and Olivia Sundberg

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

CAT, the entity of black cats, the spirit behind them, loosely the Egyptian goddess Bast.

SNAKE, the entity of chaos, evil incarnate, based on the Egyptian deity Apep, a giant snake.

NORA, (doubled CAT) a concerned friend who's noticed the start of an abusive relationship.

LAYLA, (doubled SNAKE) a girl lost in an abusive situation, but too caught up in the darkness to see a way out on her own.

(Note the number and website for the National Domestic Violence Hotline should be included at the end.)

October 2020 is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Talking about abuse is hard, but start the conversation

1-800-799-7233

<https://www.thehotline.org/>

## THE CAT AND THE SNAKE

The world is dark. Barely more than shadows. The darkness is so vast, you can't quite tell what lurks among it, but you can tell it's powerful. It fills the empty, overshadowing the shadows.

### CAT

I was worshipped once. A goddess. I was royalty. Hundreds of people, thousands of people, entire civilizations worshipped me as a fearsome warrior, powerful protector, guardian against evil spirits. I was in constant battle against the serpentine deities of chaos, malice, and corruption. I fought tirelessly, tooth and nail, to keep them at bay, to protect. And I was proud. Proud of my work, proud of my wounds, proud of my war that I fought so they wouldn't have to.

For generations I was greeted and welcomed with open arms. I was a symbol of good fortune, of safety, of prosperity. I was there to fight the battles for them so why shouldn't I be welcomed? Whether it was the day to day menaces or the brewing storms of malevolence, I was there to help. I only wanted to help.

The praise was nice, but I only wanted the welcome. After eons of fighting a war that could never end, a welcoming face restored my energy, replenished my courage, reinvigorated my spirit.

But then *they* arrived. *They* did not trust what they did not know. *They* did not like what they did not control. *They* did not like me. So *they* turned you against me.

They ruined my reputation, ignore the years of tradition and trust we had built, tearing down everything you'd ever known about me and replacing it with their own soiled ideas. They smeared my likenesses, chased us out, met my open arms with a flames and blades.

I didn't know what to do, so I left. But then the evil, the malice, the chaos filled in my empty space, and I loved you too much for that. So I returned. I took the knife from my own back to protect the hand that struck me in a war I never wanted.

I still fought for you. I still worked tirelessly to protect you. But now people scream when they see my scars.

They chase me away with pitchforks and torches. They spit at me, hit me, say I am the bringer of evil! I am the only thing keeping evil at bay! Do you not see that? You have blended into them so I don't know who is who. And I am tired. Tired of my endless war. Tired of my thankless work. Tired of the years of abuse. Tired.

SNAKE

You must be tired. Why, for such a majestic being to be so shunned and mistreated is such a disgrace. Such a foolish mistake. After all this treatment, why don't you leave?

CAT

I cannot leave. They still need me even if they do not see it.

SNAKE

They don't deserve you. They mistreat you so. Don't you miss being worshipped, praised, loved? You've been through so much. You deserve better.

CAT

There is no better. Not anymore. They have ruined me.

SNAKE

Why don't you return the favor?

CAT

I won't... I don't... I don't know...

SNAKE

Try.

There is an abrupt shift.

THE CAT OR THE SNAKE

Nora's apartment. It is cozy, welcoming, lived in. Nora answers the door as soon as there's a knock.

NORA

Hello!

LAYLA

Hey.

NORA

I haven't seen you in forever, it's been too long.

LAYLA

I know, sorry. Seth has just been so busy. What was the big surprise?

NORA

Oh! Yes, are you ready? I got a cat! Isn't it cute?

Nora gestures to a black kitten.

LAYLA

It's a black cat.

NORA

Yeah, it's a rescue. I haven't figured out a name yet but--

LAYLA

Aren't you like, crazy superstitious?

NORA

Duh.

LAYLA

Well then..?

NORA

Did you know that black cats are the least like animal to be adopted and the most likely to end up euthanized in shelters? I think it was like 30% or 60, I don't remember.

LAYLA

Wow.

NORA

Yeah, and as a historian, I feel the need to remind you that black cats were originally omens of good fortune and protection before Christians decided to make them omens of evil and witch trials etcetera.

LAYLA

Oh.

There is a beat.

NORA

I guess we'll see which one this turn out to be.

Another beat.

LAYLA

Well. I guess I better be going.

NORA

Wait, why don't you stay for a while? We need to talk, catch up--

LAYLA

Seth is waiting at the apartment for me I really shouldn't.

NORA

Come on, just a few minutes? You can tell him you were stuck in traffic.

LAYLA

He'll see my phone hasn't left yet.

NORA

Well then let's turn off your phone and say the battery died.

LAYLA

Oh no, I need to be able to respond right away if he texts me. Really, it's probably better if I leave.

NORA

Wait! Layla, I never see you anymore and we need to talk.

LAYLA

I know, and I'm sorry but--

NORA

We might as well talk now. You're already here.

LAYLA

But Seth--

NORA

He's what we need to talk about. I love you, and I care about you, and I miss spending time with you, but Seth has taken over a lot of that time. Do you remember the last time we hung out just the two of us?

LAYLA

We went out for coffee. We talked about that new movie.

NORA

That was three months ago.

LAYLA

I know! I'm sorry. I miss you too but Seth needs me to be around and...

NORA

How does he need you?

LAYLA

Ok, well maybe need wasn't the right word. Maybe wants. He wants me around all the time. And it's nice to be wanted.

NORA

It is, but you don't need to spend every second of every day with him.

LAYLA

But he wants me too. He loves me.

NORA

Other people love you too.

LAYLA

Yes, but not like that. He loves me. He loves me so much he doesn't know what he'd do without me.

NORA

Is that what he said?

LAYLA

Well, sort of. I just like being there for him.

NORA

Is that why you quit your job?

LAYLA

Um. Yeah. I just... he needed me to be at home for him. So I had to leave.

NORA

What do you do all day?

LAYLA

There's a lot to do around the apartment, and you know how I mess things up, I usually have to redo a lot anyway.

NORA

How long has it been since you talked to your parents?

LAYLA

You know I don't talk to them anymore. They don't like Seth, they just don't understand him. Or us.

NORA

Ok, but do you talk to anyone else?

LAYLA

Seth.

NORA

Besides him.

LAYLA

Seth is the only person I need to talk to. He takes care of things for me. I couldn't do much without him.

NORA

Layla, you are a fully capable woman, you can do anything you set your mind to.

LAYLA

Not anymore.

NORA

What happened?

LAYLA

I don't know. I just... It started slowly at first. Constant texting, and he always wanted to know where I was. And then he always wanted to be there. And it was nice. It was so nice to have someone want me. To have someone want to be there. Want me. And then we just stopped going places. He didn't like my friends. And then I had to choose between spending time with my friends, or him, and no one had ever cared about me like he did, so I had to choose him.

NORA

It's ok to spend time with other people, it's healthy.

LAYLA

But I don't want to hurt his feelings. It hurts him when I choose other people over him.

NORA

Have you talked to him about this?

LAYLA

No, he doesn't like to talk about it. He gets angry and...

NORA

And what?

LAYLA

It's nothing, Nora. It doesn't matter.

NORA

It does matter, how you feel matters.

LAYLA

I feel scared. When's he's angry I feel scared. And I try to make it better, but I just make everything worse. It's my fault anyway.

NORA

It is not your fault. None of this is your fault.

LAYLA

I don't know what to do anymore. I just feel lost and alone and... and...

NORA

You're not alone. I'm here for you. Other people are here for you. This cat is here for you.

LAYLA

I've missed you so much, Nora!

NORA

Do you want to stay here tonight? Maybe we can look up some steps to take?

LAYLA

And name your devil cat.

NORA

Hey, this cat is a protector. A guardian angel.

LAYLA

Angel?

NORA

Mm... too on the nose. Shadow?

LAYLA

I don't think so.

NORA

Well, we'll figure it out later. Together.

LAYLA

Together.

As they make plans and research options for the cat and Layla, the cat watches them. Content with its choice.

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