

## FICTIONAL FILM ADAPTATION

“Cat in the Rain” (1925)

Ernest Hemingway

(1899-1961)

from *Follywood* (2005)

The title *Cat in the Rain* appears.

Slowly it fades to an establishing shot of a hotel on the seacoast of Italy. The day is gloomy. Low waves are breaking in long white scallops that slide up onto the beach and dissipate. The hotel faces the sea over a garden with benches, dripping palms and puddles on the gravel paths. A bronze war monument standing in a square in the garden is glistening with rain. In the doorway of a cafe, a waiter stands gazing across the square.

The camera approaches a window on the second floor of the hotel, where a girl is looking out. Bacall with hair cut very short is looking down at something the camera finds below her on the terrace, a cat hunched under one of the dripping tables. She peers down at the cat, both of them held for awhile in the frame as living shapes that stand out in the gloom, with something in her shrinking posture that resembles the animal. Pull back to a medium shot that balances Bacall standing at the window with Bogart reclining on the bed, at opposite ends of the room.

“I’m going down and get that kitty.”

“I’ll get it for you,” her husband offers.

“No, I can do it! The poor kitty.”

“Don’t get wet,” he says.

Bacall goes downstairs.

The padrone, the hotel owner played by Walter Huston wearing a dark Italian suit, rises from his desk and bows to her. In deep focus, spaced widely apart the young woman and the older man exchange pleasantries about the bad weather in English and Italian. Bacall conveys that she likes this gentleman, a man with manners who pays attention to her.

She opens the door and looks out into the rain. A man in a cape makes a tortoise back as he bends running across the empty square to the cafe. Still standing in the doorway, Bacall peers up at the eaves as if looking for cover. Just then an umbrella opens behind her. It is the maid, sent by the gracious padrone, saying in Italian that the Signora must not get wet. With the maid holding the umbrella over her, Bacall walks along the gravel path until they arrive under her window. A shot straight down from the roof shows the round black umbrella with a white tip close beside the white table with a black hole in the center for an umbrella. The two shelters fill the screen for a moment, then Bacall’s head pokes out from under like a tortoise and pulls back quickly.

The cat is gone.

Disappointed the American girl tries to explain to the maid what she wanted. A cat under the table, she wanted it so much! The Italian woman laughs at the triviality of the American girl and urges her to come back inside before she gets wet. Bacall sighs and goes back inside. As she passes the office, the padrone stands up and bows to her. She visibly shrinks at first, as if feeling small and closed in, but then she smiles and swells as if feeling important. With the pride of a lady, she glides upstairs. The cleanshaven Bogart is still reclining backwards with his bare feet splayed apart on his pillow. He puts down his book. She sits down on the bed toward the head, at the opposite end from him. Their bed fills the screen with Bogart on his back and Bacall on the edge.

“I wanted it so much. I wanted that poor kitty. It isn’t any fun to be a poor kitty out in the rain.”

Bogart starts reading again.

She rises nervously and steps over to the dressing table. There she sits down in front of the mirror and picks up a hand glass. She studies her profile, first one side and then the other. Closeup in deep focus of one side in her mirror with Bogart horizontal in the background, followed by a closeup of her other side with a daydream image in the background of the tall gentleman who made her feel important. She asks

Bogart if he thinks it would be a good idea if she lets her hair grow out. He looks up at the back of her neck clipped close like a boy's.

"I like it the way it is," he says.

Bacall purrs that she is tired of looking like a boy. Bogart shifts his position on the bed. He has not taken his eyes off her since she began to speak. "You look pretty darn nice," he says.

She puts down her mirror, steps to the window and looks out into the rain. It is getting dark. She talks as if to her reflection. She wants to grow her hair long and make a big knot in the back that she can feel. She wants a kitty to sit on her lap and purr when she strokes her. She wants a cat. She wants to dine at a table with candles and her own silver and she wants a cat. And she wants it to be spring and she wants to brush her hair out in front of a mirror and she wants a kitty she can feel and she wants some new clothes.

"Oh, shut up and get something to read!"

"Anyway I want a cat," whining now. "If I can't have long hair or any fun, at least I can have a cat!"

A knock on the door.

Bogart calls out to come in. It is the maid, holding a big fluffy tortoise-shell cat. She says the padrone asked her to bring this cat up for the Signora. Deep focus defines the fluffy cat in the foreground, Bogart in the background looking as if he thinks this girl will never be satisfied, and the girl between them disappointed again. Fade to the cat she wants trotting up a street in the dark, looking wet and bedraggled in the rain, trotting up a hill toward a distant light. A faint roar in the distance is heard, as though just over the hill, like a crowd in a bullring.

Michael Hollister  
from Chapter 10  
*Follywood* (2005)



*Follywood* dramatizes the 1940s and 50s, with deep focus on directors, writers and politics. Soon after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the young 20th Century Fox director Ryan Eisley films a documentary on women working in a defense plant, where he meets Sarah. They marry and settle down on a ranch in the San Fernando Valley with their two kids and their dog Boffo.

The Eisleys go on to make independent films adapting American classics, while Sarah tries to overcome Ryan's infidelities with scripts and actresses. Just after their film *Women in Hemingway* is released, the U.S. House Committee on Un-American Activities resumes investigating Communist influence in Hollywood, provoking their stars John Huston, Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall to fight back by joining a delegation of stars who fly to the hearings in an airplane named Star of the Red Sea. Some suspect the Eisleys are Communists and the hearings could end their careers. They hope to clear themselves by producing the anti-Communist film *Blithedale*, starring Tracy and Hepburn.

The Eisleys become involved on both sides of the Blacklist scandal, as Sarah resists the Communists who control the Screen Writers Guild and Ryan fights the conservatives who try to impose a blacklist on the Screen Directors Guild. Like the nation, their marriage is threatened by disloyalty and the prospect of war. Orson Welles takes over their *Pierre*, then Josef Stalin courts Judy Garland in their *Flowering Judas*. Their lives interwoven with their films, the Eisleys dramatize the dominant political and aesthetic conflicts in Hollywood.