

'THE NINE LIVES OF CHRISTMAS'

SYNOPSIS

Ambrose, an orange-striped cat, hops up onto the windowsill of a fire station decorated for the Christmas season and peers into the window. Inside, handsome fireman/eternal bachelor Zachary Stone uncomfortably poses for a photographer shooting a charity firemen's calendar. Mark and Rey, Zachary's firemen peers and fire chief Sam playfully snicker as Zachary continues posing. Photo shoots are clearly not Zachary's cup of tea. Suddenly, the fire alarm goes off and the firemen jump into action and race to the fire.

In class at a veterinary college, 29-year-old student Marilee White – a nose-to-the-grindstone, workaholic type who has promised herself she will not date until she graduates – is asleep at her desk, exhausted from her unbalanced life of work and school. Sarah, Marilee's good friend, tells Marilee she needs to balance her life with some fun activities. As Marilee drives out of the school parking lot, she stops abruptly as Zachary's fire truck screams by. Marilee watches the fire truck and as soon as it's safe to continue driving she heads off to her job at Bosley's, a pet supply store.

Zachary arrives home after his shift and, as he goes into his house, Ambrose, the cat from the fire house windowsill, follows him in. Ambrose makes himself at home and Zachary has no choice but to accept it. A friendship has begun.

Marilee returns to her apartment complex and is greeted by Mrs. Winnamucker, a stern landlady who questions Marilee about the possibility of a cat being in the apartment complex in violation of the building's strict no pet policy. Once inside her apartment, Marilee picks up Queenie, a female calico cat who Marilee has living with her unbeknownst to Mrs. Winnamucker. Back at the fire station, Zachary tries to find an owner for Ambrose, but there are no takers. Zachary tells Sam he believes that happiness in a romantic relationship is temporary and that happily ever after does not work.

The next day, at a supermarket where Christmas music plays and employees wear Santa hats, Zachary and Marilee meet as Zachary struggles to pick out the right cat food for Ambrose. Marilee is smitten. Marilee and Zachary flirt as Marilee teaches Zachary how to care for cats.

That night, Marilee's sister Jaclyn comes to Marilee's apartment to take her out to dinner. Zachary is at home, when Blair, the young model he's currently dating - whose family owns the pet supply store where Marilee works - shows up. Blair sees Ambrose and doesn't like him, a huge contrast to Marilee's passion for animals.

At an upscale Italian restaurant, Marilee, Jaclyn and Jaclyn's husband Kyle are seated for dinner. Jaclyn and Kyle scheme to fix up Marilee – who is too busy with school and work to focus on a relationship - with a date for an upcoming fundraising event. Feeling pressured, Marilee tells a white lie, saying that she is dating Zachary. Jaclyn and Kyle insist Marilee bring Zachary to the fundraiser. Zachary and Blair walk into the restaurant and sit with a couple of Blair's snooty

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friends. At one point, Zachary and Marilee each step away from their respective tables and bump into each other. Zachary tells Marilee he doesn't believe in happily-ever-after relationships with fairy tale endings and Marilee says she believes in true love.

The next day, at Blair's insistence, Zachary and Blair take Ambrose to Bosley's Pet Supplies to be adopted. Marilee is checking inventory when Blair approaches her, holding Ambrose and asking her to find Ambrose a new home. As Zachary and Marilee joke with each other, Blair tells her father, Mr. Bosley, that Marilee was rude to her and Mr. Bosley fires Marilee.

Zachary returns to Bosley's Pet Supplies, looking for Marilee and learns that Blair had her fired. At the fire station, Sam tells Zachary that Marilee is a special person and that he should be open to the idea of true love and marriage and having someone to spend the holidays with.

Blair enters Zachary's house, accidentally letting Ambrose out and closing the door behind her. Zachary comes home and realizes that Ambrose is missing. When Blair expresses that she doesn't care that Ambrose is gone or that Marilee was fired, Zachary breaks up with her and goes outside to search for Ambrose.

Marilee and Jaclyn spend the day together, getting mani/pedis, dress shopping and enjoying the holiday season. Marilee gets a makeover and Jaclyn drives Marilee to the fire station, encouraging her to go inside and show Zachary her new look. Marilee pretends to go into the fire station, but winds up walking home instead. On the way, she finds Ambrose and returns him to the fire station. Zachary is overjoyed at the sight of Marilee and Ambrose. Zachary takes Marilee out for dinner and, the next morning, invites her out for coffee. Zachary and Marilee return to Marilee's apartment, where Mrs. Winnamucker, having learned that Marilee has been hiding her cat, Queenie, in her apartment, serves her with an eviction notice. Zachary takes Marilee to his house and offers to let her live in an upstairs apartment. Ambrose and Queenie meet and get along swimmingly. Zachary and Marilee are getting along well, too, enjoying a variety of daily life activities together. Though Zachary maintains that he does not believe in love and marriage, it's clear he is developing serious feelings for Marilee. With Christmas only one week away, Zachary and Marilee go Christmas shopping together, pick out a Christmas tree and decorate it. Ambrose and Queenie have now become best friends, enjoying the budding romance between their owners.

In Sarah's apartment, Marilee tells Sarah she does not want to allow herself to fall for Zachary because he does not believe in committed relationships. Sarah suggests Marilee hang mistletoe in Zachary's house. Zachary kisses Marilee under the mistletoe and Marilee swoons. Now, she knows he likes her.

The next day, at the fire station, Zachary tells Sam, Mark and Rey that he is afraid of the feelings he has for Marilee. Zachary's fear of settling down is beginning to consume him and he feels his independence is being threatened by his relationship with Marilee. When Marilee invites him to the fundraising event, which will take place at the Mayor's mansion, Zachary sees it as her taking a closer step towards intimacy and tells her he cannot attend. Marilee knows something is bothering Zachary, but is not aware of his intimacy issues.

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That night, Marilee arrives at the Christmas fundraising event and joins Jaclyn and Kyle. As Marilee surveys the party, she sees Zachary, wearing a tuxedo, with his arm around a beautiful woman. Stunned and hurt, Marilee leaves the party.

The next day, Zachary returns home to find Marilee moving out. Zachary is disappointed. He wants Marilee to stay, but doesn't know how to express his feelings.

On Christmas Eve, Zachary is on shift at the fire house. Sam convinces Zachary that he needs love in his life and that he should find Marilee and tell her how he truly feels. Zachary tries to call Marilee, but she will not take his calls, even though she is missing him terribly.

On Christmas Day, Zachary, dressed as Santa Claus, hands out presents to underprivileged children at the fire station. As Zachary looks around at visiting families and sees the love they have for each other, he has an epiphany: Life is truly all about love and family. When everyone leaves the fire station, Zachary sits alone with Ambrose and realizes he has made a huge mistake in letting Marilee walk out of his life. Zachary notices a newspaper article advertising a Christmas Day pet rescue adoption. Knowing that Marilee will be there, Zachary climbs into the fire truck with Ambrose and, with the siren blaring, speeds off to the pet adoption.

At the pet adoption, Zachary rushes over to Marilee and Ambrose runs over to Queenie. Zachary tells Marilee that he was at the fundraiser to promote the firemen's calendar to raise money for charity and the woman she saw him with was the Mayor's wife, not his date. Zachary tells Marilee he loves her and that she is the reason he now believes in love. As Ambrose and Queenie watch, Zachary and Marilee kiss. They are a couple at last.

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