



Title: Treasure Link: Adventures of a Hemingway Cat
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Treatment By: Brian Dillon

Mission Statement:

Treasure Link is a timeless children's adventure tale that should sit proudly alongside such animated masterpieces as *The Lion King*, *Madagascar* and *Rio*. With the enormous popularity of animated films, which appeal to both older and younger audiences, *Treasure Link* has a little something for everyone. At once a rousing quest following a young, polydactyl cat as he searches for answers to his past, and a subtle social statement about the dangers of drug use and the state of our environment, this tale has all the ingredients of a modern classic.

As with any book-to-screen adaptation, only a portion of the narrative can be adapted to the big screen, and certain adjustments must be made to fit the story into an audience friendly running time. Certain plot elements must be condensed, rearranged or omitted to facilitate this, but the goal of this treatment is to present the heart of Buffett's tale as close to the source material as possible.

As Buffett navigates the beautiful Florida Keys in search of the famed Hemingway House, he encounters a variety of other animals, including dogs, parrots, rats and other cats, all of which begin to shape his worldview into one we can all appreciate: that we are all connected in this delicate environment, and what's good for the community is good for us all. This inspiring message lies at the core of this wonderful book, and should translate well into its screen counterpart.

Logline:

When a young cat escapes his life as a performer, he embarks on a quest to find a true home, discovering friendship, courage and the truth about his own past along the way.

Treatment:

Dreamy images of a sea grape bush, of two cats fighting, hissing, and then the screech of tires laying down rubber.

BUFFETT – a young cat, with bright orange fur – opens his eyes, yawns, and then peers out the bars of his cage at the stage beyond. On it, a great gray striped tabby



cat named TIGER performs before a crowd of children, perched upon a stool, catching catnip mouse toys in his mouth as the CAT TRAINER - 30s, mustached - throws them his way. When Tiger's act is finished, the cat struts backstage and is lead into his own cage, opposite Buffett's. Tiger grins at Buffett, and then remarks that with Buffett's deformed paws, he'll never be a star in the show. Buffett looks down at his paws, which are comprised of six toes on the right, and seven on the left, and then glances at Tiger's paws, which have the normal five toes each.

Key West, Florida.

Buffett sighs and looks out past the cheering children at Mallory Square, where the circus-like Sunset Celebration is in full swing. Sword swallowers, fire-eaters, singers, clowns, artists, fortunetellers and dancers perform their feats for cheering throngs of spectators. The spectacle is blocked as the Cat Trainer's face swoops down in front of Buffett's cage, announcing that it's his turn to perform. The cage door swings open and Buffett is lead out on stage, where a stool and hoop lie waiting for him. Buffett looks back to catch sight of Tiger snickering, and then tries to leap up onto the stool, but slips and tumbles over backward. The children laugh hysterically as Buffett prepares to try again - but instead of leaping onto the stool, he leaps off the stage into the crowd.

Darting between the children's feet, Buffett can hear the Cat Trainer yelling after him, but pays no mind. He takes refuge under a popcorn cart and waits, watching the tourists pass by, a cavalcade of flip-flops and sneakers. Buffett catches his breath and surveys the area, noting a group of scruffy cats pacing around an old bearded man as he dices up fish on a cutting board. Buffett waits until the coast is clear, and then darts out to join them.

A black-and-white cat with a masked face, who introduces himself as BATCAT, greets him. Batcat tells Buffett they are free-range cats, and he should join them, as their show isn't planned, and the old man feeds them no matter what. At this, the old man dangles a piece of fish over Batcat's head and asks the feline to "give him six." Batcat paws the old man's hand and is rewarded. Buffett notices he has six toes on his paws, and asks why the other cats don't make fun of him. Batcat replies that their extra toes make them special, and there are lots of them. They are referred to as "Hemingway Cats" because the famous writer used to have a cat with extra toes, and a bunch of them live in the Hemingway House here in Key West. Buffett is amazed at this revelation, but before he can ask where this house is, he spots the Cat Trainer approaching and thanks Batcat before he scurries off.

Buffett races through the crowd and out into the street, where he narrowly avoids being hit by the Conch Train. He scurries back onto the sidewalk where he finds



himself at the foot of a large, silver statue of a man. At his feet is a hat, and when a passerby drops a quarter into the hat, the statue moves, startling Buffett. He backs away from the bizarre living statue, and runs right into NUBIS – slender grey Sphinx cat, hairless, villainous. Nubis dangles a toy mouse before Buffett, and in a sly, tinny voice asks if he'd like to try some catnip. Buffett backs away cautiously, and asks what catnip is. Nubis eyes him up and down, and then notes that he looks like a cat in trouble, and catnip will make all his troubles go away.

Buffett naively reaches out for the toy mouse, but then a commanding voice behind him tells him to stop. Buffett turns around to see a daunting, brown cat with only a small nub for a tail. This is HOGTAIL. Nubis tells Hogtail to mind his own business, and Hogtail replies by barring his teeth and loosing a threatening hiss. Nubis slinks away, but promises to see Buffett again.

Buffett is still a little frightened, but Hogtail assures him that even though he looks different, he is still a cat, a Manx cat indeed, who are born without regular tails. Hogtail asks if he is hungry, and Buffett's rumbling stomach answers for him.

On the top floor of an old building, Hogtail shares food and water from his bowls with Buffett, who gobbles up the food hungrily. When they are finished, they lie back on the moldy wooden planks and let their food digest. Hogtail asks about his parents, but Buffett has no memory of them, though he admits to having dreams in a sea grape bush and he can almost sense his parents in the dream. Then Hogtail asks why he would runaway, as show cats usually have cushy lives with lots of food, and Buffett explains how he wasn't good at the tricks, and how the other cats made fun of his extra toes. Then he asks Hogtail if he knows about the Hemingway House, which he doesn't, but he claims to have an old friend they can ask in the morning.

Nearby, in a dingy alleyway, Nubis meets with RATSIN – a lumbering, sinister rat. Ratsin wants to know why Nubis hasn't been selling more of their catnip, which is revealed to be a special, highly addictive formula they call "Mega Nip." Nubis promises to up their sales, and then tells Ratsin about the encounter he had with Hogtail. Ratsin instructs Nubis to bring on a couple of other cats for extra security.

The next day, under a banyan tree outside the Mel Fisher Maritime Museum lounges an old charcoal gray cat, sporting an eye patch over his right eye and a cluster of gold rings around his neck. This is GIL. As he grooms himself, he spies Hogtail and Buffett padding towards him and turns to welcome them. Introductions are made, and when Gil sees Buffett's toes, he and Hogtail share a knowing look. Buffett catches this, and asks them what they know, and Gil reveals that he knows Buffett's mother, and she is indeed at the Hemingway House. Overjoyed that Gil not only knows about the Hemingway House, but he also knows his mother, he wants Gil to



take him there right away. Unfortunately, the old cat doesn't remember the way, but knows a parrot that might be able to help them. But first, they must eat and rest, and then they can set out the following day. Comfortable that Buffett is in good hands, Hogtail says goodbye for now, but promises to see them soon.

Buffet, as a kitten, looks up into the face of a beautiful orange cat. The cat strokes his head with a seven-toed paw, and somewhere, far-off, he hears a male's voice telling him everything will be all right.

Gil shakes Buffett from his dream, and tells him it's time to go and visit his friend. As they stroll down the street, Buffett asks him about the golden rings on his collar, and Gil tells him they are treasure links. Long ago, when pirates ruled the seas, men used these golden chain links as a kind of currency, and the ones around his neck are part of his family's inheritance of treasure. He explains how five of his six links are his, and one belongs to another cat, but when Buffett asks whom, Gil tells him that's a story for another day, as they've arrived at their destination.

The Audubon House is an impressive white structure surrounded by a lush garden. A sign out front is covered with pictures of birds, and Gil explains that the house is home to a sizeable collection of bird paintings by the artist John James Audubon, and the yard behind the house is referred to as Bird Garden. From high above them, a great green-feathered parrot swoops down and perches on a nearby branch and introduces himself as SCULLY. They follow Scully to the rear yard, and engage in a frustrating conversation with the bird, which instinctively repeats everything they say before answering. Finally, Buffett learns which direction the Hemingway house lies, but the parrot also informs them that in an attempt to keep the cats there inside, the house has been equipped with a wire mesh barrier atop its outer walls, and only a cat with tremendous courage and resourcefulness could attempt to get it. When Buffett claims to be that cat, Scully eyes him up and down carefully, stating the real issue here is whether or not Buffett can stand up for himself. This answer confuses the cat, and Scully tells him he needs to learn to ignore what others say about his toes, his deeds and how he treats others will define him, not how many toes he has.

Buffett thanks Scully for the advice, and as he and Gil head in the direction of the Hemingway House, Gil tells him he must travel alone for a while. Dismayed, Buffett tries to convince him to stay, but Gil claims he has other responsibilities, but paws off one of his treasure links and attaches it to Buffett's collar. He tells him it is the link which belonged to another cat, and it's sacred, and it will bring him luck. With that, he leaps over a fence and out of sight. Alone, but not entirely afraid, Buffett slinks under a bench and closes his eyes.



When he awakes, it's late afternoon and his belly is grumbling. He ventures into an alley and begins sniffing around for food, and is greeted by a flabby, oversized tabby cat named LION, who quickly begins to make fun of his paws. Remembering Scully's words, Buffett retorts how he'd rather have a few extra toes than a few extra bellies. This enrages Lion, who lumbers towards him over a trash heap. Buffett scrambles past him into the street, where a trolley car is just opening its doors. He leaps inside, just out of the tabby's reach. As Lion trudges, defeated, back towards his trash pile, he is met by Ratsin and Nubis, who offer him as much catnip as he wants if he'll agree to join them. Lion agrees.

In the trolley car, Buffett watches out the window as Key West passes by to the accompaniment of a tour guide's voice, rattling off information about the city's history and famous landmarks to the tourists. Buffett begins to doze off as the voice slogs on, but then he mentions that the famous Hemingway House is just up ahead and Buffett leaps to his feet in excitement. The trolley pulls to a stop, and as the passengers disembark and begin snapping photos, Buffett tries to slip out between their feet, but can't make it through the throng. The doors close just as he is about to slip out, trapping him inside. He peers out the window, sees the house with its high meshed fence, and even sees a couple of cats slinking about. He claws futilely at the glass, to no avail. The trolley begins to move again, carrying him away from the house, and when it finally stops and he's able to slip through the doors, he's at the harbor, far away from his fellow multi-toed cats.

Disheartened, Buffett wanders out onto the dock and watches the boats come and go. He hears voices behind him and turns to see SCHOONER – a spry terrier – and PEPE – a rambunctious Chihuahua – coming towards him. At first, Buffett is frightened of the two dogs, but they see the treasure link around his neck, and sensing he is in trouble, they offer to help. Having never met a dog before, let alone two dogs, Buffet is intrigued as to why they would want to be friends with a cat. Schooner informs him they are friends with all kinds of animals, especially members of the Alliance. Buffett asks what the Alliance is, and Schooner and Pepe exchange confused looks, pointing to the treasure link on his collar and stating that all members of the Alliance have those. Buffett tells them it was a gift from a cat named Gil, and is shocked to learn they know him, and indeed, Gil is the leader of the Alliance. They explain that the Alliance members are generally cats, but friends of the Alliance, such as them, can be any animal, as long as they vow to do good in the community.

As they talk, a large turtle and a pelican join them, also friends of the Alliance. They tell Buffett of the troubles the sea-faring animals face as the oceans become more polluted. Across the dock, Ratsin catches sight of them conversing and sneaks closer. When the rat is close enough to see the treasure link on Buffett's collar, his



eyes glow bright with greed. He pounces, narrowly missing Buffett. Schooner and Pepe begin snapping at the rat, but he slips between their feet and chases Buffett down the dock. Nubis and Lion appear, flanking Buffet from all sides. Buffett turns and scampers up a plank and leaps onto a departing boat, barely catching hold of a dangling rope. He pulls himself up and looks back at the angry trio watching him on the dock. Relieved, but exhausted, Buffett curls up in a folded wetsuit and braces himself against the rocking boat. Back on the dock, Ratsin tells Nubis and Lion that if they can get their hands on Buffet's golden treasure link they could afford to double their supply of Mega Nip.

Out on the ocean, the ferry bounces along with the waves, and curled within the wetsuit Buffett battles his own seasickness, eventually retching out the contents of his belly onto the water-strewn deck. Finally, the ferry finds calmer waters and he collapses into a deep sleep.

Looking out through the sea grape bush, Buffett the kitten watches a large orange cat wrestling violently with a dark shape. The sound of tires screeching is loud and terrible, and the little kitten buries its head in its paws.

Buffett wakes to find the ferry has stopped moving. He climbs out to see a vast beach with a massive stone fort looming in the distance. He leaps from the boat's deck into the warm sand and heads for the fort. Inside, he climbs to the fort's second tier and looks out over the ocean to see the ferry pulling back out to sea. Dismayed, he rushes back through the concrete maze out onto the beach, but the boat is already gone. He hears a strange cawing above him, and he looks up to see two seagulls engaged in an aerial battle over a fish. One of the birds loses its grip on the fish and it plummets down right in front of Buffett. Hungry, he snatches the fish up, only to be greeted by the familiar voices of Hogtail and Gil screaming for him to drop it. Confused, he turns to meet his two friends, but there is no time for pleasantries – the birds are dive-bombing them. Buffett drops the fish, and the trio races back towards the safety of the fort, dodging aerial attacks from all fronts, and eventually their way is blocked. Gil spots a nearby lighthouse, and they make a break for it, but there are too many birds swarming around them. Buffett whips around, bears his claws and begins swiping at the swooping birds. He takes one of them down, giving them just enough time to slip into the lighthouse.

Panting, their fur still bristling, Buffett asks what they are doing here, and Gil reveals that they have been coming to the fort for years, searching for clues to help them find his family's missing treasure links. Buffett asks them why they didn't tell him about the Alliance, and Gil admits he didn't feel he was ready to join them, but now having seen his courage facing the birds, he thinks it might be time. Before he can say anything further, they hear heavy footsteps approaching. Gil and Hogtail hide,



but Buffett simply drops to the floor and covers his eyes with his paws. A park ranger enters the lighthouse and sees the cat cowering on the floor. He scoops Buffett up and pets him lovingly, noting how much better it will be for him back in Key West. Gil and Hogtail watch as the ranger carries Buffett towards the beach.

Buffett keeps his eyes closed as he is passed between hands, and doesn't open them until the roar of an engine forces him to look around. He finds himself in the front seat of a seaplane. The pilot looks down at him, and then gives him a perfunctory pat on the head before pulling back on the throttle and cutting across the water into the sky.

Schooner and Pepe are resting their snouts on their paws when the Cessna seaplane begins its descent towards the harbor. Neither pay much attention, until the plane splashes down and Buffett leaps from the cockpit onto the dock before them. The dogs stare in amazement at the cat, who relates the scary and joyous flight, and then remembers that Hogtail and Gil are still at the fort. Schooner and Pepe promise to take care of him until they return.

They leave the harbor and head into a parking garage where they can safely hide out while planning their next step. Unbeknownst to them, Ratsin and Nubis watch them enter the structure. Inside, Schooner and Pepe search for a suitable hiding place, but then Schooner stops and sniffs the air, realizing that Nubis is near. They scramble to an elevator door, which is locked. As Pepe tries to find a way through, Buffett instinctively backs up to the closed door, lifts his tail and marks the door. Schooner sees this and shouts at him, because now they'll be able to smell him. Buffett doesn't understand why he did this, and they promise to explain it to him later, but right now they can use it. Pepe leads Buffett around and has him spray the tires of cars, and once finished, they take the stairwell to the top floor and hide. Buffett asks what is going on, and Schooner explains he is growing up, and instinctively marking his territory, which should throw the rat and his henchmen off their trail.

Downstairs, Nubis sniffs the closed elevator door, then the surrounding area, noting how they must be hiding under one of the parked cars. Lion and another cat join Ratsin and Nubis, and they begin searching the bottom floor.

Upstairs, Buffett asks Schooner why Ratsin is after them, and they explain how his treasure link is very valuable, and Ratsin is very greedy. Greed is an unknown concept to Buffett, and when they explain it to him he happily claims he'll never be greedy, because it's not good for the community. Schooner and Pepe are proud of the young cat, and believe he's going to be a welcome addition to the Alliance.



On the bottom floor, Nubis finds the stairwell and calls to the others to stop searching under the cars. Ratsin sends them up.

As Buffett settles in between Pepe and Schooner and begins to drift off to the sleep, the two dogs leap to their feet. Buffett wants to know what is going on, but before they can answer Nubis arrives with Lion and the third cat, which is revealed to be Tiger. Buffett stares at Tiger unbelieving, and then asks how he could go from being a show cat to a thug. Tiger just grins and says that everyone has a price. Nubis tosses Tiger a Mega Nip cat toy, which further energizes him. The two dogs flank Buffett protectively, but Nubis promises they won't hurt him if he just gives up his treasure link. Buffett refuses. Tiger and Lion pounce on the two dogs, who nip and tangle with the cats. Nubis leers at Buffett, relishing the moment, and then splays his claws. Before he pounces, Nubis reveals that he knew Buffett's father, and was there when he died. Buffett doesn't believe this, but Nubis lecherously explains how he was the last one to see his father before his "little accident." Buffett crouches, a growl festering in his belly. He hears Scully's words about courage and when Nubis lashes out, Buffett whips around and bites his tail. Nubis cries out, slashes at the air, misses, and Buffett slashes his face with his seven-clawed paw. Nubis stumbles backward, hurt, confused, and then turns tail and runs. Schooner and Pepe chase Lion and Tiger down the stairs and into the street.

Back in the structure, Buffett steadies himself, but then a sinister voice behind him demands he hand the golden link over. Buffett turns to see Ratsin slinking towards him, his teeth bared. Exhausted, Buffett searches for a place to hide, and finds a caged storage area in the corner of the structure. He makes a bolt for it, slamming the cage door shut just before Ratsin can get to him. The rat paces back and forth, taunting Buffett with promises of torture and pain, but if he hands the link over he'll leave him alone, he'll even show him the way to the Hemingway House. A grin spreads over Buffett's face, confusing the rat. He follows Buffett's gaze behind him where Schooner and Pepe stand, growling fiercely. Ratsin shrinks, whimpers, and then scuttles off.

Schooner and Pepe examine the cage Buffett's locked himself into, which is open at the top, but too tall to climb. The door is locked shut. They tell him to sit tight and they promise to return with help. Buffett sits and waits, with flashes of his dreams dancing before his eyes. He sees the two cats fighting, one a majestic orange, the other a dark, hairless gray. Nubis wasn't lying.

He's snapped out of his reverie by the voice of Gil, and when he looks up he sees the old one-eyed cat, along with Hogtail, Schooner, Pepe and even Scully. Buffett asks how they got back from the fort, and they explain how they simply waited for the next ferry. The bird flies over the cage wall and lands beside Buffett, tells him to



take his claws, and with great effort the parrot is able to lift Buffett out. On the other side, Buffett tells Gil what Nubis said, and Gil finally relates the truth to him. We watch the scene as Gil narrates it:

Buffett's father's name was Geiger, and he was a legendary Hemingway Cat, leader of the Alliance, friend to all, and Gil's half-brother. Together with his mother, the three of them lived in the Hemingway House when Buffett was just a kitten. One day, Geiger believed it was time for Buffett to see the outside world, and despite his mother's objections, the two of them ventured out of the Hemingway House through a secret entrance in the garden. Outside, however, the vile Nubis attacked Geiger, trying to steal his treasure link. His father hid Buffett in a sea grape bush and then fought the other cat, and in the struggle he was thrown into the street where a car ended his life. Gil and Hogtail arrived too late to save him, but they found young Buffett in the bush and tried to return him to his mother, but the entrance to the garden had been sealed shut. Believing the safest place for him was with the cat trainer, they took Buffett to Mallory Square with the hopes that someday he would realize his true potential and return on his own.

Buffett listens tearfully as Gil finishes the tale, realizing he is actually his uncle. He touches the link on his collar, and Gil nods, telling him that, yes, the link was his father's. He asks why he didn't tell him this at the beginning, and Gil conveys how Geiger always wanted Buffett to grow up to be a courageous cat in his own right, and how he needed to go through these trials before he was ready to rejoin his mother at the Hemingway House. They've been walking as they talk, and as Gil finishes speaking they find themselves in front of a great white house, with a high, meshed fence. Buffett beams, realizing they are finally here.

His friends say goodbye, one by one, with promises to see him soon, excited at all the adventures they have before them. Finally, it is just Gil and Buffett staring up at the great fence. Buffett asks how he can scale it, but Gil says this is something he must do on his own. He says goodbye, and leaves him with one last sentiment, his mother is behind the fence waiting for him, and should be all the motivation he'll need.

Buffett circles the house, searching for a way inside. He finds a towering tree with a branch that almost crosses the barrier and climbs up. At the end of the branch, he peers out at the fence beyond, a good stretch away. He remembers trying to leap onto the stools in the cat show and quickly shakes off the memory. He musters all of his courage, and springs out, front paws splayed to the air. He catches the top of the fence, almost falls, but grips tightly with his extra toes and pulls himself over.



He lands firmly on the other side and looks around, seeing no one. And then a beautiful orange cat emerges from around a corner and stares at him with watery eyes. Buffett inches forward, knowing it's his mother, but somehow not believing it. The two cats, mother and son, creep closer and closer, and then touch their noses together. She feared she would never see him again, but knew deep down Buffett was strong like his father, and would never give up. As she begins to lick his face, purring softly, Buffett cuddles up to her, safe, at ease, at home. "Finding the Hemingway House is only the beginning of your journey, Buffett. You have many things to learn, many places to see, many adventures to behold."