

THE CAT

By JOHN ESCOTT

The year is 1935. The place is Hollywood. The Los Angeles newspapers call him The Cat. He steals at night. Tonight, he is at a house in the Hollywood Hills. The people in the house are having a party. They cannot see or hear The Cat. He is on the roof.

'I need to get to that window,' he thinks.

Minutes later, he is making a hole in the window. The Cat opens the window and gets into a bedroom. He listens, but everything is quiet in the room. The only noise is the party.

'Now I must find the jewels!' he thinks.

It only takes him a minute or two to find them.

'I can get hundreds of dollars for these!' he thinks.

Moving quickly, he puts them into his bag and leaves. Next day, at Starshine Studios, Zak Wakeman is making a movie. The star of the movie is Natalie Nevons. She begins to act.

'OK, Natalie,' Zak says. 'Act very afraid. You want to get out of the building. You look up... you can't see Brad. But Brad, you can see Natalie, and you're waiting for her... OK!' says Zak. 'Now bring on the stand-ins.'

The stand-ins are Nathan and Bud. They do all the dangerous things in the movie, all the stunts. Nathan is Natalie's stand-in, and Bud is Brad Poole's stand-in.

'Good luck, Nathan!' says Natalie.

'Thanks, Miss Nevons,' says Nathan.

Brad says nothing to Bud.

'OK!' calls Zak. 'Begin to climb up the building, Nathan.'

The two stand-ins begin to act. Nathan climbs out of the window and up onto the roof of the building. Bud is waiting for him.

'At first you don't see Bud, Nathan!' calls Zak. 'Now you do! And Bud, you try to stop Nathan, but he gets away.'

Nathan quickly gets away from Bud and runs across the roof of the building.

Bud runs after him. Natalie Nevons is watching them.

'I can do that,' she thinks. 'Nathan is very good, but I don't need a stand-in.'

'OK, everybody,' calls Zak. 'We are beginning again in twenty minutes.'

'I like your hair, Nathan!' says Bud, laughing. 'It's very nice. You're very pretty!'

Nathan is angry, but he says nothing. He does not like Bud. Natalie goes to speak to Zak.

'What's wrong, Natalie?' Zak asks.

'Mr Wakeman, please can I do some of my stunts?' asks Natalie. 'I don't always need a stand-in.'

'Sorry, Natalie,' says Zak. 'The stunts are too dangerous.'

'Why do you want to do your stunts, Natalie?' Brad Poole asks her. 'I'm happy to leave the dangerous acting to Bud.'

'Are you coming to my party tonight, Natalie?' Zak asks. 'It begins at eight o'clock.'

'Yes, Mr Wakeman,' says Natalie.

'Me, too,' says Brad.

Zak goes to speak to Nathan.

'I can give you twenty dollars to park the cars at my party tonight, Nathan,' he says. 'Do you want to do it?'

'Yes, please, Mr Wakeman,' says Nathan.

That night, Natalie Nevons arrives at Zak Wakeman's house in the Hollywood Hills.

'Hi, Miss Nevons,' says Nathan.

'Hi, Nathan,' says Natalie. 'Are you working here tonight?'

'Yes,' says Nathan. 'I'm helping to park the cars.'

'Why?' asks Natalie.

'Because I need the money,' Nathan tells her.

The Cat is out again. This time, he is going to steal from Zak Wakeman's house. He leaves his car near the trees and waits. Quickly, he runs across to the building and begins to climb.

Nathan does not see The Cat. He is watching Natalie Nevons go into the house.

'There are lots of movie stars here tonight,' he thinks. 'But Miss Nevons is the most beautiful.'

After some time, Nathan goes to look at the swimming pool.

A minute later, he sees Natalie Nevons. She is coming out of the house. She has two drinks.

'I have a drink for you, Nathan,' she says.

'Oh - thanks, Miss Nevons,' says Nathan.

'You're a good stand-in, Nathan,' she says. 'But I want to do some of my stunts in the movie. Mr Wakeman says "no" but I...'

Suddenly, she sees someone running to the trees.

'Look!' she says. 'Who's that?'

'It's The Cat!' says Nathan. 'Remember him from the newspaper? He's going to that car!'

'Quick!' says Natalie. 'Let's get my car!'

'Do you want me to drive?' Nathan asks. 'I can drive really fast.'

'No!' Natalie tells him. 'I'm driving!'

Natalie drives fast and it is a dangerous road.

'Be careful, Miss Nevons,' says Nathan. 'You have a movie to finish, remember!'

'It's OK, I'm a good driver,' she says. She smiles. 'And you can call me Natalie.'

Nathan smiles, too. 'OK,' he says.

'We're getting near to him!' says Natalie.

'Yes, but look! There's a train coming!' says Nathan.

Natalie looks quickly. 'It's OK!' she says. 'It's not going to hit us.'

The train is moving fast.

'We aren't going to do it!' says Nathan.

'Yes, we are!' Natalie tells him.

'Wow! That was close!' says Nathan.

Natalie laughs and says nothing.

Suddenly, two policemen see Natalie's car.

'Look at them!' says one policeman. 'How fast are they going, Joe?'

'Too fast, Sam,' says Joe. 'Let's stop them.'

'It's not going to be easy,' says Sam, 'but let's go!'

Suddenly, Nathan sees the police car.

'Er, Natalie,' he says.

'What is it?' she asks.

'There's a police car behind us,' says Nathan. 'It wants us to stop.'

'I'm not stopping,' she says. 'It's OK, we can tell them everything later. First we have to stop The Cat.'

Suddenly, The Cat sees the police car, too.

'Oh, no!' he says. 'I need to get out of this car.'

He stops his car and runs.

Soon after, Natalie and Nathan are jumping from Natalie's car. The Cat looks back and sees them.

'They're stopping, too,' he thinks. 'So, who can run the fastest?'

Minutes later, the police car stops near Natalie's car. The two policemen jump out, and look for Natalie and Nathan.

'Where are they, Sam?' asks Joe.

'I don't know,' says Sam. 'I can't see them. There are too many people.'

'There he is!' says Natalie. 'There's The Cat!'

'He's running to that building,' says Nathan.

'Let's go!' says Natalie, and she runs after The Cat.

Nathan runs after her. 'He's going up to the roof!' he says.

And the three of them begin to climb up to the roof of the building. Suddenly, The Cat throws his bag at Natalie. She does not see it, but Nathan does.

'Natalie, the bag!' he calls.

The bag does not hit Natalie, but it hits Nathan.

'Nathan, are you all right?' calls Natalie.

'I'm OK,' says Nathan.

The Cat and Natalie run across the roof of the building. Then, The Cat jumps from one building to the next. Natalie watches him. 'Can I do that?' she thinks. Natalie jumps. Nathan sees her. 'Wow! Look at her!' he thinks.

The Cat sees her, too. 'How can I get away from her?' he thinks.

He cannot get away from her.

'Got you!' says Natalie, and she jumps on him. 'So who are you?'

She takes off The Cat's mask. 'You!' she says.

'It's Bud!' says Nathan.

The policemen arrive and look from Natalie to Bud and back again.

'It's the movie star, Natalie Nevons!' says Joe.

'Yes!' says Sam. 'And The Cat!'

The next day, Nathan and Natalie tell Zak their story. 'Bud is The Cat?' he asks.

'That's right,' says Natalie.

'And you want to be Brad's new stand-in?' Zak says to Nathan. 'OK, but we need a new stand-in for Natalie. Who can do her stunts?'

'Natalie doesn't need a stand-in!' says Nathan, laughing. 'She can do her stunts!'

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