

THE TOP FLOOR

by
Michel J. Duthin

Phone Number: 33 623233561

FADE IN:

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

The frame is white.

CLOSEUP on a closed apartment white door.

A MAN'S VOICE can be heard from behind that door. KEYS NOISE in the locker and the door slowly opens.

A MAN and a YOUNG WOMAN enter the apartment.

The man is in his mid-forties, wearing a smart suit and tie. He's a real estate agent with a tag where it reads DWIGHT.

The young woman should be thirty. With a bright red-hair like a halo around her white face, she looks rather reserved and moves very slowly. She's CAT.

NOTA: ALONG THE SEQUENCE, SHE'LL NEVER SHOW THE RIGHT PART OF HER FACE

DWIGHT

(resolutely charming)

As I told you on the phone, this apartment is a real bonanza. As you should know, it's almost impossible to find a such bargain nowadays.

They enter a large empty one-room apartment with white walls.

As Dwight is talking, Cat walks along in the room, assessing each part of it, knocking on the wall as a connoisseur, checking the paint, looking out through the window.

She opens a door, trying to avoid Dwight's sneaking glances.

DWIGHT

This is the bathroom. With a large bathtub and toilets.

Cat inspects the bathroom, presses on the light switch. No light.

Dwight turns to the small vestibule.

DWIGHT

In the entry, you have a large closet, with plenty of shelves. Very useful.

Cat leaves the bathroom and nods, visibly hesitating. She tiptoes the carpet and sighs.

Then, she finally looks up at Dwight, smiling.

She shows now the right part of her face: she has a large old burnt scar on the cheek.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CAT'S APARTMENT - EVENING

The apartment is full of boxes. There is the minimum of furniture. A mattress laid on the carpet, a simple table, an old writing desk, a tiny fridge, a cupboard, and a CD player.

Smooth music is playing in the apartment.

The window is open on the dusk.

WRITTEN: WEDNESDAY

INT. CAT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Most of the boxes have been opened.

Cat is having dinner, facing the open window. Night has fallen.

Someone knocks on her door.

THREE LITTLE KNOCKS

Puzzled, Cat gets up, walks to the door, and opens.

She is facing a LITTLE BOY in his tens. Simply dressed, he shyly lows his head.

LITTLE BOY

(lispng)

Mummy sent me to borrow some
salt, please.

Perplexed and amused at the same time, Cat steps to her cupboard to get the salt box and comes back to the little boy. She hands it the box.

LITTLE BOY

Thank you miss. I'll bring it
back at once.

Cat smiles at him and the little boy runs to the stairs. Cat can hear his footsteps climbing the wooden stairs, higher and higher. Then, a door slams.

Cat closes back her door.

INT. CAT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (LATER)

A clothe on a small lamp, Cat is lying on her bed, reading.

Not a noise in the apartment, except for the alarm clock TICKING.

The TICKING increases, almost unbearable.

As Cat raises her head from her book to look at the alarm clock, the ticking ceases.

Smelling, she realizes the clothe is heating and starting to smoke. She takes it out.

It is almost midnight.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. CAT'S APARTMENT - DAY

WRITTEN: SATURDAY

A summer-like day.

In the main room, the boxes have disappeared.

Cat is on the fours in the bathroom, scouring the tiled floor. She wears a short and a large tee shirt. Around her head, a bandana. She's happily singing.

She relentlessly scrubs a rebellious dark spot, when she hears a funny NOISE coming from in front of her door. Like a bouncing ball.

Intrigued, Cat stands up, wipes her hands, and steps to open her door.

INT. CAT'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - DAY

The little boy is here, in front of her apartment door, playing with a ball.

CAT

Hi.

The little boy stops playing.

LITTLE BOY

Hi.

CAT
Tell me. Did you forget to bring
back my salt last night?

LITTLE BOY
What salt, miss?

CAT
The salt you--

At this very moment, another apartment door opens and a
WOMAN in her fifties, stiff and snooty, steps out from her
place, and closes her door.

Cat turns to her, smiling, feeling a bit stupid the way she
is dressed up. She visibly tries to hide her scar.

CAT
(agreeable)
Good morning.

WOMAN
(sharply)
'morning.

CAT
Can you tell me who's this little
boy who--

WOMAN
(interrupting)
What little boy?

CAT
(turning to the little
boy)
This litt--

He's gone.

CAT
(embarrassed)
He should have gone.

The woman disdainfully passes by her. As soon as she turns
her back to Cat, the young woman cannot help grimacing at
her. She shrugs and closes back her door.

FADE TO LUMINOUS
WHITE:

INT. CAT'S APARTMENT - DAY

WRITTEN: SUNDAY

Cat has pulled her mattress in the sun. Wearing a swimsuit and sunglasses on her nose, she is reading and taking some notes.

While the music is gently playing in the apartment, birds are singing outside.

Sweaty, Cat gets up and steps to the small fridge to take a bottle of water.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CAT'S APARTMENT - DAY (LATER)

Her sunglasses still on the nose, Cat enters her apartment, encumbered with grocery bags. She puts her bags in the vestibule and is about to close back her door, when she finds herself facing the little boy who stares at her with a sad smile, hands in his back.

Cat jumps.

CAT

Gosh. You scared me. What are you doing here?

The little boy does not answer.

CAT

Where do you live?

LITTLE BOY

Up there. On the top floor.

CAT

On the top floor?

The little boy acts as if he didn't hear the question.

LITTLE BOY

Are you giving me my present?

CAT

(floored)

Your pre-- But-- How do you know I have--

The little boy keeps staring at her with his sad smile. Cat looks at him, a bit cautious, then takes something out from her bag, and hands it to him.

A SMALL FIRE TRUCK TOY

The little boy takes it and hugs it.

LITTLE BOY
Thank you.

CAT
What's your name?

LITTLE BOY
Thomas, miss.

CAT
(kindly)
I'm Cat.

Cat smiles and reaches out her hand to him, when a FEMININE VOICE can be heard from a higher floor.

FEMININE VOICE
(shouting)
Thomas! Lunch's ready!

THOMAS
(to Cat)
Sorry, miss.

Once again, he runs to the stairs. Cat can hear his footsteps climbing the wooden stairs, higher and higher, and the door slams.

Cat is befogged.

Then, she glimpses at her watch.

CLOSEUP on her watch. It's 10 AM.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. CAT'S APARTMENT - EVENING

WRITTEN: MONDAY

KEY NOISES

Door opens and Cat enters. She puts a rucksack on the floor by the closet and steps back.

INT. STAIRS - EVENING

Cat puts her foot on the first step of the stairs and starts slowly climbing, her hand sliding on the bannister.

The wooden steps gently creak under her feet.

She leans over to watch to the top of the stairs and tries to discern the top floor, which looks unreachable to her.

She keeps coming up, her face tense and edgy.

Every move she makes is loomed on the stairs wall, forming large distorted shadows.

INT. TOP FLOOR - EVENING

Cat finally reaches the top floor.

In the small hallway, two doors.

Cat steps to the door on the right and notices it's not closed. She gently pushes it.

INT. TOP FLOOR APARTMENT - EVENING

An old dusty apartment, destructed, a long time ago, by the fire. Walls are black with soot and the floor covered with burned debris.

Last sun rays go through the wood planks on the broken windows and give the place a chapel-like atmosphere.

At the foot of one of the walls, bathed by a sun ray, Cat notices the fire truck toy she gave to Thomas the day before.

Cat picks up the red toy, cautiously walking through the debris, scans the room, and steps back to the door.

She exits the apartment.

INT. TOP FLOOR - EVENING

Cat steps to the door on the left and knocks.

After a while, an OLD MAN opens. He looks fearful. Cat can only see his head through the ajar door, locked by a safety chain.

CAT
(smiling)
Good evening. Is Thomas home?

OLD MAN
I beg your pardon?

CAT
Thomas. Just pop in to say hello.

OLD MAN
I'm afraid you're at the wrong
apartment.

He is about to close his door.

CAT
(worried)
Wait. You do have a little boy
called Thomas?

OLD MAN
No.

CAT
(fazed)
Or whatever his name.

The old man shakes his head.

CAT
I'm looking for a little boy. He
should be ten. He's living in
this building and his name is
Thomas.

OLD MAN
(with a sad smile)
Sorry.

CAT
(discouraged)
I've just found one of his toys
in the other apartment.

She shows the man the fire truck.

CAT
You should have seen him.

OLD MAN
You know, I lost my wife seven
years ago and nobody ever come up
here anymore.

CAT
(upset)
Well. I'm sorry.

She's about to reach the stairs when the old man steps out
from his apartment and hails her.

OLD MAN
Wait! You did say a little boy in
his tens called Thomas?

CAT

That's it.

She comes back to the old man, smiling.

CAT

Have you see him?

OLD MAN

I remember a family who was
living here, in the other
apartment.

(he nods to the facing
door)

They did have a boy. His name was
Thomas. Always very neat, very
polite.

CAT

Yeah! That's him.

OLD MAN

He died with his parents when the
fire destructed their place
fifteen years ago.

Cat is petrified.

She raises one hand to her scar and lows her head to the
fire truck in her other hand.

As the image of the red toy fills the frame, a fire truck
siren BLARES to become unbearable.

FADE OUT:

the end