

The Creative Centre Cats

by Jules de Jongh

Season 2 Episode 33

[opening theme music and strapline]

Nanny Bea: Good day to you and well done, you've arrived just in time. The tea is ready and my neighbour Jules will bring us a story any...

[knock sfx]

Nanny Bea: minute now.

Nanny Bea: Is that someone at my door? Who'd call at this time of day? Hello?

Jules: Hello Nanny Bea, it's your neighbour Jules with a story.

Nanny Bea: What a delight! Please do come in.

Jules: Why thank you Nanny Bea. Today we've got more than a tale, we've got a wonder word.

[wonder word jingle]

Eloisa: Hi, Nanny Bea, I'm Eloisa and today I have a wonder word, it is razzmatazz.

[drum roll]

Eloisa: Razzmatazz is a big impressive action to attract a lot of attention like our end of year show. This year I'm in it and get lines and even a song. Goodbye.

[piano out]

Jules: Eloisa you could be the star of the show, thank you. Now are you ready for a story?

Nanny Bea: Oh, yes please.

Jules: Okay then, **The Creative Center Cats**, adapted for radio

The Creative Center is a special place for special people. They dance and they draw, they paint and they play, as in putting on productions. It is a productive place by all accounts but what may surprise you to know is what happens after the dancing and drawing, the painting and playing is done, after all the razzmatazz of the day.

There is a community of cats around the center and when the sun is up they lounge around entertaining and interacting with the students. But if only they knew how entertaining these cats could be!

As the sun sets, they sneak around back. The center is an old building when they knew how to build for the valley heat. There's a room beneath, room for a secret door only the cats know about, well the cats and now you. Standing at the door is Marv, a broad black bodied creature with a white triangle starting above his nose and moving all down his belly. The extra beard of black on his chin tells the customers, this cat's not one to be messed with. He checks their id (no minors allowed), he looks through their bags for anything suspicious, then confiscates it, under the guise of doing his job but actually because he's a hoarder. He collects anything collectable, fur balls to catnip, flea collars to jingling bells, he has a real thing for jingling bells. Then he lets the suitable clientele through. There's no cover charge at the underground jazz club, the drinks bring in plenty of cash for the owner and everyone knows him, Mikey. Mikey used to hang out at the center by day but locked down a sweet deal with one of the teachers. Now he commutes to the club, it's worth it. So far he's made enough to finance his lavish lifestyle, his yacht in the Bahamas, his spa in Cabo and his hotel in Hawaii. He doesn't have the time to enjoy his riches but he sleeps satisfied he's accumulated so much. Like I said, everyone knows Mikey and everyone wants an audience with him but Mikey, he's a cat of few words, the strong silent type, always thinking of what he'll do next, never quite in the moment.

Except when it comes to Kitty, a platinum purebred Persian. Kitty is a singer at the club. With her voice alone she melts the heart of every cat in town. Mikey's no exception. That grey tabby goes all wobbly kneed when she just looks at him but all she'll do is look 'cause Kitty's got a crush of her own on a blue eyed, silver tipped, hulk of a cat and keyboard player, Smokey. Smokey can play any tune, but he won't. That's 'cause Smokey has seen too much, he knows too much and he plays to forget. Kitty wishes she could break down that shell around his heart, but it's made of stone, stone dipped in iron.

There are regulars who come most nights. The orange striped Pete the postal cat once he's done with his rounds, Betty that wild tabby who'll never be caught, then there's the brown and gold stripey one, the all white but one ear one, the cat with three legs, the cat with more than nine lives. They come for the music, they stay for the vibe. Kitty and Smokey know how to keep 'em coming back. They're full of razzmatazz but they keep it just loud enough to carry the room but quiet enough to have those conversations no one else should hear. They're not all bad, sometimes it's just an exchange of love messages, sometimes it's a couple of long lost friends catching up, but other times it's nothing short of mischief, the kind of mischief that could get a cat locked up for good.

Rumor has it, one of the Burmese gang was selling tickets again to a one night only show at the tuna canning factory. Risky purchase. Just being caught with those tickets could send a cat down the river but even more risky is the 'show' itself. The tuna factory is known to can around the clock and the overnight shift is not as diligent as the daylight ones. They could be distracted, fall asleep even. The gang leader would sneak his clients in and they'd wait for such an occurrence, then they'd pounce, right into the vat, eating all the tuna and jumping back out before being funneled off to the canning conveyor. It was a sad day when that little

tortoise shell cat went into the factory but never came out. The gang don't mention that when touting their tickets but Smokey knows. Smokey knows everything.

He was there at the start before the other cats. Actually, he's the one who started the community. He's the one who encouraged Mikey to start the club. It all seemed so innocent in those days, frolic around the center grounds, make friends with the students. There was always enough food. No one was quite sure how. But they didn't question it, they just rode the wave. The wave that crashed one hot August night. Smokey was with a few of the guys, kicking the can around when one of them started to ask, 'Why are we always doing what you want to do Smokey? Who made you leader?' Well no one made Smokey leader, he just has a way about him. He draws cats in, always has. Well that was the night the gangs started to break off, just a few of them, but enough to cause trouble. Smokey doesn't want any trouble. That's why he pushed Mikey to open the jazz club, a place to chill out, a place to come together. And on the whole it works, something about Kitty's sultry voice and Smokey's heartfelt playing calms the beast within. She sings that song about Smokey's mother:

*My mother's hairs are everywheres the feline eye can see
Sometimes I'm sure, I think they might, just be following me
They form a bunch upon the stairs
In every corner here and there
They hide out in Dad's dressing gown
In my undies they are found
Her tumble weed roams without care
It is a wonder her head's not bare*

There's not a dry eye after she's done singing. Kitty soothes the soul. Even the neighbours around the Creative Center who don't hear it, can feel it. The underground jazz club is good for the cat community and beyond, even if they don't know it's there.

The End

Nanny Bea: Thank you Jules, I wonder if those cats travel. I was certain I heard Kitty and Smokey at our local pub a few years back.

Jules: I'm not sure. Maybe cats find it hard to get passports.

Nanny Bea: Well I know of one with a driving license so a passport doesn't seem unreasonable.

Jules: With you Nanny Bea, nothing is unreasonable! You've reminded me of our Uber Doober Doo story which you can find on our website.

Thomas: Go to NannyBea.com

Jules: Go there to find out about all our stories. And make sure to like or follow us on iTunes or Spotify to get a reminder. See you next week for more Tales and Tea.

[Be on the Show jingle]

Mr Announcer: This has been a Toad in the Hole production for NannyBea.com.