

The Many Adventures of Katie Cruz

FADE IN:

INT. TREE HOUSE - WINDY, AUTUMN NIGHT

Florida. Present day.

Room is completely dark and ambiguous to the viewer.

A young voice, clearly trying to sound dramatic and serious, pipes up.

VOICE (O.S.)

The date was April 23rd, 2013.

Lamp light switch flicks on. A desk lamp casts a small cone of light on the wooden desk and a small pair of hands folded on the desk. The face and upper body are still concealed. The voice is recounting the story to some mysterious audience, and the situation eerily emulates an investigation.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

It was dark. Very dark, mainly because I was wriggling down an air vent. But it was also night. That wicked, dark figure escaped my grasp once, but I was determined to do the old cat in.

The person twists the neck of the lamp towards her face. The voice is now revealed to be KATIE, a lanky, half-Filipina/half-Caucasian 13-year-old. She's small-boned, and her natural voice quality is lower, with pubescent cracks every now and then. Her gestures are theatrical as she narrates to her mysterious audience.

KATIE

FREE! I was free from the vent when the masked, black figure thrust her nasty claws at me.

SHOT OF MYSTERIOUS AUDIENCE

-- which is revealed to simply be a group of children huddled around in their pj's and blankets listening to "scary stories." They let out a gasp.

KATIE (CONT'D)

I ripped the mask off the stowaway thief nicknamed "The Cat" aboard the Caribbean Cruise Liner, and it was none other than Serena Freeman, the supposed FBI agent I trusted.

The kids let out another gasp.

KATIE (CONT'D)

We rumbled. We fought.

ANGLE ON ONE TREMBLING CHILD

-- as he whispers "No."

KATIE (CONT'D)

Then she tumbled off the boat into the watery abyss, never, I fear, to be seen again.

PETER, Japanese 8-year-old boy whose face is round like a dumpling, lets the popcorn fall from his mouth as he drops his jaw in shock.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Well, for the next minute or two, until her brother, a real FBI agent by the name of Benedict Freeman, not to be confused with Benedict Cumberbatch or Martin Freeman...

(to herself)

So disappointing...

(to the rest)

Fished her out and turned her in.

The kids all speak at once in excitement. Nothing can be made out.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Now, now, ladies, gentlemen, one at a time, one at a time!

LENA

Was all the jewelry saved?

KATIE

Yes. Rich people tend to get what they want when they make enough noise...

(reflectively)

The little dears.

MARTY

Did you become a world-class detective?

KATIE

(to Marty)

Well, kid...

SLOW ZOOM IN ON KATIE'S FACE

-- as the burden of justice swells within her.

KATIE (CONT'D)

(beginning to answer as if she's being televised to the whole world)

I decided to let the little detectives have the credit for once. I've outgrown the chase in a way. That's when I decided to go into business for myself. Search the small cracks of the world, go where no one's gone, solve the unsolved,

(with great fervor, pounding her fist on the desk)

And bring justice to the most insidious of crimes!

CUT TO:

MAIN TITLES

EXT. KATIE'S BACKYARD / BOTTOM OF TREEHOUSE - DAY

Katie stands next to a makeshift sign that reads "Cruz Private Detective Agency." Below it are charge listings for services such as "Lost Goods," "Pet Detection," "Occasional Murder," etc. She leans up against the bulky tree, letting out a sigh of frustration and discontent.

KATIE (V.O.)

Look at the poor kid. Bloom of
youth off her cheeks. Idle hands.

Katie picks a leaf off a branch, rolls it, and pretends to
smoke a cigarette.

KATIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The name's Katie. Katie Cruz.
Detective by day, and uh, also,
detective by night--that's if I
don't have too much homework. Now
I know what you're thinking:
"That kid's basically a fetus,
why is she a detective?" I don't
know, Ace, why is the sky blue?
(laughs to herself,
in a lower tone)
Hah, that was kind of
philosophical. Well anyway...

Katie chucks the leaf.

KATIE

(to the camera)

You get the picture.

Katie crosses her arms in front of her chest.

Peter descends the tree house ladder. He's dressed well,
wearing slacks, a button-up, and a sweater on top despite the
Floridian heat. His bow tie is too big and is clearly his
father's.

KATIE (V.O.)

Shhh. Here he comes.

KATIE

(exasperatedly)

Can you tell Geoffrey Montgomery
for the last time that I will not
look for his missing lunchbox, I
don't care how much sentimental
value it has.

PETER

(catching his breath)

It's not about that, although he
did call five times today.

KATIE

(places her hands
into her trench coat
pockets)

I knew the poor kid was in love
with me.

PETER

I came down 'cause I think I got
'n exciting case for you.

Peter begins fussing around his sweater for a piece of paper.

As he does so--

KATIE (V.O.)

That's Peter, my backdoor
neighbor and agency admin
assistant. He likes organization
and abhors slow walkers. Good
kid.

KATIE

Speak, man, what news!?

Peter finds the paper.

PETER

Allyson Hardwick believes foul
play's involved in her broken,
straw...

(trying to make out
his own handwriting,
reads choppily)

Picnic hat and is willing to pay
all her lawn-mowing money for the
case.

KATIE

(disappointed)

Tell Allyson Hardwick I don't
take petty revenge cases.

Peter breaks out his pen and pocketbook and jots it all down.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Besides...

(pause)

It was clearly Jenny Mankewitz.
It's so obvious the girl is still
bitter about the strawberry case
of last summer.

BEGIN FLASHBACK: INT. NEIGHBORHOOD ROAD - DAY - LAST SUMMER

Jenny Mankewitz is on the roadside with several packages of strawberries littering the ground. Her clothes, hands, everything are covered in strawberry juice which closely resembles blood.

JENNY MANKEWITZ

(sobbing)

WHYYYYY?!

BACK TO SCENE

KATIE

Here...

(going through her pocket)

Give Jenny five bucks, tell her it's from me and that I know. She'll buy Allyson a new hat and they'll make up, they always do.

PETER

Is that the last of our account funds?

KATIE

There's no use havin' an account when you don't have a business. A real one at least.

(turns to face Peter)

Peter, when are we going to get any real cases again?

PETER

There was that one case last month--

KATIE

About a dog "stalking" someone. Turns out it was just a brown paper bag, and Mr. Clavoy just had really bad eyesight. I mean it, Peter, what are we doing here? I'd rather lose all our money and help someone for a change than--

(pause)

Than have all the money and deal with brown paper bags and strawberries.

PETER

I know...

KATIE (V.O.)

(reflectively)

There's not a lot of business for
a 13-year-old detective.

KATIE

(hesitates)

Maybe it's time we closed up
shop, old friend, maybe just for
a bit, until we can find a
footing again.

PETER

But Katie--

KATIE

I know, it's just that I can't
continue to support you and your
four cats. You understand, don't
ya, kid?

PETER

Sure I understand. Besides, it's
not the first time I've been laid
off.

KATIE

Yeah, stupid economy crash.

(beat)

I wish you the best of luck, pal.
You need real wages. Business's
dried up, and perhaps this old
gal's sleuthing days are gone
with the wind.

PETER

Don't say that. You're a
detective with or without a case.

KATIE

Yeah, like a homeowner with no
home, wait that's confusing.

Peter chuckles, then grabs his flat cap off a tree branch,
places it on his head, and exits.

Katie casually kicks her feet into the ground.

KATIE (V.O.)
 Sorry, I know you're kind of
 coming in on the middle of
 things.

KATIE
 (looks up to the
 camera)
 The truth is, it's not pets or
 items or anything that's missing.
 It's the adventure that is.

She slings a worn-out messenger bag over her shoulder, grabs her bike, and pedals off into the street.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TOWN MAIN-STREET - MOMENTS LATER

ANGLE ON GRAVEL ROAD. KATIE'S BIKE STARTS OFF-CAMERA THEN ZIPS INTO FRAME

-- as she pedals farther and farther away from the camera, slowly going out of focus.

Downward angle on the town's main-street. Town sign reading "Loven Port" is visible.

KATIE (V.O.)
 This is Loven Port--I'd explain
 why this town isn't really cared
 for, but it's in Florida, so I
 think that explains it.

As she passes several small businesses--

KATIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Now I know this town seems
 insignificant to everyone else,
 but I like the things that get
 overlooked, the things that don't
 quite fit. My mom was like
 that...
 (pause)
 I guess that's what made her such
 a great detective in the olden
 days.

Katie looks a little more relaxed as she pedals. A tiny smile peeps from the corner of her mouth as she enjoys her ride.

KATIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

If I'm gonna take you along for the ride, there's one thing you should know: I never go looking for adventure; I let the adventure find me.

Katie skirts down the town's main-street and parks her bike in front of a cafe.

Before entering, Katie slips a treat to a whimpering dog stuck in a woman's purse. Clearly routine.

CUT TO:

INT. CAFE - CONTINUOUS

Katie walks through the door and nonchalantly pushes aside an ill-placed potted plant hanging from the ceiling that would have otherwise smacked her head. Another action hinting at routine.

KATIE (V.O.)

When I'm in a rut, I just sneak off to a place that allows me to think. Sherlock had his symphony, I have the brewery. But the cafe's also bubbling over with caffeine addicts, workaholics, and PTA moms gossiping about who didn't bring orange slices to the last soccer game--so all potential clientele basically.

Huddled in b.g. is a group of PTA moms. As Katie passes them, you hear whispered "Do you know who didn't bring the orange slices to the last soccer game?"

Katie pulls out a chair from the counter and unfolds a newspaper she grabbed from a rack.

KATIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Usually I just sit here, order my usual, and let the mess of my surroundings simmer over.

KATIE

(to the camera)

And they usually do.

SHOT OF A YOUNG BARISTA BEHIND THE COUNTER

-- ANDIE, he's about 15, with a good head of blonde hair and an easy-going smile. His voice quality is pubescent.

ANDIE
Hi, Katie, your usual?

KATIE
(to Andie)
Yep...
(leaning over counter)
And make it piping hot, please.

ANDIE (O.S.)
Sure thing.

CLOSE-UP SHOT ON ANDIE BEHIND THE COUNTER

-- as he dries some mugs with a dish rag. As he does so--

KATIE (V.O.)
That's Andie. All-around good guy that talks to schmucks like me. He's studying to be an actor and was actually an extra in *The History Channel* reenactments of the Revolutionary War, until he got fired for being too into it.

BEGIN FLASHBACK: EXT. AN OPEN FIELD - DAY

Andie is on set of *The History Channel's* Revolutionary War reenactment. He has more fake blood on his costume than needed. Andie is meant to be a flute-playing extra, yet he somehow made his way to the forefront of the action.

As he feigns dying--

ANDIE
(pulling another actor towards him)
I'll never play again...
(ugly crying)
EVER! I've done SO MANY terrible things.

As he acts his death pitifully--

DIRECTOR (O.S.)
Get this kid off my set!!!

BACK TO SCENE

ANGLE ON BOTH KATIE AND ANDIE

-- Katie has her back turned away from the camera and faces Andie, who's still fiddling about behind the counter. Katie whips around in her chair and--

KATIE

(to the camera)

Now he mainly focuses on school plays and improv classes.

(back to Andie)

Say, Andie, not that I'm looking for a case, but did any drunks or lonely-hearts stumble in during the midnight shift?

ANDIE

Uh-uh. Whya lookin' for clients?

KATIE

I ain't lookin' for clients. That's what desperate people do. I'm just...

(realizing her
desperation)

Say, kid--

ANDIE

(mumbling confusedly)

But you're a kid.

KATIE

(without skipping a
beat)

I'm inna jam. I haven't been this stressed out since that lice problem.

Customer next to Katie looks at her in disgust and terror as he pulls his coffee and newspaper closer to himself.

KATIE (CONT'D)

It's all dried up. All of it.

ANDIE

(handing her her
usual)

What is?

KATIE

The old times.

Katie suddenly notices a man she's never met before sitting by the window, typing away on his laptop. Katie then begins to feel that pang of intuition. She has to know who he is!

KATIE (CONT'D)

(motioning with a
slight tilt of her
head)

Andie, who's that guy over there?

ANDIE

Who, him? Uh, some new guy in town. Pretty nice. Been comin' here the last few days, but during odd hours for you.

The two pick up a quick back-and-forth--

KATIE

Huh.

ANDIE

What do ya mean "huh"?

KATIE

I dunno, I just said "huh."

ANDIE

That wasn't a regular "huh" that was a "I'm thinking of doing something 'huh'" that was a--ya know what never mind. Go ahead and talk to 'im.

Katie begins to stand up.

ANDIE (CONT'D)

Wait, do you--do you think he likes improv?

KATIE

What?

ANDIE

Like, do y--do you think he's the type to sit and watch improv?

KATIE

What? Why?

ANDIE

I don't know, I just, I was wondering--I--I have this improv show on Friday and...

(holding a brochure)

I was thinking you could hand these ou--

KATIE

(grabs the brochure)

All right, fine.

Katie makes her way over to the young man, BLAKE LOCKHEART, about 20-years-old. He has a swoop of dark, brown hair, and for a young lad still growing into his face, is pretty handsome.

Katie plots herself at his table in the chair opposite him and unfolds her newspaper to cover her face.

BLAKE

(looking up from his laptop)

Uh, hi--uh...excuse me, um...can I help you?

Katie continues reading the newspaper.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

I don't--I don't mean to be rude or anything, it's just that there's a lot of empty tables here. And--

Katie puts down her newspaper and spreads it flat on the table like a winning hand of poker.

KATIE

One hundred 'n five.

Blake finally gets a good look at Katie, surprised that she's so young and small.

BLAKE

One--one hundred and what?

KATIE

(not caring for his dull questions)

One hundred and five is the number of people who die every minute.

Blake reacts with great disturbance.

BLAKE

Um...what?

KATIE

The name's Katie. Katie Cruz.
Private detective, except my
agency's kind of...

(mumbling)

Going under...

(quickly)

But you don't needa know that.

BLAKE

(extremely confused)

That's...great. But, uh, I don't
really--

KATIE

Say, anyone ever tell you you've
got one of 'em faces?

BLAKE

What face?

KATIE

The kind you wanna...

(sticks her chin out
and gestures
punching)

Well anyway, you look like you
know a lot.

BLAKE

What?

Andie suddenly appears next to Blake.

ANDIE

Hi.

BLAKE

(lets out a quick
gasp of shock)

Oh god.

(recovering)

Uh, hi yeah uh, can I get a
refill?

ANDIE

Of-course!

BLAKE

Thanks...
 (trying to read his
 name tag)
 Andie.

ANDIE

(nods "you're
 welcome," then to
 Katie)
 Hey, Katie, you know I was
 thinkin', if you're having
 trouble with cases why don't you
 go see Tristram at the station
 and--

KATIE

(to Andie)
 The police station?
 (moment of great
 realization)
 The police station! Andie, you're
 a genius! I love you! Thank you,
 thank you, thank you.

She runs to the door. As she's opening it--

KATIE (CONT'D)

Goodbye, everybody.

MAN (O.S.)

Leave already.

Exit Katie.

SHOT ON BLAKE AND ANDIE

-- Staring at her as she leaves.

ANDIE

(to Blake, with eyes
 still remaining on
 the door)
 So do you like improv?

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF SCENE