



Pat the Cheeky Sidekick

A Pat the Cat Adventure, by Robert Wrate © 2014

Chapter One: The Highway

It was cold; very cold. In the little street where Pat the cat lived, the previous week had seen the last warmth of summer finally yield to the chill of autumn, and in the gardens the first frost of the year was tinting the grass white. Inside, though, where it was nice and cosy, Pat yawned. It was a kitten's yawn. You see, he was actually still actually a very young little cat, just a few months old. He had a black coat that extended over the most of his body, with a white mouth and chest, and white paws that made him look like he had little white socks on. His best friend was Frankie, the eight year old boy who looked after him and loved him very much, and together they were now looking out of the window at the start of a new day. They watched as the cold morning sun slowly rose from the left-hand side of their window, casting long fingery shadows across the garden.

'I wonder if it'll rain today Pat,' said Frankie, looking down at his best friend. The cat looked back from his window sill.

'I'm not sure', he replied. 'I think it could go either way to be honest'. Of course, Frankie had not taken the time to learn the ancient and noble language of Catish - like most humans as it happens. So, despite the fact that his friend had given quite a long answer, all Frankie picked up was a few high-pitched kitten noises, much to his own annoyance.

'Hmm, I wish I could understand what you're on about Pat!' he said, walking over from his bed to give his pet a tickle behind the ear.

'Ugh... humans', sighed Pat as he rubbed his head against Frankie's hand.

'still', he thought as he began to purr, 'today does look like the sort of day for an adventure!' Quick as a flash he jumped down onto the floor, and after a quick 'meow' to Frankie (which meant 'bye for now'), he scampered down the stairs and out into the garden where his neighbours, Nicky and Goldie the ginger cats, were waiting to meet him.

'Hello young Pat, how are you today?' said Nicky, the friendlier of the two.

'I'm in a great mood! I'm going to have another go at the wall later,' said Pat.

'That should be a laugh,' chortled Goldie, the bigger of the brothers. All the cats (and for that matter, even one or two of the foxes) in the area used the wall as a safe way to travel through the neighbourhood. 'After all', Goldie had said many times on the subject, 'it's better to take a nice stroll along the wall than to have to venture across the gardens and risk being eaten by dogs, or chased away by nasty old humans with brooms!'

On any other day, Pat would have shivered at the thought of being eaten by a big scary dog, but now he was pondering things. He considered how the other cats did it. He knew that the grown-up cats like Nicky, would often climb up one of the wooden fences between the gardens, digging their claws into the wood until they got to the top. From there, it was easy to walk along the edge of the fence to the wall. On the other hand the really big strong cats like Goldie, and for that matter Prince who had recently moved into Mrs. Brown's house on the other side of the wall, simply took a big run-up across the garden and 'charged' up its side. But how was he, a puny kitten, to do it? It was a problem. But, this was no ordinary day, and knew what he had to do.

'That settles it', he thought. 'This is the day I'm going to beat the wall!'

Chapter Two: The Challenge

A bit later that morning, Pat curled up in his basket, as do most cats about this time of day, for his mid-morning snooze. Normally he would have gone straight off to sleep, but this time, he had quite a lot to reflect on.

'Did you see Pat outside', said Frankie as his Mum came to sit at the table with him. 'He was playing with all the other cats in the garden.'

'Aww, that's nice,' said Frankie's Mum. She'd been out at the shops, so hadn't been in the kitchen to see as her son had. 'He'll be off soon for days, like all the grown-up cats, bringing home mice!'

'And spraying the bloomin' furniture,' grumbled Frankie's Dad from behind his big old newspaper. He actually liked Pat but would never admit it to anybody, even Frankie's Mum. Subdued, Frankie looked down and carried on playing with his mobile phone. Neither he nor his cat actually knew what 'spraying' meant, and to be honest, Pat himself was more concerned at the idea of having to catch mice, and climb big scary walls. He sighed to himself. It had indeed been a very energetic morning and he had a lot to take in. All the cats in the neighbourhood had come down to show him how to climb onto the wall. Nicky and Goldie were there, the four cats from the house on the other side had turned up too, as well as Prince the new cat, who had quietly sat and watched it all.

'It *is* a shame I didn't make it up the wall,' he thought to himself. It was also a shame that the old shed at the bottom of his garden had collapsed a few weeks ago. Before (and secretly) he'd once managed to get onto the wall by climbing up through the shed, but now, that way was blocked. 'It's not all bad, though,' he thought. He'd enjoyed playing with all the other cats, and had also seen the new cat that lived over the wall, but hadn't had the chance to speak to him.

'Come on boy,' said Frankie, walking over to Pat's basket. 'Let's get you something to eat. You'll never be like the big cats if you don't eat your food.'

'Oooh, food! Yes please!' Pat jumped out of his basket and was just following his friend out to the kitchen when Frankie's dad called after them:

'It'll take more than some cat food to grow that little troublemaker big and strong. He'll never be like the big cats, not if he followed them around for years,' chuckled Frankie's Dad.

'Yes he will!' Frankie said back angrily. 'He'll be able to run along the wall and hunt mice like all the other cats, you'll see!'

'If he did that, I'd eat my bloomin' newspaper,' chuckled Frankie's Dad. Frankie and Pat looked at each other. Not another word needed to be said... they'd show him. And though they didn't know it yet, they were going to get some help.

Chapter Three: Prince

It was mid-afternoon by the time Pat managed to get back out into the garden and have a go at climbing up the wall at its far end. It was a bit of an awkward situation. He needed somebody to show him what to do.

'Ho-hum,' thought Pat as he got ready for his first attempt. 'At least I can try on my own now everybody has gone inside.' He crouched down at the other end of the garden, took a deep breath and shot across the grass, leaping up at the wall and scrambling up it a little before falling back onto the soft pile of soil at the bottom.

'Oh dear,' cried Pat. 'I'll never be able to do it! Frankie's Dad was right, he'll laugh at me.'

Then he heard a polite cough from above. Lazily – let's face it, nobody does 'lazy' like a cat – Prince, who had been lounging in one of the branches growing over Pat's garden, plopped down onto the ground next to him with a big thud. It was only then that the kitten realised that Prince was quite the biggest cat he had ever seen, bigger even than Goldie, who himself was very impressive. He was grey over most of his body, with a white chest, and golden eyes. He had a similar build to Pat, they could have even been related, but Prince was far, far bigger.

'Ello there, I want to thank you', he said to Pat.

'Er, why,' he was in awe of Prince, whose sheer size was a bit scary.

'Well, I 'ave a new 'ome now. That nice Mrs. Brown came down to the Cat's 'ome to find a new pet after she made friends with you, and she adopted me. Still, I always 'ave 'ad a bit of flair with the ladies.'

'Ohhh, the Cat's Home, that sounds horrible,' said Pat.

'No, the big 'ouse ain't so bad, mate, not for a streetwise fella like me anyway. You just gotta know the game, and 'ow to play it.' Pat sat wide-eyed, looking at the new arrival, he was so cool. He decided from that very moment that when he grew up, Pat wanted to be just like this new mysterious cat who lived over the wall.

'How do you learn the game then,' squeaked Pat.

'Well, you can spend ages trying and trying and trying again until you eventually figure it out'. Pat's little shoulders sank. 'Or,' Prince continued, looking the smaller cat through one eye as he spoke, 'you find someone who knows what they're doing, and who's willing to teach you. And that, me old mate, is why I'm 'ere.'

Chapter Four: Pat learns the ropes

The garden was quiet. Looking from the outside, nobody would have known there was some teaching going on. In the wreckage of the old shed at the bottom of Frankie's garden, two pairs of eyes stared out across the grass. Then, like a bolt of furry lightning, a black and white blur shot out from its hiding place and zipped up to the old metal dustbin that sat near the back door.

Bang! There was a thud as Pat whacked into its side.

'Ugh,' sighed Prince as he emerged from the wreckage of the shed. 'You shot off well, young lad, but the finish ain't there is it? You're a cat. It's not enough to get something done, you gotta look good doing it!'

'I tripped,' replied Pat mournfully.

'Well, nobody saw it, so that's okay. The last thing you want is to let anyone, particularly the people who think they own you, see you trip, or fall out of a tree, or do anything un-catlike. That's clumsy and stupid, and what dogs do... not us!' He winked at Pat to show there were no hard feelings. 'Now, watch this!' From the middle of the garden, where they were sitting, Prince shot at the bin, and in one movement, crouched, then sprang into the air and landed cleanly on top of the bin lid. 'Easy as that,' he said. 'Once you can get onto the bin, we'll get you up to the wall.'

Over the next couple of hours, Pat was like a shadow. He followed Prince around the garden, copying everything he did. Frankie and his Mum watched with amusement as the two friends played in the garden, doing cat things and having a lovely time. Frankie's mum enjoyed watching them so much that when it was Pat's tea time, she bought out an extra saucer of food for Prince.

'You two are like a double act! You could be on TV!' She stroked both cats and then went back into the kitchen, where, despite their attempts at secrecy, Frankie had seen everything. The two of them had just finished their dinner when Nicky from next door popped his head under the little gap in the fence.

'Hello you two,' he said. 'Would you like to try some of the fish that was brought home for us? It's nice, and I think young Pat is going to need all the help he can get if he's going to climb up the wall tonight.' Normally, Pat liked to go next door, particularly if there was food involved. But at that moment all he could think about was having another go at the wall. Both the older cats read his expression.

'You've practised enough young Pat,' said Prince. 'Now it's time for a rest. If it's meant to be, it's meant to be, and you'll get up the wall'.

'Okay,' he said. Pat followed the other cats under the fence into the garden next door, but he was worried. Despite what Prince had said, he couldn't help thinking that in spite of all that effort, he still hadn't managed to get onto the wall, and time was running out; the day was nearly over!

Chapter Five: The big moment

The moment of reckoning came as just as the sun was going down and the shadows were again lengthening. Frankie's mum would have made it somewhere around 6 o'clock, but cats have no interest in clocks or the way we humans measure out time. Word had spread around the neighbourhood, and most of the cats, many of the birds (safe up in their trees) and even Herman the fox, who normally stayed away from the cats watched from up the other end of the wall.

Pat was nervous, really nervous. Everybody was still in the garden next door, where Nicky and Goldie lived. Slowly all the animals in the street, by various means, moved from one garden to the other. Pat was almost the last.

'Don't worry,' said Nicky. 'It'll be okay'. Goldie grinned, and Prince gave him a wink. Then, one by one, they crawled through. The garden was gloomy now, hard to make things out. Nobody said a word. Even Frankie and his Mum and Dad, who had been eating their dinner in the kitchen, stopped for a moment to watch. Something seemed different to Pat as he got ready to make his run-up, but he couldn't see what. Still, no time for that now, he had a job to do.

'Go!' yelled Buzz, the big black cat from four doors down, and off Pat went. Streaking across the grass as fast as he could, he leapt... and to his surprise, landed on the old rusty dustbin! That's what was different! While they were next door, somebody (it actually been Frankie, but the cats didn't know) had moved the bin from one end of the garden to the other. No

sooner had Pat landed, than he sprang from the bin-lid onto the top of the wall. Victory!

‘That’s cheating!’ said Buzz the black cat from four doors down.

‘No,’ said Prince, ‘that’s thinking!’ All the animals cheered, and inside the house, where Frankie and his Mum and Dad had been watching, Frankie’s Mum turned round to her husband...

‘Will you be wanting some tomato sauce with your newspaper then?’ she asked. Frankie’s Dad, still a bit surprised at what he saw, simply walked out of the room in a daze. As he did, Pat came through his cat-flap and padded up to Frankie.

‘We showed him boy,’ said Frankie.

‘Yes,’ said Pat as he spied Prince smiling at him through the cat-flap, ‘we did. We all did.’