

'NINE LIVES'

A Film Review by Deirdre Chitwood

With so much distressing news in the world about animals these days, it is good sometimes to have light relief with a comedy about animals. The 2016 film 'Nine Lives' starring Kevin Spacey certainly offers a good deal of humour. It is not clear whether the film was intended for children or adults but definitely, I think, for cat lovers. The incredible special effects coupled with just enough reality makes the film interesting as well as funny.

The story, which takes a while to get going, is about a business tycoon in New York City called Tom Brand whose workaholic attitude ruined his first marriage and is about to cost him his second. His daughter, Rebecca is coming up to her 11th birthday and she has always wanted a cat but Tom hates cats and has always refused. Leaving it until the last minute as he always does, Tom rushes to get a present for his daughter but as he is distracted, his GPS redirects him to a mysterious pet shop called Purrkins, which is filled with odd and exotic cats. The shop's eccentric owner, Felix Perkins, tells him that he cannot pick the cat, the cat has to pick him. The cat that chooses Tom is Mr. Fuzzypants, who Felix says has used up seven of his nine lives. Being short of time, Tom takes the cat. Mr. Fuzzypants is a beautiful long-haired feline.

On the way home, Tom has an accident and passes out. When he wakes up he realizes that his human body is in the hospital in a state of coma and his consciousness is trapped inside Mr. Fuzzypants' body. Felix visits him and tells him he must reevaluate his priorities and connect with his family within one week or he will be stuck as a cat forever.

For me the funniest aspect of the film is watching Tom trying to convince Rebecca and his wife that he is trapped inside the cat's body. It begins with him trying to write a message and hold a pen but unfortunately he squirts ink all over a prized photo of himself as Tom with a celebrity. He then tries to use a laptop. Tom's voice inside the cat says, "Ironically, I really could use a mouse right now". Although a little juvenile, the use of slapstick comedy with special effects is really very funny. There is also something about hearing a human's voice inside a cat's body which satisfies that bit in us which has often wondered what our animals were thinking.

Mr. Fuzzypants' antics are every cat owner's worst nightmare and include him helping himself to a scotch from the drink's cabinet, getting drunk, and then peeing on the rug saying to himself, "I always hated that rug". Presented with his first breakfast as a cat, his comment is, "How do cats eat this stuff?" Have you ever thought your cat was thinking that? When his wife holds a party she invites Tom's first wife whom he really dislikes. She comes with her two terrier dogs who chase him all over the apartment. In retaliation, he pees inside her handbag. What makes it all so funny is that we can relate to these antics. Perhaps your cat was trying to tell you something?

Eventually Felix is called in as a cat whisperer to try to get Mr. Fuzzypants to behave. Felix tells him, "You need to be a good cat, your family needs you right now", and then continues, "Otherwise I will get you fixed!"

The other part of the film is about Tom's business real estate acquisitions including a tower block. The story is quite fanciful other than it bears certain similarities to an American politician who is very much in the limelight at present. Whether this is by accident or not, it adds another thread of humour to the story.

How does the film end? Does Tom get back to his own body? What happens to Mr. Fuzzypants? Does he still have one more life after this one? Well, you will need to see the film to find out.