



THE KING OF THE CATS

An elderly man sat quietly reading by the fire one evening when a cloud of soot fell into the fireplace and he heard a scrabbling in the chimney. His first thought was, "Those dratted birds." He pulled himself up to look, but before he was fully standing a huge wild grey cat landed in the hearth and leapt, knocking him back into the chair. It sat on his chest, prickling its feet against his jumper and searching his face. The man stared back into the cat's eyes; one amber and one green.

Then, the cat spoke. Yes, spoke! It said,

"Tell Dildrum that Doldrum is dead."

With that, it leapt back into the fireplace and vanished up the chimney. A minute later the man's wife came in. Their own cat ran in at her heels and settled itself down on the rug.

"What's that you've got on your jumper?" she asked. Looking down, the man saw two sooty paw marks. "Well, my dear...this enormous grey cat...it came down the chimney, leapt onto me and said 'Tell Dildrum that Doldrum is dead!'"

His wife stared at him in disbelief, but their cat pricked up his ears and jumped up. They both looked at him and he spoke. Yes, spoke! He said,

"If Doldrum is dead, then I'm the King of the Cats!"

They watched as he turned and leapt up the chimney.

That evening, as the man and his wife searched the neighbourhood, Dildrum was taking his seat on a gilded throne, a golden crown on his head.

The old man stayed up late that night, staring into the fire until the last few coals glimmered among the ashes. As he stood up to go to bed, he heard a scratching and scraping coming from the chimney. Bending down, he watched as three starling feathers fell into the embers.