



# *The First Black Cat of Halloween*

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Animals, Magic

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Long ago, before tabbies and calicos, all cats had fur as white as snow.

Every cat was so alike, that they had to wear collars to tell one apart from the other. Some wore yarn around their necks, some wore ribbons, others wore colorful lace, and those who lived with the wealthy, wore rich gemstones around their necks.

This had always been the case, and because they could tell each other apart, the white cats all got along as well as all cats do.

However it was during October, that one white cat by the name of Bartok, was biting and clawing at his blue lace collar in a desperate attempt to get it off.

For he had gotten in trouble with the King's cat, because he had beaten him thrice at Tellah-tale, and he declared that Bartok had cheated and was able to peek at the cards.

He was demanding the catnip wine and money back, and that Bartok be thrown in the dungeons for his cheating.

Bartok in truth had just gotten really lucky, and pretended to be able to see the cards, to get a laugh out of some

of the servants. Regardless, the King's cat wanted Bartok in the dungeons, and so, Bartok was running and hiding for his nine lives.

Bartok had just avoided the guards, when he bumped into a witch by the name of Agatha, who was fetching water from the local well to use in her potion brewing.

"Well, what has your fur all ruffled up my friend?" she asked the panting Bartok, as she offered him her bucket to drink from, "Who wouldn't be as distressed as I am, when my coat is on the line, because the King's cat wants me thrown in the dungeons for a bit of harmless fun." He replied between sips of water, and he told the witch his whole story.

About how he played Tellah-tale, and how he tried to make the servants laugh by pretending that he could see Alexander (the King's cat)'s cards.

Agatha listened and nodded, having a soft spot for cats, she wanted to help Bartok. "Sounds like you're in a bit of a tight corner," she said as she walked back to her home, with Bartok following close behind her, nodding his head in agreement. "If I had a way to either convince him that I was just joking, or scare him away, then I wouldn't have to spend every day watching my back." He said as he followed her inside her cottage, and rubbed his body against her broom.

That got Agatha thinking, "Maybe there is a way you can do that," she mused as she filled her cauldron with the well water, "If you had a little bit of magic, just enough for some flash, then Alexander and the King might be scared to throw you in the dungeon." Bartok nodded with a purr, for that was certainly a most sensible idea, "Could you give me some magic?" he meowed politely.

Now Bartok was a sensible cat, spending his days going from place to place. However, he was truly happy in the village, and the people liked him because he was a champion mouser and rat-catcher. The people liked him, and he liked the people. He had even done Agatha many favors, and always lent a helping paw when it was needed.

"Of course, I'll be happy to give you a little magic, for you have done many good deeds for everyone in the kingdom." Agatha replied as she stroked his soft white fur, which got a bashful purr or three from Bartok, "Might I suggest that you change the color of your fur, to something that stands out along with the magic you'll

soon have?”

Bartok nodded eagerly in agreement, “I like the sound of that,” he replied, “Between you can me, I was getting tired of the color white.” And with that, he dashed out of her cottage and visited the local painter. “Good day to you painter, may I borrow some of your time to have my white coat painted?” he meowed politely as he hopped onto the stool.

“That is an unusual request Bartok,” the painter replied as he set his palette on the table, “But I’d be more than happy to do it, what color would you like it to be painted?”

Bartok looked at the many colors on the painter’s palette, but the color he found himself drawn to, was black.

“Kind painter, may I please have my coat painted black?” he asked, and the painter did just that, and painted Bartok black. From the tips of his ears to the tip of his tail, the painter had even painted his nose and paddy paws black. Bartok looked his new coat over in the mirror, he much preferred this color than the white of his original coat. He thanked the painter, and paid him with a diamond.

Bartok returned to Agatha’s cottage and could smell the sweet-smelling brew in the cauldron, “What do think of my new coat?” he asked as he posed and spun in his black coat, “Heh, I think it suits you much better than white.” Agatha replied as she stirred a handful of spices into the bubbling brew, it was almost ready for the now black cat.

Bartok smiled, and did the sweeping for Agatha, as she brewed the potion that would give him magic. “I warn you, when you drink this potion and you have your magic, many people will either like or hate you.” Agatha said as she scooped a ladleful of the potion from the cauldron, Bartok ran his pink tongue over his jaws, it was a risk, but he had nine lives for a reason. “I accept this fate, and the troubles that will come with it.” He replied as he watched her pour the ladleful of potion into a saucer for him.

Bartok politely lapped up the potion, it was warm and sweet like catnip on his tongue. As he drank, he felt all full of vim and vigor, like he had eaten some gingersnaps. When he finished the potion, his fur had fluffed up, from the tips of his ears to the tip of his tail. He tapped his paws against the floor, "What kind of magic do I have?" he mewed eagerly like a kitten on its birthday, "A little bit of luck magic, and some conjuring, with a dash of misty step." Agatha replied as she dusted her apron off.

Bartok thanked her multiple times, and spent the majority of October dashing to and fro, practicing his magic. He skillfully avoided the guards left and right, preparing for when he would make his grand entrance at the castle, on Halloween.

When Halloween arrived, he woke up extra early, and strolled about town, giving people in the village good luck. He hummed a silly autumn tune, and clicked his heels together, feeling quite cheerful.

Many other cats saw him, strolling about, and they decided to color their coats as well. Some chose tabby stripes, others chose spots, and some chose calico splotches. Some of the cats on the other hand, preferred to have white coats, but they found it interesting that many were changing their color.

At breakfast on the dot, Bartok appeared before the King and Alexander, "Good morning to you Sire, and Alexander." He said as he bowed respectively. At the sight of Bartok, Alexander spat out his milk on the red carpet, "B-b-b..Bartok? What happened to you?" He stuttered as he looked at the former white cat.

Bartok grinned a Cheshire grin, "Oh just strolling about, I came to tell you that I didn't cheat when I played Tellah-tale with you." He replied politely and he saw Alexander glare at him, but he wasn't worried.

"I don't care," Alexander hissed, "If I say you cheated, then you cheated and I want you thrown in the dungeon!" he arched his back and hissed, fluffing his white fur coat up.

At this Bartok snarled and with a tap of his left paw, a small storm cloud appeared over Alexander's head, looking like it was about to rain on him at any time.

This definitely got Alexanders attention, and he ceased his hissing, "Bartok, where did you learn that...?" he mewed nervously. He had a grooming day yesterday and he didn't want his fluffy white fur to get wet, "I learned a bit of magic while I was hiding from the guards, I have some luck magic," Bartok replied with a

cheeky purr, “I can give people good luck or bad luck.”

“Bad luck...?” Alexander mewed as he eyed the storm cloud above him, and he immediately felt his pride shrinking into the size of a mouse.

“Yup, bad luck.” Bartok replied, “Like bad naps, annoying mice, and-“ “Don’t say it!” Alexander whispered with a shiver, “Bent whiskers.” Bartok said with a light growl. At that, Alexander mewed like a frightened kitten, “M-maybe I was a bit hasty to judge you...” he said, and he watched the storm cloud shrank ever so lightly. Bartok’s ears perked up, “You still think I cheated?” he asked conversationally.

Alexander shook his head vigorously, “No, Y-you didn’t cheat, I’m sorry. P-please...just make the rain cloud disappear.” He mewed pitifully; he was nearly shivering on his velvet pillow, as he watched the little storm cloud disappear.

An apology was all Bartok wanted, with that, he took a bow and left. He took a bit of time to wish other a happy Halloween, and he brought Agatha back a chocolate mouse with almond ears and a spun sugar tail.

As Agatha had said, Bartok faced hardships with his new life. While some people were kind to him, others became frightened of him and tried to drive him away. Some even tried to kill him, but he always got away, and he never ended up with anything more than the occasional scrape or cut. He didn’t mind though; this made his new life quite the adventure.

Alexander learned a good lesson of humility that day, and he whenever the other cats played game with him, he minded his temper and wasn’t too quick to judge others.

The other cats started marrying with the cats with white coats, and in return their kittens had different colored coats.

As for Bartok, he was the same kindhearted cat that everyone knew.

After losing one of his lives to a miller, who thought he was bad luck, Bartok stayed Agatha in her cottage. The two got along quite well, and every Halloween, Agatha would take Bartok on her broom and fly off into the night. To celebrate Halloween with the ghosts, ghouls, and other witches and wizards. Bartok's new look caught on, and soon almost every witch and wizard in the forest had a black cat of their own.

Ever since then, black cats have danced and celebrated Halloween with witches, ghosts, and ghouls. As well as be the talk of superstition and luck.

And that is the story of the first black cat of Halloween.

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