

Page 1/ Teacher Script/ THE KING OF THE CATS

(READER 1 STANDS).

READER 1: Imagine this! It is a cold, wet, foggy night along the rocky coast of Nova Scotia.

(READER 2 STANDS).

READER 2: Listen! Hear the sounds of a lonely seagull, somewhere in the distance.

(READER 3 STANDS).

READER 3: Now picture a small seaside graveyard spotted with ancient crumbling headstones. At one end of the yard, a fresh grave has just been dug.

(THE THREE READERS REMAIN STANDING).

READER 1: Move along in your imagination to a tiny wind-blown cottage which stands nearby. You can see a flicker of light from one of the cottage windows.

READER 2: Inside, the local gravedigger's wife sits in her rocking chair beside the fire. She waits for her husband to come home. The couple's big black cat, Old Tom, is curled beside the chair.

(READER 5 BEGINS TO ROCK BACK AND FORTH FROM BEHIND MUSIC STAND).

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READER 3: The old woman rocks back and forth on wooden rockers.

ALL: SQUEAK SQUEAK! SQUEAK SQUEAK!

READER 3: Once in a while Old Tom lifts his head and says,

(READER 6, WHO HAS BEEN LOOKING DOWN INTO FOLDER, LIFTS HEAD, STARES AT AUDIENCE, AND SAYS):

6/OLD TOM: "MEOW!"

(ALL READERS WHO ARE STANDING, SIT. READER FIVE STOPS ROCKING BACK AND FORTH).

READER 1: When, at last, the gravedigger rushes in through the cottage door, he is out of breath, shaking, and very upset. The gravedigger shouts,

(READER 4 RUNS IN PLACE FROM BEHIND MUSIC STAND AND MIMES THE ABOVE).

4/GRAVEDIGGER: "Who is Tommy Tildrum?"

(READERS 1, 2, and 3 LOOK AT EACH OTHER, THEN FOCUS BACK ON AUDIENCE).

READER 2: His wife and the cat stare at him. Finally, his wife answers,

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5/WIFE: "What in the world is the matter with you? I don't know a Tommy Tildrum. Don't care to know one either. Why do you ask?"

(READER 5 BEGINS TO ROCK BACK AND FORTH FROM BEHIND MUSIC STAND).

READER 3: The old woman rocks back and forth on the wooden rockers.

ALL: SQUEAK SQUEAK! SQUEAK SQUEAK!

(READER 5 STOPS ROCKING).

READER 3: The gravedigger continues.

4/GRAVEDIGGER: "You will never believe what I have seen! I finished digging old man Garnier's grave about an hour ago. It was foggy and cold and I had a heck of a time gettin' her done. I was just gathering my tools together when I heard the cry of a cat."

READER 1: Old Tom lifts his head and says,

(READER 6 LIFTS HEAD AS BEFORE AND SAYS):

6/OLD TOM: "MEOW!"

4/GRAVEDIGGER: "Yes, just like that!

(READER 4 LOOKS AT AUDIENCE, AMAZED AND HORRIFIED).

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4/GRAVEDIGGER: I looked over Garnier's grave, and guess what I saw?"

5/WIFE: "How would I know?"

(READER 5 BEGINS TO ROCK BACK AND FORTH).

READER 2: The old woman rocks back and forth on the wooden rockers.

ALL: SQUEAK SQUEAK! SQUEAK SQUEAK!

(READER 5 STOPS ROCKING).

4/GRAVEDIGGER: "I saw nine black cats, just like Old Tom. Each had a white patch on his chest, just like Old Tom. Now, I know you'll think I've lost my mind, but I saw those cats marching through the fog and they were carrying a coffin covered with a black velvet cloth. On top of the cloth lay a golden crown. And every fourth step all the cats cried, 'MEOW!'"

(READER 5 BEGINS TO ROCK AGAIN).

READER 3: The old woman listens carefully and rocks back and forth on the wooden rockers.

ALL: SQUEAK SQUEAK! SQUEAK SQUEAK!

READER 1: Old Tom lifts his head and repeats,

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(READER SIX LIFTS HEAD AS BEFORE AND SAYS):

6/OLD TOM: "MEOW!"

(READER 5 STOPS ROCKING).

4/GRAVEDIGGER: "Yes! The meow sounded just like that! But I must go on. Well, those cats came nearer and nearer. I could see how their eyes glowed green through the fog and the darkness. They came straight toward me. Eight of them were carrying the coffin. I counted them! The ninth cat marched in front, slowly – and full of dignity – and looking right into my eyes."

(READER 5 ROCKS, AS BEFORE).

READER 3: The old woman looks up and rocks faster on the wooden rockers.

ALL: SQUEAK SQUEAK! SQUEAK SQUEAK!

READER 1: Old Tom stares at the gravedigger and says,

(READER SIX LOOKS UP, TAKES A MOMENT TO STARE AT AUDIENCE, AND SAYS):

6/OLD TOM: "MEOW!"

(READER 5 STOPS ROCKING).

READER 2: The gravedigger turns pale.

4/GRAVEDIGGER: "That's it! That's just how he stared at me! I swear Old Tom understands every word I'm saying."

(READER 4 MIMES THE FOLLOWING):

READER 3: The gravedigger begins to pace around the room. He pulls out a handkerchief and wipes the sweat from his forehead.

4/GRAVEDIGGER: "Well, where was I? Oh yes. I watched as they carried the coffin right into old man Garnier's grave. I was terrified! Frozen to the spot. Then, one by one, eight of the cats popped their heads up over the edge of the hole and stared at me."

(READER 5 BEGINS TO ROCK).

READER 1: The old woman watches her husband pace around the room. She rocks back and forth on the wooden rockers.

ALL: SQUEAK SQUEAK! SQUEAK SQUEAK!

READER 2: Old Tom jumps into the woman's lap and says,

6/OLD TOM: "MEOW!"

(READER 5 CONTINUES TO ROCK).