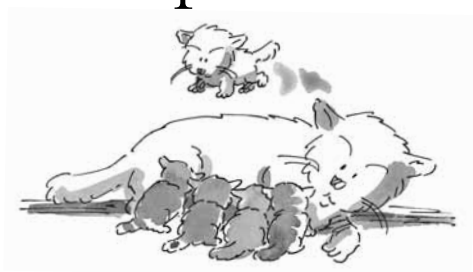


Chapter One





When Aristotle was a kitten, he did not know that cats have nine lives. His mother knew, of course. But I'm not going to tell him, she thought. Already he's a tearaway, much bolder than his brothers and sisters, and if he knows that he's got nine lives to play with, he'll take all sorts of risks.

So she didn't say anything to

Aristotle except “Goodbye” when he left home and went to live with an old lady.

A strange looking old lady she was, with a beaky nose and a chin that jutted out, and she wore black clothes and a tall black hat on top of her stringy grey hair.

Her name was Bella Donna, and it was she who decided to call her new kitten Aristotle.





“Really,” she said,
“I ought to have a black
cat, but it’ll be a nice change
to have a white one.”

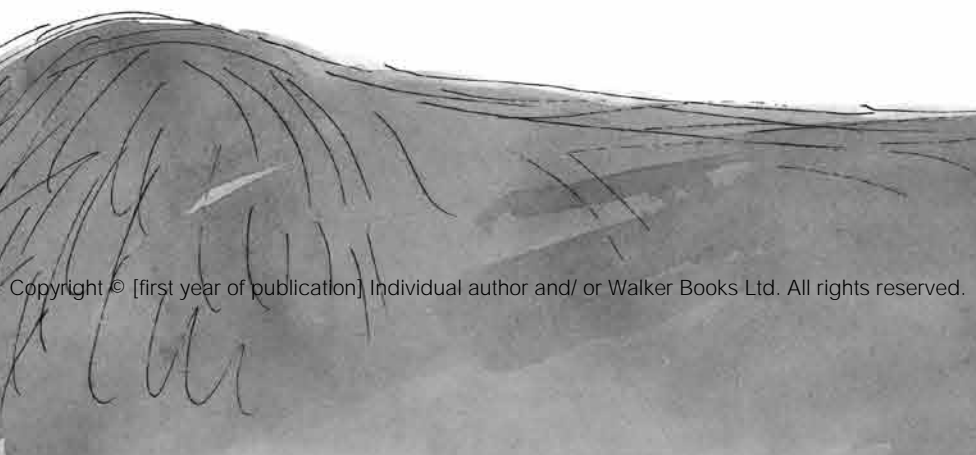
But the very first day that
Aristotle went to live in Bella
Donna’s funny old cottage, he
decided he would explore it from
top to bottom. Or rather from
bottom to top, because when he’d
looked all round the downstairs





rooms and then the upstairs rooms,
he thought he'd like to get up on
the roof.

It was a thatched roof, so,
once Aristotle climbed up the
creeper that grew on the walls of
the cottage, he could easily walk up
the thatch to the single chimney.
Then, because he was curious, as
all cats are, he scrambled up the
chimney-stack and looked down

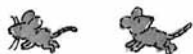




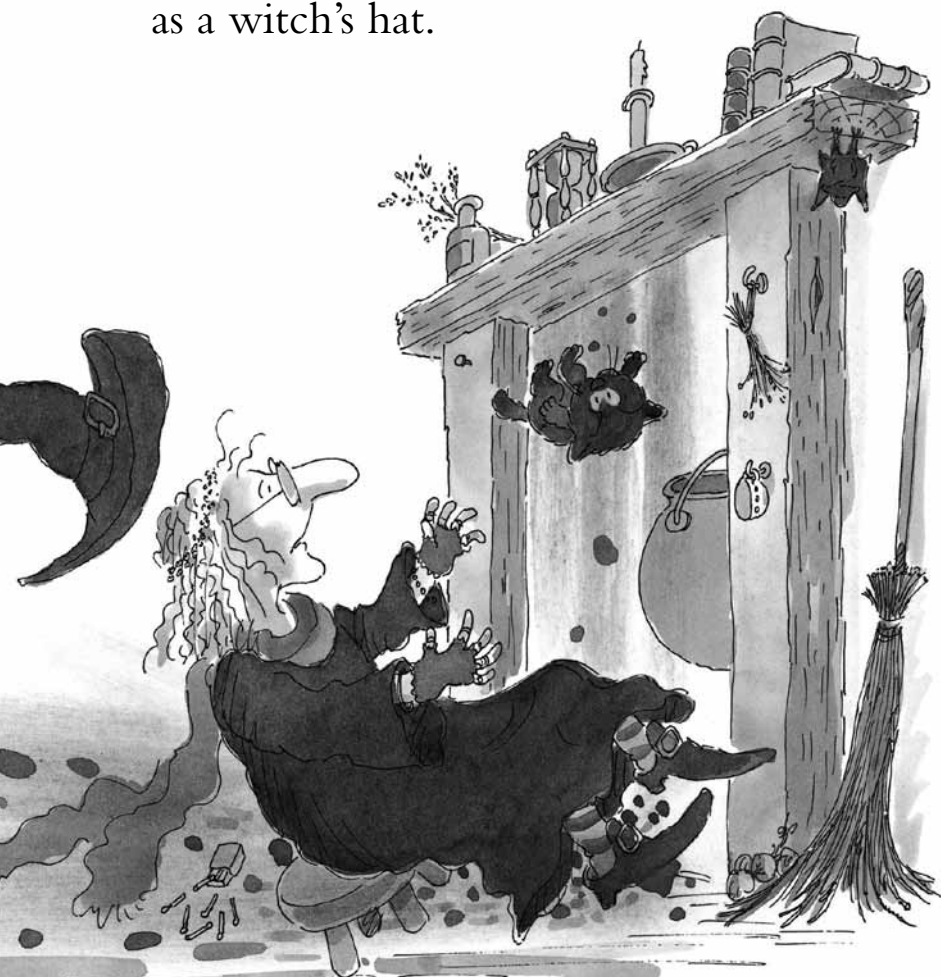
the chimney-pot and wondered
what the hole in it was for.

At that very moment a big
puff of smoke came up, right in
Aristotle's face, which made him
cough and sneeze and lose his
balance, and down the chimney
he fell.

Bella Donna had just lit her
kitchen fire when down into the
fireplace came a great load of soot,
which put out the flames,



and after the soot, a kitten that had
been white but was now black
as a witch's hat.



“Well, my boy,” said Bella Donna,
“that’s the first of your nine lives
gone. Good job the chimney was so
dirty or you’d have burned to death.
You’d better be a bit more careful,
Aristotle, if you want to grow to be
a cat. Only eight to go.”