

George's Second Christmas - Part One

By Dante Harker

George's Second Christmas - Part One George glared at the basket. It wasn't its fault that Food-giver had just moved him out of it - again - but still it wasn't fair. It was just so comfortable, with its soft cushion that he could just snuggle into and sleep. George tried again, but once again Food-giver pushed him out of it and said, 'that's not yours, now go sit on your own cushion'. This made no sense to George. Of course he understood the words; they were easy enough. It turned out that the language of the things who occupied his house was easy to learn. Though it was annoying for George that his language appeared much too hard for them to learn; and he'd tried all sorts, even waiting till Grumpy, the largest of the things (or Lumps as George preferred to call them) was asleep, when he then licked one of Grumpy's eye-lids and yelled in his face. That did not have the desired affect at all. George had been locked in the kitchen for the rest of that night. No, it made no sense because, as far as George was concerned, all the cushions in the house were his so what made this one so special? Plus, why was it in its own basket, why did a cushion need a basket? This isn't over, thought George and, while he

decided what his next plan of action was going to be, he plonked himself down in the middle of the floor and went to sleep. As he drifted off he heard one of the Lumps say, 'why do you have to sit right in the middle of the hall? Such a trip hazard!' George smiled as he heard his favourite nickname and then let the world fade away. It had been a fun year for George, not that he had any real concept of time. As he understood it this was something that the Lumps got very concerned about. There was always lots of fun in the mornings as the family rushed around getting ready to leave. This was George's favourite time of the day. Cry baby, the evil thing that was always trying to hug the life out of him could now walk. Which had turned her into a real menace. If George wasn't careful he would find himself dragged out of a wonderful slumber and squashed so tightly that bringing out his claws was his only recourse. Actually, they were George's only recourse the first time he'd been squashed but hacking at Cry-baby's face appeared to really upset the other Lumps, like really upset, so instead now he was much more careful and, if she did get him, he'd just struggle, keeping his claws neatly tucked away. First thing in the morning, Cry-baby got strapped into some form of containment device where food was placed in front of her. There was no escaping this contraption which meant that if George was quick, and the other Lumps weren't looking, he could sneak up and push Cry-baby's food onto the floor, a couple of gentle taps and the slop she ate was everywhere. After that, George would walk around the feet of the Lumps. Quickly going from one to the next was the most fun. He

would count the number of times he heard his name called, 'George move', 'George stop it', 'come on, George, get out the way', 'ah, no, you're a menace, George'. Seven was the sweet spot, it was just enough to get the Lumps in a flap but not enough to get him evicted from the room. Several months' back there had been a revelation at one of his morning tripping sessions. Grumpy had yelled, 'I can't believe we got a Maine Coon, oh no, we couldn't just get a moggie, had to get a posh cat, and a stupidly-large posh cat at that!' Though not entirely sure what a 'moggie' was, George knew it sounded hateful and he was so glad that he wasn't that. A stupidly-large posh Maine Coon on the other hand sounded amazing. Like a super hero. Since that day, George had taken full charge of his domain. He had always seen the Lumps as there to meet his needs but it was now clear that he wasn't just any cat, he was cat royalty. True to Grumpy's outburst, George grew and grew. He could now block an entire step on the stairs, two if he draped his feet over and now he could push full plates of food off the counter top, not just empty ones. Though, to be polite, he reserved this course of action only for when the Lumps didn't feed him quickly enough. Of course, when he wanted feeding changed according to his mood, but as a king, they really should pre-empt his hunger. 'Today's the day, George,' said Food-giver as she picked him up and brought him to the settee. George didn't protest, he liked attention - as long as it was at the right time. Plus, he loved allowing the stroking for so long, drawing in a Lump and then biting their hand when they aren't expecting it. What's today?

George wondered, but then the rubbing around his eyes and under his chin distracted him and he thought of those little brown treats he got in the evening, tripping and rolling on his back so he can see the ceiling. George looked up. He wasn't sure why but he always knew when one of the Lumps was about to arrive home. Moments later, Grumpy's car pulled into the drive and without any thought given to the fact that George was enjoying the strokes under his chin, Food-giver got to her feet and said, 'they're here George, how exciting!' Who's here? Please, please don't let it be another Cry-baby, one was enough, thought George. He hated the fact that that tiny Lump stole so much of his attention and, though he'd had more than one urge to do the thing serious harm, he had resisted. And he was a king and kings shouldn't have to resist anything. George leapt onto the sill and looked out the window. He tapped on the window as snow drifted down and then watched Grumpy get out of the car and make tracks in the white. If it was another Cry-baby it seemed a little mean of Grumpy to be carrying it in a box, George thought, trying not to get distracted by the house plant on the sill. He really, really wanted to push it off, but decided now wasn't the time, he really wanted to know what was in the box. Grumpy's entrance caused quite a stir. Food-giver ran to the door giddily saying, 'they're here, they're here!' The excitement of what was in the box must have gotten to George too, as, though he knew he could get between Food-giver and the door, and perhaps even bring her down (it wouldn't be the first time), he did nothing but stare. Well, bite the leaves on the plant and stare, he was king after all.

