Old Pettson sat doing the crossword, with Findus the cat on his knee.
‘Tell me about me disappearing,’ said Findus.
‘You haven’t disappeared, you’re sitting right here,’ said Pettson.
‘But I mean when I was little.’
‘Oh then. But you know that story already, I’ve told you so many times.’
‘But tell me anyway.’
‘Well, why not?’ said Pettson, putting aside his crossword. ‘Do you want the whole story, or just when you disappear?’
‘The whole story,’ said the cat and snuggled up happily.
‘The whole story it is then. Here we go:
There was once an old man called Pettson. He lived in his little house in the country and was as content as could be – well almost. The trouble was that now and then he got lonely. If he really had to, he could talk with his neighbours, but they were busy with their own lives of course.

He had his hens too for company. But they were so scatterbrained. The moment he started talking they’d skedaddle off after a worm or something. Not ones for long conversations, chickens.

After dark, when the hens went to roost, it often felt very empty and quiet in the little house. Not much fun really, all on your own.
One day, Betty Andersson from the neighbouring farm dropped by to say hello. She brought buns with her, and Pettson served coffee under the lilac bush. But he wasn’t very talkative, and Betty Andersson could see he was a bit down in the dumps.

‘You need a wife to cheer you up,’ she said.

‘Oh,’ said Pettson, and ‘No I don’t think so. Anyway, it’s too late for all that. I’m too old. I’m used to being on my own. I don’t think I could manage a whole wife.…’

‘You don’t even have a cat.’

‘Nope,’ said Pettson and thought a while. ‘Actually, cats aren’t that much bother. Maybe I should get one…’