



# Puss in Boots

Once upon a time there was a miller who left no more riches to his three sons than his mill, his mule and his cat. These were soon divided. The eldest had the mill, the second the mule, and the youngest nothing but the cat.

The youngest, as we might understand, was quite unhappy at having so poor a share.

‘My brothers,’ said he, ‘may get their living handsomely enough by joining their stocks together; but when I have eaten up my cat, and made mittens of his fur, I will die of hunger.’

The cat, who heard all this, without appearing to take any notice, said to him in a grave and serious voice: ‘Do not worry yourself, my master; you need do nothing more than give me a bag, and get a pair of boots made for me, that I may scamper through the brambles, and you shall see that you have not so poor a share with me as you think.’

Though the cat’s master did not think much of what he said, he had seen him play such cunning tricks to catch rats and mice—hanging himself by the heels, or hiding himself in the flour sacks, or playing dead—that he did not altogether doubt him either. When the cat had what he asked for, he laced up his boots, and putting his bag around

his neck, he held the strings of it in his two forepaws, and went into a warren where there was a great number of rabbits. He had put bran and thistle into his bag, and, stretching out as if he were dead, he waited for some young rabbits, not yet wise to the ways of the world, to come and rummage through his bag for what he had put into it.

Scarcely had he settled down before he had what he wanted. Two rash and foolish young rabbits jumped into his bag, and Monsieur Puss, immediately drawing tight the strings, took them and killed them at once. Proud of his prey, he went with it to the palace, and asked to speak with the king. He was shown upstairs to his majesty, and, making a low bow to the king, he said:

‘I have brought you, sire, two rabbits which my noble Lord, the Marquis of Carabas’ (for that was the title which Puss had chosen to give

his master) ‘has commanded me to present to your majesty from him.’

‘Tell your master,’ said the king, ‘that I thank him, and that I am pleased with his gift.’

Another time he went and hid himself in a cornfield, still holding his bag open; and when a pair of partridges flew into it, he drew the strings, and so caught them both. He then went and made a present of these to the king, as he had done before with the rabbits



he had caught in the warren. The king, as before, accepted the partridges with great pleasure, and ordered his servants to reward him.

The cat continued for two or three months to present to his Majesty, from time to time, such gifts from his master. One day when he knew that the king was to take the air along the riverside, with his daughter, the most beautiful princess in the world, he said to his master: 'If you will follow my advice, you will make your fortune. You need do nothing more than go and bathe in the river, just at the spot I shall show you, and leave the rest to me.'

The Marquis of Carabas did as the cat advised him, without knowing what could be the use of doing it. While he was bathing, the king passed by, and the cat cried out with all his might: 'Help! help! My Lord the Marquis of Carabas is drowning!'

At this noise the king stuck his head out of the coach window, and seeing the Cat who had so often brought him gifts, he commanded his guards to run immediately to the assistance of his Lordship the Marquis of Carabas.

While they were dragging the poor Marquis out of the river, the Cat came up to the coach and told the king that, while his master was bathing, some



thieves had run off with his clothes, though he had cried out, 'Thieves! thieves!' several times, as loud as he could. In fact, the cunning cat had hidden the clothes under a great stone. The king immediately commanded the officers of his wardrobe to run and fetch one of his best suits for the Lord Marquis of Carabas.

The king was extremely polite to him, and as the fine clothes he had given him set off his good looks (for he was well built and handsome), the king's daughter found him very much to her liking, and the Marquis of Carabas had no sooner cast her two or three respectful and somewhat tender glances than she fell madly in love with him.

The king invited him into the coach to take the air with them. The cat, overjoyed to see his plan was working, marched on ahead of them, and, meeting with some countrymen, who were mowing a meadow, he said to them: 'Good people, you who are mowing, if you do not tell the king that the meadow you mow belongs to my Lord Marquis of Carabas, you shall be chopped up as small as herbs for the pot.'

The king did not fail to ask the mowers to whom the meadow they were mowing belonged.

'To my Lord Marquis of Carabas,' answered they all together, for the cat's threat had made them afraid.

'You have a good property there,' said the king to the Marquis of Carabas.

'You see, sire,' said the Marquis, 'this is a meadow which never fails to yield a plentiful harvest every year.'

The master cat, who went ahead of them as before, met with some reapers, and said to them: 'Good people, you who are reaping, if you do not say that all this corn belongs to the Marquis of Carabas, you shall be chopped up as small as herbs for the pot.'

The king, who passed by a moment after, wished to know to whom all this corn belonged.

‘To my Lord Marquis of Carabas,’ replied the reapers, and the king was very well pleased by this, as well as the Marquis, whom he congratulated. The master cat, always marching ahead of them, said the same thing to all he met, and the king was astonished at the vast estate of the Lord Marquis of Carabas.

Monsieur Puss came at last to a stately castle, the master of which was an ogre, the richest ever known; for all the lands through which the king had then passed belonged to this castle. The Cat, who had taken care to learn who this ogre was and what he could do, asked to speak with him, saying he could not pass so near his castle without having the honour of paying his respects.

The ogre received him as courteously as an Ogre could do, and made him sit down.

‘I have been assured,’ said the cat, ‘that you have the gift of being able to change yourself into all sorts of creatures; that you can, for example, transform yourself into a lion, or elephant, and the like.’

‘That is true,’ answered the ogre, roughly; ‘and to convince you, you shall see me now become a lion.’

Puss was so terrified at the sight of a lion so near him that he immediately climbed up onto the roof, but not without much trouble and danger, because of his boots, which were of no use at all to him for walking upon the tiles. A little while afterwards, when Puss saw that the ogre had resumed his natural form, he came down, and confessed he had been very much frightened.

‘I have also been informed,’ said the cat, ‘but I know not how to believe it, that you have also the power to take the shape of the smallest animals; for example, to change yourself into a rat or a mouse, but



I must confess to you that I take this to be impossible.'

'Impossible?' cried the ogre. 'You shall see.' And at the same time he changed himself into a mouse, and began to run about the floor. Puss no sooner saw this than he pounced upon him and ate him up.

Meanwhile, the king, who saw, as he passed, this fine castle of the ogre's, had a mind to go into it. Puss, who heard the noise of his majesty's coach coming over the drawbridge,

ran out, and said to the king, 'Your Majesty is welcome to this castle of my Lord Marquis of Carabas.'

'What! my Lord Marquis,' cried the king, 'and does this castle also belong to you? There can be nothing finer than this courtyard and all the stately buildings which surround it; let us see inside it, if you please.'

The marquis gave his hand to the young princess, and followed the king, who went first. They passed into the great hall, where they found a magnificent banquet, which the Ogre had prepared for his friends, who were that very day to visit him, but dared not enter, knowing the king was there. His majesty, charmed with the good qualities of the Marquis of Carabas—as was his daughter, who had fallen madly in love with him—and seeing the vast estate he possessed, said to him: 'It will be

owing to yourself only, my Lord Marquis, if you are not my son-in-law by day's end.'

The marquis, with low bows, accepted this honour gladly, and later that very same day married the princess.

Puss became a great lord, and never ran after mice anymore except to pass the time.