

Puss in Boots

Once upon a time, there was a miller who left no more riches to the three sons he had than his mill, his ass, and his cat. The division was soon made. Neither the lawyer nor the attorney was sent for. They would soon have eaten up all the poor property. The eldest had the mill, the second the ass, and the youngest nothing but the cat.

The youngest, as we can understand, was quite unhappy.

The Cat said to him with a grave and serious air,

“Do not thus afflict yourself, my master; you have nothing else to do but to 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 portion in 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. When the Cat had what he asked for, he booted himself very gallantly, and putting his bag about his neck, he held the strings of it in his two forepaws, and went into a warren.

Scarcely was he settled but he had what he wanted. A rash and foolish young rabbit jumped into his bag. Proud of his prey, he went with it to the palace and asked to speak with the King. He said,

“I have brought you, sire, a rabbit which my noble Lord, the Master of Carabas” (for that was the title which Puss was pleased to give his master) “has commanded me to present to your Majesty from him.”

“Tell thy master,” said the King, “that I thank him, and that I am pleased with his gift.”

The Cat continued for two or three months thus to carry his Majesty, from time to time, some of his master’s game. 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, your fortune is made. You have nothing else to do but 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 what the Cat advised him to. 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 put his head out of the coach window, and seeing the Cat who had so often brought him game, he commanded his guards to run immediately to the assistance of his Lordship, the Marquis of Carabas.

While they were drawing the poor Marquis out of the river, the Cat came up to the coach and told the King that, while his master was bathing, there came by some rogues, who ran off with his clothes. 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’s daughter found him very much to her liking, and she fell in love with him. The King would have him come into the coach and take part in the airing. The Cat, overjoyed to see his plan succeed, marched on before, 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 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’s Cat, who went always before, said the same thing to all he met, and the King was astonished at the vast estates of my 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 which the King had then passed through belonged to this castle. The Cat, who had taken care to inform himself who this Ogre was and what he could do, asked to speak with him, saying he could not pass so near his castle without paying his respects to him.

The Ogre received him as civilly 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 you have a mind to; 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 into the gutter, 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 after, when Puss saw that the Ogre had resumed his natural form, he came down and owned he had been very much frightened.

“I have, moreover, been informed,” said the Cat, “but I know not how to believe it, that; you have also the power to take on you the shape of the smallest animals; for example, a rat or a mouse, but I must own to you 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 perceived this than he fell 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 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.”

The Marquis gave his hand to the young Princess, and followed the King, who went first. They passed into the great hall. His Majesty, charmed with the good qualities of my Lord of Carabas, as was also his daughter, who had fallen violently 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.”

The Marquis, with low bows, accepted the honor which his Majesty conferred upon him, and forthwith that very same day married the Princess.