



Puss in Boots

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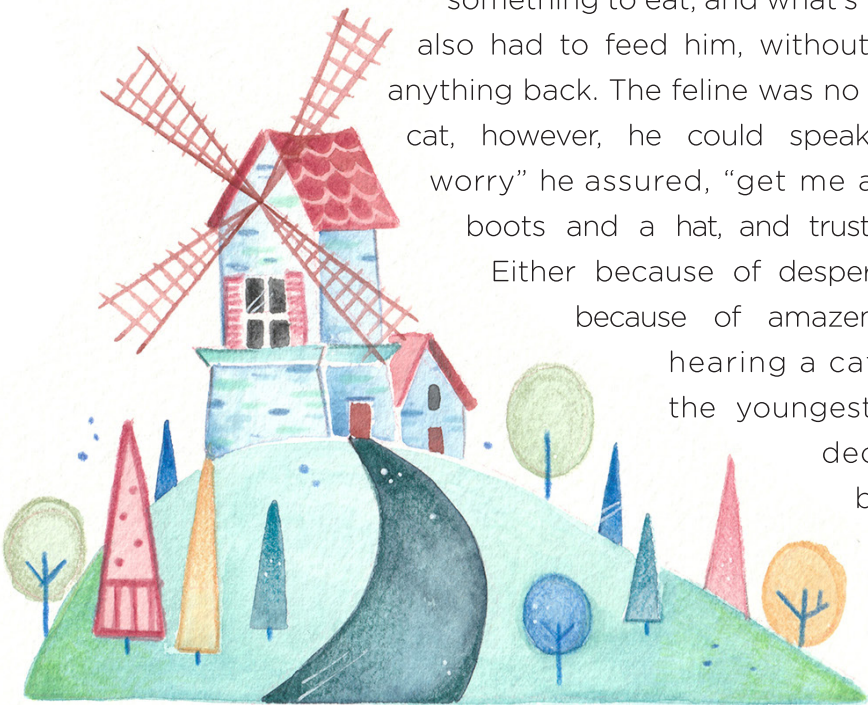
Once upon a time there was an old miller who had three sons. There are no mills anymore nowadays, isn't it a pity?

Well, if I could live in a mill, I would choose a mill just like the one of the miller of this story. It was a bit rickety, to be honest, there were draughts blowing from every direction, the door creaked open and on rainy weather the water entered from the roof. But, the mill stood in the middle of fields that, in the springtime, got filled with flowers, and had an oval window from which at night you could admire the stars and its blades were the wind's best friends.

When the miller died, the three sons received his inheritance: the eldest brother gained the mill – I am so jealous! – the middle son got the mule and the youngest brother got a cat. The third son didn't know what to do with a cat, he would have preferred

something to eat, and what's more, he also had to feed him, without getting anything back. The feline was no ordinary cat, however, he could speak: "Don't worry" he assured, "get me a pair of boots and a hat, and trust in me."

Either because of desperation or because of amazement of hearing a cat speak, the youngest brother decided to believe in



him and did whatever he asked. The cat put on his boots and headed to the woods for hunting.

He came back a couple of hours later with two beautiful pheasants.

“Who would have thought! Let’s have a party tonight!” the boy exclaimed. But the cat dampened his enthusiasm. “These pheasants are not for you” he replied, “I want to bring them as a gift to the king.” After that he went out and walked towards the castle.

He knocked on the heavy doors and, once they opened, he gave the pheasants to the court chef, asking him to present it to the king as a gift from the Marquis of Carabas.

He was definitely a special cat: he was not only able to speak, but he was also clear-headed and extremely determined: every day he looked for something for the king and took it to the castle as a gift from the Marquis of Carabas. The miller’s youngest son saw all these kinds of gifts passing in front of him, especially things to eat, but his belly was still empty.

Then, one morning, the cat suggested that he go to the river for a bath: “As soon as you see the royal carriage passing, you’ll have to pretend to drown!”

So, let’s recap: a cat who could speak, is clear-headed and also a joker. Or maybe, more than a joker, he had a plan in mind... Yes, I think so, because, while the boy was splashing around in the water, the cat went to those beautiful fields around the mill which in spring were filled with flowers, and he looked for the peasants: “When the king comes





here and asks who the fields belong to, you have to answer that they belong to the Marquis of Carabas.” And the peasants, either because of the tiredness from their hard work or because of the amazement of hearing a cat speak, bowed their heads and nodded.

Shortly after, in fact, the king’s carriage passed by, with all the court and soldiers: “Who do these fields belong to?” the king asked one of the peasants. “Um, to the Marquis of Carabas, Your Majesty” replied the man. “So it’s the same Marquis who presents gifts to me every day” the king thought, “he must be a rich and generous man.”

Proceeding down the road, he came across the Puss in Boots, desperately waving his paws: “Help me! Help me, please! My master, the Marquis of Carabas, is drowning in the river” At that point the king ordered the carriage to stop immediately and the entire court rushed towards the river bank, including the king himself, who was worried about that generous man whose face he didn’t even know. The bravest soldier immediately jumped into the water to save the marquis, who, as a matter of fact, was none other than the youngest miller’s son. It happened,

however, that, because of his heavy armor, the soldier couldn't move around, and was about to drown. So another soldier arrived to help him, who wanted to rescue the marquis. But also the latter, without thinking of taking off his armor, began to add too much water, struggling to stay afloat. One after the other, first the soldiers, then the ladies, and even the elderly ended up splashing around in the water to lend a hand to someone.

The only one left was the king, who, taking a look around, saw that on the dry bank there were just the horses and the carriage left, and realized that it was his turn to jump. He didn't have time to take his crown off, but at least he was quick to remove the long cloak. Hey! What's the fuss? The river water was low, there was no danger! When the situation had calmed down, everyone turned to look at the younger page-boy, who decided to have a good swim in the river: since his clothes were already soaked, at least he was enjoying the unexpected event!

When the court left, they were so wet, that the water could have filled up one hundred barrels, and the king took the boy too, since he was still certain that the boy was a rich nobleman. They decided to make an overnight stop at a nearby castle, offering their precious trunks in return. The castle, alas, was



home to the real Marquis of Carabas, who was a real person, greedy and petty. At that point the king finally became conscious that the boy was not a rich gentleman and that had cheated him with the help of the cat, but he didn't feel the need to punish him because he had received from him not only many gifts but also an extraordinary moment of fun. It had never happened to him before, because he always stayed inside the castle and went out for no other reason but boring and formal occasions.

Now, however, the two needed to find a solution to save themselves from the clutches of the marquis, who aimed to become more powerful than the king and steal all his wealth. Who to ask for advice, if not the cunning Puss in Boots? The cat then suggested to the king that he needed to make the marquis believe that the boy with him was an ogre, who was capable of transforming himself into a number of creatures. In order to

convince him, he organized a performance worthy of the best jesters: "Look, Marquis" said the king emphatically, "as the boy goes behind the column, he can transform himself into a cat!"

The boy ran behind the column, where the cat was hidden, and the latter promptly jumped

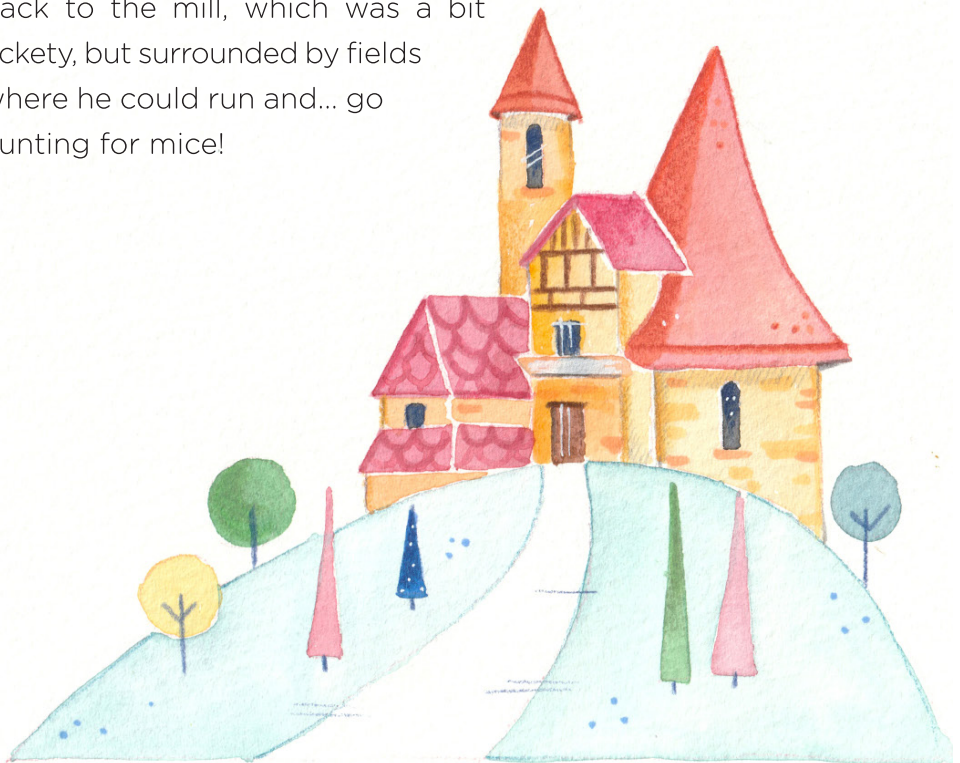
out, pretending to be his master. "What kind of witchcraft is that?" cried the astonished marquis, "If he was really your friend, Majesty, this cat would be able to speak!" "I could tell you about the mill I lived in,



Marquis of Carabas” replied the cat, “It’s not as beautiful as this castle, but its blades are the wind’s best friends. My father gave it to his eldest son as inheritance, so I don’t have a place to live.” The marquis couldn’t believe what was happening and began to think that he was the victim of some strange spell and that the ogre really had magical powers. Because he was afraid that he could be transformed into a creature as well, perhaps into one of those hateful pigeons that infested the tower, he ran away terrified and, since then nobody has known what happened to him.

“From now on, this castle belongs to the new Marquis of Carabas!” solemnly said the king, who had grown fond of the miller’s son and wanted to reward him. “Set the most beautiful table, we have to celebrate!” he said to the servants, happy to have finally got rid of that greedy and selfish man.

After the feast, the Puss in Boots smiled and, satisfied, went back to the mill, which was a bit rickety, but surrounded by fields where he could run and... go hunting for mice!



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