



Once upon a time there lived a miller with his three sons. One day, the old miller passed quietly away. The miller had been very poor so he did not have much to leave his sons.

When the miller's will was read out, these were the terms:

"To my eldest son I bequeath my mill. To my second son I leave my donkey. And to my youngest son I leave my cat."

The two elder sons were happy with what they received. "We can both earn a decent living by joining forces. The mill will make the wheat, and the donkey can deliver it to the market."

The youngest son was very disappointed with his share. "A cat! What good is a cat to anyone? He can't work for me, and

he's not worth anything. Once I have eaten him and turned his fur into gloves, I shall surely starve to death."

Now, unbeknown to the boy, the cat was rather special. Unlike most cats, he could talk. And he was not impressed with the boy's plans for him. "Master, I am not such a bad bargain as you think. Fetch me a bag and a pair of boots for pushing through the prickly gorse undergrowth, and I shall prove my worth."

The boy was not convinced of this. "A cat is just a cat. You cannot grant me three wishes, or shower me with gold."

The cat knew he had to persuade the boy of his worth or his life would be over. "Remember, Master, I am good at performing cunning tricks to catch rats and mice. I hang by my claws and drop down on them, or hide in the wheat stacks, or pretend to be dead."

The boy had to admit that his father's cat was clever, so he did as he was bid.

When the boy had brought the things the cat had asked for, the cat quickly pulled on the boots.



Then he carried the bag over his shoulder, and headed for the fields. "There are hundreds of rabbits living in the warrens here. I will soon prove to my master that he needs me."

The cat reached a warren hole. He placed lettuce leaves and carrots in the bag then he lay down as though he was dead.

The older rabbits were not stupid, and kept well away from the cat and his bag. But the cat did not mind. He waited patiently.

After some time, a young rabbit who was not yet aware of the dangers of outside the warren hopped up to the bag.

His nose twitched excitedly as he saw the lettuce and carrots.

“My family are silly. They have all this food in front of our home, and yet they have completely overlooked it. I shall have it all for myself.”

The rabbit hopped into the bag and began to feed. At once, Puss leapt up where he lay, and tightened the strings around the top of the bag. The rabbit was trapped.

With one slash of his sharp claws, Puss killed the rabbit. “Excellent! This rabbit is perfect for my plans. Now I shall go at once to the royal palace and demand an audience with the King.”

Puss travelled along the road until he arrived at the palace. A guard stood outside the palace.

“Go away, cat, before I run you through with my sword. No one can see the King unless he requests it. And he certainly won’t want to see a scrawny flea-ridden cat!”



Puss pretended to leave, but when the guard wasn’t looking he slipped around to the back of the palace. There, as he had hoped, he found an open window.

“It is lucky I am a cat and can leap a long way.”

Puss jumped up to the window, carrying the bag with the dead rabbit, and scrambled inside.

He quickly made his way to the throne room. The King was most surprised to see him.

Puss bowed deeply. “Sire, forgive this intrusion. Here is a wild rabbit which I have been ordered to deliver to you on behalf

of my master, the Marquis of Carabas.” This is the name Puss had decided to call the miller’s son.

The King was most impressed by the way Puss had got into the palace. He was also pleased by the gift, for rabbit pie was his favourite meal.

“Tell your master that his King thanks him for his generous gift. It shall bring me much pleasure.”

Puss returned to his master, first stopping to catch a second rabbit. “Here, master, this rabbit is for your supper. If you allow me to live I shall bring you something to eat, each and every day.”

The boy agreed that this indeed sounded a fair deal, and anyway, he was growing fond of the cat.

A few weeks later, Puss went off again to the fields in his boots, and carrying the bag. This time he lay as if dead near the nest of partridges, with the neck of the bag wide open.

One by one, the partridges went inside the bag to shelter from the cold.

When a brace of partridges were safely inside, Puss leapt up and pulled the strings on the bag tightly shut. Again, his sharp claws soon killed the birds, so they did not suffer greatly.

“Now I shall make my way to the palace for an audience with the King!”

This time when Puss arrived at the entrance to the palace, the guard bowed respectfully. “I have heard that you come from the Marquis of

