

# THE MILLER'S SON

## A Tale from France

Long ago in the small French village of Provence lived an old miller and his three sons. When the miller died, he left the mill and a cornfield to his eldest son; the family donkey to his middle son; and the granary cat to his youngest son, Pierre.

Poor Pierre was devastated by this turn of events. He thought he would starve for sure. As he sat around feeling sorry for himself, his cat asked for a pair of boots and a sack. The cat assured Pierre that he would use these things to make a fortune. Since he had nothing to lose, Pierre agreed and gave the cat what he asked for.

The cat put a carrot in the sack, which he then took to a nearby field. He laid out the sack near some rabbit holes, and then hid nearby. When the rabbits came out to feed one went into the sack to get the carrot. As soon as it did, the cat came out from its hiding place and tied up the sack. This he brought to the king and offered it as a gift from his master, who he said was the Marquis of Carabas.

Every day for the next week, the cat brought something new to the king. Each time he told the king the gifts were from his

master, the Marquis of Carabas. While at the palace, the cat learned that the king would be out in his carriage the next day.

The cat went home to get Pierre. He told Pierre that he had a plan to make him rich. The next day, the cat took Pierre to a river that was next to the road that would be traveled by the king. He had Pierre take off his clothes and splash about in the river.

As the king's carriage arrived at the spot near the river where Pierre was, the cat ran out into the road calling for help. After recognizing the cat, the king stopped his carriage and asked what was wrong. The cat told the king that his master, the Marquis of Carabas, had been robbed of his carriage and clothes before being thrown into the river. The king was horrified, yet anxious to meet the Marquis. He ordered one of his men to get some clothes for the Marquis. The clothes that were brought back were fit for a prince. And so it was that Pierre began to look like a Marquis.

The king then invited Pierre into his carriage and offered to give him a ride home. The king's daughter was also in the carriage. When she and Pierre saw each other, it was love at first sight. Although nervous, Pierre followed his cat's lead. The cat gave the king's carriage driver the route to take. He then went on ahead to ready the way.

First, the cat came upon many men hoeing in vast fields. He

asked them to tell the king that the land they were working belongs to the Marquis of Carabas. When the king came by and asked then who the fields belonged to, they told him the Marquis.

The cat then came to an orchard being worked by women. He asked the ladies to tell the king that the orchard belongs to the Marquis of Carabas. When the king came by and asked who owned the orchards, they told him they belonged to the Marquis.

Next the cat came to a magnificent castle that was occupied by a terrible ogre. The cat knocked on the castle door. He was a bit frightened when the ogre opened it, but he tried to not let it show. The ogre asked what the cat wanted. The cat said he heard that the owner of the castle and its surrounding fields and orchards could change itself into any kind of animal it wanted. The ogre said it could do that. The cat asked to see a lion and one appeared where the ogre was standing. The cat made it appear as though that was no great feat. He then asked if the ogre could change itself into a small animal, like a mouse. The ogre couldn't resist showing off so it turned itself into a mouse. The cat immediately pounced on it and ate it up.

By now the king, his daughter and Pierre had arrived at the castle. When the king asked who owned it, the cat proudly stated that it belonged to the Marquis of Carabas. He invited the king and his daughter in to partake in a fine meal that was

spread out in the dining room. The king was so impressed by all he saw that he thought his daughter should marry this Marquis (in other words, Pierre).

And so it was that Pierre became the Marquis of Carabas, inherited a castle with its surrounding fields and orchards, and married a princess to boot. The cat, Pierre and his bride lived happily ever after, all thanks to the cat.

\*Adapted by Kathleen Simonetta. Inspired by the following tales

“The Miller’s Son” found in, Around the World in 80 Tales, by Saviour Pirotta. Illustrated by Richard Johnson. Boston: Kingfisher, c2007, pp. 104-106.

“Puss in Boots” found in Usborne Stories From Around the World, retold by Heather Amery. Illustrated by Linda Edwards. London: Usborne Publishing Ltd., c2000, pp. 22-27.

