

The Cat and The Mouse

From the book, "Children's Classics in Dramatic Form" by Augusta Stevenson
Suggested by Grimm's The Cat and the Mouse

Time: Perhaps this minute

Place: Perhaps your own garret

Characters:

Mother Mouse

Miss Mouse (Mother Mouse' daughter)

The Cat

(Mother Mouse and Miss Mouse are in their spare room because Mother Mouse is getting ready for a journey. Miss Mouse helps her. The Cat is outside, peeping now and then through the window, but so slyly that the mice do not see her.)

MOTHER MOUSE: *(Going.)* Now mind you keep one eye on our grease-pot, child.

MISS MOUSE: That I will, dear mother!

MOTHER MOUSE: Let no one in—no one! No one!

MISS MOUSE: No one, dear mother!

MOTHER MOUSE: I'll not be long away. Goodbye, my child. *(Starting out; stopping.)* Mind you show no one the grease-pot, child—no one! No one!

MISS MOUSE: No one, dear mother!

(Mother Mouse goes out of the front door.)

CAT: *(Calling through window.)* Oh, Miss Mouse! Oh, Miss Mouse!

MISS MOUSE: *(Showing alarm.)* Who calls?

CAT: *(Very sweetly.)* Only I! Will you please let me in?

MISS MOUSE: *(Shaking head.)* Mother said—

CAT: *(Interrupting quickly.)* 'T is a matter of business!

MISS MOUSE: *(Shaking head.)* But Mother said—

CAT: *(Interrupting.)* 'T is most important!

MISS MOUSE: *(As before.)* But Mother said—

CAT: *(Interrupting.)* I wish your advice—you are so clever!

MISS MOUSE: *(Showing she is pleased; starting to window.)* Oh, do you truly think so?

CAT: *(Nodding.)* Everyone thinks so!

MISS MOUSE: *(Showing she is more pleased; going to the window.)* Oh, do they, truly?

CAT: Oh, truly they do!

MISS MOUSE: *(Showing she is most pleased; opening window.)* What else nice say they?

CAT: *(Jumping in.)* That I'll tell you by and by. *(Sniffing about.)* There must be a grease-pot about! Am I not right?

MISS MOUSE: Mother said—

CAT: *(Interrupting.)* Only tell me if I be right! 'T will do no harm!

MISS MOUSE: *(Hesitating.)* Well—then—yes. But 't is put away for our winter stores.

CAT: *(Nodding.)* Just so! Now, I can't decide where to keep my grease-pot when I have bought one. Won't you give me your advice? You are so wise.

MISS MOUSE: Do you truly think I'm wise?

CAT: *(Nodding.)* Aye, and if you will tell me where to keep my grease-pot when I have bought it, I'll tell you something more.

MISS MOUSE: *(Greatly pleased.)* About me?

CAT: *(Nodding.)* Yes, —what everyone says about your being so beautiful. But first I must know where to keep my grease-pot.

MISS MOUSE: Then listen—you must keep it, when you have bought it, in the northwest corner.

(The Cat runs quickly to the northwest corner.)

MISS MOUSE: *(In alarm.)* Come away! Come away!

CAT: Why, here is your grease-pot!

MISS MOUSE: *(As before.)* Come away, I say!

CAT: *(Looking into the pot.)* Truly, the fat is kept hard and cool here.

MISS MOUSE: I pray you come away! Mother does not so much as let me look into it. 'T is not yet time, she says.

CAT: *(Looking again into pot.)* Exactly! *(She leaves the pot and joins Miss Mouse.)* 'T is just what I'll tell my kittens about my grease-pot when I have bought it.

MISS MOUSE: Ah, then you have kittens at home?

CAT: *(Nodding.)* Such beautiful kittens! The eldest is white, with brown marks.

MISS MOUSE: He must be charming!

CAT: I've a mind to tell you his name. First, though, run out to see if your dear mother is not coming.

(Miss Mouse nods and runs out. The Cat quickly creeps to the grease-pot and licks the top off. She crosses to the window just as Miss Mouse returns.)

MISS MOUSE: Mother is nowhere to be seen. Now what did you name your eldest child?

CAT: Top-off.

MISS MOUSE: Top-off? Why, that is a curious name! Is it common in your family?

CAT: Oh, no! My second child has a white ring around his neck.

MISS MOUSE: Remarkable!

CAT: Very!

MISS MOUSE: What did you name him?

CAT: I gave him an unusual name. I will tell you what it is. First, though, run out to see if your dear mother is coming.

(Miss Mouse nods and runs out. The Cat creeps to the grease-pot and eats half the fat; then crosses to the window. Miss Mouse returns.)

MISS MOUSE: Mother is nowhere to be seen. Now what did you name your second child?

CAT: Half-out.

MISS MOUSE: Half-out? I never heard such a name! 'T is not in the calendar, I'm sure.

CAT: What does that matter, if it pleases me? Now the last child is really a wonder. He is quite black and has little white claws, but not a single white hair on his body.

MISS MOUSE: What have you named him?

CAT: I'm afraid that will please you no better than the others, but still I will tell you. First, though, run to see if your dear mother is not coming.

(Miss Mouse nods and runs out. The Cat creeps to the pot and eats all the fat. She then crosses to the window.)

CAT: What one begins one must needs finish.

(Miss Mouse returns.)

MISS MOUSE: Mother is nowhere to be seen. Now tell me what you named your youngest child.

CAT: All-out.

MISS MOUSE: All-out? Why, that is more curious than the others. I have never seen it in print.

CAT: *(Glaring at Miss Mouse.)* You never will!

MISS MOUSE: *(Frightened.)* What do you mean?

CAT: *(Preparing to spring.)* I mean to put you down with the fat!

MISS MOUSE: Help! Help!

(Enter Mother Mouse just as the Cat clutches her daughter and jumps out of the window with her. Mother Mouse crosses and looks into the empty grease-pot.)

MOTHER MOUSE: *(Sighing sadly.)* 'T was ever thus! Show your grease-pot, and you'll go with it!