



MR. CAT FROM CATVILLE

Once upon a time, there lived a farmer and his cat in a house by the woods. The older the cat got, the lazier he was. Soon he became so lazy, he would do nothing but lie on the oven and snore all day. The farmer couldn't even remember the last time the cat had caught a single mouse. One day, he thought, "What good is an old lazy cat lying about on the oven to me? I'll take him out to the woods. He can go wherever he wants and take care of himself, for once." The farmer grabbed the cat, took him far into the forest, and left him there. The cat was very unsettled. He'd been asleep, but suddenly he was travelling and now he was all alone in the woods! He took a second to gather his wits about him, looked around, and noticed a sleek red fox.

"Who are you?" she asked.

"I'm Mr. Cat, from Catville," the cat said.

"You know what?" said the fox. "I like you! If you have nowhere to go, come with me. You could be my husband and I could be your wife."

Mr. Cat liked the sound of being someone's husband, so the fox took him to her cottage.

A week later, the fox was walking through the woods when she chanced upon her friend the hare.

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“Oh, dear fox,” he said, “it’s been so long since I last paid you a visit! I’ll come by and say hello next time I pass your cottage.”

“It would probably be better if you didn’t... Mr. Cat from Catville lives with me now. If he sees you, he’ll rip you to pieces.”

This scared the hare, and he made sure to stay as far away from her cottage as possible. The next day, he told his friends – a wolf, a bear and a boar – about the dangerous creature now living with the fox. They were all really scared, but they were also very curious and wanted to see it with their own eyes. Who was Mr. Cat, and where in the world was Catville? After a lot of thinking, they came up with a plan – they would cook some lunch and invite the fox and the cat over.

The wolf got meat in the village, the boar dug up potatoes at a nearby field, the hare ran to the garden for some cabbage and the bear went to the forest to pick up some honey so that they would have something sweet to eat after lunch. When the food was ready, they couldn’t agree who should go to the fox and the cat to invite them over. They were all too scared.

“If things went sideways, I wouldn’t be able to run away,” said the bear, nervously. The boar quickly joined him, saying he, too, could not run very far. The wolf insisted he was too old and his sight wasn’t as sharp as it used to be. In the end it was down to the hare to go. He set off, numb with fright, towards the fox’s cottage. Mr. Cat was napping on the couch when the hare arrived, but the fox was looking out the window and noticed the hare nervously shuffling around on his hind legs, looking over at the house anxiously.

She opened the window and said, “Whatever are you doing here, my dear hare?”

“The wolf, the bear, the boar and I would like to invite you to have lunch with us and we kindly ask you to bring your Mr. Cat from Catville,” said the hare.

“Oh, alright then, we’ll come. But take my advice. When you see us coming, you’d better hide yourselves as quickly as you can. Otherwise Mr. Cat will maul all of you to death.”

The hare went back to tell his friends the news: “They’re coming, they are, but we need to hide or else he’ll maul us to death.”

Soon after, the fox arrived with Mr. Cat right behind her. The bear quickly climbed

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up a tree, the wolf hid in the bushes, the boar buried himself in a pile of leaves and the hare cowered behind the boar.

When the pair got to the table and the cat saw all the food, he jumped up and immediately started stuffing himself. As soon as he was full, he stretched his bones a bit and contentedly fell asleep right there on the table. The fox continued eating as though nothing out of the ordinary was happening.

The rest of the animals watched quietly until, suddenly, a wasp bit the boar on his tail. The boar yelped and swung his tail, rustling the old leaves rustled. The noise woke up the cat, who thought it was a mouse in the pile of leaves. He hadn't gone after a mouse in a very long time, but he was feeling well rested after his nap and he jumped towards the pile. All at once, the startled boar took to his heels, the hare following in his wake. Seeing such a large animal emerge from the leaves gave Mr. Cat such a fright that he leapt up a tree – right where the bear was hiding. The terrified bear wanted to escape and started climbing to the top, but the tree couldn't support his weight and – bam! The bear fell right into the bushes where the wolf was hiding. All of them, shaking with fear, ran for their lives into the depths of the forest. Still sitting at the table, the fox chuckled and took another bite of food.

They were deep in the forest when the animals stopped running. When they all finally calmed down, the bear looked at the boar and said, with a shaking voice, “He was such a small cat, but it's a miracle he didn't eat us all alive!”