

PUSS IN BOOTS

by Michele L. Vacca

(Based on the famous French tale)

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CHARACTERS:

OLIVER, The Awful OGRE Of ORMANDY

KING KASPAR of KASABLANCA

PRINCESS MARGUERITE, his daughter

JACK, later The MARQUIS Of CARABAS

PUSS IN BOOTS, his friend

PENELOPE PURRR, Princess Marguerite's cat

PUSS IN BOOTS PRODUCTION NOTES:

CHARACTERS:

OLIVER THE AWFUL OGRE OF ORMANDY – the thirteenth ogre in his family line. He performs his traditional Ogrelly duties reluctantly, secretly yearning to retire and raise flowers in his castle garden.

KING KASPAR OF KASABLANCA – a genial and pleasant ruler, who prefers to have life proceed peacefully and happily so that he can do as he pleases.

PRINCESS MARGUERITE – King Kaspar's daughter, and a lady possessed of considerable charm and intelligence. More practical than her father, she frequently offers him very sensible advice about the Kingdom.

JACK (later the MARQUIS OF CARABAS) – a young man on his own in the world without money or possessions or friends except for his loyal cat, Puss.

PUSS (later PUSS IN BOOTS) – Jack's very unusual and clever cat, who devises a way to make his master's fortune (and his own, too, of course).

PENELOPE PURRR – Princess Marguerite's pet cat. In spite of her pampered, comfortable life, Penelope proves that she is clever and knows her way about the countryside.

COSTUMES:

Almost any style or historical period of "fairy tale" costumes will work well

for the play. It may help to keep in mind that Oliver the ogre is very rich, and would, no doubt, dress accordingly. The two cats, Puss and Penelope, can be dressed in a number of various ways, though a jump suit type of garment is the easiest to construct, and provides flexibility for the actors' movements.

SPECIAL MAKEUP:

If desired and the budget allows, the use of rubber prosthetic pieces can enhance the makeup of the two feline characters and that of the Ogre. Consultation with a makeup artist or with a merchant who specializes in such items is recommended.

SETTINGS:

The locations for the various scenes shift back and forth among three main areas; the forest, the Ogre's garden and a room in the King's castle. minimal representative pieces are all that are required, preferably pieces that are easily moved, and can serve multiple functions. For example, in a proscenium production of this play, two wall units on casters were constructed so that on one side they represented bushes in the woods, and on the other they were stone walls for the castle.

PROPERTIES; PUSS' GIFTS TO THE KING:

Puss picks up the gifts for King Kaspar by collecting items that have been discarded along the road. The more realistic these items are, the more effective are Puss' explanations of them. In other words, it is better to have a real television than to build a "prop" one. See the individual pages of the script for descriptions of the other "gifts".

MUSIC AND SOUND EFFECTS:

The off stage voices of the people heard fleeing from the Ogre can either be pre-recorded or performed live. The simplest method is to simply use the voices of the other cast members for these sequences. If you're expanding the cast to include extra people, then obviously these folks can appear on stage as they flee from the Ogre.

The use of music, live or taped, greatly enhances the production of this play.

PUSS IN BOOTS

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ACT I

(AS THE PLAY BEGINS SOFT AND PLEASANT MUSIC PLAYS. IT IS A QUIET AFTERNOON IN THE KINGDOM OF KASABLANCA. THE SETTING CONSISTS OF SEVERAL PLAYING AREAS. ONE PORTION OF THE STAGE REPRESENTS A ROAD NEAR THE PALACE OF THE KING. A PORTION OF THE OGRE'S GARDEN IS ANOTHER AREA. NEAR HIS GARDEN THERE IS A LARGE RURAL ROUTE STYLE MAILBOX WITH THE NAME OLIVER OGRE, ESQUIRE PAINTED ON THE SIDE. PERHAPS THE KING'S PALACE CAN BE SEEN IN THE DISTANCE.

SUDDENLY THE LIGHTS DIM, AND A DISTANT RUMBLING IS HEARD. LIGHTNING FLASHES, AND THE RUMBLING GROWS LOUDER. ONE VERY LOUD VOICE IS HEARD, GROWLING. THEN A MULTITUDE OF OTHER VOICES ARE HEARD SCREAMING AND SHOUTING.)

OGRE: (FROM OFF STAGE.) GRRRRRRRRRR!

A VOICE: (FROM OFF STAGE.) Here he comes! It's Oliver the Awful Ogre!!

VOICES: (FROM OFF STAGE.) Help! Help! Help! Run for your life! Here he comes! Run! Hurry! Here he comes! The Ogre! On, save me! Help! Help!

OGRE: (FROM OFF STAGE.) GRRRRRRRRRR!

(AS THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE FADE AWAY INTO THE DISTANCE, THUNDEROUS FOOTSTEPS ARE HEARD AS THE OGRE APPROACHES HIS GARDEN. GIVING A FINAL LOUD GROWL TO THE PEOPLE, HE APPEARS ON STAGE. OLIVER THE AWFUL OGRE IS VERY TALL, VERY CLUMSY,

AND NOT TERRIBLY BRIGHT. IN SPITE OF HIS LOUD VOICE AND FEARSOME REPUTATION HE IS AT HEART VERY GENTLE AND TERRIBLY SHY.)

OGRE: (AS HE ENTERS.) GRRRRRRR! (STUMBLES OVER A SMALL STONE.) Uh? (GROWLS AT THE STONE.) GRRRRRRR! GRRRRRRR! Where are you? (LOOKING TO SEE IF ANY OF THE PEOPLE ARE STILL NEARBY. HE CONTINUES TO GROWL TENTATIVELY IN CASE HE IS BEING OBSERVED.) Grrr. Grrrr. (LOOKS BEHIND A TREE.) Grr! (LOOKS UNDER A LARGE ROCK.) Grr?? (SEES ANOTHER TREE.) Aha! (HE TIPTOES OVER TO THE TREE, AND LOOKS BEHIND IT.) Grrrr! (BUT THERE IS NO ONE THERE.) Grrrr! (HE BACKS UP SLOWLY, LOOKING AROUND CAREFULLY AND SUSPICIOUSLY.) Grrrr! (THEN HE BUMPS INTO SOMETHING, A TREE, OR A ROCK PERHAPS AND HE IS VERY STARTLED AND FRIGHTENED.) Agggghhhh! (HE RUNS TO HIDE BEHIND THE NEAREST TREE. TREMBLING WITH FEAR, HE GROWLS SHAKILY.) G-G-G-G-Grrr. (AFTER A MOMENT HE RECOVERS HIMSELF, AND SLOWLY COMES OUT FROM HIS HIDING PLACE. HE STUMBLES OVER ANOTHER STONE, AND GROWLS AT IT.) Grrrr! (HE KICKS IT FIERCELY.) Grrrr! (STUBS HIS TOE IN THE PROCESS.) ouch! Grr! Ouch! Grr! Ouch! (HE HOPS AROUND ON ONE FOOT, AND THEN SITS ON A POCK OR STUMP, HOLDING HIS FOOT, AND MOANING WITH PAIN.) Ohhhh! Ouch! (GLARES AT HIS FOOT.) Grrrr! (HE LOOKS UP AND HIS FOOT DROPS TO THE GROUND – IT HURTS.) Ouch! Grr! (SIGHS HEAVILY.) Ah, me! What a life! (SIGHS AGAIN.) Ah, me! (TO THE AUDIENCE.) I suppose you think it's easy being a mean and nasty Ogre. Well, it's not. Every day – no matter what – I have to stomp around the countryside, growling and yelling and scaring everybody. The people expect it. It's a tradition around here. No matter what the weather is like – rain or snow or hail – every day the Ogre has to go out and stomp around the kingdom. It's no fun, I can tell you that. Once in a while

wouldn't be too bad. I mean, everybody has their grouchy, growly days, but not every day. Nobody's grouchy every day. Not even an Ogre. But like I said, it's a tradition around here – my father was Oscar the Ogre, my grandfather was Orville the Ogre, and so on back through the years. So here I am, Oliver the Awful Ogre, the thirteenth Ogre in my family. (SIGHS.) Oh, well. I think I'll go home. I've done my duty for today. No more growling and yelling until tomorrow. (HE STARTS OFF, AND STUMBLES. THIS STARTLES HIM.) Agggghh! Who pushed me? (HE HIDES BEHIND A TREE.) Grrrr! Who's there? (HE PEEKS OUT AND OF COURSE THERE IS NO ONE THERE.) Ahhhh! No one. That's good. Maybe I'll be able to sneak all the way back home without seeing anybody. Then I won't have to do any more growling and stomping today. I'd like that. (AS HE STARTS TO SNEAK OFF, SUDDENLY A VOICE YELLS –)

A VOICE: (FROM OFF STAGE.) There he is!

OGRE: (STARTLED, STUMBLES AGAIN.) Grrrr? Who's there? Grrrr!

VOICES OFF STAGE: (ACCOMPANIED BY SCREAMS AND YELLS.) Where? Where is he? The Ogre!? Run for your life! Help! Help! Here he comes! Oliver the Awful Ogre!

OGRE: (TO HIMSELF.) Grr! Drat! They saw me! Now I'll have to growl and stomp and yell all the way home. Grr! And I have a sore throat, too. (SIGHS.) Oh, well, I better get on with it. (TAKES A DEEP BREATH.) Here goes! GRRRRRRR! GRRRRRRR!

VOICES FROM OFF STAGE: Watch out! Here he comes! The Ogre! Help! Help!

OGRE: (AS HE GOES OFF STOMPING AND GROWLING.) GRRRRRRR!

(THE SHOUTS AND SCREAMS AND GROWLS FADE AWAY INTO THE DISTANCE. ONCE AGAIN PLEASANT AND QUIET MUSIC PLAYS. THEN THERE IS A SHORT FANFARE. KING KASPAR AND HIS DAUGHTER, THE PRINCESS MARGUERITE, ENTER. THEY ARE ACCOMPANIED BY MARGUERITE'S PET CAT,

PENELOPE PURRR.)

PRINCESS: The ogre is gone, Papa.

KING: I tell you, Marguerite, something has to be done about that Ogre. He's ruining the property values in the Kingdom.

PRINCESS: But what can you do, Papa? The country of Kasablanca has always had an Ogre. It's a tradition. Besides, people from far and wide come here to see our Ogre. He's a wonderful tourist attraction.

KING: I know. I know. But after all, Marguerite, I am the King of this country, right?

PRINCESS: Of course you are, Papa.

KING: And I should be able to take a walk or go on a picnic if I want to, right?

PRINCESS: Of course, Papa.

KING: But how can I? Hmmm? I tell you, Marguerite, things are in sorry shape when a man is afraid to set foot outside his own palace.

PRINCESS: But what can you do about the Ogre, Papa?

KING: Oh, how should I know? A king my age shouldn't have to go out slaying dragons and conquering ogres. I did all that as a young prince. All I want now is to be able to rule the kingdom, and go for a walk or have a picnic once in a while. But I can't even do that! Every time I go out that Oliver Ogre is out stomping around scaring everyone, and mashing the corn crops with his big feet! (HE HAS BEEN STOMPING HIS OWN FEET TO DEMONSTRATE AND NOW ACCIDENTALLY STEPS ON PENELOPE'S TAIL.)

PENELOPE: (IN PAIN.) Yow!! Meow!!

PRINCESS: Careful, Papa. You stepped on Penelope's tail. (PATTING HER ON THE HEAD.) It's all right, Penelope. Papa didn't mean to hurt you.

PENELOPE: Meow, meow?

PRINCESS: Of course not.

KING: Sorry, Cat. (REACHES OUT TO PAT HER.)

PENELOPE: Hisssssss!

PRINCESS: Penelope!

PENELOPE: (SHRUGS.) Meow. (TO PRINCESS.) Purrrrrrr!

KING: She hates me. I know she does.

PRINCESS: No, she doesn't. You don't hate Papa, do you, Penelope?

PENELOPE: (LOOKS AT KING, SHRUGS.) Meow, meow.

KING: (TO PRINCESS.) You see? She hates me.
PRINCESS: She's just shy, Papa. Isn't that right, Penelope?
PENELOPE: (AGREES.) Meow, meow.
KING: Shy, eh?
PENELOPE: (TO KING.) Hisssssss!
KING: (TO HER.) Oh, hiss – to you, too!
PENELOPE: (INSULTED.) Meow! (SHE STALKS AWAY FROM HIM.)
KING: (GLOOMILY.) Well, anyway, what's to be done about Oliver the Ogre?
PRINCESS: I have an idea, Papa. It might be worth trying.
KING: I'll try almost anything. What's your idea?
PRINCESS: Well, why don't you write a letter to Oliver the Ogre, and ask him to please not step on the corn crops anymore.
KING: Hmmm. Not bad. Not bad at all, Marguerite. I like that idea. It can't do any harm to try, I suppose.
PRINCESS: Of course not, Papa.
KING: Come help me write the letter, then. We'll send it off today. After lunch. I'm hungry. (AS HE STARTS OFF, HE STEPS ON PENELOPE'S TAIL AGAIN.)
PENELOPE: (IN PAIN.) Yowl!! Meow!!
PRINCESS: Oh, Papa. Not again.
KING: Sorry, Cat.
PENELOPE: Hisssssss!!
KING: I said I was sorry.
PRINCESS: Come along, Penelope.
PENELOPE: (IN A HUFF.) Meow. Meow.

(LED BY THE KING, THE THREE OF THEM GO OFF TO HAVE LUNCH. AFTER A MOMENT JACK ENTERS. HE IS A VERY POOR YOUNG MAN, SHABBILY DRESSED, CARRYING ALL HE OWNS IN THE WORLD IN HIS SMALL KNAPSACK. HE IS ACCOMPANIED BY PUSS, HIS CAT AND COMPANION. AT THE MOMENT JACK APPEARS TO BE VERY DOWNCAST. HE DROPS HIS SACK ON THE GROUND, SITS ON A NEARBY ROCK, AND SIGHS DEEPLY. PUSS SITS NEXT TO HIM, AND ALSO SIGHS.)

JACK: (SIGHING AGAIN.) Oh, woe is me! What can I do?
Woe is me! (SIGHS.) I shouldn't just sit here and feel

sorry for myself, but I don't know what else to do.

PUSS: Meow? (LOOKING INTO THE SACK.) Meow, meow, meow?

JACK: I know, Puss. I'm hungry, too. But we finished all the food, remember?

PUSS: (NODS SADLY.) Meow

JACK: Poor Puss.

PUSS: (AGREES.) Meow.

JACK: Here we are – all alone in the world.

PUSS: (SADLY.) Meow!

JACK: Just you and me.

PUSS: (ECHOING JACK.) Meow-meow-meow.

JACK: Me and you.

PUSS: (ECHOING JACK.) Meow-meow-meow.

JACK: (SIGHS.) Ah, me!

PUSS: (SIGHS.) Me-ow!

(THERE IS A PAUSE, DURING WHICH JACK CONTINUES TO SIT SADLY, MUSING TO HIMSELF. PUSS STEPS AWAY FROM HIM, LOOKING OVER HIS SHOULDER TO MAKE SURE THAT JACK IS NOT WATCHING OR LISTENING. THEN HE SPEAKS TO THE AUDIENCE.)

PUSS: Meow! – I mean – Hello! My name is Puss. (POINTS.) That's Jack. As you may have noticed, he's very sad. Poor Jack. Actually, he has a very good reason to be sad. You see, Jack has two older brothers and two older sisters. Last week Jack's father decided to divide up everything he owned and give each one of his children a share of property so they could all set out on their own—and make their way in the world. Now, Jack's father is not at all a rich man, so by the time he came to his youngest child – that is, Jack – there was nothing left – except me, Puss, the family cat. Now Jack is a very nice person, and so he didn't tell his father that he was disappointed. But I could tell. Jack has been very kind to me these last few days while we've been out on our own. He even gave me the last bit of bread and cheese. But I know what he's thinking now. He's thinking – how is a cat going to help him make his way in the world? Not only that – he's thinking that now he has two mouths to feed instead of just

one. Poor Jack. I understand how he feels. But I do know of a way to help him. Of course, he won't believe me at first, but I'll convince him that my plan is worth a try. Don't you think I ought to help Jack? (AUDIENCE REACTIONS.) Me, too. Well, here I go. (HE STEPS BACK TO JACK, WHO HAS NOT MOVED ONCE DURING THIS ENTIRE LONG SPEECH.)

PUSS: (TO JACK.) Meow?

JACK: I told you, Puss, we ate all the food. I'm sorry there's nothing left. Poor Puss, I haven't taken very good care of you. I confess I don't know what to do. We have no money, no food, and – (SIGHS.)

PUSS: Listen, Jack, I have a plan.

JACK: (QUITE STARTLED.) Huh? What was that?

PUSS: I said – I have a plan.

JACK: (SHAKES HIS HEAD.) I know we haven't eaten in two days, but –

PUSS: Jack!

JACK: (TO THE AUDIENCE.) Oh, I must be hearing things. I thought (LAUGHS NERVOUSLY.) – ha, ha, ha – I thought I heard Puss – ha, ha, ha – speak to me

PUSS: Listen, Jack –

JACK: (BACKING AWAY FROM HIM.) No, I don't believe it. (LAUGHS NERVOUSLY AGAIN.) Ha, ha, ha. You didn't say anything. It's all in my mind. I'm just hungry, that's all. (TO AUDIENCE.) Cats don't talk – I mean – whoever heard of a talking cat, right? It's just my imagination, isn't it? (AUDIENCE REACTIONS.) It isn't?? You mean – you mean – he really can talk? Oh! Oh, my! Oh, my, my. Oh, my, my, my! Ohhhhhhh! (HE FAINTS.)

PUSS: Jack? Jack, are you all right? Jack! Speak to me! (TO AUDIENCE.) I guess the shock was too much for him. Jack! Wake up! Jack!

JACK: (WAKING UP.) Ohhhhhhh! What happened?

PUSS: You fainted.

JACK: I did? But why? Oh! I remember! You – you – you –

PUSS: Yes.

JACK: You can – you can – talk!

PUSS: Right!

JACK: (FAINTS AGAIN.) Ohhhhhhh!

PUSS: Jack!? It's all right, Jack! Wake up!

JACK: (WAKING AGAIN.) Ohhhh! You – you really – really can talk

PUSS: Right!

JACK: A cat – ha, ha, ha – a cat – who can talk.

PUSS: As well as you.

JACK: I wasn't dreaming.

PUSS: Not at all. I really can talk.

JACK: Well, what do you know about that? (TO AUDIENCE.) He can talk. (LAUGHS NERVOUSLY.) Ha, ha, ha.

PUSS: Listen, Jack, I have a plan.

JACK: A plan? For what?

PUSS: A plan to make our fortune!

JACK: Fortune? Oh, Puss, what are you talking about? A fortune, indeed!

PUSS: Trust me, Jack. What do you have to lose?

JACK: Absolutely nothing, I suppose.

PUSS: Right. Now, Jack . . .

– END OF E-MAIL “SAMPLE” SEGMENT –

THERE ARE 52 TOTAL PAGES IN THE
COMPLETE VERSION OF *ON STAGE!* PUSS IN
BOOTS.