

PUSS IN BOOTS

Adapted by Noah Smith

From the story by Charles Perrault

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Puss in Boots

- 2 -

STORY OF THE PLAY

When a young guy, named Guy, discovers that his inheritance consists only of a cat and a pair of boots, he is highly distressed, until he gets to know the cat. Boots, as the cat is called, vows to help Guy achieve his goal of marrying the beautiful princess from next door. Boots also helps free the town from the clutches of Ugolin, an evil ogre who has magical powers to turn himself or others into any animal he chooses.

Guy and Boots trick the king and queen into thinking Guy is the "Marquis of Carabas" and also trick the ogre into turning himself into an insect who meets an abrupt end, courtesy of Boot's boot. Boy gets girl, the town is freed, magical spells are broken, and much fun is had along the way.

PUSS IN BOOTS was presented at the Richard Glenn Gettell Amphitheater on the Mount Holyoke College Campus, August 2-5, 2000. It was directed by Noah Smith with Susan Daniels as artistic director. The scenery was designed by Nicole Santaella; costumes were designed by Susan LaBonte; sound was designed by Ben Johnson; and properties were designed by Katie Doyle and Zachariah Goodwin. The stage manager was Laura Jo Anderson; the director and assistant director of Students on Stage were Tom Reing and S. Ann Hall; and the technical director was Jay Miller. The cast, in order of appearance, was as follows:

Boots ... Victoria Mack

King ... Brian Smolin

Queen ... Kate Sandberg

Ugolin ... Bryan Wilkins

Guy ... Maxwell Williams

Executor ... Jim Cavanaugh

Genevieve ... Arielle Faye-Foulds

The Townsfolk ... The Students on Stage (Christina Aldrich, Virginia Constant, Emma Funk, Alison Green, Caitlin Hannahan, Kieran Hart, Neil Krulewitz, Katie McCauley, Rylan Morsbach, Chelsea Narey, Alice Olmstead, Kassie Pearson-Pomerantz, and Dustin Viands)

Puss in Boots

- 3 -

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 m, 3 w, extras)

BOOTS: The cat.

KING: Jean-Louis-Robert-Jacques-Jean.

QUEEN: Marie-Annette-Yvette-Suzette-Marie.

UGOLIN: An ogre.

GUY: A miller's son. (His name is pronounced as "Ghee."
Rhymes with "flea.")

GENEVIEVE: A princess.

***TOWNSFOLK:** People of the town.

THE EXECUTOR: Voice over.

**(The roles of the townsfolk can be portrayed by children or actors of the same age as your principals. There were twelve villagers in the original production. You could probably get away with having as few as six, but twenty would probably be too many.)*

SETTING

A small town in France, 1700s. Three buildings are evident, in a rather incongruous way. The first is the royal palace of the king and queen. The second is a mill, ideally complete with windmill blades et al. Finally, there is another palace-type thing, though this evil dwelling more resembles a cave. It is the home of Ugolin the Ogre.

PROPS

Food; bag with a pair of boots in it; bag of gold; book; suit of clothes for Guy; trumpet; weapons; and fierce animal costume pieces as bear and lion. Also, optional top hat and bow tie.

SOUND EFFECTS

Fanfare, magical sound, splash.

Puss in Boots

- 4 -

NOTES FROM THE AUTHOR

This script is adapted from the story by Charles Perrault, the French author who wrote fairy tales in the 1690s. The story dates back to at least 16th century Italy and variations on it were told by Creole descendants as early as the 18th century in the parts of North America which eventually became the Louisiana Purchase.

I wrote this, vaguely, in the style of Ancient Roman comedy, Plautus. Those tended to be about a servant helping his master get the girl and usually had a set of an exterior street with three houses on it. But that's more or less where the similarities end. People familiar with the similarly based "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" might recognize the play's first line.

When the Villagers introduce themselves at the beginning of the play, they should give their names and their professions in the town. Have some fun making up French names. My favorites that we had were Marie Formoney and Francois De Foie Gras. Some of the professions should be wacky, too, but have a couple of normal ones at first so the wacky ones act as punch lines. When the villagers pretend to be the marquis's servants, they should just introduce themselves as butler, footman, cook, etc.

Ugolin turning into a bear and a lion was chosen because I figured that children's theatres might have those costumes kicking around from productions of "Goldilocks" or "The Wizard of Oz." You may substitute other fierce animals for these if you have other costumes available, since there's not much sense in building new costumes for such little stage time ... though you would miss out on one of the best lines in the play, "King of the Jungle, baby!" These costumes can certainly be representational and of course need to be easy to put on and take off.

We're all clear on the Guy/guy/ghee thing, right? Our hero is named Guy, like Guy de Maupassant, not Guy like Guy Smiley. So, for instance when Genevieve sees Guy in his bathing suit, she calls him by name (Guy, hard G, rhymes with flee). The Queen, confused, says "Ghee?" (Still hard G. The H is there so you don't think it's, like, "golly gee.") Genevieve covers by saying "Ghee" (Still hard G.) "sundheit." Like gesundheit, but not. Get it? Hilarity with French and German!

In the original story, the Ogre turns into a mouse and the cat eats him. But I figured having one character eat another on stage might not be a great idea. The bug-squashing has less to do with Boots being a cat and more to do with her being a cat wearing boots, but it felt like a good compromise.

Puss in Boots

- 5 -

ACT I

(AT RISE: BOOTS enters from the audience. She speaks a lot of French in this first speech, but a French accent is not advised when she speaks English.)

BOOTS: Playgoers, I bid you welcome! Or, as we say in France, *bonjour!* *(Pauses, expects the audience to say "bonjour" back. Some will, but not enough.)* Pardon me, but that is the height of rudeness! And in France, we do not tolerate rudeness. But, oh, of course, how foolish of me. You don't speak French, do you? Well, let me teach you. "Bonjour" means "good day." This is how we say hello in France. So when I say "Bonjour," you say "Bonjour" right back. Shall we try? *Bonjour!* *(Audience says, "Bonjour.")* *Comment allez-vous?* *(Confused response.)* No, no, no, no, no. "Comment allez-vous" means "How are you?" So when I say, "Comment allez-vous," you should say, "Tres bien." This means "very well." I'm sure some of you aren't doing very well, but frankly, I don't have time for that. Let's try this - remember, you say "Tres bien." - *Comment allez-vous?* *(Audience responds.)* Ah! *Magnifique!* Let's put it all together. *Bonjour!* *(Audience responds.)* *Comment allez-vous?* *(Audience responds.)* *Wonderful!* You're speaking like natives! Oh my, how rude of me, I haven't introduced myself yet. My name is Boots. I know I'm not wearing any boots right now. But I promise I'll get some soon. Let me show you around. This is the center of town, a hustling little village in the countryside. Wait a minute! Where's the hustle? Townsfolk! Townsfolk! Where are you, townsfolk?

(The TOWNSFOLK enter.)

TOWNSFOLK: *(Ad lib.)* Here we are. *Bonjour.* Sorry we're late.

Puss in Boots

- 6 -

BOOTS: I was just showing these good people around town, and there was no town! Oh, never mind. Townsfolk, introduce yourselves. *(The TOWNSFOLK introduce themselves by name and profession.)* Ladies and gentlemen, the shortest town in France.

TOWNSFOLK: Oui, oui!

BOOTS: Pretty typical little town, as you can see. Oh, except for-- *(The TOWNSFOLK cower.)* But we'll get to that later. *(The TOWNSFOLK stop cowering.)* Right over here, good people, is the royal palace. Inside these walls live the king and queen of all of ... this town. And I think it's just about time for them to make their appearance before the people.

(A FANFARE plays. KING and QUEEN enter.)

KING: Oh darling, look. The people are here. We must greet them.

QUEEN: Of course, dear. Say hello to them.

KING: Well, I can't just say, "Hello!" I have to be introduced! I'm the king! Introduce me, dear.

QUEEN: Well, I can't speak to them without an introduction, either! I'm the queen!

KING: Oh, of course! How foolish of me. I'll introduce you, dear. *(Addresses the CROWD.)* Beloved subjects, it is my honor to present to you Her Royal Majesty, Queen Marie-Annette-Yvette-Suzette-Marie!

(The TOWNSFOLK applaud the QUEEN.)

QUEEN: Thank you, thank you. Bonjour, subjects.

TOWNSFOLK: Bonjour!

QUEEN: And now, it is my great pleasure to introduce to you, His Royal Majesty King Jean-Louis-Robert-Jacques-Jean.

(TOWNSFOLK applaud the KING.)

KING: Oh, oh, you're too kind, gentle subjects. Bonjour.

End of Freeview

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