

Dramatis Personae

Puss: Lead Boy. A crafty cat in a smashing pair of boots, determined to make his master a lord in order to live the easy life.

Carl Millerson aka the Marquis of Carabas: Puss' new master. Third born son of a miller, has no place being Marquis of anything.

Hilda Climon, the Lady of Shallots: The Dame. Lady of a county whose wealth is based on selling shallots.

Hope Climon: Niece of Hilda, who Hilda is saving for marriage to a proper gentlemen. Which Carl is, thus far, not.

Orville the Ogre: The mean ogre who lives in a nearby castle. Determined to get back at Puss for making him look foolish.

Lights up on a simple medieval town. Puss leaps in: Puss is wearing his signature boots.

Puss: What ho, fellow travelers! You seem like a band of people in the mood for a story. Well, you're in luck! For I have a story to tell you. A story of the bravest, cleverest, best-looking person in all the land...

Carl sweeps in, dressed in finery.

Carl: The Marquis of Carabas!

Puss: *(deflates slightly)* Oh... hi there, master, didn't... didn't know you were back there.

Carl: But... we're telling my story, right? The story of how I became—

Puss: Sure sure sure. That's the one. That's the story. But we're at the beginning, so... maybe go get changed?

Carl: Right. Yes. Good thinking.

Puss: I live to serve.

Carl: Thanks, Puss.

Carl exits.

Puss: liiiiis he gone? Okay. Good. So, yes, that was my master. He's... he's part of the story, yes, but this story is actually about the person who made my master the man he is... that person being the magnificent, the marvelous, the many-talented ME! Puss! In boots. *(does a grand flourish)* That said. There will come a point in the story when I'm going to need all of you... that is, the gentle people of the village *(winks)*, to clap and cheer for the man I'm calling the Marquis of Carabas. So... maybe we should practice that. Tell you what. I'll pop out, then hop back in, and you'll all clap and cheer. Okay? You've got this, you guys. You're gonna nail it. Let's give it a whirl.

Puss exits, then jumps back in with a flourish. Gods willing, people clap.

Puss: That's the stuff! Great job! But, tell you what... it's gonna be *super* important that you nail it later on, so... we'll keep practicing! Any time I, the magnanimous Puss in Boots, enter the stage, clap and cheer like you just did. Or louder. And happier. Let's go with that. But not all is well in our fair land! A foul beast stalks through the woods and villages and... dark, spooky places everywhere! The fiendish Orville the Ogre! When you see him, I need you to boo, really loud! Trust me on this, he super deserves it. You'll see. Give it a try! Boo with all of your might!

Pause for boos.

Puss: Yes, good! Also, for a big, ugly ogre, Orville can be pretty sneaky. If he's sneaking up behind me, you tell me. Or my master. Or whoever. Just yell "Behind you!" Okay? Give it a try! One, two, three, "BEHIND YOU!" Brilliant! You guys are the best. Last thing... people in these woods can be really stubborn. I might need your help with that. So if someone says "Oh yes I am," shout along with me "Oh no you're not!" Or, you know, vice versa. Let's try it out! "Oh yes I am!" and you say? (*repeat call and response*) Yes, that's it! Okay. So. I'm going to disappear for a minute, but I'll be right back. In the meantime, I take you back to my and my master's humble beginnings... back to the village of Cipolla!

Puss exits. Carl enters, carrying several boxes in front of him. Hope also enters, wearing a hood and moving sneakily. Hope sees Carl, well, the parts of him not obscured by the boxes. She scurries over to him.

Hope: Excuse me, sir?

Carl: What? Where—(*looks over the top of his boxes*) Oh! Hi! Welcome to our wonderful village of Cipolla! Produce capital of the kingdom!

Hope: I thought you mostly farmed onions.

Carl: Well... yes. But the city council says they have big plans, so... that is a stupid story to bore a lovely newcomer with, can I help you? With something? Directions, or dinner plans?

Hope: I'm a little lost. Can you help me find the fruit cart?

Carl: Ahead and to your right.

Hope: Thanks, sir. Good luck with your boxes.

Hope wanders off.

Carl: Thanks! I... wow...

Puss (sans boots) leaps in behind Carl, poses heroically, and awaits applause. Prompt audience if applause is slow. Puss runs up to Carl.

Carl: She is--

Puss: Excuse me, sir!

Carl: Agh! (*jumps, sending boxes flying*)

Puss: You dropped some things.

Carl: I know that I-- Where did you come from?

Puss: Sorry to alarm, but you look like a man in need of companionship.

Carl: (*gazing after Hope*) I'm starting to think that's true...

Puss: Specifically, companionship of the feline variety! Such as myself! The wittiest, cleverest, most handsome cat in all the land! Puss... in Socks! (*does a grand flourish, but slips a little in his socks*)

Carl: (*finally looking at Puss*) Puss in Socks?

Puss: You don't like it?

Carl: Well...

Puss: You don't like it.

Carl: It's just...

Puss: Lacks punch? Pizzazz? Showmanship?

Carl: It's a little odd.

Puss: To be honest, I've been between masters for a while now, thought I should find a way to stand out.

Carl: And you picked socks?

Puss: It's a work in progress.

Carl: Well... I do have some mice I need to get rid of.

Puss: Make that *two* ways to stand out.

Carl: You're a cat who can't catch mice.

Puss: I *can* catch mice, when the *mood* strikes, I'm not *helpless*, I just don't *love* it. All brute force, no style, no chance for wit.

Carl: I work in a mill, mice are a bit of an issue.

Puss: Well. We can... we can talk about that.

Carl: So... what do you offer?

Puss: The same as most cats not defined by their bloodlust. Warmth, companionship, and unflinching loyalty to—*(sees Hope cross the stage)* stop the presses, who is that?

Carl: That's what I want to know!

Puss: A chance to prove my worth! I'll find out who this lovely lass is and report back!

Carl: Great, thanks!

Puss starts to leave, but Carl stops him.

Carl: Wait.

Puss: What?

Carl: You wouldn't be doing this so you can see if she'd give you a cushier home than my mouse-infested mill, would you?

Puss: ...You're very clever for a miller, you know that?

Carl: Well—

Puss: Possessed of a keen analytical mind!

Carl: I like to think that—

Puss: A sharp one indeed, sir! I'll be right back!

Carl: You... didn't actually answer my question.

Puss: Did I not. Well—

Hilda: *(from off)* Hope Isabella Climon!

Carl drops his boxes again.

Hope: Oh no...

Carl: What was that?

Puss: Such a mighty below I've never heard...

Hilda Climon, the Lady of Shallots, enters.

Hilda: There you are, my dear.

Puss leaps in front of her.

Puss: Here I am indeed!

Hilda: Who are you?

Puss: I, my dear and... vast madam, am the magnificent—

Hilda: Wait—I don't actually need to know that. Hope!

Hilda crosses to Hope.

Puss: No, fine, I was probably done talking.

Hope: *(annoyed)* Hello, Auntie Hilda.

Hilda: You know you shouldn't be wandering the villages alone! It's unsafe and unseemly!

Hope: Yes, I know, it's not safe, ogres and bandits and blah blah blah...

Hilda: Ogres and bandits are hardly to be scoffed at! Orville the Ogre has been terrorizing every town within two days' ride! *(turns to the audience)* You people see what I'm saying, don't you? There is an *ogre* loose, attacking travelers and villages, and she acts like I'm telling her to be afraid of the dark or something. Am I crazy? Am I the crazy one? It's an ogre, not a bumblebee!

Hope: Don't drag those nice people into this. The real danger was what was going to happen if I spent one more minute locked up at home! It's a beautiful day, there are sights to be seen...

Puss: *(pops up between them)* Incredible sights!

Carl: *(pulls Puss away, keeping the boxes between him and the ladies)* Don't do that.

Hilda: Sights lose their appeal when you're being eaten by an ogre! And besides, there was a gentleman caller waiting to be seen back at home!

Hope: Another of your eligible nobleman bachelors?

Hilda: If you'd stop scaring them away—

Hope: Maybe I would if they weren't all so endlessly tiresome.

Hilda: Irregardless—

Puss: *(pops up between them)* Not a word.

Carl: *(pulls Puss away)* Really, don't.

Hilda: It is my duty, as head of the family, to find you a suitable husband, one who can keep our family from falling into ruin!

Hope: And I keep saying the key isn't strategic marriage, it's diversifying our family's interests above and beyond simple agricultural production, but every time I do your eyes glaze over. Yes, like that.

Hilda: Sorry, drifted off there for a minute. My point is, you abandoned a perfectly fine gentleman with a vast, vast dowry he was willing to give us. Life is hard, Hope, and you need a companion.

Puss: *(pops up between them)* A companion, you say?

Carl: *(pulls Puss away)* Seriously, stop it.

Hilda: Just who is this nosy feline, anyway?

Puss: As I was saying before, I am the magnificent, the wonderful, the dashing handsome Puss in—well the full title's a work in progress.

Hope: Lovely to meet you, Mr. Puss. My name is Hope.

Puss: A true pleasure to meet you as well, Ms. Hope.

Hope: And this is my aunt—

Hilda: Lady Hilda Climon.

Puss: And quite the hill it is...

Carl: Puss—

Puss: I never was one for mountaineering.

Carl: Puss.

Puss: Socks are not made for a climb like this—

Carl: She's very rich.

Puss: *(hugs Hilda)* But oh what a view at the summit!

Hilda: Well... yes. Thank you little creature. But anyway. Hope, I insist you return to the manor with me at once!

Hope: But Auntie...

Hilda: No buts! That fiendish ogre is still lurking around!

Puss: What's this ogre you keep mentioning?

Hilda: A horrible beast that has been preying on local farmers and their animals.

Puss: Which kinds of animals?

Hilda: All kinds.

Puss: Don't love that.

Hilda: *(to Hope)* Which is why we need to get you back somewhere safe and away from ogres or other nasty, mean, or nosy beasts.

Puss: *(to Carl)* Was that about me?

Carl: I think so.

Hilda: Come *along* Hope.

Hope: Yes, Auntie. See you around, Puss and... pile of boxes.

Hilda and Hope exit. Carl watches after them. Puss stands behind him.

Puss: Like her, huh?

Carl jumps and drops his boxes again.

Puss: You are just super easy to startle.

Carl: So maybe you could stop sneaking up on me!

Puss: What sneaking? I've been talking to you for five minutes. Maybe if I were that Hope lady you'd be able to remember I was here.

Carl: I think she might be the most beautiful woman I've ever seen. How did you know I liked her?

Puss: I have known you the entire time you've known her. Which, again, has been maybe five minutes.

Carl: It's useless, though... she'd never go for someone like me.

Puss: Yeah, she doesn't seem like she likes depressed people with no self confidence.

Carl: That's not what I meant!

Puss: Isn't it? That seemed to be your biggest problem to me. Well, other than not introducing yourself. Or moving the boxes so she could tell what you looked like. Actually there's a lot of problems here.

Carl: You're right. It's hopeless.

Puss: I didn't say that. Anything's possible if you really believe. And I believe that you can win over this woman.

Carl: You do?

Puss: Well--How rich is her aunt again?

Carl: She controls the onion farming in three counties.

Puss: Really.

Carl: That's why they call her the Lady of Shallots.

Puss: And if you were to marry into this family, you'd be sure to take any loyal pets with you, right?

Carl: Of course, I guess...

Puss: Then I, your faithful and ferociously cute pet, will help you to win your way into Hope Climon's heart! And her presumably large and wonderful family manor.

Carl: Is that why you're—

Puss: For shame even thinking it, sir! I have only the interests of my humble master in mind! My humble and dashing master... I don't think I ever I caught your name. Wow, you are not good at introducing yourself. We'll have to work on that.

Carl: Right. Sure. I'm Carl.

Puss: My humble and dashing master Carl! Mm. We'll work on that too.

Carl: We will?

Puss: You just get those boxes home and let me worry about Hope! And dinner. We'll need some dinner.

Carl: And you're going to catch it?

Puss: Sure thing!

Carl: I'm not really big on eating mice—

Puss: *I never said it would be mice.* Thank you.

Carl: Right, sure. You know what might help... *(opens a box, rummages)* One of my cousins left behind some things her son had outgrown... thought I might find a use for them... here we go. *(pulls out a pair of boots)*

Puss: Boots?

Carl: Have to be easier to get around in than socks, right?

Puss: They definitely would. Thanks very much, Master Carl!

Puss puts on the boots.

Carl: Fit pretty good.

Puss: Yes they do. So now begin... the adventures of Carl, and his faithful companion, Puss in Boots! *(flourishes)* Oh I like that. I like that a lot.

Puss and Carl exit. Set and boxes are cleared. Puss then re-enters.

Puss: That night, I set into the nearby forest to hunt up some dinner. Not my favourite thing, no, but it was time to prove to Carl that I could help him better his situation! Little did I know that the fearsome Orville the Ogre was out in the same woods. You remember what to do, right? Really let him have it!

Puss exits. Orville enters, carrying two sacks. Puss pops his head back in and encourages the audience to boo.

Orville: Ha ha! Your boos mean nothing to me! I, Orville the Ogre, rule these woods! All who try to pass through tremble with fear at my meanness! My meanness and utter, undefeatable cleverness! But wait! What's this nearby? Some tasty morsel of a feline slinking through the woods! Just right for an ogre snack to go with these grouse I caught earlier! I'll sneak up behind him and work my fiendish charms.

Orville sneaks upstage and Puss re-enters, looking for prey. Orville attempts to sneak up behind Puss. With luck, the audience remembers to shout "Behind you." Puss whips around and sees Orville.

Puss: YA! Hello there... fearsome stranger. Something I can help you with?