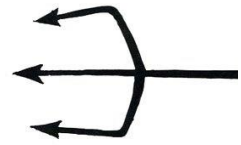


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THE CAT
AND THE
DEVIL



While on a visit to Copenhagen (the capital of Denmark), the Irish writer James Joyce sent his grandson, Steven, a ceramic cat filled with candy. Steven wrote back that what he had wanted was a *real* cat. Here is his grandfather's reply:

My dear Stevie,



There are no cats in Copenhagen. There are lots and lots of fish and bicycles, but there are no cats. Also, there are no policemen. All the Danish policemen spend the day at home in bed. They smoke big Danish cigars and drink buttermilk all day long. There are lots and lots of young boys dressed in red on bicycles going around all day with telegrams and letters and postcards. These are all for the policemen from old ladies and little girls who want to cross the road. When I come to Copenhagen again, I will bring a cat and show the Danes how it can cross the road without any instructions from a policeman.

Along with the note, Mr. Joyce included this story about a cat from the French town of Beaugency.



The Cat and the Devil by James Joyce

Beaugency is a tiny old town on the bank of Loire, France's longest river. It is also a very wide river, for France at least. At Beaugency it is so wide that if you wanted to cross it from one bank to the other you would have to take at least one thousand steps. Long ago the people of Beaugency, when they wanted to cross it, had to go in a boat for there was no bridge. And they could not make one for themselves or find anybody else to make one. So what were they to do?

The devil, who is always reading the newspapers, heard about this sad state of theirs, so he dressed himself up and came to call on the lord mayor of Beaugency, who was named Monsieur Alfred Byrne. This lord mayor was very fond of dressing himself up too. He wore a scarlet robe and always had a great golden chain round his neck even when he was fast asleep in bed with his knees in his mouth.

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The devil told the lord mayor what he had read in the newspaper, and said he could make a bridge for the people of Beaugency so that they could cross the river as often as they wished. He said he could make as good a bridge as ever was made, and make it in one single night.



The lord mayor asked him how much money he wanted for making such a bridge. "No money at all," said the devil, "all I ask is that the first one who crosses the bridge shall belong to me." "Good," said the lord mayor.



The night came down, all the people in Beaugency went to bed and slept. The morning came. And when they put their heads out of their windows they cried, "O Loire, what a fine bridge!" For they saw a fine strong stone bridge thrown across the wide river.

All the people ran down to the head of the bridge and looked across it. There was the devil, standing at the other side of the bridge, waiting for the first person who should cross it. But nobody dared to cross it for fear of the devil.

Then there was the sound of bugles - that was a sign for the people to be silent - and the lord mayor M. Alfred Byrne appeared in his great scarlet robe and wearing his heavy golden chain round his neck. He had a bucket of water in one hand and under his arm - the other arm - he carried a cat.



The devil stopped dancing when he saw him from the other side of the bridge and put up his long spyglass. All the people whispered to one another and the cat looked up at the lord mayor because in the town of Beaugency it was allowed that a cat should look at a lord mayor. When he was tired of looking at the lord mayor (because even a cat gets tired of looking at a lord mayor) he began to play with the lord mayor's heavy golden chain.

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When the lord mayor came to the head of the bridge every man held his breath and every woman held her tongue. The lord mayor put the cat down on the bridge and, quick as a thought, splash! He emptied the whole bucket of water over it.



The cat, who was now between the devil and the bucket of water, made up his mind quite as quickly and ran with his ears back across the bridge and into the devil's arms.



The devil was as angry as the devil himself. "You people of Beaugency," he shouted across the bridge, "from this time on you will be called the people with the courage of a cat!"

And he said to the cat: "Come here, my kitty cat. Don't fear me, little kitty cat. Are you cold, my wet little kitty? Come, come, the devil will take you home with him, O.K.? There you will be nice and warm."

And off he went with the cat.

And since that time the people of that town are called the cowardly cats of Beaugency.

But the bridge is there still and there are boys walking and riding and playing upon it.

P.S. The devil mostly speaks a language of his own called Bellsybabble which he makes up himself as he goes along, but when he is very angry he can speak quite bad French very well, though some who have heard him, say that he has a strong Dublin (Irish) accent.

