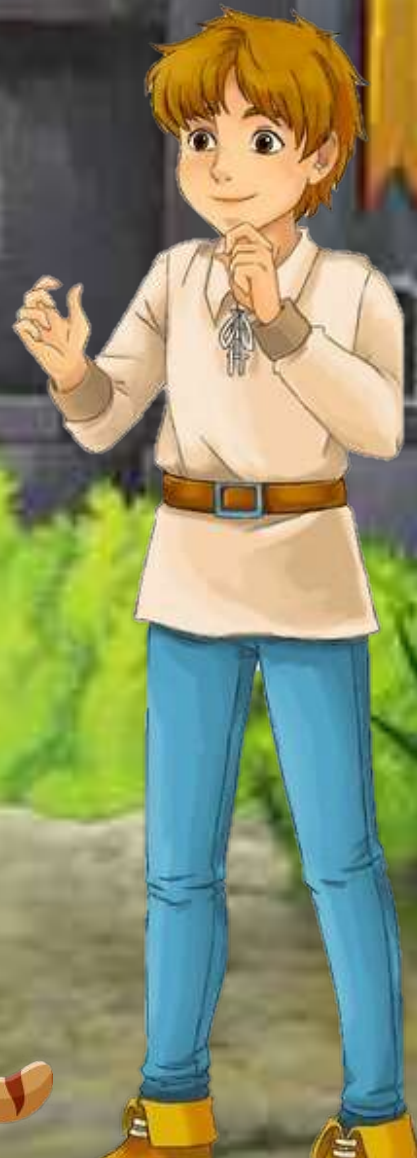


The Brothers

Grimm



The Miller's Boy and the Cat



Once Upon a Time

There was an old Miller who lived in a mill with no wife or child but only three lads who worked for him.



After some years, he said, "I'm getting old. All I want to do is sit by the fire. So I've decided to give the mill to one of you. Whoever brings me back the finest horse shall have the mill, so long as he looks after me until I die."



Now two of the boys were sharp enough, but the third was a nincompoop. The other boys made fun of him and said, “What would you do with a mill, stupid?” And he wasn’t even sure himself if he would want it.



The three of them set out together, but when they got to a village, the first two told stupid Hans, “You might as well stop here. You’ll never get a horse as long as you live.” But Hans stayed with them.



At nightfall they came to a cave in which they lay down to sleep, but the two smart ones just waited until Hans had dropped off and then sneaked away, leaving him behind. They thought that was very funny – though, as it turned out, the joke was on them.



When the sun rose, Hans woke to find himself alone in the deep cave. He looked around him, and explained, "Heavens, where am I?"



He got up, clambered out of the cave, and found himself in the forest. "I'm lost and alone. How will I ever find a horse now?" he moaned.



As he walked along, thinking such thoughts, a little tabby cat came up to him, and said in a friendly way, "Morning, Hans. What can I do for you?"



“I’m afraid you can’t help me,” said Hans.

“I know what you’re looking for,” the cat replied. “You’re looking for a fine horse. Well, if you’ll come with me and do my bidding for seven years, I will give you the finest horse you ever laid eyes on.”



This is a peculiar cat, thought Hans. I wonder if she's telling the truth. There was only one way to find out, so Hans agreed to serve the cat for seven years.



The cat took him back to her enchanted castle. All the servants were kittens, who bounded upstairs and downstairs all day, always happy and playful.



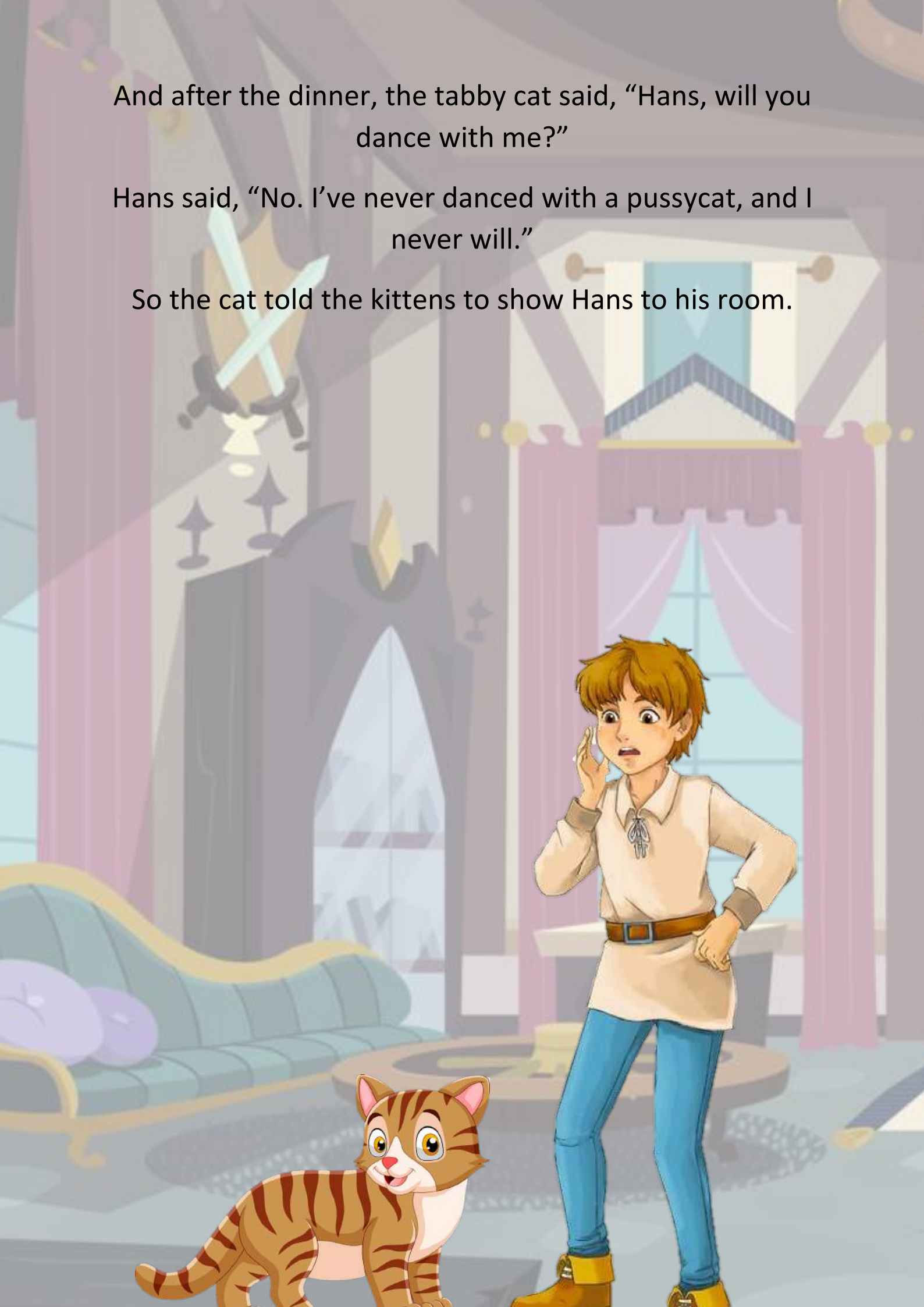
In the evening, when Hans the tabby cat sat down to dinner, three of the kittens made music for them. One played the double bass, another the fiddle, while the third puffed and blee on a trumpet.



And after the dinner, the tabby cat said, “Hans, will you dance with me?”

Hans said, “No. I’ve never danced with a pussycat, and I never will.”

So the cat told the kittens to show Hans to his room.



One of them showed the way with a candle, another took his shoes off, another took his stockings off, and another blew out the light.

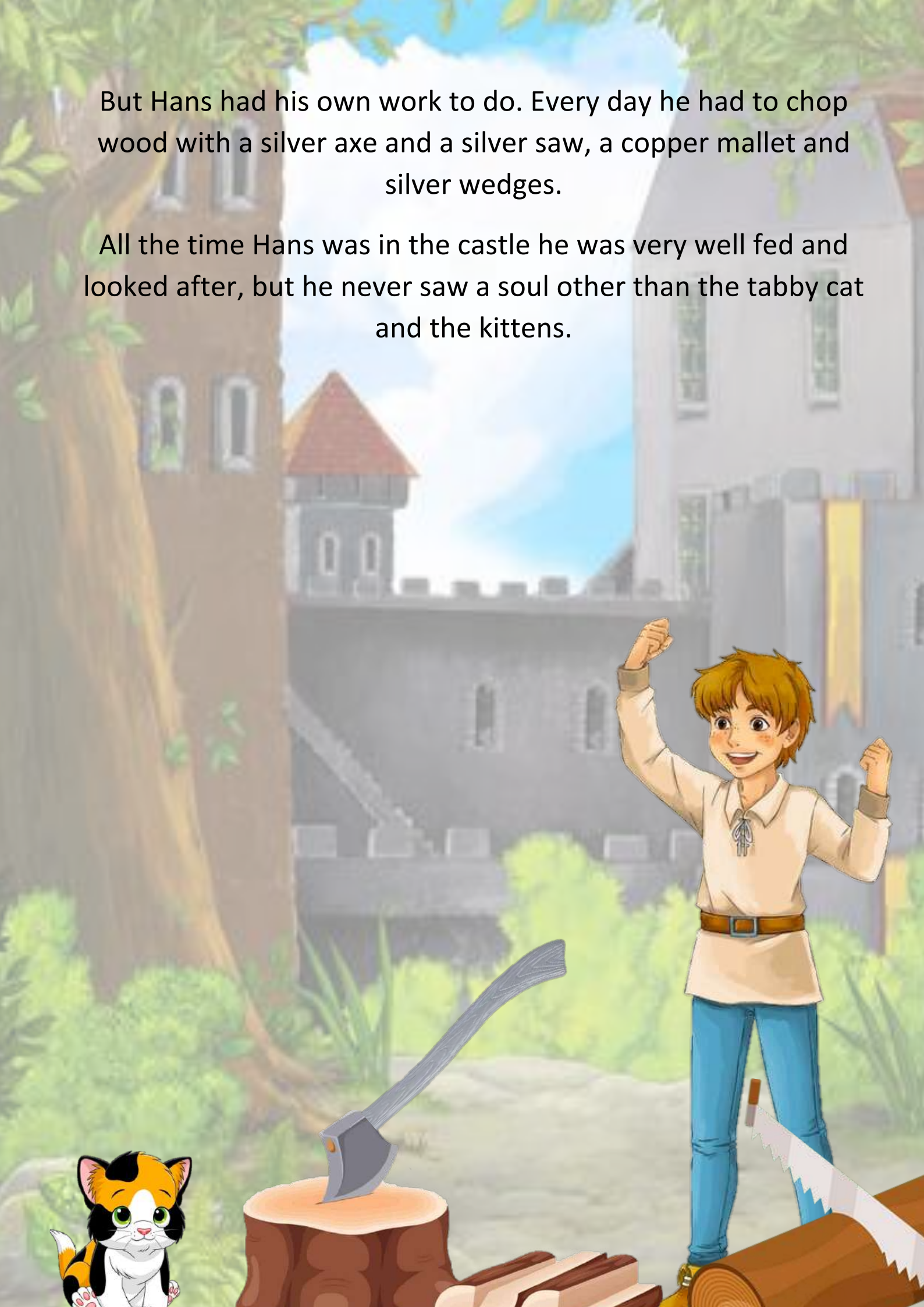


And in the morning they came back and helped him get dressed. One put his stockings on for him, another tied his garters, one brought his shoes, one washed him, and another dried his face with her tail. “How soft that is!” he said.



But Hans had his own work to do. Every day he had to chop wood with a silver axe and a silver saw, a copper mallet and silver wedges.

All the time Hans was in the castle he was very well fed and looked after, but he never saw a soul other than the tabby cat and the kittens.



One day, the cat asked Hans to go and mow the meadow and bring in the hay. She gave him a silver scythe and a gold whetstone, and he set to work.



When the haymaking was done, Hans said, “Isn’t it time for my reward?”

‘You must do one more thing for me first. I want you to build me a little house. Here is everything you need – wood, and tools all of silver.’”



Hans built the little house and when he was finished he said, “Now I have done everything you asked, but I still have no horse.” The seven years had flown by like so many months.

“Would you like to see my horses?” asked the tabby cat.

“Yes!” said Hans.



So the car opened the door of the little silver house that Hans had built, and inside there stood twelve horses, so sleek and glossy that his heart jumped for joy.



Then the cat gave Hans food and drink, and said, "I will not give you your horse yet. You go home, and I will follow in three days."



The cat showed him the way to the mill, and Hans set out. Now the cat had never given him any new clothes, so he was still in the same old smock he had come in; and after seven years it was dirty and torn, and far too small.



When he reached the mill, the two lads were already there and each of them had brought a horse, though one of the horses was blind and the other was lame.

“Where’s your horse, stupid?” they crowed.

“It will follow me in three days,” he replied and they fell about laughing.



The miller wouldn't even let Hans come inside, because he was so ragged and filthy. "What if we have guests?" the miller said. "You'd put us to shame." So Hans had to eat on the doorstep and sleep in the goosehouse on the hard straw.



When he woke up in the morning, the three days had passed.



A coach came to the mill, drawn by six shining horses and a servant was leading a seventh horse, which was for the miller's boy. A beautiful princess stepped out of the coach and went into the mill and this princess was the tabby cat Hans had served for seven years.



She asked the miller, “Do you have a boy who serves you?”

“Two of the rascals,” said the miller, pointing to the two smart lads.

“Isn’t there another?”

“Oh, him!” the miller replied. “He’s too dirty to come in here; he’s in the goosehouse.”

“Bring him to me,” said the princess.



So they fetched him from the goosehouse. He was holding his tattered smock together for modesty's sake.



But the princess's servants unpacked splendid clothes for him. They washed him and dressed him, and when they were finished, he looked as handsome as any king.



Then the princess said, "Let me see the horses the other boys brought home." They showed her the blind nag and the lame one.



Then the princess told her servants to bring forward the horse that they had brought for Hans. Its coat glistened, and its muscles rippled underneath its skin. When the miller saw it he said, "This is the finest horse that has ever entered this yard."



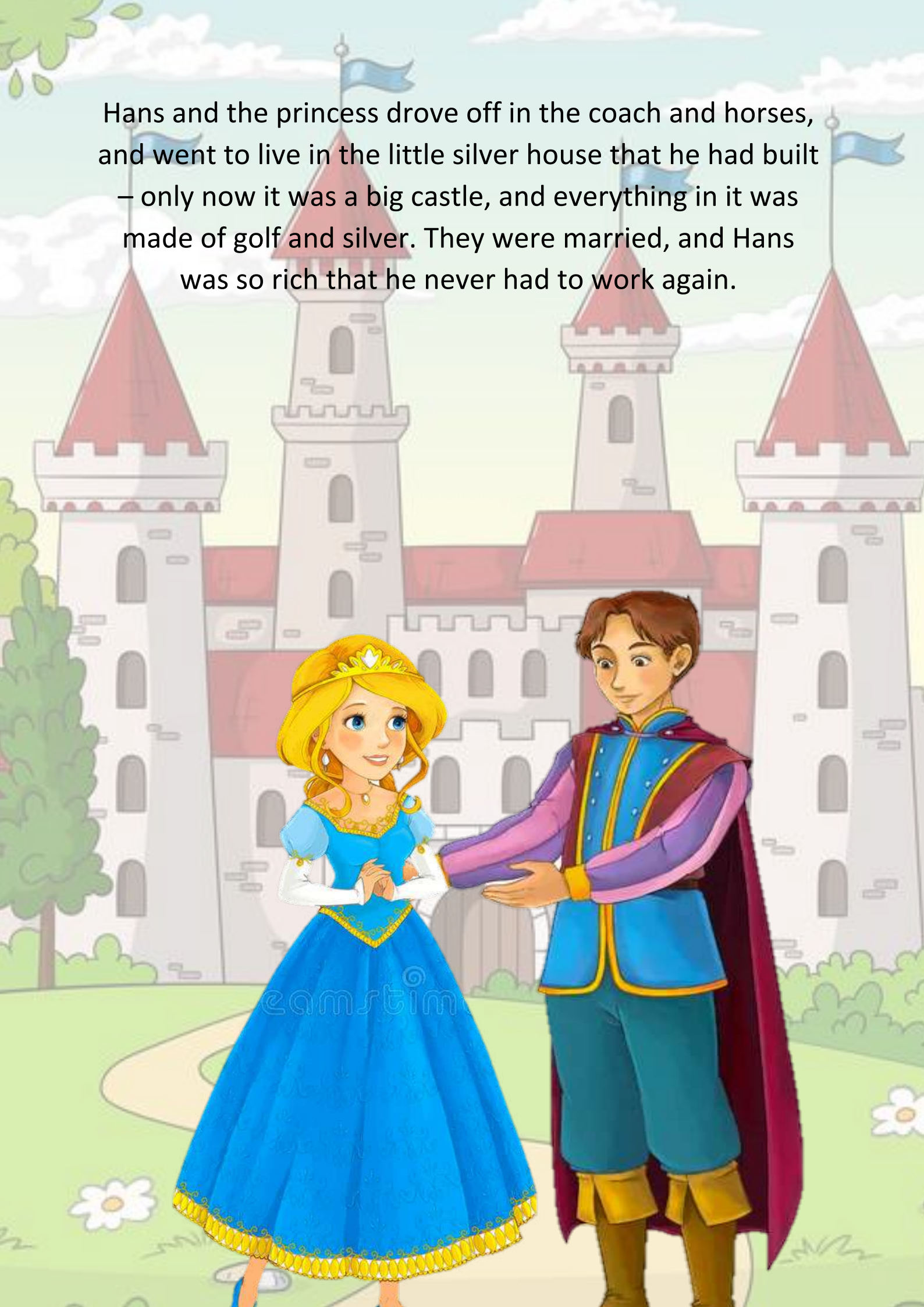
“That horse belongs to Hans,” said the princess.

“Then so does the mill,” said the miller.

But Hans didn't want the mill now. “You keep it,” he said, “and the horse too.”



Hans and the princess drove off in the coach and horses, and went to live in the little silver house that he had built – only now it was a big castle, and everything in it was made of gold and silver. They were married, and Hans was so rich that he never had to work again.



Which just goes to show that even a nincompoop can get on in the world.

The End





THINK

DIGITAL ACADEMY