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Artuš Scheiner created this image of Godfather Drosselmeier telling Marie the story about Princess Pirlipat. The illustration was published in Prague, during 1924.

Trying to help his goddaughter get better, Herr Drosselmeier tells Marie (Clara) a story. It's about a princess called Pirlipat.

As everyone gathers around Marie's bed, also hearing the tale, does anyone believe the story is true? Does Marie?

"Pirlipat's parents were the king and queen which, of course, made Pirlipat a princess," Godpapa Drosselmeier began. "She was born the prettiest princess you have ever seen. Her little face looked as though it was made of the finest pink and white silk. Her eyes were a sparkling blue, and her hair looked like spun gold.

"What is more, she was born with two rows of pearly white teeth, which she immediately used to bite the Lord Chancellor's hand. Everybody in the royal court knew she was very intelligent indeed!

"Pilipat was so lovely that the king and all the ministers of state, the generals and presidents, danced around her cradle for joy.

"All was happiness, except that the queen worried, terribly, about her little daughter and had her cradle guarded carefully. Apart from the guards at the nursery door and the two chief nurses by her cot, there were always six other nurses by the cradle at night. And what nobody could understand was why each nurse had a cat on her lap, which she stroked continuously to make sure that it purred all night long.

"You couldn't possibly know the reason for this, so I'll have to tell you.

"Before Pilipat was born, there was a splendid party at the palace. The king had decided to show just how right he was by throwing a huge pudding and sausage banquet. He ordered the Chancellor of the Exchequer to bring out the Great Golden Sausage Kettle and the silver casserole dishes. Then the king called the queen to his side and sweetly said:

'Darling, you know just how I like my sausages!'

"Now the queen knew that this meant she should do the cooking.

"In the royal kitchens a huge fire of sandalwood was lit, the queen put on her damask apron and

soon the most delicious smell of sausage, bacon and spicy pudding was wafting through the palace.

"Then the time arrived for the bacon to be cut into little squares and browned on silver spits. The ladies-in-waiting retired and left the queen all on her own.

"But just as the bacon started to brown, the queen heard a low whispering in the kitchen:

'Oh, I want a bit of that tasty bacon, too! Give me some, please, sister. I'm a queen like you.'

"Who was speaking in such a plaintive voice? The queen knew. It was Dame Mouserink, who had lived in the palace for many years. She claimed to be related to the royal family and was the Queen of Mousalia herself.

"She lived, with a great household, under the kitchen hearth.

"Though the queen would never accept that Mouserink was related to her, she was kind-hearted and it was a festive occasion, so she decided to give Mouserink a little of the bacon to eat. Dame Mouserink scurried from the hearth, as fast as she could, and held up her little paws. The queen handed her slice after slice of the crisp, tasty bacon.

"Now something terrible happened. Out jumped Dame Mouserink's uncles, aunts, cousins and her seven lazy sons, too. In a chorus of squeaks and squeals, they all demanded a share of the bacon. The poor queen was too frightened to refuse, so she fed them all.

"Fortunately for her, the Mistress of the Robes' son came in and shooed all the mice away. But when the poor queen looked at the bacon, she gasped. It was nearly all gone! In despair, she summoned the court mathematician. With some very clever and complicated calculations, he was just able to divide the remaining bacon among the royal sausages.

"Upstairs, in the royal dining rooms, the kettledrums crashed, the trumpets sounded and all the great princes arrived in their silver coaches for the feast. In the Great Banqueting Hall, acrobats tumbled, jesters juggled and players masqueraded magnificently.

"The King sat at the head of the table with his crown on his head and a golden sceptre in his hand. But when the sausages and puddings were handed out, the king turned deathly pale, fell back in his chair and let out a loud groan. The court physician rushed up and revived him with powerful smelling salts. Entertainers, courtiers and guests heard His Majesty whimper, very faintly:

'Not enough bacon, not enough bacon!'

"At this, the queen threw herself at his feet.

'Oh my poor darling, how you are suffering! But the culprits are at your feet. It was Dame Mouserink and her family who ate your lovely bacon ...'

"And then, the queen fainted.

"Now the king jumped up in anger and decided to take a terrible revenge on Dame Mouserink and her family. He summoned the court clockmaker, whose name was just the same as mine - Christian Elias Drosselmeier. Drosselmeier was ordered to drive Mouserink and all her relatives from the palace forever.

"So Drosselmeier set to work and invented clever little traps. Inside them he put pieces of browned bacon and placed them, carefully, outside Dame Mouserink's dwelling.

"The smell of the bacon was much too good to resist and soon ... THWACK!! All Dame Mouserink's seven sons and most of her relations died in the palace kitchens.

"Dame Mouserink's heart burned with hatred and anger. Before she and her diminished retinue left the palace, she vowed that she would have revenge on the king. The next day, when the queen was in the kitchen cooking the king a mutton stew, Dame Mouserink suddenly popped up in front of her.

'Be careful, or one day the Queen of Mice will bite your little princess in two!'

"The queen was so frightened that she dropped the stew in the fire and ruined the poor king's dinner. She sought advice from the court astrologer. He told her that from now on only the famous feline family of Cat Purr could keep Mouserink away."

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