

Of mice and cats

(Time – 1.36)

Once upon a time, all the mice of the world got together for a great meeting about the problem of cats. All of them agreed something had to be done. Wherever mice lived, cats were attacking them and eating them. It was a worldwide epidemic.

One suggestion after another was made. The air was full of squeaking as each idea was discussed, but no idea seemed to be good enough. Then one mouse jumped to his feet: ‘Listen! I’ve got the answer to the problem – it’s simple. All we have to do is this: we steal a ribbon, and then with it we fasten a bell around the neck of our enemy, the cat. That way whenever she comes close we’ll hear the tinkling of her bell and we can run and hide in our holes.’

There was a thunder of applause. Tens of thousands of mice clapped their pink paws together. Everyone agreed it was an excellent idea. Everyone agreed that it was the best possible solution. But then a wise old mouse got up to his feet: ‘This is indeed an excellent plan, save only for one tiny detail.’

‘What’s that?’

‘Who will volunteer to tie these bells around the necks of every cat in the world? Raise your paws if you’d be happy to bell a cat.’ A terrible silence settled on the mice then and not one paw was lifted.