

## **LET THE CAT OUT OF THE BAG**

**By Carole L. Cooney**

In medieval markets little pigs were commonly sold and traded. In an effort to keep the piglets secure, they were sold and put into tightly tied bags which the new owner was not to open until he or she was in a safe place at home. Often times, dishonest pig sellers would put a cat instead of a piglet in the bag. Thus, the pig buyer wouldn't know the secret until he or she was at home. "Letting the cat out of the bag" meant letting a secret out.

**Setting:** a medieval market

**Characters:**

**Narrator**

**Mitchell – the pig seller**

**Maura – mother**

**Sabrina – Maura's daughter**

**Cedric – a mean, young servant**

**Narrator:** One day at the Middle Man's Market, Mitchell, the pig seller, was herding his piglets into their pen.

**Mitchell:** Here, here! Little piggies. Come on now, in ye go. (One piglet squirms away and refuses to enter the corral.) Come back here little black and white piggy and stop that squealing or I'll...

**Maura:** Please sir, don't harm the piglets. I'm here to buy one and I don't want one that is lame.

**Sabrina:** Oh, Mama. Look at that little one with the black and white spots. May we buy that one?

**Cedric:** (interrupting) How much for the black and white one, Mitchell?

**Mitchell:** That one's taken, sir.

**Cedric:** It is not! It's not in a bag. I know that the one's that are sold are put in one of those bags.

**Sabrina:** Mama, Mama, that man wants to buy my little piggy. (She starts to cry.)

**Cedric:** (Giving Sabrina a push) Move over you little cry baby.

**Maura:** (Stepping forward) Young sir! Don't touch my child!

**Mitchell:** All right now. Let's all calm down. There are plenty of piglets for everyone. The lady and her daughter were here first so it's their choice that comes first.

**Cedric:** Humph! (He backs away) Well, make it quick – I've got to get back to my master!

**Maura:** Sabrina, have you made your choice? Is it to be the black and white one?

**Sabrina:** I'm not sure, Mama. I like them all.

**Maura:** Now child, we can only buy one. This young man is waiting and he will get very upset if you don't decide.

**Sabrina:** (Starts to cry) I don't know which one to take. Mama, help me.

**Cedric:** (growing impatient) What's it going to be little girl? If you don't answer quickly, the black and white one is mine.

**Maura:** Sabrina, you chose the black and white one when you first saw it. I think that's your best choice. Do you agree?

**Sabrina:** (still crying) I don't know, Mama...

**Cedric:** All right, Mitchell. I'm buying the black and white. And that's the end of it! Bag her up!

**Mitchell:** Yes, sir.

**Narrator:** Mitchell was not happy with young Cedric when he came to buy piglets. He was always grumpy and often wanted the *same* piglet that others wanted to buy. Perhaps he needed a lesson today, Mitchell thought. Mitchell gathered the piglets to the far corner of the pen where he saw a stray cat sleeping in the sun. Mitchell opened the large burlap bag and swooped the cat into it. He tied the knot extra tight and handed the bundle to Cedric.

**Mitchell:** Now you've got what's coming to you. Don't open it until you're in a safe place. The master won't want a piglet running about the house! That'll be two pounds total.

**Narrator:** Cedric smiled broadly at Sabrina as he paid for the bundle. He quickly turned and ran through the market to his master. Mitchell leaned down and picked up the black and white piggy.

**Mitchell:** Now is it the black and white piggy you're wanting, little miss?

**Sabrina:** (looking shyly at her mother) Yes, sir. *Oh, yes, sir!* (she smiles)

**Maura:** Sir, didn't you just sell that very same black and white piglet to that young boy?

**Mitchell:** Well, let's keep us a little secret. I just sold him a cat because of the way he treated your dear daughter. He's in need of a good lesson, he is. So, when he opens that bundle he'll be letting the cat out of the bag and the secret will be out as well. (Mitchell places the piglet in a bag.) Here's the black and white, little miss. That'll be one pound total.

**Maura:** Not two pounds?

**Mitchell:** No, just one pound for all of your trouble.

**Narrator:** Sabrina lifts the bundle into her arms as Maura pays the pig seller. As they walk away Mitchell, the pig seller, smiles and shakes his head.