**THE CATS’ TALE**

Once upon a time in Terra d’Otranto there was a woman who had a daughter and a stepdaughter.

The evil stepmother mistreated her stepdaughter.

One day the woman sent the poor girl to pick chicories. She went to a field and, instead of chicories, she found a cauliflower , the biggest one she had ever seen. She pulled and pulled and when she uprooted it, a sort of well opened in the ground. There was a ladder and she climbed down.

At the bottom of e ladder there was a house full of cats. They all were busy: one of them was doing the laundry , another was washing the dishes, another was sewing, another was baking some bread. The girl took a broomstick and helped a cat that was sweeping the floor, then she helped another cat to do the laundry, and helped another cat to bake the bread.

At midday there came out a big cat that was the kittens’ mother and rang a bell: -Din don dan! Dan don din! Who has worked will eat and who hasn’t will watch-. And the kittens: -Mum, we all have worked, but this girl has worked more than all of us!--Well done!- said the cats’ mother, -come and have lunch with us.-

They all sat at the table and the cats’ mum gave the girl a dish full of meat, macaroni and roasted chicken. The kittens had only a plate of beans. The girl was sorry because the kittens were hungry, so she shared all those good things with them. When they finished, she cleared the table, did the washing up, swept the floor and tidied the house. Finally, she said to the cats’ mum: -Dear friend, I have to go now, as I’m late, my mother is waiting for me and she is going to scold me-.

And the cat: -Wait a minute, dear, I want to give you a present.-

Now, in the house there was a storage closet full of silk chothes and silk shoes in one side, and of canvas skirts and aprons in another side. –Choose whatever you want.- said the cat.

The poor girl asked for a simple canvas skirt, but the cat gave her the most beautiful silk dress and a stunning pair of satin shoes. -When you get out- the cat said, -Look for the holes on the wall, put your fingers inside the holes and look up.-

When the girl got out of the house, she found the holes, put her fingers inside and realized they were covered with amazing rings. She looked up and a star fell down onto her forehead. She got home dressed up like a bride.

When her stepmother saw her wonderful outfit, she asked the girl who had given her all those precious garments and jewels. The girl told her everything and the stepmother was looking forward to sending her daughter to the cats’ house.

But the dughter was a very lazy girl and walked very slowly to the field. She found the cauliflower pulled it and climbed down the ladder.

She saw the cats and she pulled the tail to the first one, the ears to the second one, the whiskers to the third one, threw the bucket down the well…In short, she didn’t do anything else but playing pranks to the poor kittens. And they mewed and mewed.

At midday there came the cats’ mother with her bell: - : -Din don dan! Dan don din! Who has worked will eat and who hasn’t will watch-.

-Mum-, the kittens replied, we wanted to work but this girl has pulled our tails and she has played so many pranks to us thet we could do nothing!-

-Well,- said the cat, -let’s sit at the table- She gave the girl a vinegar-soaked cracker and she gave macaroni and meat to her kittens. But the girl stole the food to the kittens. When they finished lunch she didn’t clear the table and didn’t do any chores but asked for her presents.

The cat let her into the closet and asked her what she wanted. – The most beautiful dress, the one over there, and those high-heeled shoes!-

-Ah-, said the cat, -take off your clothes and put this greasy woollen dress and these old, shabby shoes, and now get away, and when you get out, put your fingers into the holes and look up.-

The girl put her fingers inside the holes and earthworms coiled around them. She looked up and a blood sausage fell down onto her forehead and hung over her mouth so that she had to bite it in order to shorten it.

When she got home and her mother saw how ugly she had become, she died of anger. The lazy girl died, too and the good girl married a handsome man.

*Martignano’s class 3 students*