

402 The Animal Bride

(previously The Mouse [Cat, Frog, etc.] as Bride).

A father is not able to decide which of his (three) sons should inherit his property (kingdom) and sends them all on a quest for one year [H1210.1]. They are told to bring back a special object (yarn, linen [H1306], fine chain [H1303], ring, horse, smallest dog [H1307], money) or they must learn a profession. Whoever performs the task best will be the heir.

The youngest son, often a fool goes into a forest and becomes the servant of an animal (cat [B422] rat frog [B493.1], mouse [B437.2]). As a payment he is given the object that his father had asked for. It proves to be the most beautiful one, and thus he should be the heir [H1242]. Because his brothers (parents) are envious, two further tasks are set, and finally the brothers are required to bring a bride (most beautiful woman [H1301.1]).

The youngest returns to the animal which again promises to help. The animal is disenchanted by burning, mutilation, decapitation [D711], or by crossing a river [B313, D700], and becomes a beautiful princess with a castle. They return happily to his parents as bride and bridegroom. Sometimes they deceive the parents: The youngest son arrives dressed in rags and is ridiculed; then the bride arrives and they reveal their identities. When the son arrives in the first place dressed as a prince, a mole helps to identify him. Often the youngest son renounces his inheritance and goes with his wife back to her castle.

In some variants from eastern and southeastern Europe and the Near East, the youngest son takes the animal (often a frog or toad) to his home and hides it from the family. The father assigns tasks to his daughters-in-law which the frog performs best. The last (third) task requires the brides to attend a feast, where the frog turns into the most beautiful woman. The bridegroom burns the frog's skin so that the bride cannot change back. As a consequence she leaves him, and he sets out on a quest and finally is able to retrieve her. Cf. Type 400.

Combinations: This type is usually combined with episodes of one or more other types, esp. 400, 465, and also 302, 310, 313, 409A, 425, 425A, 550, and 1880.