

THE BOY WHO DREW CATS
Based on a Japanese Folktale retelling by Kitty Higgins

Characters: Narrator 10, Ki, Father, Mother, Sisters 2, Monks 3, Cats 6, Rat

Narrator:

In a village in Japan, there once lived a farmer, his wife, and children. Their oldest was a boy named Ki. Ki was expected to help his father with chores on the farm.

Sister 1:

Ki! Get up! The sun is up, and the rooster has gone back to sleep.

Mother:

Daughter, Ki is very special. We must not be too hard on him. He is tired because he stayed up late last night painting.

Father: (Angrily)

Painting? How does that help me run this farm? I need my son to work with me in the fields, not spending his time painting.

Mother:

Ki is an artist. He was not brought upon this earth to till the soil.

Ki:

Mother! Father! Please do not argue. I am up and ready to go to the fields.

Narrator 2:

Ki followed his father to the fields, where he and his father tied the oxen to the plow. As his father plowed, Ki walked behind him to drop seeds in the furrows. They worked for many hours.

Father:

You have worked hard this morning, Ki. We will stop for water and a bit of rice. You may sit under the shade tree, and I will fetch water from the stream.

Ki:

Father, I will help you carry the water. You are tired, and I am more rested.

Father:

Thank you son, the water pails are heavy.

Narrator 3:

Ki stood at the edge of the stream as his father dipped a pail into the water. As Ki waited to carry the pails, he picked up a

twig. Without thinking, he began to draw in the mud. One of his sisters saw him.

Sister 2:

Do you call this helping? Playing with a stick in the mud? And you're drawing those ridiculous cats again. Can't you draw anything else?

Ki:

I don't know why, but my mind says draw a tree, and my hand draws a cat!

Father:

Cats! Cats! Your room is covered with cats. You have drawn cats on the porch and on the chicken coop. I will speak with the monks in the temple. Perhaps they can teach you to concentrate on more than drawing cats.

Narrator 4:

The monks agreed to let Ki stay at the temple.

Monk 1:

You are a very clever boy Ki. You will learn to study and forget about drawing cats.

Ki:

I will try very hard to do as you say.

Narrator 5:

And so it went. Ki read books and learned. But one day he found a paintbrush, and then cats began appearing everywhere.

Monk 2:

Ki, you cannot seem to stay focused on your studies.

Monk 1:

You will sleep in the temple alone tonight and think about how you have disappointed us.

Ki:

Sleep in the temple? But it is cold and dark in the temple at night. I will be scared.

Monk 3:

Don't think about the cold and dark. Think about not drawing cats. In the morning, we will see if you have learned your lesson.

Narrator 6:

Ki went to the temple at dusk, ready to do as the monks had asked. He sat for a while, thinking hard. He put his hand in his pockets to warm them and found a paintbrush.

Ki:

It is so very lonely in here. I know I'm not supposed to paint. But perhaps I will feel better if I do.

Narrator 7:

He painted cats on the floor, the pillars, and the walls. Finally, he was so tired and cold that he curled up in a cupboard to sleep where he could stay warm. Before long, he woke with a start. There was a terrifying noise coming from outside the cupboard.

Ki:

Oh my! What is that snarling and growling?

Narrator 8:

The noise went on and on until finally there was silence. Ki was afraid and did not open the cupboard door until he could see the morning light through the crack.

Ki:

Is anyone there?

Narrator 9:

As Ki peeked out of the cupboard, he saw a giant rat! It was dead! Then he saw that the cats he had drawn were crowded together around the rat. The monks arrived and looked about the room. They were amazed at what they saw.

Monk 2: We were wrong, Ki.

Monk 3: Your art is more powerful than we knew.

Monk 1: From this day on, you will draw whenever you want.

Narrator 10:

The boy who drew cats grew up to be a famous artist, and now draws all the things his mind can see.