

Once four young men bought a big farm. They became very successful farmers, but they had a lot of trouble with rats, so they bought a cat.

After some time, one of them said, 'Perhaps we will want to divide our land into four parts soon, so that each of us can farm his own land separately, but how will we be able to divide the cat?'

They decided that each man would have one leg, so they tied a white ribbon to one of the cat's legs, a red one to another, a blue one to a third, and a purple one to the fourth.

One day the cat was chasing a rat round the fire when the white ribbon caught in a piece of burning charcoal. The cat was frightened and ran out into the fields. The burning charcoal started a fire in the corn, and all of it was destroyed.

The other young men blamed the first. 'The fire was started by a burning stick which the leg with the white ribbon took to the field, so you must pay for the damage,' they said.

The first young man did not have enough money to pay, so he began to work for the other brothers without a salary, to pay for the damage. After eight years he married, and soon his wife had a daughter. She was a very intelligent girl, and when she was ten, she said to her father, 'You do not have to work for the three other men without a salary. The other three legs took the cat to the fields too.'

So the first young man went to a judge, who agreed that all the four owners of the cat had been equally responsible for the damage and ordered the three others to pay the first young man eighteen years' salary.