

CHAPTER-04

MACAVITY, THE MYSTERY CAT

Introduction

Macavity: the Mystery Cat written by TS Eliot is a long poem about a villainous and wicked cat. The poem describes how he manages to commit all types of crimes and always escapes from being caught. He breaks all the laws yet the police fails to catch him. He also has some alibi (his companions in crime). The poem is light in tone and theme is not serious. It is humorous in nature.

Stanza 1

The poet says that Macavity is a Mystery Cat and is known by the name of Hidden Paw. The first letters of the phrase 'Mystery Cat' are written in capital, so the name is particular and proper.

He is known as "Hidden Paw" because he is the master criminal and can defy (disobey) the law. He is the bafflement (confusion) of Scotland Yard and despair (pain) of the Flying Squad (a branch of the Serious and Organised Crime Command within London's Metropolitan Police Service. The squad's purpose is to investigate robberies).

In other words, he has made the police of Scotland confused because when the Police reaches the scene of crime (after he commits the crime), he vanishes away.

Stanza 2

The poet repeats the word Macavity. It suggests that Police are searching for him everywhere. According to the poet, there is no one like Macavity as he has broken every human law as well as the law of gravity. Law of gravity here means that no one can vanish away but Macavity does.

Macavity's powers of levitation (vanishing away) can make a fakir (religious man) stare (surprise). After committing a crime, he vanishes away. So when anybody reaches the scene of the crime, he will not be able to find him though he may search him on the ground

(below) or in the air (above). So the poet tells again that he is not there. It is useless to search for him.

Stanza 3

The poet introduces him as a ginger cat as he is tall and thin. One will know that if he sees him. His eyes are sunken in, his eyebrows are deeply lined with thought i.e. make him look like a villain. His head is domed (round), his coat is dusty as he does not keep himself clean. His whiskers are uncombed and he keeps swaying (moving) his head from one side to the other that are similar to the movements of a snake. When someone would think that he is half-sleep, in reality, he is awake and in a complete sense.

Stanza 4

According to the poet no one is like Macavity as he is a fiend (evil spirit or demon) in feline (cat's) shape. He is a monster of depravity i.e. he is morally corrupt.

One can find and meet him in a by-street (private street) or in the square (mall) but after his crime is discovered ,he vanishes away and cannot be found.

Stanza 5

Macavity is outwardly respectable (i.e. he is respected by people) because some say that he cheats at cards (i.e. he cheats in a way that no one can discover). His footprints (name) are not found in any file of Scotland Yard (Police).

However, he commits every crime. Whenever he loots the larder (food) or steals jewel or milk or makes a Peke (dog) stifle (suffocate) or breaks greenhouse glass or trellis (architecture), he vanishes away quickly and is never found there.

Stanza 6

When the Foreign Officer finds a treaty gone astray i.e. a law broken, or when the Admiralty (police) lose some plans and drawings by the way (i.e. find that their papers on which plans to catch Macavity are missing), they find them later on but in the hall or on the stairs but it is useless to investigate as Macavity vanishes away.

When the loss is disclosed, the Secret Service would say that it was Macavity who did this. But now it is useless as he is already a mile away. One can find him either resting somewhere or licking his thumb or engaged in doing complicated long division sums (i.e. doing some calculations)

Stanza 7

In the final stanza, the poet says that no one is like Macavity as there can be no cat as deceitful and suave (confident and charming) as him.

Next, the poet tells that he does not commit crimes alone. He always has an alibi (some companions who accompany him in committing crime) and one or two to spare (one or two other companions). However when the deed (crime) takes place, he vanishes away as always.

In the next line, the poet says that his companions are also well known because of their crimes. He mentions their names as well; Mungojerrie and Griddlebone). However, they are just agents for the Cat who all the time (i.e. Macavity).

They just control operations of the Napoleon of Crime (Macavity).

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