

The Tale of Samuel Whiskers or The Roly-Poly Pudding

by Beatrix Potter adapted by EveryReader

Adapted to Lexile Level 200





There was an old cat.
Her name was Mrs. Tabitha Twitchit.
She was a worried mother.
She often lost her kittens.



When they were lost, they made trouble.
One baking day, she shut them in a closet.
She caught Moppet and Mittens.
She could not find Tom.



Mrs. Tabitha looked all over the house.
She called, "Tom! Tom!"
She looked in the food room and the spare room.
She looked in the attic.



She could not find him.
The house was very old.
It had many doors and halls.
The walls were thick.



At night there were odd sounds.
Food went missing.
Cheese and bacon were gone.
Mrs. Tabitha cried and meowed.



While Mother looked, Moppet and Mittens made trouble.

The closet was not locked.

They pushed it open and came out.

They went to the dough by the fire.



They patted it with soft paws.

"Shall we make little muffins?" said Mittens.

Someone knocked at the door.

Moppet jumped into the flour barrel.



Mittens ran to the milk room.
She hid in an empty jar.
The visitor was Mrs. Ribby.
She came to borrow yeast.



Mrs. Tabitha came down, still meowing.

"Come in, Cousin Ribby," she said.

"I am in trouble.

I have lost my son, Tom."



"I fear the rats got him," said Tabitha.

"He is a bad kitten," said Ribby.

"Where did you look?"

"Everywhere," said Tabitha.



"There are too many rats," said Tabitha.

"I am not afraid of rats," said Ribby.

"I will help you.

What is all that soot?"



"The chimney needs sweeping," said Tabitha.
"Oh dear! Now Moppet and Mittens are gone!"
"They came out of the closet!" said Ribby.
They searched the house again.



They poked under beds and looked in closets.

They lit a candle.

They looked in a chest in the attic.

They found nothing.



A door banged.

Something ran down the stairs.

"This house has rats," said Tabitha.

"I caught seven young ones last week."



"I once saw a big old father rat," said Tabitha.

"He showed his teeth and ran down a hole."

"The rats make me nervous," she said.

They searched and searched.



They heard a roly-poly sound under the attic floor.

They saw nothing.

They went back to the kitchen.

"Here is one kitten," said Ribby.



She pulled Moppet from the flour barrel.

They brushed off the flour.

Moppet shook with fear.

"Mother, an old lady rat was in the kitchen."



"She took some dough," said Moppet.
They ran to the dough pan.
They saw little scratch marks.
A lump of dough was gone.



"Which way did she go?" asked Mother.
Moppet did not know.
She had stayed in the barrel.
Ribby and Tabitha kept Moppet with them.



They went on.

In the milk room, they found Mittens in a jar.

They tipped the jar.

Mittens climbed out.



"Mother, an old man rat was here," said Mittens.

"He was very big.

He took a pat of butter.

He took the rolling pin."



"A rolling pin and butter!" cried Tabitha.

"Oh, my poor Tom!"

"A rolling pin?" said Ribby.

"Did we not hear a roly-poly sound in the attic?"



They ran upstairs.

The roly-poly sound still went on under the floor.

"This is serious," said Ribby.

"We must send for John Joiner with a saw."



This is what happened to Tom.
It is not wise to go up a chimney.
There may be big rats.
Tom did not want the closet.



When he saw Mother bake, he hid.

He chose the chimney.

The fire was new.

It was not hot.



White smoke rose up.

Tom stood by the fire and looked up.

It was a big fireplace.

The chimney was wide.



There was room for Tom.
He jumped up to the iron bar.
Then he jumped to a small brick shelf.
Soot fell down.



Tom coughed.
He heard the sticks crackle.
He chose to climb to the top.
He would go out to the roof.



He would try to catch birds.

"I cannot go back," he thought.

"I may fall in the fire.

I may burn my blue coat and tail."



He climbed up and up.

It was dark.

There was less smoke.

He felt lost.



He pushed through deep soot.

He was like a little sweep.

He came to a loose stone.

Some bones lay there.



"This is odd," said Tom.

"Who ate bones up here?

The smell is strong.

It makes me sneeze."



He squeezed through the hole.

He crawled along a tight, dark space.

He felt his way.

Then he fell down a hole.



He landed on dirty rags.

He stood up.

He was in a small, dusty room.

Across from him sat a huge rat.



"What do you mean by falling on my bed?" said the rat.

"You are all black with soot."

"Please, sir, the chimney needs sweeping," said Tom.

"Anna Maria! Anna Maria!" squeaked the rat.



An old lady rat came.
At once she rushed at Tom.
She pulled off his coat.
She rolled him in a bundle.



She tied him with string.
The knots were very tight.
The old rat watched.
"Anna Maria," said the old rat.



His name was Samuel Whiskers.

"Make me a kitten dumpling.

Make a roly-poly pudding for dinner."

"It needs dough, butter, and a rolling pin," said Anna Maria.



"Use crumbs," said Samuel Whiskers.

"No," said Anna Maria.

"Use butter and dough."

They talked and then went away.



Samuel went through a hole.

He went down the stairs to the milk room.

He took the butter.

No one saw him.



He came again for the rolling pin.
He pushed it with his paws.
He heard Ribby and Tabitha talking.
They did not see him.



Anna Maria went to the kitchen.
She took dough with a small dish.
She did not see Moppet.
Tom lay alone.



He tried to move.

He tried to meow.

He could not.

His mouth had soot and webs.



The knots were too tight.
Only a spider heard him.
The spider looked at the knots.
It did not help.



The rats came back.

They began to make him into a dumpling.

First they smeared him with butter.

Then they rolled him in the dough.



"Will the string be hard to eat?" asked Samuel.

"It does not matter," said Anna Maria.

"Hold your head still," she told Tom.

She pulled his ears.



Tom bit and spat.
He meowed and wriggled.
The rolling pin went roly-poly.
"His tail is out," said Samuel.



"You did not bring enough dough."

"I brought all I could," said Anna Maria.

"I do not think it will be a good pudding," said Samuel.

"It smells like soot."



Then they heard new sounds.

A saw buzzed.

A little dog scratched and yelped.

The rats dropped the rolling pin.



They listened.

"We are found," said Samuel.

"We must go.

Take our things and other people's, and come."



"We must leave this pudding," said Anna Maria.

"The knots would be hard to eat," said Samuel.

"Come help me tie up some bones," said Anna Maria.

"I have half a ham in the chimney."



John Joiner the dog lifted a board.
Under the floor was Tom in a dirty dumpling.
The rolling pin was there too.
There was a strong rat smell.



John Joiner sniffed.
He nailed the board back.
He put his tools away.
He came downstairs.



The cat family felt better.
They asked him to stay for dinner.
They peeled the dough off Tom.
They made it into a bag pudding.



They put raisins in it to hide the soot.

They put Tom in a hot bath.

The bath washed off the butter.

John Joiner smelled the pudding.



He could not stay.

He had work to do.

He had made a wheelbarrow for Miss Potter.

He had two chicken pens to make.



Late that day I went to the post.
I looked up the lane.
I saw Mr. Samuel Whiskers and his wife.
They ran with big bags on a small wheelbarrow.



It looked like mine.

They went to Farmer Potatoes' barn.

Samuel puffed.

Anna Maria talked in a sharp voice.



They had many things.

I did not say they could use my wheelbarrow!

They went into the barn.

They pulled their bags up the hay pile.



After that, there were no more rats at Mrs. Tabitha Twitchit's house.

But Farmer Potatoes had many rats in his barn.

They ate the chicken food.

They stole oats and bran.



They made holes in the meal bags.

They were all the children and grandchildren of Samuel Whiskers and Anna Maria.

Moppet and Mittens grew up.

They were very good rat catchers.



They worked in the village.

They charged by the dozen.

They earned their living.

They hung the rats' tails on the barn door in a row.



But Tom Kitten was always afraid of a rat.
He never dared to face anything bigger than a
mouse.