

The Tale of Samuel Whiskers or The Roly-Poly Pudding

by Beatrix Potter adapted by EveryReader

Adapted to Lexile Level 300





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 the kittens in a cupboard.
She caught Moppet and Mittens.
She could not find Tom.



Mrs. Tabitha walked all over the house, mewing for Tom.
She looked in the pantry and under the stairs.
She looked in the best spare room with dusty sheets.



She went up to the top rooms.
She still could not find him.
She felt very upset.



It was a very old house with many halls and cupboards.
The walls were thick with odd little holes.
Food like cheese and bacon went missing at night.



While Mother searched, Moppet and Mittens made trouble.

The cupboard was not locked.

They pushed the door and came out.



They went to the dough by the fire.
They patted it with soft paws.
Mittens wanted to make little muffins.



Someone knocked at the front door.
Moppet jumped into the flour barrel.
Mittens ran to the milk room and hid in an empty jar.



The visitor was their neighbor, Mrs. Ribby.
She came to borrow some yeast.
Mrs. Tabitha came downstairs, mewling.



She said she was in sad trouble.
She had lost her dear son Tom.
She feared the rats had got him.



Ribby said Tom was a naughty kitten.
She asked where Tabitha had looked.
Tabitha said she had looked everywhere.



Tabitha said there were too many rats.
She felt it was hard to have a naughty family.
Ribby was not afraid of rats.



Ribby said she would help and scold Tom too.
She asked about soot in the fender.
Tabitha said the chimney needed sweeping and the
kittens were gone.



They searched the house again.

They poked under beds with Ribby's umbrella.

They looked in cupboards and in a clothes chest with a candle.



They did not find anything.

They heard a door bang and someone run down the stairs.

Tabitha near tears spoke of the rats.



She had caught seven young rats in the back kitchen.
She once saw the huge father rat.
He showed yellow teeth and ran into a hole.



They searched and searched.

They heard a roly-poly rolling sound under the top room floor.

But they could not see anything.



They went back to the kitchen.

Ribby found Moppet in the flour barrel.

They shook off the flour and set her on the floor.



Moppet was very frightened.
She said an old woman rat had been in the kitchen.
The rat stole some dough.



The cats ran to the dough pan.
They saw little scratch marks.
A lump of dough was gone.



They kept Moppet close and went on searching.

They went into the milk room.

They found Mittens hiding in an empty jar.



They tipped the jar, and Mittens scrambled out.
She said an old man rat had been in the milk room.
He stole a pat of butter and the rolling pin.



Ribby and Tabitha looked at each other.
Tabitha cried for poor Tom.
Ribby remembered the roly-poly sound.



They rushed upstairs.

The roly-poly sound was still under the floor.

Ribby said they must send for John Joiner with a saw.



Now this is what had happened to Tom.
He did not want to be shut in a cupboard.
He hid when he saw Mother would bake.



He chose the chimney.
The fire was only just lit.
White smoke rose from green sticks.



Tom stood by the fire and looked up.

It was a big old fireplace.

The chimney was wide inside.



There was room for a small Tom Kitten.
He jumped to the iron bar and then to a high ledge.
Black soot fell by the fire.



Tom coughed and choked in the smoke.

He heard sticks crackle and burn.

He planned to climb up, get out, and catch sparrows.



He could not go back.

He feared he might fall into the fire and burn his tail and blue jacket.

He climbed up and up.



Daylight shone far above.

Tom was very frightened.

He pushed sideways through inches of black soot.



He was like a little sweep.
It was dark and confusing.
One passage led into another.



Before he reached the top, he found a loose stone.
Meat bones lay on the floor.
There was a strong mousey smell.



He squeezed through the hole.

He crept along a tight, dark passage.

He felt his way behind the wall of the upstairs room.



All at once, he fell down a hole.

He landed on dirty rags.

He was in a small dusty room with boards and cobwebs.



An enormous rat sat across from him.
The rat asked why Tom fell on his bed.
Tom said the chimney needed sweeping.



The old rat called for Anna Maria.
An old woman rat ran in.
She pulled off Tom's coat.



She rolled him up like a bundle.
She tied him with string in tight knots.
The old rat watched.



They stared at Tom.

The old rat was named Samuel Whiskers.

He told Anna Maria to make a kitten dumpling, a roly-poly pudding.



Anna Maria said it needed dough, butter, and a rolling pin.

Samuel said to use breadcrumbs.

She said no, butter and dough.



They whispered and went away.
Samuel went for butter in the milk room.
He also rolled away the rolling pin.



Anna Maria went to the kitchen for dough.
She used a small dish.
Moppet did not see her.



Tom was left alone under the floor.
He wriggled and tried to mew for help.
The knots were tight, and no one heard him.



A spider came out of a crack.
It looked at the knots but did not help.
Tom wriggled until he was very tired.



Soon the rats came back.

They began to make him into a dumpling.

They smeared him with butter and rolled him in dough.



Samuel asked if the string would be hard to eat.
Anna Maria said it did not matter.
She told Tom to hold still.



Tom bit and spat and mewed and wriggled.
The rolling pin went roly-poly, roly-poly.
The rats each held an end.



His tail stuck out.

There was not enough dough.

Samuel said it would not be a good pudding because it smelled sooty.



They heard a saw above them.

A little dog scratched and yelped.

The rats dropped the rolling pin and listened.



Samuel said they were found.

They would take their own things and other peoples things and go.

Anna Maria said they must leave the pudding.



Samuel said the knots would be hard to eat.
Anna Maria tied up meat bones in a blanket.
She had half a smoked ham in the chimney.



John Joiner lifted a floor board.

No one was there except the rolling pin and Tom in a very dirty dumpling.

There was a strong smell of rats.



John Joiner sniffed and poked his head in the hole.
Then he nailed the board down and put away his tools.
He came downstairs.



The cat family felt better.

They asked him to stay for dinner.

They peeled the dumpling off Tom.



They made it into a pudding in a bag with little raisins to hide the soot.

They put Tom in a hot bath to wash off the butter.

John Joiner could not stay.



He had just made a wheelbarrow for Miss Potter.
She had ordered two hen coops.
He went on his way.



Later, I went to the post.

I looked up the lane.

I saw Samuel Whiskers and Anna Maria with big bundles
on a small wheelbarrow.



They turned in at Farmer Potatoes barn.

Samuel puffed.

Anna Maria argued in a high voice and carried a lot of big bags.



They went into the barn.

They pulled their bundles with a string to the top of the hay.

The wheelbarrow looked like mine.



After that, there were no more rats at Tabitha Twitchit's house for a long time.

But Farmer Potatoes had many rats in his barn.
They ate chicken food and stole oats and bran.



They made holes in the meal bags.

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

There was no end to them.



Moppet and Mittens grew up to be good rat catchers. They worked in the village and were paid by the dozen. They hung the rats' tails in a row on the barn door.



They caught dozens and dozens.

But Tom was always afraid of a rat.

He never dared to face anything bigger than a mouse.