

The Tale of Samuel Whiskers or The Roly-Poly Pudding

by Beatrix Potter adapted by EveryReader

Adapted to Lexile Level 600





Once there was an old cat named Mrs. Tabitha Twitchit. She worried a lot about her kittens. When they were missing, they always got into trouble.



One baking day, she shut the kittens in a cupboard. She caught Moppet and Mittens, but she could not find Tom.



Mrs. Tabitha searched the whole house, mewing for Tom Kitten. She looked in the pantry, the spare room, and the attics. She still could not find him.



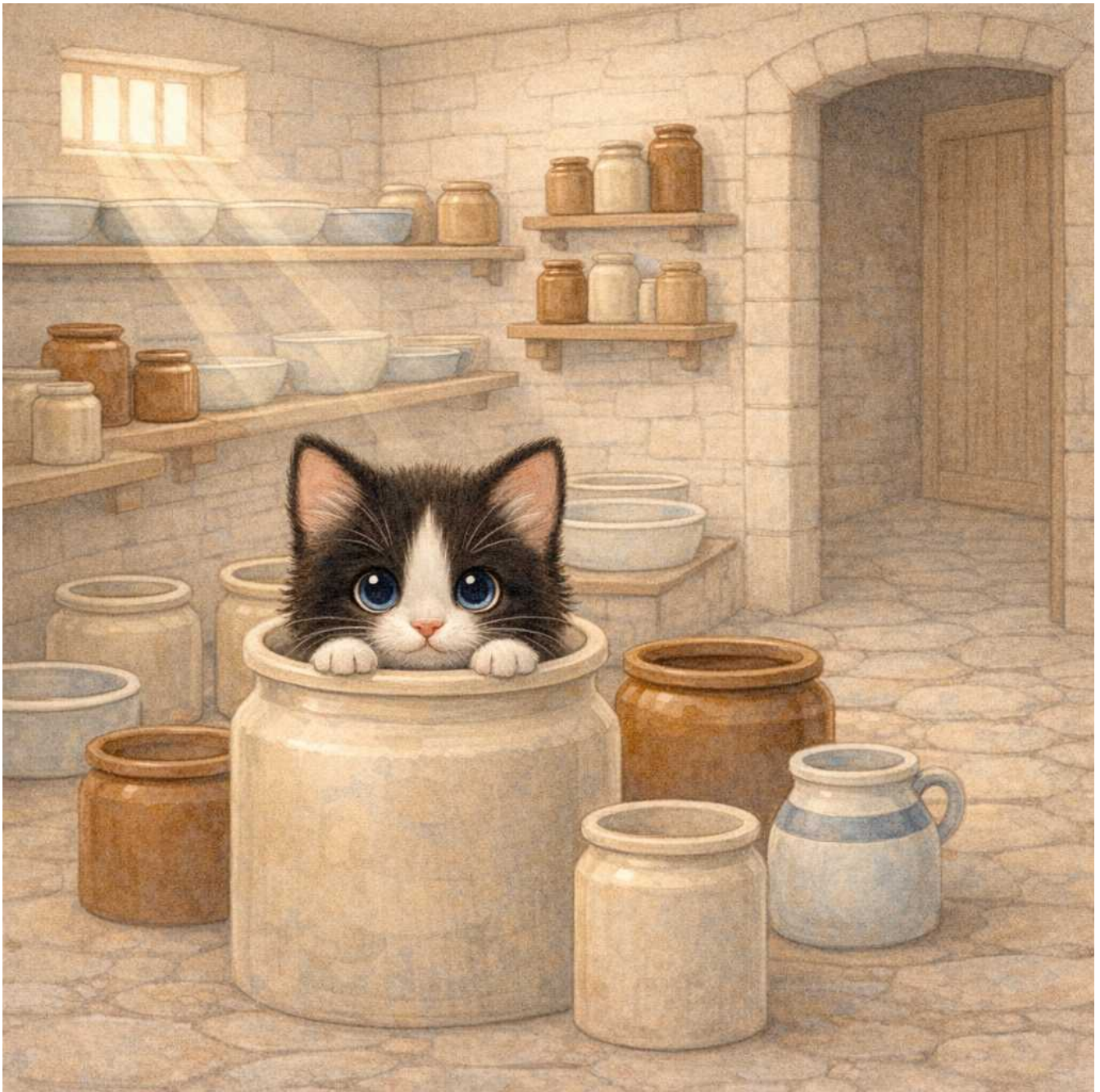
It was a very old house with many cupboards and passages. Strange sounds came from the thick walls. At night, cheese and bacon sometimes disappeared.



Mrs. Tabitha grew more upset and mewed loudly. While she searched, Moppet and Mittens slipped out of the unlocked cupboard. They went straight to the pan of dough by the fire.



They patted the dough with their soft paws. "Shall we make little muffins?" asked Mittens. Someone knocked at the door, and both kittens hid.



Moppet jumped into the flour barrel. Mittens hid in an empty jar in the dairy. The visitor was Mrs. Ribby, a neighbor who came for yeast.



Mrs. Tabitha came downstairs, mewling sadly. She said she had lost Tom and feared the rats had got him. Ribby called Tom a naughty kitten and asked where she had looked.



"All over the house," said Tabitha. "There are too many rats for me." "What is all that soot in the fender?" asked Ribby. "The chimney needs sweeping, and now Moppet and Mittens are gone!"



Ribby and Tabitha searched again with an umbrella and a candle. They found nothing, but a door banged and something scurried. A strange roly-poly sound came from under the attic floor.



"Yes, the house is full of rats," said Tabitha tearfully. They went back to the kitchen and pulled Moppet from the barrel. Little scratches marked the dough, and a piece was gone.



They took Moppet with them and went to the dairy. They tipped the jar, and Mittens scrambled out. "An old man rat stole a pat of butter and the rolling pin," said Mittens. "Did we not hear a roly-poly noise in the attic?" said Ribby.



They rushed upstairs, and the roly-poly noise continued. "This is serious," said Ribby. "We must send for John Joiner with a saw." John Joiner was a small carpenter dog.



Now, this is what happened to Tom. He did not want the cupboard, so he hid in the chimney. The fire was just lit, and white smoke rose from green sticks.



It was a big, old-fashioned fireplace with a wide chimney. Tom climbed onto the fender and then to a high ledge. Soot fell, and he coughed and choked.



The sticks began to crackle below. Tom decided to climb to the top and get out on the roof. "I cannot go back," he thought. "I might fall into the fire and scorch my tail and blue jacket."



The chimney was very old, like a small stone tower. Daylight shone from the top under slanting slates. In the dark, one flue led into another, and Tom felt lost.



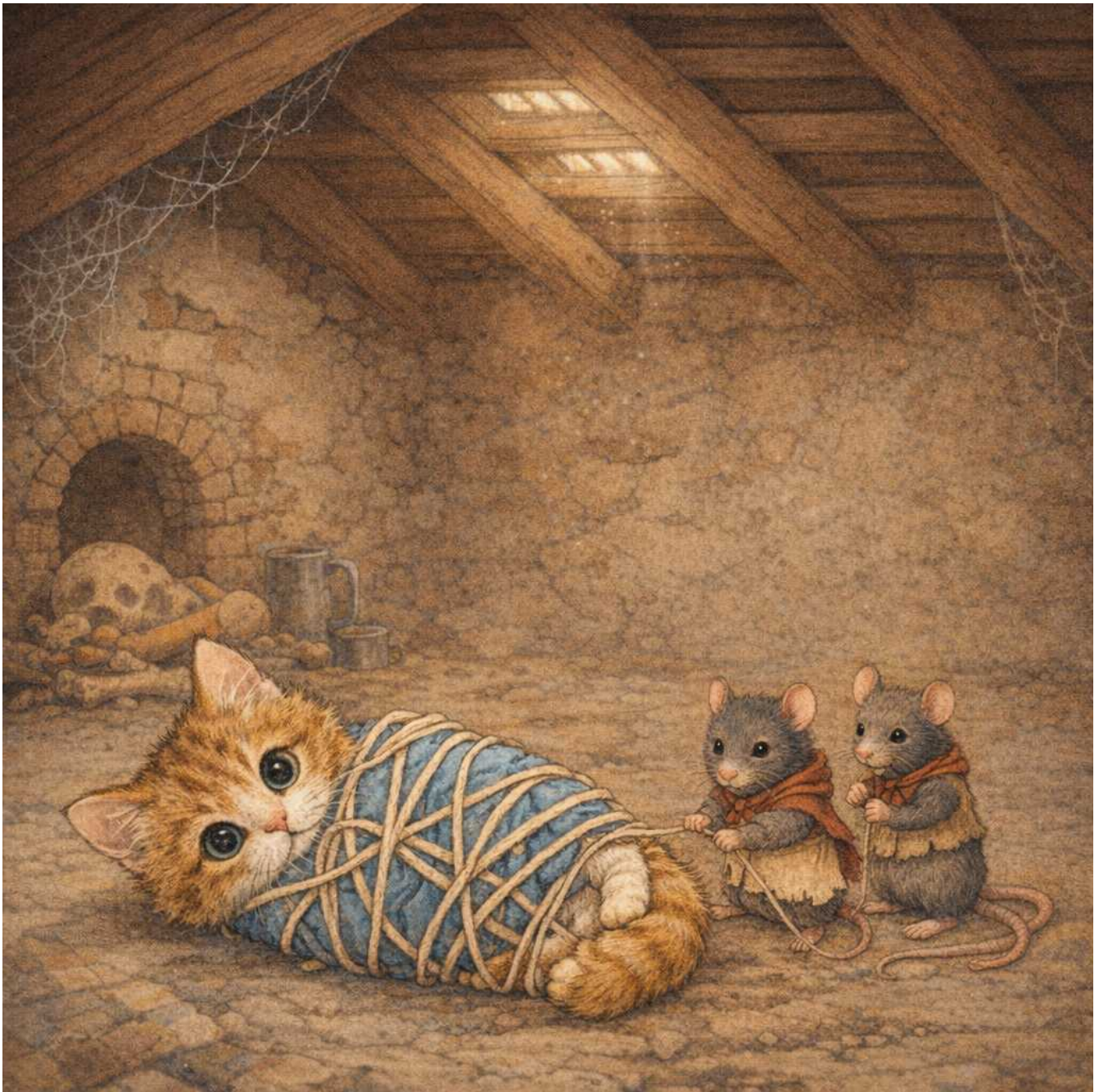
He found a loose stone in the wall. Mutton bones lay there, and a strong, mousey smell made him sneeze. He squeezed through the hole into a tight passage.



He felt his way behind the wall in the attic. All at once he fell headfirst down a hole. He landed on a heap of very dirty rags in a stuffy little room.



An enormous rat sat across from him. "Why did you tumble into my bed, all covered with soot?" the rat chattered. "Please, sir, the chimney needs sweeping," said Tom. The rat called, "Anna Maria!" and an old woman rat rushed out.



She pulled off Tom's coat, rolled him up, and tied very hard knots. "Make me a kitten dumpling, a roly-poly pudding," said the old rat, Samuel Whiskers. "It needs dough, butter, and a rolling pin," said Anna Maria. They whispered, then went to fetch the things.



Samuel slipped to the dairy for butter and pushed the rolling pin along like a barrel. He heard Ribby and Tabitha but was not seen. Anna Maria borrowed a saucer and scooped up dough from the pan.



Tom lay alone, wriggling and trying to mew for help. His mouth was full of soot, and the knots were tight. A spider looked at the knots but did not help.



The rats returned and smeared Tom with butter. They rolled him in the dough with the rolling pin going roly-poly. "His tail is sticking out," said Samuel. "You did not fetch enough dough."



"It will not be a good pudding. It smells sooty," said Samuel. A saw rasped above, and a little dog scratched and yelped. "We are discovered," said the rats. "Take our things and go!" "Tie up the mutton bones in a blanket. The ham is in the chimney."



John Joiner sawed up a plank in the attic floor. Underneath were the rolling pin and Tom in a very dirty dumpling. He sniffed, whined, wagged his tail, and poked his head into the hole.



He nailed the plank down, packed his tools, and went downstairs. The cat family recovered and asked him to stay for dinner. The dough was peeled off Tom and made into a pudding in a bag with currants. Tom had a hot bath to wash off the butter.



John Joiner could not stay. He had a wheelbarrow and hen-coops to make. Later, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Whiskers hurried to Farmer Potatoes's barn with bundles. After that, Tabitha had no more rats, but the farmer did. Moppet and Mittens became fine rat catchers, but Tom always feared a rat.