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Title: Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats Author: Eliot, T.S. Date first published: September 1939 Editor used as base: London: Faber and Faber, December 1948 This ebook was produced by Al Haines and Mark Akrigg. The publisher notes that minor layout adjustments were made for digital format conversion. Copyright considerations led to the omission of illustrations by Nicolas Bentley. T.S. ELIOT NICOLAS BENTLEY drew the pictures FABER AND FABER LIMITED 24 Russell Square London First published in September Mcmxxxix by Faber and Faber Limited PREFACE This Book is dedicated respectfully to friends who assisted its composition with encouragement, criticism, and suggestions: notably Mr. T.E. Faber, Miss Alison Tandy, Miss Susan Wolcott, Miss Susanna Morley, and the Man in White Spats. CONTENTS The Naming of Cats The Old Gumbie Cat Growltiger's Last Stand ... (The rest of the text remains unchanged)

Tweaking feline whiskers or indulging pride? Among names like Munkustrap, Quaxo, and Coricopat, as well as Bombalurina and Jellylorum, there's one remaining name – a secret known only to the cat himself. This elusive title is beyond human comprehension, yet The Cat knows its meaning. When observing a feline in deep contemplation, it's always the same reason: their mind is preoccupied with thoughts of their own unique, effable Effanineffable Name. Jennyanydots comes to mind, a Gumbie Cat with a tabby coat featuring tiger stripes and leopard spots. She spends her days lounging on stairs, steps, or mats, embodying the essence of a Gumbie Cat. Once the day's activities are complete, Jennyanydots descends into the basement to focus on mice behavior and manners. Under her guidance, they learn music, crocheting, and tatting. Jennyanydots is an exemplary Gumbie Cat, appreciating warm and sunny spots, often sitting beside the hearth or on a bed. Her equal can be challenging to find; she takes pride in her baking, frying, and curtain-cord winding skills. By providing employment for cockroaches, Jennyanydots creates well-disciplined boy-scouts, working towards a purpose and good deeds. Gumie Growltiger, a Bravo Cat, roamed the Thames in search of evil aims. Although his appearance and manners were rough, he rejoiced in being 'The Terror of the Thames'. As for Old Gumbie Cats, let us raise three cheers for those who maintain well-ordered households. No explanation needed, and with one eye, he glared at the world with hostility. The people of Rotherhithe were aware of his notorious reputation; in Hammersmith and Putney, they trembled at the mention of his name. When rumors spread along the shore that Growltiger was on the loose, they would secure the hen-house and lock up the silly goose. Woe to the weak canary that flew out of its cage, woe to the pampered Pekinese that faced Growltiger's fury, and woe to the bristly Bandicoot that hid on foreign ships, for Growltiger showed no mercy to any cat that crossed his path. His hatred was particularly directed towards cats of foreign breeds; he vowed to show no quarter to those with foreign names and origins. The Persian and Siamese cats feared him, for it was a Siamese cat that had mauled his missing ear. On a peaceful summer night, when all of nature seemed to be at play under the bright moonlight, Growltiger's vessel lay rocking gently on the tide at Molesey. He was in a sentimental mood, and his attention was focused on Lady Griddlebone. His crew, including his mate Grumbuskin and bosun Tumblebrutus, were either absent or asleep, unaware of the danger that was approaching. The Siamese cats crept in, their sampans and junks circling around the vessel, but Growltiger was oblivious to the threat, entranced by Lady Griddlebone's charms. The moonlight reflected off the bright blue eyes of the enemy, but they remained silent, waiting for the perfect moment to strike. Then, Gilbert gave the signal, and his fierce Mongolian horde swarmed aboard with a burst of fireworks, armed with toasting forks and cruel carving knives. Lady Griddlebone let out a screech and disappeared, and Growltiger found himself surrounded by a ring of flashing steel. The ruthless foe pressed forward, and to his surprise, Growltiger was forced to walk the plank. The news of his downfall spread, and there was joy in Wapping, with celebrations at Maidenhead and Henley, and even in Bangkok. Meanwhile, the Rum Tum Tugger, a curious cat, would rather have grouse than pheasant, prefer a flat to a house, and if set on a mouse, he would rather chase something else. The Rum Tum Tugger is a curious beast indeed. He has a mind of his own and will do as he pleases, without much consideration for others. This mischievous cat loves to cause trouble and stir up chaos wherever he goes. He is always on the move, never content to stay in one place for too long. When it comes to food, the Rum Tum Tugger has very specific tastes. If offered fish, he'll want a feast; if not, he won't touch rabbit. And as for cream, he's quite particular about his treats, sniffing and sneering at anything that doesn't meet his standards. Despite his artistic nature, the Rum Tum Tugger is more of a troublemaker than a performer. He enjoys creating a mess and causing a ruckus, often leaping onto laps in the middle of quiet activities like sewing. But enough about this troublesome cat - let's welcome the Jellicle Cats! They come out to play on special nights, their eyes shining bright under the light of the Jellicle Moon. These merry cats are black and white, small but full of life, with cheerful faces and bright black eyes. They love to dance and prance, their steps light as air. As they prepare for their annual ball, the Jellicle Cats develop slowly, growing only as much as is needed for their elegant routines. They make sure to look their best, washing behind their ears and drying between their toes. But when it comes time to shine under the spotlight, these cats come alive! They jump and leap with ease, their movements fluid and effortless. And on stormy nights, they might even put on a show, practicing a caper or two in the hall. Let's join the Jellicle Cats at their ball and celebrate their unique charm and spirit. For on this special night, anything is possible - especially when the Jellicle Moon is shining bright! They place and in Kensington Square— They had really a little more reputation than a couple of cats can very well bear. If the area window was found ajar And the basement looked like a field of war, If a tile or two came loose on the roof, Which presently ceased to be waterproof, If the drawers were pulled out from the bedroom chests, And you couldn't find one of your winter vests, Or after supper one of the girls Suddenly missed her Woolworth pearls: Then the family would say: 'It's that horrible cat! It was Mungojerrie—or Rumpelteazer!'—And most of the time they left it at that. They were highly efficient cat-burglars as well, and remarkably smart at a smash-and-grab. They made their home in Victoria Grove. They had no regular occupation. They were plausible fellows, and liked to engage a friendly policeman in conversation. When the family assembled for Sunday dinner, With their minds made up that they wouldn't get thinner On Argentine joint, potatoes and greens, And the cook would appear from behind the scenes And say in a voice that was broken with sorrow: 'I'm afraid you must wait and have dinner tomorrow! For the joint has gone from the oven—like that!' Then the family would say: 'It's that horrible cat! It was Mungojerrie—or Rumpelteazer!'—And most of the time they left it at that. They had a wonderful way of working together, and some would say it was luck, and some would say it was weather. They would go through the house like a hurricane, and no sober person could take his oath Was it Mungojerrie—or Rumpelteazer? or could you have sworn that it mightn't be both? And when you heard a dining-room smash Or up from the pantry there came a loud crash Or down from the library came a loud ping From a vase which was commonly said to be Ming— Then the family would say: 'Now which was which cat! It was Mungojerrie! AND Rumpelteazer!'—And there's nothing at all to be done about that! Old Deuteronomy's lived a long time; He's a Cat who has lived many lives in succession. He was famous in proverb and famous in rhyme A long while before Queen Victoria's accession. Old Deuteronomy's buried nine wives And more—I am tempted to say, ninety-nine; And his numerous progeny prospers and thrives And the village is proud of him in his decline. At the sight of that placid and bland physiognomy. When he sits in the sun on the vicarage wall. The Oldest Inhabitant croaks: 'Well, of all ... Things ... Can it be ... really! ... No! ... Yes! ... Ho! hi! Oh, my eye! My mind may be wandering, but I confess I believe it is Old Deuteronomy!' Old Deuteronomy lies in the Fox and French Horn for his afternoon sleep; meanwhile, the landlady warns the visitors to leave discreetly, as they mustn't wake him. As they depart without a word spoken, the Oldest Inhabitant reminds everyone that Old Deuteronomy's digestive repose must never be broken. The Pekes and Pollicles are eternal foes, and their rivalry is legendary. The Pugs and Poms, although not typically fond of fighting, will occasionally join in on occasion. On this specific day, a Peke and Pollicle happened to cross paths without provocation, leading to an impromptu bout of barking. As the commotion spreads, Pekes from all over gather at the scene, their collective grumbling and wheezing creating a cacophony that attracts attention from afar. Meanwhile, the Pollicles prepare for battle, led by their fearless leader, the Great Rumpuscat, who emerges from a nearby basement flat with his fiery eyes blazing. The neighbourhood becomes abuzz with activity as the canine combatants clash, causing traffic to grind to a halt and the Underground to tremble. Some neighbours are so frightened that they frantically call the Fire Brigade, unaware of the impending feline fracas. ... were amazing! and when he looked out through the bars of the area, You never saw anything' fiercer or hairier. And what with the glare of his eyes and his yawning, The Pekes and the Pollicles quickly took warnin'. He looked at the sky and he gave a great leap— and they every last one of them scattered like sheep. And when the Police Dog returned to his beat, There wasn't a single one left in the street. MR. MISTOFFEELES You oughta know Mr. Mistoffeles! The Original Conjuring Cat— (There can be no doubt about that). Please listen to me and don't scoff. All his Inventions are off his own bat. There's no such Cat in the metropolis; He holds all the patent monopolies For performin' surprisin' illusions And creatin' eccentric confusions. At prestidigitation And at legerdemain He'll defy examination And deceive you again. The greatest magicians have somethin' to learn From Mr. Mistoffeles' Conjuring Turn. Presto! Away we go! And we all say: OH! Well I never! Was there ever A Cat so clever As Magical Mr. Mistoffeles! He is quiet and small, he is black From his ears to the tip of his tail; He can creep through the tiniest crack. He can walk on the narrowest rail. He can pick any card from a pack. He is equally cunning with dice; He is always deceiving you into believing That he's only huntin' for mice. He can play any trick with a cork Or a spoon and a bit of fish-paste; If you look for a knife or a fork And you think it is merely misplaced— You have seen it one moment, and then it is gawn! But you'll find it next week lyin' out on the lawn. And we all say: OH! Well I never! Was there ever A Cat so clever As Magical Mr. Mistoffeles! His manner is vague and aloof, You would think there was nobody shyer— But his voice has been heard on the roof When he was curled up by the fire. And he's sometimes been heard by the fire When he was about on the roof— (At least we all heard that somebody purred) Which is incontestable proof Of his singular magical powers: And I have known the family to call Him in from the garden for hours, While he was asleep in the hall. And not long ago this phenomenal Cat Produced seven kittens right out of a hat! And we all said: OH! Well I never! Did you ever know A Cat so clever As Magical Mr. Mistoffeles! MACAVITY: THE MYSTERY CAT Macavity's a Mystery Cat: he's called the Hidden Paw— For he's the master criminal who can defy the Law. He's the bafflement of Scotland Yard, the Flying Squad's despair: For when they reach the scene of crime—Macavity's not there! Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity. He's broken every human law, he breaks the law of gravity. His powers of levitation would make a fakir stare. And when you reach the scene of crime—Macavity's not there! You may seek him in the basement, you may look up in the air— But I tell you once and once again, Macavity's a ginger cat, he's very tall and thin; You would know him if you saw him, for his eyes are sunken in. His brow is deeply lined with thought, his head is highly domed; His coat is dusty from neglect, his whiskers are uncombed. He sways his head from side to side, Macavity: The Greatest Feline Thief Macavity is a name that strikes fear into the hearts of many. He is a cat of unparalleled cunning and deceitfulness, always staying one step ahead of his pursuers. They say he cheats at cards, but even the authorities can't find any evidence of his involvement when a crime takes place. His footprints are never found in Scotland Yard's files, and his alibis are always rock-solid. When the Foreign Office loses a sensitive document or the Admiralty can't find their plans, it's often too late to investigate. The Secret Service is left to wonder if Macavity was behind the theft, but he's usually nowhere to be found. Instead, they might catch him lounging in the sun, licking his paws, or engaged in some intricate math problem. Despite his reputation as a master thief, Macavity always seems to have an excuse for his absence. He has an alibi for every occasion, and those who claim he's behind a particular crime are often proved wrong. It's said that all the other cats with questionable reputations are merely pawns in Macavity's game of cat and mouse. Then there's Gus, the Theatre Cat, whose real name is Asparagus. His shabby appearance belies his former life as a star performer. He was once famous for acting alongside greats like Irving and Tree, and he has tales to tell from his glory days on the stage. Though no longer the terror he once was, Gus still regales his friends with stories of his past exploits, including his role in creating the infamous Fireforefiddle, the Fiend of the Fell. In days gone by, a legendary feline known as Fireforefiddle, the Fiend of the Fell, would regale onlookers with tales of his theatrical exploits. He'd recount how he once stole the show in a performance of East Lynne at Shakespeare's theatre, walking on stage to suggest the need for a dramatic cat appearance. With a hint of pride, Fireforefiddle reminisced about playing the role of a Tiger, expertly evading an Indian Colonel down a drain, and producing spine-tingling growls that summoned the Ghost from the shadows. He even boasted of crossing a stage on a telegraph wire to rescue a child from a burning house. However, he lamented the current state of theatrical training, saying kittens these days get little more than basic tricks, whereas he was part of a well-oiled troupe during Queen Victoria's reign. In contrast, Bustopher Jones, the dapper feline about town, is living life to the fullest. Unlike his scrawny friends, Bustopher is remarkably plump and has an impeccable sense of style, often donning a fastidious black coat with matching spats. He frequents eight or nine exclusive clubs in St. James's Street, where he's treated like royalty. Bustopher's visits to the Senior Educational are rare, but when he does attend, it's against the rules for any other cat to join him. His love of fine dining takes him to various establishments, including the Stage and Screen, which serves up winkles and shrimps, or the Drones, where he enjoys a drink before noon. Meanwhile, SkimbleShanks, the Railway Cat, is the subject of whispers down the line at 11:39. When the Night Mail prepares to depart, concerned voices ask, "Skimble, where has Skimble gone? Has he vanished in search of a thimble?" The station staff and daughters frantically search for him, saying, "Unless Skimble is very nimble, the train can't start." The Night Mail is under Skimble's control, ensuring a smooth journey. With the signal about to expire at 11:42, passengers grow anxious until SkimbleShanks appears, giving a reassuring glance through his glass-green eyes. He oversees the entire train, from the driver to the luggage attendants, and maintains order by patrolling the corridors. The presence of Skimble quiets the travelers, making it difficult for them to behave mischievously. In the Sleeping Car Express, each compartment is meticulously maintained by SkimbleShanks' team. Each traveler's den comes with a newly folded sheet, spotless floor, and adjustable lighting. The guard politely inquires about morning tea preferences while Skimble keeps a watchful eye on everything. Throughout his nocturnal rounds, SkimbleShanks remains vigilant, consuming tea and perhaps a drop of Scotch to stay alert. Unbeknownst to passengers at Crewe, he's already begun his rounds at Carlisle, greeting the stationmaster with enthusiasm. By Dumfries, he communicates with the police, ensuring no issues arise. As the train approaches Gallowgate, SkimbleShanks facilitates disembarkation with a wave of his long brown tail. Cats are depicted as multifaceted creatures, capable of varying degrees and complexities. Skimble embodies this duality, displaying both authority and kindness. His character is reflected in the Night Mail's reliability, showcasing that Cats can possess distinct personalities, much like humans. When interacting with cats, either at work or play, it's essential to understand their proper names, habits, and habitats. However, the question remains, how does one address a feline? To begin, it's crucial to remember that a cat is not a dog. Dogs often pretend to enjoy fighting, frequently bark, and occasionally bite, but overall, they are relatively simple creatures. In contrast, cats are distinct, and their nature should be respected. When addressing a cat, it's vital to keep in mind that they resent familiarity. A polite greeting, such as "O CAT," is suitable when meeting a feline for the first time. For more familiar cats, a casual "OOPS A CAT" may suffice. To earn a cat's trust and become a trusted friend, offering tokens of esteem like cream, caviare, or potted grouse can be effective. Each cat has its unique tastes, and respecting these preferences is essential. Over time, as you build your relationship with the cat, you may eventually be able to call them by their name, signifying a deep understanding and respect between you and the feline.

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