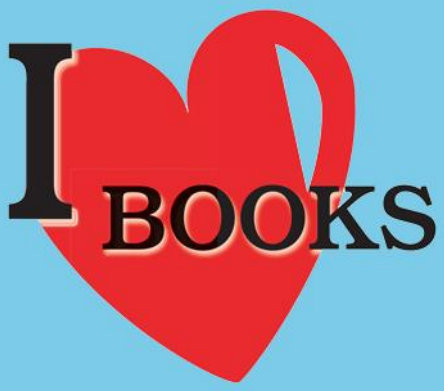


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Opening extract from

Tibs the Post Office Cat

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Dear Reader,

This story is about a cat called Tibs. Tibs was a real cat. He was born in a Post Office in November 1950. It was Tibs' job to keep all the mice and rats under control. He even got paid! Two shillings and sixpence a week, which was enough to buy him some delicious milk. He did such a good job that they named him "Tibs the Great".

The Post Office staff in those days liked to have parties on special occasions – with Tibs as guest of honour. Sometimes they had parties deep underground. This was because the Royal Mail had a very special train called the Mail Rail. This was an electric train that travelled under the streets of London. It didn't have a driver but happily trundled along delivering mail from Whitechapel to Paddington – sometimes it delivered four million letters in a day! Not many people knew about it. Tibs loved his job and had lots of fun.

We hope you enjoy his story.

The Head Postmaster



There was trouble at the Sorting Office in Mount Pleasant.

Holes in the mail sacks!
Letters torn to shreds!
Stamps licked through to the glue!

The Post Office sorters scratched their heads. "We can't deliver these!" they complained. "There's only half an address. And no stamp!"

Who or what was to blame?

MICE, of course!

The head postmaster called a meeting. "This is serious. We need a cat. A proper mouser. We've got a big event coming up and everything has to be perfect!"

"What about Minnie's kitten?" suggested the cook. "She was a great mouser and her kitten might be old enough now."

In a small Post Office, where he lived with his mother Minnie, a white-whiskered cat called Tibs was relaxing.



Christmas had been and gone, with its tinsel, trimmings and toys; then Valentine's Day with its red hearts and roses; and now it was Easter, with its feathery chicks and fluffy bunnies – one celebration fading into another.

"Come here, Tibs," called his mother. "Today we have something special to celebrate. You know that you are Tibs, son of Toodle, son of Tiddles, son of Toby. You come from a long line of distinguished career cats."

"What's a career?" asked Tibs.

"It's a very important job. Tomorrow you are going to the Central Sorting Office. You will be chief mouser!"

"But I like it here," Tibs said.

"Nonsense," said his mother, and she gave him the grooming of his life so that he would look his best.



The next day, Tibs arrived at the busy sorting office. He sat on a chair in front of the head postmaster's desk.

"Mmmmm," said the postmaster. "You look the part. We will hire you for a trial period."

"It is your job to keep the building free of mice," he said. "You will be paid two shillings and sixpence a week and as many mice as you can catch."



Tibs felt a little worried. As a young kitten, one of his best friends had been a mouse. His name was Fred. They had played games of hide-and-seek and 'What's the time, Mr Tibs?'

But now he was in the big wide world and he had responsibilities...

Watching and listening all the while
from his hiding place was a mouse.
He scurried back to tell the other mice.

FOOD TAKEN FROM THE
CANTEEN MUST NOT
BE CONSUMED IN
THE LOUNGE AREAS.

"He looks really fierce, with flaring white whiskers and sharp claws. We'd better watch out," he warned.

That evening, Tibs wandered around the Sorting Office. It was a huge, echoey building.

Tibs felt homesick.



But then, Tibs found his way into the basement kitchen where there was a big scrap bin...



He longed for his mother and the small Post Office he had come from, where everyone knew everybody's name. He longed for the queues and the chatter and the 'thank yous' and 'hellos' and 'how are yous'.





...and some left-over butter! He suddenly felt much better. Tibs was busy licking butter from his paws when a dollop dropped onto the floor.

For one little mouse, the temptation was too much.

He crept closer...

and closer...

until...

Tibs did what any polite, well-brought up cat would do.

"Hello," he said. "My name's Tibs. What's yours?"

The mouse froze. He'd never met a cat like this.

"I don't have a name," he muttered.

"Don't you?" said Tibs. "You look like a Fred to me!"

"Fred?" said the delighted mouse. "I like that name!"

Suddenly, the mice came creeping out from their holes and hiding places.

"What's my name?" asked one of the mice.
"What's mine?" they all squeaked.

Tibs didn't know what to call them.
He needed time to think. So he stretched and yawned, until the mice had quietened down.





When they were silent, Tibs began, "I am Tibs, son of Toodle, son of Tiddles, son of Toby. I am also a trusted employee of the Post Office. If you want names, I think you'll have to earn them."



"How do we do that?" asked Fred.
"You need some proper training," said Tibs.

With that, he ordered the mice back to the sorting room to find a letter each. This time, instead of nibbling the letters, they tried to walk on their hind legs, balancing the letters on their noses.







