

# **The Lighthouse Keeper's Cat**

*A Gentle Bedtime Story About a Very Small Night Watch*

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# The Lighthouse Keeper's Cat

For every child who has ever stayed awake to keep something safe.



# The Last Round



Every night Mr. Bell climbed the hundred and one steps. Every night he lit the great lamp and set it turning — tshh, tshh, tshh. Then he yawned a yawn as big as the sea.

The beam went out over the water, and the water shone like a long bright road.

# You Have the Watch



"Tibbs," said Mr. Bell, "you have the watch." He pulled the blanket up to his moustache, and in one minute he was snoring like a sleepy foghorn.

The lighthouse went quiet. The night was very, very long.



# Up the Hundred and One Steps



Tibbs went up the stairs. One, two, three, four — a hundred and one. The stone was cold and his paws were warm.

Up and up he went, all the way to the light. His tail went first. It always did.

# The Watch Begins



In the lamp room the great lamp turned, round and round. Tibbs sat on the keeper's stool and watched the beam go out — out, out, out — and then come sweeping back, like a long, slow arm.

Nothing on the sea could hide from it.



## A Smudge on the Glass



There was a smudge on the glass, right where the beam came through. Tibbs stretched up tall and licked it clean. He liked the taste of salt.

He licked it again, just to be sure. The beam came through brighter after that — or maybe Tibbs only thought so.

# One Small Nudge



Then the lamp began to slow down. Tick . . . tick . . . tick. Tibbs put his nose to the little brass wheel and nudged it, just once.

The lamp woke up and turned again, round and round and round. Nobody had taught him that. He had watched Mr. Bell do it a hundred and one times.



# The Fog Comes Creeping



Then the fog came. It came in soft and grey, like a blanket pulled over the sea. The beam grew shorter and shorter, until it was only a glow pressed against the window.

The whole world was made of nothing but grey.



# Ring, Bell, Ring



Out on the gallery there was a bell. It had a rope. The rope had a knot. And the knot was exactly the right height for a cat.

Tibbs jumped, and swung, and the bell rang out over the water — ding, ding, ding.

# A Boat in the Fog



Far out in the fog was a little boat. In the boat was a boy in a yellow coat, and a dog who did not like fog one bit.

They could not see the land. Then they heard the bell. Then they saw the glow.

# The Fog Lifts



The fog rolled away like a tide going out. The beam reached long and bright, all the way to the harbour mouth.

Tibbs sat on the rail and watched the sea turn silver. Somewhere out there, a boy rowed home to his supper.



# The Sleepy Watch



After that, the night went quiet. The sea went flat. The stars came out, one by one.

Tibbs' eyes grew heavy, and his head began to nod. He sat up very, very straight. He did not go to sleep. Not quite.

# Good Morning



When the sun came up, Mr. Bell climbed the hundred and one steps. He found his grey wool cap on the floor, and inside the cap was a small, warm, purring cat.

"Good watch," said Mr. Bell. And on the doorstep downstairs, somebody had left a fish, and a note that said: Thank you, Lighthouse.

# A Note for the Grown-Up Reading Aloud

Long ago, before every boat had a radio and every pocket had a map, lighthouses kept people safe. A keeper lived beside the light, night after night, and someone had to stay awake so the lamp never went out.

- Keepers wound the clockwork that turned the great lamp every few hours, all night long — just like Tibbs nudging the little brass wheel.
- When fog hid the light, keepers rang a bell or blew a foghorn instead, so boats could hear their way home.
- Many keepers kept a cat. The cat chased mice away from the food sacks and the bell ropes, and sat warm beside the lamp all night.

Ask your listener: what would you check, if the lighthouse were yours for one night? What would you keep safe?

*"Good watch," said Mr. Bell.*

**The End**





















