

Arrietty

THE BORROWERS

MARY NORTON

First published in 1952, and made into a BBC Television series adapted by Richard Carpenter in 1992.

Beneath the floor behind the kitchen clock live a family of tiny people; Pod and his wife, Homily, and their young daughter **ARRIETTY**. Everything they have, clothes, furniture, food and even their own names, are borrowed from the human 'beans' upstairs, and they call themselves 'The Borrowers'.

Pod has been seen as he was climbing down the curtains, by a human 'Boy', while he was on his last borrowing expedition. The time has come to warn **ARRIETTY** about human 'beans' and how dangerous it is to venture upstairs alone. Over supper, Pod and Homily tell her how her cousin Eggletina – who had never been told about the dangers of 'Upstairs' – had climbed up there on her own and never been seen again. Her father, Uncle Hendreary, was broken-hearted, and he and his family emigrated very soon afterwards. It was thought that the cat had got Eggletina.

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Arrietty

Why did you tell me this? Now? Tonight? . . . You think they'll get a cat? *(She sets down her cup of soup)* Couldn't we emigrate? . . . Supposing that I went out, like Eggletina did, and the cat ate *me*. Then you and papa would emigrate. Wouldn't you? *(Her voice falters)* Wouldn't you? *(Her eyes fill with tears)* I was only thinking that I'd like to be there – to emigrate too. Uneaten . . . It's not that I'm afraid. *(Angrily)* I like cats. I bet the cat didn't eat Eggletina. I bet she just ran away because she hated being cooped up . . . day after day . . . week after week . . . year after year . . . Like I do! *(A sob)* . . . Oh, I know papa is a wonderful Borrower. I know we've managed to stay when all the others have gone. But what has it done for us, in the end? I don't think it's so clever to live on alone, for ever and ever, in a great, big, half-empty house, under the floor, with no one to talk to, no one to play with, nothing to see but dust and passages, no light but candlelight and firelight and what comes through the cracks. Eggletina had brothers and Eggletina had half-brothers; Eggletina had a tame mouse; Eggletina had yellow boots with jet buttons and Eggletina did get out – just once!