



2003

The Cat Who Liked Potato Soup

Irene Halliday

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Halliday, Irene (2003) "The Cat Who Liked Potato Soup," *Children's Book and Media Review*. Vol. 24 : Iss. 3 , Article 21.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol24/iss3/21>

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Farish, Terry. *The Cat who liked Potato Soup*. Illustrated by Root, Barry. Candlewick Press, 2003. ISBN 0763608343. \$15.99. 32 pp.

Reviewer: Irene Halliday

Reading Level: Primary; Intermediate;

Rating: Excellent;

Genre: Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Cats--Juvenile fiction; Pets--Juvenile fiction; Friendship--Juvenile fiction; Book--Review;

"To appreciate a cat requires a certain amount of abstraction, I think--and a sense of humor," says Barry Root, illustrator of *The Cat Who Liked Potato Soup*. Root and author Terry Farish have created an uppity old cat with an attitude, who "never killed nothin'", preferring homemade potato soup served by her owner, "an old man, an ol' Texas boy, country raised, don't you know." The two share a wizened old place on a dirt road called Chatterpie, way out in the country. Nearby is a good fishing lake where the old man catches freshwater bass; "the cat never caught nothin'." Deep down, the old man loves his cat, "but not so's you'd notice."

When the cat seems to prefer a long, winter nap on the new electric blanket to a fishing excursion, the old man goes out without her, something he's never done before. At home, the cat awaits her morning soup. No soup. No old man. Tired of waiting, she slips out the window and disappears for 3 days, leaving her owner grumpily lonely and sorrowful. When she angrily returns with a large fish, the old man is awestruck. His cat has finally caught something! The cat doesn't care that he is impressed; she puts her paw on the fish and her eyes dare him to touch it. The two curmudgeons come to a gradual truce and peace is restored.

Farish's colorful, "countrified" text is perfectly complemented by Root's water color and gouache illustrations that evoke the strong feeling of a simple life in an earlier time. The old blue Studebaker pickup, the well-worn wood rocker on the corrugated aluminum covered wood porch, the oval metal and formica kitchen table and chairs, the big black coal stove and the old iron bed add authenticity to the rural atmosphere. But what makes this simple tale memorable is the feeling of friendship and mutual need between the old man and his cat. They love each other in spite of occasional resentments and crotchety personalities. Children will recognize this and be glad.