

Skimbleshanks, The Railway Cat

The Cats

Skimbleshanks the railway cat
The cat of the railway train

There's a whisper down the line at eleven thirty-nine
When the Night Mail's ready to depart
Saying, "Skimble, where is Skimble?
Has he gone to hunt the thimble?
We must find him or the train can't start"

All the guards and all the porters
And the station master's daughters
Would be searchin' high and low
Saying, "Skimble, where is Skimble?
For unless he's very nimble
Then the Night Mail just can't go"

At eleven forty-two with the signal overdue
And the passengers all frantic to a man
That's when I would appear and I'd saunter to the rear
I'd been busy in the luggage van

Then he gave one flash of his glass-green eyes
And the signal went 'All clear'
They'd be off at last for the northern part
of the Northern Hemisphere

Skimbleshanks, the railway cat
The cat of the railway train

You might say that by and large
It was me who was in charge
Of the Sleeping Car Express
From the driver and the guards
To the bagmen playing cards
I would supervise them all, more or less

Down the corridor he paces and examines all the faces
Of the travelers in the first and the third
He establishes control by a regular patrol
And he'd know at once if anything occurred

He would watch you without winking
And he saw what you were thinking
And it's certain that he didn't approve
Of hilarity and riot so that folk were very quiet
When Skimble was about and on the move

You could play no pranks with Skimbleshanks
He's a cat that couldn't be ignored
So nothing went wrong on the Northern Mail
When Skimbleshanks was aboard

It was very pleasant when they'd found their little den
With their name written up on the door
And the berth was very neat with a newly folded sheet
And not a speck of dust upon the floor

There was every sort of light, you could make it dark or bright
And a button you could turn to make a breeze
And a funny little basin you're supposed to wash your face in
And a crank to shut the window should you sneeze

Then the guard looked in politely and would ask you very brightly
"Do you like your morning tea weak or strong?"
But I was right behind him and was ready to remind him
For Skimbleshanks won't let anything go wrong

When they crept into their cosy berth
And pulled up the counterpane
They all could reflect, that it was very nice
To know that they wouldn't be bothered by mice
They can leave all that to the railway cat
The cat of the railway train

Skimbleshanks, the railway cat
The cat of the railway train

In the watches of the night, I was always fresh and bright
Every now and then I'd have a cup of tea
With perhaps a drop of Scotch while I was keepin' on the watch
Only stopping here and there to catch a flea

They were fast asleep at Crewe and so they never knew
That I was walkin' up and down the station
They were sleeping all the while I was busy at Carlisle
Where I met the station master with elation

They might see me at Dumfries if I summoned by police
If there was anything they ought to know about
When they got to Gallowgate there they did not have to wait
For Skimbleshanks would help them to get out

And he gives you a wave of his long, brown tail
Which says "I'll see you again"
You will meet without fail on the Midnight Mail
The cat of the railway train

You will meet without fail on the Midnight Mail
The cat of the railway train