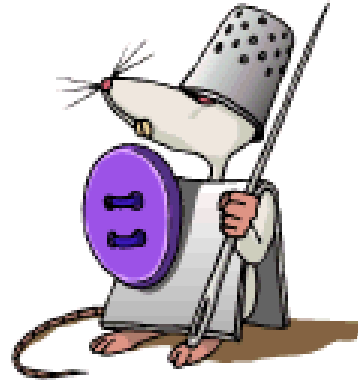




The Borrowers

Pod came in slowly, his sack on his back; on the middle of the kitchen table, he placed a doll's teacup; it seemed the size of a mixing-bowl.



"Why, Pod—" began Homily.

"Got the saucer too," he said. He swung down the sack and untied the neck. "Here you are," he said.

"Oh, Pod," said Homily, "you do look queer. Are you all right?"

Pod sat down. "I'm fair enough," he said.

Homily stared at him, her mouth open and then she turned. "Come now, Arrietty," she said briskly, "you pop off to bed, like a good girl."

"Oh," said Arrietty, "can't I see the rest of the borrowings?"

"Your father's got nothing now. Only food. Off you pop to bed. You've seen the cup and saucer."

"Good night, papa," said Arrietty, kissing his flat white cheek.

"Now, Pod," said Homily, when they were alone, "tell me. What the matter?"

Pod looked at her blankly. "I been 'seen'," he said.

Homily put out a groping hand for the edge of the table; she grasped it and lowered herself slowly on to the stool. "Oh, Pod," she said.

