

Bob Tales: Land of the Woody Warbles

Susan Sullivan

Lauren Reeves, Illustrator

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In Susan Sullivan's uplifting chapter book *Bob Tales*, a stray feline is rescued, seeks adventures, and learns that he's capable and loved.

At first mangy and unnamed, Bob is a black cat who scavenges on the streets and retreats from tougher cats. Then a kind man adopts him. Bob thrives in the man's home, which also houses the man's partner and other animals. Still, he remains an innocent: when his people go on a trip, Bob has no idea why.

Thinking that his people are missing, Bob leaves home to search for them in the woods. On his path to seeking advice from a wise owl, he has fleeting encounters with wild animals, including a snake, a frog, a fish, and a lemur. The creatures remark about Bob's lack of a tail; Bob, who hasn't felt concerned about that before, begins thinking that he should search for his tail in addition to his people. He runs into other obstacles, too, as when he falls into the water. These experiences leave Bob with new confidence.

The book veers into fantasy territory when Bob encounters a walking stick that dons a top hat, sings, and dances. And the illustrations depict the woodland setting, bathed in golden light, with whimsy: bee houses are shown suspended from a tree, and the animals don glasses and a cape. And the familiar, comforting owl figure delivers a timeless message about accepting oneself without paying too much mind to other people's opinions.

In the upbeat chapter book *Bob Tales*, a cat in search of its owners makes woodland friends and is reassured of his own worth.

KAREN RIGBY (November / December 2023)

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