



CHAPTER 7

WHITEFOOT GIVES UP HOPE



Whitefoot had been in many tight places. Yes, indeed, Whitefoot had been in many tight places. He had had narrow escapes of all kinds. But never had he felt so utterly hopeless as now. The moment he landed in that sap, Whitefoot began to swim frantically. He isn't a particularly good swimmer, but he could swim well enough to keep afloat for a while. His first thought was to scramble up the side of the tin pail, but when he reached it and tried to fasten his sharp little claws into it in order to climb, he discovered that he couldn't. Sharp as they were, his little claws just slipped, and his struggles to get up only resulted in tiring him out and in plunging him wholly beneath the sap. He came up choking and gasping. Then round and round inside that pail he paddled, stopping every two or three seconds to try to climb up that hateful, smooth, shiny wall.

The more he tried to climb out, the more frightened he became.

He was in a perfect panic of fear. He quite lost his head, did Whitefoot. The harder he struggled, the more tired he became, and the greater was his danger of drowning.

Whitefoot squeaked pitifully. He didn't want to drown. Of course not. He wanted to live. But unless he could get out of that pail very soon, he would drown. He knew it. He knew that he couldn't hold on much longer. He knew that just as soon as he stopped paddling, he would sink. Already he was so tired from his frantic efforts to escape that it seemed to him that he couldn't hold out any longer. But somehow he kept his legs moving, and so kept afloat.

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Just why he kept struggling, Whitefoot couldn't have told. It wasn't because he had any hope. He didn't have the least bit of hope. He knew now that he couldn't climb the sides of that pail, and there was no other way of getting out. Still he kept on paddling. It was the only way to keep from drowning, and though he felt sure that he had got to drown at last, he just wouldn't until he actually had to. And all the time Whitefoot squeaked hopelessly, despairingly, pitifully. He did it without knowing that he did it, just as he kept paddling round and round.