

The Tales of Beatrix Potter

5: The Tale of Benjamin Bunny adapted by Kate Stonham

It was a fine, clear morning, and Benjamin Bunny was sitting on a grassy bank.

His ears pricked up as a horse pulling a carriage approached. It was driven by a gentleman in a hat and by his side sat a smartly dressed lady.

As soon as they had passed, Benjamin set off with a hop, a skip and a jump. He was off to visit his relations who lived in the nearby wood...

The wood was full of rabbit holes - and in the neatest, sandiest hole of all lived Benjamin's aunt and his cousins - Flopsy, Mopsy, Cotton-Tail and Peter Rabbit.

Benjamin felt excited as he scrambled inside: he was looking forward to seeing Peter...but as he crawled into the warm kitchen with bunches of herbs hanging from the ceiling, he could not believe what he saw...there, in the middle, stood Peter - without a stitch of clothing on!

'Peter!' cried Benjamin. 'What happened to your jacket and shoes?'

Peter blushed bright red. 'I sneaked into Mr and Mrs McGregor's garden to eat some cabbages - but I was spotted by Mr McGregor and they came off when I tried to escape. Mr McGregor put them on his scarecrow!'

'Don't worry,' said Benjamin. 'I've just seen the McGregors go out. Let's go and find that scarecrow!'

The two bunnies bounded through the wood and jumped onto a high brick wall. On the other side of the wall was Mr McGregor's garden.

'We can squeeze in under the gate,' whispered Peter. 'But that would spoil my clothes,' protested Benjamin. 'Let's climb down that pear tree instead.'

'Wooooahhh!' But no sooner had Benjamin spoken than Peter lost his balance and toppled down.

It was just as well there was a bed of springy lettuces to break his fall. 'Come on, jump!' cried Peter. 'It's a nice soft landing!'

The two little bunnies crept over to the scarecrow and removed Peter's clothes. 'Ugh, they're all wet and soggy from the rain,' said Peter.

Benjamin felt inside the coat pocket. 'Where's your handkerchief?' he asked. 'While we're here, I want to fill it with onions to take back as a present for Auntie.'

As Benjamin dug up onions, Peter looked around nervously. 'What's that noise?!' he whispered.

'Relax!' said Benjamin. 'I know this garden well! I often come here with my papa to get lettuces. Try one, they're delicious!'

But Peter wasn't hungry. 'I want to go home,' he whimpered. 'Well, if you insist,' sighed Benjamin. 'But we can't climb back up the pear tree with all these onions. Follow me!'



Benjamin led Peter along some planks of wood under a sunny-red brick wall.

Suddenly Peter stopped. 'What was that noise!' he whispered - his eyes as big as lollipops. 'It's coming from round the corner.'

Benjamin poked his nose round to look. 'Quick - hide!' he whispered as he grabbed a basket and pulled it over their heads...

What Peter had seen...was a large, furry, cat. It prowled over to the basket, stretched itself across the top - and fell fast asleep.

Peter and Benjamin blinked in the darkness - the smell of onions was making their eyes water. They waited and waited for the cat to wake up and move - but it didn't seem to want to wake up at all...

Suddenly, they heard a tremendous kerfuffle. The bunnies held their breath. What was going on?

Then they blinked in the light, as the basket was pulled away from the tops of their heads...

'Hallo you two lads!' said a friendly voice.

'Papa!' cried Benjamin.

'That cat won't be bothering you again.' smiled Papa. 'I've locked him in the greenhouse. Come on, let's get you two home.'

When Mr McGregor returned a short time later he was baffled to see his garden covered in tiny rabbit shoe prints.

'And here's another mystery,' he said to his wife. 'How did the cat manage to shut herself in the greenhouse - and lock the door from the outside?'

When Peter and Benjamin got back home everyone was happy to see them safe and sound.

'Don't these onions look fine?' said Benjamin's aunt as she hung them from the ceiling with the herbs. 'But seeing you with your clothes back on, Peter, is even finer!'