

# The Tales of Beatrix Potter

## 12: The Tale of the Flopsy Bunnies adapted by Jan Payne

It is a well-known fact that if rabbits eat too much it makes them very sleepy. This is what happened to the Flopsy Bunnies one day when they ate too many lettuces.

The Flopsy Bunnies are the children of Benjamin and Flopsy Bunny. They are always hungry and one day decided to go and see if their uncle, Peter Rabbit, had any lettuces in his garden.

When they got there the lettuces had all been dug up and someone had put them on Mr McGregor's rubbish heap. There were so many the Flopsy Bunnies couldn't believe their eyes. They were filled with joy by the sight of all the juicy green leaves - and it wasn't long before they had eaten every single one!

Once they had finished munching their way through all the lettuces, they snuggled up together in the warm sun and fell asleep.

Just then Benjamin Bunny came walking by. 'I think I'll have a sleep too,' he said to himself when he saw them. And, to keep the flies off, he put a paper bag on his face and lay down close to the sleeping bunnies.

The Flopsy Bunnies slept...and slept...and slept. They slept so deeply that they didn't wake when a little mouse with a very long tail, called Thomasina Tittlemouse, rustled the paper bag on Benjamin Bunny's face and woke him up.

They didn't wake either at the sound of a lawn-mower cutting grass close by...and they didn't wake when Mr McGregor tipped a sack of grass cuttings over them.

The little rabbits smiled sweetly in their sleep under the shower of grass. They were dreaming that their mother was tucking them up in bed. They had no idea that danger was close by.

After emptying the sack of grass Mr McGregor noticed the tips of little rabbit's ears poking up through the cuttings. He stared at them for some time unable to believe his luck.

'One, two, three, four, five, six little rabbits,' he counted to himself with a smile. Then he picked up each rabbit and put it into the empty sack.

The Flopsy Bunnies still did not wake up. They thought their mother was turning them over in bed.

Mr McGregor tied the sack with string and propped it against the wall. Then he went to put the lawn mower away in the shed.

While he was gone Mrs Flopsy Bunny came across the field and saw the sack. 'What's in there?' she asked out loud, 'and where are my children?'

Benjamin Bunny and Thomasina Tittlemouse heard her. They had hidden when they saw Mr McGregor and had seen everything.



'Help me rescue my babies,' cried Mrs Flopsy Bunny, trying to undo the sack. But the string was too strong.

'Let me try,' said Benjamin Bunny. But he couldn't undo it either. Thomasina Tittlemouse came to the rescue. She chewed through the string with her sharp little teeth.

Mrs Flopsy Bunny quickly lifted her children out of the sack and woke them up. She and Benjamin filled the sack with turnips and marrows and tied it up again. Then they all hid under a bush to watch what Mr McGregor would do.

When Mr McGregor returned he picked up the sack and carried it to his house completely unaware of what had just happened. 'This is heavier than I thought,' he grumbled.

Flopsy, Benjamin, Thomasina and all the little bunnies followed Mr McGregor cautiously at a safe distance. When he had gone into the house they crept up to the window to watch what would happen next. They heard him talking to Mrs McGregor.

'One, two, three, four, five, six...' they heard him count.

'One, two, three, four, five, six...' they heard Mrs McGregor ask.

'Little rabbits!' replied Mr McGregor. 'That's what is in the sack. Six lovely little rabbits! I am going to sell them and buy myself something nice.'

'You will not sell them,' said his wife. 'I shall put them into a pie and use their fur to line my old cloak.' She bent down to feel the sack.

'They don't feel like rabbits,' she said. 'They are too hard and lumpy and they are all different shapes.'

Mrs McGregor untied the sack and put her hand inside. When she felt the turnips and marrows she became very angry.

'You have tried to trick me on purpose,' she shouted at Mr McGregor.

When Mr McGregor saw what was in the sack he was angry too. He picked up a marrow and flung it out of the window, just missing the smallest Flopsy Bunny.

Mrs Flopsy Bunny gathered the children around her. 'I think we've seen enough,' she whispered, 'While they are busy arguing I think it's time we went home.'

So, Mr McGregor wasn't able to sell the little rabbits to buy something nice. And Mrs McGregor didn't have any soft rabbit fur to line her cloak. But when Christmas came, Thomasina Tittlemouse received a lovely present in her Christmas stocking.

Mrs Flopsy Bunny had brushed and combed the little rabbits so often that she had collected enough fur to make a little mouse cloak and a warm pair of pretty mittens.

It was a thank you present for saving her precious little Flopsy Bunnies.