



The Tales of Beatrix Potter

14: The Tale of Mrs Tittlemouse

adapted by Kate Stonham

Once upon a time, a little wood-mouse called Mrs Tittlemouse lived in a house hidden among the roots of a hedge.

There was a kitchen, a parlour, a pantry, a larder and lots and lots of sandy passages, leading to storerooms and cellars where she tidily stored all the nuts and seeds she found.

Tidy was the word. For Mrs Tittlemouse was a very tidy mouse indeed!

She was always sweeping and dusting the soft sandy floors. And she had to, because unwanted visitors were coming into her home without invitation, bringing all kinds of untidiness with them.

'Shuh, shuh! Out of here right now and take your dirty feet with you!' she cried, with a clatter of her dust-pan, when she found a lost beetle.

Another day, she came across a little ladybird. 'Fly away home!' she ordered.

Then there was the day she got covered in nasty sticky spider web - thanks to a rather large spider that came in to shelter from the rain.

'Begging your pardon, Miss,' he said, 'but is this not Miss Muffet's home?'

'Oh, go away!' squealed Miss Tittlemouse as she bundled the spider out of the window. 'And take your sticky web with you!'

One day, Mrs Tittlemouse needed cherry stones and some seeds for dinner. The storeroom was a long way from her kitchen, but as she set off along the passage way, she noticed a strange smell.

'Is that honey?' she wondered. 'And are those dirty little footprints?'

Then, as she rounded a corner, she bumped straight into a buzzy bumble bee. The bee's name was Babbitty Bumble. 'Oh deary me,' said Mrs Tittlemouse, rather crossly. 'What are you doing in my home without an invitation?'

'Zizz, wizz, wizz,' replied the little bee, as she disappeared into a storeroom.

When Mrs Tittlemouse followed the bee inside, the walls were covered in messy moss. 'Tch, tch!' she tutted, but as she began to tidy it up...a bunch of bees stuck their heads out and buzzed angrily. 'Oh deary me, this will never do,' sighed Mrs Tittlemouse, 'but who will help me get rid of them?'

She thought of Mr Jackson, a toad who lived in a muddy ditch. He loved little creatures, and would surely gobble them up – but he was always wet and dirty and never wiped his feet.

She could not stand the thought of him in her nice neat home. No – she would worry about what to do with the bees after dinner. But when she got to the parlour, there was a nasty surprise...



For sitting in her rocking chair and twiddling his thumbs - was Mr Jackson himself! His coat tails were dripping with water, and his wet footprints were all over the floor.

'Oh dear!' sighed Mrs Tittlemouse as she got out a mop, 'what a very wet mess you've made.'

'Indeed, so I think I'll stay by your nice warm fire until I'm dry,' answered Mr Jackson.

Mr Jackson stayed so long, that Mrs Tittlemouse had to offer him some dinner too. 'Thank you very much,' he replied. 'But what I should really like is some of that lovely honey.'

'But I don't have any honey,' said Mrs Tittlemouse.

'Tiddly, Widdly, Mrs Tittlemouse, but I can smell it!' replied the toad, 'It's the reason why I came.'

And with that, he got up and started looking around. He looked in the cupboard...and the pantry...and the larder...

Finally, he found the bees...and Mr Jackson knew that bees make honey.

'Get out of our storeroom, you nasty old toad!' squealed Babbitty Bumble.

As Mr Jackson pulled away the moss in search of the honey, the upset bees angrily buzzed around him.

Mrs Tittlemouse hid in the nut-cellar until the racket died down. When she finally entered the room, it was empty...and very, very untidy.

'Oh deary me, never did I see such a smeary, honey-ish, mossy-ish, thistle-downy mess,' she cried, 'and such big, dirty, toad footprints - all over my nice clean storeroom! It will take me a long time to tidy this up!'

And indeed it did. The little mouse spent the next two weeks cleaning up all the mess that her unwanted visitors had left behind. She scrubbed down the storerooms, rubbed the furniture with beeswax and polished her tin spoons until they shone like new.

When she was finished, Mrs Tittlemouse invited all her friends over to the house celebrate - except for Mr Jackson, who had to sit outside.

But he didn't mind - especially when the field-mice passed him acorns full of honey-dew through the window. 'Your very good health, Mrs Tittlemouse!' he croaked. 'Your very good health indeed!'