



The Tales of Beatrix Potter

16: The Tale of Mr Tod – Part 2

adapted by Jeff Capel

Mr Tod the Fox was in a very bad mood. He was hungry after a poor night's hunting. He slapped his stick upon the ground and snapped his jaws at a bird who had followed him all the way home, telling every rabbit in the woods that there was a fox coming their way.

His temper was worsened by the sight of badger tracks leading up the hill to his home. This meant only one thing: Tommy Brock the badger was there.

Mr Tod didn't like Tommy Brock. Tommy Brock didn't like Mr Tod.

When he reached his house he sniffed the air. The door was still locked but he knew the house wasn't empty. He turned the big rusty key in the lock.

Peter Rabbit and Benjamin Bunny, who were hiding under the kitchen floor, heard everything.

Fortunately for them, Mr Tod didn't notice the wriggling baby rabbits in the oven as he entered. His attention turned to the bedroom from where he could hear a deep slow snoring. There lying in his bed was Tommy Brock.

The badger snored on and Mr Tod assumed he was asleep. But he didn't notice that one of Tommy's eyes was not totally shut. 'I'll teach you to break in and sleep in my bed,' thought Mr Tod and he quickly made a plan.

He went outside to where the washing-line was tied between two trees. He undid one end and very quietly, so as not to wake the snoring badger, he climbed through the bedroom window and tied the line to a hook above the bed.

Whenever, Mr Tod's back was turned, Tommy Brock opened his eyes and watched him, grinning. Then he shut them tight to look as if he was still asleep.

Mr Tod fetched a large and heavy bucket of water from the stream and staggered into the bedroom with it. He climbed onto the chair next to the bed. His legs were dangerously near to Tommy Brock's teeth.

Mr Tod tied the bucket to the washing-line. A couple of drops of water splashed onto the Badger, but he carried on snoring. 'I have never known such a deep sleeper,' thought Mr Tod.

Tommy Brock didn't move – except one eye.

Mr Tod was ready. 'I'll wake that badger with a surprise shower!' he thought. 'It will make a big mess in my bedroom but I'd have to clean it anyway after that creature has been sleeping in my bed.'

Softly, Mr Tod shut the bedroom door and started to creep back to the tree to undo the rope.

The moment he had gone, Tommy Brock leapt out of bed, rolled up a dressing gown into a bundle and stuffed it under the blankets to look like his body.



Mr Tod reached the tree and found the knot was so tight that he could only loosen it by gnawing at it with his sharp teeth.

Suddenly the rope gave away with such a sudden jerk that it nearly pulled his teeth out.

There was a crash and a splash and the noise of the bucket rolling across the floor. But there were no screams.

‘Strange!’ thought Mr Tod as he peeped in at the window.

The water was dripping from the bed and there was a soggy something under the blankets. There was no sign of movement. Just a drip drop, drop drip of trickling water.

‘It’s worked even better than I planned,’ smiled Mr Tod. ‘The bucket has knocked the badger out!’

Mr Tod walked happily back into his kitchen. What? Tommy Brock was sitting at Mr Tod’s table, pouring tea from Mr Tod’s teapot into Mr Tod’s teacup. And he was grinning.

Mr Tod rushed upon Tommy Brock and Tommy Brock wrestled with Mr Tod.

There was a great battle in the kitchen. All the china was broken, the table and the chairs were turned upside down and the clock fell off the wall.

To Peter Rabbit and Benjamin Bunny, still hiding in their tunnel, it sounded as if the floor would give way.

Tommy Brock and Mr Tod rolled over and over snarling and snapping at each other. Fur flew everywhere. Like a log, they rolled out the kitchen door, over the bank, down the hill, bumping over the rocks.

Now that the coast was clear, Peter and Benjamin emerged from their tunnel. Peter kept watch by the door while Benjamin tiptoed carefully through the wreckage in the kitchen. He opened the oven door, felt inside and found something warm and wriggling.

‘My babies! I’ve got them,’ he shouted back to Peter.

‘Quickly, cousin,’ Peter called back. ‘Let’s run for it!’

Distant sounds of a battling fox and badger still echoed in the woods.

The rabbits scampered down the hill at Bull Banks, half-carrying, half-dragging the sack containing the baby rabbits between them. They reached home safely and burst into the rabbit hole.

Flopsy and Old Bouncer were so happy to see them arrive with their young family.

The baby rabbits were fed and put to bed and soon recovered.

Peter and Benjamin told their story but of course they hadn’t waited long enough to be able to tell the end of the battle between Tommy Brock and Mr Tod. I wonder what you think happened..?