

The houses were not always empty when Mr. Tod moved OUT; because sometimes Tommy Brock moved IN; (without asking leave).

Tommy Brock was a short bristly fat waddling person with a grin; he grinned all over his face. He was not nice in his habits. He ate wasp nests and frogs and worms; and he waddled about by moonlight, digging things up.

His clothes were very dirty; and as he slept in the day-time, he always went to bed in his boots. And the bed which he went to bed in, was generally Mr. Tod's.

Now Tommy Brock did occasionally eat rabbit-pie; but it was only very little young ones occasionally, when other food was really scarce.

He was friendly with old Mr.

Bouncer; they agreed in disliking the wicked otters and Mr. Tod; they often talked over that painful subject.

Old Mr. Bouncer was stricken in

years. He sat in the spring sunshine outside the burrow, in a muffler; smoking a pipe of rabbit tobacco.

He lived with his son Benjamin Bunny and his daughter-in-law Flopsy, who had a young family.

Old Mr. Bouncer was in charge of the family that afternoon, because Benjamin and Flopsy had gone out.

The little rabbit-babies were just old enough to open their blue eyes and kick. They lay in a fluffy bed of rabbit wool and hay, in a shallow burrow, separate from the main rabbit hole. To tell the truth--old Mr. Bouncer had forgotten them.

He sat in the sun, and conversed cordially with Tommy Brock, who was passing through the wood with a sack and a little spud which he used for digging, and some mole traps.

He complained bitterly about the scarcity of pheasants' eggs, and accused Mr. Tod of poaching them. And the otters had cleared off all the frogs while he was asleep

in winter--"I have not had a good square meal for a fortnight, I am living on pig-nuts. I shall have to turn vegetarian and eat my own tail!" said Tommy Brock.

It was not much of a joke, but it tickled old Mr. Bouncer; because Tommy Brock was so fat and stumpy and grinning.

So old Mr. Bouncer laughed; and pressed Tommy Brock to come inside, to taste a slice of seed-cake and "a glass of my daughter Flopsy's cowslip wine." Tommy Brock squeezed himself into the rabbit hole with alacrity.

Then old Mr. Bouncer smoked another pipe, and gave Tommy Brock a cabbage leaf cigar which was so very strong that it made Tommy Brock grin more than ever; and the smoke filled the burrow. Old Mr.

Bouncer coughed and laughed; and Tommy Brock puffed and grinned.

And Mr. Bouncer laughed and coughed, and shut his eyes because

of the cabbage smoke

**When Flopsy and Benjamin came
back--old Mr. Bouncer woke up.**

**Tommy Brock and all the young
rabbit-babies had disappeared!**

**Mr. Bouncer would not confess
that he had admitted anybody into
the rabbit hole. But the smell of
badger was undeniable; and there
were round heavy footmarks in the
sand. He was in disgrace; Flopsy
wrung her ears, and slapped him.
Benjamin Bunny set off at once
after Tommy Brock.**

**There was not much difficulty in
tracking him; he had left his foot-
mark and gone slowly up the winding
footpath through the wood.**

**Here he had rooted up the moss
and wood sorrel. There he had dug
quite a deep hole for dog darnel;
and had set a mole trap. A little
stream crossed the way. Benjamin
skipped lightly over dry-foot; the
badger's heavy steps showed plainly
in the mud.**

The path led to a part of the thicket where the trees had been cleared; there were leafy oak stumps, and a sea of blue hyacinths--but the smell that made Benjamin stop, was not the smell of flowers!

Mr. Tod's stick house was before him and, for once, Mr. Tod was at home. There was not only a foxy flavour in proof of it--there was smoke coming out of the broken pail that served as a chimney.

Benjamin Bunny sat up, staring; his whiskers twitched. Inside the stick house somebody dropped a plate, and said something. Benjamin stamped his foot, and bolted.

He never stopped till he came to the other side of the wood. Apparently Tommy Brock had turned

A fat and grinning Tommy Brock, with a sack, spud, and mole traps, conversing with old Mr. Bouncer outside the burrow while sitting in the sunlight.

