

empty and silent; the clock had run down. Peter and Benjamin flattened their noses against the window, and stared into the dusk.

Then they scrambled round the rocks to the other side of the house.

It was damp and smelly, and overgrown with thorns and briars.

The rabbits shivered in their shoes.

"Oh my poor rabbit babies! What a dreadful place; I shall never see them again!" sighed Benjamin.

They crept up to the bedroom window. It was closed and bolted like the kitchen. But there were signs that this window had been recently open; the cobwebs were disturbed, and there were fresh dirty footmarks upon the window-sill.

The room inside was so dark, that at first they could make out nothing; but they could hear a noise --a slow deep regular snoring grunt.

And as their eyes became accustomed to the darkness, they perceived

that somebody was asleep
on Mr. Tod's bed, curled up under
the blanket.--"He has gone to bed
in his boots," whispered Peter.

Benjamin, who was all of a twitter,
pulled Peter off the window-sill.

Tommy Brock's snores continued,
grunty and regular from Mr. Tod's
bed. Nothing could be seen of the
young family.

The sun had set; an owl began
to hoot in the wood. There were
many unpleasant things lying about,
that had much better have been
buried; rabbit bones and skulls, and
chickens' legs and other horrors. It
was a shocking place, and very dark.

They went back to the front of
the house, and tried in every way
to move the bolt of the kitchen
window. They tried to push up a
rusty nail between the window
sashes; but it was of no use,
especially without a light.

They sat side by side outside the
window, whispering and listening.

In half an hour the moon rose over the wood. It shone full and clear and cold, upon the house amongst the rocks, and in at the kitchen window. But alas, no little rabbit babies were to be seen!

The moonbeams twinkled on the carving knife and the pie dish, and made a path of brightness across the dirty floor.

The light showed a little door in a wall beside the kitchen fireplace-- a little iron door belonging to a brick oven, of that old-fashioned sort that used to be heated with faggots of wood.

And presently at the same moment Peter and Benjamin noticed that whenever they shook the window-- the little door opposite shook in answer. The young family were alive; shut up in the oven!

Benjamin was so excited that it was a mercy he did not awake Tommy Brock, whose snores continued solemnly in Mr. Tod's bed.

But there really was not very much comfort in the discovery. They could not open the window; and although the young family was alive--the little rabbits were quite incapable of letting themselves out; they were not old enough to crawl.

After much whispering, Peter and Benjamin decided to dig a tunnel. They began to burrow a yard or two lower down the bank. They hoped that they might be able to work between the large stones under the house; the kitchen floor was so dirty that it was impossible to say whether it was made of earth or flags.

They dug and dug for hours.

They could not tunnel straight on account of stones; but by the end of the night they were under the kitchen floor. Benjamin was on his back, scratching upwards. Peter's claws were worn down; he was outside the tunnel, shuffling sand away. He called out that it was morning--sunrise; and that the

jays were making a noise down
below in the woods.

Benjamin Bunny came out of the
dark tunnel, shaking the sand from
his ears; he cleaned his face with
his paws. Every minute the sun
shone warmer on the top of the hill.

In the valley there was a sea of
white mist, with golden tops of
trees showing through.

Again from the fields down below
in the mist there came the angry
cry of a jay--followed by the sharp
yelping bark of a fox!

Then those two rabbits lost their
heads completely. They did the
most foolish thing that they could
have done. They rushed into their
short new tunnel, and hid themselves
at the top end of it, under

A dark and damp kitchen with a small iron door leading to a brick oven, where the young rabbit family is trapped.

