

The Tale of the Flopsy Bunnies

by Beatrix Potter adapted by EveryReader

Adapted to Lexile Level 800





People say that eating too much lettuce is soporific. That means it makes you sleepy. I have never felt sleepy after eating lettuce. But I am not a rabbit.



Lettuce certainly made the Flopsy Bunnies very sleepy. When Benjamin Bunny grew up, he married Flopsy. They had a big family. They were cheerful, but they did not plan ahead very well.



I do not remember the names of each of their children. Everyone just called them the Flopsy Bunnies. There was not always enough food. Benjamin often borrowed cabbages from Flopsy's brother, Peter Rabbit, who kept a nursery garden.



Sometimes Peter Rabbit had no cabbages to spare. When that happened, the Flopsy Bunnies crossed the field to the rubbish heap in the ditch outside Mr. McGregor's garden. Mr. McGregor's rubbish heap held all sorts of things. There were jam pots and paper bags.



There were piles of grass clippings from the mowing machine. They always tasted oily. There were some rotten vegetable marrows, a kind of squash. There was an old boot or two.



One day, what luck, there were many overgrown lettuces. They had started to bloom. The Flopsy Bunnies stuffed themselves with lettuce. Little by little, each one got drowsy and lay down in the cut grass.



Benjamin was not as sleepy as the children. Before he dozed off, he was awake enough to put a paper bag over his head. It would keep off the flies. The little Flopsy Bunnies slept happily in the warm sun.



From the lawn beyond the garden came the distant clatter of the mowing machine. Flies buzzed along the wall. A small old mouse picked through the rubbish among the jam pots. Her name was Thomasina Tittlemouse.



She was a wood mouse with a long tail. She rustled across the paper bag and woke Benjamin Bunny. The mouse apologized over and over. She said she knew Peter Rabbit.



While she and Benjamin were talking under the wall, they heard heavy footsteps above them. Suddenly, Mr. McGregor dumped a whole sack of lawn clippings right on top of the sleeping Flopsy Bunnies! Benjamin shrank down under his paper bag. The mouse hid in a jam pot.



The little rabbits smiled in their sleep under the shower of grass. They did not wake up because the lettuce had been so soporific. They dreamed that their mother, Flopsy, was tucking them into a hay bed. After he emptied his sack, Mr. McGregor looked down.



He saw the tips of small brown ears sticking up through the grass clippings. He stared for a while. A fly landed on one ear, and it twitched. Mr. McGregor climbed down onto the rubbish heap.



"One, two, three, four, five, six little rabbits!" he said. He dropped them into his sack. The Flopsy Bunnies dreamed that their mother was turning them over in bed. They stirred a little in their sleep but still did not wake up.



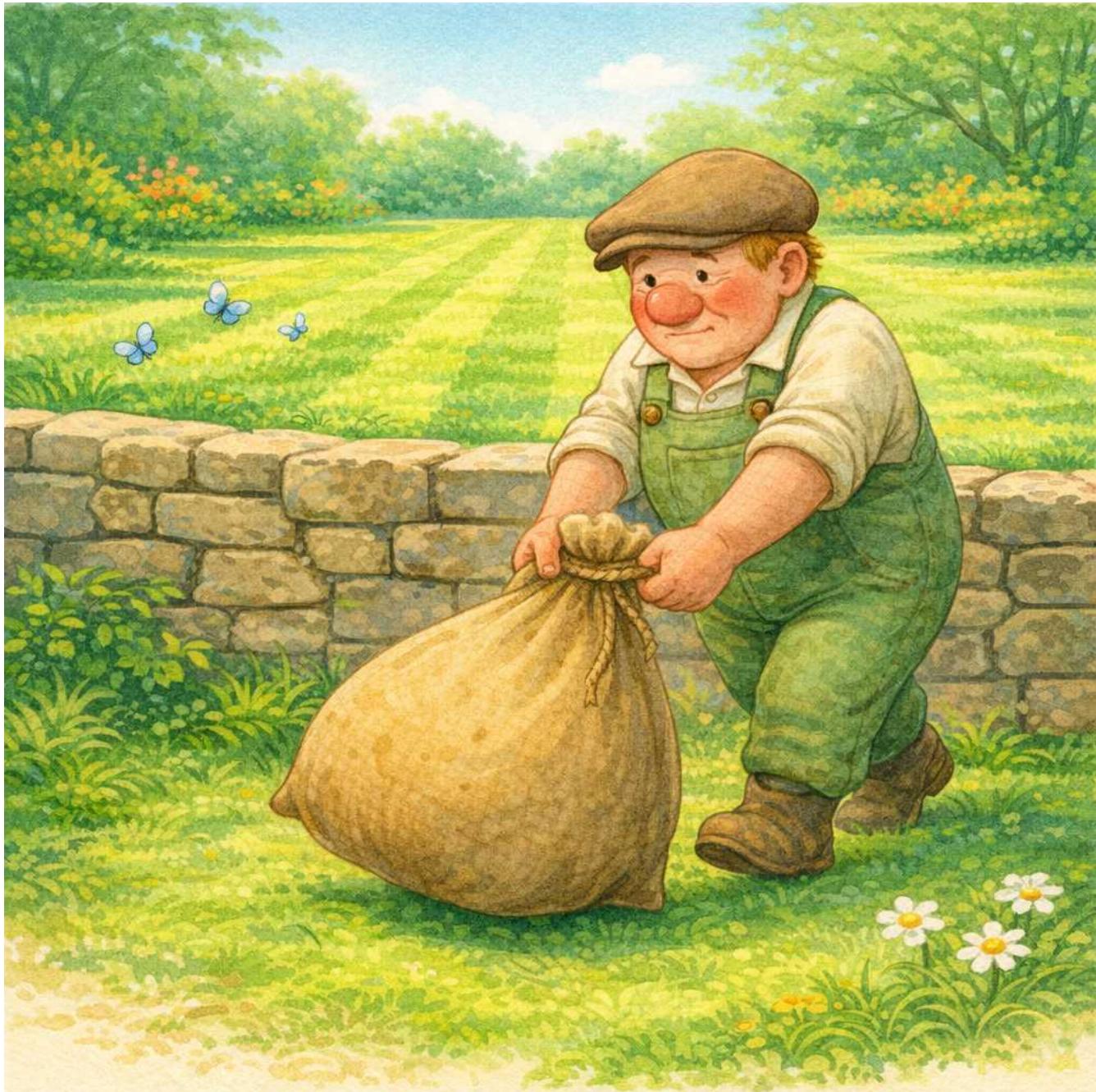
Mr. McGregor tied the sack and set it on the wall. Then he went to put away the mowing machine. While he was gone, Mrs. Flopsy Bunny, who had stayed at home, came across the field. She looked closely at the sack and wondered where everyone had gone.



Then the mouse climbed out of her jam pot, and Benjamin took the paper bag off his head. They told her the sad story. Benjamin and Flopsy were in despair. They could not untie the string.



But Mrs. Tittlemouse was very resourceful. She nibbled a small hole in the bottom corner of the sack. They pulled the little rabbits out and pinched them to wake them up. The parents stuffed the empty sack with three rotten marrows, an old blacking brush, and two decayed turnips.



Then they all hid under a bush and waited for Mr. McGregor. Mr. McGregor came back, picked up the sack, and carried it away. He held it low, as if it were rather heavy. The Flopsy Bunnies followed at a safe distance.



They watched him go into his house. Then they crept up to the window to listen. Mr. McGregor threw the sack down on the stone floor. If the bunnies had been inside, it would have hurt them very much.



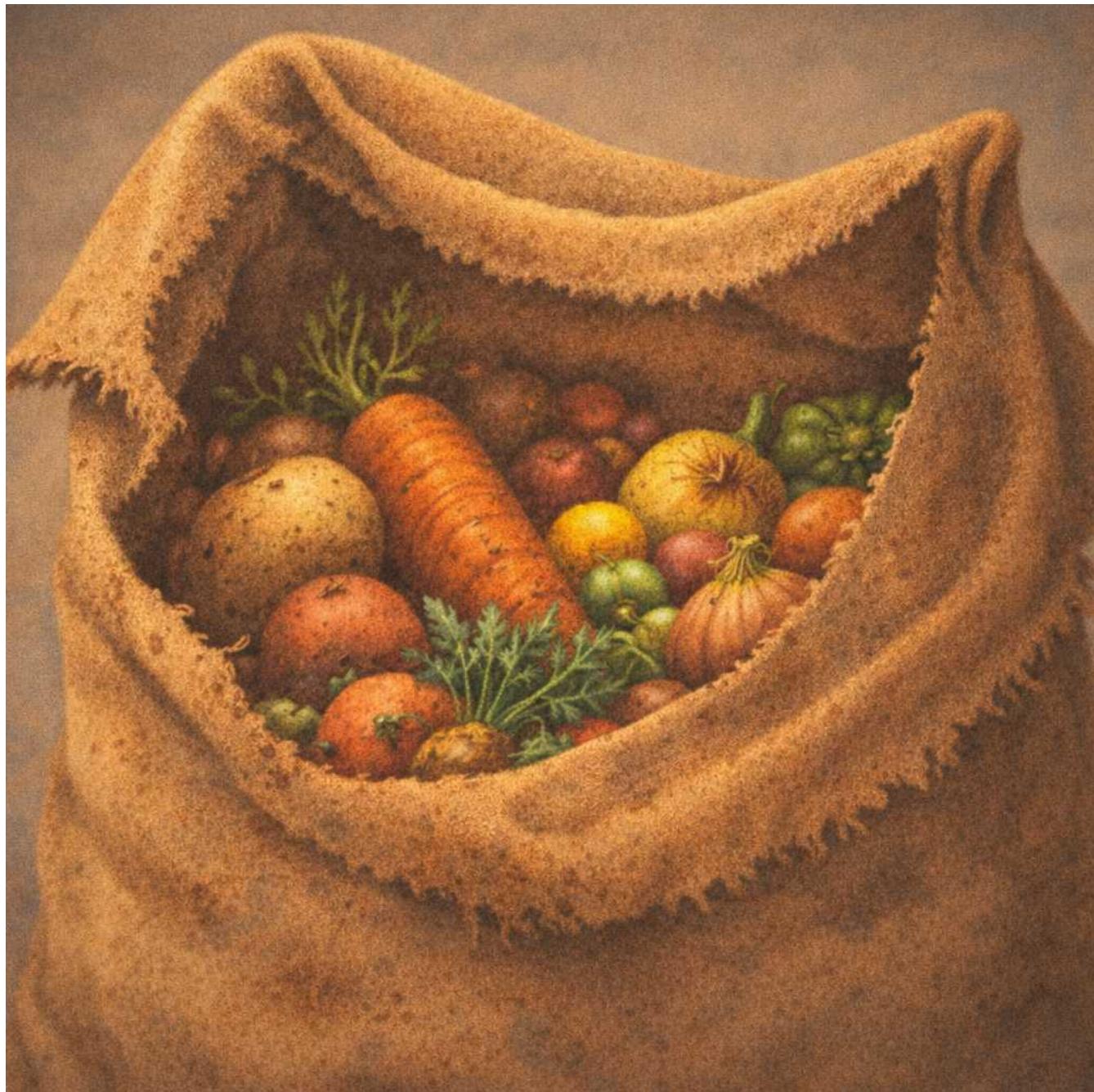
They heard him drag his chair across the floor and chuckle. "One, two, three, four, five, six little rabbits!" said Mr. McGregor. "Eh? What's that? What have they been spoiling now?" asked Mrs. McGregor. "One, two, three, four, five, six little fat rabbits!" he repeated, counting on his fingers.



"One, two, three—" "Don't be silly. What do you mean, you foolish old man?"
"In the sack! One, two, three, four, five, six!" replied Mr. McGregor. The youngest Flopsy Bunny climbed up onto the window sill.



Mrs. McGregor took hold of the sack and felt it. She said she could feel six. But they must be old rabbits, because they were so hard and all different shapes. "They're not good to eat; but the skins will do to line my old cloak."



"Line your cloak?" shouted Mr. McGregor. "I'll sell them and buy myself tobacco!" "Rabbit tobacco! I'll skin them and cut off their heads," said Mrs. McGregor. She untied the sack and put her hand inside.



When she felt the vegetables, she became very angry. She said Mr. McGregor had done it on purpose. Mr. McGregor was angry too. One of the rotten marrows flew out through the kitchen window and hit the youngest Flopsy Bunny.



The little one was rather hurt. Then Benjamin and Flopsy decided it was time to go home. So Mr. McGregor did not get his tobacco, and Mrs. McGregor did not get any rabbit skins. But at Christmas, Thomasina Tittlemouse received a present of enough rabbit wool to make herself a cloak and a hood, a handsome muff, and a pair of warm mittens.