

The Disobedient Bunny

ONCE UPON a time there was a little bunny called Koo. He was the dearest, softest, prettiest little bunny on all the hillside, and his mother and father were very proud of him. But he was terribly naughty. Nobody could think why, because all his brothers and sisters were very obedient little bunnies, and always did what they were told.

‘Don’t go out on the hillside until the sun has gone,’ Koo’s mother would say to them all. ‘It isn’t safe until then.’

And they would rub their wet little noses against her soft sides and say, ‘No, Mother, we won’t.’

All except Koo. He wouldn't promise not to do anything, just in case he should find he wanted to do it after all. And his mother would suddenly look round and say, 'Where's Koo?'

Nobody knew! He had slipped off along the dark little passage and up into the soft, fresh air of the hillside.

His mother would fetch him back and scold him, and tell him a big man would come and shoot him, but he didn't seem to care a bit.

But one day something happened to Koo, and I'll tell you what it was.

That morning, very early, he and his brothers and sisters and mother and father were all sitting on the grass, busily washing themselves. Koo finished first, and he sat up straight on his hind legs and looked at the country which lay all around.

He had never been allowed to go any farther than a short distance round about his hole, but now he felt very curious to know what the world was like a bit farther off.

Away down at the bottom of the hill stood a wood, cool and green in its early summer dress. Koo thought it looked really lovely.

‘Mother,’ he said, ‘may I go down there?’

‘Good gracious no, whatever next!’ said his mother in surprise.

‘Why not, Mother? Why can’t I go?’ he asked.

‘Because it’s too far from our hole,’ said his mother. ‘You’d get lost, and then a man would catch you.’

‘What would he do with me?’ asked Koo.

‘He would cook you and eat you!’ answered his mother.

‘What does “cook” mean?’ asked Koo, who never ate anything but raw grass.

‘You’d be put into a big pot with water in, and hung over a fire till you got hotter and hotter and were ready to eat!’ said his mother, getting tired of his questions. ‘It’s terrible to be cooked, so I’ve heard. Now it’s time to go in – and remember, all of you, never go down to the wood until you are big and strong enough to look after yourselves properly.’

Now Koo felt quite certain that he was old enough to look after himself, and he longed to know what was down in that lovely, cool-looking wood.

How nice it would be to lie there, bidden in the grass all day, instead of being down in our stuffy hole! he thought.

And the disobedient bunny waited until no one was looking – then off he went! He scurried down the hillside in the sunshine, his little bobtail gleaming white as snow.

At last he came to the wood. It was very cool, very shady, and very green. The grass tasted most delicious. Little shoots of bracken were growing up here and there, and Koo ate those too, and thought how silly his mother was to say he was not to leave his home.

‘When I’ve had enough to eat, I’ll lie down under that bramble bush,’ said Koo to himself. ‘It smells nice, and it will be lovely to sleep in the open air.’

Soon he had eaten so much that he really couldn’t nibble another blade of grass. He wriggled beneath the brambles and found a nice, soft, dry bed for himself.

‘I wish the others were here,’ said Koo, suddenly feeling a little bit lonely. ‘Mother was quite wrong about being caught and cooked. Why, I’ve not seen anybody at all except bees and butterflies. Caught and cooked indeed!’

Just at that moment there was a stir and a flutter somewhere nearby. And you’d never guess what the poor little bunny heard someone say.

‘Cook Koo! Cook Koo! Cook Koo!’

Koo could hardly believe his ears! Cook Koo? Cook him? How dreadful! Somebody must have seen him. Then his mother was right, after all! Koo lay still as still and listened.

There it was again, nearer this time.

‘Cook Koo! Cook Koo!’

Koo dashed out from the bramble bush and fled, trembling, through the wood. He came to a low hazel bush and hid himself there. But there was somebody else near there, saying the same thing!

‘Cook Koo! Cook Koo!’

Off went Koo again, as frightened as could be. But,

oh dear! The wood seemed to be full of people telling each other to cook Koo. First one called it out, then another, and whichever way Koo turned he heard it.

‘I don’t want to be cooked!’ he wept. ‘I’m only a wee bunny. Don’t cook me, I want to go home!’

‘Cook Koo! Cook Koo! Cook Koo!’ said somebody in the trees nearby.

Then Koo suddenly saw the hillside he had scampered down earlier in the day! What a piece of luck! Up he went, faster than he had ever scampered before, longing to reach home before anyone could cook him. And behind him he heard ‘Cook Koo’ getting fainter and fainter.

His mother was waiting anxiously beside the hole, looking for her naughty little bunny. She was very glad to see him, and could hardly bear to scold him, she was so happy to have him again.

Koo told her all about his dreadful adventure.

‘They kept calling out to each other to cook me!’ he said. ‘Wasn’t it horrible of them, Mother? If I hadn’t run very fast indeed, they might have cooked me,

mightn't they? I'll never be disobedient again, never!

Koo didn't know what his mother was smiling at, but I expect you do. Wasn't he a silly little bunny to be frightened by the cuckoos! But still, he was never disobedient again, so his adventure did some good after all!