



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

The Thrifty Squirrels

Emilie Poulsson

In the hollow oak tree on the lawn, a squirrel had made his home. He was such a pretty fellow, with his bright eyes and long, bushy tail. He was prudent, too, as well as pretty. That is, he was very careful about little things, and brought up his family to be the same. His family was Mrs. Squirrel and three little squirrels, and they were all of them just as careful and orderly as could be. There was never so much as a nut end or the rind of an acorn wasted in Mr. Squirrel's house, and one of the very first things he and Mrs. Squirrel taught their children was to lay up a store of food to eat in the winter months. They were nice little things, the little squirrels: bright, good-tempered, and obedient. The eldest, whose name was Brownie, was already able to make an acorn pie, or a nut pudding with chestnut sauce, almost as well as her mother.

On this cold winter day about which I have been telling you, Mr. and Mrs. Squirrel, with Brownie, and the little ones, were sitting at tea in the old hollow tree on the lawn. The afternoon was changing into evening, and the light was nearly gone, when there came a tiny tap at the door. It was a very weak little tap, so low that Mrs. Squirrel was not sure that anyone had knocked, and listened until it came again. Then Mr. Squirrel got up and opened the door. At first he saw no one. "Who is there?" he asked, in his pleasant, cheerful voice.



"It is I, Neighbor," said someone outside, sadly. "I am nearly famished with hunger and starved with cold. Will you let me come in for a while and warm myself?"

Mr. Squirrel at once opened the door wide and said: "Walk in, walk in. It is a bitter cold night, to be sure. Walk in and let me shut the door; my tail is nearly frozen just with standing here."

Then there came hopping into the house-place a rabbit. Poor Bimny! How miserable he did look! His fur was all dirty and ragged, and his tail hung down behind instead of standing up, as a good rabbit's tail ought to do. His ears were drooping and his whiskers were broken and limp. He had rheumatism in one hind

leg, and his eyes, which should have been as bright as Mr. Squirrel's, were dull and dim. Altogether, he looked as shabby and sad as a bunny could; not in the least like a respectable, well-brought-up rabbit.

Mrs. Squirrel threw up both her front paws in dismay. Mr. Squirrel made haste to put poor Bimny into a chair beside the fire, whilst Brownie brought him her own slice of beech-nut bread. Poor Bunny ate it eagerly, and for a little while, all the family of squirrels were too much taken up in attending to his wants to ask any questions. When he was warmed and rested, Mrs. Squirrel sent all her little ones to bed, and she and Mr. Squirrel began to try to find out what had brought their poor neighbor into such a sad plight.

"How could I help it?" said he mournfully. "I did not know that it would be so cold, nor that the snow would be so deep that I should not be able to get a bit of winter cabbage to eat. I am sure I am willing to work; I would take any trouble, but it is not a bit of use. Indeed, neighbour Squirrel, I do not know how you have managed." And he looked enviously round the neat, warm little room.

"It was very simple," said Mr. Squirrel, gravely. "We all helped, and we put away some of everything we found. If we found six nuts, we put away three in our storeroom, and nuts and acorns were very plentiful this autumn. So, though the winter is so very hard, we shall have plenty, and plenty for a friend too, Neighbour, so eat as much as you will and don't spare the loaf."

It was very kind of Mr. Squirrel, but he could not help poor Bimny much. He had been such an idle, wandering fellow that he could not be content to stay with Mr. and Mrs. Squirrel quietly and help to do the work of the house, so in a few days he wandered away again. As he shivered in the cold blasts and tried in vain to satisfy his hunger, he often wished that he had been as prudent and thrifty as the Squirrel family. And the Squirrel family, being as kind-hearted as they were prudent, often thought of the poor Rabbit with pity and wondered how he was getting on, but they never heard of him again.

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