

PIERRE LAPIN



PAR
BEATRIX POTTER

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Author: Beatrix Potter

Translator: Victorine Ballon

Julienne Profichet

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DE PIERRE LAPIN ***

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HISTOIRE DE PIERRE LAPIN

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TRADUIT DE L'ANGLAIS PAR

VICTORINE BALLON
& JULIENNE PROFICHET

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Il y avait une fois quatre petits lapins qui s'appelaient—

Flopsaut,
Trotsaut,
Queue-de-Coton,
et Pierre.

Ils demeuraient avec leur mère dans un terrier sablonneux, creusé sous les racines d'un très gros sapin.

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AUJOURD'HUI, mes chéris," dit mère Lapin, "je vous permets d'aller dans les champs ou de descendre le sentier; mais n'entrez pas dans le jardin de Mr. Mac Grégor. Un accident affreux arriva à votre pauvre père dans ce maudit jardin. Il fut attrapé et mis en pâté par Madame Mac Grégor."

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M AINTENANT, sauvez-vous; et ne faites pas de bêtises. Moi, je vais aux provisions.”

M ÈRE LAPIN prend son panier et son parapluie. Elle traverse le bois et s’en va chez le boulanger, acheter une miche de pain bis et cinq brioches.

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FLOPSAUT, Trotsaut et Queue-de-Coton, qui étaient de bons petits lapins, dévalèrent le sentier pour cueillir des mûres.

MAIS Pierre, qui était très espiègle, courut tout droit au jardin de Mr. Mac Grégor et s'aplatit pour se faufiler sous la barrière.

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LE jardin de Mr. Mac Grégor est rempli de légumes—des légumes frais, verts, exquis. Pierre n'en a jamais vu autant. Il mange des haricots, il mange des laitues, enfin, il mange des radis. C'est un peu dur, les radis, mais si appétissant!

PIERRE en mange trop, il se sent mal au cœur. "Si seulement je trouvais un peu de persil," se dit-il. "C'est très recommandé le persil en cas d'indigestion!"

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POINT de persil, il ne trouve que des concombres. Mais qui donc est là, au tournant du chassis? C'est Mr. Mac Grégor!

MR. MAC GRÉGOR est à quatre pattes, en train de planter des choux. Il se lève d'un bond, saisit un râteau, et s'élance à la poursuite de Pierre, en criant à tue-tête: "Au voleur! au voleur!"

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PIERRE est mort de peur, il bondit au travers du jardin, perd son chemin, et ne peut retrouver la

barrière.

Un de ses sabots reste parmi les choux-fleurs; il égare l'autre au milieu des pommes de terre.

UN lapin court mieux pieds nus, et certainement beaucoup plus vite. Par malheur, Pierre rencontre un groseiller recouvert d'un filet. Il y reste suspendu par les larges boutons de sa jaquette. Quelle imprudence de porter un habit à larges boutons parmi les groseillers! C'était une jaquette bleue, toute neuve, avec des boutons dorés.

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PIERRE se crut perdu, et fondit en larmes. De bons moineaux entendirent ses sanglots et volèrent à son secours. “Du courage, petit lapin; ôtez votre habit! Vite! vite! Dépêchez-vous! Voici Mr. Mac Grégor!”

MR. MAC GRÉGOR arrivait avec un tamis, il voulait le lancer sur le dos du lapin. Pierre se tortilla si bien qu’il put se sauver à temps, en laissant sa jaquette accrochée au filet.

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L bondit vers une cabane dans laquelle Mr. Mac Grégor rangeait les objets nécessaires au jardinage. Pierre aperçoit un arrosoir, il s'y précipite. C'eût été une très bonne cachette; malheureusement, il y avait de l'eau dedans!

MR. MAC GRÉGOR avait bien vu Pierre entrer dans la cabane aux outils. "Il se sera caché sous un pot de fleurs!" se dit-il. Il soulève chaque pot avec précaution, espérant saisir le lapin. At choum! at choum! fait Pierre dans son arrosoir, car l'eau est assez froide. "Tiens, tiens," dit Mr. Mac Grégor, "un arrosoir qui éternue!" Et il s'élance de ce côté.

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UN petit corps brun et mouillé passe sous le nez de Mr. Mac Grégor, franchit la fenêtre et renverse trois pots de fleurs.

Mr. Mac Grégor veut le poursuivre; mais la fenêtre est trop petite, seule sa botte y peut passer. Las et découragé, il prend le parti de retourner planter ses choux.

PIERRE s'assied pour se reposer. Il est essoufflé, tout trempé et tremblant. Le plus fâcheux, c'est qu'il n'a pas la moindre idée du chemin qu'il doit prendre pour retrouver la barrière!

Il erre de ci, de là, à petits pas, petits pas, en regardant tout autour de lui.

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L y a une porte dans la muraille; mais cette porte est fermée à clef. Pas moyen pour un petit lapin bien gras et bourré de légumes de se glisser dessous.

Justement une vieille souris franchit le seuil.

“Madame Souris, savez-vous où se trouve la barrière du jardin?”

Mais la souris porte un gros pois dans la bouche. Impossible de parler; elle se contente de hocher la tête. Pierre se met à pleurer.

P UIS, tout à coup, il part droit devant lui au travers des plates-bandes. Voici un bassin où Mr. Mac Grégor remplit ses arrosoirs, bien sûr!

Une chatte blanche se tient au bord, immobile, guettant les poissons rouges. Seul, le bout de sa queue va et vient comme un balancier. La chatte n’a point vu Pierre: “Ce qu’il y a de mieux à faire,” pense-t-il, c’est de s’éloigner sans rien dire: “Mon cousin Jeannot m’a fort mal parlé des chats!”

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L revient sur ses pas au travers des légumes. Rien ne tente quand on a bien mangé et qu'on a perdu son chemin. Mais quel est ce bruit? Scrou, scrou, scrr. . . . Impossible de voir: les choux sont trop hauts. Pierre saute sur une brouette. Ciel! Encore Mr. Mac Grégor; il ratisse les oignons; mais derrière son dos, voici enfin la *Porte*!

PIERRE descend doucement de la brouette, puis détaille à toutes jambes le long des cassis.

Il faut passer tout près de Mr. Mac Grégor qui l'a vu; mais tant pis, car voici la barrière. Il y touche . . . la voilà franchie . . . maintenant il est en sûreté dans le bois.

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MR. MAC GRÉGOR ramasse la petite jaquette et les sabots pour en faire un épouvantail. Mais les oiseaux les reconnaissent et n'en ont point peur.

PIERRE court, sans se retourner, jusqu'à son terrier creusé sous le gros sapin.

Il se laisse tomber sur le sable doux, et ferme les yeux. Mère Lapin est là qui fait la cuisine. "Hé, petit, qu'as-tu fait de ta jaquette et de tes sabots?" Pas de réponse, Pierre est endormi. Son sommeil est agité, il dresse les oreilles et il sursaute. Sans doute il rêve qu'il court encore. Mère Lapin est fort mécontente: c'est la seconde fois, en quinze jours, qu'il perd sa jaquette et ses sabots.

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H ÉLAS! Pierre fut malade toute la soirée; sa mère le mit au lit et lui fit prendre de la camomille.

“Une cuillerée à bouche avant de dormir.” C’est très amer; mais fort digestif!

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F LOPSAUT, Trotsaut et Queue-de-Coton eurent du pain, du lait et de bonnes mûres pour leur souper.

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