

THE STORY OF TOM TIT TOT



An old Suffolk tale, given in the dialect of East Anglia.

Well, once upon a time there were a woman, and she baked five pies. And when they come out of the oven, they was that overbaked the crust were too hard to eat. So she says to her darter:

“Darter,” says she, “put you them there pies on the shelf an’ leave ‘em there a little, an’ they’ll come agin—” She meant, you know, the crust ‘ud get soft.

But the gal, she says to herself, “Well, if they’ll come agin, I’ll ate ‘em now.” And she set to work and ate ‘em all, first and last.

Well, come supper time, the woman she said, “Goo you and git one o’ them there pies; I daresay they’ve come agin, now.”

The gal, she went an’ she looked, and there warn’t nothin’ but the dishes. So back she come and says she, “Noo, they ain’t come agin.”

“Not none on ‘em?” says the mother.

“Not none on ‘em,” says she.

“Well, come agin, or not come agin,” says the woman, “I’ll ha’ one for supper.”

“But you can’t, if they ain’t come,” says the gal.

“But I can,” says she. “Goo you and bring the best of ‘em.”

“Best or worst,” says the gal, “I’ve ate ‘em all, and you can’t ha’ one till that’s come agin.”

Well, the woman she were wholly bate, and she took her spinnin’ to the door to spin, and as she span she sang:

“My darter ha’ ate five, five pies to-day—

My darter ha’ ate five, five pies to-day.”

The king, he were a comin’ down the street and he hard her sing, but what she sang he couldn’t hare, so he stopped and said:

“What were that you was a singin of, woman?”

The woman, she were ashamed to let him hare what her darter had been a-doin', so she sang, 'stids o' that:

“My darter ha' spun five, five skeins to-day—

My darter ha' spun five, five skeins to-day.”

“S'ars o' mine!” said the king, “I never heerd tell of any one as could do that.”

Then he said: “Look you here, I want a wife, and I'll marry your darter. But look you here,” says he, “'leven months out o' the year she shall have all the vittles she likes to eat, and all the gownds she likes to git, and all the cumpny she likes to hev; but the last month o' the year she'll ha' to spin five skeins iv'ry day, an' if she doon't, I shall kill her.”

“All right,” says the woman; for she thowt what a grand marriage that was. And as for them five skeins, when te come tew, there'd be plenty o' ways of gettin' out of it, and likeliest, he'd ha' forgot about it.

Well, so they were married. An' for 'leven months the gal had all the vittles she liked to ate, and all the gownds she liked to git, and all the cumpny she liked to have.

But when the time was gettin' oover, she began to think about them there skeins an' to

wonder if he had 'em in mind. But not one word did he say about 'em, an' she whoolly thowt he'd forgot 'em.

Howsivir, the last day o' the last month, he takes her to a room she'd niver set eyes on afore. There worn't nothin' in it but a spinnin' wheel and a stool. An' says he, “Now, me dear, hare you'll be shut in to-morrow with some vittles and some flax, and if you hain't spun five skeins by the night, yar hid'll goo off.”

An' awa' he went about his business.

Well, she were that frightened. She'd allus been such a gatless gal, that she didn't se much as know how to spin, an' what were she to dew to-morrer, with no one to come nigh her to help her? She sat down on a stool in the kitchen, and lork! How she did cry!

Howsivir, all on a sudden she hard a sort of a knockin' low down on the door. She upped and oped it, an' what should she see but a small little black thing with a long tail. That looked up at her right kewrious, an' that said:

“What are yew a-cryin' for?”

“Wha's that to yew?” says she.

“Niver yew mind,” that said, “but tell me what you’re a cryin’ for.”

“That oon’t dew me noo good if I dew,” says she.

“Yew doon’t know that,” that said, an’ twirled that’s tail round.

“Well,” says she, “that oon’t dew no harm, if that doon’t dew no good,” and she upped and told about the pies an’ the skeins an’ everything.

“This is what I’ll dew,” says the little black thing: “I’ll come to yar winder iv’ry mornin’ an’ take the flax an’ bring it spun at night”

“What’s your pay?” says she.

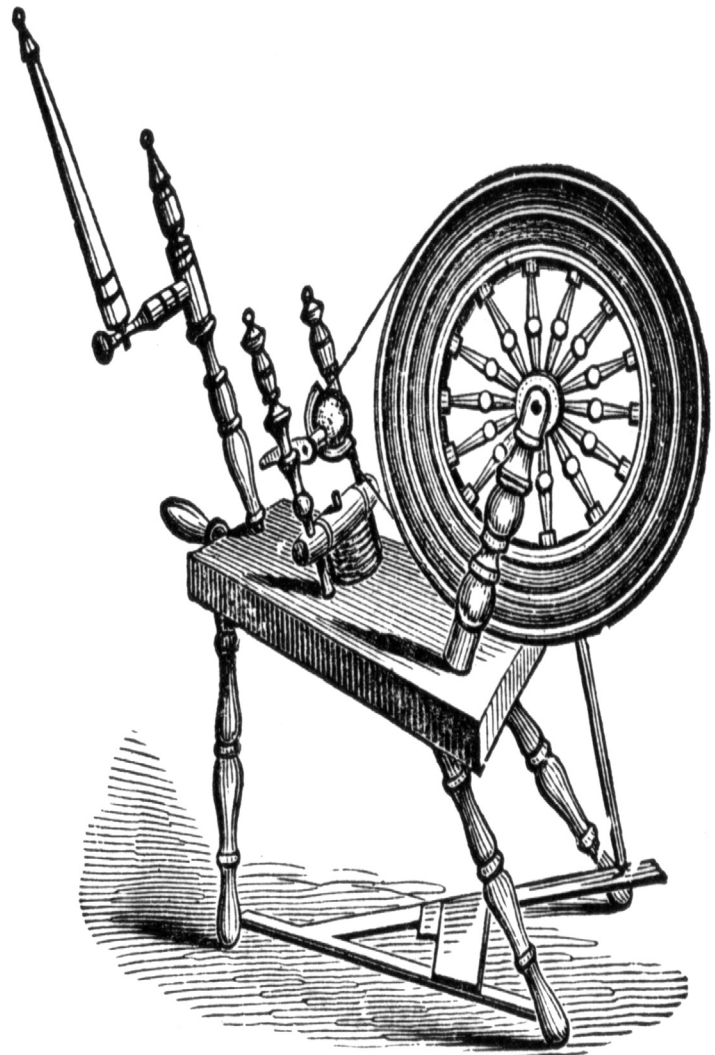
That looked out o’ the corners o’ that’s eyes an’ that said: “I’ll give you three guess-es every night to guess my name, an’ if you hain’t guessed it afore the month’s up, yew shall be mine.”

Well, she thowt she’d be sure to guess that’s name afore the month was up. “All right,” says she, “I agree.”

“All right,” that says, an’ lork! how that twirled that’s tail.

Well, the next day, har husband, he took her inter the room, an’ there was the flax an’ the day’s vittles.

“Now, there’s the flax,” says he, “an’ if that ain’t spun up this night, off goo yar hid.” An’ then he went out an’ locked the door.



He'd hardly goon, when there was a knockin' agin the winder.

She upped and she oped it, and there sure enough was the little oo'd thing a settin' on the ledge.

"Where's the flax?" says he.

"Here te be," says she. And she gonned it to him.

Well, come the evenin', a knockin' come agin to the winder. She upped an' she oped it, and there were the little oo'd thing, with five skeins of flax on his arm.

"Here te be," says he, an' he gonned it to her.

"Now, what's my name?" says he.

"What, is that Bill?" says she.

"Noo, that ain't," says he. An' he twirled his tail.

"Is that Ned?" says she.

"Noo, that ain't," says he. An' he twirled his tail.

"Well, is that Mark?" says she.

"Noo, that ain't," says he. An' he twirled his tail harder, an' awa' he flew.

Well, when har husban' he come in, there was the five skeins riddy for him.

"I see I shorn't hev for to kill you to-night, me dare," says he. "You'll hev yar vittles and yar flax in the mornin'," says he, an' away he goes.

Well, ivery day the flax an' the vittles, they was browt, an' ivery day that there little black impet used for to come mornin's and evenin's. An' all the day the darter, she set a tryin' fur to think of names to say to it when te come at night. But she niver hot on the right one. An' as that got to-warts the ind o' the month, the impet that began for to look soo maliceful, an' that twirled that's tail faster an' faster each time she gave a guess.

At last te came to the last day but one. The impet that come at night along o' the five skeins, an' that said:

"What, hain't yew got my name yet?"

"Is that Nicodemus?" says she.

"Noo, t'ain't," that says.

"Is that Sammle?" says she.

“Noo, t’ain’t,” that says.

“A-well, is that Methusalem?” says she.

“Noo, t’ain’t that norther,” he says.

Then that looks at her with that’s eyes like a cool o’ fire, an that says, “Woman, there’s only to-morrer night, an’ then yar’ll be mine!” An’ away te flew.

Well, she felt that horrud. Howsome-diver, she hard the king a-comin’ along the passage. In he came, an’ when he see the five skeins, he says, says he:

“Well, me dare,” says he, “I don’t see but what yew’ll ha’ your skeins ready to-morrer night as well, an’ as I reckon I shorn’t ha’ to kill you, I’ll ha’ supper in here to-night.” So they brought supper an’ another stool for him, and down the tew they sot.

Well, he hadn’t eat but a mouthful or so, when he stops and begins to laugh.

“What is it?” says she.

“A-why,” says he, “I was out a-huntin’ to-day, an’ I got away to a place in the wood I’d never seen afore. An’ there was an old chalk pit. An’ I heerd a sort of a hummin’, kind o’. So I got off my hobby, an’ I went right quiet

to the pit, an’ I looked down. Well, what should there be but the funniest little black thing yew iver set eyes on. An’ what was that a dewin’ on, but that had a little spinnin’ wheel, an’ that were a-spinnin’ wonnerful fast, an’ a-twirlin’ that’s tail. An’ as that span, that sang:

“Nimmy, nimmy not,
My name’s Tom Tit Tot.”

Well, when the darter heerd this, she fared as if she could ha’ jumped outer her skin for joy, but she di’n’t say a word.

Next day, that there little thing looked soo maliceful when he come for the flax. An’ when night came, she heerd that a-knockin’ agin the winder panes. She oped the winder, an’ that come right in on the ledge. That were grinnin’ from are to are, an’ Oo! tha’s tail were twirlin’ round so fast.

“What’s my name?” that says, as that gonned her the skeins.

“Is that Solomon?” she says, pretendin’ to be a-feard.

“Noo, tain’t,” that says, an’ that come fudder inter the room.

“Well, is that Zebedee?” says she agin.

“Noo, tain’t,” says the impet. An’ then
that laughed an’ twirled that’s tail till yew
cou’ n’t hardly see it.

“Take time, woman,” that says; “next
guess, an’ you’re mine.” An’ that stretched out
that’s black hands at her.

Well, she backed a step or two, an’ she
looked at it, and then she laughed out, an’
says she, a pointin’ of her finger at it:

“Nimmy, nimmy not,
Yar name’s Tom Tit Tot.”

Well, when that hard her, that shruck
awful an’ awa’ that flew into the dark, an’ she
niver saw it noo more.