Little Tales from Beatrice's Writing Desk

The Jam Jar Incident



Told by Miss Beatrice Pennyfeather

A story by Effie Moss

My dear reader,

There was hardly a spoonful left.

I was quite certain the jar had been full yesterday.

I held it up to the morning light, tilted it to the left, then to the right. This did nothing to improve matters, although a small amount of cherry jam slid slowly towards the bottom.

“Really,” I said.

The jar offered no explanation.

Now, I do not object to sharing. A person may borrow my umbrella, sit in my favourite chair or help themselves to a reasonably sized bakery crumb.

But the last of the cherry jam requires a conversation.

I fetched my notebook.

At the top of a fresh page, I wrote:

Things which may explain the missing jam.

Beneath it, I wrote:

Visitors.

Then:

An unusually hungry butterfly.

I considered the butterfly for a moment before crossing it out. There are limits, even here.

A little trail of crumbs led across the table towards my writing desk.

This was promising.

I followed it past the ink bottle, around a stack of envelopes and underneath yesterday's unfinished letter.

There lay my smallest plate.

Beside it was a spoon.

My spoon.

With cherry jam on the handle.

"Oh," I said.

I remembered bringing a warm bun to my desk yesterday afternoon. A little something to keep me company while I worked.

Then I remembered fetching another.

It had been a particularly long letter.

Still, two buns could not possibly account for an almost empty jar.

I lifted the paper.

In the margin, beneath a sentence about the postbox, I had written:

Perhaps a little more jam.

Further down:

That was rather lovely.

And, near the bottom:

One final spoonful. Then I really must finish.

I closed my notebook.

There are occasions when an investigation reaches a perfectly satisfactory conclusion which one would prefer not to discuss.

This was such an occasion.

I washed the spoon, swept up the crumbs and put the jar back on its shelf.

Then I added one final line to my notebook:

The jam has not disappeared. It has been thoroughly enjoyed.

That seemed considerably fairer.

I shall visit Godshill for another jar tomorrow. Until then, there is just enough left for one small piece of toast.

And I know a mouse who would appreciate it.

Yours,

Miss Beatrice Pennyfeather

P.S. I have decided against questioning the butterfly. It would be awkward to apologise afterwards.