

The Mill Meadow Adventure

Part 1 – A place in the Country

Badger Itchybald Scratchet, (Itchy) to his family and friends are fearful of losing their woodland home in Badger Wood, to Upples (people). Itchy has gone on an adventure to find a new home so they can all live happily.

But where is Itchy and what should Matty (Itchy's wife) do in the meantime?

Under cover of darkness, Matty travelled many Upple miles with Hurryup, her friend, to Mill Meadow, which came highly recommended from Peter the pheasant postman. He had found it so peaceful with beautiful wooden lodges, hot tubs and a lake.

The air smelt so lovely and clean and the countryside was softly bathed in late summer sunshine, birds flitted to and fro in the treetops. Matty thought she might be dreaming. She hadn't realised such a beautiful place existed?

"Wake up Hurryup!" Matty said unable to contain her excitement as she shook her sleepy friend awake. "Peter was right, it's so beautiful and unspoilt here maybe we can make this our home".

Hurryup looked around her and could see a lake surrounded by trees, their beautiful autumn leaves reflected in the clear, shimmering water which was full of fish.

Smiling, Hurryup replied, "There's no rush, let's have a good look round and see what Mill Meadow has to offer".

As the sun was going down, Matty and Hurryup went to explore the surroundings.

Author Sue C Medcalf – Copyright applies.

Matty's Mill Meadow Adventure

Part 2 - Exploring Mill Meadow

There was a chill in the night air as Matty and Hurryup made their way around the lake, moorhens squawked their greetings and asked the friends why they were visiting Mill Meadow. A Heron stretched, turned his back to the newcomers and settled down for the night, he didn't feel like talking to visitors.

"We are searching for a new home for our families", answered Hurryup smiling as she slowly looked around her. A glow from the full moon was casting soft shadows across the clear water. The small summerhouse seemed to be lit making it look cosy and welcoming.

"It's lovely and quiet here as well", said Matty, as she trod delicately through the damp grass trying not to get any closer to the water's edge. She was hoping Hurryup would indeed get a move on. Matty couldn't swim well and was not taking any chances on falling in.

Later, as dawn was breaking and still no sign of Upples, Matty decided she might feel safer in one of the holiday lodges.

Matty and Hurryup were soon inside.

"Oh it's wonderful!" Hurryup said, as she leaned back and relaxed on the comfy sofa with her feet up. Looking through a window at the glorious trees she said "Itchy and Fidget would love it!"

"There's everything here and it's lovely and clean", answered Matty, rubbing her heavy eyes with a paw and yawning loudly. Tired after exploring the lake and looking for a new home, Matty was really sleepy now.

Entering the ground floor bedroom the bright, colourful duvet reminded her of Auntie Twiddle wrapped in her soft shawl. Unable to resist the lure of a comfy bed, Matty snuggled up warmly and gave a satisfied sigh as she fell into a deep sleep.

The only clue that gave Matty away was a small lump in the bedding and the soft contented sound of a badger's snoring.....

But how long can Matty and Hurryup stay before being discovered by Upples?

Matty's Mill Meadow Adventure

Part 3 – Somerset Carnivals

Matty stretched as she woke up, a glimpse in the mirror reminded her how matted up her coat was, even more than usual. The sun was setting and it was time for her and Hurryup to move on. There was a risk of being caught by Upples if they stayed too long and anyway Matty was getting hungry.

“There are no peanut butter sandwiches or bananas in the lodge!” Matty called to Hurryup who was sleepily making her way to the table. “We will have to go out and look for some worms, there should be some fat juicy ones nearby”.

A noise outside caught Matty's attention – Upples were talking!

“Quick! Declared Matty, we need to leave before we are seen”!

Quietly leaving, the two friends hid in nearby bushes so they could hear the conversation. “What on Badger's earth could all the fuss be about”? Matty whispered.

“I couldn't help overhearing”, said a voice much to Hurryup's alarm as she thought her and Matty were alone. “My name is Percy”. The pheasant said by way of introduction, “Peter's my cousin. He asked me to look out for you when he knew you coming here”.

“They are discussing the carnival”, he continued. “I hear it's really good fun, lots of lights, music and fantastic colourful floats in a procession, all to raise money for charity. It would be a shame to miss it as you are here anyway and the Upple children love it”.

“It will be difficult to stay clear of Upples as there are so many watching the floats. There are several quieter points along the way where you can get a good view, have a lovely time”.

And with that Percy disappeared into the bushes.

Author Sue C Medcalf - copyright applies - For more information about the author and stories go to;
<http://bit.ly/2BzxJZA>

Matty's Mill Meadow Adventure

Part 4 - Halloween

"We had such a lovely time at the carnival", said Hurryup "All those bright lights and music".

"Yes", Matty replied with a smile, her fur raised and tatty as they battled against the cold wind. "This time of year is busy for Upples but if we are quiet we can join in and they won't even know we are there!"

The two friends hurried along the lane chatting all the time about what an amazing time they were having, taking care to hide in bushes if they heard an Upple car approaching.

"Did you know Upples celebrate Halloween"? Shouted Percy, as he ran as fast as he could to catch them up, his new tail feathers were just beginning to grow back after a close encounter with an Upple. "Upples carve faces into pumpkins and put them outside their house, sometimes with a light inside"?

"What a funny thing to do", replied Matty. She couldn't understand why anyone would want to do that. After all, they taste really good and it was one of Matty's favourite's food.

"It's an idea though" She said. "Maybe we could have a go". Hurryup laughed at her friend. Matty continued, "All we have to do is look out for one and then, when no one is looking, we can nibble out a shape. The Upples will never suspect badgers could be so clever. When all the fun of Halloween is over the pumpkin could be put out at Mill meadow to feed the badgers and other wildlife."

Thinking of Halloween and laughing with Percy at the things Upples do, they made their way up the hill to the big lodge; thinking of sleeping under a shed the next day. A large fox peered out of the shadows, his eyes shining brightly in the moonlight. He was after the chickens but little did he know that they were clever enough to put themselves to bed, just as it was getting dark.

"Foiled again", he sighed, as he hid watching the Upple in his green wellies, make the chicken coop safe, maybe next time.

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Matty's Mill Meadow Adventure

Part 5 – The Great Leaf Hunt

Matty woke to a crisp, frosty evening. It looked beautiful everywhere in the soft moonlight. "I can't understand why Upples go to bed in the dark", she said happily to Hurryup, who was still half asleep.

"No I can't either," answered Hurryup yawning with her paw over her mouth, secretly she couldn't be bothered to rush anywhere. Why hurry, she thought to herself, when we've got all night to explore and find exciting things to do.

Matty glanced in her friend's direction and knew exactly what Hurryup was thinking and said, "I know what we can do today! I think we will see how many trees we can identify". Matty knew Hurryup didn't feel like rushing and wouldn't know much about trees.

"What do you mean?" Hurryup asked sleepily as she looked at Matty fondly, why did she always look as if she had been dragged through a hedge backwards? She thought to herself. Poor Matty was always grooming but her coat still looked a mess.

"When I was young..." Matty began; aware Hurryup was stalling for time, just for an extra few minutes in bed. "...We used to collect different leaves and then identify which trees they belonged to. I had a nature book with seeds, leaves and bits of woodland in. It was an Upples idea really but it was good fun and I learnt so much about the area. Come on I will show you".

So Matty and a reluctant Hurryup made their way through the trees and began kicking dried, crispy leaves, throwing them up in the air and taking it in turns to hide and make the other jump.

Hurryup decided she would like to learn more. "Can we take some back and have a nature book? I want to learn all about the countryside". So the two friends collected various bits of leaves so Matty could teach Hurryup all she knew about trees.

Matty's Mill Meadow Adventure

Part 6 - Guy the pheasant

Matty scooped up leaves using her claws for Hurryup to look at.

"They are all different to each other". Hurryup said smiling. "And all colours too, I walk past them every day and I have never noticed how many different types there are".

Matty explained, "The two main types of trees are deciduous and evergreen. Trees that lose all of their leaves for part of the year are called Deciduous, while Evergreen are the ones that keep their leaves all year round".

They were so engrossed in examining different leaves Matty and Hurryup didn't hear soft footsteps moving closer to them.

"Ahem". A voice said clearing his throat politely. "Ahem, excuse me I couldn't help overhearing your conversation".

As Matty looked up she could see the bright eyes of the most handsome pheasant she had ever seen, he looked a little different to Percy as he had lots of blue feathers.

"My name is Guy, I arrived here on the 5th November, Guy Fawkes night so the Upple lady gave me this name" said the pheasant, puffing out his magnificent chest proudly, as he introduced himself. "I have overheard Upples talking and they say some of the oldest trees are in London".

"Where is London?" Matty asked. "Do they have woodland?"

"Yes they have woods and it's the capital city", replied Guy. "It's not far from here by Upple transport, a coach or a train can get you there in no time. Upples love it; there is something for everyone..."

"Is that where Itchy, Fidget and Norm could be?" Hurryup asked suddenly as the pheasant took a breath.

Guy replied, "They might be, there are lots of parks and trees, historical things to see as well. There's a Tower too, seven ravens live there and special Upples called Beefeaters feed them".

"Upples feed them!" Matty said. She was amazed.

Hurryup said to Matty "Can we go? We could have so much fun and we can be back here in no time."

Mill Meadow Adventure

Part 7 – Mia and the travel plan

Matty was considering what to do and then replied, “Well”, I suppose we could go, but “she warned. “We would need to be careful with so many Upples about. We don’t want to get caught just as we might find Itchy and the others. Let’s hope he is safe in London with Fidget and Norm”.

Guy suggested that the two friends talked to Mia, the long haired dog that lives with the Upple man and his wife up at the big house.

“Does Mia know where to go in London?” Hurryup asked.

“I expect she knows a lot about Upples as she lives with them and listens to them chatting all the time”, replied Guy. “Mia’s very clever she can tell you the best way to get there and how to get to the Tower of London”.

Matty, Guy and Percy made their way up the lane, with Hurryup trailing slightly behind. There was so much for her to look at that she never hurried anywhere.

Mia was sat outside having just had her tea. The four friends discussed their travel plans with Mia as she peered through a piece of her sandy coloured fur which had fallen softly over one eye. She raised an eyebrow at the friend’s idea; Mia had never heard anything like it and thought they were very brave to venture out on their own. She knew all about travelling from Mill Meadow to lots of interesting places.

“The quickest way is probably by train” whispered Mia keeping one eye open for an Upple; she didn’t want them to overhear her conversation. “If you travel at night it will be quieter, Upples prefer to travel in the daylight.”

Saying goodbye to Mia, Guy and Percy, the friends set off that evening.

Avoiding all the Upples Matty and Hurryup managed to sneak aboard a train bound for London. Hiding right at the back of the train amongst bikes and all manner of Upple things they chatted the night away too excited to sleep.

Once in London all they had to do was get to the Tower of London, but would they find Itchy there?

Author Sue C Medcalf – Copyright applies – Find out more about Sue and her books at <http://bit.ly/2BzxJZA>

Mill Meadow Adventure

Part 8 – In London

Matty and Hurryup arrived at the river Thames but it was flowing so fast Matty was reluctant to go near the edge.

“Come on”, Hurryup said, urging her friend gently forward as she knew Matty didn’t feel comfortable in water. “If we swim together I can help you, it’s not far”.

The two friends discussed how they were going to get across the water to the Tower of London. Eventually with no boats in sight and the water looking fairly calm, they took the plunge and swam. Landing near some stone steps a sign stated that they were at Traitors Gate, but neither Matty nor Hurryup knew what that meant. Cautiously, in the light from a full moon, they made their way to the raven enclosure Mia had mentioned.

“Caw, caw”, shouted a raven who was hopping from perch to perch “Poppy, my name is Poppy”. Called out the raven flapping her dark wings, “What are you doing here we don’t normally get badgers in the city”.

Drying herself off and shaking from cold Matty said,

“I am looking for Itchy, Itchybald Scratchet, from Badger Wood and his friends. Have you seen or heard anything about them? They set out on a journey and they haven’t been seen since. Can you and your friends have a look for them?”

“There are seven ravens here”, declared Poppy proudly. “I am fairly new but I will ask the others.” And with that she started shouting loudly to get their attention. One by one the ravens came to the front of the night enclosure to introduce themselves; Jubilee, Harris, Gripp, Rocky, Erin, Merlina and of course Poppy. Merlina explained to Matty and Hurryup why they were there,

“There is a story that states if the ravens leave the Tower something bad will happen, so the Yeoman Warders or as they are sometimes called, Beefeaters, feed and look after us.”

Long into the night the ravens discussed how one of them could escape to have a look around to see if they could see Itchy anywhere.