

How Mrs. Tibbles Won Her Twenty-Third Blue Ribbon

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So Mrs. Tibbles, she's the little old shrew down the lane. Ah, you've met her. Yeah, she's a sweet old thing. Did she show you her blue ribbon collection? Impressive, ain't it? She's won best in show every year since... Golly, since before she was married.

No, they aren't all for turnips. Well, all right, yes, most of them are. But one year isn't. No, sir, one of them is for something very different.

See, Mrs. Tibbles grows spectacular turnips. Everyone in the valley knows that if you want an amazing turnip, you go see Mrs. Tibbles. And every year, she picks the best-lookin' turnip she grew that year, and enters it in the county fair. And every year she wins! It's almost unfair, people say, but she does grow a good turnip.

Well, anyway, one day a few years ago – it must have been midsummer, because Mrs. Tibbles' turnips were just a bit bigger than seedlings – she wakes up in the morning, and looks out her window, and she howled loud enough that some folks thought that there was a sasquatch about. She howled because there was water all across her field.

Oh yeah, deep water. Prolly woulda been knee-deep on a taller critter, but for Mrs. Tibbles it was up over her head. Her whole field, nothin' to see but a sea of water... The river just rose up and done gobbled it up.

So Mrs. Tibbles goes rushin' outside, still hollerin' her head off, cryin' about her poor turnips. "They're ruined!" she hollered, over an' over. And it was a big old mystery, because there hadn't been no rain. So Mrs. Tibbles goes lookin' around, and gosh if she doesn't find the problem... Jack.

Jack was a big mean old beaver that'd lived on the river just as long as Mrs. Tibbles, and those two got along like oil an' water. No one was really sure what got them goin' at each other in the beginning, but as far back as anyone could remember those two just didn't get along.

(But if I was to be perfectly honest with ya, Jack didn't get along with anyone. Like I said, he was a mean old cuss.)

Anyways, turned out that Jack had expanded his dam, and damn – hah! – damn if his dam wasn't backing the river up right onto Mrs. Tibbles' field.

So of course she goes stompin' down to Jack's lodge and bangs on the door, and as soon as he opens it she begins givin' him a piece of her mind... Loud enough for all the neighbors to hear. And if you ever get on her bad side, you'll find out that she doesn't spare a thing when she's givin' a tongue lashin'.

And Jack just stands there and waits for her to finish, and then calm as you please he pulls out a paper and waves it at her, and he says, "Take your complaint to city hall, you senile old biddy. I got myself a permit."

Well, I thought that Mrs. Tibbles was gonna lose her ever-lovin' mind, I did. Prolly the less said about what came outta her mouth right then, the better.

Anyways! What could she do? A month or so passes. The water stays on Mrs. Tibbles' field, and of course her prize-winning turnips were ruined. But then... Jack just disappeared.

No one was really sure what happened. Rumor was that he moved down-valley, where the streams were slower and wider. Easier for dammin', ya see. And to be honest, since no one much liked Jack, no one went lookin' to see where he'd gone. But his dam was eventually dismantled by the city, and the water went down, and Mrs. Tibbles got her field back. Well... She got a field of mud an' muck back, anyway.

And when the county fair came around that fall, everyone was sure that Mrs. Tibbles just wouldn't enter anything. What could she enter, after all, what with no turnips to pick?

Well, everyone was just gobsmacked when she had an entry in the pastry contest instead. Oh, yes. She made the most delicious beavertail that anyone had ever eaten. It was crispy and soft and sweet and delicate.

There were whispers that Mrs. Tibbles had used a secret ingredient. Get my drift?

Ah, yer makin' me laugh, kiddo. Don't look at me like that. What on earth could a tiny little thing like Mrs. Tibbles do to a big old meanie like Jack?

But anyway, now you know how Mrs. Tibbles won all those blue ribbons for her turnips, and one ribbon for a prize-winnin' beavertail.