



The Tale Of One Bad Rat by Bryan Talbot

[Contemporary Fiction]

THE TALE OF ONE BAD RAT



by
BRYAN TALBOT

DARK HORSE BOOKS

"Homeless & Hungry – Please Help."

As the book opens young Helen Potter is living rough on the streets of London.

Cold, hungry and penniless, Helen is plagued by memories of maternal callousness and sexual abuse at the hands of her father. But she clings to life as she fends for her rat until caught in the middle of a mugging then identified later on. On the run from the police, with her pet rat mauled to death by a cat, Helen decides it's now or never and sets off to the Lake District, home to her heroine Beatrix Potter.

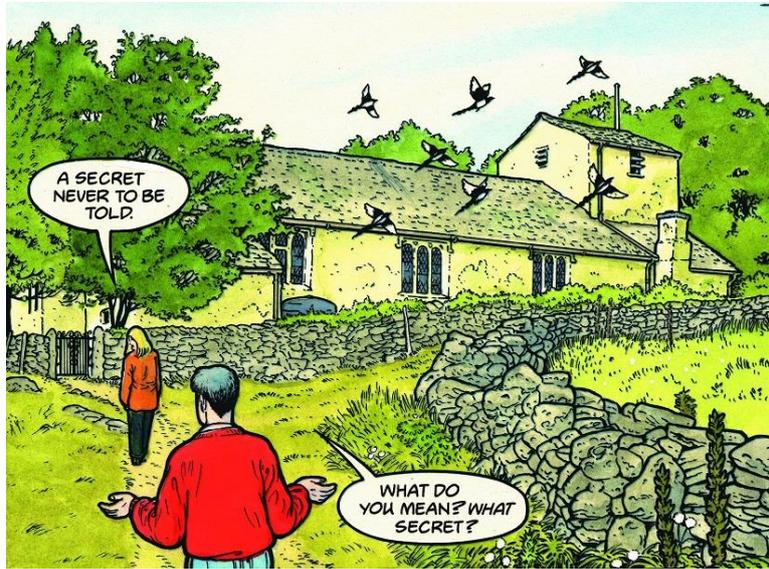
There she's taken in by pub landlords Ruth and Sam who nurture her with a loving, listening and understanding tenderness which she had never experienced at home. Step by painful step – and not without set-backs – Helen roams the glorious Cumbrian countryside with its craggy mountains, breath-taking panoramas, dry stone walls, verdant fields, fresh air and vast, open lakes, struggling to work her way through her abusive past until she finds the courage to face down her father once and for all, and the inspiration to create her own work of powerful fiction.

That is The Tale Of One Bad Rat.



If the pastoral sounds idyllic, then it is. With its meticulously composed layouts on a clear three-tier grid and majestic, bucolic scenery in soft watercolour under a *ligne-claire* acetate overlay, it remains one of the most beautiful, accessible and mesmerising graphic novels to present to first-time comics readers in order to convince them that they need to explore this medium further.

But it also packs a passionate punch. Anger explodes from within Helen Potter, shattering the page as though it were a pane of glass. It's an unflinching and powerful graphic novel but far from sensationalist. Taught in schools, the underlying subject matter of child abuse is treated if not in forensic detail then certainly with all the gravity, sensitivity and comprehension which it warrants.



THE TALE OF ONE BAD RAT with its self-marketing Beatrix Potter pastiche cover gave us one of our first prime slabs of potent, provocative and affecting British fiction to sell as a book to the masses.

When Talbot first signed with Page 45 on the graphic novel's launch over two decades ago, a blue-rinsed 80-year-old lady was drawn into the shop by its cover, blown-up in our window, recognised the book's specific scenery as some of her most treasured old haunts and gratefully snapped up a copy for Bryan to sketch in. Neither Bryan nor I could quite believe it, but this unexpected act of faith and approbation from a seemingly least likely source reinvigorated our respective faiths that we were on exactly the right track in our shared quest to introduce comics to the widest possible audience.





A decade later, Talbot's equally accessible ALICE IN SUNDERLAND came with its own canny title which still brings a smile to faces, and I commend it to you highly as the eye-popping non-fiction truth behind the creation of Alice In Wonderland, the astonishing connections between the book, its author, its model and the North East of England... as well as an exploration of regional history, art, literature and even narrative sculpture in a blisteringly erudite and witty entertainment during which not one, two, but *three* Bryan Talbots will be your host. Whatever you're imagining, it's even more wondrous!

Also recommended by Bryan Talbot:

THE ADVENTURES OF LUTHER ARKWRIGHT / HEART OF EMPIRE (Seminal Steampunk)

GRANDVILLE (Anthropomorphic Steampunk)

SALLY HEATHCOTE SUFFRAGETTE by Mary Talbot & Kate Charlesworth, Bryan Talbot

(If you currently don't vote during General Elections, then I pray that this will change your mind)