

The Ballad of Barry and the Bover-Beavers (Gerard Foster)

In a forest with a river
Lived a Bover Beaver chief
And his eager Bover-Beavers
With their big and pointy teeth.

And being rather greedy
And very fond of wood,
They soon got round to chomping down
All the trees they could.

All except for Barry.
He was more like you or me.
His teeth were small and milky
And his best friend... was a TREE!

By night the other Bover-Beavers
Nibbled, gnashed and gnawed.
By day they sat around the pool
And chewed on old chipboard.

But Barry didn't join them.
He preferred to play with Keith.
(And didn't really like the thought
Of splinters in his teeth.)

He said: "I wish you all
Could let the trees just be themselves".
The others laughed and said:
"But they make such fantastic shelves!"

Then late one night, the Bover chief
Woke Barry in his bunk.
"It's time you bit the bark" he said.
"It's time you tasted trunk!"

He called the other Bover-Beavers:
"Nibbles, Gnasher, Nora!
Take this fellah out tonight
And make him fell some flora.

But not just any plants or weeds,
Choose only proper whoppers.
It's time our Bover-Beaver bruvver
Learned to use his choppers!"

Young Barry shook with fear
As they stepped into the wood.
He tried to think of happy things
But it was just no good.

Then Gnasher stopped and smiled
With his big and pointy teeth.
“This one” he said and pointed up
To Barry’s best friend, Keith.

Poor Barry got down on his knees.
“Not Keith, I beg you, please!”
Nora burst out laughing:
“He’s got names for all the trees!”

Barry felt quite silly
As his mates all rolled about.
He wished he could be back in bed
But there was no way out.

“It’s time to munch” said Nibbles.
“I can’t do it!” Barry said.
Nibbles grinned and bared his fangs.
“Then we’ll do it instead”.

But just as Nasty Nibbles
And his friends prepared to eat
Barry felt the earth begin
To shake beneath their feet.

Above them, branches creaked and swayed
Below, the soil cracked
As Keith, the tree, pulled up his roots
And lurched off down the track.

“Run!” yelled Barry, “Save yourself!”
And then: “Hey wait for me!”
“Bovver!” said the Bovver-Beavers.
“Someone stop that tree!”

Barry turned and saw
The Bovver-Beavers drawing near.
“Help!” he cried and “Help!” again
But who was there to hear?

Then suddenly around the three
A leafy rustle rose.
Branches crashed around their heads
And roots grabbed at their toes.

"The forest is alive!"
The Bover Beavers squealed and cowered
As all around them fruit and nuts
And spiky conkers showered.

Keith and Barry lumbered on
Until they reached a moat.
If they could cross it, they'd be free...
Thank goodness trees can float!

Back at base, the bovered Beavers
Said: "It's time we left!"
The chief said "No, I think it's time
We chopped down all the rest."

"What, every single tree? But we
Don't have the teeth," said Nor.
"We have now!" grinned the Bover chief
And led them to a door.

Inside there stood, made out of wood
And camouflaged in green,
With grabbing claws and metal jaws
A tree-felling machine.

"The Bover Beast will knock 'em down
At twenty trunks a minute.
It's quick. It's clean. It only needs
A bit of petrol in it."

And so at dawn, that fateful morn
The Bover Beast rolled out.
"I love the smell of sawdust!"
Said the chief then looked about...

And saw that all around him
There was nothing, not a leaf.
For in the night, they'd taken flight
And joined Barry and Keith.

Who'd journeyed to a city
Where the creatures woke to find
Their gardens were now forests
And their streets were all tree-lined.

And Barry, he still lives there now
Not far from his friend Keith,
Who gives him bits of wood to use
To save his little teeth.

And as for all the other Beavers
Back in their old home,
They may still need a tree or two
But now they grow their own.

And only harvest what they need -
Yes even they're believers
In looking after what you've got
And not being Bover-Beavers...

THE END