

= The Tale of Jemima Puddle @-@ Duck =

The Tale of Jemima Puddle @-@ Duck is a children 's book written and illustrated by Beatrix Potter . It was first published by Frederick Warne & Co. in July 1908 . Potter composed the book at Hill Top , a working farm in the Lake District she bought in 1905 . Following the purchase , her works began to focus on country and village life , incorporating large casts of animal characters and sinister villains . Jemima Puddle @-@ Duck was the first of her books set wholly at the farm with background illustrations based on the farm buildings and yard , and nearby locales .

Jemima is a domestic duck of the Aylesbury breed , whose eggs are routinely confiscated by the farmer 's wife because she believes Jemima a poor sitter . Jemima searches for a place away from the farm where she can hatch her eggs without human interference , and naively confides her woes to a suave fox who invites her to nest in a shed at his home . Jemima accepts his invitation , little realising her danger : the fox plans to kill and roast her . Kep , a collie on the farm , discovers Jemima 's whereabouts and rescues her just in time . Potter indicated the tale was a revision of " Little Red Riding Hood " with Jemima , the fox , and the dog parallels to the fairy tale 's heroine , wolf , and woodcutter . Jemima , Kep , the farmer 's wife and her two children were all modelled on real world individuals at Potter 's Hill Top farm .

The book was hugely popular . Spinoff merchandise included a soft Jemima doll in bonnet and shawl , a Jemima painting book in 1925 , and illustrated fabric placemats hand @-@ fashioned by Potter and distributed to friends . Critically , the book is considered one of Potter 's best . In 1971 , the tale became a segment in the Royal Ballet film , The Tales of Beatrix Potter , and , in 1993 , it was telecast as an episode on the animated BBC anthology series , The World of Peter Rabbit and Friends .

= = Plot = =

The tale begins in a farmyard which is home to a duck called Jemima Puddle @-@ duck . She wants to hatch her own eggs , but the farmer 's wife believes ducks make poor sitters and routinely confiscates their eggs to allow the hens to incubate them . Jemima tries to hide her eggs , but they are always found and carried away . She sets off along the road in poke bonnet and shawl to find a safe place away from the farm to lay her eggs .

At the top of a hill , she spies a distant wood , flies to it , and waddles about until she discovers an appropriate nesting place among the foxgloves . However , a charming gentleman with " black prick ears and sandy @-@ coloured whiskers " persuades her to nest in a shed at his home . Jemima is led to his " tumble @-@ down shed " (which is curiously filled with feathers) , and makes herself a nest with little ado .

Jemima lays her eggs , and the fox suggests a dinner party to mark the event . He asks her to collect the traditional herbs used in stuffing a duck , telling her the seasonings will be used for an omelette . Jemima sets about her errand , but the farm collie , Kep , meets her as she carries onions from the farm kitchen and asks her what she is doing and where she keeps going . She reveals her errand , Kep sees through the fox 's plan at once , and finds out from Jemima where the fox lives .

With the help of two fox @-@ hound puppies who are out at walk at the farm , Kep rescues Jemima and the " foxy @-@ whiskered gentleman " (Mr. Tod) is chased away and seen again in The Tale of Mr. Tod . However , the hungry fox @-@ hounds eat Jemima 's eggs . Jemima is escorted back to the farm in tears over her lost eggs , but , in time , lays more eggs and successfully hatches four ducklings .

= = Scholarly commentaries = =

The Tale of Jemima Puddle @-@ Duck is a tale of pursuit and prey . The theme runs through several of Potter 's tales : Mr. McGregor pursues Peter Rabbit , Simpkin lies in wait for the mice in the tailor 's shop , and the trout attempts to devour Jeremy Fisher . Potter was following the pattern of fairy tales by dwelling on the theme of pursuit and prey , and often pointed out that the tale of

Jemima was a retelling of " Little Red Riding Hood " . Perrault 's tale ends with the death of the heroine , but Potter understood children will not tolerate tragedy . The prey in her books survive for better or worse (Peter returns home for a dose of chamomile tea , for example) and , though Jemima loses her eggs to her hungry rescuers , she lives to return to the farm to raise a brood of ducklings .

The tale shows Potter at her best in depicting the life of the farm and the village of Near Sawrey , but the tale becomes one of something more than just local color and interest . The archetypical tale upon which Jemima is based ? the foolish and naive are rescued from destruction by the loyal and dependable ? is transformed in Potter 's hands to one in which self @-@ preservation and shrewdness become admirable virtues . Graham Greene thought the sandy @-@ whiskered gentleman a character of ominous gloom and suggested Potter had suffered some sort of mental breakdown , but it is more likely she was simply coming to terms with life on a farm . Wild animals invade the precincts of the domesticated ones , and death is part of farming .

The victor in the tale is the farmer 's wife : she regains her errant duck and is rid of the predatory fox . Ostensibly , she confiscates Jemima 's eggs believing Jemima will abandon them , but the eggs are not confiscated for the well @-@ being of Jemima and her kin but for the well @-@ being of the farmer 's wife and her family : the eggs (or the ducks hatched from them) will end up on their dinner table . In this respect , the farmer 's wife is a predator like the fox , but the fox is condemned for his predation . Human values are at the top of the tale 's hierarchy . Potter argues for the well @-@ ordered home and the practicalities of farm life over the fantasy lives of animals . It was the *modus vivendi* Potter was to incorporate in her own life as she devoted more of her thoughts and hours to the business of farming and less to tales of fantasy animals .

Like many fairy tales , Jemima Puddle @-@ Duck belongs in a remote , but not @-@ too @-@ distant , past . Jemima 's shawl reflects the typical farm dress of the Lake District at the time of the tale 's composition , but the poke bonnet does not , and the fox 's long tail coat and exquisite manners also suggest another time . Jemima is a more interesting character when humanised with the clothing ; without it , she is just a farmyard duck . As Potter pointed out , the tale is a revision of a fairy tale and belongs in the indefinite period of " once upon a time " .

The story is one of Potter 's more ominous and is fraught with tension . Jemima is a headstrong innocent distracted by her overwhelming desire to nest , and thus unable to penetrate the fox 's designs and comprehend her dangerous situation . The tension rises in increments from the mysterious feather @-@ filled shed (the place of slaughter) , to the fox 's plan for an omelette (of Jemima 's eggs) , to the ultimate horror and crowning irony , Jemima 's errand to fetch the herbs that will be used to season herself .

The fox is the first male villain in Potter 's work , saving Samuel Whiskers in *The Roly Poly Pudding* , the companion piece to Jemima , and , like all villains in Potter , the " gentleman with sandy whiskers " presents a false social front that conceals his bestial nature . He dresses and behaves as a country gentleman of leisure , idling with a newspaper and living off the labor of others by luring their fowl to his feather @-@ filled shed . Potter had little tolerance for indolence and lack of industry , but , as a country woman , she knew foxes were clever and managed to escape more times than they were caught . From the first encounter between Jemima and the fox , the reader realises the fox is more clever than Jemima and is forced to extend him a grudging admiration .

= = Background = =

Helen Beatrix Potter was born on July 28 , 1866 to barrister Rupert William Potter and his wife Helen (Leech) Potter in London . She was educated by governesses and tutors , and passed a quiet childhood reading , painting , drawing , visiting museums and art exhibitions , and tending a nursery menagerie of small animals . Her interests in the natural world and country life were nurtured with holidays in Scotland , the Lake District , and Camfield Place , the Hertfordshire home of her paternal grandparents .

Potter 's adolescence was as quiet as her childhood . She grew into a spinsterish young woman whose parents groomed her to be a permanent resident and housekeeper in their home . She

continued to paint and draw , and experienced her first professional artistic success in 1890 when she sold six designs of humanised animals to a greeting card publisher . She hoped to lead a useful life independent of her parents , and tentatively considered a career in mycology , but the all @-@ male scientific community regarded her as an amateur and she abandoned fungi .

Potter had maintained contact with her last governess Annie Carter Moore and had grown fond of her children . Through the 1890s , she sent illustrated story letters to the children . Mrs. Moore recognised the literary and artistic value of the letters and urged her former charge to publish . Potter liked the suggestion , and , in 1900 , revised a tale she had written for five @-@ year @-@ old Noel Moore in 1893 , and fashioned a dummy book of it in imitation of Helen Bannerman 's 1899 bestseller *The Story of Little Black Sambo* . Unable to find a buyer for the tale , she published it for family and friends at her own expense in December 1901 .

Frederick Warne & Co. had once rejected the tale but , eager to compete in the booming small format children 's book market , reconsidered and accepted the " bunny book " (as the firm called it) following the recommendation of their prominent children 's book artist L. Leslie Brooke . Potter agreed to colour her pen and ink illustrations , chose the then @-@ new Hentschel three @-@ colour process for reproducing her watercolours , and on October 2 , 1902 *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* was released .

Potter continued to publish with Warnes . Early in July 1905 she bought Hill Top , a working farm of 34 acres (14 ha) at Sawrey in the Lake District with profits from her books and a small legacy from an aunt . On August 25 , 1905 Potter 's editor and fiancé , Norman Warne died suddenly and unexpectedly . Potter became deeply depressed and was ill for many weeks , but rallied to complete the last few tales she had planned and discussed with Warne .

== Production ==

In 1900 Beatrix Potter revised a tale about a humanised rabbit she had written in 1893 , worked up a dummy book in imitation of the small format bestseller *Little Black Sambo* (1899) , and , after multiple rejections from London publishers , privately published her tale in December 1901 . Frederick Warne & Co. was eager to compete in the burgeoning and lucrative small format children 's book market , and accepted the " bunny book " (as the firm called it) after their prominent children 's book artist L. Leslie Brooke gave it his enthusiastic endorsement . Potter agreed to colour her pen and ink illustrations , chose the then @-@ new Hentschel three @-@ colour process for reproducing her watercolours , and in October 1902 *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* was released .

In the next few years , Potter published books similar in concept , style , or format to *Peter Rabbit* : *The Tailor of Gloucester* and *The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin* in 1903 , and the tales of Benjamin Bunny and *Two Bad Mice* in 1904 . In August 1905 , sales profits and a small legacy from an aunt enabled Potter to buy Hill Top , a working farm of 34 acres and 36 perches (13 @.@ 85 ha) in the Lake District . In the years immediately following its purchase , she produced tales and illustrations inspired by the farm , its woodland surroundings , and nearby villages . Potter worked on sketches for *Jemima Puddle @-@ Duck* during the winter of 1907 while recuperating from respiratory infections . She accompanied her parents on a holiday to Sidmouth in April 1908 , and continued to work on *Jemima Puddle @-@ Duck* . Potter 's cousin Caroline Hutton Clark was at Hill Top during the composition of *Jemima Puddle @-@ Duck* and joined Potter as she searched the farmstead for a suitable place in which to situate Jemima 's nest for the illustrations . Kep was a real dog , and Mrs. Clark was given one of Kep 's sons . She later described the puppy as " the dearest and cleverest dog I ever had . "

Two versions of the opening paragraph were written . The slightly cynical , " What a gratifying thing it is in these days to meet with a female devoted to family life " was revised to read , " What a funny sight it is to see a brood of ducklings with a hen . " The tale is complicated with irony (the feather @-@ filled shed and the herbs for roasting a duck) and the co @-@ existence of two time sequences or two different points of view : Kep 's as he seeks the assistance of the fox @-@ hounds in rescuing Jemima , and the sandy @-@ whiskered gentleman 's as he waits nervously for Jemima to return with the herbs .

The " farmyard tale " was dedicated to Betsy and Ralph Cannon , the children of Potter 's farm manager , John Cannon . The children appear in one of the illustrations collecting Jemima 's eggs from the rhubarb patch , and their mother is depicted in the opening picture feeding the barnyard fowl . Jemima was based upon a real world duck at Hill Top Farm who evaded Mrs. Cannon and her children in their attempts to locate her eggs before she mismanaged their incubation . Mrs. Cannon believed ducks made poor sitters , and routinely confiscated the ducks ' eggs to allow the hens to incubate them . Potter may have taken inspiration from a drawing in her father 's 1853 sketchbook of a flying duck wearing a bonnet . Potter almost certainly chose the name " Jemima " in honour of Jemima Blackburn , an ornithological painter and illustrator whose Birds from Nature she had received as a gift on her tenth birthday and whom she met in 1891 .

The illustrations depict the new barn and outbuildings at Hill Top , the wrought @-@ iron gate Potter installed at the kitchen garden , the rhubarb patch , the entrance porch at the farmhouse , the exterior of the Tower Bank Arms in the village , and imagined aerial views of the countryside around Near Sawrey . In 1940 , Potter remarked upon the illustration of Jemima rushing downhill with her bonnet and shawl askew , " That is what I used to look like to the Sawrey people . I rushed about quacking industriously . "

The Tale of Jemima Puddle @-@ Duck was published in July 1908 after heated discussions with publisher Harold Warne about the dialogues and cover illustration . The book was an immediate success .

In later years , Ernest Aris would blatantly plagiarise not only the Peter Rabbit character in his The Treasure Seekers but Jemima in his Mrs. Beak Duck . Potter was restrained when alerted to the imitations : she praised his technical artistry but chastised him for a lack of originality . At the time , her eyesight was deteriorating and her days were heavily invested in operating her farm ; her restraint with Aris may be attributed to her desire to enlist him as a collaborator .

= = Similarities to " Little Red Riding Hood " = =

Potter indicated Jemima was a revision of " Little Red Riding Hood " , and the similarities between the two are numerous : Jemima and her eggs are substitutes for Red Riding Hood and her grandmother ; the farmer 's wife and Jemima 's sister @-@ in @-@ law Rebecca are substitutes for Red Riding Hood 's mother ; the fox and the wolf both conceal their bestial natures beneath the polite behaviour of gentlemen , and the dogs are substitutes for the woodcutters . Both tales touch upon physical appetite , temptation , and foolish behaviour .

Though the tale has a happy ending , tearful Jemima is led back to the farm in public humiliation after losing her eggs to her hungry rescuers . She is allowed to hatch a brood on the farm , but it only produces four ducklings . Potter 's revision of " Little Red Riding Hood " more nearly resembles Perrault 's tragic tale than the happily @-@ ever @-@ after Grimm version where the heroine is rescued by woodcutters . The author knew her young audience would sympathise with the unhatched ducklings and would not tolerate having Jemima , a mother figure , suffer a bloody end in the fox 's shed . The loss of the eggs is sad for the reader , but Potter ended the tale as happily as possible ? not only for her audience but for the sake of the real world children of her farm manager , Ralph and Betsy Cannon , to whom the tale was dedicated . Jemima is punished for her headstrong foolishness and must relinquish her hope of finding a nesting spot away from the farm , but the punishment is mitigated when she is allowed to hatch one brood herself .

= = Merchandising = =

Jemima Puddle @-@ Duck was popular , almost as popular as Peter Rabbit , and became the subject of ancillary merchandise . She is depicted in one of the four well known endpapers of the Potter books , and was featured on a Christmas card for the Invalid Children 's Aid Association . She became the principal character in an unpublished painting book describing the livestock at Hill Top , and appeared in Peter Rabbit 's Painting Book and Tom Kitten 's Painting Book before being given her own painting book , Jemima Puddle @-@ Duck 's Painting Book in 1925 , composed grudgingly

in response to public demand for yet another book .

Potter waited for ducklings to hatch at the farm to be used as models for the painting book , but in the end , the eggs were rotten . The instructions in Jemima 's painting book were similar to those in Tom Kitten 's painting book , but the kittens with crayons in Tom 's book accompanying the instructions were replaced by six ducklings splashing about in paint water for the similar page in Jemima 's book . In the original tale , Jemima 's eggs are eaten by her rescuers but in the painting book , a new design was executed for " They took Jemima home " ; in the painting book , Kep and the fox hound puppies lead Jemima away from her broken but uneaten eggs . The same theme was depicted on Crabtree & Evelyn chocolate Easter eggs .

The painting book displays Potter 's willingness to exploit the commercial possibilities of her characters and tales . The purchaser was alerted to the existence of other Potter books on the inside front cover and directed to a list of books on the back cover . Other merchandise included sets of linen or silk placemats painted by Potter for friends with an abridged text and 12 of the illustrations . In 1910 , Potter patented a design for a soft toy duck based on her model of Jemima in a Paisley handkerchief shawl and bonnet . A soft Jemima doll was manufactured by J. I. Farnell of Acton .