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# **The Duck Who Came To Tea**

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## Introduction

It began, as unusual stories so often do, with the gentle clink of porcelain in a quiet cottage on Ripplewood Lane. The morning had been an ordinary one: rain tapping softly on the rooftop, the fireplace breathing a gentle warmth, and a kettle humming its familiar tune. Nothing suggested that the day ahead would turn into one of wonder, curiosity, and unexpected friendship. In the world just outside the window, extraordinary tales were waiting; all it took was an open door—and perhaps, a little quack.

Stories of animal visitors have enchanted readers for generations, weaving magic into the familiar tapestry of daily life. Ducks, with their waddling charm and playful nature, have often appeared on green lawns and pond edges, but rarely have they crossed the threshold and claimed a seat at the tea table. What happens when such a guest arrives uninvited—and stays? This is not merely a tale of tea and toast, but the story of what happens when hearts and doors are opened, and the ordinary is willingly transformed into the extraordinary.

Through chance and surprise, “The Duck Who Came To Tea” invites you to rediscover the wonder that lies in the unexpected. Here, over steaming cups, hesitant first greetings become giggles and grand adventures. Each chapter reveals more than just the antics of an unusual guest; it unveils the peculiar magic found in the routines and rituals of home, and the gentle courage needed to embrace what, and who, is different.

As the puddles deepen and secrets float on the wind, Ripplewood Lane—a place as tranquil as it is secretive—becomes the stage for a quiet revolution of friendship. Neighbors peer curiously over hedges, and long-whispered rumors flutter against the windowpanes. Amid laughter, mystery, and the click-clack of little webbed feet, the duck teaches more than just the art of making the perfect cup of tea.

In these pages, you’re invited to join all who have ever wondered what might happen if a little whimsy slipped into their lives. Whether you are reading alone with a cozy mug or aloud to a room filled with eager listeners, may you step into this story with eyes wide open and heart ready to welcome whatever comes tapping—or quacking—at your own door.

## CHAPTER ONE: The Unexpected Visitor

Miss Agnes Periwinkle considered herself a creature of quiet routine, and Ripplewood Lane was the perfect stage for her particular brand of predictable calm. Every morning, precisely at seven o'clock, her kettle began to sing its pre-boil aria, a gentle hum that crescendoed into a full-throated whistle by seven-oh-five. By seven-fifteen, a perfectly steeped cup of Earl Grey, accompanied by two crisp digestives, would be warming her hands as she settled into her favorite armchair by the bay window. This particular Tuesday was no exception.

The rain, which had been merely a suggestion of moisture at dawn, had escalated into a determined drumming against the pane. It was the sort of rain that made the world outside seem blurry and indistinct, a watercolor painting smeared by a clumsy hand. Agnes, however, found comfort in it. It muffled the distant sounds of Ripplewood Lane's nascent bustle – the milk float, the postman's bicycle, the occasional distant squawk of Mrs. Gable's disgruntled rooster.

Her cottage, named 'The Bramble Patch' for the enthusiastic blackberry bushes that scaled its south-facing wall, was a bastion of order. Bookshelves groaned under the weight of well-loved novels and botanical guides, their spines softened by years of careful handling. Cushions were plumped, rugs lay flat, and a faint scent of lavender and old paper permeated the air. Agnes liked things just so.

She took a slow sip of tea, the warmth seeping into her fingers, and gazed out. The world beyond her window was a tapestry of greens and greys, punctuated by the vivid magenta of her fuchsia and the defiant scarlet of a lone rose struggling against the downpour. A large puddle, already substantial, was rapidly expanding at the foot of her garden path, reflecting the sky in a shimmering, distorted mirror.

Suddenly, a disturbance. A dark shape, small and bobbing, appeared at the edge of the puddle. Agnes, accustomed to the occasional squirrel or blackbird, squinted. It was too low for a squirrel, too large for a blackbird. It moved with an odd, jerky gait, a low silhouette against the grey. Her brow furrowed in mild curiosity.

The shape drew closer, revealing itself to be... well, it was certainly a bird. A rather large, rather wet, rather unkempt bird. It seemed to be contemplating the ever-growing puddle with an intensity Agnes usually reserved for the crossword puzzle. It dipped its head, then shook it vigorously, sending a spray of water droplets into the air.

Agnes, never one to interrupt a creature's contemplation, watched with a quiet

fascination. The bird then took a tentative step onto her perfectly manicured lawn, its webbed feet leaving surprisingly distinct impressions in the soft grass. Her gaze drifted from the creature to the sky, as if searching for an explanation. No, it wasn't a seagull blown off course. It lacked the haughty elegance.

It was, unmistakably, a duck. A brown duck, with iridescent green feathers shimmering on its head, even in the dull light. Its eyes, bright and beady, seemed to survey its surroundings with an air of profound thoughtfulness, or perhaps, just profound confusion. It certainly wasn't a common sight on Ripplewood Lane. The nearest pond was a good mile and a half away, nestled deep within the woods.

The duck took another step, then another, its waddle a comical dance across her lawn. It seemed to be making a beeline for her front door. Agnes, who had long since finished her biscuit and was now nursing the dwindling warmth of her tea, felt a tiny tremor of surprise. Ducks, as a rule, did not approach cottages. They certainly did not approach *her* cottage.

It reached the gravel path leading to her porch, its webbed feet making a soft, scrabbling sound. Agnes could now see the individual droplets of rain clinging to its feathers, making it look rather disheveled, but also oddly determined. It hopped onto the first step of her porch, then the second. It was heading directly for her door.

Her antique brass knocker, shaped like a benevolent lion's head, suddenly became a point of interest for the intrepid fowl. The duck craned its neck, tilting its head, as if studying the ornate metalwork with an expert eye. Agnes found herself suppressing a giggle. The notion of a duck attempting to use a door knocker was simply too absurd.

But then, to her utter astonishment, it happened. The duck, with a sudden, decisive movement, lifted its head and brought the very tip of its beak into contact with the solid brass. It wasn't a forceful tap, more of a polite, insistent *clink*. A single, distinct sound, audible even over the drumming rain.

Agnes blinked. Then she blinked again. She leaned forward in her armchair, her cup forgotten on the small table beside her. Had she imagined it? Had the early morning silence, broken only by the rain, played tricks on her ears? She waited, her breath held.

The duck, as if sensing her internal debate, repeated the gesture. *Clink*. This time, slightly firmer, a clear and undeniable sound. And then, as if to punctuate its message, a distinct, resonant *quack*. It wasn't a frantic, panicked quack, but rather a calm, questioning sound, as if to say, "Is anyone home?"

Agnes Periwinkle, a woman whose life had been a well-ordered symphony of predictable notes, found herself utterly flummoxed. A duck. At her door. Tapping.

Quacking. She slowly, deliberately, placed her teacup down. It rattled slightly in the saucer, a testament to her uncharacteristic discomposure.

This was entirely unprecedented. Ducks belonged in ponds, in parks, perhaps even on the occasional sprawling estate. They did not, under any circumstances, present themselves at front doors and solicit entry. Yet, here one was, a small, feathered enigma, patiently waiting on her porch.

Her mind, usually so clear and logical, felt rather like a tangled ball of yarn. What was one supposed to do when a duck came knocking? Offer it a worm? A puddle to swim in? The notion of opening her pristine front door to a dripping wet, rather muddy bird seemed utterly preposterous.

Yet, the duck continued to wait, its dark eyes fixed on the door, its head cocked slightly to one side. There was an undeniable air of expectation about it. It wasn't frightened, nor aggressive. It simply seemed to be... waiting.

Agnes slowly rose from her armchair, her joints protesting with a soft creak. She walked towards the front door, her movements a little stiff, a little unsure. The sound of the rain intensified as she drew closer, and through the frosted glass panel, she could see the blurry outline of the duck, still steadfastly there.

Her hand hovered over the doorknob. Her logical mind screamed for her to ignore it, to let it eventually waddle off and find its own way back to wherever it had come from. But another part of her, a smaller, more whimsical part she rarely acknowledged, felt a peculiar pull. Curiosity, pure and unadulterated, tugged at her.

After all, how often did a duck come to tea? The thought, fleeting and ridiculous, brought a small, private smile to her lips. It was undeniably absurd. And perhaps, that was precisely why she found herself turning the knob. The click was surprisingly loud in the quiet cottage.

She opened the door just a crack, peering out. The duck stood there, perfectly still, its emerald-green head gleaming. It looked up at her, its beady eyes remarkably intelligent, and let out another soft, polite *quack*. It was an invitation, clear and undeniable, to step into the extraordinary. Agnes Periwinkle, accustomed to an ordinary life, was about to discover just how extraordinary a single morning could become.

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