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The Goose Who Came To Tea

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Introduction

Every small English village has its tales. Some are whispered over garden fences, others take shape by the fireside in the hearts of those who have called the place home for decades. But now and then, an event occurs that is so out of the ordinary, it not only becomes the talk of the town, but transforms everyone fortunate enough to be part of the story. This is one such tale, about the summer when an unexpected guest—with feathers, charm, and the most peculiar sense of timing—arrived quite literally on the doorstep of Rosewood Cottage.

They say the world changes in small whimsical ways, and sometimes, all it takes is a knock at the door (or in this case, gentle tapping and a plaintive honk) to start the change. The arrival of a goose to tea was, on the surface, a lighthearted oddity, but it was also the beginning of a journey that would touch every corner of our village and every heart within it. I invite you, dear reader, to set aside your disbelief and pour yourself a comforting cup, for in these pages, the lines between the possible and the impossible become as blurred as a windowpane in mist.

This book, *The Goose Who Came to Tea*, is a novel spun from memories both real and imagined, woven together with the threads of friendship, curiosity, and the ever-welcoming spirit of an English village summer. It reflects the belief that even the most ordinary days can hold the seeds of extraordinary adventure—if only we are willing to open the door.

Perhaps, like the people of Rosewood, you find yourself yearning for something unexpected, something to ruffle the calm waters of predictable days. Perhaps you too have wondered if magic might exist just outside your window, waiting for a little kindness. This story is an ode to that possibility, to the wonder we rediscover at any age, and to the friendships that lift us when our wings feel small.

So come, gentle reader. Let the kettle boil, let the rain patter on the sill, and settle in. For in this quiet village, something enchanting is about to unfold—a story not just of a goose who came to tea, but of the people, secrets, and joys she brought along with her.

Welcome to Rosewood, where magic hides in the most unexpected of places, and sometimes, tea is just the beginning.

CHAPTER ONE: The Unexpected Visitor

The summer sun, unusually persistent for an English June, cast long, sleepy shadows across the manicured lawn of Rosewood Cottage. Miss Eleanor Ponsonby, a woman whose life had settled into a comfortable rhythm of polite society, meticulously brewed tea, tended her prize-winning roses, and solved particularly vexing crossword puzzles, hummed a tuneless melody as she arranged a plate of her famous lemon shortbread biscuits. It was precisely three o'clock, the hour of her daily ritual, and the only company she anticipated was the gentle tick-tock of the grandfather clock in the hall and perhaps the distant thrum of Mr. Henderson's lawnmower from next door.

Rosewood Cottage, nestled at the edge of the village of Heatherfield, was a picture of quaint serenity. Ivy clung to its old stone walls, and a riot of climbing roses framed the front door, their scent mingling sweetly with the honeysuckle. Eleanor had lived there for forty-seven years, ever since her late aunt had bequeathed it to her, and not once had an uninvited guest, other than a particularly bold robin, dared to disturb its tranquil order.

The kettle, a charming antique copper number, whistled its soft announcement. Eleanor, with the practiced grace of a woman who had poured thousands of cups of tea, reached for her favourite porcelain teapot, adorned with delicate forget-me-nots. The clink of china against the tray was the loudest sound in the sun-drenched kitchen. She had just picked up the teapot to pour the first infusion when a peculiar sound reached her ears.

It wasn't the usual rustle of leaves or the chirping of sparrows. This was a distinct, rather insistent tapping, followed by a sound that could only be described as a plaintive, yet surprisingly resonant, honk. Eleanor paused, teapot suspended in mid-air. Her brow furrowed slightly. Was it a child playing a prank? Unlikely. Heatherfield children were well-behaved, and besides, the tapping sounded far too deliberate.

The tapping came again, a little louder this time, accompanied by another, more urgent honk. It seemed to be coming from the front door. Eleanor, though a creature of habit, was not easily startled. Curiosity, a quality she often suppressed in favour of decorum, began to prick. She set the teapot down carefully, wiped her hands on her apron, and made her way through the cosy sitting room, past the grandfather clock, and towards the oak front door.

As she approached, the sounds became clearer. The tapping wasn't a child's knuckles; it was softer, duller, almost like... a beak? And the honking, definitely not human. Eleanor reached for the brass doorknob, her fingers hovering for a moment. This was

certainly out of the ordinary. She took a deep breath, straightened her sensible cardigan, and pulled the door open.

There, on her doorstep, stood a goose.

It was a magnificent creature, with feathers the colour of fresh snow and a long, elegant neck. Its bright orange beak, surprisingly clean, was indeed what had been tapping against the oak. Its intelligent, bead-like eyes regarded her with an unnerving intensity. It stood perfectly still, one webbed foot slightly raised, as if poised for a curtsy.

Eleanor Ponsonby, a woman who prided herself on always knowing the proper thing to say, found herself utterly speechless. A goose. On her doorstep. Requesting entry, it seemed. She blinked, once, then twice, convinced for a fleeting moment that the summer heat had finally gotten to her. But the goose remained, solid and undeniably real, its gaze unwavering.

"Well, I never," she murmured, the words escaping her lips before she could properly compose herself. It was the standard Eleanor Ponsonby response to anything truly astonishing, from a particularly vibrant sunset to the vicar's unexpected announcement of a new bell tower.

The goose, as if understanding her profound statement, let out another soft honk. It was less plaintive now, more like an affirmation. It then took a single, deliberate step forward, its webbed foot landing squarely on her welcome mat, which bore the embroidered words: "Home is Where the Heart Is."

Eleanor instinctively took a step back, not out of fear, but sheer bewilderment. A goose. Here. She glanced down the quiet lane. No farmer in sight, no stray flock, no signs of a disturbance from the nearby stream or fields. This goose appeared to be entirely on its own, and furthermore, appeared to have arrived with a singular purpose.

"Are you quite lost?" Eleanor asked, her voice sounding strangely formal even to her own ears. The goose tilted its head, as if considering her question, then extended its neck slightly towards the open doorway, its gaze flicking from her face to the warm, inviting interior of the cottage. It was unmistakably an invitation.

Eleanor found herself torn between her ingrained sense of order and a rising tide of inexplicable amusement. This was, without a doubt, the most peculiar situation she had encountered in her entire seventy-two years. A stray dog, perhaps. A lost cat, certainly. But a goose? A goose demanding entrance for tea?

She looked at the goose again. It was remarkably clean, its feathers unruffled,

suggesting it hadn't travelled far or endured much hardship. There was an air of dignity about it, an almost regal bearing that belied its unexpected presence. It didn't look like a common farmyard escapee; it looked like a goose with an appointment.

"Well," Eleanor said, a small, involuntary smile playing on her lips, "I suppose you'd better come in, then. It wouldn't do to keep a guest waiting, would it?"

The goose, as if it had understood every word, took another step forward, then another, waddling with surprising grace over the threshold and into the small hallway. It paused just inside, looking around with what Eleanor could only describe as an air of quiet appraisal. Its eyes scanned the polished floorboards, the antique coat rack, and the grandfather clock, which chose that very moment to chime the half-hour.

Eleanor closed the front door softly behind them, the click of the latch sounding unnaturally loud in the sudden quiet. She stood for a moment, simply staring at the goose standing in her hallway. This was it then. The goose had indeed come to tea. And Eleanor Ponsonby, meticulous, proper Eleanor Ponsonby, was about to have her world, ever so slightly, turned upside down. The kettle was still hot, and the shortbread biscuits awaited.

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