

# The Tales of Beatrix Potter

## 7: The Tale of the Pie and the Patty-Pan

adapted by Jeff Capel

Once upon a time there were two friends: a cat called Ribby and a dog called Duchess.

One morning the dog, Duchess, received a letter from Ribby the cat inviting her to tea. It said: 'We will have something very nice to eat. You will never have tasted anything so good. I am baking it in a pie dish and you can eat it all. I will eat muffins.'

Duchess was very pleased to receive the invitation and sent a reply with the postman. But then she thought about the pie that Ribby was baking. 'Oh dear!' she said. 'I am afraid it will be mouse pie. I really couldn't eat mouse. And I shall have to – because otherwise it's rude.'

Then Duchess had an idea: 'I have a pie ready to go into the oven, too,' she thought. 'It's a ham pie, so much nicer than mouse. And it has a lovely crust held up with a little tin patty-pan. When Ribby goes to buy her muffins,' continued Duchess, 'I will rush along and put my pie into her oven when she isn't there. She won't know the difference!'

Duchess the dog was delighted with her own cleverness.

Meanwhile, Ribby the cat was preparing to cook her pie. In her kitchen there were two ovens, one on top of the other.

The top oven was much hotter and baked things too quickly, so Ribby used the bottom oven to cook her minced mouse pie.

Ribby laid the table with a very clean white cloth and her best china decorated with pink roses. Then she put on a hat and wrapped a shawl around her to go to the village shop to buy her muffins.

Duchess was watching and waiting for her to leave. When Ribby was out of sight she rushed into her friend's kitchen. She opened the door of the top oven. 'How odd!' she thought, 'Why hasn't Ribby started baking her pie?'

Duchess placed her pie into the nice hot oven and then looked all over the house for Ribby's mouse pie. She couldn't find it anywhere. She opened drawers and cupboard doors but there was no sign of any pie. When she heard Ribby coming back she slipped out of the back door.

Ribby thought she heard scuffling in the kitchen when she returned home but there was nobody there. She opened the bottom oven to check on her pie and the room filled with the delicious smell of baked mouse. 'Mmm, wonderful!' she said. 'But I don't remember leaving that cupboard door open.'

Duchess returned home and picked a bunch of flowers from her garden as a present for Ribby.

She brushed her black coat and waited until the clock struck four when it was time for tea.

'What a delicious smell of pie,' Duchess said to Ribby when she arrived. 'I do love ham pie, I mean...I do love mouse pie.'



'It needs another five minutes,' Ribby replied. 'I'll pour tea while we wait. Do you take sugar, dear Duchess?'

Duchess didn't notice that Ribby removed the golden, steaming pie from the bottom oven. But when it was served she did notice what small pieces of meat it contained. 'I don't remember mincing the ham so finely,' she thought. But it tasted so good and she gobbled it down in big mouthfuls.

Ribby buttered herself a muffin and thought 'How fast Duchess is eating. That's her fourth helping already!'

Ribby watched as Duchess fumbled in the pie dish with her spoon. 'More mouse, my dear?' she asked the little black dog.

'No thank you. I was only feeling for the patty-pan that held up the crust,' said Duchess.

'Oh I didn't put one in,' smiled Ribby, 'I don't like tin things in puddings and pies. I nearly choked once on a thimble that my cousin Tabitha Twitchit had hidden in a Christmas pud!'

'I can't find it!' said a worried Duchess.

'That's because there isn't one,' repeated Ribby.

Duchess started to howl and moan and whine. 'I feel so ill. I have swallowed a patty-pan. I'm going to die!'

'There was nothing in the pie!' said Ribby crossly. 'But if you're feeling so ill I had better go and find Dr Maggoty the Magpie.'

Ribby hurried to the village to find the doctor - leaving Duchess sitting by the fire sighing and groaning and feeling very unhappy. 'How could I have swallowed such a big patty-pan,' she whimpered. 'How could...'

She paused. Then sniffed and listened. She could smell the rich flavour of ham and something was still sizzling in the top oven. There was her pie and through the hole in the top of the crust there was a glimpse of a patty-pan. 'Then I must have been eating mouse,' she thought. 'No wonder I feel so ill.'

But she felt rather awkward. How would she explain her pie to Ribby? 'I will put it in the back yard and say nothing,' she decided, 'I'll come back later and take it away.'

When Ribby returned with Dr Maggoty, Duchess said she was suddenly feeling very much better and thought she had better go home before it was dark. She rushed round to the back yard to collect her pie. But when she got there she found it being eaten by three crows who were now drinking up the gravy. The pie dish was smashed into pieces and the patty-pan lay in the middle of the yard.

When Ribby looked out of her kitchen window and saw the mess, she said: 'Well I never did. The next time I want to give a tea party, I think I'll invite someone else.'