

The Tales of Beatrix Potter

13: The Tale of Ginger and Pickles

adapted by Tracey Hammett

Once upon a time there was a village shop and the name over the door was 'Ginger and Pickles.'

It was a small shop, just the right size for Dolls. Lucinda and Jane Doll always bought their groceries at Ginger and Pickles.

The counter inside was just the right height for rabbits and many other little creatures.

Ginger and Pickles sold red spotty handkerchiefs for a penny. They also sold sugar, cloth caps and wellington boots.

The shop belonged to Ginger and Pickles. Ginger was a yellow tom-cat, and Pickles was a terrier dog.

The rabbits who visited the shop were always a little bit afraid of Pickles. And the mice were rather afraid of Ginger.

Ginger always asked Pickles to serve the mice because they made his mouth water. 'I cannot bear to see them going out of the door carrying their little parcels,' he said.

'I feel the same about the rabbits,' replied Pickles, 'but it would never do to eat our customers; they would leave us and go to Tabitha Twitchit's shop instead.'

'No, dear Pickles, if we ate them, we would have no customers at all,' replied Ginger gloomily.

Tabitha Twitchit kept the only other shop in the village and she made all her customers pay for their shopping straight away; whereas Ginger and Pickles always told their customers that they could pay later.

For example, when Peter Rabbit came in to buy some washing powder for his mother, Ginger would hand him it and say: 'That'll be a penny please Peter Rabbit.' Then Peter Rabbit would answer: 'Er...I'm afraid I don't have a penny... may I pay you later?' And after letting out a sort of yowl, Ginger would reply, 'If you must Peter Rabbit. I'll add it to the list of all the other things that you haven't yet paid for.'

Similarly, when Mrs Tittle-mouse wanted a new flannel to wash her whiskers Pickles, on handing her the flannel, would say: 'That'll be a penny please Mrs Tittle-mouse.' And Mrs Tittle-mouse would reply nervously: 'Eh, hem. May I pay you later?' After letting out a rather frustrated howl, Pickles would answer: 'If you insist Mrs Tittle-mouse. I'll add it to the list of all the other things you haven't paid for.'

And these were not the only examples.

When Jemima Puddle-duck bought a new shawl, she asked to pay later...and when Mrs Tiggy-winkle bought a new cloth cap...she too asked to pay later.

Then, when Mr Jeremy Fisher hopped in and picked up a new fishing rod to buy, I'm sure you'll hardly be surprised to hear that he too asked to pay later.



The customers came in crowds every day to get all sorts of things, but they never paid for anything. Not a penny passed though the till at Ginger and Pickles' shop.

'We've sold ten times more than Tabitha Twitchit sells in her shop,' said Pickles proudly one day.

'Yes, but no one ever pays us, so we have no money to show for it,' sighed Ginger.

And, as there was no money, Ginger and Pickles had to eat the food from their shelves. Pickles ate biscuits and Ginger ate dried fish. They ate by candle-light after the shop was closed.

January came and the shop looked very bare indeed. So, Ginger and Pickles went to the market to buy more stock.

'We need biscuits and dried fish, fishing rods and cloth caps, flannels and washing powder,' Pickles told the stall holders.

'But I'm afraid we don't have any money,' Ginger added. 'Can we pay you later?' As you can imagine, the stall holders all frowned at this request. 'No you may not,' they replied. So Ginger and Pickles returned to their shop with nothing.

'What shall we do now?' said Pickles, 'soon we'll have nothing left to sell.'

'Let's send out bills to all our customers,' said Ginger.

So Ginger and Pickles sent out bills to each and every one of their customers, but no one paid a penny and soon the shelves were completely empty. And, because they had nothing to sell, no one came to the shop. 'This is the last straw,' said Pickles, 'let's close the shop.'

And so, they pulled the shutters down and left. They didn't go very far though. In fact some wish they had gone further.

Meanwhile, the shop closing caused great upset in the village. Tabitha Twitchit immediately raised her prices.

So everyone was pleased when, one day, Sally Henny-penny put up a poster saying she was going to re-open the shop previously owned by Ginger and Pickles. The poster read: 'Come to Henny Penny's Opening Sale! Come buy, come try, come buy! At Penny's penny prices!'

There was a huge rush on opening day. The shop was crammed with customers and two of the customers were Ginger and Pickles. Ginger bought some dried fish and Pickles bought some cream crackers. 'It was a shame we had to close our shop,' said Pickles.

'Yes, a terrible shame,' Ginger replied, admiring some mice on the biscuit jars. Then he narrowed his eyes and whispered, 'I can't help wishing that we'd eaten our customers after all...'