Little Tales from Beatrice’s Writing Desk

A Door That Wasn’t There



Told by Miss Beatrice Pennyfeather

A story by Effie Moss

My dear reader,

I was on my way home to put the kettle on when I noticed a door at the foot of an old tree.

It was purple.

This was not, in itself, unusual. I approve of purple.

What concerned me was that I had passed this particular tree yesterday, and there had been no door at all.

I set down my basket.

“Good afternoon,” I said.

Nothing happened.

I knocked.

From somewhere inside came a scraping sound, followed by a small thud.

Then a note slid underneath the door.

Please come back yesterday.

I read it twice.

“I’m afraid I have already been yesterday,” I explained. “You weren’t here.”

There was a pause.

The note was pulled back inside.

I waited.

A second note appeared.

Tomorrow, then.

Now, I am generally an agreeable mouse. But I had put down my basket, and something inside this tree was clearly having difficulty.

"Is everything quite all right?"

A sound rather like a sigh came through the keyhole.

Then another note.

The door is stuck.

I examined it carefully.

There was a brass handle, a very small letterbox and a doormat which read:

Do wipe your paws.

A respectable establishment.

I gave the handle a gentle turn.

The door moved a little, then stopped.

On the other side, something rustled.

"Is there anything behind it?" I asked.

Silence.

Then:

Possibly.

"What sort of possibly?"

The reply took rather longer.

Post.

I sat down on my basket.

I know about post.

"Have you been putting it behind the door?"

Only temporarily.

"How long is temporarily?"

A folded scrap emerged.

Since spring.

I considered this.

"Perhaps you might move some of it."

There followed several minutes of shuffling, scraping and the unmistakable sound of somebody discovering an envelope they had been looking for.

At last, the door opened.

Only a crack.

A small paw reached out and placed a cup of tea on the step.

Then a saucer with a biscuit.

"Thank you," I said.

The paw disappeared.

I could see very little inside, except a warm light and enough envelopes to keep a person occupied until Christmas.

“I’m Beatrice,” I offered.

A note appeared beside my biscuit.

Yes. We were hoping you would come.

I looked at the tree.

Then at the note.

This was a rather different matter from a stuck door.

Before I could ask anything further, a breeze stirred the branches overhead. I turned to rescue my napkin.

When I looked back, the door had gone.

There was only bark.

And my tea.

And the biscuit, which I had already begun.

I finished it sitting beneath the tree.

It seemed a shame to waste a perfectly good welcome, even if I wasn’t quite certain who had offered it.

Tomorrow, I shall take the same path.

I may bring a few empty letter trays.

Yours,

Miss Beatrice Pennyfeather

P.S. I did wipe my paws. It seemed wise to make a good first impression.