

Hetty the Hen
by Donna Mann



Hetty scratched in the farm lane way. “This is too hard,” she said. “Besides, everybody can see me.” She had explored every corner, or thought she had.

Hetty was ready to lay her eggs and she didn’t want to be seen. But, where could she go?

She strutted over to the cedar hedge and scratched a little bit in the soft earth. “This is out of sight. Nobody would see me here. But if it rained, I’d get wet.”

Who could she ask? She needed to find a safe, dry and secret place to lay her eggs.

She ran down to the barn yard. Jack and Dolly Donkey would know. They were standing, looking over the field and nodded their heads as Hetty came near.

“Hi Jack and Dolly,” Hetty said. “I’m looking for a good place to lay my eggs. It’s spring time and I’m getting ready.”

Dolly looked at Jack and then nodded to Hetty. “I know a special place for you,” she said. “My stall in the barn has a manger. You’d be perfectly safe there. It’s quiet and dry. Nobody would bother you there.”

“But, you might forget I’m there and . . . oh, I can’t bear to think of that,” Hetty said. “No, that would not be a good place for me.”

“I wouldn’t bother you,” Dolly said, “but if you’re worried about that, we’ll help you find another place. Why don’t you go and ask Jenny Wren. She always knows lots of places to lay her eggs.”

Hetty the Hen scurried over to the tree where Jenny sat on a branch with a twig in her beak. “Happy Spring, Jenny. I’m looking for a place to lay my eggs. Do you have a good idea?”

“Hi Hetty. It’s nice to see you,” Jenny said. “You’re welcome to come up here with me. There’s a fine view from these branches.” She fluttered onto another branch.

“But, I don’t know how to climb a tree and I don’t think I could learn how,” Hetty said. “That would not be a good place for me. Do you have more ideas?”

“Let me see.” Jenny turned around on the branch to look both ways and fluffed her feathers. “Hmm. You could go down to the bridge and ask the Trolls. They know everything.”

“It’s a long way for me to walk down to the bridge.” Hetty said. “I know Bob would help. He’s a good troll . . . but no, I think I’ll keep looking myself. Thanks, Hetty.”

On her way back to the barn, Hetty noticed Stormy, the house cat, sitting on the stone path, warming herself. Hetty wasn’t good friends with Stormy, but then again, Stormy had never hurt her. Maybe Hetty would ask her if she knew a safe, dry and secret place to lay her eggs.

“Good morning, Stormy,” Hetty said as she picked in the gravel for some bugs. “The sun is warm today.”

“What are you doing up at the house?” Stormy asked. “Aren’t you a barn hen?”

“I guess I am, but I often go pecking in the garden and flower beds,” Hetty replied. “There are new bugs over there.”

“Well, you never come in the house,” Stormy said.

“No, of course not; I never come in the house.” Hetty snickered. “Have you ever known a house hen? That would not be a good place for me.” She hopped closer to Stormy. “Do you know of a safe, dry, secret place where I can lay my eggs?”

Stormy tilted her head to one side as if to think. “Well, my house friends don’t call me ‘Stormy the Watch Cat’ for nothing. I know everything that goes on around here. Follow me and I’ll show you the perfect place.

Stormy strutted down the stone path toward the barn, holding her tail straight and tall behind her.

“No! No! Wait! I’ve been down to the barn,” Hetty called out, as she scurried along behind Stormy. “I already asked Jack and Dolly.”

Stormy turned her head a little and shouted back to Hetty, “Come on. They’ve never been up here. They wouldn’t know about this place.”

Hetty followed Stormy into the top part of the barn. They ran through long pipes and old ladders. Around old pieces of furniture, bales of hay and boxes of junk, they trotted.

Finally, Stormy stopped and said, “There you go, Hetty! Have your pick. My house friend doesn’t use these anymore, but now that you’re here, they’ll find you and bring you fresh water.”

Much to Hetty’s surprise, three long rows of chicken pens sat piled along the wall “This is perfect. It’s safe, dry and secret - and there’ll be lots of new bugs. This is a good place for me.”

Stormy laughed and turned in circles. “And the sun even shines in through the cracks in those barn boards. I’ll go now. See you out in the yard.”

Hetty immediately jumped up into a wooden pen, fluffed the straw up around her and settled down to rest. Soon she began to lay her eggs . . . one, two, three, four, five, six brown eggs lay nestled in the yellow straw over the next five days. Hetty moved away to look at them. They were beautiful. She was very proud of herself. Now she must sit on them to keep them warm.

Hetty moved into a comfortable position and spread herself over her eggs. The sun went down and the moon came up. Hetty sat. And then the moon came up and the sun went down. Hetty sat. Every day she went out to the linking water hose and got a drink. Every day she went out and pecked the earth to get some fresh bugs and the barn floor for small pieces of corn. But, mostly Hetty sat on her eggs. Day after day, she patiently kept her eggs warm and safe, turning them gently with her beak.

Exactly twenty-five days later, she felt movement beneath her. She heard the sound of cracking, and then the happy sound of ‘Chirp, Chirp’. Hetty moved to the side of her nest. Her eggs were breaking open and her little chicks were beginning to talk.

The chicks grew, ran around in circles and sometimes hopped up on Hetty’s back. Soon they wanted to leave the nest and go with Hetty when she went to get water and to the yard for food. She would show them how to drink and what to eat.



“Happy Spring,” Hetty called as she strutted past Jack and Dolly Donkey, Jenny the Wren and Stormy, the Watch-Cat. “Thanks for your help. I managed it.” Hetty looked back and watched her six little chicks scurrying along behind. They looked so busy, Hetty was sure they had many places to explore.

Food for Thought: I’m glad you listened to this story. Have you ever had trouble making a decision? Maybe you just didn’t know the right thing to do. Decisions are hard to make sometimes, aren’t they? Hetty was careful, wasn’t she? She didn’t accept the first option. She was afraid she might lose a piece of herself. She didn’t consider an unthinkable option because she didn’t want to spend forever trying to do something she wasn’t created to do. She was very protective of herself. I think she looked for signs of care, interest and a genuine helping spirit before she decided. She knew her choice might affect the rest of her life as well as the future of her babies.

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