

Mr Luggie Tatters and the Terrible Trouble at Forevergreen Farm

Margaret Kennedy

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The barnyard antics that fill the middle grade novel Mr. Luggie Tatters and the Terrible Trouble at Forevergreen Farm are overseen by a lovable canine leader.

In Margaret Kennedy's boisterous middle grade novel *Mr. Luggie Tatters and the Terrible Trouble at Forevergreen Farm*, an affable mongrel helps his animal friends solve problems.

The story takes place midsummer, on a farm in Ireland with a coffee shop that's open to tourists. When Luggie, a former stray, is first introduced, his stomach is full of table scraps from visitors to the farm; he is about to take a nap in his "happy place." But then his friend Sissy, a beautiful white cat, alerts him to the arrival of new chickens on the farm. Luggie is expected to welcome them. One of the chickens, a cockerel dubbed Rott Weiler, begins terrorizing the other animals; Luggie must mediate. In a slapstick moment, the chicken grabs onto Luggie's ear and sends him flying into the rafters of the barn.

Luggie's challenges include presiding over a meeting of all of the farm animals, including Marsha Mallow the cow, Giddy the gander, Sparky the sparrow, Professor Badger, and Titanium the Clydesdale. They discuss animal dilemmas, as when a pond-dwelling alligator who thinks he's a duck wonders why everyone is terrified of him. However, such important agendas are interrupted by general barnyard chaos: Luggie's careful leadership is impeded by the animals' jokes and tangents. Although his fellow farm-dwelling creatures are said to revere Luggie, their refusal to settle down, even during an emergency meeting, frustrates the plot's progression. Nonetheless, Luggie comes up with clever solutions to all the problems he faces.

Though brief, the book is busy with activity and characters. In addition to the farm animals, there are seals, puffins, and other wildlife for Luggie to interact with; all seem to coexist in a kind of peaceable kingdom. Their actions are limited in part because they are a chatty bunch, filling the chapters with banter. The humans around them are mentioned but remain in the book's background; they don't intervene in animal affairs and are not fleshed out.

The prose focuses on humor and fun, though its diction sometimes exceeds its audience's reach, as with a reference to hangovers. In general, though, the animals' antics are aimed at engaging the attention of a young audience. Detailed black-and-white drawings featuring the menagerie follow the text, fleshing out the farm setting in general terms without directly relating to particular scenes.

A surprising turn of events sets up a potential sequel to the middle grade novel *Mr. Luggie Tatters and the Terrible Trouble at Forevergreen Farm*, whose barnyard antics are overseen by a lovable canine leader.

SUZANNE KAMATA (February 8, 2024)

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