

# Gatopato and Princess Molinda

— Maria Elena Walsh, translated and adapted by Manuela di Mattei

*This story, by Argentine author Maria Elena Walsh, was translated by Sunbridge Early Childhood student Manuela di Mattei to share a story reflecting diversity and multi-culturalism. Some Spanish words are maintained in the translation to preserve its cultural origin. Gatopato presents a sweet picture of rejection and then celebrated affirmation of differences with warmth, sensitivity, and a bit of humor.*

Once, in the forest of Gulubú, a Gatopato appeared.

How was it? Well, with a duck's beak and a cat's tail. With a bit of feathers and a bit of fur. And it had four legs, but on all four it wore duck shoes.

How did it speak?

Monday, Wednesday and Friday it said "meow."

Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday it said "quack."

And on Sundays? On Sundays Gatopato was turulato without knowing what to say.

On a hot morning Gatopato wanted to take a bath and went to the Gulubú Lagoon. The ducks didn't welcome Gatopato very nicely.

"What is this?" said the ducks. "A duck with a cat's tail?"

And since it was Monday, Gatopato answered, "meow."

Just imagine! Can you imagine?

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The ducks gathered in a flock and kindly asked Gatopato to leave, because cats often hurt ducklings.

So Gatopato very quietly left, because if it protested, it would say another “meow.”

Gatopato walked to a corner of the forest where all the cats were in assembly under the sun. And as Gatopato greeted them by saying “meow,” they let Gatopato stay with them for a while, but not without stopping to stare at their visitor with distrust.

Poor Gatopato felt very uncomfortable among such distinguished people and spent many days completely turulato, crying inside of a zapato.

Until one afternoon Princess Molinda passed through the forest, all dressed in silks, and saw Gatopato crying without consolation inside a shoe.

“What a beautiful Gatopato!” said the princess.

“Do I really look beautiful to you?” asked Gatopato.

“Why, yes, hermoso!” replied the princess.

“Yet, here in the forest no one loves me,” lamented Gatopato.

“If you want, I can love you,” said the princess.

“Yes, I want you to love me! As long as you want me to want you to love me,” replied Gatopato.

“I do want you to want me to love you! I wanted a Gatopato in the palace for years!” And she delicately picked him up, pampered him, and took him to the palace, where Gatopato played, worked, studied, and married a wise Gatapata. The princess took care of the entire Gatapatil family, giving them rich tapioca porridge with chantilly cream every day. And they lived happily in the palace up to the age of 99 and more. ♦

**Translator’s note:**

I tried my best to be truthful to the words but wasn’t completely exact. I added or took out some words, changed some others to fit the English language, and made decisions on where to leave in or insert Spanish words.

**Maria Elena Walsh** (1930-2011) Argentine poet, novelist, musician, playwright, feminist, writer, composer, and activist, fought for human rights through her songs and stories during the Dirty War (civic-military dictatorship of Argentina between 1976-1983). She is best known for her songs and books for children, including the most popular children’s songs and books in Argentina.

**Manuela de Mattei** is currently a student in the Sunbridge Early Childhood teacher training course. A native of Argentina, she is Parent-Child teacher at the Harbor Waldorf School in Sag Harbor, NY. She delighted her classmates with her translation and adaptation of “Gatopato.” She is also the busy mother of five children.