



Inside *TURKEY TOT*

A Conversation with Debut Illustrator:

JENNIFER K. MANN

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Q: What makes this book special to you? What important message do you feel it brings to young readers?

A: I love *Turkey Tot*'s absolute optimism and ingenuity in the face of skepticism and doubt. He never gives up! And he is generous toward his doubting friends.

Q: What was your favorite book growing up?

A: The first book I really fell in love with was *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. I stepped right into that book and it was so real to me, I felt sure I would find a wardrobe that opened into a magical world too—and I looked!

Q: What is your favorite memory from childhood?

A: We used to rent an old farmhouse in Vermont for ski weekends. I have a warm memory of being a very small child, required to “go to bed,” which was a daybed in the kitchen/main room. I lay there listening to the sounds of my siblings (all four of them) playing *Monopoly* late into the night at the table across the room.

Q: Do you have any pets? If so, which one is your favorite?

A: I have two dogs, three cats, and five chickens. I love them all equally, but the dogs and cats are a little more snuggly than the chickens, so maybe they get a little more special treatment.

Q: What inspired you to write/illustrate and when did you know you would become an illustrator?

A: I have always loved to draw, through childhood and beyond. I knew I would become an author/illustrator when I had children and was reading to them from so many beautiful children's books. Finally an outlet for my love of art and writing!

Q: If there is one thing you could tell your readers about life, what would you say?

A: Trust yourself to know what makes you feel joy! Make it your job—it will make work feel like play!

“Did You Know?”

Q: Name three of your favorite children’s book authors of all time.

A: John Burningham, E. B. White, and Elsa Homelund Minarik

Q: What books have you most wanted to read but haven’t yet?

A: Most of the classics, especially those written prior to 1920.

Q: What book from your childhood changed your life? Adulthood?

A: From childhood, *The Catcher in the Rye*; from adulthood, Cormac McCarthy’s *All the Pretty Horses*.

Q: If you could live in any book, which would it be?

A: *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.

Q: If you could have a magical talent, what would it be?

A: Oh, I have dreams of flying—I would love that, but also, I always wanted to go into that space that you see when two mirrors on opposite walls reflect each other—magic lurks there!

Q: What is your favorite food? Has it changed since childhood?

A: Avocados! And also chocolate! I don’t think I loved avocados as a child.

Q: What food did you hate growing up but came to love in adulthood?

A: Beets!

Q: Who was your hero growing up? Who is it now?

A: I remember feeling that Helen Keller was the most amazing “real” person I had ever read about. The fact that she could do what she wanted despite her severe disabilities—what an impression that made on me. I think she still is my hero.