



The Ugly Duckling

By Hans Christian Anderson

1

It was a beautiful day in the country. The sun was shining and the birds were singing.

Close by the canal a duck sat on her eggs. She had been sitting on them a long time.

One by one the eggs cracked open.

“CRACK” ... “CRACK” ... “CRACK”

“How big the world is,” said the ducklings as they waddled around.

2

But one egg remained in the nest. It was very large.

“Why is it taking so long?” said the mother duck.

“It’s a turkey egg,” said one of her friends. “Leave it. Take the other ducklings away with you.”

“Oh I couldn’t. Just a little while longer.” And she sat on the egg.

At last, the egg broke, and out tumbled...

A very odd looking creature. It was big and grey and ugly.

“What a funny looking duckling,” said the mother duck.

3

The next day, the mother duck took her children to the canal.

To her surprise, the ugly duckling jumped in with all the others, and swam around happily.

But back in the fowl yard, the other ducks were not pleased.

“What is that?” they asked.

“It’s my newest duckling. He is very good. He swims as well as the others – maybe better.”

“But my dear, he is so ugly!”

They all laughed.

4

Worse than that, some of them pecked at him and called him names. After a few days, even his brothers and sisters turned on him.

“Go away,” they hissed, “you ugly duckling.”

So the little duckling ran away.

He found himself at a lake. On it were a number of wild ducks.

“Oh gosh,” they said, “you are ugly. But you can stay with us, if you wish.”

5

All was well for a few days. Then one day

BANG ... BANG ... BANG

Hunters have arrived. They were shooting at the ducks.

A big dog jumped at the ugly duckling.

WOOF!

The little duckling ran away as fast as he could.

At last he found a lake. All on his own, he swam around.

6

Time went by. It grew colder.

One evening, as the sun was setting, a flock of white birds flew overhead. They were very beautiful, with long slender necks.

“Oh how I wish I was one of them,” said the ugly duckling.

Winter came on. It was bitterly cold.

The duckling was starving. He was so cold he could not feel his flippers.

Ice covered the pond.

The ugly duckling hid under a bush, trying to keep warm.

7

One day, a farmer found him.

“I’ll take you home for my children,” he said.

Inside the farmer’s house, the duckling felt better. But the children were rough.

And when he knocked over a pail of milk, the farmer’s wife yelled out at him, and tried to hit him with a broom.

Once more, the duckling ran away, back into the wild.

8

The snows came.

But the duckling was stronger now. And somehow he kept on. As time went on, he grew stronger, and bigger.

The sun started shining again.

The leaves came out on the trees. Spring had come at last. Birds came back after the winter.

And one day, three beautiful white birds landed on the lake where he lived.

“They’re beautiful,” he said. “I will go to them.

But then he remembered that he was ugly.

“They will probably kill me,” he said. “After all, the hens picked on me. And the children. And the farmer’s wife.”

9

He swam towards the white birds.

They turned. They came towards him.

“Please do not kill me,” he said. “I know I am ugly. But please be kind to me.”

But as he stopped, he looked down. He saw his reflection in the water.

He could not believe his eyes. He was like them. He was a swan.

10

“You are one of us,” they said. “Welcome.”

They swam around him and stroked him with their bills.

On the shore, the children cried out, “Look! There is a young swan.
And he is the most beautiful of all!”

He hid his head under his wing with pleasure.

Then he raised his head up and said, “Never have I been so happy.”

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