

The Ugly Duckling

Will the ugly duckling find a place where he belongs?

Once upon a time, a duck sat on her eggs waiting for them to hatch. At last the eggs began to crack and, one by one, the ducklings appeared. Five beautiful fluffy ducklings, and then one large grey one.

"Oh! What a peculiar duckling," said the mother duck.

The next day, the mother duck took her babies to the pond to teach them how to swim and to meet the other ducks.

"What's wrong with your baby?" asked one of the ducks, cruelly. The ugly duckling was very sad, so he crept away.

The poor, little ugly duckling ran far away from the duck pond.

He ran over fields and through woods.

He was alone and everywhere he went, all the animals said, "How big and ugly you are!"

One morning, a flock of beautiful swans flew overhead. "I wish I was like that," the little duckling sighed sadly to himself. He was cold, wet and very miserable.

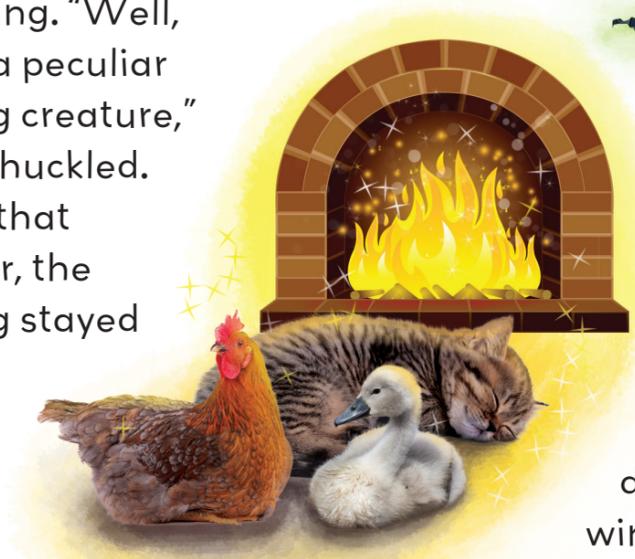
Then one evening, the little duckling saw the warm glow of some lights from a cottage. There was a gap under the door just big enough for him to creep inside.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed an old lady coming down for breakfast the next morning. On the kitchen floor, she found the cold, hungry little duckling. "Well, you're a peculiar looking creature," she chuckled.

All that winter, the duckling stayed with the old woman, the cat and the hen but as spring came, he knew he should go.

One spring morning, he woke up in the reeds by the waters' edge. The duckling spread his wings and realised that they were now big and strong.

He could fly! Rising into the air, the duckling looked down and saw three beautiful swans.



He flew down to look at them. But as he landed, the lonely bird saw his reflection in the water. He wasn't an ugly duckling at all! During the winter, he had grown into a beautiful swan!

The other swans looked up. "Hello," they said shyly, for they saw a handsome, graceful bird. "Please come with us." And he did!

