

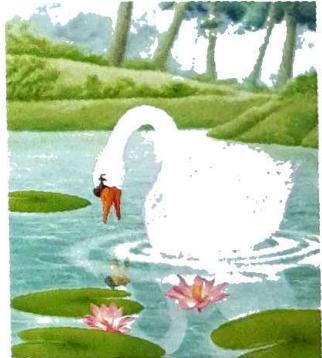
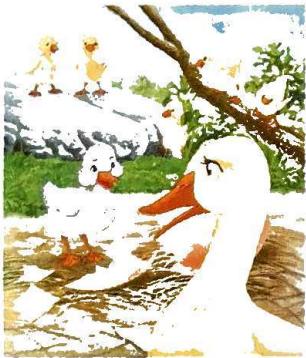


The Ugly Duckling





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Retold by June Chiang



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It was a very warm summer. A mother duck sat on her nest. She was waiting for her six eggs to hatch.

Soon the eggs began to crack. One by one the ducklings poked their yellow heads out. The mother duck was delighted. Then she saw that the sixth and biggest egg had still not hatched.





She sat on the big egg again and waited. Very soon she heard a loud crack. She looked at the egg and saw a grey head appearing. Then out came a big, grey, ugly duckling!

“Oh, dear,” said the mother duck. “What an ugly duckling!”

The other ducklings looked at him and said, “He doesn’t look like us. We don’t want to play with him!”





The ugly duckling was very sad. He could not understand why no one liked him. He waddled after the other ducklings to the pond. But they said to him, “Go play by yourself!”

As the ugly duckling sat by the pond, tears filled his eyes. He looked into the pond and for the first time, saw his own reflection.

“Aargh! I am really ugly!” he said. “What am I to do now?”

The ugly duckling then decided to run away. “I must go and hide somewhere. I am too ugly to stay here.”





The ugly duckling ran and ran until he came to a farm. There he met some geese that said to him, "You're funny-looking." Then they laughed at him.

The poor ugly duckling felt sadder than ever. He was cold and hungry, and had nowhere to go. He walked slowly as he had no energy left in him.





It was getting dark when the duckling saw a cottage. It was a very old cottage. He walked towards it. The door to the cottage was open. The duckling crept into the cottage and fell asleep on the floor.

The next morning a plump woman found the duckling. "You can stay here if you like," she said. "You can give me duck eggs!"





The ugly duckling was happy to have found a home at last. But the other farm animals did not like him. "You're ugly," they said to him. "And you have not laid any eggs."

"What can you do?" they asked him.

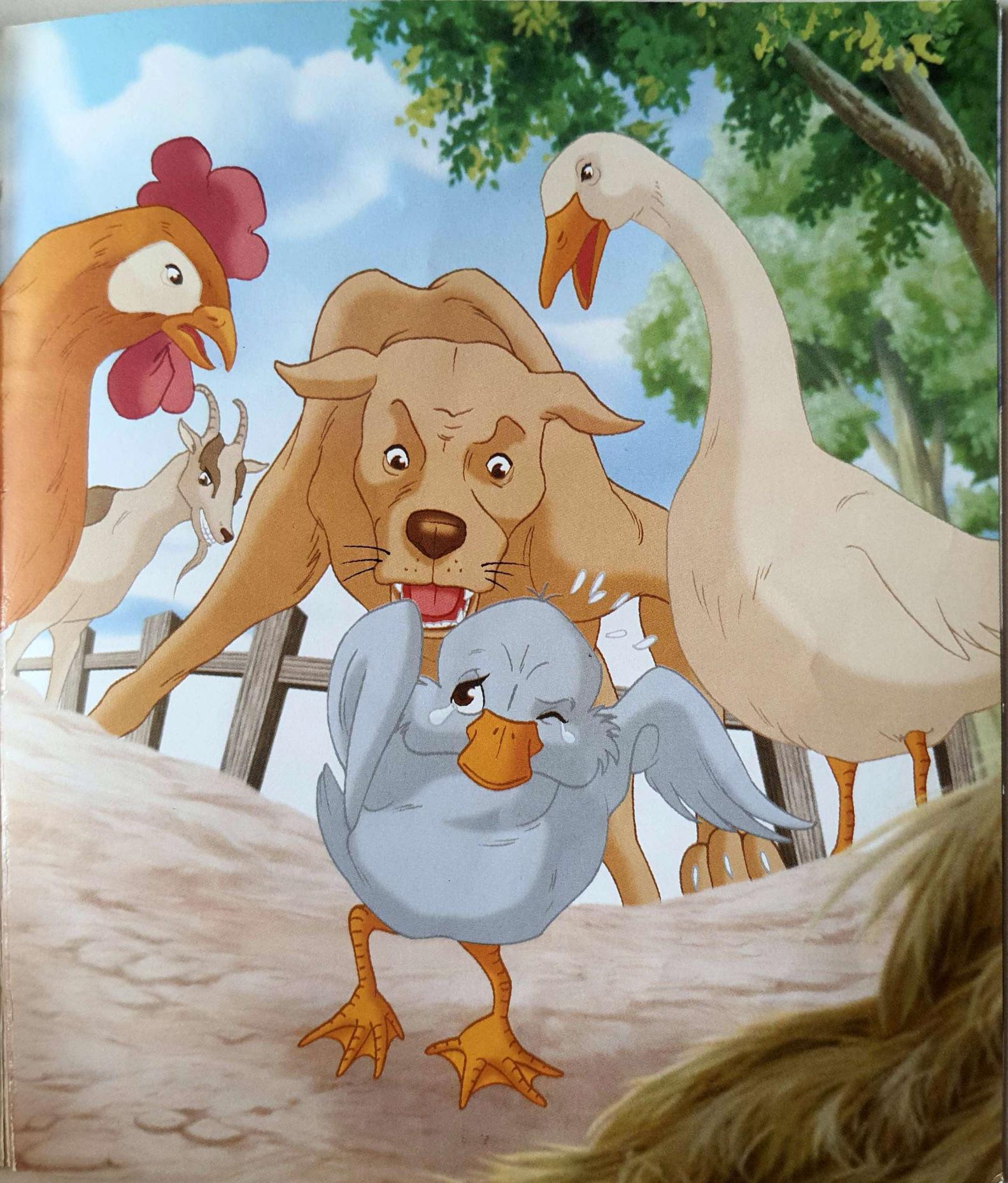
"Can you crow?" asked the cock.

"No," replied the duckling.

"Can you bark?" asked the dog.

"Er, no," said the duckling softly.

"Well, he can't do anything!" said all the animals. Then they laughed at him.





The ugly duckling once again felt sad and unwanted. Once more, he ran away. He walked in the marshes and swam on the pond. But wherever he went, all the animals said to him, "How ugly you are!"

Winter was coming soon. The ground was getting hard and cold. There was very little food to eat. The duckling found himself getting weaker and weaker. He was soon so weak that he fell flat on the cold ground.





That evening a kind farmer who was going home found the duckling. He took pity on him and brought him home. As the days passed, the duckling grew stronger. Soon he was well enough to move around the farmhouse.

The farmer's dog wanted to play with the duckling. He enjoyed chasing the duckling all over the house. The duckling was very frightened of the big sheepdog. So he ran away again.





The duckling once again roamed the marshes in the cold winter. The duckling knew that he had to find a safe place to hide until winter was over.

Soon he found some reeds in the marsh. He hid there until he felt the warmth of the spring sun again.

As the duckling came out of his hiding place, he looked up and saw a flock of birds flying above him. They were the most beautiful birds he had ever seen. They were big and strong. Their feathers were as white as snow.

“If only I could be as beautiful,” wished the ugly duckling.





The ugly duckling stretched his wings after the long winter and flapped them. But before he knew it, he found himself lifted from the ground. His wings had grown big and strong during the winter. Soon he found himself flying.





As he lowered himself onto a pond, he saw his reflection on the water. Was he surprised! He had become like one of those beautiful birds. His wish had come true.

During the winter, he had grown into a swan. He then realised that he was never a duckling after all!

