



Five Little Ducks

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Humor, Retold Fairy Tales

On the lake, at 3am, a feeling of tranquillity came upon the landscape. A warm gentle springtime breeze tickled at the bubbling waters. The lapping waves giggled foam in response as they crept up the muddy bank. The young squalls attempted to play the same trick on the tall grasses nearby, but they simply bent down to avoid being bruised and felled. This disturbed the crickets from their chorus of songs, lullabies for the sleeping creatures and hymns for the foragers of the night.

No sooner had the winds died down, when the sweet-sounding crickets retook their places in the Insectoid Orchestra. They resumed their calling songs of Stridulation as if nothing had happened, for in many ways it hadn't, not yet anyway. On and on the song of anticipation resounded, over the lake leading the nocturnal in the interaction of predator and prey. Then with no other warning than the chill on the breeze that heralded its arrival, the sun began to stir from its nest beyond the horizon, teasing the sky with the possibility of dawn. Sensing the earliness of the hour, and thus the lateness to them, the Chorus of Crickets retired to their own dwellings, making room for the birds to begin their vibrant day-time songs.

The song of one bird spilled into the song of another. This song in turn harmonised with another, and another, and soon a hundred more, until the dark uncertain shadows of the night were chased away by the feathered psalmists of the morning and their melodies of hope for a brand-new day. The dark shapes retreated from the shuddering cold and blackness to their hidden places and secret sanctuaries. They would not be seen or heard from again until the following night.

As the sun continued to awaken, and in turn roused all of those who had awaited its arrival during the night, the welcoming rays stretched out across the lake. The waters glistened with treasure all their own. Multitudes

of dormant flowers stirred from their own slumber and yawned open in the presence of daybreak. They embraced the delights of light and life again. The chrysanthemum breathed deep sighs of relief, blossoming further with each exhale. The roses blinked open in the ever brightening day. The orchids unfurled one after the other, exposing tongues of pollen and seeds. The sunlight soon touched the lilies that blossomed in response to the reinvigorating kiss of day. From each buoyant blossom there emerged delicate, ornately winged creatures, yawning and stretching in the morning sun.

Each of these fairy folk, for that is what they were, stepped out from the unique bloom which had been their bed for the night to survey the lake which was their home. Then each and every one of them spread fair wings and one by one, took flight to the roles that they must play in the brand new day.

The last fairy to emerge was Brian. He spread his wings and flew to the nearby water's edge, reached up to pull down a reed and plucked off a drip of dew from the blade. He drank the pleasant purity from the morning dew and looked at the reflection of the sun dancing on the water. Was that the time already? He couldn't be late on his first day of egg watching! He headed for the marshes, weaving between foliage to avoid the flying creatures of the lake now busily pollenating the wide-awake flowers. He spotted the shiny green wings of his superior waiting for him on the shore of the lake but it was too late. Brian came to an abrupt meeting with Miss Thorn, knocking her off her feet in an unexpected crash.

'Well, you've certainly cut it close, haven't you?' Miss Thorn belted out to him derisively after she regained her composure.

'I'm very sorry, Miss Thorn,' Brian said bowing in respect, 'it won't happen again.'

'See that it doesn't,' Miss Thorn said in disciplinary tones, 'You already know how I feel about having to supervise you. You can't afford any more mistakes on your record. Now, on to business.'

Miss Thorn pointed to a rather large and intimidatingly annoyed mother duck sitting on a nest of five white eggs waiting to hatch.

'Your job is to protect these eggs while she's away. If anything goes wrong with just one of these eggs, I swear to Mother Nature, I will eat you alive myself before the duck has a chance to.'

With those words, Miss Thorn spread green translucent wings and flew into the springtime skies.

The expectant mother duck said quack quack quack quack (ducks don't really say very much as a rule) and made her way into the lake where she paddled out among the water lilies and pond weed in search of food.

There was nothing for Brian to do but wait for her to return.

The young fairy was worn out from his morning flight around the water's edge to the nest which was his post. Places to rest were few, so he settled himself down next to one of the warm eggs to take in the scenery around him. As he laid back to survey the sky he watched the clouds slowly drift by, like white fluffy continents on a breezy ocean. Brian was washed over by the large shadows of porcelain swans flying gracefully in their search for nourishment.

His meditations were abruptly interrupted. The egg that he was leaning upon slipped out from behind him. He jumped up helplessly, only to witness the egg as it rolled down the slope of the bank and gently into the lake. 'Oh no!'

Desperately Brian looked at the water's edge and saw that the egg was floating down the stream. Desperately, Brian flew down after it, but even straining every translucent scale in his wings, he couldn't catch up to it. Just as soon as he could lay a finger on it, the course of the river pulled it away from him. Even worse, the stream was heading towards rapids in the stream that threatened to destroy the egg with the many stony teeth protruding from the riverbed. Brian flew as hard and as fast as he possibly could, but he still couldn't get his hands round the egg. The waters of the river were churning and turning so rapidly, that the little fairy could not catch up, until finally with a quivering and quaking, a shivering and a shaking, a buffeting and a battering, a clobbering and a clattering.

Down! The egg was lost beneath the water. He searched frantically around the marsh for any signs of the egg that he had lost, but alas he found none. He flew anxiously, left, right, up, down and in between the cat tails that crowned the marsh. That's when he saw it. Popping up out of the water like a champagne cork. It was the egg! After all of that searching! The egg landed alone on a bird-forsaken nest of twigs and reeds out in the middle of the lake, Wedged in between a clutch of other eggs. Thinking quickly, Brian plucked a nearby lily pad to use as a makeshift raft.

Brian weaved through the undergrowth to ensure no-one saw him. It was heavy work rolling the egg onto his raft and pulling it back to the duck's nest but he did it just as the mother duck was returning from her rather successful foraging expedition. The expectant mother sat on her nest as if nothing had happened. That night, as the sky was covered with a blanket of constellations, and Brian was covered with a dome of petals, he felt a sense of pride he hadn't felt for a long time. Sure, he had lost an egg underwater a couple of inches from the nest, but he replaced it with Nobody the wiser.

‘No harm, no fowl, as they say. ‘ Said Brian to himself, ‘After all, what’s the worst thing that could happen?’ ‘

Mother duck left her nest one day,
one of her eggs soon rolled away,
out of the nest and into the water,
with one little fairy, fluttering after.
One little fairy found the egg in a nest,
over the rocks and under the crest,
he saved an egg, a job well done,
but tinkle my bells, he took the wrong one.

Five little ducks were born one day,
Over the marsh and far away,
Four little ducks were golden as day,
but the last little duck was ugly and grey.

One little duck suffered great abuse.
Mocked by the mallards, and pecked by the goose,
until, suffering all that she could take,
she took her leave of the duckling lake.

One little duck went out that day,
over the hills and faraway.
Mother duck said “quack, quack, quack, quack.”
But the ugly duckling vowed to never come back.

One ugly duckling began to roam,
desperately searching for a brand-new home.
She made some friends, many enemies to.
But hid away, lonely, the whole winter through.

The ugly duckling woke up in the spring,

And was greeted with the strangest thing.

White feathers, red feet, dark eyes, large wings,
and an elegant beak that never sings.

One little duck, not like before,
spread her wings and began to soar.

Into the clouds, and over the trees,
carried on the winds, by a warm morning breeze.

One strange bird, swooped down from the air,
and thousands of ducks did stop and stare.

For the ugliest duckling to look upon,
Had now grown up into the most beautiful swan.

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