

Ducks Really are Lucky

I have always loved ducks, from the moment I could talk. This moment consisted of my mom asking my one year old self, "What does a cow say?" No response from me. "What does a sheep say?" she tried again, hoping another animal would do the trick. I stayed stubbornly silent. She sighed, finally trying, "What does a duck say?"

"Duck!" I cried, and there the moment came, my first word. I mean, the correct answer would have been "quack," but hey, I was one, so speaking at all was impressive.

From then on, I cherished those little lovely waddling birds. Mum and I would walk to the lake, sit at the dock and watch the ducks fly in. Their landings were always a grand entrance into the water, as they created a gigantic splash before joining their families and swimming off quietly and gracefully.

Why are ducks my favorite? Well, they can fly, walk, and swim; not many birds can do all three! At the fair each year, I'd look forward to holding the most adorable and innocent creatures ever, baby ducklings. I loved stroking their light silky feathers.

Those were the good days; days of carefree childhood, sitting in the peaceful setting of the lake without worries about anyone telling me I'm not working hard enough. We really were both lucky ducks.

Those times of freedom gradually ended. My first memory of pure evil was when we watched Peter and The Wolf.

"It's a great movie. It has animals, and music. You'll love it!" exclaimed my mom.

“Okay,” I replied, sitting down on the couch with her. “Oh, what a cute little duck!” I exclaimed. My mom agreed that the duck was by far the most adorable animal in the movie, with its fluffy tail feathers, tiny beady eyes, and happy little smile.

Suddenly, a wolf jumped out, and swallowed the duck whole. It happened in an instant; out of nowhere. We sat there, in shock.

“What happened?!” I cried, barely able to breath. I started to sob violently.

“I don’t remember this part!” cried my mom. “I’m so sorry.”

The waterfall of tears eventually slowed. I could finally breathe again but from that point on, I knew meanness existed. I hadn’t really experienced it for myself though.

That was about to change. Middle school happened. It was filled with mean lunch ladies, bad-mannered soccer people, stress, criticism, and teachers who placed way too much weight on my shoulders. I experienced what the duck in Peter and the Wolf experienced, but less gruesome. The duck had been swallowed up; the anxiety, pressure, and criticism had swallowed me up. The innocent duck didn’t deserve to be eaten, and torn apart by a wolf, and neither did I.

Walking home one day, I noticed a new parking lot.

“Isn’t that where a pond used to be?” I asked my mom.

“Yes! That’s terrible,” she commented.

“It was so beautiful, and ... look! Those poor ducks have to live in that grass section in the corner,” I responded.

“That’s horrible. Those certainly are not lucky ducks. People think of nothing but themselves,” she replied.

I nodded; I agreed completely. It was pathetic that someone took away the duck’s home, forcing them to cram themselves in the only tiny green space available; their original habitat destroyed. They were squashed together, struggling to survive.

They no longer had freedom to swim - their pond was gone.

They couldn’t walk - they’d get run over by a car.

They could fly, but where would they fly to? They were in the middle of the city.

Or so I thought. Even though they looked drained and weak, suddenly they all took off into the air. I couldn’t believe it. The ducks had been treated miserably, yet they wouldn’t let anyone take away their freedom.

Recently, at violin lesson, the duck motif returned. My instructor and I were talking about some angry, self-defeating criticism I had received. I asked for advice on how to deal with it. He looked outside at the creek, the water whirling and striking the rocks with fury. The rain poured, the droplets crashing down, with a single mallard duck paddling around obliviously.

“See that little duck?” he asked. “The rain is relentless and harsh, yet it is simply allowing the water to roll right off its thick layer of feathers. When defeat and criticism falls on you like rain, remember to be like a duck; let it slide right off your feathers.”

He was right. I needed to take pressure off myself that others were giving me, to let it slide off my back. I suppose ducks really are lucky; they can walk, swim, fly, and let the water roll right off their feathers.

I dedicate this story to the writing club. Quack!