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**THE BEST  
ENGLISH  
FAIRY TALES**



# **THE UGLY DUCKLING<sup>1</sup>**

**H.C. Andersen**

It was so beautiful in the country, it was summer. The fields were golden and the grass was green. There were thick forests and a lot of lakes. Yes, it was indeed lovely out there in the country.

There stood an old house with a pond around it. A duck sat on her nest. She was hatching her

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<sup>1</sup> **The Ugly Duckling** — Гадкий утенок

ducklings. She was bored. The other ducks swam in the pond and no one came to see her.

But at last the eggs began to crack, one after another.

“Peep, peep!” said the little ducklings.

“Quack, quack!” said the duck. Quick as quick can be they all went out to look at the green world. Their mother let them look, because green is good for the eyes.

“How big the world is,” said all the young ducks.

“Do you think this is the whole world?” their mother asked. “No, it is bigger, to the other side of the garden and right on into the field. **I hope you are all**

**hatched**<sup>1</sup>,” she said and she got up. “No, not quite all. The biggest egg still lies here. How much longer is this going to take? I am really tired of it all,” she said. She sat back on her nest.

“Well, how does it go?” asked an old duck. She came to visit her friend.

“It takes a long time with this egg,” said the duck on the nest. “It won’t crack, but look at the others. They are cute little ducklings!”

“Let’s have a look at the egg that won’t crack,” the old duck said. “It’s a turkey egg, and you can **take my word for it.**<sup>2</sup> What

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<sup>1</sup> **I hope you are all hatched** — Надеюсь, вы все вылупились.

<sup>2</sup> **take my word for it** — помяни моё слово

trouble I had with those turkey children. They are afraid of the water. Let me see the egg... Yes, it's a turkey egg. Let it lie, and go teach your ducklings to swim."

"Oh, I'll sit a little longer."

"As you wish," said the old duck, and she went away.

Finally the big egg cracked.

"Peep," said the young one. But he was so big and ugly.

The duck looked at him.

"That's a very big duckling," she said. "He doesn't look like the others. Can he really be a turkey baby? Well, well! We will see."

Next day the weather was nice. The mother duck led her whole family down to the pond. Splash! she went to the water.

"Quack, quack," said she, and one duckling after another jumped

in. They were all in the water. Even the big, ugly gray duckling was swimming along.

“Hm, that’s no turkey,” she said. “See how nicely he swims. He’s my son after all. He’s nice. Quack, quack, come with me. Let’s go to the duck yard. But keep close to me. And watch out for the cat!”

It was very loud in the duck yard. Two families were fighting over the head of a fish. But the cat got it.

“You see, this is the world. Can you see that old duck over there? She’s the noblest of us all. That’s why she’s so fat. Don’t turn your toes in. **A duckling turns**



**his toes way out**<sup>1</sup>, just as his father and mother do. Now say quack!”

They did as she told them. But the other ducks around them looked on and said, “Look! What an ugly duckling he is!” One duck came up to him and bit his neck.

“Let him alone,” his mother cried.

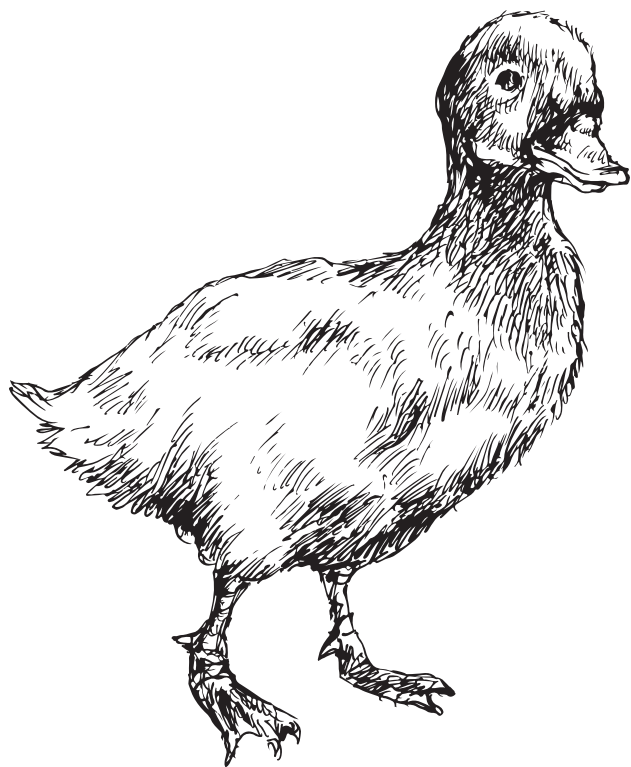
“But he’s too big and strange,” said the duck.

“What nice children you have, Mother,” said the fattest duck. “They are all pretty. But this one is not. **It’s a pity you can’t hatch him again**<sup>2</sup>.”

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<sup>1</sup> **A duckling turns his toes way out** — Утенок должен выворачивать лапки наружу

<sup>2</sup> **It’s a pity you can’t hatch him again** — Жаль, что его уже не переделать



“Your ladyship,” said the mother. “He isn’t so pretty, but he’s a good duckling. He swims very well, even a little better than my other children do. It took too long for me to hatch him. That’s why he’s so big.”

“The other ducklings are pretty,” said the old duck. “If you find a fish’s head, you may bring it to me.”

The poor duckling was very unhappy. Why was he so ugly? He was pushed about and made fun of by the ducks, and the chickens as well.

“He’s too big and ugly,” said they all.

Even his own brothers and sisters made fun of him.

“Oh,” they would always say, “we wish the cat would catch you, you ugly duckling.”

And his mother said, “I wish you were away.”

Even the girl who fed them kicked him with her foot.

So he ran away and flew over the fence. “That’s because I’m so ugly,” he thought. He ran on until he reached the great marsh. There wild ducks lived. He lay under the bush there all night long.

When morning came, the wild ducks flew up to have a look at their new companion.

“What are you? You are so ugly! Go away,” they told him.

Poor duckling! All he wanted was to lie here and drink a little water from the marsh.

There he stayed for two days. Then he met two wild geese.

“Listen,” they said, “you’re so ugly that we feel sorry for you. Come with us. There are some wild geese in the marsh.”

Bing! Bang! Shots rang in the air, and these two geese fell dead<sup>1</sup>. Bing! Bang! the shots rang. The hunters lay all around the marsh, and some even were on the branches of trees.

The bird dogs came splash, splash! through the marsh. The poor duckling was very frightened that he wanted to hide his head under his wing. But at that very moment he saw a big dog right

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<sup>1</sup> **Shots rang in the air, and these two geese fell dead** — Раздались выстрелы, и два гуся упали замертво

in front of him. It was very big with his long tongue, sharp teeth and wicked eyes. He opened his mouth, his teeth flashed, and — splash, splash — on he went. He didn't touch the duckling.

“Thank heavens,” the duckling said, “I'm so ugly that the dog won't even bite me.”

He lay still and shot after shot was fired. It was late in the day when it became quiet again. The poor duckling was afraid to move. He waited. Then he got up and ran as fast as he could. He ran across the fields and marshes.

Late in the evening he came to a little house. The wind was so strong and the poor little duckling was so weak. He noticed a crack in the door and squeezed into the room.