

UGLY DUCKLINGS

by
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SETTING

Around a pond which is in a wood, far from any human thing; morning.

CHARACTERS

Canker Weasel	lowdown, dirty, rotten, oily dude
Papa Platypus	hen pecked, slow, whining, a trifle dim
Ernest Franklin III	a stately old owl
Mrs. Pushy Tortuga	mother turtle and school marm
Softshell Tortuga	her daughter a tie-died naturalist
Mrs. Tattlina Shrew	a small, gossiping trouble maker
Mr. Prideling McBeaver	a hard dam working Scotsman
Mrs. Patty Duck	the new mother, a bit of a ding-a-ling

Baby Ducklings:

Darling	academician, teacher's pet
Starling	gifted artist, theatrical
Farling	talented at sports, competitor
Ralph	looking for his talent in life

PRODUCTION NOTES

The set's focus is the duck nest, possibly just Left of Center. It is made of hay and some sticks, raised a few feet. Up Right, the dam stretches off stage. A painted background of trees, cattails and the pond itself would be a nice compliment.

Have fun with the costumes! They, and the makeup, are an integral part of each character. The more detailed, the better!

Mrs. Shrew and Papa Platypus could be played by the same actor.

(The lights are dim. Frogs and crickets softly sing. It is a quarter till morning on The Pond when WEASEL enters, dragging a large egg behind him.)

WEASEL

What a find! Cooked with a little pond grass and butterfly wings, this egg will make a magnificent meal later this morning. (Pulling it into the Duck's nest near the other three eggs.) Ahh, the reclusive life as a weasel is grand. I takes what I finds to live off the land!

(Weasel slinks out of sight as the lights come up to full. Sounds of a forest pond can be heard waking up for the day; birds, the rustle of a brook, frogs, a light breeze...

EARNEST is all in a flutter, helping PATTY on stage to sit upon her eggs.)

ERNEST

We owls are wise but I don't know anything about hatching your duck eggs! What can I doo? What can I dooo?

PATTY

Nothing, Earnest.

ERNEST

There must be something! Can I get you a pot of hot water?

PATTY

A pot of hot water? They're going to hatch, Ernest, not be hard boiled!

ERNEST

Well how about a doctor? Can I get...

PATTY

Oh there goes another tremor!

ERNEST

Who-who! Shouldn't I get Doctor Mallard to come help, madam?

PATTY

Doctor Mallard! That quack? I wouldn't have him come within ten webbed feet of... Oh my! There's another rumble! They're on their way!

ERNEST

I'll fly to the underworld to apprehend your help, Madam!

PATTY

More matter with less art.

ERNEST

(Mrs. Duck goes through labor behind)

I'll get your friends, Mrs. Duck. The Shrew Clan and Mouse Manor and all the tasty little tidbits of Our Pond. ...And I won't eat a one of them.

PATTY

Well Get Going, For Crying Out Loud, Ernest! Go!

ERNEST

Yes. Of course, Mrs. Duck. Fare thee well, then! Fare thee well!

PATTY

(Nervously awaiting the hatching of her children,
doing her breathing exercises)

Good riddance... If only my husband were still here. (Her eggs begin to really shake,) Ohhh... Here they come! (One at a time, the three ducklings pop up, out of their eggs, looking fluffy, yellow and very cute. They yawn and stretch a little, rub eyes.) Oh, just look at my three beautiful ducklings! You're the spitting image of... Me! What should I do now? Oh, I know! Names. They need names! Let me see. (DARLING nuzzles up with PATTY) Aren't you darling. I'll name you Darling! And you have stars in your eyes. I'll call you Starling! (FARLING runs and jumps across the stage and back.) Wow! That was far. You, I'll name Farling!

DARLING

(Wearing glasses)

Being the eldest, I would like to say just how pleased we are to be here. Isn't that right, fellas?

STARLING and FARLING

Oh yes, indeed, brother. Very happy. We are very happy indeed!

DARLING

And furthermore, I believe we should get into that pond and commence with our aquatic mobility skills. Isn't that right, siblings?

STARLING and FARLING

What did he say? I don't know. What does that mean, Dude? Show off...

DARLING

Fellas. Let's get swimming!

STARLING

Oh, yeah!

FARLING

Sure! I'm there, Dudes!

DARLING

Last one in is a lame duck!

PATTY

Wait a minute! Everything's happening so fast! Your speech is so...

DARLING

intellectual?

PATTY

No...

FARLING

Resourceful, penetrating, clever...

PATTY

No...

STARLING

Imaginative, original, piquant...

PATTY

No...

DARLING

Scintillating?

PATTY

No, not that either... I know! Smart! That's the word I was looking for. Your speech is so smart. You certainly do take after my side of the family.

DARLING

Yes Mother. 'Smart' would work as well... If we were in East Oakland! Now, may we please learn to swim?

PATTY

Shouldn't we all get to know one another first?

DARLING, STARLING and FARLING

NO!

PATTY

Well, I just want to be a good mother...

DARLING

Great. We came to the right place, then, eh brothers? You can start by teaching us how to swim.

PATTY

Yes, of course. That's a nice idea, Darling. Let's go!

(They all start off towards the pond. The fourth egg begins to wriggle and struggle to get out, making muffled noise. PATTY stops to look back.)

PATTY

Dear me! We almost forgot the last egg.

STARLING

It can take care of itself, Madam. Let us go, brothers!

PATTY

Oh, no. We mustn't leave your brother, or sister, alone!

FARLING

Starling's right, Big Lady. It can take care of itself. Let's get wet, Dudes!

PATTY

Definitely not, children. We will all stay here until your brother, or sister, is hatched.

DARLING, STARLING and FARLING

(Grumbling as they sit.)

Yes, mother. We're sorry. You're right as always.

FARLING

Who wants to go swimming anyway. I mean, sheesh! We're only DUCKS!

(They all sit around the fourth egg. It becomes still for a moment then with a burst of energy, out through the shell comes its bill, wide and brown.)

PATTY

Oh my!

FARLING

A brown bill?

DARLING

How strange.

PATTY

This one must take after your father.

(Enter EARNEST, MRS. TORTUGA, SHREW and SOFTSHELL.)

EARNEST

We're almost there, everyone. If we hurry we might just see all four eggs hatch!

MRS. TORTUGA

Four eggs? That's funny. Mrs. Duck only had three eggs yesterday.

MRS. SHREW

Isn't it a shame she has to go through this ordeal alone, Mrs. Tortuga?

MRS. TORTUGA

Well, Mrs. Shrew, I'm told Patty sent her husband, Mr. Duck, out for a box of quackers one morning and that was the last she saw of him!

MRS. SHREW

Word is he flew the coop to France, of all places!

MRS. TORTUGA

He's probably paté by now!

MRS. SHREW

Mallards are all the same, Deary... Shiny colors on the outside...

MRS. TORTUGA and MRS. SHREW

...And dull on the inside!

(The two share a brief interlude of laughter.)

ERNEST

Excuse me, Mrs. Tortuga, but didn't you have three eggs of your own? Where are your other newly hatched?

SOFTSHELL

I'm the only one that made it!

MRS. SHREW

What?

ERNEST

The only one?

MRS. TORTUGA

Two weeks ago Weasel found my nest and before I knew it, made off with two of my unhatched eggs!

MRS. SHREW

Oh, I am so sorry, Deary!

ERNEST

Weasel is a thug!

MRS. TORTUGA

He's pond scum beneath my shell!

MRS. SHREW

The rotten devil!

MRS. TORTUGA

When I had that rascal in my class at school, he was a handful, believe you me, Deary. Typical of mammals, I might add!

SOFTSHELL

Typical!

MRS. SHREW

And just what do you mean by that, Deary?

STARLING

Stand back. Here comes some more!

(Then out through the opposite end comes its tail, flat,
brown and with skin!)

DARLING, STARLING and FARLING

OH, MY!

PATTY

What? What's the matter? Is something the matter with my baby?

FARLING

Are ducklings supposed to have skin on their tails?

PATTY

Skin! Did you say skin?

STARLING

You heard him correctly, Madam. And there's some really scruffy fur attached as well!

PATTY

FUR! That's impossible! Mammals have fur and we're NOT mammals!... That's your father's side for sure! Oh... (She faints. Her sons rush to her aid.)

(Enter MR. MCBEAVER, racing past EARNEST, MRS. TORTUGA and SOFTSHELL.)

EARNEST

Hello, my good man. Are you here to watch the hatching?

McBEAVER

(Speaking in a broad Scottish accent)

Can't be bothered with chit chat now, Ernest. Got a dozen leaks to fill before noon! (Exit)

ERNEST

But we're witnessing a miraculous event... (To MRS. TORTUGA and MRS. SHREW,) Mr. McBeaver is a stickler about his dam. I suspect he's trying to win the eye of some nice she-Beaver!

McBEAVER

(Dashing back on carrying a load of sticks)

'Tis more than that, Mr. Franklin. Have you never stopped to consider what terrible damage might occur to all our neighbors. Lives weigh in the very balance, they do! If I stop my work, panic and pandemonium would reign rampant sure as my Scottish blude is red, sir!

ERNEST

Please Mr. McBeaver, calm down! Things can't be all that bad.

McBEAVER

Not all that bad, he says! Maybe you haven't noticed, Ernest, but I'm the ONLY Beaver round these parts! Most o' my kin ended up as gentlemen's top hats long ago, may they rest in peace! I just hope the government doesn't force me to install a fish ladder for their *Precious Salmon!* (Exit)

FARLING

What happened to Ma?

STARLING

She fainted. Giving birth to a grotesque beast will do that to a woman.

FARLING

Where's that terrible smell coming from?

STARLING

Oh, gross! It's the egg!

DARLING

I'm afraid it's gone bad, Mother.

STARLING

It's a bad egg, all right!

DARLING, STARLING and FARLING
(Dropping everything)

Let's Go Swimming!

(MR. MCBEAVER enters. At that moment the egg
breaks forth and out pops RALPH... A platypus!)

RALPH

Did I make it? Am I out? Yes. Yes I am! I, I hear bees busily buzzing about...

DARLING

They're attracted to his certain scent...

RALPH

I can breath the dewy scent of our pond. My life is about to start, and great things will begin to happen any moment... (Opens eyes.) I can see! Mother?

PATTY

Son? Daughter??

MRS. SHREW

What a pity you've come up with such an ugly child! That reminds me of Mrs. Mouse's son, Micky.

STARLING

Boy, has that egg ever gone bad!

FARLING

Yep! He's a bad egg, all right!

MRS. TORTUGA

Now, Patty, I'm sure things aren't all that bad. (Looks back at RALPH,) Well, look on the bright side, Deary. At least you still have three other beautiful, talented ducklings.

RALPH

I'm beautiful...

McBEAVER

'Tis a sad day to be sure, lassie. 'Tis probably got no more talent in its bones than feathers on its back!

RALPH

I'm talented...

MRS. SHREW

Ugly, ugly, ugly!

ERNEST

Could it be a mutant duck?... Some sort of leap forward in the evolution of your kind? We may be witnessing what ducks will be like in the future!

RALPH

I just feel ordinary...

SOFTSHELL

Mommy, mommy! Am I a mutant leap forward in the evolution of turtles?

MRS. TORTUGA

Good Heavens, no Softshell! We turtles have been like this for millions of years and we'll remain just like we are for millions more, if I have my say!

MRS. SHREW

I know! Maybe the egg got too much sunshine and dried out. Do you remember the snake family that lived up stream...

RALPH

Well, I think that I...

McBEAVER

No, no! It's obvious the egg didn't have enough yoolk in it!

MRS. TORTUGA

What do you know about eggs? You're a mammal!

EARNEST

Yes! Who do you think you are?

McBEAVER

A Scotsman, that's whoo!

RALPH

Excuse me, but...

EARNEST

And I say it is a mutant leap forward!

MRS. SHREW

Maybe the egg had a crack in it. I remember...

RALPH

But what about me?

SOFTSHELL

I think he's cute!

MRS. TORTUGA

Maybe I didn't rotate it the same as the others...

DARLING, FARLING and STARLING

Mom! Can we go swimming now??

(Everyone starts to offer their own idea of what RALPH might be. As the arguing crescendos, RALPH tries to get their attention without luck. Finally he yells...)

RALPH

What about me!!

McBEAVER

Why it's the little lad himself that's got something to say. All right laddie, what is it that's all fired important, then?

RALPH

Well, first of all, I don't feel like a mutant. I mean, if I were a mutant, I'd be the first to know, wouldn't I?

(Everyone agrees.)

ERNEST

The two things I know are logic and reason. And that logic stands to reason!

RALPH

(To PATTY)

And second of all, you're the one who's kept me warm at night, gently turned me during the day, defended me and kept me safe...

PATTY

I have??

RALPH

You've taken care of me when I couldn't take care of myself. You've loved me without getting anything in return...

PATTY

I have...

RALPH

Maybe I'm not as smart as my beautiful brothers, but doesn't all that mean you're my 'MOM?' You've got to be my mom. You just have to!

PATTY

(Bursting out with emotion)

Yes! Yes! A thousand times, yes! I've got to be your mom! (They embrace as everyone cheers.) There, now, you need a name. Let me see, we already have Darling, Farling and Starling... I'll call you Ralph. Ralph, is a sensible name for a brother... Or Sister, or whatever...

RALPH

Brother.

PATTY

Then it's settled. Kids, meet your new brother, Ralph!

(The three ducklings, not happy, are embraced by PATTY and RALPH. Enter WEASEL.)

WEASEL

Well, well, well! Isn't this cute! Pat and her new little family are all cuddly, cozy in one another's arms. It makes me just want to... RETCH!

ERNEST

Now, Weasel... Mr. Weasel... Who, who... Who... Who do you th-think you are, c-c-coming in here, s-s-scaring th-th-the women and ch-ch-children like this?

WEASEL

I'm a mammal that eats eggs for breakfast! That's 'who-who-who' I am!

ERNEST

...J-J-Just wondering, my good man...

McBEAVER

Holy Saints Alive, the scaly wag! Step aside, Mr. Franklin! 'Tis is a job for a Scotsman! Pick on someone your own size, why don't you, Canker... I mean, Mr. Weasel!

WEASEL

Like you, McBeaver?

McBEAVER

W-W-Well, actually I w-w-was thinking of B-B-Bob Cat.

WEASEL

Well, B-B-Bob Cat isn't here right now, is he McBeaver? I left an egg here this morning... Which one of you is my breakfast? Maybe I'll have Duck soup? (All ducks exit off as WEASEL approaches.) Or maybe a nice beaver sandwich with boiled turtle. (The rest exit leaving only SOFTSHELL cowering behind RALPH. WEASEL looks them over.) Eating shell food is not very neat! Too much work for a scrap of meat! (Aside) Impressing the little ones with occasional pain, is how I stay on top of the chain. (Exits)

SOFTSHELL

A little scrap, huh? I'd like to show him who's scrappy! He's got bad karma! (To RALPH) Hi, ya. My name is Softshell. Your newly hatched, aren't ya! I gnawed out of my rubbery shell yesterday. Welcome to Our Pond, Ralph.

RALPH

...Thanks...

SOFTSHELL

Do I detect a little negative energy, here? What's eating you, Ralphie?

RALPH

(Indicating WEASLE'S exit)

Well, I hope not him!

SOFTSHELL

Weasel? Don't worry about him! Personally, I think he's short on electrolytes! I could whip him up a meadow flower and tofu salad that would straighten him right up! But he's a meat muncher!

RALPH

You sure don't sound like you're afraid of him.

SOFTSHELL

Me? No way!

RALPH

How come?

SOFTSHELL

If he ever bothered me, Ma told me to suck in all my body parts and hide in my shell!

RALPH

But I don't have a shell...

SOFTSHELL

Oh, yeah... That is a problem, Ralph. Hey, do you want me to show you how I can hide? It's a real neat trick!

RALPH

No, thank you. Not right now. I think all Weasel needs is someone to be friends with... Someone to talk to. He's probably just lonely and feeling lost inside...

SOFTSHELL

Helll-oo! You're talking about Canker Weasel, here, Bub. Ma says he's just a typical meat muncher! They live on the misery and death of the rest of us, Ralphie! We need to stand up against such tyranny. Show the power of the people! ...Then if he'd bother me, I'd hide in my shell. What d'ya say we go swimming.

RALPH

I don't know how to swim.

SOFTSHELL

You got to learn sometime. And it might as well be now, right? Come on! We'll all learn together.

RALPH

Well I'm not sure...

SOFTSHELL

Of course I've already had quite a few lessons, myself. Come on, Ralphie! I'll show you how!

RALPH

I not a talented swimmer...

SOFTSHELL

(Pushing RALPH along as they exit)

Ma says, "Practice brings excellence and excellence brings talent."

RALPH

Do you always listen to what your mom says?

SOFTSHELL

Only when she's right, Ralphie my boy. Only when she's right!

(SOFTSHELL and RALPH exit. PAPA PLATIPUS enters through audience.)

PAPA PLATYPUS

Horaaatio! I'd rather be made into a rugby ball than go back to Mama without her egg! I'll just sit a bit to rest my weary webs. (Sits on an audience member and jumps up in fright.) Aaahh!! Oh, my... You gave me a start! Hey, have you seen a baby platypus come by here? I reckon he's hatched by now. Mama said he was going to be a boy. She always knows these things. She knew that Ophelia and Gertrude would be girls and Claudius and Rosencrantz would be boys. Have you seen my son? Any of you? His name is Horatio... (Ralph comes out onto the stage to get his rubber swim cap and goggles PAPA, sent by the audience, goes on the stage to find RALPH. The both of them criss cross, turn around back to back, etc. but all without ever seeing one another. RALPH exits) Well, I can't find him here. I guess I'll keep looking over there. (Exits.)
(Enter ERNEST and his entourage of would-be actors going over their monologues.)

ERNEST

All right, everyone! Let's quiet down, now. Welcome to the first day of school. We are holding auditions for Hamlet, my favorite Shakespearean tragedy. I am looking for emotion, Emotion, EMOTION! So dig deep! Are you ready?

THE KIDS

Yeah!

ERNEST

Shall we begin?

THE KIDS

Yeah!

ERNEST

If you want to be the first to audition, step forward.

(Everyone except RALPH steps backward.)

ERNEST

So you're the brave one, eh?

RALPH

Me? No! (Sees he stands lone.) I'm not sure I can act...

ERNEST

Everyone can act! Look at me. Right now I'm acting like I enjoy being surrounded by small creatures who don't know Shakespeare from Sherlock.

RALPH

Well, maybe if I try... Maybe if I talk and react and think like the character, if I muster my motives... Maybe I could become. Yes, that's it! Maybe, just maybe I can strip off this outer pelt of ugliness that is me and become something bigger! Brighter! Something more Beautiful! (RALPH looks at his script, turns it around, upside down, completely befuddled.) I can't read yet. Could I just try...

ERNEST

NEXT!

RALPH

But, but...

ERNEST

Sorry, Kid. Theater life is tough! Who's next?

RALPH

But If I could just try...

ERNEST

Mrs. Shrew, would you mind making some dittos of this script for me?

MRS. SHREW

Of course, Earnest. (Exits with a large stack to be dittoed.)

ERNEST

(To STARLING)

What about you, the one brooding, over there in the corner.

(RALPH sits.)

DARLING

Here we go...

FARLING

He's not brooding, Director-Dude. He's In Character, I think.

SOFTSHELL

In character?

FARLING

Ever since he heard about your auditions, he's been acting very peculiar...

DARLING

And driving me crazy!

STARLING

(No longer a duckling, but an over-the-top HAM!
He might even wear a goatee.)

If you have tears, prepare to shed them now.

Bear with me; My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,

(He pauses to let that sink in. EARNEST starts to talk but is cut off by an even bigger...)

Kind souls, what, weep you when you but behold

Our Caesar's vesture wounded? Look you here,

Here is himself, marr'd, as you see, with traitors. (STARLING ends with a flourish of a bow.)

EARNEST

Mag. Ni. FIQUE! ASTOUNDING! You're the talent I should have become!
With your talent and my brains, we'll be famous!

STARLING

I thanketh thee, Squire.

DARLING

Give me a break!

STARLING

How 'bout I breaketh your wingeth.

(McBEAVER enters with the kids, ready to coach his
soccer team.)

McBEAVER

All right now! Listen up, you little wet-behind-the-ear, pansy smell'en
tadpoles. As your school soccer coach, I'm going to take the lot of you lily
liveried weaklings and turn you into MEN!

SOFTSHEL

But can't we all just live in equality and harmony, without any gender bias?

McBEAVER

Holy Saints Alive! Mrs. Shrew, ditto five copies of this soccer play book. And
I want it yesterday!

MRS. SHREW

We paras aim to please! (Exits with book.)

McBEAVER

Let's see what we've got here, then... (To RALPH) You! Dribble this soccer
ball down and back. And be snappy about it! (RALPH first tries to dribble it
like a basketball...) Here, you! 'Tis not a bleed'n basketball! Use your feet!
Holy Saints Alive! (...Then RALPH tries to dribble it like a soccer ball but is
awkward about it and finally trips, falling on his back, with arms flailing,
unable to get back up.)

RALPH

Help! Help! I can't get over!

McBEAVER

So you can't get oop now, can you?

RALPH

A bird is going to peck out my soft underbelly! Help!

(SOFTSHELL to the rescue!)

McBEAVER

Maybe you could go play cribbage with Old Widow Sloth! Who else'll try, then?

FARLING

I will.

McBEAVER

There's a laddie. Show us what you can doo, then.

FARLING

Well, with one kick, I can ricochet this ball all the way around our pond, Mr. Funny-Talking-Soccer-Coach-Dude.

(FARLING takes the soccer ball and gives it a mighty boot off stage left. From behind the set, starting from stage left, we hear snapping twigs, chicken screams, a moo, breaking glass, a bomb whistling, church bells, a horse, a crashing car, pots and pans, etc. until finally it comes bouncing back on from stage right.)

McBEAVER

With you as Cap'n o' the team, we're bound to crush any team who dares to cross us! Why, you're talented enough to play on the water polo team, me lad.

FARLING

But I can't play water polo.

McBEAVER

And why not?

FARLING

Coach-Dude! I don't have a horse!

McBEAVER

Holy Saints Alive!

(MRS. TORTUGA enters into her reading class,
ringing a bell.)

MRS. TORTUGA

Class, calm down, now. Mrs. Shrew, I need something...

MRS. SHREW

Ditto.

MRS. TORTUGA

You need something too?

MRS. SHREW

No. I mean you need me to ditto, right?

MRS. TORTUGA

Yes I do! Here are just a few things... And these... Oh, and this last pile.

MRS. SHREW

(To the audience.)

At least it's a step up from being a playground duty. (Exits)

MRS. TORTUGA

So far, class, we've had a lot of readers from the Eagle Group. (Looking at RALPH, the only one in his group.) Would anyone like to read from the Worm Group next?

(RALPH hides behind his upside down book.)

EAGLE GROUP

I'll read! Me! Let me! I can!

MRS. TORTUGA

Anyone at all from the Worm Group?

EAGLE GROUP

Oooo! Me, Teacher! I can! Pleeeeease...

MRS. TORTUGA

Well, if there are no Worms, let's hear from our prize student, Darling, in the Eagles.

DARLING

Would you like me to translate this wonderful passage into Cantonese as I read?

CLASS

No.

DARLING

Possibly Portuguese?

CLASS

NO!

MRS. TORTUGA

Young man, I need someone of your intelligence to be my Teacher's Assistant! What do you say?

DARLING

What's in it for me?

MRS. TORTUGA

The highest grades in the class.

DARLING

I'll do it!

(The class erupts in groans of disgust. Everyone else exits except DARLING, STARLING and FARLING who greet their mother in the nest. PATTY enters.)

PATTY

Well hello, boys! How was your first day at school... Just a minute! (She counts her children,) There's only three of you! Who's missing? Which one!

STARLING

Ralph, Madam.

PATTY

Did Weasel get...

FARLING

Chill, big lady! He had to stay after school.

DARLING

Mrs. Tortuga made me her Teacher's Assistant! Needless to say, however, our younger protégé did not fair to well in his first day of academic endeavor!

FARLING

Or studly sportsmanship!

STARLING

Alas, nor in the arts, Madam. In fact, he was a complete flop!

FARLING

A washout!

DARLING

An ignoramus! He doesn't belong, Mother. Next time only have triplets.

(Enter RALPH, dejected.)

STARLING

(To DARLING and FARLING)

Come thither, brothers. Let us go swimming.

FARLING

Yeah, Dudes. The air suddenly got foul.

DARLING

(As they exit.)

Wait a minute. We are foul!

FARLING

What do you mean, we're foul?

STARLING

I do not a foul make!

DARLING

NO! Foul! You know, birds!

FARLING

Well that's not what I meant! (Exit.)

PATTY

Let's sit down over here and talk. Why do you seem so sad?

RALPH

Seem, Mother? I know not seem. This ugly pelt I show, is but the garment of my woe.

PATTY

...OK... What did you learn in school today, Ralph?

RALPH

Nothing.

PATTY

Oh come now. You must have...

RALPH

I was bad at everything, Mom. And my own brothers... My family, made fun of me! How can I take part in life when I have nothing to offer?

PATTY

Here, Ralph. Have some cookies and milk.

RALPH

Cookies and milk? I'm in crisis mode and that's the best you can do?

(PATTY continues to console RALPH in their nest as DARLING, FARLING and STARLING swim near the dam Down Right.)

FARLING

If you're going to hang with me, Actor-Dude, you got to lose those silly threads! Haven't you ever heard of Nike?

STARLING

Ah, yes, Nike. The wingéd messenger to the gods...

FARLING

No, Dude! Nike the tennis shoe!

DARLING

That's enough, you two. Let us begin our aquatic exercise.

(They begin to swim. Enter WEASEL, lurking about the dam.)

WEASEL

(Enters from behind the dam.)

Culling the herd is easy to do: Pick the defenseless and munch 'em right through! (Aside) I come from a long line of cowards.

RALPH

Mother, I've eaten all the cookies and now I feel worse. Food is not the answer.

PATTY

Funny. It's always worked for me. Many of our pond's perplexing problems would disappear if more creatures shared a warm current bun. Have a bun?

FARLING

Kick the water. Kick the water. Kick the water back!
Kick the water. Kick the water. Kick the water back!
Kick the water. Kick the...

DARLING

I believe we understand the concept, brother!

FARLING

You got to keep the rhythm, Nerd-Dude...

DARLING

And I wish you'd STOP calling me that name!

FARLING

You got it, Geek.

(WEASEL'S head pops up in the middle of them.)

WEASEL

Hello, kids! Anyone for a game of Bob-for-Ducklings?

DARLING, FARLING and STARLING

AAAAHHHHHHH!!

(Over the next few lines, the BROTHERS struggle with WEASEL from behind the dam.)

PATTY

Don't compare yourself to your brothers, Ralph. They're getting what they deserve. But your day will come. Listen to The Voice inside you for guidance.

RALPH

They're so popular and talented and confident and cruel... I hope someday I can get what they're getting right now.

PATTY

No, no, Ralph. Don't be jealous. They're getting what they're worth. And someday you'll get what you're worth.

RALPH

I hope so.

PATTY

And Weasel will get what's coming to him also.

(At this, the tide turns on WEASEL and the three BROTHERS escape with their lives but not before the dam springs a dozen leaks.)

RALPH

All Weasel needs is a friend, I'm convinced of it!

PATTY

Listen for The Voice inside you. Someday you'll hear The Voice speak directly to you...

McBEAVER

(From Stage Right, near the dam.)

Hellp!!

(RALPH and PATTY stop, slowly turn and look at each other.)

RALPH

...Mom ...Did you hear that?...

McBEAVER

(Still off stage.)

I need another sturdy beaver tail to help me! The dam! She's breakin' up, she is! We'll drown like vermin!

RALPH

(Like a trance.)

Mom... Is The Voice supposed to sound like Mr. McBeaver?

PATTY

It'll do! But Ralph... There might be danger!

RALPH

Danger, Smanger!!

(With renewed confidence, excitement and strength, he goes to help McBEAVER. Afraid of the impending doom, DARLING, STARLING and FARLING come into the nest to cower with their

mother. Later MRS. TORTUGA, ERNEST and SOFTSHELL also come in, seeking solace in their community.)

SOFTSHELL

Ralphie and Mr. McBeaver are fighting against death to save us all! Who'll help?

(DARLING, STARLING and FARLING each point to the other brother.)

DARLING

I can do a cost analysis to rebuild, in two days. With federal funding it'll take longer.

STARLING

I can act out the tragic story of Ralph's death!

FARLING

I can play basketball!

SOFTSHELL

None of that will help!

ERNEST

Well, don't look at me!

SOFTSHELL

Birds of a feather!

FARLING

Does that mean I don't get to play basketball?

RALPH

More sticks, Mr. McBeaver! And MUD!

(McBEAVER gives them, then exits.)

WEASEL

(Sputtering.)

Help! I'm drowning!

RALPH

What was that? (RALPH finds WEASEL behind the dam, face down and almost dead.) Don't worry, Weasel! I'll save you!

(RALPH pulls WEASEL out from under entangled sticks, gives him CPR and revives him while...)

McBEAVER

(Enters nest area wet, exhausted.)

I've never in all my long lived days seen a finer, more spirited, talented worker than that bonnie lad o' yours, Mrs. Duck! Are you sure there's no wee bit o' Scotsman in his blude, then? The dam, she's fixed, she is. An' I could no do it without him!

SOFTSHELL

Look! Here comes Ralphie now!

(RALPH enters covered with mud and pond grass... Arm and arm, and laughing, with WEASEL! The crowd stands agape.)

WEASEL

You saved my life, Ralph. That's more than anybody has ever done for me. Anything you want, you got... Anytime! I mean that, Kid... I know where some nice turtle eggs are!

EVERYONE

You saved Weasel?!

RALPH

Of course. He needed help. Besides, he's a great guy!

EVERYONE

He's CANKER WEASEL!!!

SOFTSHELL

Ralphie... He's a Meat Muncher!

RALPH

He's also our neighbor! What if everyone despised you, treated you like an outcast...

WEASEL

Thanks, Kid...

RALPH

Used your name for a joke...

WEASEL

OK, we get it...

RALPH

Made fun of you behind your back...

WEASEL

Are you helping me here?...

RALPH

Spoke about you as if you were filthy, putrid, puss filled...

WEASEL

Puss filled!...

RALPH

Sewage laden pond scum, full of disease and pestilence, how would you react to all of that, Softshell?

SOFTSHELL

I see what you mean.

WEASEL

...Puss filled?...

RALPH

How would any of us react if we were ridiculed to the point of...

WEASEL

OK, Kid! I think we got the idea here...

RALPH

Mr. Migillicutty said it best: “Beauty is not something you see. It’s something you ARE.” If all of us decide to break the ugly cycle we’re caught in, maybe we can have a kinder, gentler pond.

MRS. TORTUGA

That boy should be a politician!

RALPH

You’ll have to be a productive part of our pond, though, Canker. Find that artist in you again.

WEASEL

OK. I’ll try. But we’re not going to get all touchy feely here, are we, Kid? I don’t do touchy feely.

McBEAVER

Aye, that’s me lad, ’tis!

ERNEST

Ralph does have gifted insight into creature feelings and motives. I’m willing to like Weasel if everyone else is...

(EVERYONE goes to greet WEASEL into their fold.)

WEASEL

I don’t know what to say... I.. I, I know! Can I make you all an omelet? I have some turtle eggs ripening and...

(EVERYONE is sickened or repulsed or insulted by his generosity.)

RALPH

Probably it’s best to give those back to Mrs. Tortuga.

WEASEL

Oh... Yes, I suppose so.

MRS. TORTUGA

Getting my eggs back won't make me forget about your shenanigans in my classroom, young man! I'm still waiting for that final "No Creature Left Behind"

math project and then you'll graduate. And not a moment sooner!

WEASEL

Yes ma'am.

(DARLING begins to laugh at WEASEL.)

MRS. TORTUGA

I wouldn't laugh too hard, my pompous little poultry. As of right now, Ralph here is my new Teacher's Assistant.

McBEAVER

Send Those three little wise-acre ducklings o' yours to me, Mrs. Duck. I'll bring 'em down to earth, teach 'em an honest day's work and give 'em a dose o' Scotsman's blood!!

ERNEST

Leave it to Beaver.

(PAPA PLATYPUS enters.)

PAPA PLATYPUS

Horatio! Where are you son!? Maybe these locals can help me. (To PATTY) Have you seen a young platypus round here? (PATTY shakes her head no. Then to DARLING.) How 'bout you? (DARLING gives it great thought then happily shakes his head no as well. Then to RALPH.) What about you, son? Have you seen a young platypus running round lost as a dingo, looking out of place, without family or friend? ...Well, have you?

RALPH

(After a great pause to consider his life...)

Why no, sir! I have not seen anyone out of place or without a family! Here, we're all one wonderful genus species!

PAPA PLATYPUS

I guess I'll just keep looking. Mama's goin' to roast me on the bar-b for this! It's tough being married to a platypus... (Aside to RALPH) Psst! How do you stand it round here?

RALPH

What do you mean, sir?

PAPA PLATYPUS

How do you stand being round all these ugly creatures?

RALPH

They grow on you.

PAPA PLATYPUS

Like a fungus, I reckon... Horatio! Come to Papa, son... Horatio? (exit)

RALPH

Horatio?? What kind of a name is Horatio! (He giggles) Horatio!!

(At first RALPH sniggers. Then he teeters which is followed by uproarious, full bodied laughter. The others follow his lead.)

DARLING

You'll always be Ralph to us, brother!

STARLING

Oh, I don't know. I rather like Horatio.

FARLING

You would, Actor-Dude!

SOFTSHELL

Ralph is a leader among creatures...

McBEAVER

As hard a worker as any Scotsman...

WEASEL

He's a forgiving fine featherless friend...

DARLING

A brilliantly benevolent brother...

STARLING

An affectionate artist...

FARLING

A tender teammate...

PATTY

A beautiful boy!

SOFTSHELL

(Running over to give RALPH a hug.)

A very beautiful boy! Oh, Ralphie! I'm so proud of you. Thank you for sharing your talents with us. You saved our pond! Let's go throw Ralphie into the pond, everyone!

RALPH

Wait! Wait! Swimming is NOT one of my talents!

ALL

It will be soon!

(The creatures carry RALPH off stage on their shoulders.)

STARLING

(Comes Down Center as everyone else exits.)

If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended.
Try, we did, to teach you well
The lesson of this little bell:
That beauty's not just how you look
But how you act, and your outlook.
These change the vision of our eyes,
Determine if you are a prize.

(DARLING, FARLING and a dripping wet RALPH enter, looking for their brother. They find him and try to playfully chase him off stage.)

Your unhid gifts will always show
Your loveliness and inward glow.
So give your hand, if you be friend,
And we shall call this play to end!

~THE END~