

## *The Ugly Attitude*

By Carly Rasper

One fine summer day in southern Tennessee, a mother swan sat on her nest. Her eggs started to crack. *Crackly crack*. Five little swans came peeping out of their shells.

“Are you all here?” honked the mother swan. She counted her babies, then she peered into the nest. The smallest egg was still unhatched. The mother sat with a worried expression on her face.

After a long time of waiting, the egg started to hatch.

*Crackle, crackle, crackle*. Out came the loveliest little bird, quite unlike the others.

“Good. Now you are all here!” said the mother swan, as she gazed down at her new flock. “Now it is time to name you. You are the biggest, so your name will be ‘Collin’. And you, ‘Aaden,’ and you are to be ‘Joel,’ and you, with the long feathers, are ‘Hannah,’ and you are ‘Alexis.’” Finally, she glanced at the smallest bird and said, “My, you look different than the other cygnets. You are so dainty. Your soft downy feathers are such a pretty yellow color--I always wanted a blonde--I will give you a name befitting your beauty...’Leah’”

The mother decided to take them swimming in the pond. They all filed into line and waddled to the pond edge. But instead of jumping in obediently like the other children, Leah stopped and yelled at the top of her lungs. “ I DON’T WANT TO SWIM!” As all mothers would be, the mother swan was very embarrassed because all the hens on the farm were staring at her.

“Leah, please get in the water now!” said the mother swan firmly.

Leah was in no mood to get her feathers wet, so she proudly proclaimed, "I am the prettiest of all the cygnets on the farm. Therefore, I will *not* go swimming and get my beautiful feathers wet!" And she sat queen-like on the bank, preening her pretty feathers and pouting.

Later that night, at exactly 8:00, all the cygnets were heading off to bed. All, that is, except Leah. "I am the youngest and the 'goodlooking-est,' so I should stay up the latest!" squawked Leah.

Again the mother was distraught and said to Leah. "Leah Swan, if I talk to you again about disobeying me, then you will be punished." Leah went in to her place next to Alexis who was snoring. She rudely woke her up and said, "You snore like a cow, and you are the ugliest of all. Unlike me who is bee-you-tiful."

The next day Mrs. Swan decided to take the cygnets for a walk around the farm, but Leah refused to wake up early to go.

"Mother! I am fatigued. I want to sleep!" yawned Leah with a pout.

Mother swan sighed, "Suit yourself. We will be back in a few hours."

Leah's family had still not returned when she woke up.

"I can't believe they left me alone," she drawled with defiance. "Maybe my family is gone for good. Well that's just fine. I don't belong with them anyway. I'm much too attractive. I know what will make them feel bad... I will run away. Then they will miss my charming sweetness around here! I will find other beautiful birds with whom to flock!"

Leah packed her bags and waddled away from the farm. Before long the weather turned unusually cold. A late fall blizzard swept down from the north and buried everything under layers of snow.

Leah was so cold so she curled up in an old boot and shivered. "This is not how a princess ought to live," she muttered. So Leah closed her eyes and slept all winter long.

When she woke up it was early spring. She was well rested and got up to look for food.

"I am so hungry. Maybe some one will see me with my beautiful feathers and give me something to eat."

As she waddled across the field she heard laughter and happy honking. Glancing in that direction, Leah saw a flock of the most beautiful birds she had ever seen. They were a lovely flock of swans with downy white feathers.

Leah called out to them, "Hello friends! Wait for me! I am a beautiful swan just like you!"

But the proud group of swans replied, "We?...wait for you? Why, you are just an ugly goose!"

Leah strutted over to a nearby pond and gazed vainly in to see her beautiful reflection. But to her astonishment her beautiful yellow feathers were gone! "My Feathers! W...what happened?"

Instead of turning out to be a beautiful swan she was an ugly--well, not really ugly, but rather *dull*-- Canada goose.

Leah felt the sting of rejection.

“Oh, if I had listened to my mother, she would be here to comfort me in my time of distress. I guess I will go back and apologize to my family for being so nasty.” So Leah waddled back to the farm to find her family.

“Mother... Joel, Aaden, Collin, Hannah... Alexis! It's me, Leah. I've come back! Where are you? I'm sorry I was such a snob.”

Mrs. Swan recognized her daughter instantly. She welcomed her back with a warm embrace.

“Mother, I am so sorry I didn't listen to you. What has happened to me? What has happened to my feathers!”

Just then Leah's siblings walked in. To Leah's horror, she discovered that they, too, had become beautiful swans. Would they, too, shun her?

The swans stared at her in disbelief.

“Leah, is that you?...you've changed. Where are your lovely, yellow feathers? You are so.... gray!” said Alexis, who was now the prettiest of all the swan quintuplets.

“Well, it doesn't matter to us how you look. You are lovely in your own grayish way.”

Leah felt ashamed. “I'm so sorry I was snobbish. Will you forgive me?”

“Sure!” said Hannah.

“I will never make fun of you guys again.”

And she never did.

*The End*