

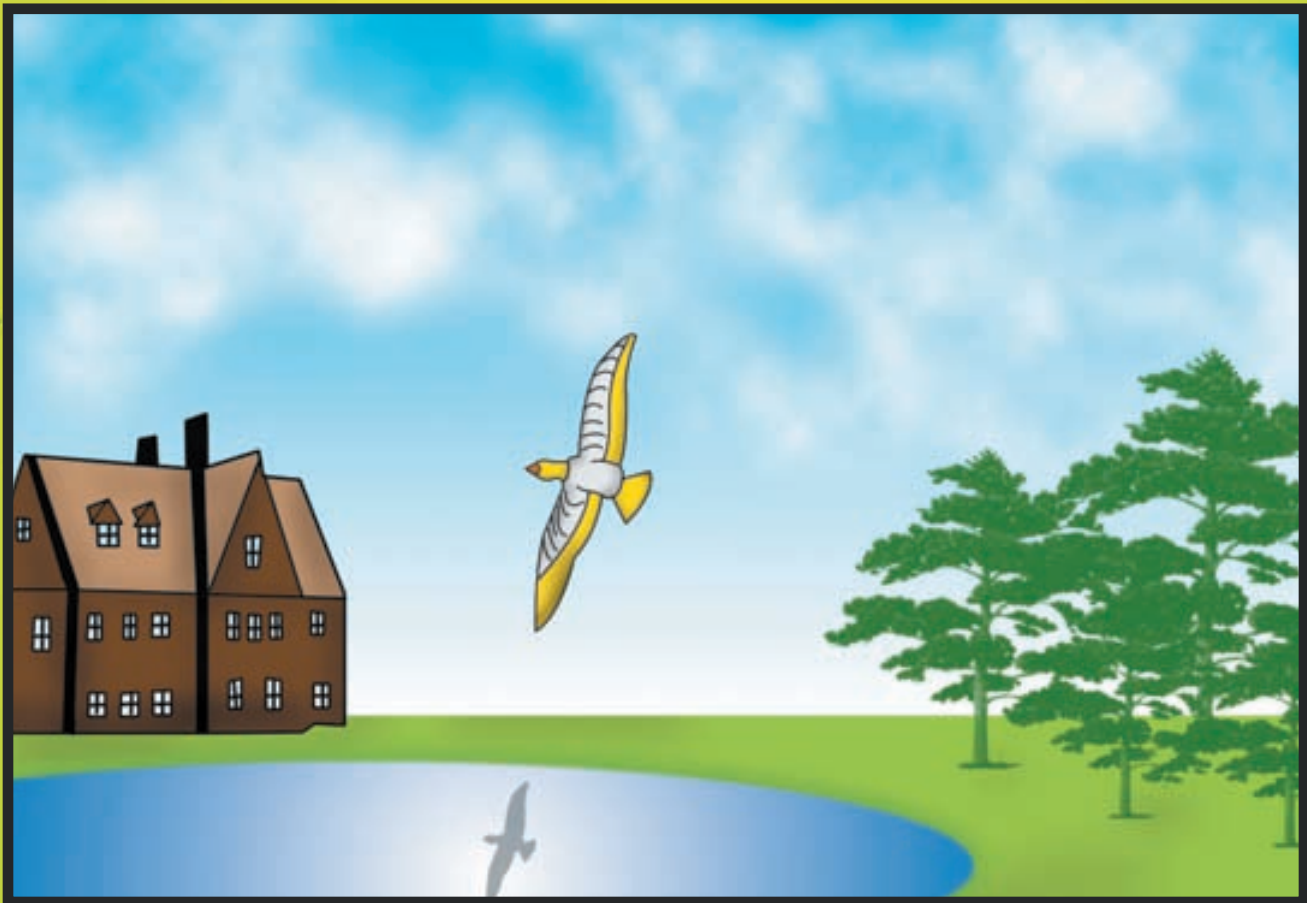
Robby **the** **Rubber Duck**



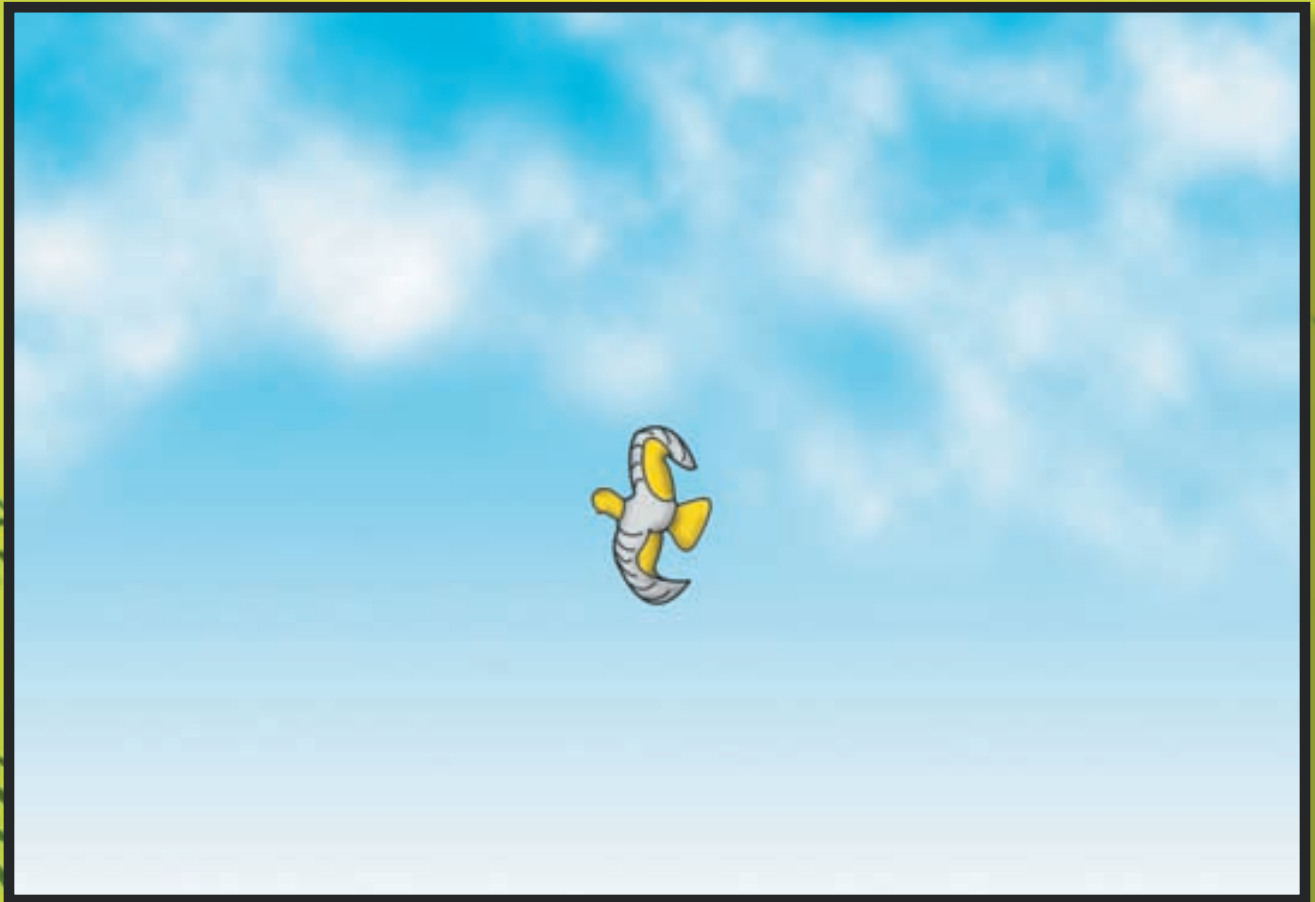
**Written and Illustrated
by
GARY L. DOUGHARTY**

Dedicated to:
*my wife and children believe in yourself
and fly with your heart!*

**The sun shined down, reflecting off the water of the pond below.
Robby the duck flapped his wings as hard as he could
to gain a little extra altitude. The wind blew
cold and fresh in his face, and
the sun warmed
his back.**



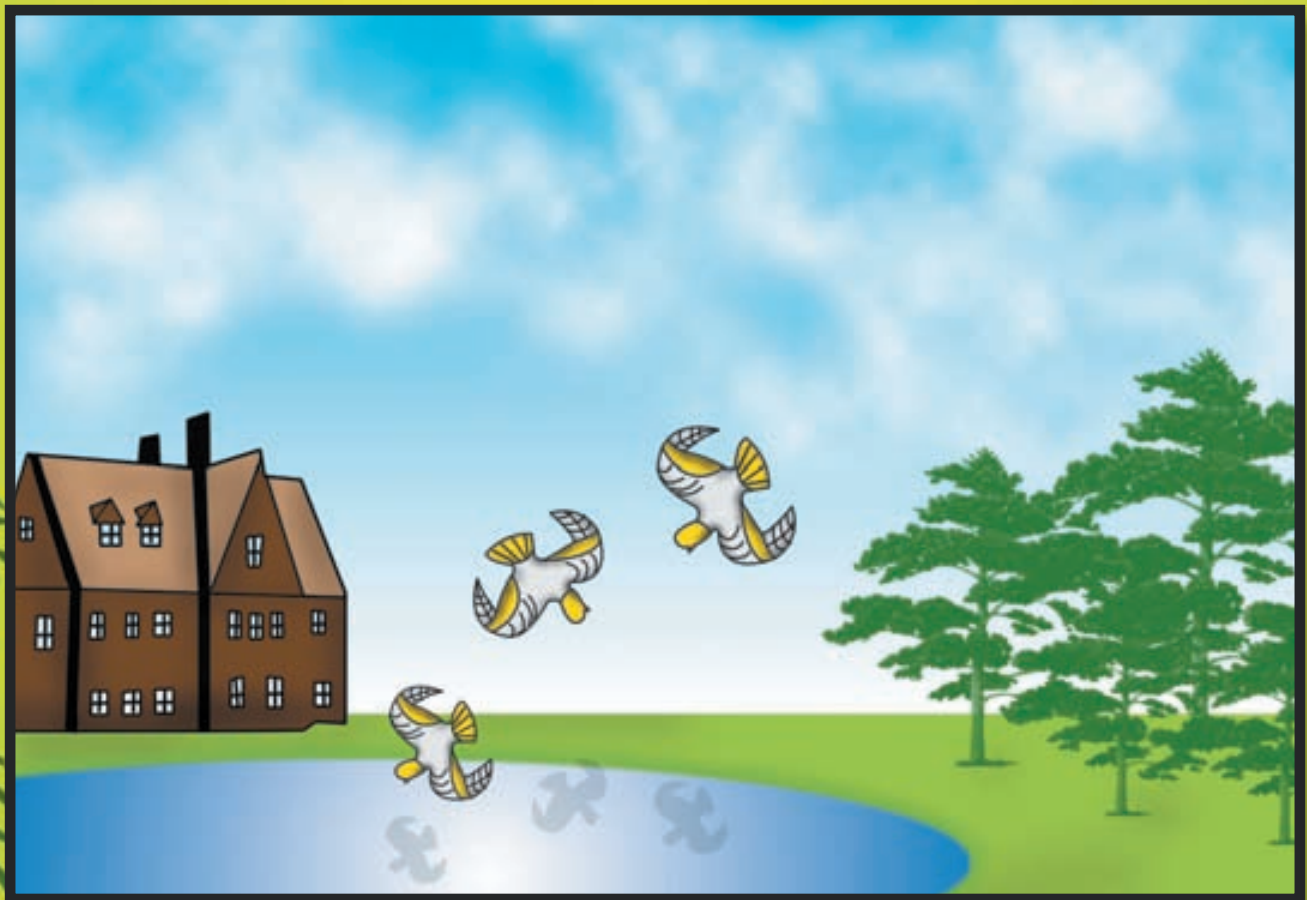
As he reached the peak of his climb, he slowed his wings, turning his beak down toward the ground that lay far below him. He then folded his wings in close to his body, leaving only the narrow edges of his wings extended into the wind.



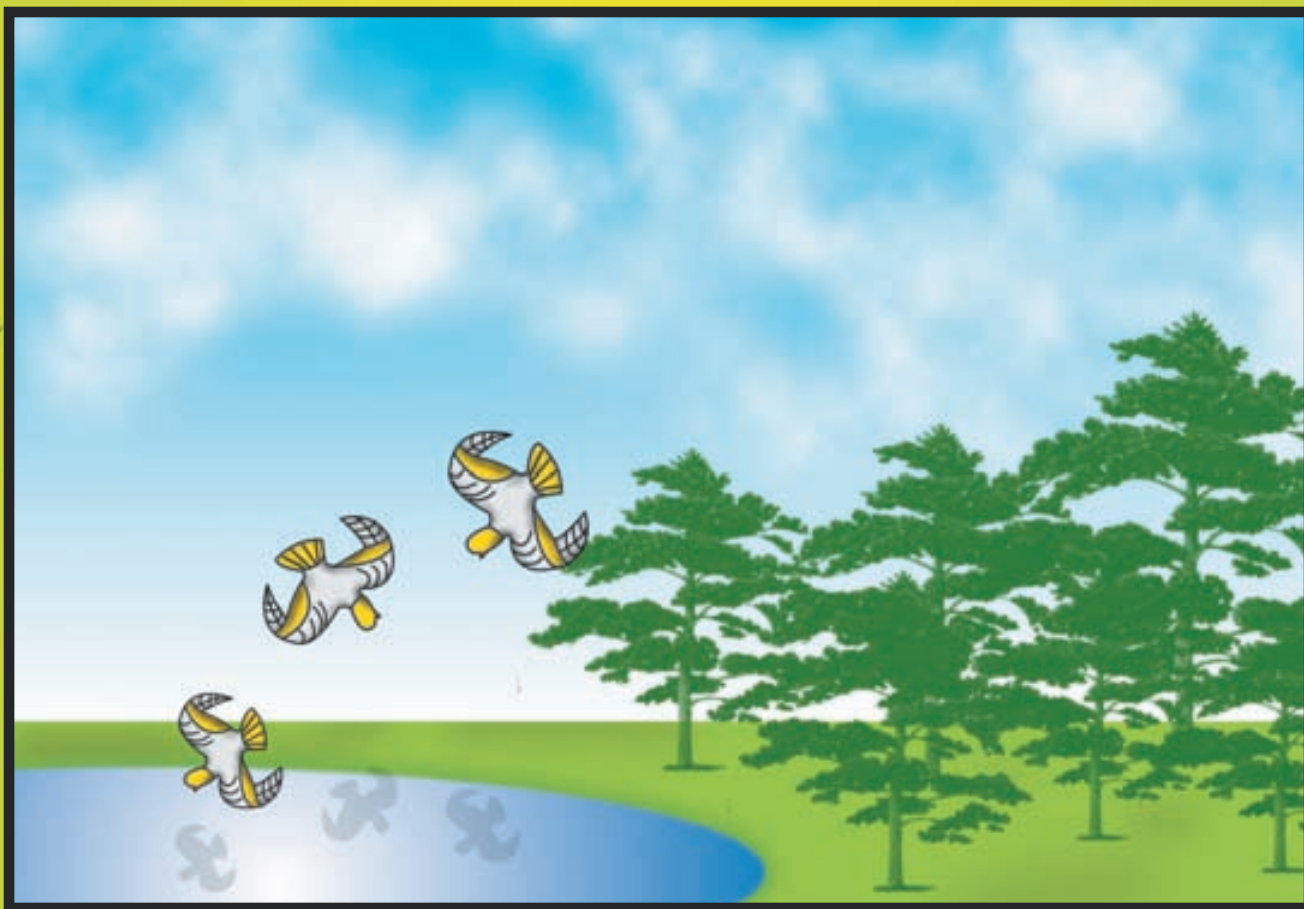
He lowered his head and started a steep dive, down through the clouds he flew. The wind roared in his ears, and he had to squeeze his eyes almost shut to protect them from the wind. In just a few seconds, he was moving very fast, sixty miles per hour, then seventy. The wind screamed like the fireworks at the Fourth of July; it was so loud it hurt his ears, and the ground grew closer at a frightening speed.



Robby was a brave duck, but he knew ducks were not meant to fly at this speed and fear began to creep in on him. When the fear finally got the best of him, he edged his right wing out to slow his descent. But it was too late; his wing caught the wind, and he rolled to the left, losing control and going into a wild spin.



**As the ground rushed up, he spun helplessly out of control.
Fear griped him, and he let out a terrifying scream.
Everything went black.**



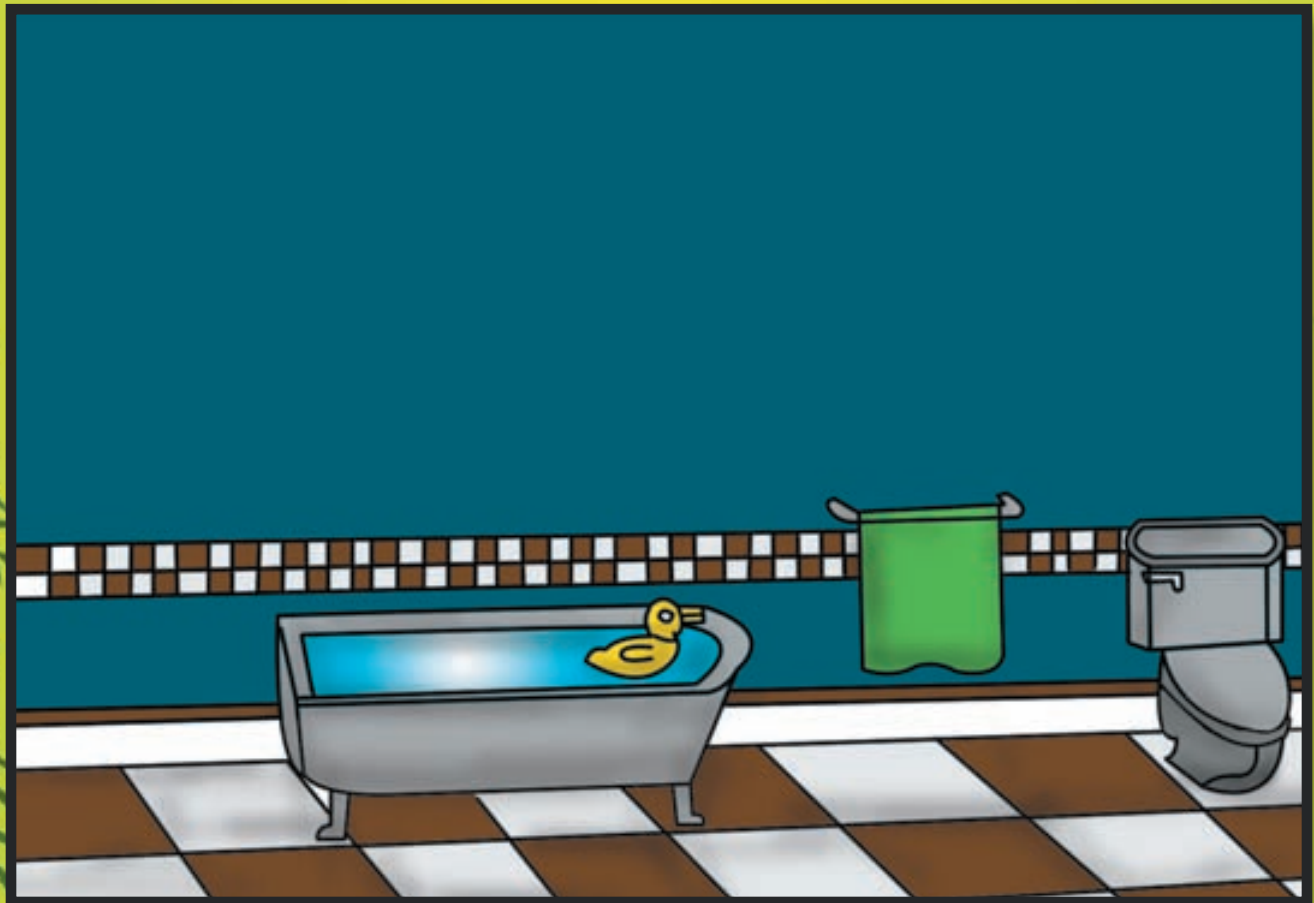
The scream woke up the other toys in the bedroom where Robby lived. The old stuffed elephant who sat on the shelf above the bed looked down in scorn. “Dreaming of flying again, Robby?” he asked in a very rude voice. The other toys broke out in laughter. The old brown bear that sat in the corner of the bed smiled. “Foolish duck,” he said. “When will you learn that rubber ducks can’t fly?”



The other toys broke out in laughter again. Robby's face began to turn red and he cried out, "I will learn how to fly someday, you'll see." The toys only laughed louder. Robby pretended to ignore them and went back to looking out the window from his place on the windowsill where he sat. Their laughter hurt him, and a small tear appeared in his eye.

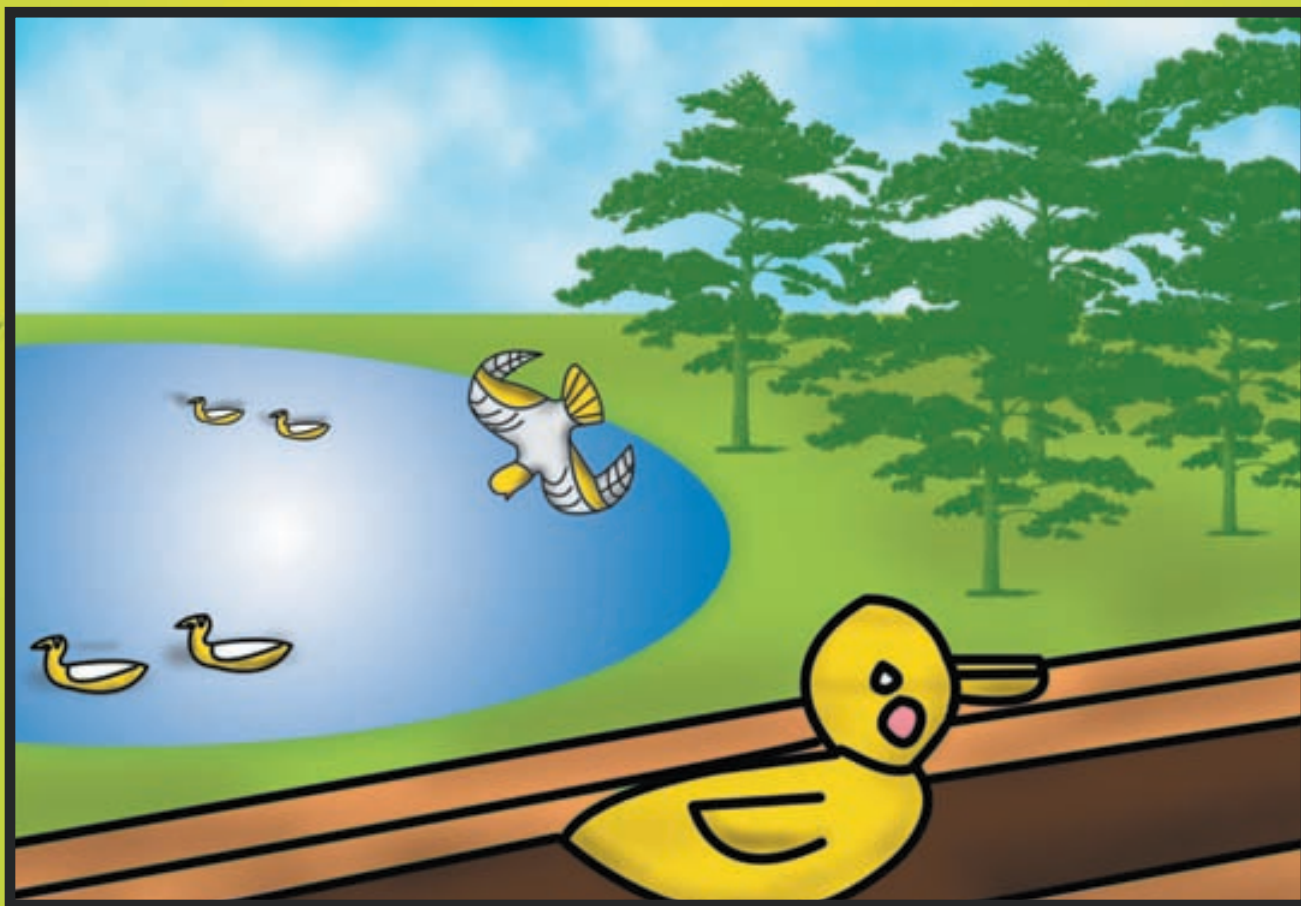


It was true what the other toys said; he was only a rubber duck, but he dreamed of being so much more. He loved the little boy who lived with him in the old farmhouse and enjoyed the times they spent playing together in the bathtub, but he secretly dreamed of being a real duck, like the ones he watched from his window. *I can be more!* he thought. *I can learn to fly!*

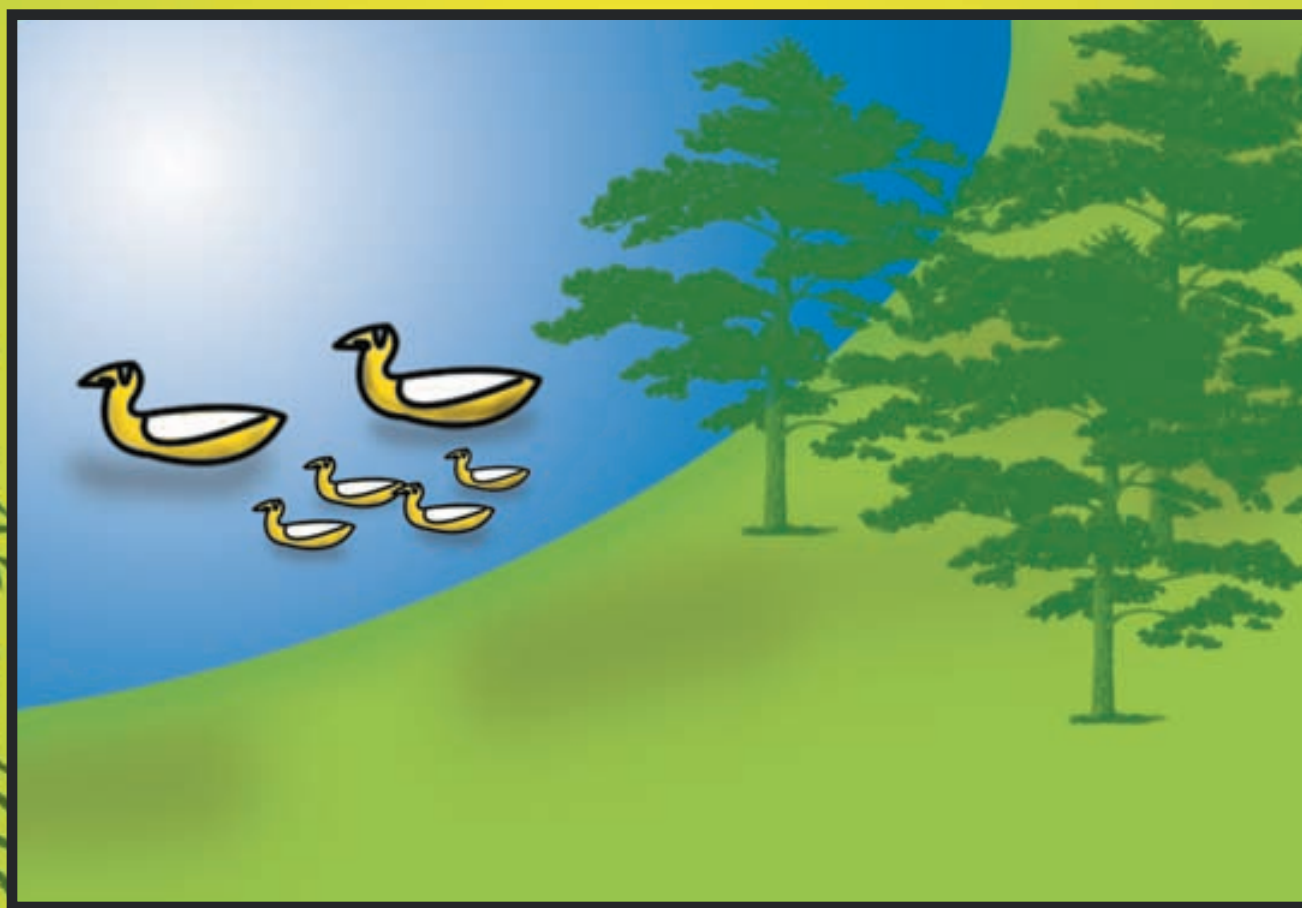


From his place on the windowsill, he could see a big beautiful world outside.

There were trees, grass, and flowers, but most of all there was a real pond where the ducks, glided down from the sky and landed, Here they could rest and play and in the springtime lay their eggs and raise their babies. He watched as they swooped down gracefully to land on the water and then swim around, quacking loudly with one another. It looked like so much fun.



Sometimes when he was watching out the window, he could see the mother ducks leading their babies around the pond and teaching them how to fly. Oh, how he wished he had a mother to hold him and love him, when the other toys were being mean and teasing him. And maybe, just maybe, to teach him how to fly. But he knew he was being silly, because rubber ducks didn't have mothers, and rubber ducks couldn't fly. He sighed sadly as he looked back out the window.



The little boy who lived with him in the big farmhouse had a mother. Robby would listen to her closely when she read them stories. She would come in after they had finished their bath each night and place Robby on the windowsill. After tucking the little boy safely into his bed. She would take down the big storybook that was filled with such wonderful stories, and in her soft, sweet voice, she would begin to read.



Robby loved all the stories; there was one about Alice and the White Rabbit, who was always worried about being late. There was one about a little train who said, “I think I can, I think I can.” But the one Robby loved the most of all, was the one about the Ugly Duckling, who dreamed of being a swan. Robby listened closely to her stories and like the little boy, faded off to sleep, in a land of dreams where mother ducks tucked their babies in at night and ugly ducklings become swans.

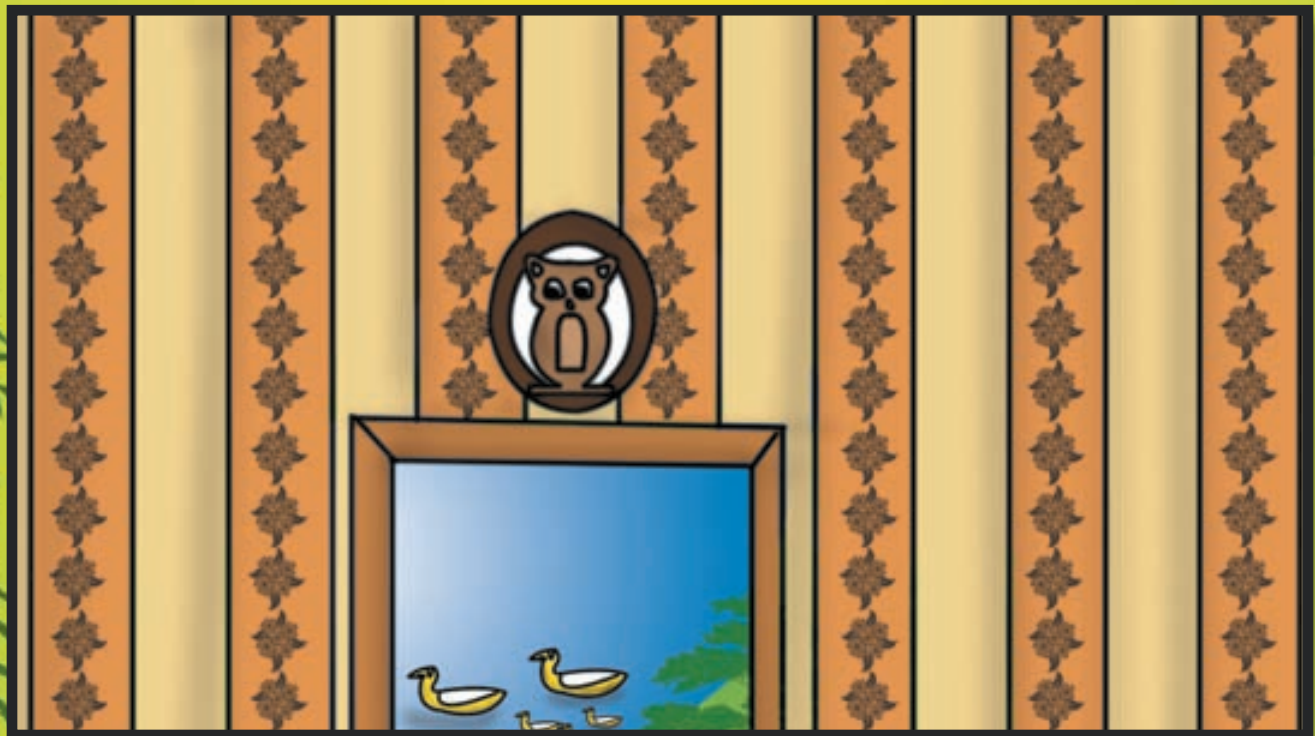


The sun sparkled off the water below. Robby was practicing high up in the air, he lowered his webbed feet and lifted his beak straining to hold a hard twisting curve. As he reached the peak he slowed until the water stood still beneath him. In fierce concentration, he held his breath, forcing one more inch out of his powerful wings, then his feathers ruffled; he stalled and fell



Robby woke. It was late at night; the other toys were still asleep, and he sat quietly in the same place on the windowsill. Dreaming again, he thought. He looked up to see the wise old owl mounted above the bedroom door, staring down at him. Not all the toys had been asleep. For the owl's big yellow eyes were studying him.

The old owl wasn't really a toy at all. He had been a real bird once, a long time ago. But now he was just an old stuffed owl that sat above the door, looking down on all the other toys. *Maybe he could teach me to fly,* Robby thought. *After all, he did know how to fly once.*



Robby asked in what he thought was his bravest voice, “Mr. Owl, can you teach me to fly?” The wise old owl stared for a moment. Then he said, “Whooo, whoo, who do you think you are! Someday, Robby duck, you will learn that irresponsibility does not pay, everybody knows rubber ducks can’t fly.” Robby turned away, embarrassed that he had asked.



Robby would not give up. If he had learned anything from the stories that the little boy’s mother told, it was that if you believed in something hard enough, then anything was possible. Didn’t Cinderella get to go to the ball? And didn’t the beast in “Beauty and the Beast” get to be a prince again? Robby made up his mind; he would just have to try harder. Surely the magic wasn’t just for children. Robby closed his eyes and faded off to sleep to dream more wonderful dreams of flying.

In the days that followed, Robby never gave up his dream of flying. During the day, he would watch the real ducks as they flew outside his bedroom window. Studying their every move, from the quick, powerful climbs into the sky, to the long gentle glides where they landed softly on the water. When night came, he would practice these same moves over and over again in his dreams. He would do loop to loops, power climbs, and barrel rolls, coming out to spiral majestically into a dive.

The little boy was getting older now, and many of his favorite toys had already been put away under his bed, to make room for footballs, fire engines and race cars. But worst of all, the little boy's mother rarely came to read to him anymore. He was getting too old for children's stories. But even if the little boy didn't believe anymore, Robby still did.



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