

The Duck Named Hope

Years after his encounter with the roc, the duck ran into Angelo, the deer, while drinking at a little stream.

"You are so pretty," Angelo commented, swallowing water from the stream, "and hi, my name is Angelo."

The duck stopped drinking and replied, "Ah, hi," and then stared, "my, ah, I don't have a name." He sat down and started to tell Angelo about his life, "when I was a baby, I had a friend named Emmett -"

"Oh, dear," Angelo interrupted abruptly, "you are the lost duck! He was so sad about having to do that, you know. I stayed with Emmett when I was a baby, too...."

They traded their stories and talked about Emmett.

"I'm still looking for a home," the duck finally said, "and I don't even have a name yet, let alone someone who wants to make a home with me." The more he pondered on his own words, the sadder he became. Soon tears streamed down his face.

Angelo, being one who liked to find options in dilemmas, offered, "Why don't we think of a name for you? Would that help?"

Shaking his head sadly, the duck replied, "Parents name their children. I mean, have you ever known anyone who named himself? I was and am an orphan. Emmett didn't even bother to name me. At least he named *you* and *you* were the one who wanted to leave *him!*" His voice trailed off, swallowed by choking tears, sinking in extreme sorrow for himself.

Angelo felt helpless. He sat with the duck for another long while, gave him a long and tight hug, and then took his leave.

The duck seemed oblivious to Angelo's sadness and helplessness. Numbly he watched the deer disappear. He sat stoically by the stream and dwelt on his misery.

When the dawn was almost near he drifted off to sleep, still hadn't moved from the spot where he and Angelo sat the previous day.

When he opened his eyes at midday, he saw another duck in the water. The duck looked exactly like himself.

Overjoyed, he waved to the water, and the other duck waved back. He ventured, "Hi, what's your name?"

The other duck replied, "Hi, what's your name?"

Opening his eyes wide with wonder, he suddenly realized that there was no other duck. The image his own in the water. And the mountain echoing a "fake" reply. Both fooling him as if there were another.

Disappointed, the duck walked away from the stream and started going into the forest, all the while talking to himself, "All I want is someone to love me, anyone, to accept me as his own and to cherish me. But I guess orphans don't deserve things such as homes."

Feeling hopeless, he entered and exited the forests, swam cross the rivers, and climbed over the mountains.

Once he even visited a cave where a pair of good old bears lived.

He encountered a great number of beasts and fowls, but for the first time his heart was so devoid of hope that he did not even bother telling them his life stories.

He simply listened to them, tried his best to understand them and build bridges to their hearts. When they said goodbye to him, they were the only ones who shed tears and said that they would miss him. He did not permit his heart to be touched by any.

"Where there is no hope and expectations, there will be no disappointments," the duck often murmured to himself. He felt that at least this way, he would not be rejected. He witnessed all kinds of wars, conflicts and arguments, and he helped make peace agreements among many. And yet his soul was so empty of desire that he did not feel that he belonged anywhere.

Many years later, one bright sunny day, sitting by another stream, he thought of Angelo and how much he envied the deer.

"Well, we lead similar lives," the duck told himself, "except that the deer chose to lead his life this way. And my life is nomadic because I had no other options. People feel better after they have met me. But I don't let them know me. I am afraid of them leaving me after they had gotten to know me. Misunderstandings are worse than no understandings at all...." His philosophizing went on.

Then suddenly he remembered Angelo, sitting by his side, telling him that perhaps they could name him.

"Silly old deer, " the duck mused, "but then, he may have had a point. Did he mean to say that if I never had parents, I could try to bring myself up? But I did bring myself up, already. A life with Emmett is not possible now. It was circumstances that made Emmett send me away from the only home I knew. Should I learn from the brave people who bore their souls to me? If they were not afraid of me misunderstanding them or rejecting them, why am I so fearful of it? The worst that could happen would be that I try and then end up right back at this point. For the silly o' deer, who seemed to be distraught by my miserable life, I will name myself Hope," he decided.