

# Jasper

## Story

There once was a duckling named Jasper. Jasper was a curious duckling who liked to read books all the time.

One day he read a story about a young duckling who was very ugly. Nobody liked him because he was ugly. But then, one day, this ugly duckling changed. He became a beautiful swan. Everyone loved the new swan because he was so beautiful. And the swan lived happily with many friends. Jasper liked this story very much. Because, you see, Jasper was something of an ugly duckling himself. His feathers weren't as brilliant yellow as everyone else's. His waddle was a little off. He always bumped into things. And sometimes his quack came out a little funny.

Jasper thought of how wonderful it would be to turn into a beautiful swan and have everyone love and admire him. He decided that he would have the same fate as the ugly duckling in the story. Someday he would turn into a beautiful swan. He shared his plan with his mother.

"Jasper," she said, "you just need to worry about being the best duckling you can be. Try and be better everyday and you will become beautiful, Jasper. You will be beautiful in your own way."

Jasper thought about what his mother said, but he wasn't sure he understood. In the meantime, he continued to read his books. He grew to be very smart and wise from all the books he read. Sometimes he would share funny jokes and stories from the things he read, much to everyone's delight. Other times, friends would come to ask Jasper questions because they knew he would probably know the answers. His brothers and sisters still made fun of him for his clumsy ways, but Jasper learned to play the pipe and he made beautiful music that everyone enjoyed.

And so Jasper continued to grow. Every now and again he would look in the mirror hoping to see himself changing into a beautiful swan, thinking that then his life would be truly wonderful. But no matter how many times he looked, or how much he grew, the change never came. He was still funny-looking Jasper.

But Jasper grew to have more and more friends as they realized how funny and smart and talented he was. Many times, Jasper was so busy having fun with his friends and reading his books and playing his music that he forgot about becoming a swan.

Finally, Jasper was all grown up. And he was still funny-looking Jasper.

He went to visit his friend Marisol the sparrow, and he told her, "Marisol, I don't know what to do. I've been waiting and waiting to turn into a beautiful swan, but nothing has happened. And now I am all grown up, and it will never happen!"

"Silly Jasper!" said Marisol. "Why would you want to change who you are? You're great just the way you are. You just wouldn't be Jasper if you tried to change that. And what about all of us? What would we do without our Jasper?"

And Jasper realized that Marisol was right.