

Ulrich Hub

Duck's Backyard

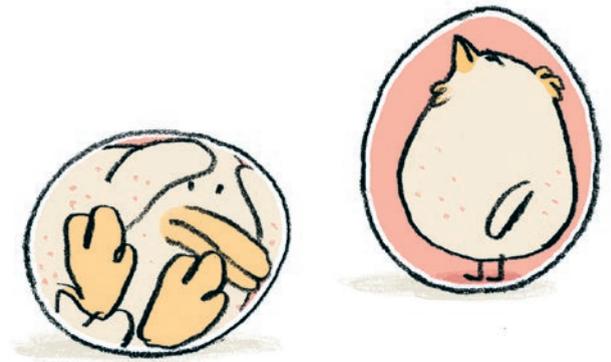


Illustrated by Jörg Mühle

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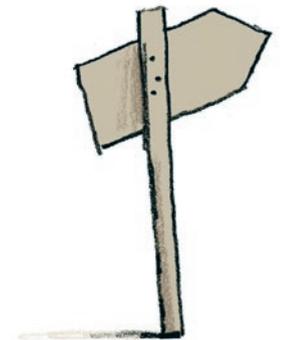
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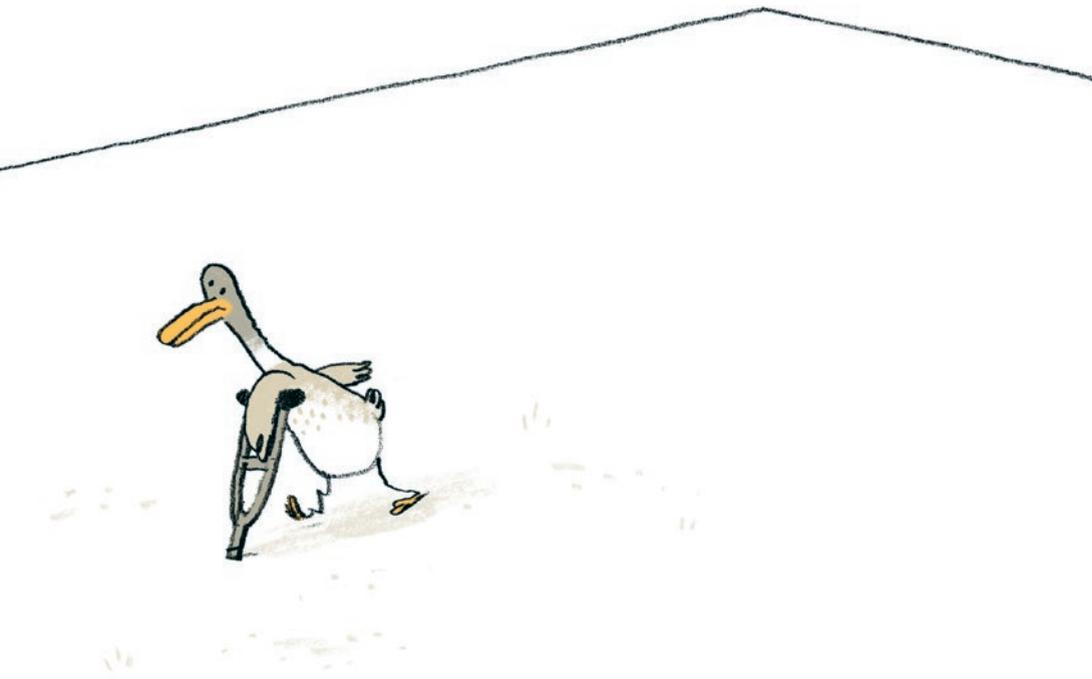


Illustrated by Jörg Mühle
Translated by Helena Kirkby

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The goal is in the way



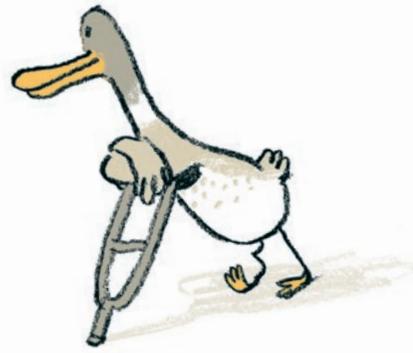


It all begins in a lonely backyard where the sun never shines. Here lives a duck with a wonky leg. She never has any visitors. She has a small supply of peanuts which she'd love to share with someone. But who would choose to set foot in such a gloomy place?

The duck has occasionally thought about venturing into the world outside, but there's always a reason not to. So as not to seize up, she takes a daily walk around the yard with her crutch.

How surprised she is when, one day, someone comes around the corner.

A chicken wearing dark glasses. The duck watches with interest as the chicken wanders



aimlessly around until she finally trips over the duck's crutch.

"How nice to meet you." The duck politely helps the dazed chicken back to her feet. "It's gratifying to meet someone worse off than oneself."

"What do you mean?" the chicken asks in a surprisingly firm voice. "I'm perfectly all right. What makes you think there's something wrong with me?"

"Well, you are blind." The duck sighs. "I can't think of anything worse than being unable to see."

"It doesn't make me any less of a chicken." The chicken laughs. Then she wags her wing. "Being blind has more advantages than you might think. For starters, it means I don't care what you look like—"

The duck's eyes start to blaze. "I don't look too bad, for a duck with a wonky leg—"

"Or if the lights go out in the stairwell and everyone starts to panic," the chicken goes on, unruffled, "I remain completely calm. But the best thing about me is that I'm a remarkably good listener." She stops. "What did you just say?"

"That I look pretty good for a duck with a wonky leg. What's more, I'm loyal, honest and adventurous, and my heart's in the right place—"

"So, you're a duck with a wonky leg!" The chicken quickly stretches her wings and

examines the duck from head to toe, then pats her on the head. “I wanted a guide dog, but a duck with a wonky leg is better than nothing. You’ll do just as well to guide me on my journey.”

At the very thought of leaving her yard, the duck begins to tremble. “I’d need to know where we’d be going.”

“Somewhere in the world,” the chicken murmurs, “there’s a place where all our secret wishes come true. Are you coming?”

“I’ll have to think about it.”

The duck pokes at the ground with her crutch.

It’s not the first she’s heard of this place. Many have set out in search of it, but all have failed. Nobody has ever found it. It probably doesn’t even exist.

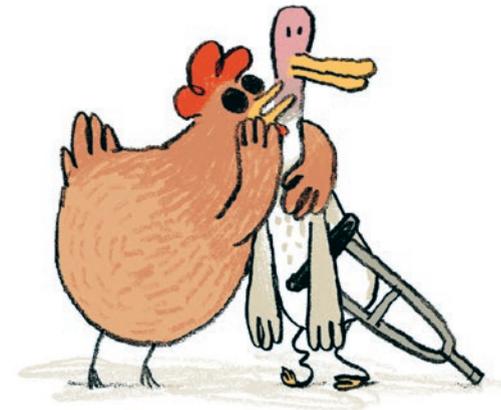
“Are you still there?” asks the chicken.

“I’m still thinking.”

“Take your time. But get a move on.”

“I have a much better idea,” says the duck at last. “Why don’t we just stay here in my backyard? The outside world is riddled with dangers. It’s all too easy to come to a sticky end. We’d be better off making ourselves comfortable here, behind these high walls.”

The chicken yawns loudly. Then she comes closer to the duck—maybe a little too close—lays a wing over her shoulder and whispers beguilingly, “Don’t you have a secret wish? Come on, you can tell me. Everyone has them.”



The duck gulps and feels herself going pink beneath her feathers.

Fortunately, the chicken can't see it.

"My wish will probably never come true."

The duck sighs deeply. "I'll come with you, though. Without my help, you'll end up in the nearest ditch, and I'll blame myself forever.

In which direction is this place?"

"No idea," says the chicken. "But I'll know once I'm there. The main thing is to get started."

"Without me!" The duck promptly backs off.

"I'm not just marching off into the blue. How are we supposed to find this place? We'll only get lost, or drowned, or frozen to death—"

"One thing is for sure," says the chicken.

"If we stay here talking, we'll never find it. Let's get out of this gloomy yard! You keep an eye out for me, and I'll prop you up." She grasps the duck energetically under the wing and declares: "We'll get along splendidly. I just know it.



I spread sunshine wherever I go, while you're as damp as a dishrag."

Every journey begins with a single step.

Very cautiously, the duck sets down one flat foot, then pauses. She slowly sets down the other foot and pauses again.

"What's with the snail's pace?" the chicken asks. "We'll never get there like this. Can't you go faster?"

"You have a lot to learn," the duck says mildly, shuffling forwards. "A duck with a limp can't be

expected to hurry. The quickest way to anywhere is by small steps.”

Before long, she stops again.

“I’m afraid we’ll have to turn back,” she says. “I’ve just remembered I left my crutch in the backyard.”

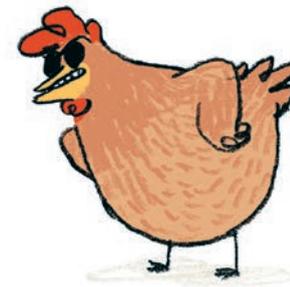
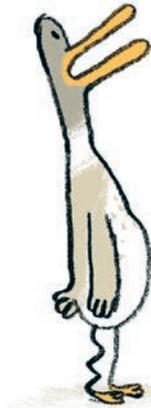
“Back?” the chicken gasps. “Not a chance.” She then hits her head with her wing. “Why didn’t I think of it sooner? We can just fly! We’ll be there in no time.”

The duck shakes her head and shuffles on. “I’m opposed to flying. On principle. If you fly, you lose perspective, and have no chance to admire the charming scenery.”

“I can’t see anything anyway,” the chicken mutters.

“We’ve been walking along a dusty country road,” the duck says. “It goes dead straight to the horizon. On the left are a few stunted bushes—”

“Have you ever tried flying?”



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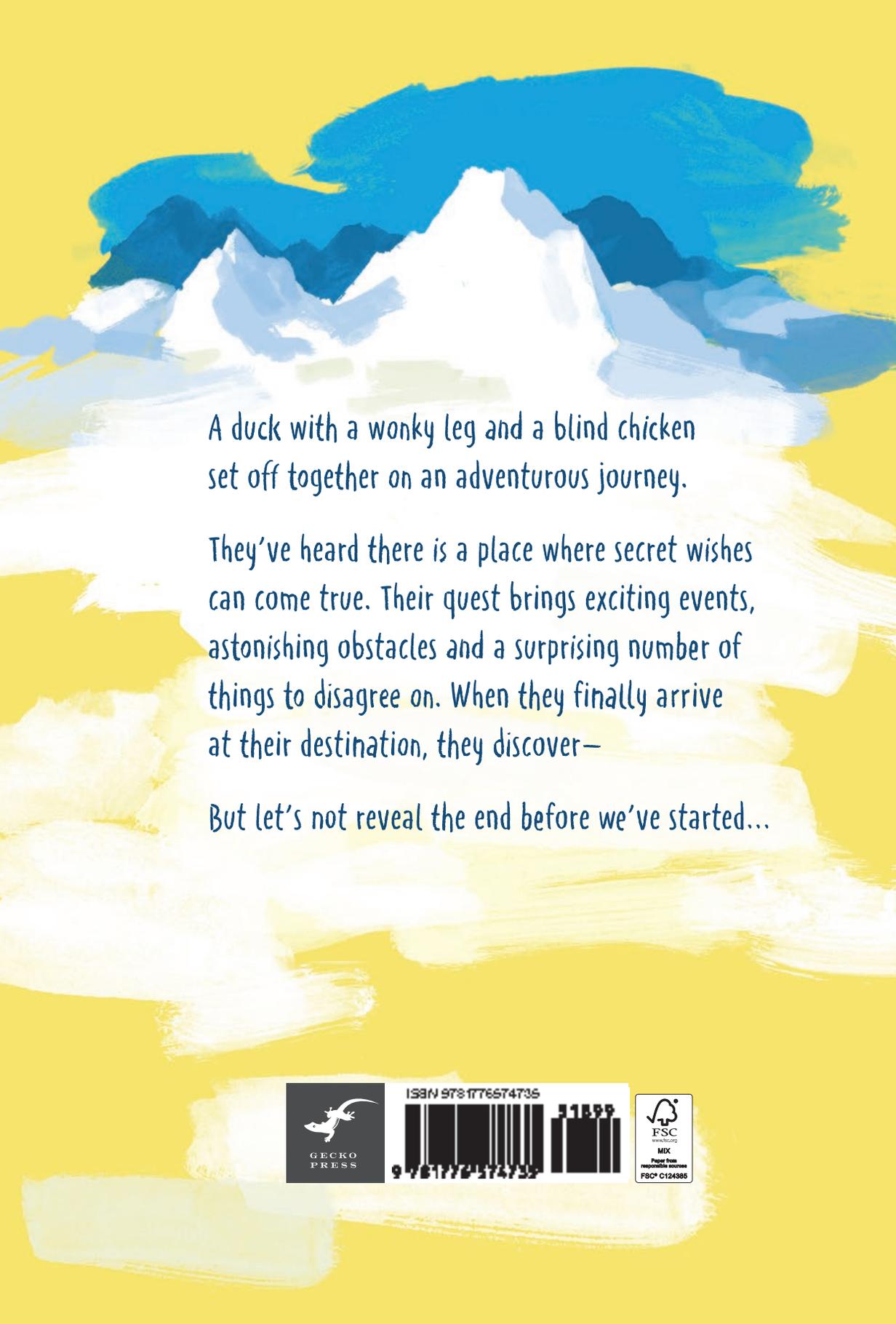
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A duck with a wonky leg and a blind chicken
set off together on an adventurous journey.

They've heard there is a place where secret wishes
can come true. Their quest brings exciting events,
astonishing obstacles and a surprising number of
things to disagree on. When they finally arrive
at their destination, they discover—

But let's not reveal the end before we've started...

