

# Odd-Duck Dreams

By Carrie Schneider

597 words

Please see illustrated dummy: <https://carrieschneiderauthorillustrator.com/odd-duck-dreams/> PASSWORD: Quack

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“Look, Dabblers! Our mallards!”

Devin *adored* ducks. And ducks adored Devin!

Loyal stuffy Dabblers did, for sure.

Her homemade Cobblers did, too! They were some of the greatest friends she’d ever made.

And the wild ducks welcomed her as one of them.  
Which she was, of course – at least partly.

She was also human.  
But the humans didn’t welcome Devin at all.

She studied people-plumage so carefully,  
and mimicked people-calls so precisely,  
but she never fit in.

*[At the edge of a playground, a human child observes other kids as she changes her hairstyle. In a wagon behind her are her discarded cape, hat with feathers, and other duck-themed clothing. Her stuffed toy mallard and some cobbled-together found-object-art ducks watch with concern. A boy approaches her and speaks]*

“Why are you standing there?”

“Why are you standing there?” *[Devin imitates]*

“That’s what I said.”

“That’s what I said.”

“What?”

“What?” *[He rejoins the other kids and they leave, glancing at her over shoulders]*

That was okay.  
Mostly okay.  
Sometimes okay.

Today, at least, would be wonderful!

“Get up, Dabbler! We have work to do. It’s Cobble-making time!”

Cobbling old wonders into new treasures was the BEST.

What would the shed’s dark corners and dusty shelves share today?  
Tools and trinkets, furnishings and fastenings, spokes and spools and springs?

It was none of those!

“Dabbler, look! A new kind of wonder... a wonderfowl!”

*[A real, wild wood duck sits calmly on an upturned crate in the shed]*

“And listen, too! He recognizes us!”

“Oh! You don’t speak Wood Duck, only Mallard? It’s okay, I’ll translate for you!  
He asked me, ‘*What do you wish for, fledgling?*’”

“I want DUCK MAGIC!” *[Devin leaps exuberantly]*

“Oh yes, you’re right. I have that already, of course! What do I *really* wish for?”

Devin didn’t need to think long before covering Dabbler’s ears and whispering,

“Real people friends. Will I ever have some of those?”

“I will?? But what do I DO? How do I camouflage better? Make more observations, more people-plumage?” She dug in her wagon for her notebook.

But this was not what the magic duck was recommending!

“Wait... are you sure? You want me to use my *own* plumage? To be *more* Devin, not *less* Devin?”

“I’m a unique specimen, you see. Undocumented in the wild. *Nobody* wants more Devin.”

*[She shows the duck a taped-in page in her bird guide, depicting a solitary Devin]*

But the duck was silent.

And so Devin again braved the human habitat, this time with a script prepared.

“Good day, people. I am Devin, a duck-human hybrid seeking people friends. The magic duck said...”

But the children giggled and turned away.

“You see, the scientific families *Anatidae* and *Hominidae*...”

And Devin and Dabblers were alone again.

They flew back to the shed in red-cheeked, tear-streaming panic.

“Why did you lie to me?” Devin demanded. “You told me to be me! I knew that couldn’t be right!”

But there was no answer.

So Devin took a deep breath  
and counted to three times three, three times  
and firmly started her day over again.

“It’s cobbling time, Dabblers.”

And as she hauled and hammered, tore and tied, painted and pulled, Devin forgot her sadness.

With loyal Dabblers at her side, she danced and quacked and merrily made, and in fact, she was so completely Devin that she did not even notice...

the other children...

until...

...it was too late to camouflage, hide, or flee.

*[Two kids have been seen approaching in the background as she worked. Noticing them, Devin is now frozen mid-duck-dance]*

“We’re Jay and Chrissie. We live in the green house. Can we play birds, too?”

“Quack!”

Oh no, Devin’s duck voice came out before her mind could gather the proper people words!

But the children quacked back!

*Quack, Quack!*

And they wanted to see the Cobbles.

And cobble their own!

And at the end of a long afternoon of glorious play, Jay asked, “Can we play again tomorrow?”

“Can we play again tomorrow?” Devin echoed, and the children smiled.

“You sure are odd — an odd duck!” Jay grinned. “You’re awesome!”

And Devin found more voice to reply: “You are odd ducks, too. No wings or feathers! But I can fix that...

Tomorrow!”

*[All three children are now wearing cape-wings as they play. On the last page, the wood duck reads the bird guide, open to a new entry on “Duck-Children, a fabulous new species.”]*