

Erica Weems

Promenade

“Oh, it’s you.”

“Me?”

“Yes, the one who wears a hat all the time and walks briskly. Actually, you change your hat, so I don’t always recognize you when you’re just standing there. But I do recognize your walk.”

“How can you possibly distinguish me from everyone who walks around the lake? There must be hundreds of people who come here every day.”

“You humans don’t really understand our optical range. We see things mid-flight. Do you realize how far away that is? And *you*,” the duck said pointedly, “wear glasses, no?”

“Yes, I do.”

“But you don’t always wear them.”

“You are observant. I wear contacts.”

“Contacts.”

“Contact lenses. You put them in your eyes.”

“Lenses that you put in your eyes? How do they stay there?”

“You ducks don’t understand our ocular physiology. But anyway, I didn’t know ducks spoke to humans.”

“Some of us do. Humans are ok around here. People mostly leave us alone – well, they do bother us indirectly, dumping things into our habitat.”

“I see that. I just saw an entire yoga mat floating in the lake, over there, right near those rose bushes, where someone has a tent pitched.”

“I’ve noticed a lot of tents being pitched around here. More and more, even by the footpaths. Don’t humans have special places in the woods where they pitch tents?”

“Yes, those are designated spots for camping. Sometimes people camp in the woods. Other times they camp in the desert. But you do generally need to reserve a spot – and some of these places are booked months in advance.”

“Ah, so it takes planning.”

“And a love of sleeping outdoors.”

“And eating outdoors! I’ve seen fire pits in some of those big parks. Sometimes humans bring lots of cookware along with them to cook things in those pits. Then they wash the cookware in the rivers. It gets mucky for us there, too.”

“That’s called roughing it.”

“Roughing it up, is what it is. Don’t humans enjoy sleeping in their enclosed wooden homes?”

“I do. I also don’t travel to any campground where I would pitch a tent, as I do not own a vehicle. I have nowhere to put one!”

“They seem cumbersome. Definitely not the more graceful way of getting around. *You*,” the duck was emphatic again, “do have grace.”

I blushed under my floppy hat. “Well, thank you. That is a great compliment, coming from a duck.”

“I appreciate a good mover. Have you always been graceful?”

“I’m not sure. When I took dancing lessons as a kid, people said my element was water. Water flows. I identify with water.”

“Well,” said the duck, shaking its tail so its feathers fluffed, and droplets of water radiated out from them, catching the rays of the sun, “so do I.”

And with that, the duck glided off, leaving a gentle, trailing v-shape behind it in the waters of the lake.