



Copter Duck!

AND THE CURSE OF DARK WOOD

Paul Banthorpe

JELLY BEAN BOOKS · CARDIFF
2024

The right of Paul Banthorpe to be identified as the
Author of the Work has been asserted by him in accordance
with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Copter Duck and the Curse of Dark Wood © Paul Banthorpe 2024

Editor: Shaun Russell
Editorial: Keren Williams
Cover and illustrations by Terry Cooper

Printed and bound in the UK by
4edge, 22 Eldon Way, Hockley, Essex, SS5 4AD

ISBN: 978-1-917022-52-1

Published by
Candy Jar Books
Mackintosh House
136 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 1DJ
www.candyjarbooks.co.uk

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a
retrieval system, or transmitted at any time or by any means,
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise
without the prior permission of the copyright holder. This
book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not by way of
trade or otherwise be circulated without the publisher's prior
consent in any form of binding or cover other
than that in which it is published.

For my son Daniel (not so little anymore!)

– PROLOGUE –

ON A WING AND A PRAYER

Little Dan Duck held onto the first rung of the metal ladder and looked up. His feathers were sweating, and his tiny heart raced at what seemed like a thousand beats per minute.

‘Come on, Dan. You can do this,’ came a familiar voice from above. Older brother Douglas had already flown up to the top of the farm water tank. He was trying hard to be a voice of encouragement, but Little Dan only felt a sense of doom and despair.

‘Now put your left foot onto the next rung. You have this, Dan. We believe in you,’ added his sister. Dora was standing just a few waddles behind Dan on the ground.

This was Little Dan's biggest challenge yet and both siblings were doing their best to calm his fear of heights. He had jumped several times off the pigsty (without too many bruises) and glided down the large haystack in the Great Barn without a bump or a scratch.

This was different.

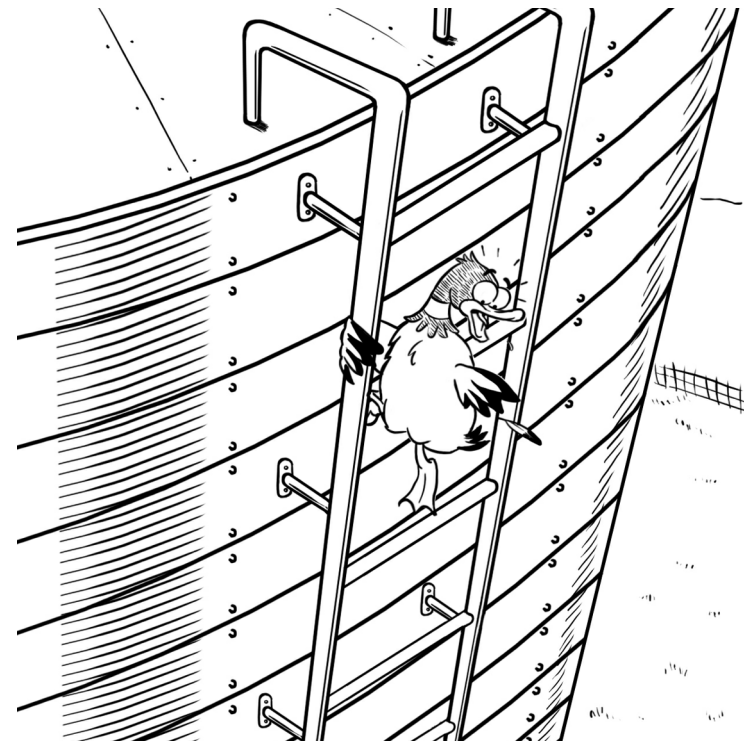
Farmer Wills had installed the new eco-water tank just over a week ago. Nearly as high as the Great Barn itself, it had one useful feature – a ladder attached to the side.

Little Dan knew this was a chance to test his greatest fear. If he was going to learn how to safely glide to the ground, this water tank was the ideal training platform.

Other farm animals gathered to lend their support. Despite this, Hettie and May, two of the farm hens, clucked with disapproval. 'If Mama Duck knew this was happening, she would be as mad as a box of frogs!' exclaimed May.

'After all she has been through,' Hettie responded. 'Doreen has protected that young duck

every day with a love only a mother can give. And this is how he repays her!'



Little Dan gradually made it to halfway, clinging onto the ladder for dear life. A duck scared of heights! *How embarrassing*, he thought. When the other ducklings realised he could not fly, the teasing had been hurtful. Now a year later, Little Dan and

his duck friends were the best of buddies. It was still hard not being able to join in with their flying games, but everyone treated Little Dan with love and kindness.

‘Dan, I’m getting a bit chilly up the top here,’ Douglas called down from his lofty position. ‘Just a few more rungs to go!’

Mischief, the farm cat, looked on from his favourite sleeping spot on top of the farm well. He had lost five of his nine lives so far, he recalled. *Or was it six?* He had fallen off so many high places in his life, he had lost count! Unlike cats, he knew ducks only had one life to lose. So, he peered up at Little Dan with one eye closed, hoping for the best, but fearing the worst.

Little Dan finally made it to the top of the water tank. Douglas gave him a hearty slap on the back. ‘That was the hard part, Dan. Now just jump off and glide back to the ground. What could possibly go wrong?’

‘Thank you, Douglas. I’ll bear that in mind when I hit the farmhouse wall at speed!’

Bess the Sheepdog was also at hand to shout up words of encouragement. ‘If you do injure yourself,

Little Dan, fear not, for I am first-aid trained. I need to be on emergency call for Farmer Wills and his wife you see. Their son, Michael, just seven, bless him, has this thing. He keeps falling to the ground. If I see him do this, I have to bark at the top of my voice until help comes. First-aid trained, I am. So, no need to worry your little head.’

‘Er, thanks, Bess!’ Little Dan called down to his loyal friend, almost losing his balance as he did so.

‘Whoa! Steady, Dan,’ Douglas cried, grabbing his brother by the wing.

The two farmyard goats Messi and Ronaldo joined the watching crowd below. ‘If I could fly, I would be the “Greatest Flyer of All Time”!’ Messi the Goat remarked to his taller, more manicured sibling.

‘I think not, brother. When it comes to flight, *I* would be the greatest of all time. Simply because I am Ronaldo the Goat!’

‘Shhhh, would you two please be quiet,’ quaked an annoyed Dora. ‘My brother is trying to concentrate up there!’

Little Dan moved to the edge of the water tank and looked down. His legs jelly wobbled, and he said a quick prayer. 'Watch out below, here I come!' he cried.

With wings outstretched, he dived towards the ground. All the animals held their breath and watched the brave young duck swoop through the air like a feathery missile. Dora gulped as her little brother just missed hitting the ground. Douglas grimaced as Dan almost collided with Hettie and May the hens. The goats, Messi and Ronaldo, dived for cover as the low gliding duck shot over their heads.

Mischief stood up on his paws ready to leap off the well's brick wall to safety. It was too late. Little Dan's right wing flicked his back legs, sending the poor moggy down the well with a thud, meow, and a splash!

Little Dan did his best to glide straight and true. He tried to flap both wings to correct his line of flight, but it was all in vain.

'Nooooo!' cried Dora, as she saw her brother

disappear over the courtyard fence.

Douglas was already flying down to the potential crash site. Bess the Sheepdog was on high first-aid alert, making her way to the back of the farmhouse.

It was not a pretty sight. They found Little Dan head first in a pile of cow manure, only his feet visible to his on-rushing rescuers.

'Poo-wee! That is surely the "Greatest Dive of All Time"!' announced the goats.

A few moments later, Little Dan was sitting up wiping 'you know what' from his face. His pride hurt more than anything else. Everyone was very kind though, giving him lots of hugs and praise for being so brave.

Mischief clawed his way out of the farm well. He was soaking wet with a large bump on his feline head. *That's six lives lost*, he huffed. *Or is it now seven?*