

## Duck's Backyard

**Ulrich Hub**

**Jörg Mühle, Illustrator**

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In Ulrich Hub's early reader *Duck's Backyard*, two feathery beings find that their imperfections make them the perfect friends for each other.

A duck with a wonky leg who needs someone to support her pairs with a blind chicken who needs someone to see for her. After setting out in search for a place where dreams come true, they encounter a yawning chasm and a dark forest. They work toward the realization that they might have had what they were looking for all along.

Lyrical and rhythmic, this fast and urgent story is bold about examining the rocky parts of relationships, too. The chicken and duck insult each other and argue, yet they also make up in the end. Further, the very details that make them different from one another enable them to complete their quest: the chicken's rash, carefree attitude encourages the duck to dream, and the duck's own reserved, cautious nature keeps the chicken safe. And because the chicken and the duck are only ever referred to as such, the story's lessons come to seem applicable to all kinds of friendships.

The book's illustrations add an additional layer of charm. The duck and the chicken are the most prominent features in the illustrations, with soft, pastel-colored backgrounds behind them in some images. Those less prominent backgrounds reveal elements of their adventures while suggesting that their greatest challenge is not the physical dangers that they face, but their struggles to accept each other and themselves.

The endearing illustrated story *Duck's Backyard* follows along as two friends overcome their differences and realize what matters most.

VIVIAN TURNBULL (September / October 2022)

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