

WATER PARK

TALES

Caleb Coot



Mummy Coot was going out to collect some berries for lunch.

“Will you look after the eggs for me, please, Caleb?” she asked.

Caleb looked down at the bright, shiny new eggs in the nest and nodded.

“I’ll sit on the eggs and keep them warm” he promised.

Looking after the eggs was a very important job. They would soon be Caleb’s little brothers and sisters.



It was a lovely, sunny day and the nest was very warm and cosy. Caleb began to doze.

Then, suddenly.....

Thump. Thud. Thump. Thud.

Caleb jumped. What was that?

The nest was beginning to shake.

Backwards and forwards.

Backwards and forwards.

The nest tilted and trembled. It wobbled and swayed. Caleb found himself sliding across the precious eggs.



Sammi Swan was tugging at Caleb's nest, pulling out pieces of straw and twigs and then tucking them neatly into her own nest nearby.

"Stop doing that" said Caleb, crossly.

Sammi ignored him and went on pulling at his nest.

"Stop it!" said Caleb, in a loud voice. "Stop stealing my nest. This is a *coot's* nest, not a *swan's* nest."

But still Sammi ignored him.

The nest was shaking even more and the hole in its side was getting bigger and bigger.



The eggs began to wobble. They shook and they swayed and they bounced so much that Caleb thought they were going to fall out of the nest.

“What am I going to do?” wondered Caleb. Big tears rolled slowly down his cheeks. “I *promised* mummy that I’d look after the eggs and now I’m going to lose them.”

Suddenly, an idea came to him.

“I know what I’ll do” he said to himself. “I’ll stop Sammi Swan from stealing our nest *and* I’ll save the eggs.”



Caleb dove into the water and swam down to the bottom of the lake. He was looking for something to help him with his plan.

He spotted some long, straggly weeds.

“That’s just what I need” Caleb said to himself.

“I’ll take these weeds back to the nest” he said “and I’ll stop Sammi from taking any more of our nest.”

Caleb gathered the weeds in his beak and swam quickly back to the surface.



Caleb dragged the weeds onto the nest then turned around and dived back into the lake.

Down to the bottom of the lake, gather the weeds and back up to the nest.

Down to the bottom of the lake, gather the weeds and back up to the nest.

At last Caleb was satisfied. He had enough weed for his plan.



Caleb began to drape the weed across the nest.

He draped it from the front to the back.

He draped it from side to side.

Front to back. Side to side

Front to back. Side to side



On and on Caleb worked until finally, he had used up all the weeds.

He sat back and surveyed his work with satisfaction.

There! That should do it. Sammi wouldn't get any more twigs or straw from *this* nest.

The nest looked more like a spider's web than a coot's nest.



Sammi Swan was *still* trying to steal the twigs and the straw. She pulled and she pulled and she pulled.....but the twigs and the straw wouldn't budge.

Instead, long pieces of weed began to twist around her beak.

Sammi tossed her head, trying to shake off the weeds but they were sticky and they clung to her beak.

"Mmmmmm!" she tried to shout for help.

But nobody heard her.



Caleb sat back on the nest. The weed felt damp beneath him but the eggs were still warm from the sunshine.

Sammi Swan had given up trying to steal the nest. She was too tangled up with weed to steal anything! The weed had wrapped itself around her beak so tightly that she couldn't even open her mouth.

"Mmmmmmm" she said.

The more she tried to shake the weeds off, the tighter they became.

"Mmmmmmmmm" was all she could say.



“Who is making all that noise?” Winnie Water Vole’s head popped up from her burrow.

“Mmmmmmm” said Sammi.

“Oh dear! What have you done here, Caleb?” Winnie was staring up at the spider’s web nest. “I think you need to tidy up before your mum comes home” she told him “I’d better come and help you.”

Caleb nodded, gratefully

Winnie helped Caleb to pull the weeds off the nest then she disappeared into her burrow. A few minutes later she reappeared, pushing a big bundle of twigs and straw in front of her.



By the time Mummy Coot came home everything was spic and span. The nest had been repaired and Caleb was sitting comfortably on the warm eggs.

"You've looked after the eggs very well, Caleb" said Mummy Coot.

"Egg minding was easy peasy" said Caleb.

"I'm very proud of you" said mummy.

Caleb smiled at Winnie.

"Mmmmmmmm" muttered Sammi Swan.





Coot on nest on Willow Pool

Coots are plucky little birds who will stand up to any larger birds or animals who threaten their young. They look slightly comical when they run on land, with long legs and round 'pom-pom' like bodies.