**Quackling**

Retold by Aaron Shepard

Once there was a very small duck with a very loud quack. So they called him Quackling.

Now, Quackling was clever and he worked hard, so he saved up a good deal of money. In fact, he saved up so much that the King himself came to borrow some.

Quackling was proud to loan his money to the King. But a year went by, then two, then three, and the King never paid him back.

“I’ve waited long enough,” said Quackling. So he took a sack for the money, and he started for the castle, calling,

“Quack! Quack! Quack!   
I want my money back!”

Before long, he came upon a ladder leaning against a wall.

“Where are you going, Quackling?” said Ladder.

“To the King for my money,” said Quackling.

“To the King!” said Ladder. “How wonderful! Will you take me with you?”

“Why not?” said Quackling. “One can never have too many friends.” And he called out,

“Quack! Quack! Quack!   
Ladder into sack!”

Quick as you can blink, Ladder was in the sack. Then Quackling walked on, calling,

“Quack! Quack! Quack!   
I want my money back!”

Not much later, he came upon a river flowing through a wood.

“Where are you going, Quackling?” said River.

“To the King for my money,” said Quackling.

“To the King!” said River. “How splendid! Will you take me with you?”

“Why not?” said Quackling. “One can never have too many friends.” And he called out,

“Quack! Quack! Quack!   
River into sack!”

Quick as you can wink, River was in the sack. Then Quackling walked on, calling,

“Quack! Quack! Quack!   
I want my money back!”

In a little while, he came upon a beehive hanging from a tree.

“Where are you going, Quackling?” said Beehive.

“To the King for my money,” said Quackling.

“To the King!” said Beehive. “How marvelous! Will you take me with you?”

Now, Quackling’s sack was getting full, but he thought there might be just enough room.

“Why not?” said Quackling. “One can never have too many friends.” And he called out,

“Quack! Quack! Quack!   
Beehive into sack!”

Quick as you can think, Beehive was in the sack. Then Quackling walked on, calling,

“Quack! Quack! Quack!   
I want my money back!”

Soon after, Quackling arrived at the King’s castle. He marched right up to the guards and told them, “I’ve come for my money!”

The guards went inside and told the prime minister. The prime minister told the King.

“Who does that Quackling think he is?” said the King. “Never mind. Just put him in the pit!”

So they put Quackling in the pit and left him there.

“Help!” cried Quackling. “I’ll never get out!”

Then he remembered Ladder. So he called out,

“Quack! Quack! Quack!   
Ladder out of sack!”

Quick as you can blink, Ladder was out of the sack. Ladder leaned against the side of the pit, and Quackling climbed out. Then Quackling stood there, calling,

“Quack! Quack! Quack!   
I want my money back!”

“How did that Quackling get out of the pit?” said the King. “Never mind. Just put him in the pot!”

So they put Quackling in the pot and set it on the fire.

“Help!” cried Quackling. “I’m in a stew!”

Then he remembered River. So he called out,

“Quack! Quack! Quack!   
River out of sack!”

Quick as you can wink, River was out of the sack. River put out the fire and flowed away. Then Quackling got out, calling,

“Quack! Quack! Quack!   
I want my money back!”

“How did that Quackling get out of the pot?” said the King. “Never mind. Just bring him here, and I’ll put him in his place—for good!”

So they brought Quackling to the King. The King tried to grab him.

“Help!” cried Quackling. “This is the end!”

Then he remembered Beehive. So he called out,

“Quack! Quack! Quack!   
Beehive out of sack!”

Quick as you can think, Beehive was out of the sack. The bees rushed from the hive and started to sting the King.

“Help!” cried the King. He fled from the castle, and the bees followed. They chased him all the way to— Well, no one knows where, for they never saw him again.

“Hooray!” cried the people of the castle, and the prime minister said, “We never liked that King anyway.”

So they put Quackling on the throne and gave him a crown.

“Will you be our King?” said the guards.

“Why not?” said Quackling. “One can never have too many friends.”

This tale is retold from “Drakestail” in *The Red Fairy Book* of Andrew Lang, 1890. Lang’s version in turn is a translation of “Bout-d’-Canard” (“Duck Butt”) in *Affenschwanz et Cetera,* by Charles Marelle, 1888. The story, known in various forms around the world, is probably most popular in France and Spain, where it sometimes features the character “Half-Chick” in place of the duck.