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## Chapter 1

# A New Pet

“Mom! Guess what happened at school today!” seven-year-old Weston shouted as he bounded through the open doorway.

“Hmmm. Did some eggs hatch in the incubator?” Mom wondered, smiling.

“Yes! Both of the Canada goose eggs Brother Kent put in the incubator hatched today! The goslings were tired when they got out of their shells. Brother Kent said pecking their way out of the shell was hard work for the little birds.”

“It’s good they hatched since the school year is almost over,” Mom said.

“Yup, they hatched just in time,” Weston agreed.

Twelve-year-old Linda was already sitting at the table, eating her after-school snack. “Brother Kent thought watching the eggs hatch would be interesting for all of us,” she explained, “so he invited Weston’s class over to our room when he realized the eggs were hatching.”

“Brother Kent said we may have one goose to raise,” sixteen-year-old Jordan chimed in, “and Brandon’s family can have the other one.”

“That sounds like fun,” Mom said. “A Canada goose should fit right in with our small farm. I don’t think Dad will mind, and it will be an interesting pet.”

“I can hardly wait!” Weston jumped up and down in his excitement. He spotted his younger sisters, Melody and Janna,

out in the sandbox. He hurried outside to tell them about the goslings.

“How did school go today, Weston?” Dad asked at the supper table that evening.

“We watched two Canada geese hatch, and it was so interesting! But they weren’t very cute. They had long necks and big feet,” Weston said, wiggling in his excitement to tell the news.

“We get the privilege of having one for a pet,” Mom said, smiling at Dad. “That is, if you say it’s okay.”

“That sounds interesting,” Dad replied. “We could keep it in a box until it’s older.”

“What’s it going to eat?” wondered five-year-old Melody.

“In the book *Grandma’s Goose*, Grandma fed Sophie oatmeal, and when Sophie was a little older, she fed her dandelions,” Mom remembered. “Maybe we could try that.”



On the first day of summer vacation, one of Jordan's classmates brought the tiny brown and yellow gosling to Weston's house. It huddled in the corner of a small box.

“It’s so cute!” Melody exclaimed, stroking the fuzzy little bird.

“It looks nicer than when it hatched,” Weston agreed.

Mom set a small jar lid full of uncooked oatmeal and a small dish of water in the box.

“Take the box to the basement,” she instructed Linda. “Dad and the boys will be home soon, and we can find a better place for it later.”

After supper that evening, Linda brought the box upstairs, and the children all crowded around to watch the gosling.

“What’s its name?” three-year-old Janna wondered.

Weston giggled. “Look how it waddles around,” he said. “I think we should name it Waddles.”

“That’s the perfect name,” agreed Jordan. “It fits him.”

The children jumped up, leaving Waddles to rest.

*Peep, peep, peep!* protested Waddles.  
*Peep, peep, peep!*

Weston ran to the box. *Waddles must not like to be alone*, he thought, *because when he sees me, he's quiet*. He would try to sneak away when the gosling wasn't watching.

"Weston, please come dry dishes for Linda," Mom called. Weston quietly got up and tiptoed into the kitchen.

*Peep, peep, peep!* cried Waddles. *Peep, peep, peep!*

"Why isn't he happy?" Weston asked Linda.

"He's probably lonely. Since humans were the first thing he saw when he came out of his shell, he thinks we're his family. When he sees us beside him, he feels safe, just like you feel

safe when Dad and Mom are with you,” Linda explained.

*Peep, peep, peep! Peep, peep, peep!*  
Waddles fussed and fussed. He didn’t like to be alone.

“I don’t like when he’s so noisy,” Melody said. “How can we make him be quiet?”

“Try wrapping a rag around him,” suggested Dad. “That might make him feel like he’s under his mother’s wings.”

Fourteen-year-old Sherwin carefully wrapped a rag around the noisy gosling. The loud peeps stopped, and contented twitters began.

Sherwin set Waddles back in the box, and everyone sighed in relief. At last he was quiet.

Then, *peep, peep, peep!* Waddles wiggled and squirmed. His head peeked out from under the rag, and he knew he



was alone again. *Peep, peep, peep! Peep, peep, peep!*

Mom sighed. “He’s cute, but he’s so loud! Melody, why don’t you sit here and take care of him while Linda and I finish tidying the kitchen.” Mom set Waddles, wrapped in the rag, in Melody’s lap. Waddles twittered contentedly and snuggled deeper into her lap. Now he felt safe!

When Mom and Linda were finished, they joined the rest in the living room for family devotions. While the children settled into comfortable positions, Dad paged thoughtfully through his worn Bible. Jordan tossed his book into the magazine rack, and everyone turned their attention to Dad.

“I believe we’re ready for Psalm 91,” Dad said. In his gentle, calm voice, he began reading the psalm.

“Waddles is a little like us,” Dad remarked after he had finished. “When Waddles is lonely or scared, he lets us know. We hold him and try to make him feel safe. When we’re scared or lonely, we can take our burdens to God, who comforts us and keeps us under His wings, as it says in verse 4.”

From underneath his fuzzy rag, Waddles twittered contentedly. The children sat quietly, thinking about Dad’s words.

“And now it’s bedtime,” Dad said finally. “What shall we do with Waddles?” He looked at Mom.

“Sherwin, why don’t you take Waddles’ box up to your room for the night?” Mom suggested. “Good night, children.”