

## Young Authors' : : Club : :

JUNIOR DAY

### THE HANDY PUDDLE

Original by Philip Dick

Today, it is January the 22. I was reading the book "The White Feather" when I heard a piping whistle from outdoors. I thought it was one of the neighbor's children blowing a whistle. Then I realized that it was raining, and that probably it was something else, then. So I looked out of the window, and there in a big tree outside was a flock of fat birds, and I was sure that they had been whistling to each other.

There must have been hundreds of them, they filled the trees, and overflowed on to the fence. They were large, possibly robins, and every now and then one of them would fly down to the wet lawn and swallow a worm. After a bit I went back to reading my book; there were always birds around.

I was disturbed again, but this time by a flapping noise like someone splashing a pool of water. I noticed that the sun was out, and I looked out of my window again to see what had happened. Outside there was a wide driveway, it was the neighbor's, and joined ours. Right in the middle of the concrete driveway was a puddle of muddy rain water, just below the drooping branches of the tree. Now the birds had flown down from the tree, and were standing around the puddle of water, and one brave bird was taking a bath. He sat in the middle of the puddle for a second, quite still, and then he dipped his head and raised his tail, and splashed the water with his wings until he was quite wet. Then he shook off to prove his feathers.

He had not left the puddle for more than a minute, when another bird waded out into the middle. He also ducked his head under the water (like a duck) and flapped the water with his wings. Then another ventured in, and soon the puddle was full of chirping, laughing birds.

Only about ten of the birds bathed, the more timid, or clean ones, sat in the branches of the trees and watched like an audience. But now and then one of the bathing bravest would fly up to the tree to dry off, and to prove, until there was only one bird in the bath.

He sat in the middle, and headed into a feathery ball, waiting for the others to return. Suddenly the birds in the tree swooped down to the bath, and soon it was a squawking, splashing mass of birds. Then suddenly ten of the birds began to scuffle and the others flew away. The two bathing birds stopped, ashamed, and stood on the shore, calling the other birds back.

As I look out now, I see that they have become tired of bathing and are drinking the water! Wouldn't it be nice if we could go outside and bathe in a puddle? But alas, that is one of the dreams of civilization.

Is this entertaining? First-hand observations are so easily made so with just a little effort. This sketch has little real interest and personal touch. I became definitely interested in these birds, as I read. There are some outstanding word pictures: "the someone splashing pool of water"; the last part of paragraph three; and the reference to the birds as "washing themselves". "Laughing birds" is an original idea, if not a convincing one. Anything prominent, such as a driveway (paragraph three) should be referred to in the present tense. The title doesn't do justice to the article. In my opinion, the concluding paragraph sounds off the article nicely.



Aunt Flo

CREDIT LINE  
Five credits for Philip Dick,  
Feb. 3, 1942.

Aunt Flo  
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