

Mother Duck

Chris Lee

I am a crazy duck lady.

My husband has chooks which I'm not too fussed about and our three adolescent children are too tangled in screens and surging hormones, stumbling about learning how to navigate a crazy world, to pay much attention elsewhere; but I love my ducks.

Watching them swim about on the dam is a balm to my soul. It's a calm and quiet world where sleek heads dip and shimmer, wings stretch and water glitters, where something in me exhales.

My bantam girl 'Kansas' is my favourite. Her olive beak is unique. White feathers are peppered with freckles of grey across her wings, and a treasure of shiny emerald green hides on the underside.

She'd recently hatched nine perfect ducklings, and my heart soared. Tiny golden buttons bobbing on the surface like dandelion wishes. But the dam is perilous for such little nuggets, with ravenous crows and hawks flying overhead. I had to get them to a safer space. I had plans.

I found myself waist-deep in the cold water, hammering star pickets into the mud and rolling out chicken wire so they had an enclosed haven with their mum for a short period as they grew.

The problem was, those tiny little baubles could still fit through the chicken wire. As I enclosed Kansas in her new house, the little ones scooted sporadically into the wider dam, happily swimming around, obliviously launching at bugs while Kansas darted and flapped from behind the wire, quacking frantically for them to stay close, her cries desperate: 'Get back here! It's not safe out there.'

My still, small voice did not achieve much, though I tried to reassure. 'Kansas! It's okay. I see everything from here. This is for their protection, I won't let anything happen to them. Even while they're straying, if something flies overhead, I have my big stick as defence. Nothing stands a chance against me. Be patient, trust me, I'm bringing them back to you!'

As I stood there in that water, closing up the holes and using my rod to gently direct the little ducklings back to their mum, I felt the quiet voice of revelation whispering to my spirit.

I am Kansas.

I've been flapping and fussing at God about my children: trying to make sense of what's going on, anxious for the future I can't see, about what they're getting into, choices they're making that might not be particularly wise, the distance they're straying.

But there stands God. Providing, protecting, comforting; loving us. Rod and staff in hand, securing our perimeter, aware of the dangers that circle overhead.

Poor Kansas in such turmoil, not knowing I have this under control. It's going to be okay. I'm standing right there in that cold muddy water with her – and with her precious ones. I love them too. I am gently guiding them home. Poor Kansas. Poor me. We panic in the unknown. But from where God stands, he can see everything. We're going to be okay.