

## The Freedom of Flight

Once there was a little bird. This little bird was not much different from other little birds. He was bright and cheery. Ready to see what was out there beyond his nest. He couldn't wait to soar above the trees and begin a new adventure. He waited day and night until he would finally be able to leave and explore the outside world.

Eventually the day came. The little bird, wings wobbling at first, took his first big shot at flying. Immediately the little bird felt the rush of the wind. He looked at all the trees that were slowly getting farther and farther away from him. Finally, the little bird felt free, like he had never felt before.

The little bird flew for what felt like forever until finally stopping to get some rest. As he sat on a tree branch he went over the moments he was high up in the air. He decided those moments were the best he had ever experienced.

Suddenly, the little bird noticed a particularly large owl coming in his direction. Quickly the little bird looked for a place to hide. He hopped along the branch and found a little alcove in the tree which he entered. In the alcove he found another bird. It was a blue jay.

"Are you hiding from the owl?" The little bird asked.

"Yes, it should be gone any minute." The blue jay responded.

They both waited awhile for the owl to go away. Soon, however, the little bird grew impatient. He wanted to be out in the sky again. He wanted to be up in the air high above the trees. The little bird glanced over at the blue jay who showed no signs that the owl was gone. The little bird decided he was just going to have to see for himself. So, the little bird came out of the alcove to see that the owl had moved on.

"The owl is gone!" The little bird shouted into the alcove to the blue jay.

The blue jay then came out of the alcove and joined the little bird on the branch. The blue jay watched as the little bird started jumping around the branch excited to start flying again. Then the blue jay took off. The little bird decided to go in the same direction as the blue jay.

“Are you following me?” The blue jay asked once it realized the little bird was nearby.

“Not really. I like flying, and I want to learn all about the outside world.” The little bird said.

As they flew the little bird asked the blue jay many questions about the outside. He wanted to know as much as he could. The little bird was excited to learn about the world he had waited so long to be out in. The little bird and the blue jay soared above the trees and watched as the outside danced beneath them.

“I’m so glad I’m a bird! Who wouldn’t want to soar above all this and be free?!” The little bird exclaimed.

“There is still much you don’t know about the world, little bird.” The blue jay said.

“What do you mean?” The little bird asked curiously.

“Follow me.” The blue jay stated.

The blue jay led the little bird to a house. The little bird peered into an open window as they landed on a nearby branch. To his surprise he saw another bird inside the house. It was a beautiful yellow canary. However, the little bird soon grew very confused. As he continued to observe the inside of the house he realized the canary was inside a wire box.

“What’s that bird doing in there?” The little bird asked, puzzled.

“Here we have an example of a caged bird.” The blue jay responded.

The little bird watched as the canary started to fly around the cage. The canary only got a few inches from where it started before it had to stop. The little bird glanced up at the sky above him. Immediately remembering the great feeling of soaring above everything. Surely the canary would much rather fly in the sky than that small cage the little bird thought.

“Wouldn’t it be much happier if it were out here?” The little bird asked.

“You would think,” The blue jay paused. “However, this particular bird has known nothing other than the cage that surrounds him. This has established a false sense of freedom.”

The little bird didn’t understand. Why would a bird rather be in such a small little space when a big, grand sky exists? Why would it continue to try to fly only to have to stop a few

seconds later? The little bird once again remembered the excitement he got when flying in the wide open sky.

“Let me ask you something, little bird. How is one supposed to escape if one never knew they were imprisoned?”

The little bird didn't answer, instead he watched as a human came into view. The human came over to the canary's cage and opened up a little door. The canary slowly came to the door before finally leaping out and flying up to the ceiling of the room. It flew from one side of the room to the other. Fully, extending its wings and happily chirping.

“Oh!” The little bird said. “So, it *can* still fly around. I guess it is still free then.”

“No, little bird. Freedom is not the ability to do something. Freedom is the ability to have a choice in doing something. This canary has no choice about *when* it gets to fly. So, it's not truly free.”

The little bird thought about what the blue jay said for a moment. He decided that the blue jay was right. He knew that if he were in the canary's place he wouldn't like not being able to fly around when he wanted. Suddenly, the little bird felt compelled to help the canary.

“Can't we tell it that out here is a much better place to be? Out here it can fly when it wants!”

“I'm afraid it wouldn't do much good, little bird. The canary would most likely prefer to stay in its cage. It wouldn't want to leave the only place it has ever known. That's its choice. So, unfortunately there is nothing we can do to help it.”

The blue jay started off again leaving the little bird only a brief moment to glance back at the canary one last time. He watched as the canary was ushered back to the cage. The door was shut and the canary once again only had a little space to fly. The little bird started off behind the blue jay. That canary will never know what it's like to truly soar outside in the sky, the little bird thought. Suddenly the little bird felt quite sad, and he knew he had to do something.

Early the next day the little bird flew back to the window. This time without the company of the blue jay. The window was open like it had been on the previous day. The little bird peered in, and once again saw the yellow canary in the cage. Then, the little bird hopped down to the window sill. He gazed at the wire bars that were now right in front of him and wondered how anyone could be satisfied with them.

“Hello there!” The little bird started.

Immediately the canary whirled around and flew to the edge of the cage farthest from the little bird. It stared at the little bird with such fright one would have thought it was looking at a huge bear. The canary had rarely been visited by other birds. It didn’t know what to do.

“I was just wondering if you would like to come outside. The sky is a lot better than that cage, you know.” The little bird said while trying to come closer to the canary.

“The sky!” The canary suddenly squawked. “Why would I go out there when I’m perfectly safe here?”

“Well the sky is much bigger-” The little bird tried.

“The sky is full of terrible things!” The canary shouted.

“But in the sky you could fly whenever-” The little bird offered.

“I’ll never go out there, it’s much too scary.” The canary stated.

The little bird stared at the trembling yellow canary in front of him. He tried to reason with the canary multiple times however, everytime the canary would only shout about how it’s too scary to go outside of its cage. The little bird soon grew very frustrated.

“How do you even know if anything bad is even out here if you’ve never been?” The little bird asked impatiently.

“I’ve heard horrible and terrible things about the outside.” The canary responded.

“But, you’ve never actually seen anything. So, the outside can’t be that bad right?”

“No. No. No.” The canary said while shaking its head. “The outside is not safe. I suggest you also go back to your cage too. It’s safer that way.”

The little bird finally gave up. He flew back up to the nearby branch to find the blue jay sitting there. They both watch as the canary is let out of its cage. It dutifully flies around the room before once again coming back. It sits quite content in its little cage. Not even bothering to notice any of the world that is going on around it.

“It doesn’t understand.” The little bird sighs.

“What doesn’t it understand, little bird?” The blue jay asks.

“It doesn’t understand that the sky is not just a place of terror. It’s only working with the stories that it made up in its own head. It doesn’t even know what it’s actually like out here.”

“And could you do anything about it?” The blue jay asked patiently.

“No.” The little bird moans. “It won’t listen to a word I say.”

The blue jay nods. The little bird sat in frustration for a moment. The little bird could pinpoint every flaw in the canary’s argument. He knew that the outside *could* be a scary place, but he also knew how good it *could* be. He wouldn’t want to give up soaring above everything just because he was scared of something. Especially if he wasn’t even sure if he needed to be scared.

“Sometimes you just need to move on and accept that it’s not worth the fight. Especially if one isn’t even willing to listen.” The blue jay says before asking,

“You are free, aren’t you little bird?”

“Well, yes. When I’m flying I definitely feel free.” The little bird responded.

“Then, enjoy it. Don’t let others take it away or hinder it under any circumstance. You know what being free truly means. So, take every chance you have and *live*.” The blue jay says before flying off high into the sky.

The little bird sits on the branch for a bit longer and thinks about the blue jay’s words. The little bird thinks back to all the times he soared above the trees and felt free. He thinks back to the time when he hid from an owl, even then he wasn’t *really* scared. He was just excited to fly again once the owl was gone. The little bird decided that even though the outside might seem scary, the

reward of freedom is worth it. So, the little bird takes flight once again, not even feeling bad about not looking back at the canary who knows nothing of the sky.