

A Bird's Eye View

by Mary G. Lane, Virginia

I only slightly remember being in the egg. I remember the dark warmth that made me constantly sleepy. I remember growing so big I felt my egg was a prison instead of a shelter. I wanted to get out, although I did not know what lay beyond. By pecking on the eggshell as hard as I could, I managed to emerge halfway out. What a dazzlingly bright world greeted me! So big, so wondrous, so terrifying. I strained until I broke the remaining eggshell in half. As soon as my shell was broken, I wanted to creep back in.

I cried out in a startlingly high voice. I was so surprised by the sound of my cheeping that I almost fell onto another egg. Feathery comfort surrounded me at once, and I knew instinctively that this was Mother.

There were three of us baby birds: I, a female, and two males. I was the eldest because I had hatched first. My mother looked us over and spoke to each of us. "You are 'Leaf,'" she told me. "Because you are so little and light. Your brothers are 'Twig' and 'Sunshine.'"

We became fast friends, the three of us. We learned to cry out for worms and bugs when we were hungry. We learned to snuggle up to Mother at night. We learned to sing like Mother, sweetly and happily. And we learned it all together.

Twig was the first one to venture out of the nest. He was the bravest and the most eager to see the world beyond. As soon as he was on the branch, he toppled over, squawking. I don't know what would have happened if Mother hadn't caught him. But he tried again...and again...and again until he could sit there without losing his balance.

One day something happened that changed my life. We were all sitting on the branch, arguing about whether beetles tasted better than worms, when, out of nowhere, Mother came flying toward us from behind. We fell off the branch. I was terrified! Then, all of a sudden, I found I was going up again. My wings were flapping and I was flying! Up and around I flew, cheeping and singing until I was exhausted. I went back to the nest then.

“Mother,” I asked later. “Why did you come flying at us like that?”

“Because you needed to learn to fly. I knew it was time and you were ready.”

“Why not wait until *we* say we’re ready?”

“You would have been too scared to ever try. You need to be ready for the Journey in Autumn.”

“What’s the Journey?” Twig interjected.

“The Journey is when all the birds fly south in Autumn. They fly back north in Spring.”

We learned to fly very well in the course of the next few weeks. Mother taught us how to search for worms, bugs, and seeds to eat. Then she told us it was time for her to say goodbye.

“You are grown birds now,” Mother said. “It will be Autumn soon. Go where your instincts take you. Goodbye.”

We were sad when Mother left, but we were excited for the Journey. We all felt a chance in the air that compelled us to fly south. First Twig, then me, then finally Sunshine spread our wings and began the Journey. We stopped to rest every now and then, sometimes on trees and sometimes on strange, black cords that hung high in the air. We saw loud, growling metal beasts all over, especially on the black strands that broke and wove together all over the landscape. What strange things we saw! Strange plants and big blocks that humans went in and out of.

“Maybe the humans’ nests,” Sunshine mused. Mother had told us all about humans before she left, and about their loud noises and odd ways. We soon came to a nice warm tree in the South, and there we knew to stop.

“We have come far enough. Let’s winter here,” I said, and we did. The beautiful tropical plants delighted us, and we enjoyed our winter so much we decided to come here every year.

In the Spring we flew back to our old tree, and there, on a branch, I saw something so strange and wonderful I almost fell over. A handsome young male robin sporting a scarlet breast. He strutted. He sang his love. He told me his name was Sunset the Great.

“The Great? What do you mean? I asked.

“Okay, fine, just plain Sunset. Because my breast is so red and handsome,” he added.

Sunset was a show-off, but everything he said about himself was true. We decided to mate. We built a nest together, placing every twig or ribbon or piece of hair together with tender care. I laid eggs, he brought me worms, I warmed the eggs, he warmed me with his feathers at night. Soon the eggs hatched.

Now I watch my babies sitting on a branch. I know now what my Mother meant. I know that Water, Wind, and Rose, are ready to fly.

The End.