

Told by Ruth Stotter in Chennai (Oct 2009).
Written down by Eric Miller (Jan 2014).

"The Bird who had a Broken Wing"

Once a flock of birds was flying south. You know, in the northern part of the world, it can get very cold during one part of the year. They call that "winter". When it gets cold like that, birds often form a flock, in a V formation, and fly south for the winter.

So a flock of birds was flying south. They decided to take a rest, so they all landed on some trees, in a forest area. And they has a meeting.

One of the birds asked, "How is everyone doing? Is everyone ok?"

There were a few moments of silence. Then one young male bird said, "I have to say something. The other day, I was playing around with my friends, and I accidentally hurt my right wing. I have been flying with it today, but it hurts a lot. I think it may be broken. So I can't fly any further. I will camp out here. You all, go on to the south. When the cold weather time is over, come back and find me here".

This bird's best friend said, "I will stay here with you!"

But the best friend's mother said, "No, it is too dangerous. It is going to get very cold here. You cannot risk your life like that".

The discussion went on and on like this, back-and-forth.

Finally, three animals who had been listening on the ground, from behind a tree, came out from behind the tree. They were a deer, a rabbit, and a squirrel.

The deer said, "Hello brother and sister birds! Welcome to this forest. We could not help overhearing your discussion. We will take care of your boy bird who has a broken wing".

So that was it. All of the other birds said goodbye to the bird with a broken wing. One by one, they re-assured him, "Don't worry! We'll be back soon". And then, they started flapping their wings, up they went, and they were gone.

The boy bird with a broken wing felt it was suddenly very quiet in the forest.

But he decided he should begin to make a nest. He couldn't fly, so he climbed down the tree and gathered some leaves and twigs in his beak. Then he began to climb back up the tree.

But the tree said, "Stop! What are you doing?"

"I am making a nest on one of your branches, with your permission", answered the bird.

The tree said, "To tell you the truth, I would prefer that you do not make a nest on a branch of mine. I find that birds often make a lot of noise, chirping and singing. And there is often a big mess, with all of the twigs and all. So please do not make a nest on me. There are many other trees. Please go and make a nest on one of them.

The boy bird climbed down to the ground, and walked to another tree. He began climbing up this other tree, but this tree also said, "Stop! What are you doing?"

The boy bird explained. This tree also said the bird could not stay and make a nest.

So the boy bird climbed down, and went to yet another tree. And that tree also sent him away.

The boy bird was beginning to get very worried. He knew his chances to survive would be much less if he could not find a tree on which he could make a nest.

At this moment, the rabbit approached the bird, and said to him: "There is a tree a short distance from here that has a hollow space in its trunk. Perhaps this tree might let you make a nest in its hollow space".

The rabbit led the bird to the tree that had a hollow space in its trunk. The bird asked the tree, "Sir, I am all alone here. I would be very quiet and neat. Could I possibly make a nest in your hollow space, and stay there during the approaching time of cold weather?"

The tree agreed!

So the bird made a nest inside the tree. He brought many leaves to make a soft warm bed. With the help of the deer, the rabbit, and the squirrel, he also gathered -- and put away in the hollow space -- many nuts and seeds that he would be able to eat once the weather might turn cold and snow might cover the ground.

A few days later, the weather really did turn cold. And soon the snow came down from the sky. But the boy bird was safe and warm and dry in the hollow space. He spent hours and hours just looking out at the silent snow-covered world. But he wasn't lonely -- for one thing, many squirrels came to visit him. Sometimes he would go on walks, leaving his bird footprints in the snow.

After some months, the weather began getting warmer, and the snow began to melt.

And soon after that, the flock of birds came. They landed in the same part of the forest where they had left the boy bird. And now many of the birds called out for him: "Boy bird! Boy bird! Where are you? Are you ok?"

The boy bird heard their calls. He stuck his head out of the hollow space, and called back, "Hello! Yes, I am here! I am ok! I am so glad you have come back!"

All the birds flocked to him.

He said, "I am ok. My wing has healed. Look!" And with that, he flapped his wings and hovered in the air.

Then he landed on one of the tree's branches. He said to the tree, "Thank you so much for letting me stay in your hollow space!" And he looked down at the deer, the rabbit, and the squirrel, and said to them, "And thank you for helping me!"

Then, all the birds, including the boy bird with the healed wing, flapped their wings and went up into the sky, flying northward.