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ISBN: 978-0-974523-5-8

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The Eaglet

by Jim Elliff

*I*t is not so surprising that an eaglet would want to fly. This eaglet certainly did. He lived with his mother and father on the top branch of the highest tree on Clear View Peak. This majestic old tree almost touched the clouds as it strained upward from the overhanging ledge. Two sheer cliffs looming up on each side formed a massive gorge called Certain Death.

Every day the frail eaglet watched his stately mother stretch out her eight feet of wings over Certain Death Gorge. Spiraling down, down, down, she was soon only a swirling speck below. There in the fast-running river she would catch the fish the eaglet would eat with her in their nest above.



Oh how he wanted to fly! And if it were not for his father's command, he would do so right this minute.

At his birth, his father swept into the nest with an alarming message. He leaned over into the eaglet's surprised little face and sternly warned, **"The day you fly is the day you die!"**

To obey would be for his own good, his mother reminded him—it would save his life. And day by day, the mother warned him of his father's words before she spread out her wings to fly again.

But still the eaglet wanted to fly.

One day, after gazing a long time at his mother's silent flight on the wind, he found his own wings slowly stretching out.



Before he knew it, he was on tiptoe prancing around the edge of the nest, pretending to soar through the air!

Suddenly he lost his footing and almost fell! Catching himself, he quickly pulled in his wings and shook his fuzzy head. He remembered again those awful words from his father, **“The day you fly is the day you die!”**

But as he looked over the edge of the nest, he wondered again just what it would be like to ride the wind.

“Why is it that I want to do what I should not do?” mused the eaglet while resting his head over the lip of the nest. “Perhaps my father is only trying to make life miserable for me.”

And then an idea entered his mind which he should never have thought.



"I am big enough to do what I want!" he said to himself.

"I will die if I don't fly!" So, foolishly and much too quickly, the eaglet walked up to the edge of the nest, lifted his wings and . . . *jumped!*

It took only a second of time for the eaglet to know he had done the wrong thing. His scrawny wings did not have large feathers or strong muscles and could not catch the waves of wind or push against the air to stop his fall. Soon the rushing air forced his wings up beside his face. His feet came right along beside them, and he went down like a stone.

He was doomed. Faster and faster he went, passing ledge after ledge. He was plummeting to his death below. And worst of all, he could do nothing about it.