



# *Gray Eagle and His Five Brothers*

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There were six falcons living in a nest, five of whom were still too young to fly, when it so happened that both the parent birds were shot in one day. The young brood waited anxiously for their return; but night came, and they were left without parents and without food.

Gray Eagle, the eldest, and the only one whose feathers had become stout enough to enable him to leave the nest, took his place at the head of the family, and assumed the duty of stifling their cries and providing the little household with food, in which he was very successful. But, after a short time had passed, by an unlucky mischance, while out on a foraging excursion, he got one of his wings broken. This was the more to be regretted, as the season had arrived when they were soon to go to a southern country to pass the winter, and the children were only waiting to become a little stronger and more expert on the wing to set out on the journey.

Finding that their elder brother did not return, they resolved to go in search of him. After beating up and down the country for the better part of a whole day, they at last found him, sorely wounded and unable to fly, lodged in the upper branches of a sycamore-tree.

“Brothers,” said Gray Eagle, as soon as they were gathered around, and questioned him as to the extent of his injuries, “an accident has befallen me, but let not this prevent your going to a warmer climate. Winter is rapidly approaching, and you can not remain here. It is better that I alone should die, than for you all to suffer on my account.”

“No, no,” they replied, with one voice. “We will not forsake you. We will share your sufferings; we will abandon our journey, and take care of you as you did of us before we were able to take care of ourselves. If the chill climate kills you, it shall kill us. Do you think we can so soon forget your brotherly care, which has equaled a father’s, and even a mother’s kindness? Whether you live or die, we will live or die with you.”

They sought out a hollow tree to winter in, and contrived to carry their wounded nest-mate thither; and before the rigor of the season had set in, they had, by diligence and economy, stored up food enough to carry them through the winter months.

To make the provisions they had laid in last the better, it was agreed among them that two of their number should go south; leaving the other three to watch over, feed, and protect their wounded brother. The travelers set forth, sorry to leave home, but resolved that the first promise of spring should bring them back again. At the close of day, the three brothers who remained, mounting to the very peak of the tree, and bearing Gray Eagle in their arms, watched them, as they vanished away southward, till their forms blended with the air and were wholly lost to sight.

Their next business was to set the household in order, and this, with the judicious direction of Gray Eagle, who was propped up in a snug fork, with soft cushions of dry moss, they speedily accomplished. One of the sisters, for there were two of these, took upon herself the charge of nursing Gray Eagle, preparing his food, bringing him water, and changing his pillows when he grew tired of one position. She also looked to it that the house itself was kept in a tidy condition, and that the pantry was supplied with food. The second brother was assigned the duty of physician, and he was to prescribe such herbs and other medicines as the state of the

health of Gray Eagle seemed to require. As the second brother had no other invalid on his visiting-list, he devoted the time not given to the cure of his patient, to the killing of game wherewith to stock the house-keeper's larder; so that, whatever he did, he was always busy in the line of professional duty—killing or curing. On his hunting excursions, Doctor Falcon carried with him his youngest brother, who, being a foolish young fellow, and inexperienced in the ways of the world, it was not thought safe to trust alone.

In due time, what with good nursing, and good feeding, and good air, Gray Eagle recovered from his wound, and he repaid the kindness of his brothers by giving them such advice and instruction in the art of hunting as his age and experience qualified him to impart. As spring advanced, they began to look about for the means of replenishing their store-house, whose supplies were running low; and they were all quite successful in their quest except the youngest, whose name was Peepi, or the Pigeon-Hawk, and who had of late begun to set up for himself. Being small and foolish, and feather-headed, flying hither and yonder without any set purpose, it so happened that Peepi always came home, so to phrase it, with an empty game-bag, and his pinions terribly ruffled.

At last Gray Eagle spoke to him, and demanded the cause of his ill-luck.

"It is not my smallness nor weakness of body," Peepi answered, "that prevents my bringing home provender as well as my brothers. I am all the time on the wing, hither and thither. I kill ducks and other birds every time I go out; but just as I get to the woods, on my way home, I am met by a large ko-ko-ho, who robs me of my prey; and," added Peepi, with great energy, "it's my settled opinion that the villain lies in wait for the very purpose of doing so."

"I have no doubt you are right, Brother Peepi," rejoined Gray Eagle. "I know this pirate—his name is White Owl; and now that I feel my strength fully recovered, I will go out with you to-morrow and help you look after this greedy bush-ranger."

The next day they went forth in company, and arrived at a fine fresh-water lake. Gray Eagle seated himself hard by, while Peepi started out, and soon pounced upon a duck.

"Well done!" thought his brother, who saw his success; but just as little Peepi was getting to land with his prize, up sailed a large white owl from a tree where he, too, had been watching, and laid claim to it. He was on the

point of wresting it from Peepi, when Gray Eagle, calling out to the intruder to desist, rushed up, and, fixing his talons in both sides of the owl, without further introduction or ceremony, flew away with him.

The little Pigeon-Hawk followed closely, with the duck under his wing, rejoiced and happy to think that he had something to carry home at last. He was naturally much vexed with the owl, and had no sooner delivered over the duck to his sister, the housekeeper, than he flew in the owl's face, and, venting an abundance of reproachful terms, would, in his passion, have torn the very eyes out of the White Owl's head.

"Softly, Peepi," said the Gray Eagle, stepping in between them. "Don't be in such a huff, my little brother, nor exhibit so revengeful a temper. Do you not know that we are to forgive our enemies? White Owl, you may go; but let this be a lesson to you, not to play the tyrant over those who may chance to be weaker than yourself."

So, after adding to this much more good advice, and telling him what kind of herbs would cure his wounds, Gray Eagle dismissed White Owl, and the four brothers and sisters sat down to supper.

The next day, betimes, in the morning, before the household had fairly rubbed the cobwebs out of the corners of their eyes, there came a knock at the front door—which was a dry branch that lay down before the hollow of the tree in which they lodged—and being called to come in, who should make their appearance but the two nest-mates, who had just returned from the South, where they had been wintering. There was great rejoicing over their return, and now that they were all happily re-united, each one soon chose a mate and began to keep house in the woods for himself.

Spring had now revisited the North. The cold winds had all blown themselves away, the ice had melted, the streams were open, and smiled as they looked at the blue sky once more; and the forests, far and wide, in their green mantle, echoed every cheerful sound.

But it is in vain that spring returns, and that the heart of Nature is opened in bounty, if we are not thankful to the Master of Life, who has preserved us through the winter. Nor does that man answer the end for which he was made who does not show a kind and charitable feeling to all who are in want or sickness, especially to his blood relations.

The love and harmony of Gray Eagle and his brothers continued. They never forgot each other. Every week, on the fourth afternoon of the week (for that was the time when they had found their wounded elder brother),

they had a meeting in the hollow of the old sycamore-t

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