

## **PROLOGUE**

The nest of Young Eagles hung on every word as the Master Eagle described his exploits. This was an important day for the eaglets. They were preparing for their first solo flight from the nest. It was the confidence builder many of them needed to fulfill their destiny.

“How far can I travel?” asked one of the eaglets.

“How far can you see?” responded the Master Eagle.

“How high can I fly?” quizzed the Young Eagle.

“How far can you stretch your wings?” asked the old eagle.

“How long can I fly?” the eaglet persisted.

“How far is the horizon?” the mentor rebounded.

“How much should I dream?” asked the eaglet.

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“How much can you dream?” smiled the older, wiser eagle.

“How much can I achieve?” the young one continued.

“How much can you believe?” the old eagle challenged.

Frustrated by the banter, the Young Eagle demanded, “Why don’t you answer my questions?”

“I did.”

“Yes. But you answered them with questions.”

“I answered them the best I could.”

“But you’re the Master Eagle. You’re supposed to know everything. If you can’t answer these questions, who can?”

“You,” the old, wise eagle reassured.

“Me? How?” the Young Eagle was confused.

“No one can tell you how high to fly or how much to dream. It’s different for each eagle. Only you and God know how far you’ll go. No one on this earth knows your potential or what’s in your heart. You alone will answer that. The only thing that limits you is the edge of your imagination.”

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The Young Eagle, puzzled by this, asked, "What should I do?"

"Look to the horizon, spread your wings, and fly."



The Young Eagle was perched on the limb that supported his home from birth. He faced the eastern sky, as he did every morning just as the sun awakened. The nascent sun lit the golden plumage of his neck and head while its warmth and glow stirred a restless and curious spirit in him. He could feel the full weight of destiny tugging at him. The Old World is a good place for a young eagle—any eagle, for that matter.

Today, he will fly alone from the nest, beginning his solo journey. *Fear is just another word for excitement*, he thought. The Young Eagle felt both. He turned his head to steal one last look at the sleeping nest dwellers. They were not ready for their

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solo flights from the nest—their time will come. Today is all about the Young Eagle’s journey. The Young Eagle has been preparing for this day since he broke free from the shell. He built his wing strength by jumping from one limb to another. He flew with the Master Eagle to learn how to soar, hunt, and read the thermals. He studied the habits of other predators as well as prey. He has mentally rehearsed this journey dozens of times. The anticipation for this day has been overwhelming for a fledgling. Destiny demands a great deal from the young, and youthful zeal leaves little room for patience. Starting a new life, beginning a new journey, leaving the familiar and comfortable are scary and exciting. Soon, the Young Eagle will learn that he needs the energy from both of these emotions—fear and excitement—to sustain him on his journey.

He replayed his many lessons with the Master Eagle: “Many eagles fail to leave the security of their nests because of fear. They fear the unknown. They don’t realize that fear is part of the excitement. By avoiding their fears, they also avoid life’s pleasant

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surprises. In the great unknown, opportunity lives and waits for them. How can they seize these opportunities if they live out of fear?”

“What else are they afraid of?” the Young Eagle pressed.

“For many, it’s the idea of change. They’re comfortable where they are—in their nests. They don’t want to push themselves. Maybe no one encouraged them to dream or stretch their wings as far as they could. For others, change means leaving something or someone behind—friends, family or the security of the nest. Starting anew means leaving the old.”

“I’ve not thought much about what I will leave behind. Now that I’m thinking about it, it makes me kind of sad to think of leaving everyone.”

“You will take your memories and their spirit with you, and there’s a very good chance you will return one day. Many young eagles do.”

“Will I be scared when I leave?”

“Probably, and that’s okay. Fear can be your friend or your foe. If you let it overpower you, it

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becomes your foe. If it sharpens your senses and makes you vigilant, it is your friend. It will protect you as long as you don't let it overpower you. Feel the fear and use its energy to help you fly. There will be times on the journey that you will need the boost."

The Young Eagle smiled at these memories. He was fond of the teacher who nudged him. The Master Eagle believed in this young bird, and that made the Young Eagle believe in himself. That was the greatest gift the Master Eagle could give the Young Eagle—self-confidence. This confidence empowered the Young Eagle and gave him the courage to leave the nest. He would need both confidence and courage for the journey that lies ahead.

The Master Eagle's words from their last conversation hung on the walls of the Young Eagle's memory: "Look to the horizon, spread your wings, and fly."

*I can't stay in this nest forever, the Young Eagle thought. Every eagle must fly. It's my time. It's impossible to reach great heights without venturing*

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*from the nest. The longer I stay in this nest, the harder it will be for me to leave.*

With that, the Young Eagle stretched his wings as wide as they would go, fully exposing a brilliant white underside that matched his tail. His reach seemed broader today, foretelling his ascent to great heights. He caught air and felt the thermals lift him effortlessly. One thousand meters. Two thousand meters. Three thousand meters. Beyond. This is the highest the Young Eagle has ever flown. He felt the release of the fear that once pulled at him like gravity. The Master Eagle's words made more sense now. Fear can keep eagles close to the ground and close to the nest. As he released his fear, he was able to soar to unfamiliar heights. Fear no longer held him back. The Young Eagle was learning a valuable lesson: As he concentrated on flying, he left fear in his wake. He was flying away from it. This intense focus left little room for fear.

His wings cut deep into the air with little resistance. The air felt cool and crisp. He filled his lungs fully with the pure, high air. The high air smelled

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fresher and it tasted different. His vision clearly pierced this high air all the way to the edge of the horizon. *It's quieter up here*, he thought. The Young Eagle discovered another of nature's great lessons: The higher an eagle soars, the less crowded the sky. He owned the sky. This was his domain and he was master. It was all new and exciting, just as the Master Eagle had promised. *Fear is just another word for excitement*, he reminded himself. *I never would have experienced this had I submitted to my fear.*

"Hey, Youngster," the gravelly voice startled the Young Eagle.

"What? Who are you? Where did you come from?" the Young Eagle asked, visibly shaken.

*Who is this intruder?* he thought.

"Oh, I've been around for a while. I was watching you earlier."

"What do you mean you were watching me?"

The Young Eagle thought: *What gives this eagle the right to watch me do anything?*

"I was circling while you were still in the nest this morning."

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“Why would you circle over our nest?”

“Oh, a friend of yours asked me to keep an eye out for you.”

“Who?”

“Your Master Eagle, of course.”

“How do you know him?”

“He and I used to fly together. In our younger days, we traveled great distances together. In fact, we made the great journey east together, just like you’re doing. Now, I hover about and keep an eye on the young ones like yourself when you first leave the nest.”

This reference to the Master Eagle relaxed the Young Eagle. He was relieved to hear that the intruder knew the Master Eagle.

“I thought I was on my own,” the Young Eagle said defiantly.

“You are. But that doesn’t mean you are alone. There are others along your journey to help you as you need it.”

“Is that your job?”

“Yes, one of them.”

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“So, there are others like you out there?”

“Oh, yes. And you will meet several in your travels. Like the Master Eagle, they will help you learn the lessons every Young Eagle must learn.”

“What lessons? I thought I already got that from the Master Eagle.”

The older eagle smiled. *Youth!* he thought.

“Learning doesn’t stop when you leave the nest. That’s when it really starts.”

“Oh,” the Young Eagle responded.

Like many young eagles, this one thought he knew everything he needed to know, but soon would learn that leaving the nest began the next phase of his education.

“There are six things you must learn on your journey. At various stops along your journey, you will encounter a mentor and learn one of the six things that every eagle must know. Once you have learned all six of them, your future will be as clear as this high air. For now, you’re just flying around, right?”

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“Yeah, I thought that’s all there was to it. You know, spread my wings and fly.”

“You will discover there’s more to your journey than catching air and bumping into clouds.”

“What else is there?”

“The great truth awaits you. You will discover it along with your destiny.”

“What is the great truth?” the Young Eagle demanded.

“In time, my young friend. When you are ready, you will learn it.”

“What should I do now?”

“Look to the horizon, spread your wings, and fly.”

With that, the older eagle packed his wings snugly against his body and dove vertically, falling thousands of meters. The Young Eagle marveled at his swift and graceful descent.

*Look to the horizon, spread your wings, and fly. I’ve heard that before.* The winds aloft interrupted his thought: *I can ride these winds forever. That’s what the Master Eagle told me, always seek the winds—fly them, let their momentum carry you, use them.*

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The Young Eagle danced his aerial ballet—falling, turning, tumbling, climbing, and rolling. The older eagle watched from a distance, admiring the youthful play.

After playing with the thermals, the Young Eagle turned to the eastern sky, caught air and streaked across a clear, blue sky. The Young Eagle reflected on his early lesson that it is easier to soar to grand heights because so few birds try. It surprised him that it wasn't as crowded as he thought it might be: *How could others not want to experience this?*

With his vision as keen as ever, the Young Eagle saw as far as his imagination allowed, beyond the edge of the horizon. Things looked clear up here. Things just seemed to fit when viewed from a distance. There was a pattern to how everything—trees, rivers, fields, mountains—fit together. It's as if some master artist painted this grand design. Colors and patterns blended magically and seamlessly into a natural palette of sky and earth.

Experiencing nature's wonders caused the Young Eagle to think: *How did all of this come*

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*about? How did a tree know how to be a tree? How did a river know how to flow and find its way from one end to another? Why did this mountain decide to reach for the sky? Why do eagles want to fly? Why do fish swim? Maybe these are the things I will learn along the way?*

The Young Eagle spotted dark clouds in the eastern sky and felt the wind tugging hard on his left wing. He could smell the storm building. The air felt heavier before a storm and lighter after a cleansing. It was time to find somewhere to ride out the storm. The Young Eagle spotted a clump of trees on the southern side of a hill and knew that would be his refuge—a place of safety to watch the rains. He curled his wings and dove for the trees. He landed gracefully on a middle limb, shielded from the storm but still part of it.