

## The Story of Little Bird

Once upon a time, there was a Little Bird. He was just learning to fly, which is VERY hard work. All day long, his mom and dad were nudging him out of the nest, saying, "Just try, Little Bird! You can do it!"

But it was too hard, and after his last try, when he was covered with dust from falling in the road, his mom helped him get back up into the nest and tucked him into a nice pile of leaves to go to sleep.

He fell asleep right away because he was so very, very tired!

In the midst of his sleep he had a dream. Do you ever have dreams when you sleep?

Well Little Bird's dream was that he was in a beautiful garden. It seemed familiar to him, even though it didn't look like mom and dad's nest, or the yard where their tree was. It just felt like somewhere he had been before.

He was sitting there in that garden, wondering where this was, when who should come upon him but an old gardener! He had a warm smile and great big hands, hands that were a little rough from working in the garden, but gentle, too...and he used those gentle hands to softly pick up Little Bird and bring him close to his face.

Little Bird thought he might be frightened, but somehow he knew that this was a good gardener, and he wouldn't let him fall, or hurt him in any way.

The gardener said "Welcome back, Little Bird! Do you remember where this is?"

Little Bird said, "No. It feels like I should remember, but I just can't. It's really nice here, though..."

The gardener said, "Before you were hatched in your mom and dad's nest, you were here with me. This is the starter garden for all of my creatures. You begin here, and then you go to your mom and dad in their place. Most of my creatures don't really remember this place, and that's okay, because once you go to be with mom and dad you don't need to remember this time and place."

Little Bird's eyes got really wide. He couldn't imagine a time before when he came out of his shell in mom and dad's nest. But somehow this place felt like somewhere he had been before.

The gardener said, "I think you remember a little bit about this place, don't you?"

Little Bird nodded.

"Well, it is a special place, and you must be a very special Little Bird to remember.... But look at you! You're all dusty!"

"I was trying to fly and I wasn't very good at it, and I fell down into the dusty grass. It wasn't fun. I didn't like it."

"Hmmm..." the gardener said. "Do you remember how we used to bathe all the little creatures here when they got dusty? How I would pick you up and take you to the stream over there?"

"No, but I bet that felt good."

"Would you like me to take you over to the stream and wash you off?"

"Oh, that sounds nice. The water isn't cold, is it?"

"Oh, no! It's nice and warm, and not too warm. It's just right."

"Okay."

So the gardener took Little Bird over to the water and gently set him on the bank of the stream. He used his great big hands to scoop up a little of that warm water and let it pour over Little Bird, washing off the dust. It felt sooo good!

Little Bird felt refreshed. He could hardly remember how scared he had been when he tried to fly. He could hardly remember the big bump when he fell and got all dusty. He just felt good. Nice and clean, and fresh, and....loved.

"Thank you, gardener. That's better than the worms mom brings me to eat! I feel great!"

"Water is like that, Little Bird. It cleans us, and it refreshes us, and it makes us happy.

Now I'll tell you a little secret. This is a special stream. It is water that doesn't just drip off you once you're clean."

That made Little Bird worried, because mom didn't like him dripping water in their nice clean nest. The gardener saw that look, and realized what Little Bird was thinking.

"No, it will dry off in a bit, but there will always be a little bit of it in your heart. You've been refreshed and washed in the stream, and you can feel that way forever. Just think of the stream, and the love you felt when the water splashed off all the dust, and you will feel the water in you once again. I love you and always want you to feel that love, so I give you a little water in your heart..."

"But won't my heart get wet?"

"No, it's just a warm-water feeling. But I bet, the next time you try to fly, if you think of the warm water feeling, you'll find the courage to try extra hard and you will soar. And then, when you see a stream or a lake or a pond or a river or even a birdbath, you can fly down and wash off and feel that same joyful feeling of how much I will always care for you."

"I'm not sure about flying."

"I know. It's scary. But I believe you can do it. After all, I made you to do it..."

...and now it's time for you to go back to sleep. Always remember the water. Always remember my love. Be brave, Little Bird. Fly high!"

Little Bird was sleepy. His eyes closed, and before he knew it he was sound asleep again. The next morning he woke up in mom and dad's nest. He could barely remember the dream and the gardener and the stream, but he felt rested and strong.

"Mom," he said "can I try to fly again? I think I can this time, and I want to see if I can fly to the birdbath over there. I like the water..."

...and he did just that!

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