

Tico and the Golden Wings

The little bird born without wings is one day granted his dearest wish

By Leo Lionni

Many years ago.....

I knew a little bird whose name was Tico.

He would sit on my shoulder

And tell me all about the flower, the ferns and the tall trees

Once Tico told me the story about himself

I don't know how it happened but when I was young

I had no wings

I sang like all the other birds

And I hoped like them but I couldn't fly

Luckily my friends loved me. They flew from tree to tree and in the evening they brought me berries and tender fruits gathered from the highest branches.

Often I asked myself, "Why can't I fly like all the other birds? Why can't I soar too, through the big blue sky over the villages and the treetops?" I dreamt that I had golden wings strong enough to carry me over the snowcapped mountains far away."

One summer night I was awakened by a noise nearby. A strange bird pale as a pearl was standing behind me. "I am a wishing bird; make a wish and it will come true." I remembered my dreams and with all my might I wished I had a pair of Golden Wings. Suddenly there was a flash of light, and on my back there were golden wings shimmering in the moonlight. The wishing bird had vanished.

But when my friends saw me they were jealous. "You think you are better than we are with those golden wings," they said, and they flew off without saying a word.

Why were they gone? Why were they angry? Was it bad to be different? I could fly as high as an eagle but I was very lonely.

One day I saw a man sitting in front of a hut. He was a basket maker and he had baskets all around him. But this basket maker had tears in his eyes. I asked him "why are you crying?" He said, "oh little bird, my child is sick and I cannot afford the medicines to make him well." I thought, "What could I do? I know: I will give him one of my feathers."

The poor man thanked the bird. "You have saved my child," the poor man said, "but look where your gold feather was...there is now a black feather soft as silk."

From that day on little by little I gave my gold feathers away and black feathers appeared in their places.

I bought many presents

New paints for the poor painter

A sewing machine to make coats for homeless people

And a map for the newcomer who was lost in the city

And when I gave my last golden feather to a beautiful bride, my wings were as black as India ink.

I flew to the tree where my friends gathered for the night. Would they welcome me?

They chirped with joy "now you are like one of us!" they said.

We all huddled together. I thought about all of those people that I helped. I thought, "I am not like my friends." We are all different, each of us for our own memories and our own invisible golden dreams.