

The Blueziad

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Prologue

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Once the mother chickadee knew she'd been spotted, she began to limp away from her nest. She could feel the yellow eyes of the predator on her. She flapped one wing and made pitiful cries of distress. From behind a bush a coyote watched, licking his lips in anticipation, muscles tensed in readiness to attack. There was nothing to fear from the wind; the wind was on his side. It even looked like the little morsel had a broken wing— this would be too easy. But the coyote never took chances when he was hunting. He sprang and hit the ground running. To his surprise, however, the little bird lifted quickly off the ground. The coyote leaped to snatch his prey in mid-air. The chickadee let out a cry of fear. But before the coyote's feet touched the ground, something large and powerful struck him in the back of the neck, knocking him into a forward roll and his snout into the dirt.

Looking up, the mother chickadee saw an eagle, a magnificent creature with silver-tipped wings. It was the fiercest looking eagle she'd ever seen. It frowned down at her, then scooped

her up in its beak and flew up into the sky.

The coyote, lying on the ground, watched the eagle fly away with his chickadee. “Bah!” he said. “It was probably all skin and bone anyway!”

Chapter One: The Runt of the Nest

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The runt of the nest always had the hardest life, which was why the mother bluebird had a difficult decision to make. In general, a mother bird would disown her runt, for it had the least chance for survival. She remembered her friend's advice. *A bird's motto is: The big grow bigger, and the smallest get left behind.* What point was there, then, in trying to keep a fledgling alive? This mother, however, felt great pity for her smallest egg. What would become of the hatchling? Would it be able to face the many perils birds encountered every day?

These thoughts were interrupted by a series of little cracks. Looking beneath her, the mother bluebird saw four beaks poking out of their shells. After many hours, four hatchlings had emerged. But there was no sign of life in the smallest egg. She cradled the newborns, a brother and three sisters, and waited nervously for the last egg to break open. She waited so long she eventually fell asleep.

When she woke up in the morning, the mother

bluebird found not four but five little birds snuggled under her wing. She looked down at the youngest of her hatchlings, and almost immediately wished she hadn't. The hatchling's tender beak was wide open, already begging for food. Tufts of dark blue fluff sprouted from her translucent skin. The little bird looked so much thinner and frailer than her siblings that the mother scolded herself for being careless. *What chance does this baby have? You have to do what's best for everyone.* She picked the baby up in her beak and hung her over the edge of the nest.

But she didn't have the heart to let go.

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