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Taking Flight!

Master the DISC Styles to Transform
Your Career, Your Relationships...Your Life



Merrick Rosenberg & Daniel Silvert

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Praise for *Taking Flight!*

“*Taking Flight!* is an instant classic that will forever change how you see yourself and interact with others. The engaging fable that opens the book—and the enlightening discussion that follows—should be read by anyone seeking growth and success.”

—**Ken Blanchard**, coauthor of *The One Minute Manager*

“This wonderful book contains the secrets to nurturing supportive and enduring relationships. *Taking Flight!* will enrich your life by guiding you to understand and celebrate differences.”

—**John Gray**, author of *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*

“*Taking Flight!* is fun to read, but make no mistake—the lessons here are both practical and far reaching. This book is a real eye-opener.”

—**Jon Housman**, CEO, Ora.tv

“As an educator, I found *Taking Flight!* to be a book that will teach students important principles for everyday life. I will make this book mandatory for my students.”

—**Stan Kligman**, Clinical Professor of Marketing, Drexel University

“Rosenberg and Silvert write with humor, eloquence, and practicality—a rare combination. *Taking Flight!* got me looking at relationships from a whole new perspective.”

—**Pam Levine**, Executive Vice President of Marketing, HBO

“This book should be read by teachers, parents, or anyone who wants to impact others in a meaningful way.”

—**Michael Kozak**, Superintendent of Franklin Township Schools, New Jersey

“*Taking Flight!* offers incredible insight into why we say and do the things we do. We have applied this wisdom to our work team and have seen tremendous results. Definitely more than just another management book for your shelves.”

—**Del Ross**, Vice President, Americas Sales & Marketing, InterContinental Hotels Group

“This cleverly crafted fable demonstrates how the DISC system can break down the walls that too often separate co-workers. *Taking Flight!* is all you need to kick-start collaboration.”

—**Frank Wander**, Chief Information Officer, Guardian Life Insurance Company

“*Taking Flight!* is destined to become the definitive work on the DISC styles.”

—**Salvatore LoDico**, Vice President, Human Resources, Agusta Aerospace Corporation

“*This* is the kind of book that changes corporate culture.”

—**Lani Davis**, Manager, Human Resources, L-3 Tinsley

“Until now, there has been a void in literature that makes the concepts of DISC easily accessible. *Taking Flight!* fills that void. I will be making *Taking Flight!* a part of all my

workshops.”

—**Bart Puglisi**, Vice President, Talent Management, Penske Truck Leasing

“What a wonderfully insightful way to understand relationships. While there is terrific material in here for anyone in the corporate world, I find myself applying its lessons everywhere. *Taking Flight!* is a gem of a book and I will recommend it far and wide.”

—**Monique Garret**, Head of Global Marketing, Octagon Research

“As an HR professional, I have been using the DISC styles for many years. *Taking Flight!* is a great vehicle for either introducing or re-enforcing this powerful model for understanding human behavior. The fable is fun and illuminates the styles in a clever way. The application section is packed with smart analysis and easy-to-apply DISC strategies. In a short number of pages, Rosenberg and Silvert have delivered both a highly readable and in-depth resource.”

—**Marda Kornhaber**, Director of Human Resources, ITT

“Finally, an easy-to-read resource that millions of DISC users can reference to improve their relationship management skills. From the parable-like story that defines the major behavioral styles, to the concrete applications of DISC scores, *Taking Flight!* is packed with insights and easy to apply. Managers will want to keep copies handy for new employees, and consultants/trainers will find this a very useful tool for their clients.”

—**Leonard S. Altamura**, former President/CEO, Steininger Behavioral Care Services

“In *Taking Flight!*, authors Merrick Rosenberg and Dan Silvert have provided an insightful and entertaining allegory for today’s often complex business environment. A modern business fable that guides managers to identify, understand, and blend individuals’ characteristics and compatibilities into an effective team.”

—**Gary M. Ilkka**, Vice President, Human Resources, Emerson Electric Co.

*Traci, your insight, support, and unconditional love are the wind beneath my wings.
Gavin and Ben, thanks for being who you are.*

—Merrick

*For Cindy, your love and humor fill my life with joy.
For Eden, Benjamin, and Jakob.*

—Daniel

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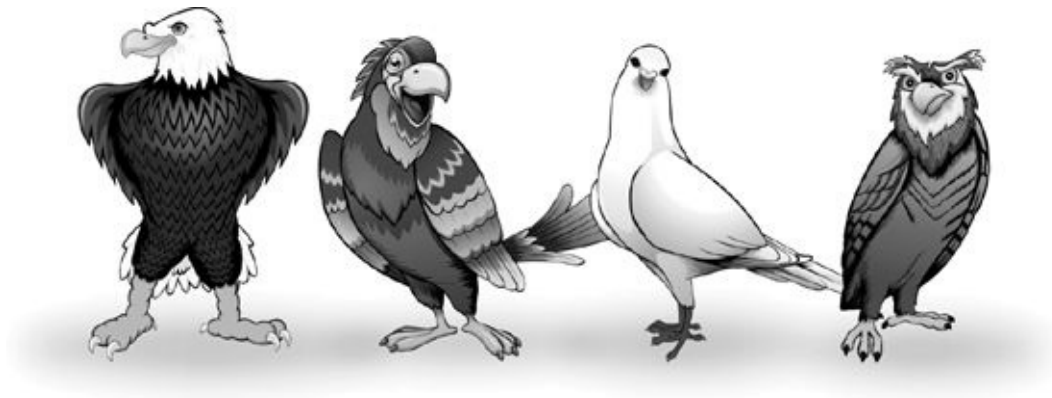
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About the Authors

Merrick Rosenberg, M.B.A., is an accomplished entrepreneur and keynote speaker. In 1991, he co-founded Team Builders Plus, the most recognized team-building company in the United States. Merrick has led team and leadership development training programs around the world for more than two decades. Drexel University honored Merrick as the Alumni Entrepreneur of the Year, and *NJ Biz* selected him as one of the New Jersey Executives of the Year. Under Merrick's leadership, Team Builders Plus was recognized as the New Jersey Business of the Year by *NJ Biz*, one of the Fastest Growing Companies in the U.S. by *Inc.* magazine, and on numerous occasions, as one of the Fastest Growing Companies and Best Places to Work in the Philadelphia region by the *Philadelphia Business Journal*.

Daniel Silvert, B.A., is a sought-after keynote speaker and executive coach. Daniel has led training programs at every level on the DISC styles, leadership, teamwork, accountability, and transformational change. Daniel's early background focused upon career development, coaching hundreds of executives through career transitions from both within and outside their organizations. Daniel has brought his unique perspective to hundreds of companies and government agencies, including Adidas, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Dell, Dow Jones, Home Depot, L'Oreal, L-3 Communications, Merck, SAP, Situs, W.L. Gore, and the Department of Homeland Security.

Take Flight Learning

Based on more than two decades of experience with the DISC styles, the authors co-founded Take Flight Learning to share DISC with the world. Take Flight Learning offers a variety of DISC training programs, products, and services. DISC sessions can be conducted for organizations (including programs for individuals, teams, leaders, salespeople, and educators), trainers (through the *Take Flight with DISC Certification*), and in public seminars. Merrick Rosenberg and Daniel Silvert are available as keynote speakers to enliven conferences with DISC wit and wisdom. And individuals can discover their strengths and challenges through the *Take Flight with DISC* profile.

Team Builders Plus

Team Builders Plus helps teams and leaders create more engaging and productive work environments. Team-building sessions range from team bonding events to facilitated interventions. On the lighter side, groups of just about any size can participate in treasure hunts, philanthropic activities, and an assortment of programs that are just plain fun. More intensive sessions are also available for groups who seek to build trust, improve communication, increase collaboration, break down silos, and instill accountability.

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Introduction

Sometimes we discover a pattern so obvious and predictable that we can't believe we hadn't noticed before. Imagine if this pattern could provide a blueprint for better understanding yourself and every person with whom you interact.

Such a framework exists through a simple four-style model of behavior known as *DISC*. The pattern is hidden in everything we do, and it might just be the most powerful tool you ever discover because it will enable you to maximize your potential and deepen your connection with everyone you know.

If you're already one of the millions of people familiar with the *DISC* behavioral styles, the principles shared in *Taking Flight!* will elevate your understanding to a whole new level. If you haven't yet been introduced to the four styles of *DISC*, brace yourself for impact: This knowledge will change your life!

In our work with hundreds of companies and tens of thousands of people from all walks of life, we have witnessed phenomenal transformations in people. We have watched mediocre managers evolve into highly effective leaders, teams mired in conflict resolve years of pent-up stress, floundering salespeople transform into superstars, frustrated teachers become inspirational educators, and countless careers revitalized and redirected by individuals who have learned how to fully leverage their natural gifts. As they replaced judgment with acceptance, couples have told us that understanding *DISC* saved their marriages, and parents have approached us with joy and relief at better understanding their children.

Whether you're interacting with coworkers or customers, family members or friends, *DISC* will empower you to better relate with others. You will soon understand why you click with some people and clank with others. Moreover, you will gain a valuable framework for maximizing your strengths and minimizing your weaknesses.

What you are about to read is not just a story about birds. At its heart, *Taking Flight!* is about *you*. Although you might not notice it at first, before long you will quickly recognize yourself in these pages. *Taking Flight!* is about why you react to your family, friends, and coworkers the way you do. It's also about how you respond to the world around you and what drives your decisions and actions. And, it's about how you can use this newfound knowledge in the future.

As you read, consider what *you* would do in the birds' situation and think about what that says about who *you* are, how you behave, and how you perceive and respond to the people in your life. Yes, this is just a story. But it's also a representation of your life. Believe it or not, you are one of the birds in this story. The question is, which one?

Is there a character in the story who acts like you?

Perhaps one of them reminds you of someone you know.

Do you find yourself cheering for one of the birds?

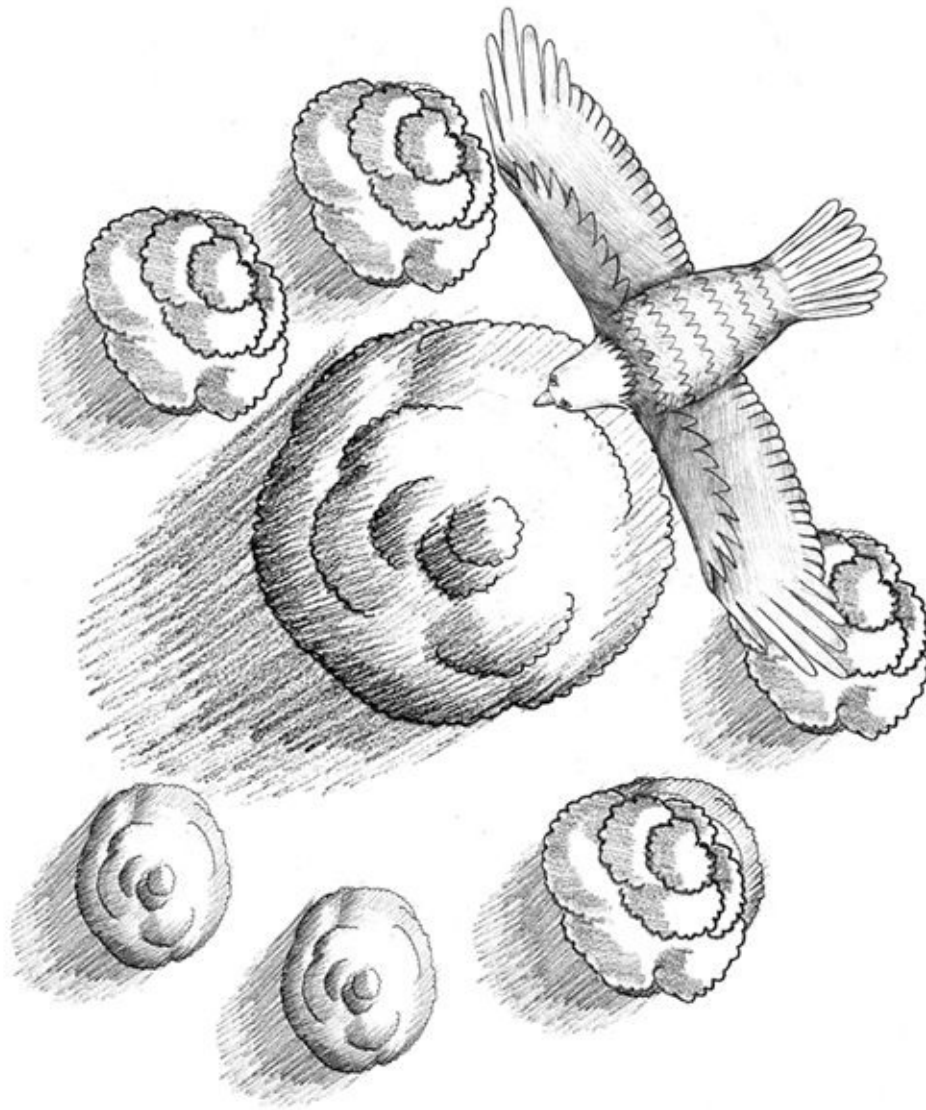
Do any of the characters push your buttons?

Birds know that in order to fly, they must first take a leap. They must jump from the secure branch that grounds them and head into the unknown that lies ahead.

If we wish to soar and reach new heights in our closest relationships, in our business careers, and in all aspects of our life, we too must take a leap. We all know that birds can *Take Flight*. The question is, can you?

Part I: Taking Flight! The Fable

Chapter 1. Home



It began with a subtle crackling sound—hardly noticeable at first. Branches vibrated as the ground trembled below. Leaves shimmered. Suddenly, a booming snap echoed through the forest as the tree swayed one last time in the morning sun. Within seconds, the mighty tree would no longer provide shade for ground animals or shelter for birds. The two-hundred-foot giant hurtled downward, crashing to earth with a deafening thud.

An aftershock of anxiety rippled deep within the forest, known simply as “Home.” To the diverse community of birds that dwelled there, Home was a place of safety and serenity. Here, fearsome eagles interacted with kind doves, and boisterous parrots mingled with watchful owls.

High above it all flew Dorian, a majestic eagle with a proud, sharp gaze and impressive seven-foot wingspan. From sunup to sundown, Dorian patrolled the skies. The mighty eagle felt a great sense of responsibility to ensure the security for all those who lived below. On this day, however, his sixth sense alerted him that something unusual had occurred. But what was it? Instinctively, his sharp eye and decisiveness kicked into a higher gear.

With focused attention, Dorian flew over a family of doves sharing quiet conversation. He noticed Samuel and Sarah sitting on their usual dependable branch preparing a meal for a friend. Their soft white and grey feathers blended seamlessly into their surroundings. Sarah was hatched in this tree, as was her mother, and her mother before her.

Typically, Dorian would hear soft cooing in sweet rhythmic tones as he glided past Samuel and Sarah's branch. ~~The eagle never quite understood why so many birds went to the dove family tree to seek companionship, advice, and comfort.~~

But today, no cooing could be heard. The echoing thud had rattled the doves, and the resulting silence spoke volumes to Dorian.

The eagle continued his daily patrol and made certain to watch for Man or any other intruders. The birds enjoyed great harmony in their world, and Dorian intended to keep it that way.

He soared over the Great Lake and spotted a group of parrots. Though not large in number, they seemed to be *everywhere*. With a burst of red here and a flash of yellow there, parrot laughter reverberated from one end of the forest to the other. Dorian listened in for a few minutes as the parrots amused themselves with their usual banter.

"Hey everybody!" belted Indy, widely recognized as the forest's biggest personality. "Let's fly!"

"Where are we headed?" asked Ivy.

"We'll figure it out when we get there," Indy replied.

Passing just below, Dorian heard Indy remind the group, "*Life's no fun when there's work to be done. But we can make it better if we do it together. Yeah!*"

"That darn parrot motto. They are such time wasters," thought Dorian as he scanned the forest below.

"Don't they realize that we need to figure this out right now?" If only they could just channel that parrot energy into something constructive."

Chapter 2. The Forest Grid



On the evening of the sound heard 'round the forest, owls Clark and Crystal were busy at work. Dorian flew by their nest and asked the owls if they could help find out what happened.

Clark waved Dorian away and said, "Can we talk later? We're almost finished with a project that may help assess the situation."

The owls were designing a forest map and grid that would enable Dorian to patrol the skies with maximum efficiency. Clark and Crystal had an innate ability to detect and analyze every detail of the world around them. This was coupled with an unrivaled knack for careful planning and organization.

Before they were ready to give the map to Dorian, they diligently employed their skills, checking and rechecking every last detail and working until the sky was orange with the morning sun. As Clark wrapped up his third and final accuracy check, he abruptly froze.

"What's wrong?" asked Crystal.

"This isn't right!"

"What is it?" she inquired. After all, their process had been rigorous, counting trees and meticulously recording every last variable.

"Well, I guess...we...it seems that...I can't believe I'm saying this, but our tree count is off," stammered Clark.

"How can that be?" asked Crystal. "Our count must be accurate if we're going to give this to Dorian."

They began to review their methodology when out of the blue—*bammmm, whapppp!* Parrots Indy and Ivy slammed right next to the owls and proclaimed, "The parrots have landed!"

Indy and Ivy laughed at each other. Clark rolled his eyes and thought, "Can't they see that we are *working?*"

"Good morning, Clark! Whatcha doin'?" asked Indy.

With a sigh of frustration, the owls reluctantly began to explain their project when Ivy interjected,

“Details, schmetails. What’s the big deal if you miss a tree? Whatever crazy stuff is going on out there will reveal itself sooner or later.”

Baffled and stunned, Clark and Crystal stared in silence as the parrots continued to chat amongst themselves—swapping ideas about all the fresh and exciting ways they could spend their day. The owls just shook their heads and returned to the map. The parrots were a distraction, and the owls were anxious to present the eagle with a structured system. Surely *he* would appreciate their hard work and attention to detail.

Chapter 3. The Council



Dorian's frustration continued to build. The owl's diagram was not going to make a difference. The parrots' blind optimism wasn't going to solve anything. And this was certainly not a time for the doves to gather with close friends and family to comfort each other. The eagle wondered why he was the only bird concerned enough to take action.

The following morning, dark clouds hovered just above the treetops. Through the mist arose a piercing cry. It was Dorian, and, his screech meant only one thing; the eagle had found something. It was time for an emergency council meeting.

Many moons had passed since the last assembly of The Bird Council, and the entire forest was buzzing with apprehension.

All gatherings to discuss serious matters were held at the Council Tree, a massive redwood more than 200 years old. Almost as if it had been designed for meetings, the Council Tree featured two wide branches curved in a semicircle just underneath a protruding limb that served as a platform.

Because there hadn't been official business to conduct for a long period of time, the tree had remained empty—a symbol of the forest's serenity and security. That, of course, did not include the many secret, late-night, parrot-only comedy sessions, aptly named I-Team Improv, a tiny fact that Indy and Ivy chose not to share with Dorian.

The doves, represented by Samuel and Sarah, were the first to arrive at the Council Tree and settled

into their usual spots. Their calm demeanor hid an underlying uneasiness, as they found it difficult to connect with their fellow birds in such a formal setting.

The doves warmly greeted Dorian, who was eager to get the meeting underway. The owls arrived next, ready to take detailed notes. All the birds waited in silence for the parrots—who could be heard chatting in the distance. Finally, Indy and Ivy strolled to their seats. “Give us the scoop, Big D,” said Indy.

Dorian led all council meetings, just as generations of eagles had done before him. As usual, he cut to the chase: “We have a crisis on our wings.”

A hush fell over the group.

“A large tree has fallen not half a mile from this very spot,” the eagle continued.

“Oh, is that what this meeting is about? We saw that a few days ago,” Ivy interjected. “It was right near the road, and there were some wolves hanging around. We were wondering...”

“You saw a fallen tree and didn’t report it to me?” Dorian exclaimed, as he puffed his chest feathers. “Don’t you understand? All of our nests are now at risk!”

Ivy shrugged. “We didn’t think it was a big deal.”

“A big deal? Do I have to remind you that we *live* in trees? What if this was *your* tree that crashed to the ground?”

“Relax,” said Indy. “Trees have fallen before and I don’t see why—”

“Not like this one,” Dorian interrupted. “It was gigantic, healthy, and didn’t just fall by itself. We need to get to the bottom of this. Now!”

“Maybe a big gust of wind knocked it down,” proposed Ivy.

“Absolutely not!” screeched Clark, in a rare display of emotion. “Do you know the velocity at which such gusts would need to travel in order to do that? My estimate would be....” He began flipping through his journal. “Ah, yes, 86.7 miles per hour. Although, wind gusts of such magnitude are extremely rare. In fact, with a few calculations...”

“This was not a natural event,” Dorian declared adamantly.

Sarah gasped as a wave of concern swept over her. Samuel comforted her. Silence fell over the group.

“Well?” Indy asked, nearly bursting with anticipation. “What was it then?”

“I don’t know,” Dorian said sharply. “But I’ll find out.”

The owls sifted through their notes. “We all need to stay calm and not jump to any conclusions before we gather the facts,” said Crystal. She then turned to the parrots. “Let’s review the situation. Indy and Ivy, you saw this a few days ago?”

“Yup,” the parrots replied in stereo.

“I’m curious,” Clark probed. “Why didn’t you warn anyone using the Forest Alert System?”

“Didn’t think anything of it,” answered Ivy.

“Nobody pays attention to that anyway,” added Indy.

“Why do we create these systems if nobody is going to use them?” muttered Clark.

“Now that’s a good question,” said Dorian.

Clark threw the eagle a dismissive look and returned back to Ivy, “So you saw the tree on the ground and just flew away?”

“Well actually, we were more interested in the wolves. Indy does this great impersonation of a howl.

Do it Indy. You all have to see him...”

“Not now,” Dorian snapped.

The doves, who still hadn’t spoken a word, glanced nervously at the parrots and then back at the owls but did not enter the fray.

Clark, thinking he could offer a solution, waved his notes in the air. “Dorian, I’m wondering why you weren’t flying along the new grid lines. It’s quite efficient and might have allowed you to identify the situation earlier.”

“Do you really think I spend my days following lines on an imaginary map?” snarled Dorian. “I don’t think so.”

Frustrated by the entire conversation, Clark stepped to the center of the platform. “My fellow Council members, we have developed processes and systems specifically designed to keep our forest orderly.”

“Oh, come on,” Ivy interrupted. The typically easy-going parrot was getting annoyed. “The purpose of Home is not to be *orderly*—it’s to enjoy life. We shouldn’t get worked up so easily. I say, ‘Live in the moment, fly with abandon!’ I still don’t see what the big deal is here. Owls take the fun out of everything. I’m tired of it.”

“That’s all well and good for you and your parrot fantasy world,” said Dorian. “But real life is not about playing games—though, if time permits, I see nothing wrong with healthy, competitive sports. Life is about accomplishments. We are here in this forest to leave our mark. Do you only want to be remembered for how much *fun* you had?”

Indy and Ivy shrugged and said, “What’s wrong with that?”

“Everything is wrong with that!” exclaimed the owls.

Within a split second, the owls, parrots, and Dorian were all yelling at one another. Meanwhile, the doves continued to sit quietly in the background, alarmed that a full-blown conflict had broken out. Sarah squirmed uncomfortably.

“What should we do?” she whispered to Samuel. “The Council is coming apart. They’re screaming at each other, and nobody is really listening.”

Samuel tried to comfort her, but he was also upset. “We can’t resolve anything by acting like this. We have to work together in harmony, or this situation will quickly turn into chaos.”

Suddenly, Sarah had an idea. “I think we need some outside help.”

“Xavier?” Samuel asked.

“The birds in the north are still talking about how he changed their lives after the big fire. It’s worth a try.”

“STOP!” screeched Dorian, his voice overpowering the owls and parrots.

Then Dorian turned to the doves. “Don’t you two have anything to say? Or are you just going to sit there?”

Caught off guard and feeling pressured, Sarah stuttered to find words. She hadn’t planned to speak and didn’t want to sound critical, but now all eyes were on her. She took a deep, calming breath to steady her nerves. “Well, I can see everyone’s perspective,” she began warmly. “I agree with Clark’s desire for order. We don’t want to live in chaos. And I also see Dorian’s point that one should seek to achieve important goals. As for what Ivy was saying, life ought to be enjoyed.”

Everyone reluctantly nodded in agreement.

“And?” asked Dorian, already frustrated by her long response.

“I guess Samuel and I just want to live in a place where we can all be friends and feel safe,” Sarah concluded.

“Is that it?” said the Eagle

His patience was exhausted. “With all due respect to your little pep talk, we’ve got a crisis here, and I’m going to figure out what’s going on. I suggest that you do the same. If anyone observes anything suspicious, report back to me immediately.”

The eagle leapt from his perch, and with a few mighty pumps of his wings he was gone. The group remained silent for a few moments, and then they parted ways. The Council meeting had, well, ruffled some feathers.

Although the birds had all lived in the same forest for many years, they had never faced a challenge like this before. Now, an uneasy mood hung over the land.

Chapter 4. An Old Friend



The next day, Samuel and Sarah rose early to journey to the northern tip of Home. Flying side by side, the doves passed over rolling hills and a towering waterfall. Following a creek that wrapped its way around mossy rocks, they noticed two humans gathering branches, presumably for a campfire. Gliding silently, Samuel and Sarah circled the red granite boulder where their trusted old friend Xavier could often be found. They almost missed him, as his chameleon skin blended seamlessly with stone.

Xavier was pleased to see the doves as Samuel and Sarah would rarely fly far from their comfortable nest. After a few minutes of exchanging pleasantries, Xavier asked, “Is there a reason for your visit?”

Samuel cleared his throat. “Actually, there is something we wanted to talk to you about.”

Surprisingly, Xavier already knew about the fallen tree and had even heard about the heated tempers at the Council meeting.

“But how did you find out?” asked Sarah.

“News travels quickly,” replied Xavier. “The Council meeting didn’t sound particularly harmonious. And I assumed it would be the two of you who would seek advice.”

“We don’t know what to do,” sighed Sarah. “Even the parrots are upset.”

The chameleon grinned slightly. “Your kind once knew what to do, but over time, you have forgotten.”

Puzzled, Samuel asked, “Doves knew what to do about falling trees?”

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