

MOLLY AND THE FALCON

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THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL CURRICULUM



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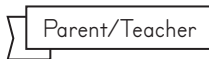


Chapter 1

UI and UE



A sudden gust of wind cruised down through the pine trees that covered the steep hillside. It circled around a little white home with blue shutters, and then it swirled the dark hair of a 14-year-old girl named Molly. She was standing in the backyard of her new home, admiring the pink and orange hues of the sunset.



Suddenly, there was a loud clattering, and Molly whirled around. The sound had come from the shed in the yard, but she didn't see anything. Then something thumped against the shed wall, and Molly was sure that she saw a flash of white go past the shed window. As fast as her legs could carry her, Molly flew into the house and slammed and locked the door. She lived with her father in the cozy little rental home. They had only been there for one week. This was the first time Dad had left Molly alone at home while he went into the tiny town for some groceries.

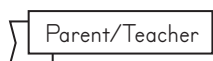
Breathing hard, Molly went to the dining room window and peeked through the curtains. The shed looked still and quiet.





She continued to watch and saw another sudden flash of white again through the shed window. After a moment, she heard her dad's truck rolling up the tree-lined avenue to her house.

"Phew!" said Molly aloud. She ran to the front door so quickly that she tripped over the rug and bruised her knee. She didn't even notice the pain because her mind was on what might be in the shed.



"Dad, there's something—or *someone*—in our shed!" Molly cried from the front porch.

"Stay in the house, Molly," he said seriously.

Through the window, Molly watched her dad walk around to the backyard and toward the shed. Another clattering made him pause a moment before continuing.

Carefully, he peered through the partially opened shed door. Molly realized she was holding her breath as her dad stood totally still, letting his eyes adjust to the dark shed.

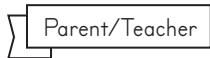
Then, he turned to the house with a smile on his face and motioned for Molly to come.

Molly let out her breath and wondered what he could possibly have found. She hurried out the back door toward him.



"It's a bird of prey," Dad said, "a hawk or a falcon, I think. But I really have no clue when it comes to bird species. We can peek inside, but stay behind me."

Molly didn't argue. As she took a step into the shed, she saw a few tools on a shelf and an old green wheelbarrow, but nothing else. Then Dad guided her eyes with his finger to a far corner. A large bird was standing still as a statue, watching them with huge yellow-ringed black eyes. It held one wing out oddly.



"It's hurt," Molly said. Her voice frightened the bird, and it tried to fly but only made it to a nearby shelf.

Dad shut the shed door. Molly noticed that it was already beginning to get dark out.

"What are we going to do?" Molly asked.

Dad rubbed his chin and thought. "Well, for tonight let's keep the shed door shut and do some research. Then, hopefully we can get it some help first thing tomorrow morning."

"Why are we keeping the door shut?" Molly asked.

"To keep the bird warmer and to protect it from any wild animals that might come into the shed at night."

Molly nodded in understanding.

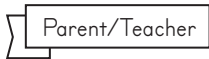




"We could feed it some juicy blueberries I picked up at the store today," Dad said. "Or do you think it would prefer grapes?"

"It's a bird of prey, Dad," Molly said with a grin. "They eat small animals, not fruit."

"Oh yes, I'm sure you're right. I didn't get any small animals at the store," Dad said with a laugh. "I didn't know we'd have a bird of prey to rescue."



Molly and her dad watched the bird through the shed window for at least another half hour. Molly especially was fascinated by the majestic animal, sitting up straight with its curved beak and its breast poking out. She studied it in the dim light until it got too dark to see anymore. Then she and her dad walked back to the house.

What would happen to the bird? Molly thought about this question as she gazed out her bedroom window at the star-filled sky for a long time before she fell asleep.

When she woke up in the morning, her first thought was of the injured bird in their shed. She hurried and got dressed and pulled on her shoes.

"Let's go see our bird of prey, Dad!" she called as she ran down the stairs.

Chapter 4

EIGH



A group of eighteen people gathered in the large yard of the falconer, Mr. Sanchez, who stood at the front of the group with his son, Simon. A majestic bird of prey was perched on Simon's extended arm.

Molly couldn't peel her eyes away from the majestic bird while Mr. Sanchez described the art of falconry to the homeschool group.

A decorative banner with the words "Parent/Teacher" written on it.

Parent/Teacher

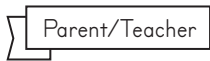
“Simon is holding a one-year-old red-tailed hawk that we call Zazzy,” Mr. Sanchez explained. “God has blessed her with the natural ability and instinct to catch wild prey, such as squirrels, rabbits, and pigeons. As licensed falconers, Simon and I have trained her to hunt with us as a team. For example, we take her to the edge of a forest and release her. She flies high, scouting out prey animals. When she finds one, she dives down and catches it. In the wild, she would then eat it, but as part of our team, she brings it to us, and then we reward her with food.”

A teenage boy raised his hand and asked, “How long did it take to train her to hunt with you?”





“Great question,” Mr. Sanchez said. “It only takes two to three weeks to train her to hunt. Then, after one year of flying with us, we will release her back into the wild. We usually only keep each bird for one year, although some falconers, like one of our neighbors, prefer to fly the same bird year after year. Zazzy is our eighth bird. She weighs only two pounds, but don’t let her weight fool you. She is a mighty hunter and can reach speeds of up to 120 miles per hour! How would you all like to watch Zazzy catch the lure?” he asked.



The group cheered! Simon put a whistle to his mouth and blew one short puff. Zazzy lifted her wings and flew from his arm. Then Simon bent down and picked up the end of a rope with a leather ball attached at the end and began swinging it round and round. Zazzy flew in circles above her admirers. Molly watched in awe as the red-tailed hawk beat her large wings, using her red tail feathers to steer her course. Suddenly, the beautiful hawk swooped down at Simon. With perfect timing, she reached her talons out and snatched something from the swinging leather ball. She landed gracefully on the ground next to Simon and ate whatever it was that she had grabbed from the ball.

“Good girl,” Simon said. He knelt down, setting his gloved arm next to Zazzy. She stepped onto his glove, and he stood up again. Zazzy was incredible!



★★
Student

For the next hour, Mr. Sanchez and Simon taught the homeschool group all kinds of amazing facts about falconry and birds of prey in general. The more Molly heard, the more she wanted to know. She had never in her life felt so excited to learn. At the end of the presentation, she gathered her courage to go ask Simon some questions.

Parent/Teacher

Simon was just as eager to teach as Molly was to learn. They talked for another hour about falconry. Other kids, from young children up to teenagers, chatted with them too, asking questions and introducing themselves to Molly.

One girl named Aspen pleaded with Molly to come to their homeschool activities every Friday. “Next week we’re meeting at the bike park!” Aspen told her.



By the time Molly and her dad left that afternoon, Molly had made many new friends. She was excited to meet with them at the bike park next Friday!

Simon had insisted that Molly borrow his favorite book about falcons and said she could bring it back to him when she finished reading it.

That night, as Molly's dad read on the couch, Molly sat curled up in a big chair by the fireplace under the comforting weight of a heavy quilt. By the light of a lamp and the glowing fire, she read all about falcons.



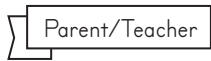
She was quite fascinated when she read about the history of falconry in Great Britain. For several thousand years, British falconers had used a variety of birds for hunting prey. The type of bird each individual used depended on the person's rank—peregrine falcons and gyrfalcons were for kings and earls, goshawks and sparrowhawks for the middle class, and kestrels for the servants.

She discovered that kestrels are amazing little birds of prey. The book explained that kestrels are able to hover in one place in the sky, like a helicopter, to watch for field mice, and then dive down and catch the little rodents.





Molly yawned. She realized she was getting very sleepy, so she closed the book. As she watched the flames dance slowly in the fireplace, she thought of the injured peregrine falcon she had found in the shed. She imagined him soaring above her out in a meadow, beating his wings at incredible heights. A sudden longing for adventures with the falcon filled her heart and mind.



The ringing of her dad's phone snapped her out of her thoughts.

"Excuse me, Molly," he said. "I need to take this call." He hurried from the living room to the kitchen to answer the phone.

"Wonderful! Yes, I can meet you there tomorrow," she heard him say. "This is very exciting. But I don't want Molly to know anything about this. Can we meet during my lunch break? Twelve o'clock sounds good. I'll see you then."

Molly greeted her dad when he came in. "Hi, Dad. What was that about?"

"Oh," he said, looking uncomfortable. "I didn't realize you could hear me. It's nothing you need to worry about. Now tell me, what was your favorite bird you saw today?"

Molly tried to answer his question, but she couldn't shake the mysterious phone conversation from her mind.

Chapter 11

GN, IGN, AUGH

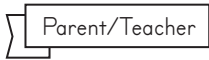


"We should have been getting home about now," Tara said, looking glumly at her watch.

It was late in the afternoon and still raining hard.

"Our parents are going to wish they had never sent their daughters on a hike," Molly said with a fearful voice. "What are we going to do?"

"We're going to stick together like Mom and Dad taught us," Tilly said.



Tara gained courage from her twin. "That's right!" she said. "Sticking together is the first rule of survival. And the second one is to stay calm and to stay put. That's exactly what we'll do!"

Molly looked at her friends. "Do you think they'll be able to find us here if we stay put?"

"We can sure hope and pray so," Tilly answered. "If we try to find our way out, we might just get more lost."



After another hour or so, the drizzling rain finally died down to a sprinkle and then stopped altogether. The first signs of evening crawled in. The clouds moved away, revealing a colorful sunset of amber gold, pink, and bright orange. It was all so lovely except for one thing—gnats! The tiny bugs appeared out of nowhere and started gnawing at the girls' faces and arms.

"Molly and Tilly," Tara said, waving gnats away from her face, "can I assign you two to gather wood for a fire? I'll try to get one started."





MOLLY AND THE FALCON

When Molly and her dad find an injured falcon, they can never guess the new experiences that are about to unfold. With the help of new friends, Molly learns much about birds of prey and dedicates herself to nurturing the falcon back to health. When she and her friends find themselves in a dangerous situation, their survival skills are put to the test. Parents and children alike will love reading and learning side by side in this delightful and inspiring tale.

