

The Dove

written and illustrated by Jennifer C. Core

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The dove watched the old man hammer the last nail into the barge. The old man quietly told her that the next day he would gather all the animals into the places he had prepared for them. He talked of the long time that they would spend in the barge—a long time before she would fly again.

The next morning the dove watched the animals board. She wanted to fly one last time before she entered the barge.







He placed her in her new cage with some straw, food, and water. She felt weak from the battle with the wind. She looked through a crack in the boards. Outside, water streamed from the sky. The rain stained the earth and trees a new shade of green. The dove groomed herself and built a new nest. When her nest was finished, she slept.

She flew over the old man's house, over the trees, high into the air. The mountains rumbled. Light cracked. She could see the old man far below her and the last of the animals. She turned to fly to them, but a strong wind blew her backwards. The wind turned her feathers. She struggled to fly straight. Roaring filled her ears.

She looked down to the old man. He held out his hands to her. She broke the hold of the wind and flew to him. Her claws grasped his hands, and he carried her onto the barge.





One day, the dove awoke to silence. No rain fell on the barge. Light creeped in through the boards. She pressed her eye to the crack. Outside, she could see sun on the water.

The old man came to unlatch her cage door. He carried the dove to a window set in the roof. He opened the window and light fell down into the barge. He held her into the sunlight. She felt the wind in her wings. She flew into the blue and the gold.

Mountains rose from the water. She flew toward them, in search of grass and trees.

The wind became cooler and light began to leave the sky.

The dove turned from the mountains and back toward the barge. She flew lower and lower. Her claws dragged the water. Drops gathered in her feathers. She arrived at the barge wet and tired. The old man placed her gently in her cage where she rested all night long.

The next day passed slowly. She looked for the mountain peaks through the crack in the boards. The old man came to her cage with seeds. He stroked her feathers. She hoped that he would take her to the window again, but he left her on the straw.

During the next days, the old man came to her cage often. She could feel her wings grow stronger.

Many days passed. The dove was warm and safe, but she longed to fly. The boards closed around her. She could hear the wind on the roof and the water against the sides. She could hear the other animals roar and moan, but she was far away from them.

The old man came each day to feed her and to clean her cage. He would stroke her feathers and talk of the day when he would send her to fly again.

The dove waited to fly. She watched the rain and thought of sun and grass and trees.





One day, after looking carefully at her, the old man carried the dove to the window. As he held her in the air, she flew from him with strong wings.

She could see the mountains ahead. They had grown taller. The sun warmed her back. The wind lifted her into the air, pushing her toward the mountains. Below her, fish jumped in the water. The sky was cloudless. With each push of her wings she felt stronger. The mountains moved closer. She could see trees and shrubs growing on the highest mountain. She flew to the tallest tree and settled in its branches.

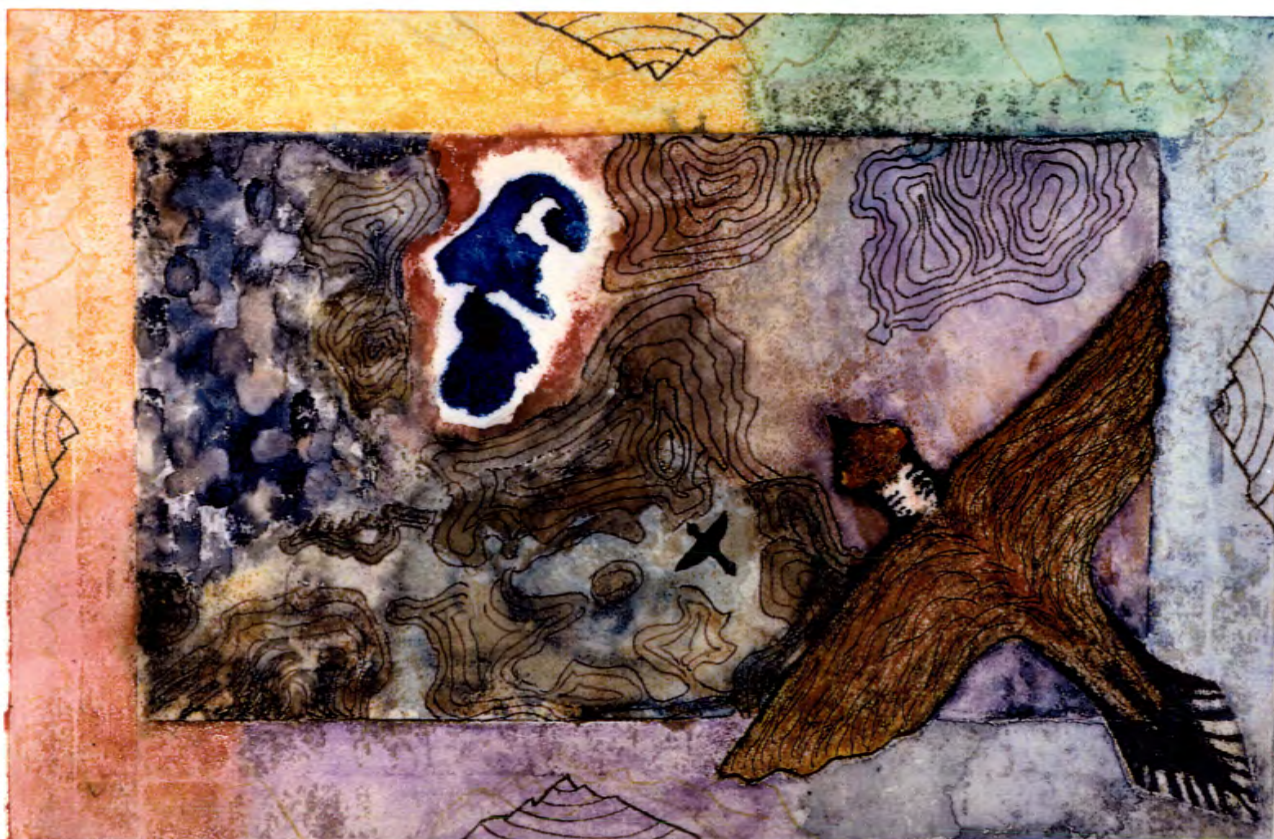
She rested in the tree that night. The next morning the sun woke her. She stretched her wings and knew she was strong enough to return to the barge.

The waters still filled the valleys. The world was not ready for the animals. But she would take a piece of the tree to the old man and he would know that the time would soon come for all the animals to leave the barge.

She looked at her tree. Its branches were young and green. She gripped one in her claws and twisted it. The branch broke off.

The weight of the the branch slowed her flight, but her wings were strong. She could see the barge at the edge of the water. As she grew closer, she saw the window in the roof. The old man was waiting for her. She hovered above him. He took the branch. He held out his hand to her, and they descended into the barge. He held up the branch for the animals to see.

The dove slept well that night.





Days later, the old man again took her to the window for the third time. She flew from his hands toward the mountains. The water had receded, leaving scattered puddles.

The journey was even shorter this time. Her wings beat the air. She stopped in a tree, and then flew to the base of the mountain. Shrubs had grown there. She set about building a nest. She finished before dusk, and slept in her new home that night.

More days passed. The dove learned to find the best seeds. She flew over the mountain, learning the place of each tree and each bush. One evening, as the sun was setting, she looked and saw animals leaping and crawling down the mountain's side. Behind the animals, walked the old man. The dove left her nest. He held out his hands, and they descended the mountain together.

