

A Magical Moment

Arjan sat brooding at his desk. He decided he was not going to school tomorrow. It was not that he hated school, but if bad things were going to happen there, what was the point in going?

He shut his door and turned up the music. Music always put him in a good mood. But it wasn't working today.

His eyes rested on the picture of Guru Gobind Singh ji, the tenth Guru of the Sikhs. His grandma had given it to him when he had visited her in India.

He looked at the falcon perched on Guru ji's gloved right hand. That's a pretty cool bird, he thought for the hundredth time. He wished he had a bird like that. He would take him everywhere. He would save up his allowance to buy him the most comfortable perch.

He picked up the picture to take a closer look. The falcon looked so real! He wished he could scratch the bird's neck. He knew the short feathers would stand up when he curled his fingers into the soft tuft. His friend, Aaron, had a yellow-naped Amazon called Mango. Aaron had taught Arjan how to scratch Mango's neck.

If he ever had his own falcon, Arjan decided he would call him "Khushi", Punjabi for happiness. As he put the picture back, he saw the falcon blink.

I am imagining things! Arjan rubbed his eyes.

But then, the falcon blinked again. This time, he also stretched his feathers. Arjan was mesmerized. The falcon stepped out of the picture and looked directly at him.

“H---Hi!” stammered Arjan. “Are you r---real?”

“You made me real,” said the falcon in a deep voice. “Love makes everyone real.”

Like the Velveteen Rabbit! This is too good to be true. “Will you be my pet?”

“I belong to my Guru ji,” said the falcon with a note of pride in his voice. “But I will be your friend.”

“May I call you Khushi?” Arjan asked.

“Yes, you may. I like that name.”

Khushi was a large, majestic bird. His feathers were creamy beige with flecks of brown. The white underbelly was soft and fluffy like freshly fallen snow. Vertical stripes in the lightest brown ran down it. His legs and feet were an unexpected yellow. He held his head high and spoke in a commanding voice.

Khushi looks so regal; he must be the King of falcons.

Arjan remembered that his grandma referred to Guru ji’s falcon as “Baaj Sahib”. Baaj was Punjabi for falcon, and sahib was sort of like calling someone “sir” out of respect.

“You look a little sad today. I can grant you a wish if you like,” Khushi offered.

“Are you a genie?” asked Arjan incredulously.

“No, I am not a genie. But I help people who are in trouble.”

“Sweet,” said Arjan. He knew exactly what he wanted. “I’d like to beat up this mean kid in my class.”

Khushi rolled his beady brown eyes. Suddenly, they looked big and a little scary.

He must think I am a bad kid. Of all the wishes I could have asked for, I told him I want to beat up someone.

