

# *The Starry Bird ~ an Easter tale*

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There was once a bird. It flew to the earth from unending spaces beyond telling or knowing – moons, planets, distant stars and galaxies uncountable were its home. When the bird first appeared in the sky it was as a bright star. Everyone was amazed and impressed with his marvelous plumage, his never-ending wings that filled the sky.

“Here is the One the prophets foretold,” they cried, gazing high into the heavens.

At first the marvelous bird soared in the upper reaches of the sky, far beyond where the others could fly. But as time passed, he flew closer to the earth and became less brilliant. He was still beautiful, still wondrous, but also more like the other birds of the planet. Some began to be jealous.

“We can fly as high as him if we really tried,” said the hawks. “And if he is so mighty where are his claws and sharp beak to tear flesh?”

Gradually the cosmic bird became more and more a bird of the earth. Even though he was special he lost the starry gleams from his feathers.

Then the ravens began to crow: “Caw! He has too many colors. He thinks himself too fancy! We should pluck his eyes out.”

But other birds loved him, especially the sparrows and birds of their ilk. They listened to his words of peace and love. Slowly the heavenly bird became feathered completely with the colors of earth.

“He is too proud! Who does he think he is?” said the peacock, strutting around with his fan. “He spouts off about where he is from and who his father is and calls himself a bird of God! Whoever heard such nonsense!”

“Let’s take him to our king and ruler,” said the hawks. “This upstart needs to be put in his place. Lord Vulture will deal with him!”

Lord Vulture did not like this cosmic bird. “Does he think he can take my place on the throne?” he hissed. “I, and only I, am King of the Earth. Kill him!” he screeched, his bald, fleshy head turning blood red. “Take him to the Place of Skulls!”

The hawks grabbed the starry bird, took him to the Place of Skulls and tore him to pieces. They hung his broken body on a barren tree and flew away.

The earth trembled and shook. It split open and swallowed the tree and body. Then the sky darkened, the sun halted, day turned to starless night and all were afraid. Only hours later did the sun return and the earth cease trembling.

The next day the brave hawks sent the sparrows to find out what had happened at the Place of Skulls.

“An egg sits on the ground,” they said. “It’s as white as snow and glows brightly.”

“Burn it!” commanded Lord Vulture. “Burn it and let it roast. I will eat its flesh. Do it!” he screamed.

Hundreds of birds collected twigs and branches and dry grass, anything that would burn. All day they built a pyre around the egg until it was so thick and dense that the egg was covered.

“Send me the two-faced magpie,” commanded Lord Vulture and they sent the long-tailed bird to him.

“Fly to the volcano,” crooned Lord Vulture. “Light your tail on the molten rock and set the pyre alight. I will pay you thirty pieces of handsome gold. You will be rich and happy.”

The magpie went to the fiery mountain. He dipped his tail in the molten rock and flew back to the Place of Skulls. But the flames spread quickly up his tail and set his wings on fire. A burning torch, he plunged through the air and fell into the pyre.

Fire leapt from the wood and straw. Smoke billowed, flames roared, but the white egg gleamed more brilliant than ever before. Suddenly the egg cracked open with the sound of thunder and the shell flew apart. In the flames sat the cosmic bird, now purest white and more beautiful than ever before. He soared into the air and vanished into the clouds.

“Where has he gone?” called the small birds in dismay. “We see our loved one no longer!”

But Lord Vulture and his hawks screeched and cursed. They knew the cosmic bird would stay with the earth and that they were defeated. Not now, not for a long time, but slowly, surely, they would be conquered. They knew they couldn’t battle a bird who would not fight and was master of the realm of death.