



Chapter 1



UP UP AND AWAY

“Oh come on,” coaxed the boy. “I know you want out. Mom said it was okay. Stop playing hard to get.”

Puffernut threw the boy an icy glare. He turned his head to the side and shuffled back and forth on his perch. He liked the boy. The boy talked to him and often gave him bits of apple. He also liked to fly around the living room. What Puffernut didn't like was climbing back into his cage. So far, that was how his brief flights always ended. He glared at his mirror with its little bells, his used

cuttlebone, and the dirty newspaper on the floor of his cage. He ruffled his feathers and turned his back.

“For Pete’s sake Puffernut,” said the boy. “Stop sulking. I’ve got soccer this morning so it’s now or never!”

Puffernut heard the boy’s annoyed tone and responded with an irritated chirp. Then, grumpy but unable to resist, he hopped onto the boy’s extended finger. He rode the finger out of the cage and the boy gave him a gentle toss. The little cockatiel spread his delicate black-edged wings and swooped around the room.

“See,” crowed the boy “you did want out.”

Puffernut flew in a tight circle, faster and faster as furniture blurred by below; couch, chair, lamp, table, couch, chair, lamp, table, couch, chair, lamp, table.

Then something happened that had never ever happened before.

“Whoosh bang!”

The family room door swung wide open. Framed inside stood the little girl in her favorite yellow jumper. She held up a large purple Popsicle and squealed happily.

“Look Jimmy! Mom bought me a ...”

“Nooooo,” cried the boy waving his arms.

Just as fast, Puffernut swerved toward the beckoning doorway. Powerful strokes of his small wings ruffled the girl’s shiny curls and he zoomed through the opening. He couldn’t believe his eyes. At the end of the hall sun light streamed through another open door. Beyond that there were trees and sky. The girl whimpered and the boy yelled at the top of his lungs. Puffernut was gone!

Puffernut loved it outside. He’d been there many times but always in his cage, never like this. He flew and flew and flew. He flew barrel rolls and loop-the-loops. He climbed almost to the clouds and then fell toward the earth only to pull up at the last instant and climb again. He glided between tall buildings and over the tops of trees; “Oh Joy!” the sights, the sounds, the smells. He wanted to experience everything.

Hours later, tired but elated he settled onto a telephone wire. The sun warmed his back and a gentle breeze smoothed his feathers. Puffernut was in heaven. He felt dreamy. In slow motion,

he cocked his head from side to side and peered at the world spread out below. It was strange and wonderful. This was the best day of his life.

It was about then when Puffernut's tummy rumbled and he realized that he was hungry. He didn't want to go back to his cage, but he thought some millet or a bit of apple would be delicious. Thinking about food, he also started to feel thirsty. He scanned the street below but nothing looked familiar. He'd seen the outside of the house where the people kept his cage, but never from this far away or from this angle. Still, Puffernut wasn't worried. He felt certain that he would know the house when he saw it. The problem was, right now, it was nowhere in sight. His tummy rumbled again. *Well, he thought, if my house isn't on this street, I'm sure it'll be on the next one over.* He knew that sitting in the sun and preening wasn't getting him any closer to his millet, so with a chirp and a hop he bounced off the wire.

Earlier, when he darted through the front door, Puffernut thought that his escape was brilliant. At the time it seemed just about his greatest idea ever. After hours of fruitless searching, he wasn't so sure. Everything below him was still exciting and different, but now it was also a little scary. Worry dried and constricted his throat and a tight little knot of fear made his stomach feel doubly empty. Puffernut was fairly sure that he'd made a bad mistake.

...Continued in Chapter 2...

ADVENTURE TAKES WING

Puffernut Flies South



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