

## **Fly, Raine - Grace, Year 3, VIC**

The wind blows. The sun shines. The trees grow. Raine will migrate.

Her chocolate feathers nestle beneath layers of soft coats, shielding her from the harsh winter weather. Her golden goose beak smiles like summer memories, smoothly honking. Ocean blue stretches from the island coastline to the sunset horizon. Raine says quiet, sullen goodbyes. Formations are at the ready. Wings are positioned South and then take to the sky. Raine is one of them.

Her first migration starts.

As drifting clouds lazily lay above the sunrise, pinks and oranges paint the sky. Elegant feathers of the flock snuggle in the underbrush of a lake. Raine comes to rest. She huddles on the grass of protected land and dozes off.

But the blast of the pistols drowns her sleep.

The stench of the smoke hovers on the air, smelling of bullets. More blasts into the atmosphere, leaving the cries of innocent victims.

Raine helplessly waddles to the rocks, hiding away to seek safer shelter. It rains feathers of geese. Booming footsteps fade. Her head bobs above the rocks and she approaches slowly the wreckage of her flock.

Survivors reach to their lifeless loved ones, crying tears of desperation. They needed someone to step up. Lead them out of the black, hollow hole in their hearts.

And Raine guided them.

Through meadows and rivers as feathers healed. Over mountains and villages as courage came back. In mud and puddles as they gained hope. To an Evergreen Forest of love and nature. They restarted. They forgot the shooters, but remembered who died. They were happy to move in. But sad to leave home.

Over time, spring sprung. Raine will meet her joy.

As flowers bloomed, Raine nestles the last of the sticks into her nest. Her eyes sparkle when she pictures her family future. Her and her gosling learning to fly, laughing, snuggling. An hour later, an egg dotted with chestnut brown cracks a bit and Cloud is welcomed into the Evergreens. Her snow coat burrows into her skin. Raspberry feathers nestle amongst her head. But her eyes are her mother's. Curious.

Time again flew over the memories they shared of Mother and daughter.

Once again, it is time to migrate. But now they have a secret skill. Bravery.

Formations are at the ready. Wings are positioned South and then take to the sky. Cloud is one of them. *Her* first migration starts. Soon. As foggy clouds fly along, blues and purples tickle the sky at night, as they rest again in the same underbrush and lake as last year.

Predictably, shooters boom into the illegal land and fire smoking bullets. But this time the Evergreen flock are well aware of what was coming.

Cloud is in the bush, hiding from the black stench. Through the ashes of the leaves, she expects to see chaos and death. But somewhat of a formation attacks the enemy. A puzzled look smuggles onto her face of feathers. Something is up.

Weeks later they returned to the forest. Cloud wants to know the background. Know the origin. She wants to know the truth. The one thing Raine has kept secret.

As moss and rocks shift in the soil, Cloud stalks her lying mother. But she would not need to put herself through the trouble. One way or another, it was getting out whether Raine liked it or not. For rumours fly. Rumours spread. Rumours lie. And no one can stop them.

Then a night away, stars and whatnot, Cloud sneaks from their nest onto the vines of the elderly Tree. She rests there in silence, thinking. Thinking of the shooters. Of the flock. the way Raine led them. And so, on that morning, she calls a Forest Meeting.

There Cloud stood in the vegetation plaza as all eyes focused upon her words. Vines burrowed into the soil as she spoke. Then she found out the truth. Commotion spun as everyone told their side. But it settled when Raine told her about the home of before. She said of the land before. The crowd knew what she was saying, until something happened.

Raine spoke about her sorrow. She had a loved one. Her mother, Hail. Right before her eyes she saw the flames circle her and her only family lost to the shooters. And then Raine's eyes rained. The only reason she kept it secret was she didn't want Cloud to suffer the grief that surrounded her when she first fled home.

Cloud understands her mother. Despite that, their lives thrived. Another will join them. And that spring, Cloud had a little gosling. A bleach egg in a dotted coat of strawberry blossom red. And as Fall came by, it cracked, and Sun was welcomed to the Evergreens. Her wings were dipped in yellow. Her orange beak tipped the ends with lemon. And AGAIN came Winter, so her migration happened. And after, in her little nest a baby blue egg hatched into Skye. Her feathers painted blue. Her eyes aqua. Her beak uniquely periwinkle. She is just like Hail.

And so, the generation continues...