

# *A BIRD IN A CAGE*

by  
Hal Ames



One day, when I was a young bird, my life completely changed. I remember when I first left my home. I do not know how long ago it was, but I still remember flying through the sky. I was looking down at the green forest below. I was looking for food when suddenly everything went black.

I had crashed into something soft. I was unable to move. I struggled to get loose. I was not able to get free. I was put into a box, and the walls were very hard. I did not have much room to move. I struggled and yelled for help. After a while, I just gave up. Inside the box, I found some water and food to eat. I do not know how long I was in the box.

Suddenly a bright light blinded me. I dropped to the ground. It took a moment for my eyes to adjust to the light. I felt the warmth of the sun on my back. I was FREE!

I stretched my wings. I waved them against the air. It felt so good to flap my wings and walk around. I must have been in that box for a long time. My wings were very weak.

I began to look around. This place was so different. The ground was hard. It was not green. It was brown. Above me, I did not see any trees. However, there was something blocking the sun.

As I looked around, I saw birds everywhere. I did not know what kind of birds they were. I had never seen any of these birds before. There were blue birds, yellow

birds, green birds and red birds, and they were all looking at me!

I flew around looking for a place to land. I saw a small hole in a black box. I landed on the branch outside. When I stuck my head inside the hole, something bit me. I jumped back. I tried to go inside again, but the same thing happened.

A black bird popped out. She yelled at me, "Leave me alone, can't you see I'm trying to take care of my family! They are trying to take a nap."

I decided this was not a safe place. I flew to the other side, and I tried to hide in the corner.

A big yellow bird flew over. He sat next to me.

"Hello, my name is Tiki, what is your name?" asked the bird.

"Uh... Uh... I don't know, I don't think I have a name." I replied.

The other birds began to laugh.

"You don't have a name? Ha, now that's new!" said one of the larger birds.

An older bird flew over and sat on my other side. He looked at me from beak to tail.

"I think we'll call him Newbie," he stated to the others. They all laughed. Then he flew away.

I thought to myself, "Hm.... Newbie, sounds OK to me." So, from that day on my name was Newbie.

I found out that this place was called a zoo. It is a place where many animals are kept so humans can come to laugh and stare at them.

I like the smaller humans. They are fun. They like to come to our house and giggle.

They threw food at us. I discovered that if I flew from one end of the cage to the other, the people would go "ooh" and "ah".

It rained for many days. I hated it when it rained.

In the forest, I could hide under a tree to keep dry. In this place, I got all wet. There was no place to hide.

After the rain, the sun would come out. It was so bright and hot it would dry my

feathers quickly, but then I would be uncomfortable from the heat, because I did not have any shade.

On this day, I decided to stay on the ground to look for food. All of a sudden the fence opened. A human came inside. I knew what this meant! Every time a human came inside, one of my friends disappeared. I jumped up to fly, but I was caught. I knew this feeling. I was trapped again.

I was put into a dark place and could not move. “What now?” I thought to myself.

I was bounced around. I tried to keep from hitting the sides of the box. I bounced up and down like a toy.

Finally the bouncing stopped. It got very quiet. I waited quietly to see what would happen.

Suddenly there was a bright light. I was gently dropped to the ground. I rolled over and got onto my feet. I spread my wings and flapped them to get rid of the stiffness. As I looked around, I was in a very different place. I was alone. I was in a very small cage. I saw a place to sit so I jumped up to get a better view.

Just then, there was a face in front of me. It was one of those small humans. I did not have enough room to fly away so I just sat there and stared back at him. I do not know how long this lasted. Then I heard a strange noise.

“Hay - low” “Hay – low” “Hay – low” “Hay – low” the small human said over and over again. I had nothing better to do so I sat there and stared at this small person who was making this strange noise.

This went on for several days. He kept coming to the cage and making that strange noise. He would say it over and over and over again. Finally, I got mad. I did not want to hear that sound anymore so I yelled, “Hay – low!”

The small child stopped making the noise. He began to laugh at me. He was just like the kids at the zoo. Then he gave me some food.

The next day he came back. He started making that noise again. I got fed up with the noise. Once again I blurted out, “Hay – low!”

He stopped.

I realized if I said “Hay – low” he would stop. Then he would give me some food. This became our game.

Then he started making other noises. I found out that if I repeated what he was saying he would give me a treat. I liked the treats so I learned many new words. The small human and I became good friends.



**"Short Stories for ESL Students"** by **Harold I. Ames** is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License.

**VOCABULARY:** (*Match the word to its definition*)

- |                    |                               |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. forest _____    | a. bill, mouth of a bird      |
| 2. young _____     | b. vanish, gone missing       |
| 3. struggled _____ | c. sound                      |
| 4. blinded _____   | d. woodland                   |
| 5. corner _____    | e. where two walls meet       |
| 6. beak _____      | f. up and down, spring        |
| 7. zoo _____       | g. sightless, unable to see   |
| 8. disappear _____ | h. fought, resisted           |
| 9. bounced _____   | i. wildlife refuge, menagerie |
| 10. noise _____    | j. immature, not old          |

**TRUE / FALSE:**

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| 1. I liked the forest.                                 | T / F |
| 2. My name is Norman.                                  | T / F |
| 3. I liked the hot sun in the zoo.                     | T / F |
| 4. I liked living in the zoo.                          | T / F |
| 5. The small boy said “Ah-Choo” to me over and over.   | T / F |
| 6. I liked the treats the small humans gave me.        | T / F |
| 7. I was in the circus.                                | T / F |
| 8. My new friend in the zoo was named Tiki.            | T / F |
| 9. I missed the rain and the hot sun at the zoo.       | T / F |
| 10. I hated the humans who entered my cage at the zoo. | T / F |

**MULTIPLE CHOICE:**

1. Where did the young bird live before he was caught? \_\_\_\_
  - a) in the city
  - b) in the zoo
  - c) on a farm
  - d) in the forest
  
2. What name did he get when he was at the zoo? \_\_\_\_
  - a) Norbert
  - b) Tiki
  - c) Newbie
  - d) Norton
  
3. What happened when the human came into the cage at the zoo? \_\_\_\_
  - a) he was caught in a net.
  - b) he caught a cold.
  - c) he got wet.
  - d) Tiki yelled at him.
  
4. What did the little boy say to him over and over? \_\_\_\_
  - a) Hay Ho
  - b) Hey You
  - c) Hay Low
  - d) Hop Ho

**COMPREHENSION:** *(Write a complete sentence to answer the question.)*

1. Where was the bird born?

---

2. What was the name of the first bird he met at the zoo?

---

3. Where was he living after he left the forest?

---

4. What was the name the old bird gave to him?

---

5. What was the word the small human wanted him to say?

---

6. What did he find inside of the first box?

---

7. What did he do so the small humans at the zoo would say “ooh” and “ahh”?

---

8. What did the people say when he flew across the cage?

---

9. What always happened when humans entered the cage at the zoo?

---

10. What happened when he put his head into the small hole in the black box?

---