

***Frightful's Mountain* by Jean Craighead George**

Frightful, the peregrine falcon, could not see. A falconer's hood covered her head and eyes. She remained quiet and calm, like all daytime birds in the dark. She could hear, however. She listened to the wind whistling through pine needles. This wind music conjured up images of a strange woods and unknown flowers. The sound was foreign. It was not the soft song of wind humming through the hemlock needles of home.

Frightful was a long way from her familiar forest. Suddenly an all-invading passion filled her. She must go. She must find one mountain among thousands, one hemlock tree among millions, and the one boy who called himself Sam Gribley.

The one mountain was her territory; the one tree was Sam's house; the perch beside it, her place. And Sam Gribley was life.

Frightful had not been quite two weeks old when she first saw Sam Gribley. He had lifted her from her nest on a cliff. Small as she was, she had jabbed him with her already powerful talons as he carried her to the ground. "I'm going to call you Frightful," he had said. "You are a raving beauty." Then he carried her to the gigantic hemlock tree on the mountain and into its hollowed-out bole. This was Sam's home.

He fed her four and five times a day. He carried her on his gloved fist and talked to her. Before long, Frightful thought of him as her mother. He nurtured her like a peregrine falcon mother would.

When she was older, Sam made a perch for her and placed it outside his tree. He taught her to fly to his hand. When she was full-grown, he took her hunting with him. By now, the memory of her parents was pushed far back in her mind. Sam was her family.

At night and on winter days, Sam brought Frightful inside the huge old tree. She perched on his rustic bedstead and warmed herself by the clay fireplace. On spring and summer days, she would sit on her perch outside and watch the birds, the butterflies, and busy Sam. Patiently she waited for him to take her hunting. It was her greatest pleasure. She loved the sky. She loved the updrafts and coiling winds, and she loved "waiting on," hovering above Sam until he kicked up game. Then she stooped, the wind singing in her feathers.

Frightful was an excellent hunter who rarely missed. The food was shared. Their lives depended on each other. She must find Sam again now.

Frightful crouched to fly. She could not see. She folded her gray-blue wings to her body and straightened up.

Hooded and tethered, she had traveled with two strange men for several days.

One of them had taken her from the perch beside the big hemlock tree. He had a deep jerky voice and a face like a condor's. She looked intently at him before he slipped the falconer's hood over her head.

Sam had begged and pleaded with the man not to take her away, but he had pushed Sam aside and carried her down the mountain to a pickup truck. A leather perch had been presented to her feet. She had stepped up on it as Sam had taught her to do. A door had closed, and she was inside a camper on the truck. The motor rumbled, and she was moving.