

Albert's First Flight

Merwin Books



With a fish in his beak, a red-billed gull named Simon alighted near a nest.

Sitting inside the nest was a bird many times his own size. The bird was Albert, an albatross.



Albert couldn't fly, and his walk was more of a waddle. All the birds on the island found him terribly interesting — especially Simon.



Simon and Albert would often play and chat together.

Simon loved to fly to the far side of the island to play. Albert was curious. “How I wish I could see what the far side of the island is like.



Every morning at sunrise, Albert would go to a higher, windier place to practice flying. He tried everything he could think of, but after many, many tries, he still couldn't fly.



One day as he was out walking, Albert tripped and fell. Some red-billed gulls by the roadside said, “Albert will never learn to fly. His wings are too heavy!” “That's too bad,” they said. “If he can't fly, then he can't fish...he'll starve for sure.” Albert felt very sad after he heard this.



Albert looked at the shadow he cast on the boulder next to him. He hated his huge, ungainly wings. Albert looked at the shadow he cast on the boulder next to him. He hated his huge, ungainly wings. He plucked out some of his wing feathers with his beak. He tried not to cry, but it was no use. The tears streamed down his face.



A flock of twittering red-billed gulls playing in the grass nearby took to the air. Albert hid behind the boulder, hoping they wouldn't hear him sobbing. Just then, a gust of sea wind scooped up Albert's feathers, which then appeared to follow the red-billed gulls into the distance.



One day, Simon flew over to Albert's side and said excitedly, “Hey Albert, I found a mysterious cave on the far side of the island. Let's go check it out!” Albert really wanted to go. He readily agreed. “OK, I'm going, even if I have to hop there.”



Albert walked and walked and walked until his legs felt like jelly, but he kept on going...



Oof! Ow! THUD!

Albert tripped, tumbling head over heels into a ravine.



“Simon, I'll never be able to fly!” “Don't worry Albert— every bird it up sooner or later!” Simon tried to console him. “Actually, flying is easy, Albert. C'mon – I'll show you.”



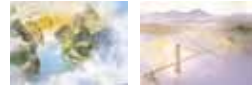
Simon flew to the top of a big rock. He spread his wings, and **WHOOSH!** he landed on the ground.



He spread his wings wide and began to glide downward. His little island vanished into the distance. The great wind had carried Albert far, far away...



Albert climbed to the top of the rock, but soon lost his balance and fell to the ground with a resounding **THUMP!**



He soared over fjords.
He sailed over bridges.



Simon displayed his impressive flying skills again and again. Albert watched intently.



Albert glided for a long, long time — and wasn't the least bit tired. His long, long wings enabled him to fly high, and swiftly, and ever so gracefully.



Just then, it began to rain. The rain turned into a violent storm. “Albert!” Simon yelled, “Quick! Run for shelter!” In a panic, Albert followed Simon....



Albert covered most of the globe in his travels. But throughout it all, he missed Simon and wondered about the mysterious cave.



But another mighty gust sent Albert tumbling over the cliff.....

Albert flew back to his familiar little island. As he approached the the far side of the island, he slowed down.



The wind howled fiercely. Struggling with all his might, Albert flipped and whirled and flapped his wings like crazy. Suddenly, his feet stopped flailing about. The savage storm was now a force helping him ascend!



“Wow! The mysterious cave!” Albert could hardly contain his excitement. A flock of red-billed gulls were playing near the entrance of the cave. Albert was thrilled to see Simon there, too! There were so many things Albert wanted to tell him...



Albert was flying! He rode on the wind, climbing higher and higher...



...and illuminated the beautiful far side of the island.



Albert rose up above the dark storm, into the blinding sunlight. He felt very small indeed in this vast new world.