

The freedom song

There was once a proud hunter. One day the hunter was walking through a forest when he saw, perched high in a tree, a bird with a beautiful golden beak, green wings and a red tail. "What a beautiful bird," he thought. "I'll leave it alone."

As he carried on walking the bird sang out to him. The song sounded to the hunter like it was mocking him. "*Na-na, na-na-na.*" (Clap-clap-clap).

The hunter didn't like it. The song reminded him of the playground teasing he had experienced as a boy. He looked up at the bird. "I don't like that song. Don't sing it again or you will be sorry." But the bird didn't seem to mind. It pushed back its wings, stuck out its beak and sang, "*Na-na, na-na-na.*"

The hunter put an arrow into his bow and shot at the bird. The arrow went straight through the bird's heart and he fell, lifeless to the ground. "That will show him," said the hunter. He put the dead bird in his sack and continued on his way. But from his bag came first a vibration and then a muffled sound, the very same song the bird had sang, "*Na-na, na-na-na.*"

The hunter took the sack home, got out the bird and plucked out all its feathers. But then, in a shivering voice he heard that song again, "*Na-na, na-na-na.*" Furious with the bird, the hunter took a sharp knife and chopped the bird up into a hundred pieces and threw them in a pot of boiling water. "That will show him," he said out loud. But then, in a bubbling gurgling voice he heard the song again, "*Na-na, na-na-na.*"

The hunter was wild with rage. He took the pot, the bones, the feathers - everything to do with this bird - out into the garden. He dug a deep hole and buried the lot. But the soil had barely been patted down when he heard the song, mocking him again. "*Na-na, na-na-na.*"

He dug the bird up, threw all the pieces into a box. He took the box down to the river, tied a great big stone around it and pushed it into the river. At last, the bird was silenced and the hunter went home to bed.

But during the night, at the bottom of the river, the box started to sway in the currents and finally it broke free. It floated to the surface, the lid burst open and one hundred birds, each with a golden beak, green wings and a red tail, flew silently out into the night.

The next day, the hunter got up, had his breakfast, then set off hunting. But as he slipped quietly through the forest he saw a golden light. He followed it into a clearing and looked up. There in the trees were a hundred birds with golden beaks. Each one of the birds pushed back their wings, stuck out their beaks and sang, "*Na-na, na-na-na.*"

The hunter sighed. "You are the Freedom Bird and that is your song."

And from that day on, in that place, the hunter and the Freedom Bird have lived happily side by side.

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