

The Gull And The Moon

Long ago, there lived a young gull whose name was Gilbrilian. He had a small hole in the steep cliffs that overlooked the sea. The Cliffs were a favorite nesting place for gulls. They were close to their food source and offered the seabirds protection from their predators. Gilbrilian’s roost was one of hundreds that populated the burrows along the rocky ledge that his flock called home every summer.

Each morning Gilbrilian would wake and join the other snowy white gulls that flew down to the water below to catch fish and to play on the waves and in the wind. When the sun set every night, he would return to his little home and dream about the air currents that delighted his wings.

But being a young and impetuous gull, he was not always satisfied with such simple pleasures as swimming, eating, and flying. He was constantly challenging the other young gulls in the flock to see who could fly the fastest and the highest, or to see who could do the best tricks. He would boast that he was the best and he took great pride in beating the others who cared to compete with him.

As the days of summer passed, Gilbrilian’s reputation spread throughout the Cliffs and finally reached the ears of Avindar, the great king of all the gulls who lived on the steep slopes. The news of Gilbrilian’s boasts aroused his curiosity of the leader, as Old Avindar had been searching for someone worthy to rule after he had passed on. Any future leader must excel at all of the things that gulls do and Avindar thought that maybe Gilbrilian might be such a gull. He sent several of his sergeants to summon Gilbrilian.

The sergeants found Gilbrilian amongst several young gulls that were diving from the steepest cliffs along with friendly terns. Naturally, he was puzzled at why the chief gull would want to see him, but he decided that it would be in his best interest to do as the messengers requested.

Upon arriving at Avindar’s rather large cave, the young gull was led immediately to the king. As Gilbrilian entered the meeting room, he could see that Old Avindar was somewhat larger than he had estimated from the few occasional glimpses of the great gull he had had. Avindar spoke first.

“Are you the one they call Gilbrilian?”

“Yes, Your Greatness, I am,” replied Gilbrilian, still wondering about the purpose of this meeting.

“They tell me that you have boasted about being able to fly faster, dive straighter, catch more fish, and do better tricks than any other gull. Is this true?”

“Yes, Your Greatness, it is.” Gilbrilian saw no point in denying what was obviously well known throughout the Cliffs. Avindar spoke again.

“For some time now, I have been looking for one who would be worthy of wearing the Crown of the Cliffs after I pass on. You see, I becoming old and will one day not want to carry the burden of ruling any longer.”

“And you think that I might be such a gull?” Gilbrilian asked rather hesitantly. “What could I possibly do to prove my worthiness?”

“You have said that you can fly faster and higher than any other gull. Prove this to me by flying to the Moon and back. If in three days time you do not have some proof of your having done

this feat, then you shall not be worthy of wearing my crown. I will make my decision on the third dawn.”

Gilbrilian thought for a moment, knowing this was an unheard of challenge. No gull had ever flown to the Moon. The risk would be great, but the reward was the answer to all of his dreams. He gathered all his courage and looked straight into Old Avindar’s eyes.

“I accept your challenge. If on the third dawn you have not heard from me, or have not seen a sign from me that I have made it, then I will deem myself unfit for your title. Until then, watch the night sky for a sign.”

When he finished saying this, he bowed slightly and turned towards the entrance way.

* * *

Upon leaving Avindar’s chambers, Gilbrilian caught an afternoon breeze that carried him gently around a point in the rocks toward the ledge where his home was. His thoughts were of bewilderment, surprise, and worry. He wanted to be the leader of the gulls more than anything but was unsure of how to go about his task.

When he returned to his modest dwelling, he began to think, searching for an answer. He figured that flying to the Moon was probably impossible, since no gull had ever done it or had ever heard of it being done. Surely if it could be done, some gull would have tried it, and his name would have been set to song. No, flying to the moon was impossible.

He thought and thought, but no plan came to his mind. As the day grew to dusk, some of his friends flew up the side of the steep cliff to visit with the young gull. They had expected Gilbrilian to have left for the Moon and were going to ask why he had not done so.

“Why have you not yet left,” said his friends. “Surely it is a great distance to the Moon. Or have you decided that this is too great of a challenge for you? You know that you will be the laughing stock of the Cliffs if you do not follow through on the Old Avindar’s offer.”

This made Gilbrilian furious. He knew that he was better than any of them. In his fury he again boasted of his superior abilities.

“I have not left yet in order to prove that I am the fastest gull. I do not need three days and nights to fly to the Moon. I can do it in just one night.”

The others laughed at him. “You will never be able to beat Old Avindar’s deadline!” When they had finished jeering at him, they flew down to the sea to catch their evening meal.

* * *

All the next day and all of the following day, Gilbrilian stayed in his nest, knowing the other gulls would laugh at him should he show himself. Though he thought and thought, there didn’t seem to be a way to end his dilemma.

With the dusk, there came a realization of what his life would be after the dawn. No longer could he boast of being the best, for others would laugh. His name would become the joke of the Cliffs. With the last rays of daylight, he left his little hole for the final time and headed for the high clouds.

Some gulls saw Gilbrilian leave and thought that he was finally flying off to the Moon. Word got to Avindar that the young gull whom he had challenged had at last left. Old Avindar gave a chuckle and placed a few guards at the entrance to watch the night sky. He then left for his royal chamber and a long sleep.

Not long after the sun had set, the moon rose in the east. At first it was large and slightly orange, but within a few minutes, it became its normal size and silvery-white color. It was then that something amazing started to happen. The Avindar’s guards noticed it first. Soon the whole cliff was awake and watching the Moon.

The lower portion of the Moon’s face was slowly disappearing. After an hour, more than half of the Moon was gone. Needless to say, this created quite a stir. Most of the gulls had become aware of Gilbrilian’s departure and were speculating as to where and what he might be doing.

The silver light became dimmer and dimmer. Soon there was but a thin sliver of the moon left. The king’s guards went and woke Avindar, instantly barraging him with stories of a disappearing Moon. Old Avindar arose and followed the guards out to the entrance at Cliff’s Edge.

What Avindar and all the gulls saw was the Moon vanish from the sky, leaving only a shadow of its rim behind. There was a great hysteria along the Cliffs, for none knew what had happened. Gilbrilian’s name flew from nest to nest, gathering more praise with each telling.

Before the gulls could even begin to worry about whether the Moon would regain its light, the darkness lost its hold and a silver line returned to the sky. The light grew just as it had disappeared.

As the Moon’s brightness slowly increased, the praise of Gilbrilian reached the ears of Old Avindar. Its ring echoed in the king’s sleepy head until he realized what it meant. He breathed a sigh of relief, knowing that he had now found one worthy of leading the gulls. With that thought, he ordered the guards to prepare a royal welcome for Gilbrilian, and then turned towards his warm bed and his waiting sleep.

* * *

The next morning the Cliffs were alive with the anticipation of Gilbrilian’s return. Of course, no one knew that Gilbrilian had not headed for the Moon when he left. As the morning failed into afternoon, the currents were full of questions about Gilbrilian. Surely he should have been back by now. What could have happened?

Naturally Gilbrilian was unaware of events back at the Cliffs. In fact, he had not even seen the Moon’s performance, as he had been flying in the clouds. His despair was a far cry from the excitement at the Cliffs. His wings wandered aimlessly through the dark sky as his mind wandered around his future.

Gilbrilian flew long and far until the first rays of sunlight found their way over the Earth’s edge. His eye caught a flicker of dawnlight coming from below. As he flew towards it, he saw a blue lake whose surface held the reflection of the surrounding mountains and trees. Relaxing his wings, he began to circle down towards the lake’s shore.

After landing on a smooth rock near a collection of cattails, he began looking for a sheltered place where he could rest for awhile. No sooner had he started inspecting possible options than he heard a flutter of wings above him. As a surprised Gilbrilian turned, the sound ceased. A large golden gull was settling himself on a fallen tree nearby. There seemed to be a certain brilliance surrounding the strange bird.

“Ah, Gilbrilian. At last,” said he. “You are a hard one to keep up with!”

A bewildered Gilbrilian stared through tired eyes at the majestic creature. With great effort, he found his voice.

“You know my name. Who are you?”

“I know your name and the names of all the gulls on your Cliffs. My name is Lightsender to some, Wishbringer to others, but to you, I am Goldenwing.”

Unable to speak any words, Gilbrilian watched Goldenwing with blank eyes. Goldenwing continued after a pause.

“I am aware of your heartache and of what brought it about. It was I who planted the notion of flying to the Moon in Old Avindar’s head. You see, you have been chosen to be the leader of all the gulls. I used this fashion of events to bring you here so that I might tell you this.”

Gilbrilian’s drowsiness had left him and he felt the fear of the unknown and a growing sense of humility. The words of Goldenwing seemed to find their way into his heart and his soul. They were warm and full of strength. Gilbrilian began to feel changes in his mind and in his body. Every feather soon tingled with energy.

“You will rule the gulls with compassion, fairness, and wisdom as Avindar has before you. These gifts I give to you. To the Doomsayer I cast your uncertainty and your fears. Always remember what it is to be free.

“Go now. Return to your cliffs. Your fellow gulls await you. You will be greeted with much jubilation and praise, for they believe that you did indeed fly to the Moon. In a manner of speaking you have, as I am not of this world.

“Go and rule well. Unite the Cliffs and make each gull a brother to the other.

“Go now. I will guide your way and keep you wings strong, today and always.”

* * *

Gilbrilian spread his wings and caught a breeze coming out of the pine trees. He climbed slowly but steadily. He soon lost sight of Goldenwing and the lake. Then turning towards the newly risen sun, he found a high wind and let it carry him where it pleased.

After a time, which he could say was neither short nor long, he saw the blue of the ocean come into view. The thought of flying over the waves delighted him as it would any gull.

Within minutes, he could make out the lines of the Cliffs. He started a slow spiralling down towards his old home. Several young gulls noticed a kingly Gilbrilian dropping from the skies. Shouts of welcome rose up to greet him.

As Gilbrilian landed at Cliff’s Edge, he realized that he had forgotten to ask Goldenwing what sign all the gulls had seen the night before. It made little difference, thought Gilbrilian, as he folded his tired wings in place.

* * *

*“And there shall be signs in the sun,
and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth
distress of nations, and with perplexity;
the sea and waves roaring ...”*

Luke 21:25