

Terry

A WORKING TITLE BY CONNER INGALLS

A planet, similar to our own, existed thousands of years ago. On this planet there lived unique and diverse life who needed the same oxygen, water, and food to survive as creatures on Earth. A species called Flyers flew through the skies. Much alike our birds, Flyers flew in flocks and migrated when the days became cold. Our story follows a special Flyer, one called Terry, and his experiences one cold winter, when his family began to migrate hundreds of miles south to the warmer climates.

On this planet there is a forest the size of a continent. In this forest there are huge trees, massive sky needles dense with leafs and branches, home for many creatures who seek shelter in their high peaks. These are called Bunji trees. Up at the top, where the brush is the most dense, lives the Flyers. In one specific tree, lives Terry and his flock. The Flyers spend most of their time eating smaller creatures at the lower levels of Bunji trees, and flying around the upper forest. When the winters come, they must leave the northern forest and migrate south, or risk freezing to death. The Flyers lack the essential tools for winter survival, they have no fur or warming layers, and cannot burrow into the Bunji trees like the food they feed on. When the first frost appears on the highest branches of the Bunji trees, that is the Flyers indicator to fly south, to the warmer, more barren parts of the forest. There they will stay until it

becomes too hot, and it is safe to return back North, when the winter is over.

Terry and his family of Flyers left their lush green forest at the first sight of frost accumulating on the Bunji tree branches. The Bunji trees sit higher than all other life in the forest, and the Flyers sleep deep in the dense brush at their peak. The frost is a clear indicator that winter is coming to their continental forest, as a fragile species the Flyers are not fit to survive the brutal winters.

End Introduction

The first frost appeared on the branches, Terry and his family departed from their trees, beginning their long journey southbound. Since Terry was one of the youngest of his flock, he had to fly in the back of the formation. The elder Flyers flew up front, leading the way. Terry underestimated the length of the journey, and as it was his first winter, did not know what to expect. The night before, instead of sleeping like his family suggested, Terry was out flying alone at night. In awe of the serenity of the forest night, Terry flew around for hours, chasing bugs, exploring, and playing around. Terry learned to regret his decision to stay up late early into the flight. The sun had just set, and he knew there was much more traveling ahead of him. As the flock neared the edge of the forest,

into a desolate desert area Terry never knew existed, he began to nod off. He could hardly keep up, his wings were failing him, his eyelid began to shut without effort. His self-control began to slip, unable to keep up with the rest of his family he was fatigued. In an instant, Terry lost the battle to stay awake and begin plummeting to the desert below.

Terry woke shortly after hitting the ground. In a panic, he looked to the sky to see if his family was above. They were not. They had not noticed he fell behind, perhaps they would once they reached where they were going and would turn around to look for him. Terry had no idea where he was, or where he was going. He was relying on his family to lead the way.

It was just before sunrise when Terry crash landed, the desert was warming up. Terry tried to rationalize his situation, he told himself over and over that his family would notice and turn around. He sat in silence, without a plan. Just waiting. A few hours passed, and Terry did not see a single thing in the sky above. Realizing his situation, yet still oblivious, Terry began to fly upward. He figured, the desert was not a place he'd want to stay. There was nothing but sand, all he could see was sand. There was no shade, no water, nothing. In the distance he could make out lumps in the dunes, perhaps desert flowers or cactuses. All of a sudden, as Terry began to fly further above, a strong gust of wind, stronger than one he'd

ever experienced before, whipped him down. The wind played with Terry like a ragdoll, tumbling him and throwing him in every direction downwards. Already weak and injured from his first fall, Terry found himself in a worse situation now. Not strong enough to fight the winds, Terry braced for impact, back down to the desert below.

With his ambitions in check, Terry was not ready to try flying again. He was too weak before, and was certainly too weak after his first attempt. Getting desperate and scared, Terry began to muster up a plan. If he couldn't fly, maybe he could walk his way out. The one problem with that, was that Terry did not know which direction to walk in. He had lost his bearings after the first fall, and again after the second. He had no idea which direction he came from, or where his family was going. Terry realized he had no tools to help him travel back the way he came, so he decided to start walking towards the lumps on the dunes he had seen when he was flying. The sun had completely risen. It was right overhead, and it was hot. Terry was exhausted, and used his wings to cover his eye from the sun-rays above. As he crested the first sand dune where he thought to have seen something, there was nothing but a skeleton, a rather large one. In fact, looking out at the rest of the dunes, Terry saw nothing but skeletal remains, few and far between, yet consistently littered throughout the landscape.

Terry burrowed into the skull of a beast, like he and his family would burrow into the Bunji trees. The sun was too hot, and Terry needed a way to cool down. Here, inside the fallen beast, Terry tried to think of a plan. First, he determined he'd get some rest, and wait for the afternoon, when the sun began to set. That way, he could go out and try to find food and water without the heat killing him. Terry, exhausted, passed out for a couple hours in the shade of the beast. Time flew by, and he didn't wake up until dawn, as the sun was just about to set. As it was brutally hot earlier, it now began to get cold, and a terrible wind started whipping the landscape. Terry tried to escape the confines of his shelter, but the nightly wind was too intense, he could hardly walk, forget fly. Even with the powerful gusts of wind, Terry built up the courage to take a walk out in the dark, in hopes of finding food, water, or maybe even another shelter. As Terry walked, he could hear growls, snarls, and scary noises coming from the other sides of the sand dunes, and every time he was able to climb to the top of one to see what was on the other side, there was nothing. Convinced it was the wind playing tricks on him, Terry tried to rationalize the spooky noises coming from the dark. As he walked, the sounds got louder and louder, and Terry began to get discouraged and scared. Afraid, he turned around back to his skeleton shelter.

When morning came, Terry wandered out again into the desert in hopes of finding something, anything really. All there was out there was sand, and more sand, and more sand. Terry focused hard to search for food and water, but found nothing but skeletons in the desert. As he was about to give up, Terry noticed something in the distance, it appeared to be a lush green tree. Surprised and excited, Terry began to run towards the tree. As much land as he covered, it did not seem like the tree was getting any closer. The more he ran, the more Terry convinced himself he was seeing more than the tree, in fact, he told himself he could see the pool of water surrounding it come into sight. Determined to reach this utopia in the plains of the desert, Terry exerted himself greatly. He did not reach the tree. He was fatigued, and more thirsty than ever before. To his dismay, the tree remained in the distance, it appeared he made no progress in his attempt to reach it. The skeletons that Terry noticed before appeared to be much more scarce than he had previously seen.

Assuming he had ventured deeper into the desert due to the little amount of skeletons, Terry reached an all time low. He thought he'd never escape the desert. It seemed like it was almost alive, trying to keep Terry down there long enough so that he would die. Whatever Terry tried, the desert would shut him down. He couldn't venture out at night because of the wind, and he couldn't travel during the day because

of the heat. When he was able to travel, he wasn't able to get anywhere. Not to mention, the last time he tried to fly, he was knocked down almost immediately. Terry's faith began to dwindle, he felt hopeless. He returned to the skeleton he had been taking shelter in, and fell asleep.

When Terry slept, he had a dream. The spirit of the beast that Terry slept in spoke to him. The spirit revealed to him that the desert was trying to kill him, and keep him there in order to absorb his life energy. The spirit was trying to help him, he told Terry that the only way to escape the desert was not to be physically strong, but spiritually strong. Terry would have to find his lost hope and courage, and regain his spiritual strength in order to beat his environment. Terry woke up suddenly, and with a new-found confidence.

It was nearing dawn, not quite morning yet, and the sun hadn't began to rise. The wind slowed down, and Terry walked outside. He took off, flying straight up in the sky. Almost immediately, the wind took control. It flung him around, and smashed him to the ground. Unwilling to give up, Terry took another go at it. This time, he climbed to the top of a dune, and jumped horizontally, Trying to use the wind to his advantage. This time, the wind flung him a much greater distance. He spread his wings, and leveled out. The wind lifted him in a controlled manner this time, Terry caught the

perfect gust. The wind launched him violently in a vertical direction, as if it were angry. Terry maintained control, and had faith he would succeed.

As Terry flew higher and higher, the winds became less violent. Terry was able to fly consistently, without being knocked down. He had defeated the desert. He felt an immense feeling of relief, by believing in himself, he was able to defeat what had nearly killed him. Terry, still exhausted, was in no shape to wait around. He had no idea where to go, so off of instinct, he gained more altitude, and picked a direction. He flew for hours, and reached the edge of the desert. Now, he must try to find his family.

The End.