



ST. STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

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The Tale of Edwin Eagle's Christmas Adventure

*A Children's Christmas Story,
Christmas Eve, December 24th, 2015*

Once upon a time, long, long ago, there lived an Eagle called Edwin. Now Edwin was a very unusual Eagle because he didn't live in an eyrie: a nest high on a cliff or mountaintop where eagles like Edwin usually live.

Edwin's home was on a branch next to the nest of a family of nightingales. Even more unusually, he called Mrs. Nightingale "Mom" and Mr. Nightingale "Dad" and their whole host of little nightingales "brothers" and "sisters." Edwin, you see, had been adopted.

One night during a terrible storm, the wind had blown poor Edwin out the eyrie which he shared with his eagle baby brothers and sisters. Desperately, Edwin flapped his little wings, but it didn't do him much good because he was too young to have feathers. Faster and faster, further and further he fell until he landed with a plop in a nice, soft warm nest – a nest much more cozy than his draughty eyrie.

"Move over, you're squashing us," said a muffled voice somewhere beneath him. Edwin moved over and three little nightingales appeared.

"Sorry," said Edwin, "I didn't mean to drop in like that."

"Who are you?" asked the little nightingales.

"I do believe he's a baby eagle," said Mrs.

Nightingale. "He must have been blown out of his nest in the storm."

The Nightingales were kindly folk. They put Edwin to bed, with a nice cup of Cocoa, and next day asked their friends and neighbors if they knew anyone who had lost a baby eagle. But when nobody had heard of any eagles looking for Edwin, they decided to adopt him.

Eagles are much bigger than nightingales, but Mr. Nightingale and his friends added an eagle-sized wing to the family's nest. Next it soon became clear feeding Edwin would be a very big problem, but the whole flock of nightingales pitched to gather enough worms and grubs to satisfy Edwin's growing appetite.

Edwin adored the nightingales. When he got bigger, he thoughtfully moved out of the nest to a perch on the branch next door in order to give everyone a bit more room. But he still helped with the family's household chores and in his spare time gave the little nightingales in the neighborhood rides on his back.

Edwin loved living with nightingales. He didn't miss hanging out with his fellow eagles at all. In fact there was only one thing that disappointed him. He simply couldn't sing well enough to join the nightingale choir. Adric, the flock's choirmaster, tried his best to coach him, but at the end of six months all Edwin could manage was the same tuneless squawk.

"Sorry, Edwin," said Adric, "There's no way you can sing in the choir. Why don't you hand out the programs, organize the transport and all that sort of thing."

Poor Edwin! All he'd ever wanted to do was sing like a nightingale. But he swallowed his disappointment and became the choir's road manager and chief program hander-outer. But every night when he said his prayers before going to bed, he added the petition: "Please God. Give me a nice voice so I can sing in the choir."

One chilly evening in December, the nightingale choir was booked to sing far away in a little town called Bethlehem. The birds of the choir birds snuggled down in Edwin's back feathers and they flew to Bethlehem.

"I know it sounds a bit odd," said Adric, "but the booking agent says we'll be singing in a stable. And to make matters worse, there'll be no time to rehearse with the big, important choir that will be singing with us. You know I am not pleased about that."

When they arrived at the stable, Edwin could see that it was packed with people and animals. Not only were there shepherds, sheep and woolly lambs, but there were also a pair of donkeys and a big brown ox. In the middle of the crowd was a tall man with a beard and a very pretty lady in a blue dress. And everyone present was gazing at a beautiful baby boy lying in a manger.

"Better hand out the programs fast, Edwin," whispered Adric, "Tonight we're singing to celebrate the birth of Jesus, the newborn king. It's a very big honor. I can't believe they've asked me to conduct a massed choir of angels and nightingales!"

The concert was a tremendous success. The nightingales and angels put terrific show, and much to his surprise, even Edwin got to take part. This how it came about:

"Adric," said the Blessed Virgin Mary, just before the performance started, "I've never heard of an eagle singing in a nightingale choir before."

"Well, ma'am," replied Adric, "Edwin's actually our road manager. He can't sing a note. He can only squawk – and badly off-key at that. It sounds absolutely awful."

Edwin hung his head in shame.

"Oh, the poor bird," said the Blessed Virgin, "Psalm 66 and Psalm 81 both say 'Make a joyful noise unto the Lord', and I'm sure Edwin could do that. There'll be trumpets tonight, why not let Edwin play the drums?"

"If you say so, Ma'am," said Adric, handing the eagle a pair of drum sticks, "Edwin, I do hope you know what you're doing."

"So do I," replied Edwin, uncertainly.

But it turned out Edwin was a natural drummer. After the concert, the Archangel Gabriel congratulated Adric on a job well done. "You're the best conductor we've ever had. Your nightingale choir was quite exceptional. And where did you find that drummer. He was absolutely terrific."

"Actually," said Adric, "He literally dropped in our lap."

The Blessed Virgin Mary and Joseph were thrilled with the nightingales' singing. After the performance, Mary gave each of them – including Edwin – a silver medal depicting herself with the baby Jesus on her lap to wear around their necks.

From then on, every time Adric engaged trumpets to play with the choir, he made sure Edwin was there to accompany them on the drums.

"Edwin may not be able to sing, but he certainly makes the most joyful noise I've ever heard."

The End