The Golden Toucan
Yavuz DEMİRKIRAN

The Golden Toucan

Yavuz DEMİRKIRAN

Deep in the green jungle, where vines swung like skipping ropes and sunshine dripped through the leaves, lived Tiko the toucan. His feathers were glossy black, his chest was bright white, and his beak—oh, his beak!—shone like polished gold. When the morning light touched it, the whole jungle sparkled. Tiko loved his jungle home, but he did not love being stared at all day long.

Every morning, the animals gathered to admire Tiko's shiny beak. "It's so bright!" chirped the parrots. "It glows like the sun!" giggled the monkeys. Even Oldo the tortoise, slow and wise, nodded his wrinkled green head and said, "I have never seen such a beak in all my years." Tiko smiled politely, but inside he wished they would look at something else for a change.

Mama Mina the monkey noticed Tiko's quiet sigh. She swung down beside him, her curling tail wrapped around a branch, and asked, "Why the long face, little friend?" Tiko shrugged his black wings. "Everyone only sees my beak," he said. "They never ask what I think or how I feel." Mama Mina nodded gently. "True worth is not in how we look," she said, "but in what we carry inside."

That afternoon, Tiko flew to the river for a drink. He passed Pip, a tiny cream-coloured rabbit with floppy ears and a little blue leaf scarf. Pip stared at Tiko's beak with wide round eyes. "It's so shiny!" Pip whispered. Tiko sighed again. "Yes," he said softly. "It is." He wished someone would notice his kind heart instead of just his golden beak.

Then the sky turned grey. Clouds piled up like angry pillows, and the wind began to howl. Mama Mina shouted from the treetops, "A big storm is coming! Hold on tight!" The animals scurried for cover. Tiko felt the first fat raindrops plop onto his shiny beak. He fluffed his feathers and waited, hoping the storm would pass quickly.

But the rain did not stop. It poured and poured, and the river rose higher and higher. Soon, water rushed through the jungle, swirling around tree trunks and turning paths into muddy streams. "The jungle flood is here!" cried Oldo, his spectacles fogging up. "Everyone must get to high ground!" The animals panicked. Some could not swim. Some were too small to climb. The water kept rising.

Tiko flew above the flood, his golden beak shining even in the grey rain. He saw Pip trapped on a tiny island of mud, trembling with fear. "Help!" squeaked Pip. "I can't swim!" Tiko swooped down without a thought. "Hold on to my feet!" he called. Pip grabbed Tiko's small paws, and Tiko flapped his wings hard, carrying the little rabbit to a safe, dry hill.

Next, Tiko spotted a family of mice clinging to a floating log. Their tiny voices squeaked over the roaring water. He flew to them and said, "Climb onto my back!" One by one, the mice scrambled aboard. Tiko's wings ached, but he did not stop. He carried them to the same safe hill, where Pip waited with wide, grateful eyes.

The rain kept falling, and Tiko kept flying. He rescued a shivering lizard from a branch and a soaked squirrel from a hollow log. Each time, he spoke gently: "You're safe now. I've got you." The animals on the hill grew quiet, watching the toucan with the golden beak risk his own safety again and again. Mama Mina helped them settle, her warm voice calming their fears.

Oldo the tortoise was too heavy for Tiko to carry. The water was rising around his mossy brown shell. "I am too old and slow," Oldo said sadly. But Tiko had an idea. "Mama Mina, can you find a strong vine?" Mama Mina swung through the trees and brought back a long, thick vine. Tiko tied it around Oldo's shell, and together with the monkeys, they pulled the old tortoise to safety.

At last, the rain slowed to a drizzle, and the flood began to sink back into the river. The animals huddled on the dry hill, safe and sound. Pip hopped close to Tiko and whispered, "Your beak is shiny, but your heart is even brighter." Tiko's round dark eyes sparkled with happy tears. He had never felt so tired—or so glad.

Mama Mina gathered everyone around. "Today," she said, "we saw what true worth looks like. It is not a shiny beak or a pretty feather. It is a heart that helps others, even when it is scared." The animals nodded. They looked at Tiko with new respect—not just for his golden beak, but for his courage and kindness.

Oldo the tortoise adjusted his tiny spectacles and spoke in his slow, wise voice. "A shiny beak is nice to see," he said, "but a caring heart is true worth. Remember that, little ones." The animals cheered for Tiko. This time, they were not just staring at his beak. They were cheering for the friend who had saved them.

Tiko felt warm inside. He had been tired of being known only for his looks. Now the animals saw him for who he really was: a kind, brave toucan who cared about others. "Thank you," he said softly. "I am glad I could help." Pip hugged Tiko's leg, and the mice waved from the grass. Tiko smiled, and his golden beak seemed to shine even brighter.

From that day on, the jungle felt different. The animals still admired Tiko's shiny beak, but they also asked about his day and listened to his stories. Tiko was happy to be known for who he was, not just how he looked. And whenever someone new arrived, Mama Mina would smile and say, "Watch what they do, not just what they wear."

The jungle flood was long gone, but its lesson stayed. Tiko and his friends played by the river, safe and sound. Pip wore a new blue leaf scarf, and Oldo told stories under the shade of a big fig tree. Tiko flew above them, his golden beak catching the sunlight. He knew now that true worth comes from kindness, and that was the best treasure of all.