

Richard Bach - Jonathan Livingston Seagull

Part 1	
It was morning, and the new sun sparkled gold across the ripples of a gentle sea.	
A mile from shore a fishing boat chummed the water, and the word for Breakfast Flock flashed through the air, till a crowd of a thousand seagulls came to dodge and fight for bits of food. It was another busy day beginning.	
But way off alone, out by himself beyond boat and shore, Jonathan Livingston Seagull was practicing. A hundred feet in the sky he lowered his webbed feet, lifted his beak, and strained to hold a painful hardtwisted curve through his wings. The curve meant that he would fly slowly, and now he slowed until the wind was a whisper in his face, until the ocean stood still beneath him. He narrowed his eyes in fierce concentration, held his breath, forced one ... single ... more ... inch ... of ... curve Then his feathers ruffled, he stalled and fell.	
Seagulls, as you know, never falter, never stall. To stall in the air is for them disgraced and it is dishonor.	
PART 2	
When Jonathan Seagull joined the Flock	

<p>on the beach, it was full night. He was dizzy and terribly tired. Yet in delight he flew a loop to landing, with a snap roll just before touchdown. When they hear of it, he thought, of the Breakthrough, they'll be wild with joy. How much more there is now to living! Instead of our drab slogging forth and back to the fishing boats, there's a reason to life! We can list ourselves out of ignorance, we can find ourselves as creatures of excellence and intelligence and skill. We can be free! We can learn to fly!</p>	
<p>The years head hummed and glowed with promise.</p>	
<p>The gulls were flocked into the Council Gathering when he landed, and apparently had been so flocked for sometime. They were, in fact, waiting.</p>	
<p><i>"Jonathan Livingston Seagull! Stand to Centre!"</i> The Elder's words sounded in a voice of highest ceremony. Stand to Centre meant only great shame or great honor. Stand to Centre for honor was the way the gulls' foremost leaders were marked. Of course, he thought, the Breakfast Flock this morning; they saw the Breakthrough! But I want no honors. I have no wish to be leader. I want only to share what I've found, to show those horizons out ahead for us all. He stepped</p>	

forward.	
Part 3	
Jonathan stayed and worked with the new birds coming in, who were all very bright and quick with their lessons. but the old feeling came back, and he couldn't help but think that there might be one or two gulls back on Earth who would be able to learn, too. How much more would he have known by now if Chaing had come to him on the day that he was Outcast!	
<i>"Sully, I must go back," he said at last. "Your students are doing well. They can help you bring the newcomers along."</i>	
Sullivan sighed, but he did not argue. <i>"I think I'll miss you, Jonathan,"</i> was all that he said.	
<i>"Sully, for shame!" Jonathan said in reproach, "and don't be foolish! What are we trying to practise every day? If our friendship depends on things like space and time, then when we finally overcome space and time, we've destroyed our own brotherhood! But overcome space, and all we have left is Here. Overcome time, and all we have left is Now. And in the middle of Here and Now, don't you think that we might see each other once</i>	

<p><i>or twice?"</i></p>	
<p>Sullivan Seagull laughed in spite of himself. <i>"You crazy bird,"</i> he said kindly. <i>"If anybody can show someone on the ground how to see a thousand miles, it will be Jonathan Livingston Seagull.:</i> He looked at the sand. <i>"Good-bye, Jon, my friend."</i></p>	
<p><i>"Good-bye, Sully. We'll meet again."</i> And with that, Jonathan held in thought an image of the great gull-flocks on the shore of another time, and he knew with practiced ease that he was not bone and feather but a perfect idea of freedom and flight, limited by nothing at all.</p>	