

Laine Scott

The Bird and the Human

This story begins with a pie. This pie was baked by a little old man who hated baking pies. He hated to tenderly knead the soft, pillowy dough. He hated stirring and mixing delightful fillings. He hated the smell of pies baking in the oven. He hated the taste of a crunchy-crumby crust that gently cradled delicious, gooey filling.

But, most of all, he *hated* when someone would compliment his masterpieces (for he sold these pies at a bakery).

One morning, as he grumpily huffed to the bakery (which was called “Bernie Baker’s Bakery”) he was stopped in the street by a little bird.

The little blue and grey speckled bird didn’t do much—he just would be where the angry old man would be, no matter where the angry old man went. The old man walked over the bridge that was over the brook—there was the bird. The old man walked down the street that went down to the town—there was the bird. The old man stopped at the stop light that stopped traffic—there was the bird.

The bird never sang a whistle—which infuriated the angry old man.

“Stupid bird!” he yelled at the little bird, “your only purpose is to sing, but you can’t even do that!” The little bird blinked at the angry old man, and followed him no longer.

The next morning, however, the little blue and grey speckled bird was sitting on the old man’s mailbox. But the old man didn’t notice the bird, and went on his not-so-merry way to Bernie Baker’s Bakery. The old man also didn’t notice the little bird at the bridge over the brook, or on the street down to the town, or at the stoplight that stopped traffic.

If, when the old man entered the bakery, he had looked to the sign above the store, he would have noticed a little blue and grey speckled bird sitting ever so quietly upon the great wooden “B” in the word “Bernie.”

But he did not.

And just as the old man slammed shut the bakery door, the little bird began to sing and trill with all its tiny, trilling heart.

Inside the bakery, the little old man stopped for half a moment. He was frozen by the pure simplicity and beauty of the bird's song. He smiled ever so hesitantly, and slipped his pies more gently than normal on the countertop. When Bernie came to the desk with a splotch of white flour across his nose, the little old man motioned him to brush it off, and chuckled when Bernie missed it completely. When Bernie said he was out of fives, and could only pay in ones, the little old man waved it off, took out his wallet and gave Bernie all of his own fives so he could make change later.

Then, for the first time, the little old man looked around the bakery, and realized it was a rather charming place. There wasn't much—but of the little that was, there dwindled a feeling of simplistic beauty. The windows had no curtains—but they were large and elegant. The tables were very small, but they were black as iron and perfectly circular. The walls were a harsh unpainted white, but were filled with striking black-and-white photos.

One photo was of a couple dancing. And another of a crowded street. And another of the Statue of Liberty. And another of fallen leaves. And another of a broken bench. And there was one of a little bird sitting on a fence.

The little old man decided to leave, but first he bought a chocolate chip scone for the walk back. As soon as the old man opened the bakery door, the little blue and grey speckled bird shut his beak and flitted away.

Suddenly, it seemed to the old man, the world had become noticeably lonelier. He threw his scone into the first trashcan he came across, and stomped home in a huff.

The next morning was quite the same as all the other mornings—except the little bird was nowhere to be seen—he wasn't even there to be not seen by the angry old man as he trundled off to sell his pies.

Over the door, a little bell that hadn't been there before jingled when the old man went into Bernie's bakery.

"What's that awful racket!" yelled the angry old man to Bernie, who was in the back.

"HUmffffh?" came the muffled reply, then Bernie ran to the desk. The angry old man slammed his boxes of pies on the countertop.

"Oh," said Bernie collecting up the pies, and smiling "I put that in yesterday. Do you like it? It makes me so happy when I hear it! Such a pretty sound...."

“Humph!” said the angry old man turning to leave.

“Hey,” Bernie called, “Mrs. Hubert wanted me to tell you how wonderful that cherry pie was you baked a few days ago. Bought it for her son’s birthda—“

“Shut up! I don’t care!” huffed the old man, and he left the store with a flurry of jingling.

On his way back to his house, the angry old man was stopped in the street by the blue and grey speckled bird. It was looking intently at him from across the way.

It sang not a tune.

“What a stupid, horrible bird,” mumbled the man to himself, “Even if it sang, no one would want to hear it.”

This story ends with a man. This man was made bitter by avoiding the beauty that thrived around him. He avoided the beauty of baking delightful pies. He avoided the beauty of seeing the over-exuberant Bernie. He avoided the beauty of walking outside in the sunshine. But, most of all, the little old man avoided the beauty of the little bird who trilled and tried, for a moment, to make him pay attention.