

# A DAY IN ROANOKE



THE ROBIN KNEW she would fly again. Knew the vet was wrong. She'd been flying over Roanoke when a Red-Tailed Hawk (he'd been circling an updraft searching for his next meal when the red-breasted feast caught his eye) came screaming down at her nearing forty miles per hour. The talons were splashed in red as they sank into the poor girl's wing. He never knew how he missed, but miss he had. She had frantically flapped her good wing as the earth came racing towards her plummeting body.

"atty cake, patty cake, bake..." the sisters' rhyming stopped abruptly when the robin slammed into the sidewalk with a sickly squish. One wing thrashed the ground as it attempted to get back into the air – every flap splashing scarlet across the cold grey of the sidewalk; every splash of scarlet dying its red breast a deeper shade of crimson.

"O'my god! O'my god! What do we do? WHAT DO WE DO?" cried one girl as the bird squawked in pain. Tears already dripped down her face onto the pavement's grey surface: she'd always been the weaker one. "I'll take her to see Dr. Joe. He'll be able to fix her." Violet hadn't cried since losing her mom, and she wasn't crying as she gently cradled the robin to her chest.

"You go tell dad where I'm going; ok?"

As she weaved through yards on her way to Dr Joe's house she couldn't help but wonder if the blood would come out; it was her favorite blouse.

The robin didn't care if the vet said the wing had three breaks. Soon she would dance among the arms of her Elm, Oak, and Spruce friends. It didn't matter that two of the bones were jutting through the soft downy feathers of her wing; it didn't matter that every time she shivered the bones would slide into the warm protection of her flesh before forcing their way into the painfully cold air of the vet's office; it didn't matter if her exposed flesh was being attacked by bacteria. None of it mattered because she was strong.

"ep ou si "the vet's flat emotionless voice was a distant thing as she imagined teaching her babies to fly. Next spring as the dandelions bloomed and freshly cut grass filled her nostrils with its life affirming odors she would choose a mate, and was already anticipating sitting on the eggs – waiting patiently for her babies to hatch. She knew there would be challenges. A blue jay might fly near and she would fling herself forward – wings propelling her as far from the nest as fast as possible. She would rise every morning to track down food for her blossoming children and could already feel an emptiness as they flew

away to start their own lives.

– her glorious life and dreams forever buried  
in trash. Collection to be held next Tuesday.

“I love you my little ones.” She would tell  
them every day.

– *Mike Beatty*

She would be a good mother to her children.  
She would teach them how to find food, and  
she – a fresh pain shot through her; it was an  
agony completely different from the pain  
she’d been experiencing so far: it completely  
derailed her fantasy. She could feel her body  
twitching and realized that this was the  
feeling of death working its icy fingers  
through her body. There were no insights  
about life. No memories of childhood; just  
her brain pushing and pulsing against her  
skull – a burning sensation that worked its  
way through her – a pain that lasted an  
eternity.

Dr. Joe raised the can of creamed corn over  
his shoulder, and brought it down on the  
robin’s flattened skull a second time – just to  
be sure. The violence of the blows didn’t  
cause much blood to splash across his kitchen  
counter. The poor girl had bled so much it  
was like squeezing the remains from an  
empty bottle of Heinz. He thought he could  
still make his tee time if he hurried. He  
grabbed a spatula to scrape the once suffering  
(now peaceful) corpse into a plain waste bin