

"Bird Brain"

by
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HERMAN TERWILLIGER, thin, 40s, and wearing glasses, sits on a park bench reading his favorite ornithological book, which is open on his lap.

Many trees surround him. Some people sit on the other benches beyond his. They are reading, talking, phoning, etc. What you'd expect of a park.

Suddenly someone is beside him - a very pregnant woman. She is tall and thin. Her hair is colored in many stripes. Her name is RHEA CRAIG.

She sits down on the bench beside Terwilliger.

CRAIG

Good afternoon.

Herman looks up from his book.

TERWILLIGER

Afternoon.

She holds out one dainty hand with long, black fingernails.

CRAIG

Rhea Craig.

Herman shakes her hand gently.

TERWILLIGER

Herman Terwilliger.

Rhea takes in a large breath of air.

CRAIG

Lovely day.

TERWILLIGER

Yes.

She glances at his book.

CRAIG

You're a birder?

TERWILLIGER

(proudly)

Have been for years.

(beat)

You?

(CONTINUED)

She smiles and gently rubs her pregnant belly.

CRAIG

I'm pretty busy for a hobby right now.

(beat)

What kinds of birds do you see up here? Anything unexpected?

TERWILLIGER

(sighs)

Sadly, no. Lots of robins, blue jays, chickadees, grackles. I have several feeders in my yard, but they seldom attract anything rare - even with the priciest of seed.

CRAIG

Have you ever seen a blue tit?

TERWILLIGER

(nods)

A few years ago - when I vacationed in England.

CRAIG

No, I meant *here*.

TERWILLIGER

In Massachusetts?

(beat)

They'd be way off course.

Rhea leans closer to Herman.

CRAIG

I'll bet you twenty dollars that you'll see one today.

Herman starts quickly flipping through the pages of his bird book.

TERWILLIGER

Of course I can see one. There's a picture of -

CRAIG

Not a picture.

Herman stops his page flipping.

CRAIG

A living, breathing bird.

(CONTINUED)

TERWILLIGER

(intrigued)

When?

CRAIG

Very soon.

(beat)

You know their colors, of course?

Terwilliger is eager to share his knowledge.

TERWILLIGER

Oh yes: Yellow, green, white -

CRAIG

Do we have a bet?

Herman pauses for a bit, wondering what Rhea is up to.

CRAIG

(prompting him)

Well?

TERWILLIGER

I'm. . . I'm not sure.

CRAIG

Too much?

TERWILLIGER

No.

(beat)

What do I get if the bird *doesn't* show?

CRAIG

He will.

TERWILLIGER

But. . .

CRAIG

I'll leave you alone to enjoy your book.

(beat)

What do you say?

TERWILLIGER

OK.

He reaches for his wallet.

CRAIG

Not now. When I've earned it.

(CONTINUED)

Terwilliger flips to the blue tit's picture in his book and sighs a pleasant sigh, remembering his trip across the pond.

CRAIG
(suddenly)
There!

Herman breaks himself away from the book to the sight of a male blue tit resting mere feet from him.

TERWILLIGER
Incredible!

He closes his book and puts it down beside him on the bench.

TERWILLIGER
How did you -

Rhea presses one finger against his lips.

CRAIG
Shh. Just enjoy his visit.

They both watch the bird for a moment; then it flies away. Herman is astounded at his good fortune.

CRAIG
Was it worth twenty dollars?

TERWILLIGER
Absolutely!

He reaches into his wallet and removes a ten and two fives. As he hands the bills to Rhea, the tit returns and perches on her shoulder. Herman gasps.

Rhea, money in hand, slowly collapses into herself - as though she is swirling down a drain. Amid a flash of sunlight, she morphs into a female blue tit, her fingernails now talons. For a moment, she and her mate sit cooing on the bench.

Terwilliger is sorely tempted to reach out and touch them.

With the bills firmly in the female's beak, the two birds fly high up and into their nest. Herman watches as much as he can, but his eyes have known better days. He stands and peers upward. The birds are using the notes to strengthen their home.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

He glances at his watch. Time to head back to the office. He squints at the high-up nest and chuckles slightly. He bends to retrieve his book.

It is open.

TERWILLIGER

But I *closed* it!

The book is open to the page about the blue tit. In the crease between the pages lays a small, blue feather. He delicately picks it up and puts it into his shirt pocket.

He looks up at the nest.

TERWILLIGER

(smiling)

You're welcome.

Terwilliger tucks his book under one arm and leaves the park to the unmistakable sound of blue tit trills.

FADE OUT.