

## The songbird who couldn't sing

– By Ben Palmer Fry (all rights reserved)

On the edge of a town at the end of a lane  
In one of the houses that all look the same  
A songbird lived in a cage by the door  
Content with kind owners but looking for more  
His red feathers would flash and his blue colours would zing  
Though never, not once, could he manage to sing.  
Occasional croaks not befitting his long  
Shiny tail feathers but no, not a song.  
Now there was such a day when his owners were out  
And all of the swallows were flitting about  
When our wonderful songbird discovered a-gasp  
His cage was ajar with an unfastened clasp.  
Minutes went by as our friend he considered  
What life might be like not next to the withered  
Dried hallway plants that never would talk  
Or group of smooth sticks that never would walk.  
After some deliberation he decided to try  
So nudged at the door and thought “i can fly!”  
“But where would I go and what would i do?”  
Questioned unanswered as freely he flew  
Into the lounge and out of the window  
Into the sun and under a rainbow.  
Feeling the wind and smelling the earth  
And flapping his wings for all that he's worth  
Right down the lane amongst all the swallows  
Who for want of any others he opted to follow.

For an hour and a day he arced and he dove  
He looped and he fluttered, he banked and he wove  
Doing as they did and learning their song  
A simple sharp tweet that somehow was wrong.  
It didn't sit right in his questioning breast  
So he went on his way on a melodious quest.  
Over the rooftops he perched near a lawn  
With a verge of begonia and a sculptural fawn  
When out of some privet a like-sized bird hopped  
Bold as a badger, red-chested, brown-topped.  
This robin began with a few high thin calls  
Then hurried three verses from the stone garden walls  
Before flitting to the greenhouse and sat hopeful on a seedling  
Where a person on all fours was whistling and weeding.  
Our songbird positioned himself in a bower  
And sung what he'd heard but attracted a glower.  
The robin came near and puffed out his chest  
And sung AT the songbird then returned to his nest.  
Our blue and red friend felt sadness inside  
As he knew in his heart that there was no such pride.  
As nightfall was falling he took himself out  
To the countryside fields and into a stout  
Wooden hay barn and sat under a cowl  
At peace till he heard the shriek of an owl.  
Looking up to the roof he saw a ghostly form glide  
A barn owl alighted with a span 3-feet wide

Shrieking again and feasting away  
On a poor vole who had an unfortunate day.  
“My! That gives me the shivers for sure”  
He said to himself as he looked out the door  
Hoping no more of these meat-eating birds  
Came home to roost with unsavoury words.  
Taking flight in the dawn with a shake of relief  
Our songbird’s discomfort was little and brief.  
Beholding a glorious, glittering river  
He thought “what a beautiful, bountiful giver  
“There must be among these watery fowls  
“Someone who shares my musical vowels”.  
He honked with the geese and clacked with an eider  
He boomed with the bitterns and wailed with a diver  
He drummed with the snipe and rolled with a marsh tit  
He chorused with the larks and trilled with a pipit.  
But nowhere did this kind motley crowd  
Quite meet our songbird’s changeable sound  
Till way up above, high on the wing  
A singular bluethroat decided to sing.  
She started quite slow but built in more parts  
Combining more birdsong that fluttered his heart  
Resulting in a cascade of musical flight  
That our blue-throated songbird knew must be right.

Ascending to his kind as she headed south  
He gathered his songbook and out of his mouth  
A similar collage of melody true  
Drew many more bluethroats out of the blue.  
Together in strength they carried him on  
Guided by spirit until whereupon  
Our songbird has embraced his real ID  
A god-gifted miracle, wild and free.