

BIRD IN THE HAND

Written by

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INT. CROWDED COMMUTER BUS. EARLY EVENING.

JANE'S TRYING TO READ ON A CHAOTIC BUS, BUT KEEPS GETTING BUFFETED BY THE GUY BEHIND'S ENORMOUS, TACKY VALENTINE'S BOUQUET. **WEE WOMAN** GETS ON, JUGGLING HANDBAG AND SMALL BOX, HOLDING EVERYTHING UP. THE DRIVER SITS SILENT, IMPASSIVE BEHIND HIS PLEXIGLASS AS SHE STRUGGLES WITH BUS-PASS, DROPS BAG, ETC. PASSENGERS TUT AT THE DELAY, SOME KIDS GIGGLE.

WEE WOMAN STARTS UP THE AISLE, SMILING INGRATIATINGLY FROM SIDE TO SIDE. JANE DROPS HER EYES BACK TO HER BOOK, SINKS INTO HER SEAT. *NOT BESIDE ME...* WEE WOMAN PLONKS HERSELF DOWN AND SMILES BRIGHTLY AT JANE, INDICATES DRIVER.

WEE WOMAN

He's happy at his work, eh?

JANE SMILES POLITELY, RETURNS TO HER BOOK. WEE WOMAN SHUFFLES ABOUT, UNBUTTONS HER COAT, JOGS JANE'S ELBOW.

WEE WOMAN (CONT'D)

Awful warm, these buses. Oh, sorry, hen, I didn't mean to...

JANE

No, no, it's fine... (*IT ISN'T*)

JANE RETURNS TO HER BOOK. THE BOX SUDDENLY EMITS A PLAINTIVE CHEEP. WEE WOMAN HOLDS IT UP TO EYE-LEVEL, MAKES KISSY NOISE

WEE WOMAN

You're alright, wee boy. Not be long now.

SHE CATCHES JANE LOOKING SIDELONG AT THE BOX.

WEE WOMAN (CONT'D)

(*whispers*) We're going to the vet.

JANE

Oh?

WEE WOMAN

He's not feeling very well. And he's not very fond of buses.

JANE

Ah.

THE BOX CHEEPS AGAIN.

WEE WOMAN

He's probably just got a wee chill, but you want to be sure, eh? (TO BOX) Sure we do?

JANE
 (Giving in)
 Is it a budgie?

WEE WOMAN
 Aye. Say hello, then.

SHE HOLDS THE BOX UP TO JANE. IT'S WIRE-SIDED. A FORLORN BLUE BUDGIE HUDDLES DISCONSOLATELY IN ONE CORNER.

JANE
 Er... 'hello'.

WEE WOMAN
 No, hen, I meant him.

JANE
 Oh, right, yeah...

WEE WOMAN
 He's a rare wee talker, usually.
 C'mon, say hello, Sparky.

JANE
 Oh, it's okay, if he's not feeling
 like talking...

WEE WOMAN
 Aye, you're right. Can't force
 them, eh? (BEAT) Have you got a
 pet yourself, hen?

JANE
 Err - I have a cat, actually.

WEE WOMAN
 Aye? Well, cats are good, too...
 It's just nice to have somebody
 happy to see you when you come in
 the door, eh? (BEAT) Keeps you
 going.

SHE GIVES THE BOX THE TINIEST OF PATS. IT CHEEPS AGAIN.

JANE
 Yes. (BEAT) Yes, it does. (BEAT) I
 hope he gets better soon.

WEE WOMAN
 Oh aye. The vet'll sort him. He'll
 be right as rain soon enough. Sure
 you will, Sparky? Sure you will?

SHE PLANTS A LOVING KISS ON THE BOX. THE BUDGIE CHEEPS. JANE SMILES AT THEM BOTH, AND GOES BACK TO HER BOOK.

END