

The Dunlin & the Robin

By Fatima Najm

Rodham the Robin came home to a strange sight. Rosie the other Robin was hopping about, flapping her wings and chirping at a bird lying upside down in their nest.

"Intruder! Get out of my garden! Cheen Cheen," she cried.

"Stop being so territorial, Rosie" said Rodham. "He looks like he hit a tree branch, had a nasty fall, and landed in our nest by accident."

"Oh? I wish he had fallen elsewhere," said Rosie. "You know I don't like it when someone sits on my branch, let alone comes barging into my home."

"Calm down and think rationally. A Dunlin is no threat to us. He is injured. You should show a little kindness," said Rodham, who knew a lot about birds of other species. "Now, let's help him heal so he can return home."

The talk of returning this stranger to his own home cheered Rosie.

"Where am I?" asked a weak voice. The Dunlin looked dazed and confused.

"You're in my house, and you smashed my bed to bits and pieces," said Rosie.

"I'm so sorry. But all I remember is flying over the mud banks of my river in Essex, and then a great gust of wind blew me away... "

"You don't realise you landed in London?" said Rosie, still suspicious. "It is already hard to find earthworms to feed two birds. How long are you staying?"

"Stay? I cannot stay!" The Dunlin said, alarmed, trying to move his wings. "I am a migratory bird: my flock is leaving for Africa. I must leave now."

Rodham looked at her sharply as the Dunlin struggled to stand.

Rosie said, "Err... I didn't mean that. Sorry. We robins tend to be quite territorial by nature."

"But some of us Robins have learnt to overcome our nature and fight our fears so we can be good citizens and welcome newcomers," said Rodham. "You must stay with us till you feel better. By the way, I am delighted to meet you. Your species is known for developing the skills our city needs."

"You mean the special "stitching" motion I use to scoop up dozens of delicious insects and worms, pecking at the mud at a speed of several times a second," replied the Dunlin.

Rosie the Robin thought to herself: "I could use someone with those skills."

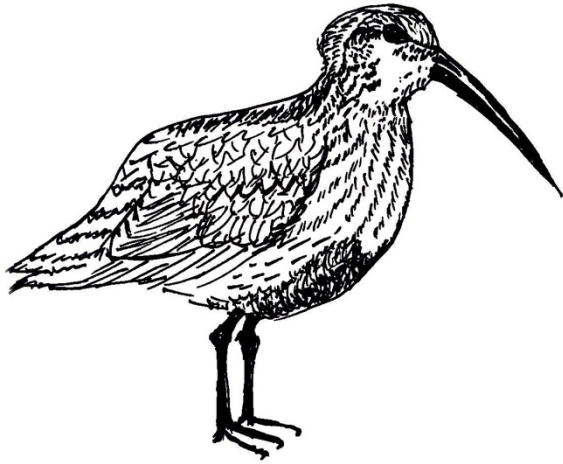
The Dunlin was very helpful. He spent his time with the robins collecting lots of crunchy creatures for Rosie. Time passed quickly and then it was time for the Dunlin to leave.

"I am sorry I was so quick to judge you. I had no idea migratory birds had so many skills," Rosie said.

The Dunlin sighed: "I am used to these misconceptions about us migratory birds. I try not to let it affect me. You should come visit my flock by the river in Essex before we go."

"Afraid not. We are sedentary birds. We don't travel at all," replied Rosie the Robin.

"It is a shame you are missing the world beyond your garden: the rolling hills of Scotland and the glorious sweep of emerald green meadows in Wales. I will tell you more about the stunning landscape of Africa on my return," and with that, the Dunlin took off.

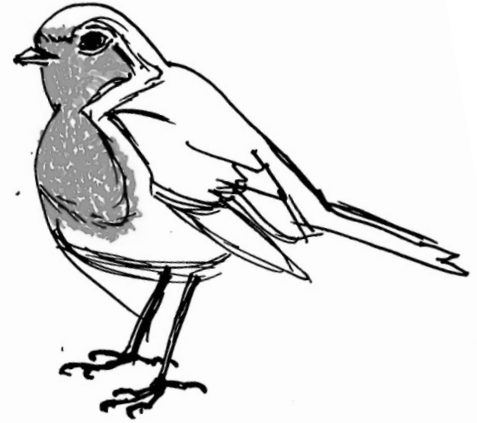


Comprehension questions:

What qualities does Rodham value/ like?
(Generosity, Kindness, Rationality)

What adjectives describe Rosie's reaction?

How adjectives would you use to describe the Dunlin?



Credits: This story, its art work and edits were crafted lovingly by Jamie, Monika, Kal and Fatima at Creatives Against Poverty for Speak Street at the Islington Centre for Migrants and Refugees.