

Feathery Miracles

By Becky Barr

It was a beautiful winter morning in the little town of Brightcrest. The sun was shining brightly on the snow covered ground and into the window of Abigail's room. Her eyes fluttered open to see the sight of a mural of three birds in a nest. The brilliant blues of the birds seemed to shine in a way they've never done before, filling the room with happiness. Abigail knew this was going to be a good day. After all, it was her thirteenth birthday.

After throwing some clothes on, she went downstairs to grab some breakfast before heading to school. Her breakfast was already made with a note that says:

Hey Bluebird,
We're sorry we couldn't be there this morning, but we'll try our best to be there this evening.
Happy Birthday,
Mom and Dad

"Huh, I guess it's going to be a busy day at the station," Abigail said to herself while grabbing her food. Usually on her birthday, her parents would surprise her with breakfast in bed. It was a family tradition that they had. Her parents used to give her all the attention she needed, but as of late, they have been so busy with work. She was sad that her parents weren't there, but it didn't matter, for today was an exception. As long as they were going to be there in the evening, she would be fine.

After eating breakfast, she put on her blue jacket and black beanie and went out into the glittering white winter wonderland. She passed neighbors on the street and wished them a good morning. The last person she saw on her way to school was Mr. Trelegan, who was still putting up posters of his son, Mason, who went missing about three months ago.

"Hello, Mr. Trelegan," Abigail greeted.

"Oh, hello Abigail," Mr. Trelegan replied.

"Still putting up those posters I see."

"Yeah, well, I still believe he's out there. Even if no one else believes so." He was right. During the first month, everyone was trying to find the young boy. Abigail would know, her parents were heading the entire operation. After that first month, however, everyone presumed Mason to be dead and stopped looking for him.

It was a huge blow to the whole town. Mason was a bright light that created joy wherever he went. It was really hard to see him gone, but everyone just moved on, focusing on their own lives. Mr. Trelegan was the only one who believed Brightcrest's shining star would return.

"Well, I hope that he comes back. It's kinda dull without him here," Abigail replied.

"Who knows. Miracles are known to happen from time to time," Mr. Trelegan recited.

"Well, Goodbye."

“Goodbye, Abigail.”

And with that, Abigail walked through the school gates.

On her way back to school, everyone was wishing Abigail a happy birthday. She walked up to her door and turned the key only to see that there were no parents and only a note that said:

We are so sorry Bluebird, we were going to be home, but something came up at work last minute, so we have to stay late. Your birthday dinner is in the fridge and so is some cake. Sorry again for not being there.

Love,

Mom and Dad

Abigail couldn't believe this! She was left alone on her special day. She put down the note, walked back out the door and locked it. She needed some fresh air. She walked for a while through the town towards the woods, which was on the western outskirts of Brightcrest. It was always her favorite place to be. When she was little, all the children played in those woods together. They would play hide and seek and tag and when it snowed they would have snowball fights and make snowmen. It was always so much fun. Unfortunately for her, those days are over. She's now officially a teenager and having fun, at least in that way, wasn't part of the deal. None of her friends wanted to play outside anymore, and school takes up most of her time now. Sometimes she wished that people in this town would just slow down and appreciate one another. Everyone is always so busy that, even though this is a small town and everyone knows each other, it just doesn't feel like they do.

Before she made it to the woods, she bumped into an old woman she had never seen before.

“Oh, sorry miss” Abigail quickly apologized.

“Oh, it's quite alright,” the lady said, “You seem like you're in quite a hurry, so I won't waste anymore of your time.”

“Oh no. I was just taking a walk to get my mind off of some things. I guess I walk fast when I'm distracted.”

“Indeed. What might I ask is troubling you?” the lady asked. Abigail hesitated. She knew that she shouldn't talk to this lady anymore, but something in her mind said that she could trust her.

“Let's sit down, I've been walking for quite a while,” Abigail told the lady.

“Yes, let's.” They found a nearby bench to sit and chat.

“So, now what's troubling you dear?” the lady inquired.

“Oh... right. It's just that today is my birthday and I'm spending it alone,” Abigail explained.

“You don't have anyone to celebrate with?”

“Well, you see, usually I celebrate with my parents, but they're out on business and I don't want to bother them.”

“Ah, I see,” the lady replied while showing Abigail a wry smile, “So they too have succumbed to the dreaded workaholic syndrome.”

Abigail laughed at this. Everyone has been working so hard, especially after Mason disappeared, it almost does feel like a disease.

“Yeah, sometimes I wish that the people here would just slow down and spend some time together.”

“You and me both kid,” the lady sighed, then looked up at Abigail, “But who knows, miracles do tend to happen here. All it takes is one person to make a big difference.”

The lady smiled towards Abigail and Abigail smiled back. As Abigail got up, she said, “Thank you. Talking to you made me feel a lot better.”

“You’re welcome...”

“Abigail.” The lady just smiled and nodded.

“Well, I’ll see you around,” Abigail said, walking towards the woods.

“Maybe, maybe not,” the lady said, and then she was gone without a trace.

After calming down, Abigail headed home. It was getting cold and dark and she didn’t want anyone to worry. Once she got home, she realized that there was still nobody there. She heated up her dinner and ate it. She wasn’t really in the mood for cake. There was no point in eating a **cake alone**, anyways. After that, she went upstairs to her bedroom and tried to go to bed, but she wasn’t tired, so she decided to read her favorite book.

It was an old book that her parents gave her when she was a child. It was all about an ancient civilization of shapeshifters and all of their customs. One such custom was that when a shapeshifter became thirteen, they had to decide on a spirit animal, become that animal, and live on their own for a month. It was such a fascinating culture. Abigail wished that she was part of that culture ever since she was a little girl, though she didn’t think she would be able to handle being alone for a month. The book said that there were still shapeshifters that live among us, even though they are extremely rare.

After reading her book for a while, Abigail began to get tired. She put her book down and turned off the lights. Her mural glowing in the moonlight was the last thing she saw before she closed her eyes and went to sleep.

When she **woke up**, she realized that she wasn’t in her room. In fact, she wasn’t even inside. She was outside, and boy was it cold. She looked around to find a shelter, **but realized that not only was she not inside her warm bedroom, but she’s stuck up in a tree in the woods near her small town**. She can’t even see the town from here. She stretches her arms forward only to see... blue feathers? Abigail screams and falls down out of the tree. She flapped her wings trying to fly, but she can’t. She finally gets her wings to work properly as she reached the ground, stopping her fall just in time. She was pretty high up, so she had plenty of time to figure it out.

She saw a frozen pond right next to her and looked upon it. **In her reflection was a bluebird, not a person**. Her feathers were cobalt blue, black, and white. The only thing that she recognized was the hazel eyes that she has had for her entire life.

She didn't know what to do. How could this happen? Why was she a bird? Why does that remind her of something?

"So she got you too?" Abigail heard from a nearby branch. She looked up to see a beautiful cardinal with the most striking blue eyes she has ever seen.

"Who got to me?" Abigail asked back.

"The old lady, of course."

Now Abigail remembered. When she was feeling down and out, she confided in a strange woman that she had never seen before.

"How did you know?" Abigail questioned.

"I'd be glad to tell you, but first you should come up here. I don't want you to become a predator's breakfast," the cardinal joked, which scared Abigail. She jumped up and tried to fly over to the branch. It was hard, but after quite a few tries, she managed to do it.

"Sorry, still getting used to these wings," Abigail explained.

"I can see that," the cardinal sarcastically said.

"Anyways, can you answer my question now. How did you know what was happening to me? I don't even know what's happening."

"Simple, it happened to me too." This made Abigail look at the cardinal in disbelief.

"Do you happen to be Mason Trelegan?" Abigail asked. Mason slowly nodded.

Now it was all coming back to Abigail. The evening before Mason disappeared, Abigail saw him looking quite depressed. She was going to see if he was okay, but then he saw him bump into a lady. She didn't quite see the face, so she just assumed that it was one of the nice store ladies that were talking to him. She thought that Mason was in good hands and didn't give it a second thought. That was until he went missing the next day. Maybe she too succumbed to the dreaded so-called "workaholic syndrome" at one point and didn't help out her neighbor and friend in a time of need. Now she really felt bad.

"So, you've been in these woods the entire three months that you were gone? All alone?" Abigail asked.

"Nah, there were other birds here a couple of months ago, but they all started migrating for winter."

"Why didn't you join them?"

Mason hesitated before answering, "Because I'm trying to find out where that old witch lives so I can fix everything and go back home."

"I know that what she did was terrible, but there's no need for name calling," Abigail berated.

"No. I mean literally."

"We don't even know if she did this to us or not," Abigail reasoned with Mason.

"How else did we end up like this?" Mason questioned.

"Well... what if we were descendants from an ancient civilization that can change into different animals?"

"Now you're just bringing up old fairy tales."

"Says the boy who's blaming his misfortunes on a witch."

Mason scoffs at this. Abigail knew this was going nowhere so she complied and asked, "Do you know where she lives?"

“Now you decide to believe me?” Mason spat.

“Even if she’s not the reason, she’s our best bet. She might still know how to turn us back into a human, since we clearly have no idea how.”

“Don’t remind me.”

“Well... Do you know?” Abigail interrogated.

“No... but I have narrowed it down to our town,” Mason explained.

“Okay then,” Abigail said as she attempted to fly to the east.

“Where do you think you’re going?” Mason questioned.

“I’m going in the direction that the town should be in, seeing as the woods were to the west of town,” Abigail explained, trying to stay in the air.

“Fair point,” Mason said and he took off to follow Abigail.

After about a day of flying, it was clear the two birds weren’t getting very far.

“Ugg, this is ridiculous! We covered only a hundred feet in a day!” Mason yelled.

“I’m trying my best! Learning to fly is hard!” Abigail said angrily.

Mason sighed as he said, “I know, I know.” He looked at an extremely exhausted Abigail.

“Let’s turn in for the night. We’ll start flight training tomorrow.”

“Wait, what?”

“Things will go faster if you know how to fly. The town is probably still miles away. If we stop for a while and teach you how to fly, things will go a lot quicker. Hell, we’ll probably get there before the month is out.” Abigail looked at Mason, then nodded. She found a branch they could perch on, and they did. Once they did, Mason snuggled into Abigail, startling her.

“It gets really cold at night, might as well use each other,” Mason explained.

“Oh, okay,” Abigail replied, “Hey, quick question. Why didn’t you try to change yourself back?”

“I did try... for a month, after that I spent a month searching the forest for the old lady.”

“What about the third month?” Abigail asked.

“I don’t wanna talk about it,” Mason replied looking up, “Hey, look. It looks like some of the birds didn’t migrate for winter.” Abigail knows that Mason was avoiding the question, but she looked over to see a family of birds sleeping soundly in their nest. God, she missed her parents deeply. She couldn’t wait to see them again. She longed for her small, but happy family.

After two weeks of flight training and a week of flying, Abigail could finally see Brightcrest on the horizon. Mason seemed to see it as well because he swooped down and started to glide at an extremely fast rate. Abigail quickly tried to follow him, but she was still a little slow while flying.

After finally catching up to him, Abigail huffed, “Wow, you must be extremely happy to be home.”

“Well, yeah. I miss everyone. I can’t wait to get my own body back and head home!” Mason excitedly exclaimed.

They were now flying over the town. “Well, we’re here,” Abigail said, “Look for any signs of the old lady.” After a while of flying over the town, Mason suddenly dove down into the streets and zoomed out of sight. Abigail tried to catch up to him, but she lost him. She tried to find him, but she suddenly stopped when she saw something in her peripheral vision. It was her parents. They were putting up a poster. Her mother started crying.

“I know, I miss her too,” Abigail heard her father say. She decided to sit on top of the streetlamp that her parents were crowding around.

“I just wish we spent more time with her,” Abigail’s mother cried, “We know how she gets when she’s alone. Maybe if we spent more time with her, she wouldn’t have run away.”

“You know that wasn’t exactly possible. We needed that extra money. If we didn’t take those extra shifts, we wouldn’t be able to afford the house anymore.” Abigail couldn’t believe what she was hearing. Her parents were too busy because they were trying to make ends meet. They were just trying to make sure that she lived comfortably. She understood that her family wasn’t the most affluent, and she understood that their business wasn’t exactly doing well due to them not figuring out why Mason went missing, but she didn’t know that they were struggling this much. Losing the house? Why didn’t her parents tell her? She could’ve helped, if only just a little. She wanted to cry. She was being so selfish. She didn’t even know what her parents were going through, and she put all the blame on them.

“Still, she’s just a child. A very social one at that. We should’ve at least balanced our time better. We should’ve at least been there for her birthday.”

“How about this. When she comes back, we will go play in the woods together.” Her mother nodded and they left, probably going to work, but at this moment, she doesn’t care. She flew down to the poster. It was like looking in a mirror. Her baby blue hair was falling over her shoulders and her hazel eyes were shining in the sunlight. She looked at the rest of the poster which read:

MISSING
ABIGAIL FLORES
OUR FAVORITE LITTLE BLUEBIRD

Abigail smiled. Her parents always called her their little bluebird. It was mostly due to her unusual blue hair, but she distinctly remembered asking why exactly they called her “bluebird”, in which they replied, “Well, it’s because you are as beautiful and captivating as a bluebird. Besides, bluebirds are my favorite bird.” It made Abigail so happy when she heard that. She began smiling ear to ear. Her father must’ve found the smile captivating as well because he took a picture of it. This happened to be the exact picture she was looking at right now.

She remembered a time when her family wasn’t so busy and was happy to be together. Seeing her parents so upset and yet hopeful gave her more of a reason to find that woman and get herself and Mason back to their families. But first, she has to find Mason, then the old lady.

After about an hour of searching the town by air, she saw a little red speck zooming through the streets. She knew it had to be Mason, so she dived after him. Once she finally caught up, she asked, "Mason, what the hell are you doing?!"

"What does it look like I'm doing? I'm searching for that old lady. Have been for the past hour. Where have you been?"

"I was... um... sidetracked." Nothing happened for a while before Mason just nodded his head. "So... how much of the town did you check while I was gone?" Abigail asked.

"About half. We should probably split the other half. It would make things go a lot quicker. I take northwest and you take southwest?" Abigail nodded and flew in the opposite direction.

Abigail flew to every house on the southwest side and still found nothing. Giving up on this part of the town, she flew back to where she knew Mason was. Mason found her halfway, looking dejected.

"Didn't find her, I presume," Abigail noted. Mason looked down, distraught.

"I don't get it! I looked everywhere in the woods and now everywhere in the town! She should've been here!" Mason yelled.

"Don't worry. We'll find her."

"Will we?" Mason asked, giving her a face that was both sad and hopeful.

"Yes," Abigail hesitantly said, "But first we need a plan, and we can't do that while flying, so let's find a place where we could rest." Mason nodded his head once again and flew away to find somewhere to perch.

Once they did find somewhere to rest, they started strategizing.

"So, you're absolutely positive that you checked everywhere?" Abigail asked.

"Yes," Mason stated.

"Huh... well, there has to be something that we're missing or else we would've found her by now."

"Ugh... Don't remind me," Mason sarcastically said.

"Please stop being a smartass. That is literally getting us nowhere." Mason turned his back to Abigail, who sighed and looked down, where she saw a familiar green cloak. It was the cloak of the old lady.

"Mason," Abigail whispered.

"What," Mason spat.

"I think I found what we were looking for." Mason looked at Abigail, then at where she was looking at and instantly remembered. It was the old lady! Mason's negative energy suddenly was whisked away as he got ready for take-off.

"Wait," Abigail hissed. Now Mason just looked pissed.

"What now."

“We should follow her and find the opportune moment to strike, preferably when she’s alone at her house so we don’t scare her away.” Mason thought about it for a bit, then nodded. We both take-off, following closely behind the old lady.

After waiting an excruciatingly long time for the lady to return home, she finally did. Her home was on the outskirts of town on the east side. It was pretty secluded so no wonder they couldn’t find it. Well it was more like a little shack than a house. The lady unlocked the door and went inside with both Abigail and Mason sliding in behind her.

“Oh, I was wondering when you two would show up. Took your time, didn’t you?” the old lady questioned. Mason, looking furious, was about to attack the lady, but Abigail put her wing up in front of him so that he wouldn’t. He complied, though he didn’t want to. Abigail was about to confront the lady, but something in her peripherals stopped her in her tracks.

“Wait, is that the book about the shapeshifters?” Abigail asked the lady.

“I don’t speak bird, dear. All I hear are little tweets,” the lady joked. Getting fed up, Abigail flew over to the book on the counter, pointing at it.

“Oh right, you must be here to get some answers about what’s happening to you, am I correct?” the lady asked. Both birds nodded. “Well... We should turn you back then. This conversation will be much easier if we could all understand each other. Now, all you have to say is ‘I want to be human again’.”

Both of the birds looked at the woman in confusion, then looked at each other, closed their eyes and said, “I want to be human again.” And with that, they were looking at two humans, instead of birds. Mason smiled from ear to ear and dashed to the door, only to be held back by Abigail.

“We should listen to what...” Abigail faltered.

“Genevieve,” the lady supplemented.

“Genevieve has to say. This could be important.”

“Actually,” Genevieve stated, “I’m extremely busy and you two need to get back to your families, but I will give you the short version now. You two are descendants of an ancient civilization of shapeshifters who used to live in this town before it was colonized. It was said that all the shapeshifters vanished when this town was created, but two families remained, which are your families, by the way...”

“Really. No shit,” Mason sarcastically said. Abigail elbowed him in the ribcage to make him stop.

“Anyways... After a person from a shapeshifter tribe turns thirteen, their power begin to manifest. That was why it was a tradition to have the person set off on their own for a month and choose a spirit animal. It is quite funny how both of you turned into birds, though. And that you landed so far away. That has never happened before. You must be terrible sleepwalkers” That seriously confused both Abigail and Mason. They all stood in silence. “Any-who, that’s all the information I can give to you now. But come by every day from now on. I need to teach you how to use your new abilities. But for now, go and see your families.”

The two teenagers thanked Genevieve and left the shack.

"It's going to be a while till we get to our homes," Abigail suddenly stated.

"Yeah," Mason quietly said.

"Hey, I was wondering why you were so upset the day you went away... You don't have to answer if you don't want to, though."

"Nah, it's fine. My father and this town puts a lot of pressure on me. I'm their shining star, and that's a lot to live up to. It was especially bad on my thirteenth birthday, or the day I was upset. My father and I got into an argument and it kinda went downhill from there. I was wishing for some freedom from my stressful life. That's why it took me three months instead of two. I was enjoying the freedom being a bird gave me," Mason explained.

"Well now you have a friend on your side. If you need anything, feel free to ask me, even if it's just a shoulder to cry on," Abigail reassured. Mason gave Abigail a look of gratitude.

"Thank you, Abigail."

"No problem."

Mason's house was the first one they stopped at. As he got to the door, he turned to Abigail and gave her a small smile and a wave. Abigail waved back and started to her house. Abigail couldn't wait to get home and tell her parents about her adventure. Plus, she was technically promised some snow time as well.