

“ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER DONUT” THOUGHT THE PARAKEET as he landed on a garbage can outside *Santa Monica Donuts*. A half eaten honey glazed donut had been left under the blaring midday sun, it was to be breakfast for our green feathered hero. This Oriental bird was not native to these lands. Legend has it that in the 70s a pet shop in Calabasas burned down and the only survivors were forty Rose-ringed Parakeets. From those forty birds were born several generations that eventually populated Southern California from Oxnard to San Diego. Parakeets are a pretty small bird, they could never join a council of pigeons feeding in the park or a row of crows standing guard on a phone wire. They would muscle him out, he was a delicate animal. His delicate feathers were of an avocado flesh green moving to a deeper green at the wings. Powder blue feathers covered his small head that held a maroon colored hooking beak.

As far as parakeets go he wasn't big but you could say he was pleasantly plump. After all he had fully accepted his donut addiction. He knew they were bad for his health but in his darkest hours health was far from his mind. He had been without a flock for quite some time and he yearned for companionship. His loneliness echoed in his heart with a deafening silence. He shook the feeling off. It was nice out and he was young and this was Santa Monica. It was the kind of place that would never let you forget it's name. *Santa Monica Donuts* is on Santa Monica Boulevard and he was in Santa Monica because the garbage can had a big City of Santa Monica sticker on it. The bird flew up and over the busy slow moving cars below and headed westward a couple blocks to Wilshire. The hero of our story first noticed her walking down Wilshire when he landed on the Spanish tile awning of a *Starbucks Coffee*. It was love at first sight and also at second sight, as he tilted his head from side to side catching a glimpse of her with one eye at a time. She was barefoot just like him but she wasn't a bird. She was a woman, a plump woman with freckles. She wore a flowing black dress and had black unkept hair. The bird was mesmerized as he watched her hips shift from side to side as she passed him. An envelope fluttered behind her and lightly landed on the sidewalk. He swooped down from the awning and grabbed the envelope in his talons. It was her energy bill that she had dropped without noticing.

Determined to return the envelope he kept following her as she walked down the street, he flew from roof to roof, tree to tree and traffic light to traffic light all while holding on to that envelope with all his might. He danced this way for three blocks. Ouch! He landed on a pine cone, a Jeffrey pine cone that was particularly unforgiving with it's sharp spikes. He immediately jumped off and got a bit ahead of her. Ouch! Ouch! Ouch! His left foot was sore and he had to stop again. He crash landed into the negative space of the V from the CVS sign. As luck would have it she walked into that very pharmacy. He stayed perched on the store's sign, in the middle of the V and looked down as she walked in triggering the automatic doors. He tried flying in front of the doors but his small body could not trigger the sensors.

The bird flew into the CVS after an overweight mother and her three unhealthy kids, leaving a good amount of time for the bird to make it's way into the store. He flew around the store causing a minor panic among some shoppers. There she was! He found her in the travel section. She was buying miniature hygiene products. Preparing for a trip perhaps, where was she going? A small foldable toothbrush, three ounces of toothpaste and a thimbles worth of CVS brand mouthwash. Wherever she was going she was expecting a small bathroom cabinet thought the bird unaware of the restrictions on traveling with liquids.

There was a lot this bird did not realize. Even if they did have a chance to have a true encounter, he wasn't sure if she would like him. He wanted so much to rest on her shoulder. Maybe even rub against your cheek. She would be so grateful that he returned her energy bill that she would take him home and take care of him, feeding him donuts and water every day. What would he say to her? He couldn't speak, he could only squawk, she would never understand him. It was a relationship doomed from the start but maybe that's how the little bird preferred it. Perhaps he chose these doomed relationships to protect himself. If anything got too real he would have to show his true self which terrified him greatly. The game of survival in a hot city leaves little room for charm.

He followed her out of the store without causing too much commotion and was back on her trail holding on to that envelope with all his might. She got into a parked car and before the bird could think of what to do she was driving down Wilshire. The envelope was starting to feel heavier and heavier as he struggled to keep up with her car.

She finally pulled into *Santa Monica Windshield Repair*, another example of the lack of imagination of Santa Monica business owners but that wasn't important right now. The parakeet landed on a nearby sidewalk tree and watched her talking to the man at the counter. Who was he? Why must she talk to that man right now and not him. After all he had her energy bill! What did he have? The man handed her a small coupon and she gave him her keys.

"What was that all about?" Thought the bird as he watched her leave the garage and walk to the corner. Why him!? Why would she take his paper and not the bird's paper? The bird collected himself and noticed her walk into the *7-Eleven* across the street. He dashed across the traffic and into the *7-Eleven* right behind her. His newly found jealousy gave him an extra boost of energy.

At that moment the parakeet flew into the store as *Savage Garden's I Knew I Loved You* weakly lingered in the air from the in-store radio speakers. The clerk quickly ducked and turned his head to see the bird perched on the Slurpee machine. A child screamed dropping its pacifier. The toddler was quickly lifted up by her mother as they left the store with their heads hunched deep into their shoulders. A neighborhood cat-and-bag lady was standing by the clerk and she sent a shrilling cry through the store. She dropped her bag of kitty litter and little plastic cat toy ball she was paying for. The clerk fetched a broom and another held the door open. The parakeet pooped on the Slurpee machine and made a straight shot for the donut display case. Here are the donuts but where was the barefoot beauty?

She walked away towards the coffee island paying little attention to him. The bird watched her hips again and could tell she wasn't wearing anything underneath, that was plain as day to any observer with a healthy amount of perversion. But what could a parakeet do with that kind of information? He really liked her style as well, she married plump hobo and raw female magnetism in one dirty footed package.

From the donut display case he noticed the inscription on her coffee cozy: *A fresh take on the daily grind*. You could say that again, he was still wrapping his head around her beauty.

The little bird's heart was thumping, he was sure she could hear it. He just couldn't shake the idea of getting close to her. She probably has a boyfriend or she's gay. The bird shook his head and readjusted his focus to his ultimate mission which was to return the envelope.

She now stood in front of the donut display case. Her eyes danced from shelf to shelf right in front of him. They shared a taste for donuts, they were made for each other. He noticed her body change shape as she bent over to inspect the *Boston Creme* donuts on the bottom shelf.

More determined than ever, the bird made the flight towards the girl. He flew over her and dropped the envelope into her hands. She immediately realized what it was and was completely baffled. She stood up and looked at the bird and felt a connection from the mystery. He could tell she was looking at him and that he had made her happy. For a split second time went into slow motion. They shared a first look, then another look as the bird shifted his head looking at her from each eye one at a time. He smiled in that subtle way birds look like they're smiling when they open their beaks slightly. In her own way she loved that little bird at first sight as well. How did the bird end up with her gas bill? How long had it been following her? How did it get such beautiful colors? These questions rushed over her as she continued to look at him.

A stalky *7-Eleven* clerk emerged from the back room with a broom and began waving it towards the door. Panic stricken the bird leaped out of broom's trajectory. The broom's motion moved the air so much it sent the bird off his track. In a tragic moment of fate, the feral bird was blown into the ceiling fan and was quietly and quickly sent to the next world. As feathers slowly drifted from side to side around the store the barefoot woman in the black dress finally knew what it felt like to be truly loved.

••••