

Job and the Pigeon

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p 59-80

Joke

Job is playing with a feather.
He's pretending that it's a quill pen.
He's being a fine gentleman.
Gentlemen used to write with feathers in the olden days.

Job, calls Mum.
Come on!
Job's hair is long.
It's hanging in front of his eyes.
And down the back of his neck.
It's warm.
It suits Job perfectly.
He feels at home in his hair.

It needs to be short, says Mum.
And that's just the way it is.
Come here.
I'll get the scissors.

Mum wants to cut it herself.

Even though she doesn't know how.
I want to go to the hairdresser's, says Job.
A proper hairdresser's.

Last time she cut it really short.
The wrong sort of short, especially at the front.
He looked like nothing on earth.
Well, actually, he did.
He looked like a girl. Or like a horse.
But not like Job.

I'm not going to waste my money on a hairdresser, says Mum.
It's just hair.
Come here.
It'll be done in a second.
Snip.
Snip.
Snip.
Snip.
And snip!
There.

Job knows what's coming next.
Oops!
It's wonky.
Wait, just another bit here.
And there.
And there.

Mum squints at Job.
Hmm, I'd better stop.
In fact, I'm going to have to.
You've run out of hair.

That's her little joke.

Hum

Job stomps outside.
He kicks a bucket.
CLONK!!!
What a noise!

Hey! someone says.
It's Pigeon.
I was just having a nap.
Until you came along.
Thanks very much!

Go on, says Job. Be as mean as you like.
You can't hurt me now.
I already feel really bad.

Oh, says Pigeon.
Now I see.
I get it.
Who did that to you?

Job doesn't say anything.

Oh, it's not that bad.

A bit short there.
And a big long there.
And that tuft?
That really needs to come off.
But apart from that it's okay.

Job doesn't look at Pigeon.
He hums.
Hm, hm, hm, hm.
He can hardly hear what Pigeon's saying.

Hey, says Pigeon.
I thought you looked just like a leek for a moment there.
But from here?
Not at all!

Hm, hm, hm, hm, goes Job.

From here you look like something else.
A chicken's tail?
Or a clump of grass?
No, that's not it.

Then Job explodes.
Listen here, you ball of feathers!
You just shut your beak!
What do you know about hair?
I'm not listening anymore.
You hear?
Job is boiling with anger.

That's it! says Pigeon.
A beetroot! That's what you look like.
I couldn't think what it was at first.
But I've got it now.
Thanks!
Thanks very much!

Closed

It's dark.
Job has to go to sleep.
Dad doesn't want to come upstairs again.
Job knows that.
Because then he'll have to close the door.
That's what always happens.
It's better with the door open.
Then Job can hear the TV.
And Mum and Dad's voices.

Job tosses and turns.
It's late.
He can feel it in his eyes
They're stinging.
But there's no sleep in them yet.

The window is open a crack.
Job can hear the traffic outside.
He makes a list in his head.
Car.
Car.
Bus.
Nothing for a bit.
Moped.
Another moped.
Car.
Nothing again.

Suddenly he hears something else.
A sound that's very close.
Something shuffling. And tapping.
Something that's far too close.
He tries to listen to the traffic.
Or the TV.
But it doesn't work.
The other sound is bigger.
It doesn't go away.

Job doesn't look around.
He doesn't dare.
He squeezes his eyes closed,
in his pillow,
under his duvet.
triple closed.
But his ears can still hear it.
Tap. Shuffle. Tap.
And then: pssst!

Job holds his breath.
It doesn't sound like something shuffling now.
Or something tapping.
It sounds like something speaking, he thinks.
That's much worse.

Escape

Job wants to call out.
For his mum or dad.
And they'll just have to close the door.
Psssst! he hears again.
It sounds very close.

Job shouts.
Nothing comes out of his mouth.
Or just a little something.
The E! in HELP!
and the A in DAD!
and the U in MUM!
No one will hear that!

His duvet will have to come off.
So will his pillow.
And his eyes will have to open.
Or he won't be able to shout.
Or run away.
He's almost too scared, but he has to do it.
One.
Two.
Three!

And he sees... Pigeon.
Hello, silly, she says.
I've been sitting here for a couple of hours.
My beak's stiff.
My wings are cramped.
And you're just lying there.

Is that really you? asks Job.
He hopes and hopes it's true.

No, says Pigeon.
It's an old woman.
She's come to give you a good hiding.

Phew! thinks Job.
It's just Pigeon.
I'm so glad it's you, he says.
I thought...

Yes, I know, says Pigeon.
It's all right.
Listen. I'm on the run.

Slow

Job sits up straight.
Did he hear that right?
Pigeon's on the run?
What did you do? he asks.
Have you done something wrong?
He knows Pigeon.
She's not very well-behaved.

That's nice, says Pigeon.
So that's how you see me – as some kind of criminal.
I'm off. You just snuggle back into bed.
She hops over to the window.
Her wings are drooping.

Wait, says Job.
Don't go yet. Tell me what's wrong.
Why did you come here?

Pigeon turns around.
She sighs.

I'm tired of it. Always flying. So far away.
And my husband stuck in that coop, all alone.
No.
I can't do it anymore.
I won't do it anymore.
I'm not doing it anymore.
No matter what my owner says.

Job thinks about this.
Pigeon doesn't belong with Job.
She belongs with her owner.
There's nothing he can do.

And there's more, says Pigeon.
She pecks at a feather.
My husband has to go.
The owner said so.
He's not very good at flying.
He's too slow.

How mean! thinks Job.
Yes, you have to run away from your owner, he says.
I'll help you. But first we need to sleep.

Tomorrow will be better for thinking.
Then we'll see everything more clearly.

Did I really say that? thinks Job.
I sound just like Mum.
