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Robin Redbreast's Cherry Pie

Abbie Phillips Walker

"I know my mother used to make cherry pie by this time when I lived at home," said Robin Redbreast, sitting on the edge of his nest, smoking his pipe.

"But, Robin," pleaded Mrs. Redbreast, "cherries aren't ripe at this time of year. We've only been up north for a few weeks. Just think about it."

"You can talk and make all the excuses you want," said Robin, setting his pipe aside, "but my mother used to serve me cherry pie for dinner before this. You just don't want to go through the trouble of pleasing me. That's the reason."

Mrs. Redbreast bristled with anger and fluttered back and forth over the nest before responding. "Robin, I don't know what's gotten into you. I almost believe you need a good dose of herb tea. It's not like you to be so unreasonable."

"I'm not unreasonable at all," Robin replied. "I'm simply hungry for a piece of cherry pie like my mother used to make, and you won't make one. I think you're afraid to try because you're worried it won't be as good as hers."

This was the first time since their marriage that Robin had displayed such a bad temper, and Mrs. Robin didn't know how to handle it. But she was a wise little bird, so instead of responding to Robin's last comment, she put on her bonnet and flew over to an older bird's nest to seek advice.

"He wants cherry pie," Mrs. Robin explained, tears welling in her pretty eyes, "and you know cherries aren't ripe enough for pies. Oh dear! I wish I knew where my mother was living this summer. I would go home, and he could go back to his mother to see if she could make cherry pies before the cherries ripen."

"There, there, my dear, have a good cry," said the older bird, patting her on the back.

Mrs. Robin sobbed as though her little heart would break, then dried her eyes and said with a determined look, "I'm tempted to make him some pies out of those green cherries. It would serve him right if he got sick from eating them."

"You're absolutely right, my dear," said the older bird. "Now, wipe away your tears, and on your way home, gather the cherries and make the pie for supper. He'll come around to your way of thinking before morning, I promise you. By sunrise, he'll be a meek husband."

"But what if he gets seriously ill?" asked Mrs. Robin. "Some birds do, you know, when they eat unripe cherries."

"Robin won't die; he won't eat enough for that. But he'll have some of the pie because he's been talking so much about it."

Mrs. Robin decided to follow her friend's advice. On her way home, she collected the cherries. Robin was out when she arrived, so she quickly busied herself making the pie, talking to herself as she worked.

"He'll never be able to eat it," she said. "No matter how much sugar I use, I might as well be eating a lemon. My mouth waters just looking at them."



When Robin came home, supper was on the table, and there, in front of his plate, was the pie.

"What's this?" he asked, eyeing the pie.

"It's a cherry pie," his wife replied. "I found some cherries while I was out this afternoon. I hope you'll enjoy it, but the cherries aren't quite ripe yet."

"I knew you could find cherries if you looked," said Robin, cutting into the pie.

He seemed a bit disappointed when he saw the filling, but he didn't say anything. Mrs. Redbreast watched him as he took his first bite.

"How is it?" she asked. "I'm sure it must taste like vinegar. It's too early, just as I said from the start."

That was all Robin needed to hear. He took another mouthful, then another, before answering, but Mrs. Redbreast could tell the pie didn't taste pleasant.

"It's nice," Robin said. "Very nice indeed. I think you should've used more sugar. My mother used to make hers sweeter, but you did quite well."

Poor Robin struggled to swallow another piece of pie, but his wife watched him intently, so he had no choice but to continue eating.

"I always go easy on the first pie of the season," he said. "So I won't have any more tonight."

Mrs. Redbreast was relieved to take the pie away; she was concerned about the consequences of him eating two pieces.

Robin went to bed early, but he couldn't sleep well. He tossed and turned, unable to find a comfortable position. When he finally did, he began to dream

and talk in his sleep.

Long before morning, he woke up in excruciating pain.

"Ohh! Get the doctor, quickly! I know I'm going to die. The pain is unbearable," he cried.

Mrs. Redbreast flew away in a panic to fetch Doctor Raven, as she was genuinely worried; poor Robin seemed terribly ill. Doctor Raven arrived promptly, carrying his black bag of medicine.

"You're very sick, Robin. Very sick indeed," Doctor Raven said. "Seems like you've eaten something that didn't agree with you. Now, what did you have for supper? What did you eat?"

Poor Robin was too sick and frightened to answer at first, but Doctor Raven asked again what he had eaten for supper.

"I had only two pieces of cherry pie," Robin replied.

"Cherry pie at this time of year!" exclaimed Doctor Raven. "Well, bless my soul, Robin, you must be out of your mind!"

"Why did you make cherry pie before the cherries were ripe?" he asked Mrs. Robin.

"I knew he shouldn't eat it," she replied, "but Robin insisted. He said his mother used to make cherry pie at this time, and he wanted one. Oh, please give him something, Doctor, to make him feel better. I promise I won't make another, no matter what he says, until the cherries are ripe."

Doctor Raven opened his black bag and took out three bottles. Each one contained a mixture that looked quite unappetizing.

Poor Robin looked at them as the doctor poured the mixtures into a glass. "Drink this," he said, handing it to Robin.

Robin tasted it and shook his head. "I can't take that," he said. "It's terrible." Suddenly, a sharp pain doubled him over, and he swallowed the rest of the medicine without a word.

"I think that will do the trick," Doctor Raven said, putting on his hat. "I don't think Robin will be asking for cherry pie again anytime soon, Mrs. Redbreast. And if he does, don't give it to him. No mother, including mine, ever made cherry pie at this time of year. If silly young husbands don't know what's good for them, their wives have to enlighten them. Goodnight, or rather, good morning. The sun is rising, and I've lost my sleep because of a foolish fellow who wanted cherry pie before its time."

Robin didn't open his eyes or speak for some time. Eventually, he said, "My dear, I must have been hasty about that pie. I suppose my mother waited for ripe cherries. I promise I'll never find fault with anything you cook or what's on the table again."

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