



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

The Bald Parrot

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Once upon a time, there was a flock of parrots living in the wild. Early each morning, they would fly to the fields to eat corn, and in the afternoons, they feasted on oranges. They made a great racket with their squawking and always had a lookout parrot perched in the tallest trees to watch for approaching danger.

Parrots can be as destructive as locusts because they peck at the corn, leaving it exposed to rot in the rain. And since parrots also make a delicious stew, the farmhands would often hunt them.

One day, a man shot down a sentinel parrot. The wounded bird fought bravely before allowing himself to be captured. The farmhand brought him home for the landowner's children, and they nursed him back to health since he only had a broken wing. The parrot recovered well and became completely tame. His name was Pedrito. He learned to shake hands (or rather, give his foot), loved perching on people's shoulders, and would tickle their ears with his beak.

He roamed freely and spent most of his day in the garden's orange and eucalyptus trees. He also enjoyed teasing the chickens. Around four or five in the afternoon, when the family had tea, Pedrito would join them in the dining room. Climbing up the tablecloth with his beak and claws, he'd nibble on bread dipped in milk. He was crazy about milk tea.

Pedrito spent so much time with the children and heard so many things from them that he began to talk. He'd say, "Good morning, little parrot!" "Yummy potato!" "Potato for Pedrito!" He also picked up a few words that aren't suitable to repeat because, like children, parrots easily learn bad words.

When it rained, Pedrito would fluff up his feathers and mutter a bunch of things to himself, very softly. But when the weather cleared, he'd fly around, screaming like a madman.

As you can see, he was a very happy parrot who, besides being free—as all birds wish to be—also enjoyed, like wealthy people, his "five o'clock tea."

Now, in the midst of this happiness, something happened. One rainy afternoon, the sun finally came out after five days of storms. Pedrito started flying around, shouting, "What a lovely day, little parrot! Yummy potato! Shake hands,

Pedrito!" He flew far until he saw below him, way down, the Paraná River, which looked like a distant, wide white ribbon. He kept flying until he finally settled in a tree to rest.

Suddenly, through the branches, he saw two green lights shining on the ground like enormous fireflies.

"What could that be?" he wondered. "Yummy potato! What's that? Good morning, Pedrito!"

Pedrito always talked like this, mixing up words without any sense, and sometimes it was hard to understand him. Being very curious, he began descending from branch to branch to get a closer look. Then he saw that those two green lights were the eyes of a tiger crouched down, staring intently at him.

But Pedrito was so happy about the beautiful day that he wasn't afraid at all.

"Good morning, Tiger!" he said. "Shake hands, Pedrito!"

And the tiger, with that terribly hoarse voice he had, replied, "Good mor-ning!"

"Good morning, Tiger!" repeated the parrot. "Yummy potato! Yummy potato! Yummy potato!"

He kept saying "yummy potato" so many times because it was already four in the afternoon, and he was eager to have his milk tea. Pedrito forgot that wild animals don't drink milk tea, so he invited the tiger.

"Delicious milk tea!" he said. "Good morning, Pedrito! Do you want to have milk tea with me, Mr. Tiger?"

But the tiger became furious because he thought the parrot was mocking him. Besides, being hungry himself, he decided he wanted to eat the chattering bird. So he answered:

"Sure! Come clo-ser; I'm hard of hea-ring!"

The tiger wasn't hard of hearing; he just wanted Pedrito to get close enough to snatch him with a swipe. But the parrot was only thinking about how delighted everyone at home would be when he showed up to tea with this magnificent friend. So he flew down to another branch closer to the ground.

"Yummy potato at home!" he repeated, shouting as loud as he could.

"Closer! I can't he-ar you!" the tiger replied in his hoarse voice.

Pedrito moved a bit closer and said, "Delicious milk tea!"

"Even clo-ser!" the tiger insisted.

The poor parrot got even nearer, and at that moment, the tiger made a

tremendous leap—as high as a house—and just managed to graze Pedrito with the tips of his claws. He didn't manage to kill him but ripped out all the feathers from his back and his entire tail. Not a single tail feather was left.

"Take that!" roared the tiger. "Go have your milk tea now..."

Screaming in pain and fear, Pedrito flew away. But he couldn't fly well because he lacked a tail, which is like a bird's rudder. He wobbled in the air from side to side, and all the birds who saw him flew away, scared of this strange creature.



At last, he managed to reach home, and the first thing he did was look at himself in the cook's mirror. Poor Pedrito! He was the strangest and ugliest bird imaginable—completely bald, tailless, and shivering from the cold.

How could he show up in the dining room looking like that? So he flew to a hollow in the trunk of a eucalyptus tree, which was like a little cave, and hid deep inside, trembling with cold and shame.

Meanwhile, everyone in the dining room wondered about his absence.

"Where could Pedrito be?" they said. They called out, "Pedrito! Yummy potato, Pedrito! Milk tea, Pedrito!"

But Pedrito didn't move from his hiding place or say a word, silent and still. They searched everywhere, but the parrot didn't appear. Everyone then believed that Pedrito had died, and the children began to cry.

Every afternoon at tea time, they remembered the parrot and how much he loved to eat bread dipped in milk tea. Poor Pedrito! They would never see him again because he had died.

But Pedrito wasn't dead. He continued hiding in his hollow, not letting anyone see him because he was so embarrassed to look like a bald rat. At night, he would come down to eat and quickly go back up. At dawn, he'd quietly descend again and go look at himself in the cook's mirror, always sad because his feathers were taking so long to grow back.

Until one day—or one afternoon—the family was seated at the table for tea, and they saw Pedrito calmly walk in, swaying as if nothing had happened. They were overjoyed to see him alive and with beautiful feathers.

"Pedrito, little parrot!" they exclaimed. "What happened to you, Pedrito? What shiny feathers you have!" But they didn't know they were new feathers, and Pedrito, very serious, didn't say a word. He just ate bread dipped in milk tea. But

as for talking, not a single word.

Because of this, the master of the house was very surprised when the next morning the parrot flew over to perch on his shoulder, chatting like crazy. In two minutes, he told him everything that had happened: his trip to Paraguay, his encounter with the tiger, and all the rest; and he ended each story by singing, "Not a feather left in Pedrito's tail! Not a feather! Not a feather!"

He invited him to go hunt the tiger together.

The master of the house, who was just about to go buy a tiger skin he needed for the fireplace, was delighted at the chance to get one for free. Going back inside to fetch his shotgun, he set off with Pedrito on the journey to Paraguay. They agreed that when Pedrito spotted the tiger, he would distract him by chatting so the man could quietly sneak up with the gun.

And that's how it happened. The parrot, perched on a tree branch, chatted and chatted, all the while looking around to see if he could spot the tiger. Finally, he heard the sound of branches snapping and suddenly saw below the tree two green lights fixed on him—they were the tiger's eyes.

Then the parrot began to shout:

"Lovely day! Yummy potato! Delicious milk tea! Want some milk tea?"

The tiger, furious upon recognizing that bald parrot he thought he'd killed—and who now had beautiful feathers again—swore that this time the bird wouldn't escape. His eyes flashed with rage as he replied in his hoarse voice:

"Come clo-ser! I'm hard of hea-ring!"

The parrot flew to another branch closer still, still chattering:

"Delicious bread with milk! HE'S AT THE FOOT OF THIS TREE!"

Hearing these last words, the tiger let out a roar and leaped up.

"Who are you talking to?" he bellowed.

"Who did you tell that I'm at the foot of this tree?"

"Nobody, nobody!" screamed the parrot. "Good morning, Pedrito! Shake hands, little parrot!"

He kept on chatting and hopping from branch to branch, getting closer. But he had said, "He's at the foot of this tree" to alert the man, who was creeping up, well-hidden and with his shotgun ready.

There came a moment when the parrot couldn't get any closer without falling into the tiger's jaws, so he shouted:

"Yummy potato! WATCH OUT!"

"Even clo-ser!" roared the tiger, crouching to pounce.

"Delicious milk tea! CAREFUL, HE'S GOING TO JUMP!"

And the tiger did jump, indeed. He made a huge leap, which the parrot dodged by simultaneously shooting straight up into the air like an arrow. But at that very instant, the man—who had his shotgun barrel rested against a trunk to aim properly—pulled the trigger. Nine pellets, each the size of a chickpea, shot like lightning into the tiger's heart. Letting out a roar that made the whole jungle tremble, the tiger fell dead.

Oh, how Pedrito shouted with joy! He was beside himself with happiness because he had avenged himself—and well avenged—on that ugly animal who had plucked out his feathers.

The man was also very pleased because killing a tiger is no easy feat, and now he had the skin for the fireplace in the dining room.

When they got home, everyone learned why Pedrito had been hiding so long in the hollow tree, and they all congratulated him on his brave deed.

They lived very happily from then on. But the parrot didn't forget what the tiger had done to him, and every afternoon when he came into the dining room for tea, he would always go up to the tiger skin spread out in front of the fireplace and invite it to have milk tea.

"Yummy potato!" he'd say. "Want some milk tea? Potatoes for the tiger!"

And everyone would burst out laughing. Pedrito too.

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