

Wednesday

There once was a robot with a broken heart. The others did their best to fix him, but it wasn't any good. So he was sent to sit on the scrap heap with all the other old machines. He tried talking to them. He said, "My heart was broken, you know." But they didn't answer. So he lay down and looked up at the sky. He lay there through the long, dark nights and the empty days. He lay there rusting in the autumn rain. He lay there when the first snows of winter fell.



And there, one day, was a Bluebird, fighting against the freezing wind. She landed on his shoulder. "What are you doing here, little bird?" he said.

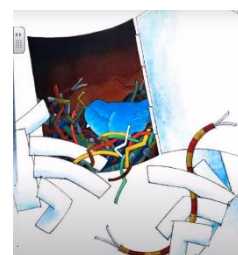
"I'm flying south," she said weakly. "South where the sun shines. But I'm so cold and tired I can go no farther."



"I'm sure you don't want to stay here," said the Robot. "I'm rubbish." But the Bluebird just shivered and said nothing.

"There's space where my heart used to be," the Robot said gently. "You can sleep there if you like."

So the Bluebird settled down to sleep on a nest the Robot made. And as the Robot looked out into the night, he was astonished to feel as if he had a warm, living, beating heart. And when the Bluebird fluttered, he felt as if his own heart were fluttering. The next morning, the door to his heart opened and the Bluebird sang, sweet and bright in the icy air. "My old heart only ever said *ticktock*," said the Robot, "but now my heart is *singing*." And the Bluebird flew a little way up into the air, and the Robot felt like his heart was *flying*. And creaking, he got to his feet, and danced a creaking, clanking dance.



"I wish I could live in your heart," said the Bluebird, "but I'll die of cold if I stay here. Winter has come so soon and I still have so far to go. I don't even know if I have the strength," she said sadly, settling in his hand.

"Then let me carry you and I'll shelter you from the cold and the storms," said the Robot. And so he carried her in his heart, across frozen wastes, over towering mountains, through blizzards and fog, until he was deathly tired and his joints groaned with every step.



And when at last the sun shone, he opened the door to his heart and out flew the Bluebird, singing and twittering thank-yous. The Robot lifted his arms towards her, but he couldn't take another step. His strength had failed at last. "Make your home in my heart," he said in the faintest whisper and he hung his head. And the Bluebird lived in his heart always. And the Robot stands there still, his arms outstretched like an old, hollow, tree, home every year to singing birds.