

Songbird

Zac Tangiers was inseparable from his beaten up classical, nylon-stringed guitar. It was a rarity to see him anywhere, not singing a sweet melody and coaxing a delightful tune out of 'Sabine', his guitar.

It had gotten to the point where he would rather stay at home and play than go out to parties.

One afternoon, Zac was luring a song into the world when a strange phenomenon occurred. As he strummed, a rainbow lorikeet appeared on his windowsill. This alone was not amazing, however the bird sat and listened, tilting its petite, multi-coloured head and looking Zac straight in the eye.

Zac noticed that the bird had a small splotch of white paint on its left wing. Abruptly, the bird flew away.

Zac continued to help his new song blossom, connecting even deeper with it as it evolved, right before his very ears. Then the bird returned with a friend. Zac's limited knowledge of ornithology hinted to him that because the 'friend' bird was plainer in plumage, that it was his female partner.

Both of them sat astutely and seemed to be keenly listening. Tilting of heads was happening at random intervals. The two birds were like puppets, controlled by the wistful melody of Zac's voice and Sabine's resonance.

The female bird flew off suddenly but the male remained behind, intrigued and thoroughly fascinated.

Returning with the female were five more birds, three rainbow lorikeets and two rosellas. Then a vivid red King parrot landed in the middle of the smaller birds, intimidating them a bit but not enough to scare them off.

Motley in their crimson, scarlet, ruby and other hues of red and various other colours, the birds never broke their focus, lured and hypnotised by the birth of this new song.

Zac grew curious.

He had never had a single bird on his windowsill before this moment, now there was a small aviary installing itself on his house.

He stood up and approached the window. Not one of the birds flinched in the slightest. In fact they all leaned. He bobbed his head from left to right as he sang and they all followed him with their bodies.

As he got to the window he saw that out on the white plastic outdoor furniture were a large flock of sulphur-crested cockatoos, punctuated (peppered) with a few yellow-tailed black cockatoos. This was pretty mind-blowing but was slightly overshadowed by the fact that Zac's entire lawn was littered with birds of every variety he knew and plenty that he didn't (know).

Each and every single bird was staring intently at Zac like he was a god.

Then he stopped (playing).

The spell was broken. All of the birds snapped out of it and then looked around as if they were embarrassed having been drawn out of their reveries.

Quickly Zac picked the song back up where he left off and the birds uniformly turned their attention back to him and lulled into bliss again.

More birds arrived. They covered the trees. Crows, sparrows, pigeons, seagulls, Indian minahs, wattlebirds, starlings, plovers, magpies and other birds too numerous in variety and exotic to identify.

Stunned, Zac didn't really know what to do. He wanted to tell someone but that would involve stopping the song. He thought about calling his mate Dylan, speed-dialling his number with his toe and getting him to witness this spectacle but his phone was in his jacket pocket. That meant he couldn't take a photo or film this incredible experience.

Certain that if he stopped, the birds would vanish, Zac played on.

Birds of prey arrived, which led him to believe that some of his new little friends may be preyed upon, this was not the case. They too, the wedge-tailed eagles, the lettered kites, the ospreys, and hawks, all lined the tip of his wood paling fence, like armaments, mesmerised by the dulcet tones.

Then the cats started to gather and Zac knew that it wouldn't be long until they were amongst the pigeons.

Everybody knows that cats eat birds but these cats were not the slightest bit interested in the multitude of meals teeming like sequins across Zac's backyard.

Zac decided to go outside and play for his largest audience to date. Their little heads and eyes followed him as he entered the yard.

It was only then that Zac realised that the most surreal thing about this situation was that this cast of thousands was not making even the slightest of noise.

Soon enough almost every cat in the neighbourhood and every bird in the vicinity were enjoying a private recital.

“Whoa!” Sac’s neighbour gasped in disbelief over a small gap in the top of the fence, “They’re all listening to you.”

Zac was so relieved that someone else was witnessing it too.

“Yeah, it’s amazing huh..?” Zac replied but the neighbour had fallen under Zac’s musical influence and was rendered speechless.

“Can you take a photo? I’ll need to prove this later and I can’t keep playing for much longer” said Zac to his blank and vacant-faced neighbour.

Evening was creeping in and the birds would soon be heading home to their nests, trees and branches. That was the nature of things. Zac was sure that his music wouldn’t override their deep natural instincts.

If nature wouldn’t make them go home, he’d have to stop eventually anyway, the song was full of Barre chords, which would cramp his hand up sooner or later. By this stage, he’d been playing the song for over half an hour.

Two more neighbours from the other side’s residence, a plethora of more cats and some nocturnal birds, tawny frogmouths and barn owls and some marsupials later, Zac had to let this good thing come to an end.

With his fingers throbbing, calloused as they were, his hand cramped up and his mouth parched from the last hour and a quarter of singing, Zac watched the wave of consciousness break slowly over the backyard.

Nervously, the birds shook their heads and took off in a frenzy. Feathers flew and cats leapt unsuccessfully and then hid in the shadows as the eagles launched and lunged.

The neighbours jolted awake out of their meditative states just in time to see this explosion of colours, fur and (wings) feathers.

“That was amazing,” sighed one of Zac’s other side neighbours.

“I’m so glad you saw it,” replied Zac.

“Me too,” said the neighbour.

The next day Zac awoke to his empty bed and a whole load of missed calls on his silenced mobile, a result of all his calls to them the night before.

He’d run in and tried to grab his camera but the animals and birds were gone by the time he returned.

Some of his friends thought he was insane, some thought he was drunk or stoned and others thought it was a great story.

So he ate breakfast and decided that he’d take his guitar to the botanic gardens and see what happened.

Zac took Sabine out and tuned up in the sunshine, on a lush patch of grass near a massive fig-willow tree.

Quietly the song emerged from his strings and his voice found its place.

One by one the birds nearby found their way to the source of the golden sounds. Ducks waddled up, swans bobbed and terns took the short walk.

It wasn’t long until birds of all types again surrounded Zac, staring at him in awe and all ears to the front.

Before falling under his trance, one passer-by managed to snap a couple of photos. Then they stood frozen and became lost in the music.

Then Zac saw her.

At first she was walking over out of pure curiosity. She was exquisite. Zac was magnetised. He could barely concentrate. The song became a song for her, about her, made by her.

Just when he thought she was going to fall under his spell, she started to dance.

She snaked through the outer ring of people into the throngs of birds, until she reached him. Right there in front of him she spiralled and swayed. Her hips were liquid and her limbs were seductive like slow burning flames.

The only moment her eyes left his gaze was when she was lost in an ecstatic bliss and they shut themselves (in peace) with tranquillity.

The birds started to land on her and move with her. Some of them began to land on Zac as well. Soon enough they were both covered in beautiful birds. It was like countless photos tourists of San Marco piazza took on their trips to Venice but so full of colour and wonderment.

Zac rose from his seated position and circled this beautiful dancer girl, captivated by her soulful movement and lovingly drugged by her deeply alluring eyes.

More birds gathered on the two and yet they both drew closer to each other.

Slowly they gravitated into each other's breathing space and they could feel the other's warmth as they drew in, to a soft melting kiss.

The world fell away and Zac felt like the birds had lifted them both off the ground and they were floating through the sky. It was so dream-like he could barely control his hands. Overcome by the desire to embrace, Zac let his guitar go and slung it behind him.

The music stopped.

With no singing and no music, the birds were brought back to reality and all awoke stunned and most flew off. Some waddled away.

The people gained their senses and some quickly took photos before it all ended.

Zac and the beautiful dancer girl were lost in their embrace. They had never spoken. It was a perfect start.

After leaving the park, bewildered by their first encounter, Zac invited the beautiful dancer girl back to his house for dinner. She told him her name and they conversed freely for hours. They ended up spending the night together and the next morning as they lay in bed, Zac played her a song. As he played, a small red-breasted robin came to the window.

Then it flew away.