

Chickadees Dance on My Windowsill

By T. Gillmore

My daughter wanted to be a bird, and I said, "No. Please no. You're too young to be a bird. There's a whole life ahead of you. It will get better. After this hurdle. You'll see. Please trust me. Don't be a bird. Let's do something together—shop, listen to music, anything you want."

She didn't answer. Her skin turned cold and hard and she tucked her head between her shoulders, eluding others but more so, avoiding me.

My daughter wanted to be one of those chickadees. The ones dancing on our windowsill. These tiny, short-necked, large-headed birds, bodies no larger than my fist, flutter their gray wings as if inviting her to come out and play. She doesn't. She won't. And I am glad because something inside me said, *Don't let her*. So, I tried to change her mind about birds—to become something else.

"Why not be a dog or a cat?" I asked, delicately, not wanting to spook her back into her shell. She rarely peeked her head out at me. "You like dogs and cats. You can run and play. Little birds can't run. They don't play."

She shook her head no and said, "Dogs and cats are stuck inside the house or chained in the yard. I want to fly."

"But why a chickadee?" I asked. "You can be an eagle, soar the sky, and reach as high as you can. Or an owl; be strong and respectful. No one bullies an owl."

My daughter had not answered. She stared at the window, and I wondered what was she thinking, but I didn't ask. I was afraid of the answer. Instead, I left and cooked, sewed and sang as if time would erase all thoughts of chickadees. They said time had that power. I was counting on time.

My daughter became a bird. Overnight. Without a slight indication, she flew away. Time healed nothing. I then followed. But I am a cat. I am inside my house, safe, sitting on the windowsill. My paw pats the glass at the chickadees dancing on the outer edge. The autumn leaves swirl in the background.

Tell my daughter I am here. Please tell her to come and visit me. Here on the windowsill. She doesn't have to sing to me if she doesn't want to. I will know it is she when I see her flutter her wings. A mother knows her child. I will wait.



T. Gillmore writes in weird New Jersey. Her work has previously been published by *Aurora Wolf*. *Vestal Review* is her second publication.