

Speech without barriers - A tale of connection.

The chill wind felt amazing through his feathers even if he wanted to say it again and make the other geese even more frustrated. There was just something about flying through the sweet air that made you feel so good, even if it was your frightening first migration.

“Hey,” Pioneer groaned as Blizzard and his goonies flapped over, “you seem tired, do you need to land to rest while we go ahead,” “No,” He replied. “O fine,” The bone-white gander mockingly said, “I’ll just be over there if you need me,” The rest of the posse followed Blizzard with a laugh just behind him as soon as they came out of a cloud.

The landscape ahead revealed shimmering water with an emerald green thing that looked like a fish and a white cloth billowing with it in the wind. He saw people on the thing, he recognized people, and he did not like them at all. The memories of that hard boot on his fragile wing flooded him like a freezing cold gust of air. “Look out!” a voice called snapping him back to reality. He saw the approaching green thing dangerously close. He tried to get out of the way in vain, as if his feathers were acting up and braced for impact. He felt the cloth squeezing past him and splashed headfirst, with no control. He got up, lifted his head and it was just him wet and shivering, the water, and the other geese leaving. “Hey, come back, I do not know where to go! Hey! Come back!” He called the others. He watched them fly into the distance, slowly getting smaller and smaller until they were no more than blips in the sky. All Pioneer could think of was that the group left him, they left a fledgling on his first migration alone on a never-ending pond of icy water. Despite his dripping state, he raised wings, started to flap, and rose out of the water desperate to find his fellow geese.

As Will strode across the pier, he admired the beauty of the shimmering water with the tide turbines sticking out like lemon zest on a blueberry pie. The cylindrical sand batteries as well as the bikes in the rack nearby were fitting for the workers that worked there and for the birds that were starting to come back. He saw all sorts of blackbirds, cardinals, swallows, and a couple of eastern phoebes and geese. They were all coming from over the sunrise and the historic Wolfe Island Wind Turbines. Just at that moment, a flock of the iconic geese streaked past making him turn. It hurt his back even more than it already had. His attention was pulled to the other people boarding the light electric railway and store owners setting up for the market full of maple syrup, wooden trinkets carved over the winter and spring hardy seeds and plants. At the center of it all was the two-hundred-year-old city hall, with its old copper roof, stained glass solar panels and all. It was such a change from Kingston thirty years ago. He turned around to face the sunrise when he noticed something flying in the distance. He furrowed his white, bushy eyebrows to realize

it was a lone goose who looked to be limping in flight and tired out of his mind, but he did not realize how fast it was going. Suddenly, that same goose collided with him like a gale, knocking him back and sending the goose sliding down the pier, crashing into a melting snowbank. Will stood up, almost slipped again, and ran carefully to the goose. He honked with exhaustion at the sight of the large, imposing human looking down on him. With earnest effort the lone goose stood up and tried to fly but collapsed to the ground. “Hey, could somebody help me please?” Will called out from the sidewalk hoping to see just one friendly face to help him.

Pioneer woke up to the sounds of another human talking in a box about things he had no clue of, and crackling fire, shedding its abundant warmth and cozy atmosphere. The exhausted gander tried to stand up, but scorching pain whipped his wing and forced him to sit back down, catching the attention of the human in the Satin plush chair. He was a great, thin, winter willow, its leaves as porcelain in embers light over plaid and jeans, like all mean humans were. He sank further into the worn blanket’s embrace as the towering man approached him bracing himself for the blow. Pioneer felt the man’s breath as he was lifted face to face with this unfamiliar creature and heard a very faint whisper, almost nothing, saying, “It’s going to be alright, brave one.” All he could feel then was, yes, it was going to be all right, but bliss was interrupting the box human saying something about the biggest snowstorm of the year passing over somewhere called Kingston by sunset. “I thought that snowstorms only came earlier in the spring, I don’t know why the birds are coming back.” The man pronounced. If it was like the one as my hatching year, he thought to himself, then I must go warn the others, oh wait, I am the one who is lost.

“If you’re looking for your friends” the man spoke, like he was reading the goose’s mind. “I saw geese down by the pier, and even a snow white one.”

“Yes!” he honked approvingly, “They are the ones!” Pioneer waggled over to the old gentleman, rubbed his neck against his pant leg and motioned for the door. “Good plan,” said the gent, and they both hurried to the door.

The encroaching clouds dimmed the noonday sun as Will and the goose rode out on his bike through the streets of the limestone and cob filled city, passing shops, houses of all cultures and kinds, and the tiny forests and the bird houses within, though none of them would fit a goose very well. He turned a corner and was greeted by construction and was taking up the entire road. “Ah blast it,” yelled Will. “Why did we come to this when I’m supposed to be helping this goose!” He frustratingly started to go home when the goose honked, like it was trying to tell him something. “Yes, what is it?” He asked the goose, and he put the goose down. It collapsed for a second but stood up and motioned to a little path on the side of the fence. “Oh, I’m blind.” They passed on through, and there it was, the

pier. They hurried as fast as they could when the goose heard what sounded like the clamor of Canadian geese in the lake a few meters down. Sensing the excitement in the wriggling gander, he put him on the cold pavement and off like a bullet he went. “My job is done now, so it’s time for my walk, I guess,” Will muttered to himself, and started around the neighborhood.

“Blizzard” Pioneer exclaimed! I have never wanted to say this before, but I have never been so glad to see you in my entire life. “

“Oh Pioneer, I did not expect you here. Why are you so late and where have you been? Blizzard asked.

“It’s a long story but I came here to tell you that there is a really, really big snowstorm coming and we need to find a warm place to stay.” Pioneer explained.

“Are you serious? There has never been a snowstorm in our migration. It has only happened in the white time.” Blizzard mocked.

“Guys, I’m not joking, and you can’t just stay here waiting for breadcrumbs.” Pioneer persisted.

“Yeah right” Blizzard said. “I think we will go to another shoreline.”

Blizzard and the other geese wandered over into the unknown city as a looming stormy cloud and a formattable wind gusted them.

Pioneer recognized the same signs as the snowstorm of his hatching year. This was going to be a bad one, and if Blizzard and the other geese did not find safety, they would be doomed icicles.

A shiver ran down Pioneer’s back. He looked around and suddenly recognized one familiar face. Will had helped him before, and he needed his help again.

With all his strength Pioneer lifted his wing up. Despite searing pain, he flapped until his feet felt the ground no more, lifting his tired body into the air. He was off to get Will.

Will was tired. He had walked through the streets of his familiar home city for a while now. He noticed that the sky had darkened, though it was only about 3:00 pm in the afternoon. The air felt thicker, and the wind began to lift his coat up. Donning his memory to the news caster earlier that day, mentioning that despite everyone’s efforts the changing weather was now unpredictable. Ever since past years, he had never heard of this weather this late into the season. Lost in thought, he heard the sudden honking of the goose in the air. “Is it you, brave one?” he questioned, then he realized, “, it is you! How did you get to fly? Isn’t your wing hurt?” The goose pointed at the clouds with his head. “Did you find the others?”

The goose nodded, shivered, laid down and stuck his tongue on the side of his mouth. Will knew exactly what he meant, he did not know why but he knew that his friends were not safe from the encroaching storm. He swiftly strided his way up the freezing roads searching for the familiar white goose and looking at the distance, the goose honked pointing at the shoreline under his nose all this time. "Again, thanks a lot."

Pioneer saw the flock of geese and Blizzard huddled like a can of sardines shivering.

"Hey" Shouted Pioneer. "you will have to trust me."

"You know he is right. " Said one of the geese. And the others all nodded in agreement.

Blizzard looked over to the others and then to Pioneer, and frustratingly agreed.

"Fine, but this is so I don't freeze." Blizzard said.

Keeping in their huddle, they all waddled to Pioneer then saw the human. White beard and all.

"Don't worry, he is friendly. He won't hurt us." Pioneer explained. "He has a place for us to be warm. Let's follow him."

The kind gentleman started briskfully leading them towards a megalithic human structure that had people crowding in it. The snow was starting to fall faster than anyone could anticipate. They had to hurry.

"In here!" The white bearded human called. Through the large doors of city hall they went. They were greeted by more humans than the geese had ever seen or been around. They then noticed a pool surrounded by weird stone and flowing water inside the enormous building.

"This will be a good place for you to rest. It is a fountain that helps to filter the water from the center of the city." The human said.

They flew straight to the fountain of water with silver specs like shiny pebbles at its bottom. They splashed the marble ground, and exhausted, one by one, they started to doze off.

Pioneer went to the ledge of the pool of water and thought to himself, "Not all humans are hurtful. Some are kind, and caring to creatures alike."

And he too started to nod off with renewed trust in humans and their unique differences. He fell into a deep restful sleep.

