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The Fire and the Bird

By: Odelle Erickson

The small blue and black winged bird flew lazily around looking for food. Its grey head was fluffy with feathers next too its black feathered mask and blue beak. She had a soft white belly that faded into blue. She got her name, Bristle, because of the way her feathers stood straight up when she was scared or mad.

Bristle saw a few wasps buzzing around a ponderosa pine. Its pinecones, a light brown, dry from the long summer days. She followed the wasps as they flew away flapping her little wings with all her might until she came to a strange scene.

A featherless, big eared, tall and flattish faced thing with no beak, was in sight. She had seen them before. They had come into the forest and put up little dens, lit a fire, put it out, and then left. It seemed like these ones were already leaving, but there was something wrong. They hadn't put out the fire.

Bristle watched the fire all night long as it slowly grew from a small light to a fiery monster reaching out its burning arms towards the trees. The smoke filled the air, and she could barely breathe. It devoured everything that got in its way, not caring if its victims made it out alive.

Bristle fled, her delicate wings flapping as hard as possible. She let out a series of high-pitched calls, a warning for others to run from the vicious monster that was coming. Another bird replied with a short high-pitched panicked sound.

Bristle finally got out of the burning forest into a bustling, smoky, stone forest. It had tall stone trees that would eat the flat-faced things and then spit them out later. There were big shiny animals with flat faced things inside them whizzing around on stone paths. They growled and honked at each other making the forest very loud. It reminded her of a wasp's nest filled with activity and nowhere to rest.

Bristle was getting hungry, so she flew up to look for food like she did normally, even though she could tell this was not like any place she had ever visited before. She flew around for hours, until her wings grew heavy and her throat grew dry. She had to land in a small grove of oak trees that was crisscrossed with stone paths. Dogs walked beside the flat-faced creatures in silent companionship. She spotted two branches in a large tree that looked perfect for a nest. She had just settled down in her scrappy nest when she saw a wrinkly, old flat-faced thing feeding the pigeons. Her rumbling belly made the decision for her, and she flew over to eat a few of the seeds.

Once she had filled her belly, she started walking lazily over to her tree. Before she could get there, a flat-faced thing flew past on a big piece of metal with big round wheels. His feet pedaling furiously, and his face wrinkled in concentration. It rode over her wing, and she let out a squawk of pain.

Bristle looked at her poor wing. It was at a weird angle and made her feel sick. In a flash, the wrinkly flat-face had picked her up, he put her in a brown box, and closed the lid. Bristle started to panic, flapping her wings wildly as he put her in the shiny animal and they started moving.

Eventually, the shiny animal stopped, and the flat-faced thing brought her into a white room. At the end of the room, looking at a piece of metal that seemed to move, was a female flat-face. She had brown hair and kind features, even if they were flat. When she saw Bristle, she walked over, picked her up, and examined her wing. Bristle did not want to be examined. She didn't want to be in this white room. She just wanted to be in a forest eating normal food.

The flat-face thing brought her a little pellet. Bristle, being as hungry as she was, ate it quickly. After she ate it, her mind began to realize how tired she was. All she wanted to do was sleep and sleep and sleep.

She woke up to excruciating pain and remembered where she was. Bristle chanced a quick glance at her wing, fearing what she would see. It was straight, perfect and usable. The pain had died down pushed aside by happiness. She was so busy dreaming about flying again that she hadn't realized they were moving. She peeked out of the box they had put her in to see she was back in the shiny animal.

After what seemed like hours, the shiny thing stopped, and they pulled up into a beautiful pine forest. Bristle felt like she would burst with joy when they opened her box, and she flew away. It wasn't home, but it was close enough.