



A NEW CHANCE AT LIFE

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Awakening with the rosy dawn, the bird extricated her head from the fluffy plumage surrounding her neck. She ruffled her feathers, shaking her head to rid her vision of the sleepiness that clouded them. She stretched her Cornforth-white wings, spreading them in the daylight. The tips of her pinions brushed the surface of the refined columnar metallic bars and her wings lay arched, unable to surpass the boundaries of metal that entrapped her. A flicker of untamed rage flashed in her carmine irises, vanishing as quickly as it had appeared. Her wrath extinguished from her scarlet eyes, the same eyes that had earned her name, Ruby. She drew back her wings, turning to face the sunrise. Her keen vision, not in the least deterred by the galvanized metal blockades encompassing her, made out the edges of the fiery ball of light. The radiant glow streamed into the cage, sliding through the gaps between the wrought iron bars and pooling on the polished floor.

The only object of interest was the gilded wooden perch. Years of use had marred its polished surface, scars revealing the handsome, rich mahogany beneath the layers of gold. Perched on the same, Ruby stared into the distance, her gaze unflinching. An intense longing stirred in the depth of those blazing eyes. Longing for a taste of freedom, for another chance to soar into the skies with the wind propelling her towards the great unknown, for a free life outside the cage. So overwhelmed by these emotions, she screeched at the bars of iron that cruelly kept her separated from the rest of the world, confining her to a limited space with no liberty.

A second later, the bird sharply turned and swallowed her wrath. As one of the precious few left of the endangered Passenger Pigeon species, her monetary worth was high enough for the humans to condemn her to a life of captivity. Even if she escaped, she would have nowhere to go. With the numbers of her species dwindling rapidly, she would be in danger without a flock to protect her.

She would never see the sun outside of the metal cage, never stretch her wings again and never soar the infinite expanse of the tranquil sky. Her vision blurred with the ghost of a tear, making the approaching figure in the horizon discernible. Ruby squawked, edging closer to the metallic bars. A passenger pigeon was flying towards the cage, swiftly slicing through the air, its abalone feathers shining as bright as the light that shone above them. As it neared, the ornate, silver key clasped in its beak glinted in the sunlight.