

The outstanding story of Piti and Grandma Canary

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and helped by Lourdes Torrelles and Zoya Bylinskii

editorial
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*This book is dedicated to my beloved
mother Mercè, grandma Canary.*

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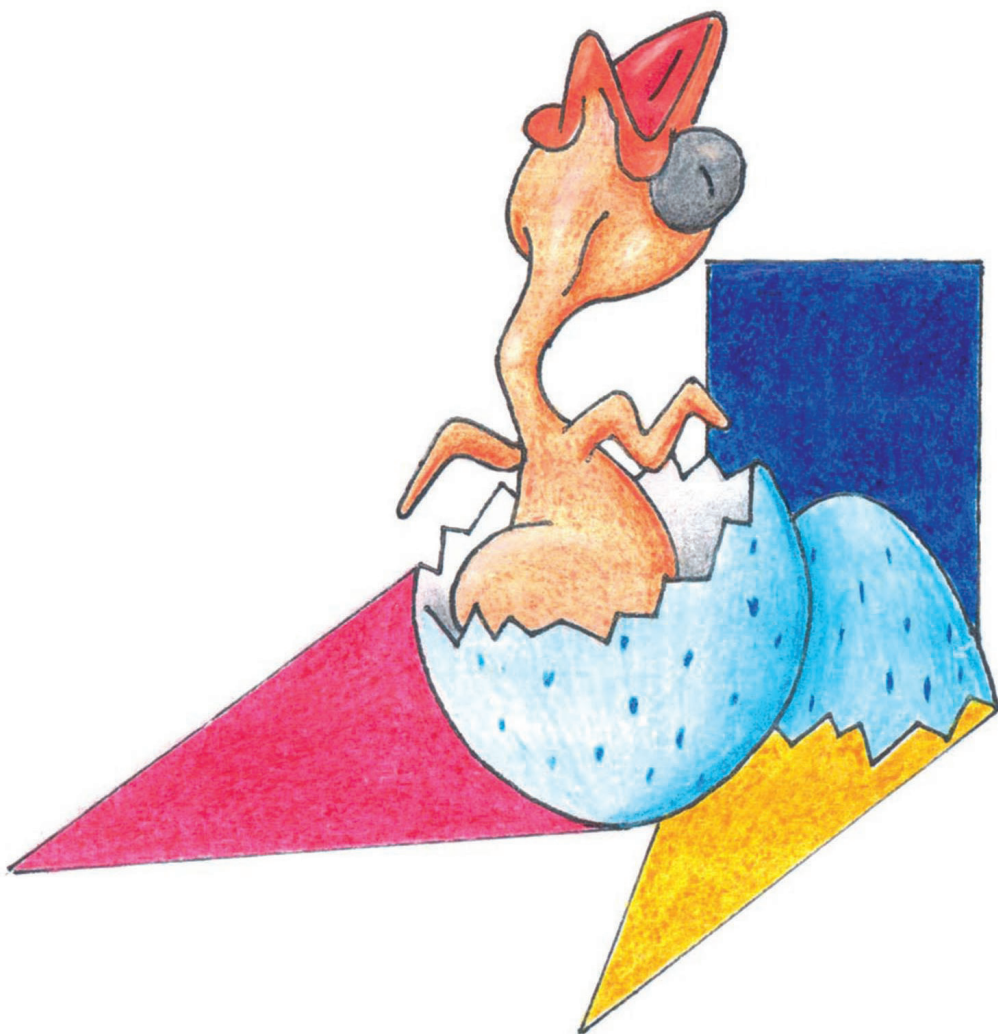
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A small miracle called canary

Hello, I am Tato and my friend is a canary. Yes, yes... I mean one of these tiny little animals covered with feathers that most of us have heard singing in those everlasting afternoons of our childhood, perhaps because we had one at home, or perhaps because the neighbour had one on the balcony.

See? Most people just know them because of their chirping. However, there are few, very few, of us who are privileged to know the humble and delicate stories that are behind each of these melodious sounds. There are very few of us who have seen them breaking the shell of a bluish egg as their tiny little trembling head lifts from inside. There are very few of us who have seen them open their beak (they're always starving) while being fed with a toothpick as we enjoy the show of that great red mouth that can soak everything up like a sponge. And there are very few of us who have seen, as if by magic, how some kind of spikes, called cannons, emerge from their skin and little by little will turn into feathers. And finally, we have seen them fly. I have seen it many times and for me it is almost mundane... but the story of Piti is very, very special.

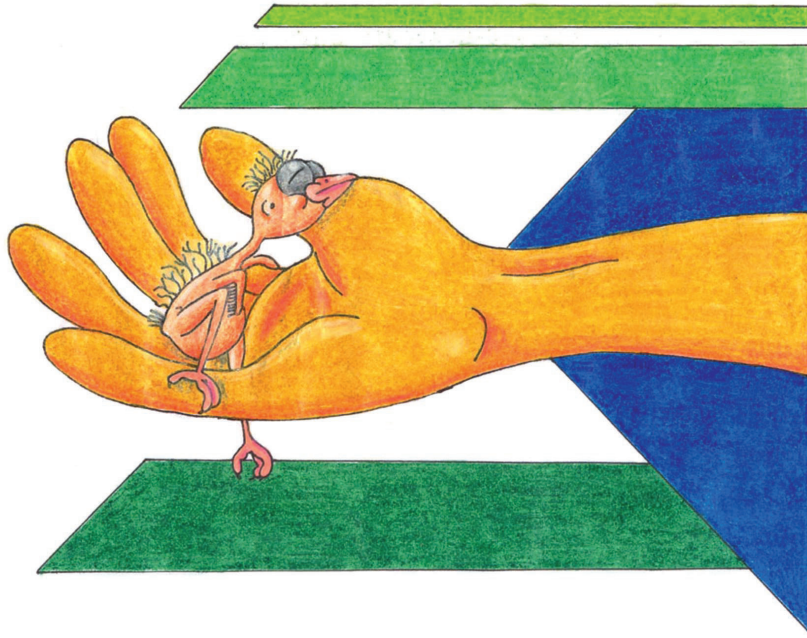


An unusual day in the aviary

It was a cool dawn in September and as I did every day I went out to give lettuce to the canaries and other birds from the Flying Space. The Aviary was a huge cage, bigger than a room, with trees and plants all over, and ground and water and places for feeding. There lived and flew all the birds that I had found hurt or that had fallen from a nest or just those that reached me for any other reason, and if left alone would not have been able to survive by themselves. That was the closest place to freedom that I could build for them even though they were in a cage.

As I was saying, once inside, Secret and Little Simon came to eat the leaves straight from my hand. They were both very clever canaries! As I did each morning, I took a look at Aaron's nest. The day before one of the two chicks I was breeding had died. I offered some lettuce to the mother and she quickly flew to me and hungrily pecked at it... canaries are crazy about lettuce! But the nest was empty! Where was the chick?

I searched the entire surroundings but found no chick. Sometimes when a chick dies in the nest, the chick's parents remove it, but I couldn't see it anywhere. I was surprised, and my heart was beating as if it wanted to fly out too. I stared and stared at the ground but I saw nothing...



Then one meter away from where I was, I found his little body, almost featherless and totally immobile. I picked him up and he was as cold as a winter's night. I could see the life escaping from that tiny body. I was very sad. But suddenly I felt a really soft kick from one of his little paws scratching my hand. It was like if someone with frozen hands tried to write a hopeless message on a paper... He was alive!

I quickly brought him close to my chest and all at once I became his Peter Pan, the boy from that eternal tale who took care of all the lost children which had accidentally separated from their parents when falling off the pram, or nest in this case, because of a moment of inattention on the part of the nanny.

Tato is way behind

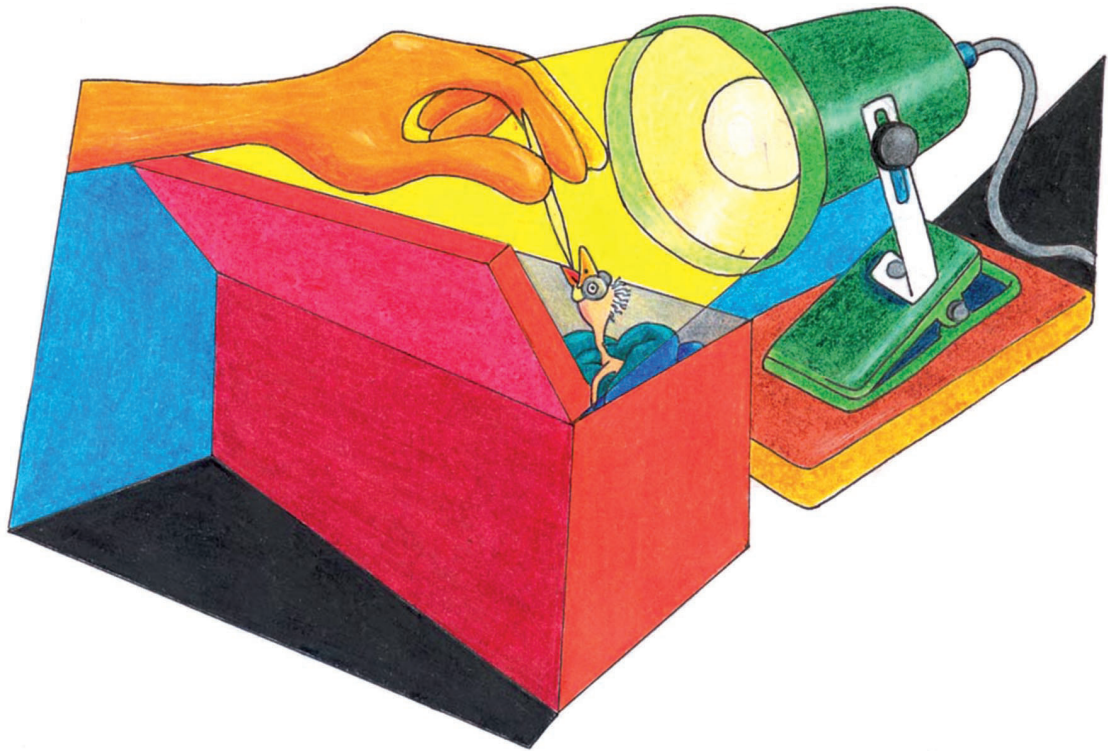
With one thing and another, there were only 10 minutes left before my work at school was to begin, and many things had to be done... I did not have much time! The first step was to call the school and find a teacher, a friend of mine. I asked her, since she was not working that early in the morning, if she could take the children to the changing rooms and give them some balls so they could play sports until I arrived.

"What? You need to take care of a canary?" Her voice was abruptly cut off since I had poor cell reception.

"Please, help me, I am going to explain everything to you later... If I don't take care of him now he will die! He is colder than ice."

Any other person in the school would have thought I was trifling with them, but she knew me and knew I was serious. Blanca knew that I was crazy about birds.

I hated not going to school on time, but this was an emergency and was totally impossible to solve in such a short time. Moreover, as if he wanted to encourage me, the little canary was moving softly inside my hand like the poppy petals when the sea breeze blows... I couldn't believe it! He was recovering so fast.



I promised Blanca a complete and detailed explanation, thanked her in advance for dealing with the situation, said goodbye, and pocketed the cell phone.

Once more, I thought that I had no time to waste, otherwise everything could founder. I looked for a box and lined it properly with insulation and padding. The little chick couldn't afford to lose the slightest bit of heat. Then I set the nest-box under a lighted bulb so it would receive pleasant, healing heat.

The next step was to cook something for the little bird... he might be starving! Like human babies, chicks need any mashed food with plenty of liquid in order to digest it well. I went to the

kitchen, opened the cupboard and found a mortar and pestle I could use to prepare his food. Then I took two peeled almonds, some dry breadcrumbs and half a leaf of lettuce from the fridge and crushed it until it was completely ground up. Finally, I added some water droplets. The paste was done and it looked delicious... I was sure the little bird was dying to try it!