

Nathaniel Tower

TWO BIRDS IN MY HANDS

I was strolling down the sidewalk whistling a tune and holding a bird in each hand—a bluejay in my left and a house sparrow in my right—when I came across a curious bush. It was covered in lush green leaves except for one gaping hole to the trunk. A single robin perched in the inner branches. “A bird in a bush,” I said aloud, trying to remember the saying my father once taught me. I stood by that bush for a moment, thinking.

Finally, I said, “A bird in hand is better than two in a bush.” The sparrow chirped in response.

I looked down at my hands. I glanced back in the bush. This wasn’t what my father had taught me at all.

That’s the only way he ever taught me, through catchy little sayings like don’t count your chickens, or two birds with one stone. It’s almost like he believed infinite wisdom came from the lives of birds. But I’d never raised any chickens or killed anything with stones, so I never knew what the hell he was talking about. And now, here I was, holding these damn birds while another stared at me, and all I had to go on was my father’s stupid cryptic advice.

The whole neighborhood seemed on pins and needles, waiting for my action. The clouds stopped and hung over my head. I thought they were going to burst open at any moment.

I tossed the bluejay in the bush and walked away. As I started down the sidewalk again with the sparrow in my hand, I knew my father would’ve been proud.