

Grandma Elfriede and her adventures



The Nighthike

written by Gisi Mengesdorf-Kasten

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Josephine



Grandma Elfriede had just sat down at the breakfast table, started to read the newspaper and drink her tea, when she heard someone knocking on her kitchen window. She looked up, took off her glasses and then she smiled.

As she opened the window she heard “morning, morningmorning!”

“Good Morning Josephine, how nice of you to visit me,” said Grandma Elfriede to her guest. Josephine followed her to the table, looked around, quickly stole a cookie and flew away!

It had been more than two years since Grandma Elfriede found the little magpie while taking her daily walk. At the time she wasn't sure but it seemed the bird had hurt its wing. Grandma Elfriede knew, that she shouldn't just pick up a young bird and take it home. In many cases the bird had not fallen out of its nest but was learning to fly and discover the world, and the parents were waiting below to take care of it.

Grandma Elfriede decided she would watch the young magpie through her binoculars from a distance. That way she could see if the parents were still caring for the youngster.



Elfriede looked through her binoculars as she lay in the grass. There were no grown magpies to be seen anywhere only the youngster, hopping now and again from his hiding place and putting himself at risk of being watched or even attacked by another animal.

“Much too dangerous,” thought Grandma Elfriede as she slowly walked back to the little bird. As she stood close

enough she could see, that one of the young bird’s wings was in fact injured. It was sticking out to the side. She carefully picked up the bird and walked home with it.



At home she took a shoe box, which she had prepared earlier by poking holes in the lid with a pair of scissors, to give enough air and a little light. She placed the bird inside and drove to the veterinarian.

Grandma Elfriede was relieved when the veterinarian found nothing broken. The bird had a sprained wing which would not take long to heal. He suggested she keep the young bird in a cage to see if it would eat or if she needed to feed it. Grandma Elfriede was given a list of foods, that she could chop small and were suitable for blackbirds. Now she knew what to do. She wanted to care for the little bird, that was for sure!

The veterinarian wasn’t able to tell her if the bird was a boy or a girl, but that didn’t matter. Grandma Elfriede had already thought of a suitable name and she was going to get little “Josephine” back on her feet again!!!



She found an old birdcage in her cellar, cleaned it up and sat little Josephine inside. Josephine cowered anxiously, hiding in the very back corner with her feathers all ruffled. No surprise, it had been a very busy day for the young magpie.

Grandma Elfriede mashed up some food to make a paste to give to the young bird and put it inside the cage. She sat down at her kitchen table to see what would happen. As Josephine stared at the bowl, her neck got longer and longer and with one quick hop she sat next to the bowl and started to eat. Things couldn't be better! Josephine had found her appetite. That was a very good sign!

The next day the young magpie was no longer sitting in the corner but already sitting on the perch. Grandma Elfriede was excited. Now she was sure, her decision to take the bird home had been the right one. As soon as Josephine was strong enough and could fly again, Grandma Elfriede would set the little bird free.

Grandma Elfriede spent a lot of time talking to the bird and it soon became clear, that Josephine was a very clever little bird. Within a few days the little magpie was flapping around in the cage. The injury seemed to have been blown away. Now Josephine needed space to practice flying again.

Two weeks later Josephine was flying effortlessly around the kitchen and sometimes she would land on Grandma Elfriede's head, pull at her hair and play with her glasses or even nibble on Gramdma's ear.



It's important to know: Grandma Elfriede is probably the most ticklish of grandmas you'll ever find and when Josephine pecked at her ear, she jumped from one foot to another, squeaking with glee!

Besides that, the little magpie loved everything that shined and Grandma Elfriede found one or two spoons and even keys, which she took out of the cage again.

After maybe four weeks or so, little Josephine spoke her first word: "Hello!" Grandma Elfriede knew that magpies could be taught to speak when they were kept indoors. To actually hear it for herself was wonderful. She looked at Josephine. "Hello my little Josephine," she said, as a teardrop rolled from her eye. Elfriede knew that she couldn't keep Josephine in her home forever! Four weeks had gone by and it was time to give the little bird her freedom.

She wanted to wait just one more night though. A farewell forever had to be well planned.

Grandma Elfriede didn't sleep well that night. She thought about saying goodbye to little Josephine and that made her very sad.

As she prepared breakfast the next morning, Josephine kept her company and commented loudly on Grandma's every move with an "hello, hello."





