

## MISS MATILDA BROWN

Miss Matilda, or Mattie as she was known by her most intimate friends, was sitting in her kitchen, having a break, her elevenses she called it. Today was not the best of days for her, a certain sadness pervaded the cottage and the reason was evident.

In the corner of the kitchen stood a now empty bird cage on its stand, and the absence of Smudge, her bird and companion, told its own sorry tale.

Two days ago, the kitchen was alive to the tweets and chirps, and now an oppressive silence was ever present.

Mattie sipped her coffee and decided that as life goes on, so must she and with a heavy heart she rose and finished the morning chores.

Days passed in this fashion and gradually the sense of loss lessened and Mattie turned her attention more and more to her garden and the welfare of the wild birds, for which she provided a generous bird table.

It was whilst washing up at the kitchen sink, she glanced out of the window and noticed a commotion going on around the base of the bird table. Three magpies, bully boys she called them, were mobbing a small ball of yellow on the lawn. Quick as a flash Mattie was out in the garden flapping her apron and the bully boys departed.

Mattie looked at the abject ball of fluff and thought she detected signs of life. She quickly organised a cardboard box, lined it with an old jumper and laid the canary, as it turned out to be, in the box, took it into the kitchen, placed it on a shelf shaded from the sun and waited for signs of recovery.

The signs did not come quickly. Next morning, although life was in evidence, there was not a lot of movement. Mattie then thought about food, and from somewhere in her memory she recalled that cat food could provide the answer. Cat food was purchased and Mattie then set herself the task of getting the food into the bird's crop.

This she achieved by making a small spatula out of wood, and by tapping on the bird's beak, which opened after a few attempts, she managed to get a few morsels into the crop. This was repeated about every two hours over the course of the day.

Two days passed, and Smudge Two was much more alert, so she gently placed the bird in the bird cage and waited for a result, if any, to come.

Another day dawned and Mattie was taking her elevenses when she heard, or did she? a very faint "cheep, cheep". No, it was real, and Mattie leaned back in her chair, a smile playing around her lips, for now all was right in the world of Miss Matilda Brown.