

Finding Your Voice

One day, Dawn's teacher asked if she wanted to join the school choir. Dawn's face blushed red and she shook her head. The thought of singing in front of anybody made her go hot and cold all over. Dawn liked singing, but only when she was by herself.

Every day, as she was getting ready for school, she heard a robin singing in the garden. She went down to breakfast humming cheerfully.

'That's a nice tune,' said her Dad.

'The robin sang it,' said Dawn. 'He likes to sing by himself too'.

'But he is in the biggest choir of all!' said Dad.

Dawn looked at him. 'But he is just sitting in the garden by himself.'

The next morning her dad woke her up very early. 'Time to get up,' he said. 'We're going outside.' Half asleep, she got dressed and put on her wellies. It was still dark out. 'Where are we going?' she said with a big yawn.

'It's a surprise,' said Dad, winking. They went down the footpath to the common. 'Here we are,' said Dad chirpily. 'Let's sit down here, shall we?' He got out a flask of hot chocolate and some snacks for them to share. They sat in silence. Then, just as the sun brightened the edges of the night sky, a bird started to sing in the tree.

'It's a robin!' said Dawn in delight. This time in the quiet of the common she heard another bird joining in too. Dawn listened, enchanted by the sound.

'That's a nightingale,' said Dad. Next to the song of the nightingale, the robin's song seemed a bit plain. But now other birds were singing as well. The songs were all different. Some cawed, some tweeted, and some whistled, some were quiet and some were loud.

'You see, the robin isn't singing alone,' said Dad. 'He's part of the dawn chorus. That's when all the birds sing at the start of the day, looking for a new mate, or warning others away from their territory.'

They sing together when everything is quiet and they can hear each other over the sounds of the city.' Dawn listened to all of the birds. Her Dad pointed out a blackbird and a thrush. Woodpigeons and warblers and wrens all had their parts as well. Blue tits, sparrows and finches joined in too.

She sat wrapped up in her warm coat with a drink in her hands, snuggled up to her dad. It was a magical time. It was like discovering their own secret world. As she listened, she thought that perhaps if the robin could sing with others, she could too. When things got quiet they headed for home.

Back home, Dawn started singing to herself as she got ready for school. From the kitchen, Dad joined in with his deep, rumbling voice. From the bathroom she heard Mum begin humming along. Even her baby brother started making his own sing-song noises and gurgles. And Chester the dog joined in with a whiny howl too! She smiled at the sound of her own dawn chorus.

Maybe she might just join the school choir after all!