



Pumpkin's Truth by Nicole Caputa | 2020

“A simple, yet oh so special gift was all it took to pass on the legacy and share the love that he didn't need to give in the first place...”

The pumpkin plants were only just starting to bloom when she was made. The yellow flowers were as bright as ever, glowing like sunflowers. The farmer stuffed her trousers first. An orange corduroy allowed for strength as the straw was stuffed in. Not as strong as denim, however, it was what the farmer's wife could find at the market the week prior so it would have to do.

The farmer wiped his brow, putting his hands on his hips. He took a moment to reflect his work, half-finished. He threw his leather gloves back on and began buttoning up the cream and yellow flannel for stuffing as well.

“The sun's comin' down, missy. We betta finish what we started!” he told his work.

The thick cockney accent came from his mother who'd grown up in the rainy back streets of London fog. From building to building they moved as each one was scheduled for demolition. Once the boy was old enough to become a farmer, he settled to the country fields, married a nice lady who promised to take care of him. And take good care of him she did indeed.

Rounding the corner of retirement, it was nearly time for their daughter to take over the farm. As much as he loved his daughter, he knew she wouldn't take the care to shoo the crows herself every day for she wouldn't be out in these fields every minute of every day like her father. And the time that he did have left in the fields would not warrant him those constant visits much longer. Not with those knees.

The fields didn't need this much attention, but the crows did. It was his wife's idea to build a scarecrow.

“I don' want ta scare 'em!” he had told her at the time.

“But they're eatin' ever' last row o' corn!” his wife insisted.

“Only the ruddy ones!”

He loved his crows. But he also loved his fields.

And they were his way of living. He had no choice but to say goodbye to the birds... As he continued building the scarecrow in front of him he nodded. With some final stitching in the smile he snipped the thread off and took a step back.

“Right then, ya look bonny! Keep ‘em crows away, now. ”

The farmer collected his work and moved back to the barn with his armful of straw and hands of buttons.

The scarecrow stood in the sun, shooing the crows with every swoop of their wings toward her. And the farmer visited her every day. Made sure her buttons were sewn on tight and her straw was keeping inside. She was doing her job well and both the farmer and his wife were quite pleased.



When the pumpkin flowers were long gone and the yellow withered up to brown, the green bulbs were no longer such. They were all bright, orange spheres ready for pies and loaves and jack-o-lanterns. The leaves also turned from green to yellow to orange, drifting around in the wind, parading in the fields.

As the farmer came out to visit his scarecrow, his attire turned from overalls and a white undershirt to a jumper and scarf most days. His olive scarf blew around his neck and he found it hard to keep it there in the evening winds. But the scarecrow smiled as brightly as ever at the farmer every day. She looked forward to his visits. It wasn't the sewn-on black string that turned her smile upwards--it was the farmer's kindness.

As the crows came along she would use the same kindness as the farmer once did.

“Come on now, shoo, ya dainty things! Get! The farmer won' want yer and yer hungry beaks near here!” she would tell them, waving her arms around in the wind.

But they would continue to come and come again. They would even land on her arms, shoulders, and head, just resting for a moment. They knew better than to go for the corn at this point. It was clear they weren't happy with it, but they obliged. For the farmer's sake. One breezy day, the farmer came out as usual for the morning to see his scarecrow. The night had been dreadfully cold and the frost had taken over the roots of the field.

If it had gotten any colder the pumpkins would have all gone to pot. Luckily, the sun was looking out for them this morning. When he waddled through the vines of the patch, his boot slipped along a nasty bit of frost on some mud. Down he went, bottom first. He lay in disbelief. Not that he'd fallen, but that he couldn't get up. The crows had dispersed at his fall.

Instinctively, the scarecrow had reached her arms out to catch the farmer but remembered her place at the last minute. But, as he continued to lay with moaning loud signs of ache, she couldn't stand still.

She pushed the rod up and out from her back. Stuck on splinters, she had issues moving. But, at last, she was able to get the rod out with only a small tear in her flannel. Her limbs were flimsy, being made of straw and all. She picked him up with all her strength, thankful for the small sticks the farm used to prop up her arms. Sitting halfway up on the ground, the farmer looked up at his scarecrow in absolute disbelief. His jaw open as wide as a cod's.

"Must'a hit my head," he said, rubbing his temples.

The scarecrow smiled brightly and rubbed her straw-filled hand on his back. He shook his head and shut his eyes tightly. She wasn't sure where the strength in her straw body came from but what was important was to help her maker. Her family...

His heavy body was dragged through the fields of pumpkins. She had to hold up his top half and leave his boots to drag behind. They occasionally got caught on vines and such, but she pushed through. The crows followed, hopping behind.

She worried that if she pulled too hard her arm would rip straight off. But she pulled and pulled, getting him through the long, long field of orange and scarlet pumpkins. The wind howled and warned to blow her all to pieces, but she carried on.

If she had sweat or a brow to wipe, she'd have wiped it. Even if she had real arms with flesh and bone and muscle, it would have been hard to pull him. But she couldn't falter. She had to make it back to the farmhouse. Of course, she wouldn't be able to let the farmer's wife see her walking about. It was bad enough the farmer himself had seen her truth.

A gust of chilly wind blew by, wavering her off-balance and blowing her golden yellow ribbon straight from her straw hair. She reached out with her arm to catch it, but the wind took it. Gone forever. It was just a ribbon anyway.

The farmer began to open his eyes again so the scarecrow hushed him to close his eyes once more. She could see the farmhouse porch in sight and began picking up speed. The sun was going down and the farmer would usually be ready to be called in for supper soon. The farmer's boots seemed to be dragging even heavier now.

The crows continued to hop behind, encouraging the scarecrow to get him to the porch. She dragged him up one step, two steps, and three, each with a clunk. She hoped the sound wouldn't draw premature attention. She set the farmer up on a white paint-peeling step, leaning over to the left side of a column.

She hopped up to the door and gave a firm three knocks and jumbled down the steps. She knew she wouldn't make it all the way back to the field in time but, she also knew the farmer's wife would be more concerned with her husband than a missing scarecrow in the field, if she were to even look.

She clumsily stumbled behind an edge of the white wrap-around porch and waited. The wife came out slowly, a flour-coated apron hung around her waist.

When she saw the farmer slouched over on the porch, she ran over to him immediately in a hobble. The farmer looked up at her with a smile. He didn't seem to have immediate harm which caused the scarecrow to let out a silent sigh.

"What were you thinkin' runnin' yerself ta death out there?" she gave him a tight squeeze. She continued, "Come on, kettle's on."

She clicked her tongue in disappointment but the scarecrow could see the worry on her face.

After bringing him inside and setting him in a chair with a steaming cup of earl grey in his cool hands, the wife came to the porch once more. Before closing the front door shut she looked around back and forth with a quizzical expression resting in her old face.

The scarecrow, still in her hiding spot, held her breath. But, the oven timer beeped through the whole house. The wife looked one last time and shut the door, hurriedly moving to the roast in the kitchen. As soon as the scarecrow could hear them chatting and setting the table to eat, she turned to leave.

For a moment, she stared into their window, though. Wishing that the crackling fireplace and steaming bread were a part of *her* daily routine. But, she knew it just wasn't where she belonged... So, with a sigh, she ran clumsily back to her post in the middle of the field.



The scarecrow continued to watch over the pumpkin and corn field as the harvest season continued. She made sure the crows kept their peace. And the farmer continued to visit. Although the visits were less common, she was glad they were continuing for the moment. She dreaded the day they would end...

One morning, the farmer was doing his usual rounds through the farm. After attending to the chickens, he came right over to the scarecrow in the middle of the field. The pumpkins were all but gone. Picked and sold at their market for all the festive families carving their faces for candles to rest inside.

The farmer stared the scarecrow up and down. He looked at her more closely now than ever. He was quite sure she had helped him that frosty day but knew that was just not possible. Yet, as he was about to turn and leave her in the field for another day, he pulled a small rectangular object out of his pocket. He eyed it for a moment and then placed it in the pocket of the scarecrow's orange, corduroy trousers.

"There yer go. Enjoy it. It were my mum's. It's tattered, but it's loved, I tell yer that."

He gave her a nod and turned to tend to the rest of the farm for the day. When his back was to her, she grabbed the rectangular gift out her pocket. A book. She flipped through it in a slow motion. She had never been given a gift before. Let alone a gift so personal to her truth. She didn't mind that the farmer knew her secret.

She knew he'd keep it to himself and keep it quiet. They already had some sort of connection she couldn't explain, and now it was clear how much he really cared about little old her. A straw scarecrow in a field. Something anyone else would think was mad if they knew the truth. If she could shed a tear she would have.

She glanced up to see the farmer still walking towards the barn. She looked down at the gift for another time to read the title, *Pumpkin's Truth*.

"Hmm," she laughed to herself, realizing the book contained the farmer's own words.



From that day on she gave the farmer a little extra smile every day he came around. They never spoke, of course, even though they both knew they could. The scarecrow kept the name for herself that the farmer had began calling her.

"Good mornin', Pumpkin," he would say every morning.

And when it was time for the farmer to pass on from this life, he made sure to tell his daughter the scarecrow's name before he had his final breath. Pumpkin was thankful for that. She was thankful for him and his kindness.

Once the time for mourning had passed, the farmer's daughter began to take over the farm and therefore took over his daily visits to Pumpkin every morning. Pumpkin enjoyed the smile every morning although it wasn't her maker's. But, whenever she missed him she pulled the book from her pocket and read a new page. The book was in fact very loved by him first, but now it had another way to be loved.

Pumpkin was thankful for the farmer's wife deciding to make her. She was thankful for him making her by hand. She was thankful for his many visits of kindness. She was thankful for the gift and the many, many smiles. And most of all, she was thankful for him knowing her truth.

A short story by Nicolle Caputa

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