

The Birds

by Peter Abbey

At least the birds are happy. Neil focussed on that thought every morning. Concentrated so hard that he would squint and when he'd thought hard enough, he would get up and continue his journey.

It had been over three months since he'd left his home and started to walk. He'd kept a journal to begin with, but his book soon ran out of batteries. It was that sort of thing that had irked Neil at the start, but now he'd just let it slide down his back and into the dirt. Ah, the dirt — that was something else he'd gotten used to rather quickly. When being told the bank were taking your home, what remained of your savings and leaving you with just the shirt on your back and the tattoo above your butt, the dirt was the least of your worries.

His feet had stopped hurting a few weeks back. That must have been the pain barrier they tell you to go through, he thought. They'd not hurt since. Rather, they'd not stopped hurting since. The relentless agony giving no respite. No respite meant he'd forgotten what it felt like to not be suffering and therefore the excruciating pain had just become the norm.

Having given thought to this for the first time in a few weeks, Neil winced. He winced twice more as he put weight upon his weary legs and hoisted himself up.

Neil ran a gloved hand over his scraggy beard. He'd never been the type to sport facial hair before, but the new lifestyle almost demanded it. "Hobo-chic" he mused as he bent down to collect his torn and filth-stained rucksack.

He looked up. Rain clouds were forming overhead and from the sound of the school-run it wasn't even 9 o'clock yet. He could tell it was going to be a long walk today.

Still, at least the birds were happy.

