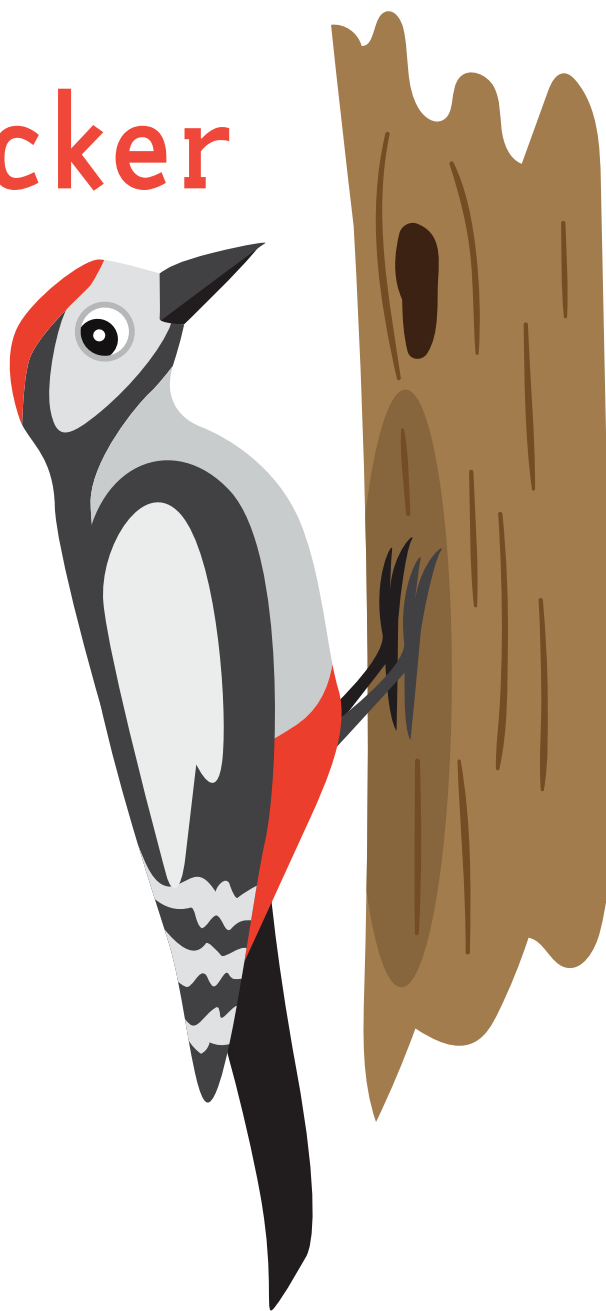


*“Very Short Stories”*

*by Paolo Silingardi*

# The woodpecker



From the edge of the woods, hidden by the highest branches of an old elm tree, **Woodpecker** watched all the hustle and bustle that had transformed the clearing into a building site. Amidst the dust created by the trucks and diggers, he could just see the buildings that were growing quickly, side by side, each one identical to the next. Woodpecker waited, because despite the fact that he was a simple soul, he knew that **everything comes to an end sooner or**

**later**, like the storm over the woods or the snow in winter, and that frost is always followed by spring.

When all the hard work was over, Woodpecker was able to see the end result, with **all the houses finished and freshly painted**.

If he had been able to smile that's exactly what he'd have done because, as he looked at the pretty, glossy wooden shutters at the windows, he realised that he had a job to do.

He flew down from the woods to the clearing and landed on the first house. He waited for a moment, just to be sure there was no one around. Then he flew to the highest window, anchored his claws into the wood, settled himself into the perfect position and went to work. **The noise he made with his beak filled the clearing like a pneumatic drill.**

When the first prospective buyers visited the new houses, **every shutter bore Woodpecker's signature**. A ray of sunlight shone into every room through the closed windows, decorating the floor with an oval which moved slowly from one wall to the other, following the path of the sun.

**The site manager set to work and, within the space of a couple of days, all the shutters had been replaced.** Woodpecker observed the work from the woods, waiting for his moment to come. As soon as the building site was empty, he flew down again, made himself comfortable and began **pecking energetically, sending splinters of wood flying in every direction.**

It was then that the real war between Woodpecker and Constructions in the Country Ltd began. Different factions soon took their stances in the local newspapers.

For animal and nature lovers, **a woodpecker who was pecking deserved respect** and to be left alone. He was simply doing his job. Lovers of progress and enterprise (which meant lots of concrete), on the other hand, thought that private property had to be defended, even with the death of Woodpecker, if necessary. As far as the legal system was concerned, **woodpeckers were a protected species and couldn't be touched**. All the journalists were bothered about were the facts, while, according to the politicians everybody was right, just not all at the same time, it depended on who they were talking to.

In the end, one of the buyers asked for a discount with the excuse that Woodpecker had reduced the value of the houses, bought the first house, **removed the shutters, hung heavy curtains at the windows and lived in peace with Woodpecker**, who went back to pecking holes in the trees in the woods.

Colour me

