

To Paint The Portrait Of A Bird

By Jacques Prévert

First paint a cage
With an open door
Then paint
Something pretty
Something simple
Something beautiful
Something useful
For the bird
Then place the canvas against a tree
In a garden
In a wood
Or in a forest
Hide yourself behind the tree
Without speaking
Without moving...
Sometimes the bird will arrive soon
But it could also easily take many years
For it to decide
Wait
Wait if necessary for years
The rapidity or slowness of the arrival of the bird
Has no connection with the success of the painting
When the bird arrives
If it arrives
Observe the most profound silence
Wait until the bird enters the cage
And when it has entered
Gently close the door with the brush
Then
Erase one by one all of the bars
While being careful not to touch any of the feathers of the bird
Then make a portrait of the tree
Choosing the most beautiful of its branches
For the bird
Paint also the green foliage and the freshness of the wind
The dust of the sun
And the noise of the creatures of the grass in the heat of summer
And then wait for the bird to decide to sing
If the bird does not sing
It's a bad sign
A sign that the painting is no good
But if it does sing it's a good sign
A sign that you can sign.
Then you gently pull out
One of the feathers of the bird
And you sign your name in a corner of the painting.