

The Birds: a poem

written by Guest Contributor | January 5, 2021



Dear Carole, Today I learned

that like humans, birds have
four-chambered hearts.
Can you imagine? In those tiny,
frail-boned bodies with feathers that float
right off in a healthy breeze.

*That's me as a bird, you'd said
one day driving home
from Food Maxx when I almost hit
a fat, slow, low-flying pigeon that ignored
the two thousand pounds of sun-hot, black metal
careening across the parking lot
as it focused in on a shiny
bag of Ruffles.*

*Stupid bird, I'd said. Get the fuck
outta the way before I hit you.*

You'd hit me if I was a bird, you said.

*You're not a bird, I said, adjusting
the rearview mirror, checking
the groceries in the back hadn't tipped.*

*But if I was? you pushed. I'm fat and slow
and you'd just hit the fucking gas
and my fat bird body would splat
across your windshield. Dead.*

*Your fat bird body would probably
crack the windshield, I said, looking
right and left to merge
into Shaw Ave.'s midday traffic.
At least your bird death
cost me two hundred dollars.*

You didn't laugh.

*Look it's just Darwinism.
The slow get hit. But the smart?
They don't. So what,
if you're a fat, slow bird? You are
also a smart bird
who'd reason out waiting
till the death machine passed.
That's when—when the only thing moving
across the parking lot is a dry wind
meandering through the Valley—
you'd tottle that round bird body
on its toothpick pegs
over to that shiny chip bag.*

*I suppose I would, you said, smiling
a little, craning your neck to watch
the fat pigeon happily tearing
at the seam on its prized chip bag.*

As a bird, you would have had it all.



Sarah A. Chavez, a mestiza born and raised in the California Central Valley, is the author of the poetry collections, *Hands That Break & Scar* (Sundress Publications) and *All Day, Talking* (dancing girl press). Her new project, *Halfbreed Helene Navigates the Whole* received a 2019-2020 Tacoma Artists Initiative Award. Chavez teaches creative writing and Latinx/Chicanx-focused courses at the University of Washington Tacoma, serves as the poetry coordinator for Best of the Net Anthology, and is a proud member of the Macondo Writers Workshop. Recent work can be found or is forthcoming in *Xicanx: Mexican American Writers of the 21st*

Century, Diode, & Hotel Amerika. Her micro chap, *like everything else we loved*, is forthcoming from Porkbelly Press in 2021.