

# The Birds: 2 Poems

written by Guest Contributor | November 30, 2018



## **A PIGEON IS A ROCK DOVE**

Before poetry  
My Grandmother taught me to pray  
*Hallowed be thy name*— & lost her mind. I watched

*Her solemn back curled form;  
I, child, one eye cracked*

My Grandmother lives in the shelter of my undoing  
Holds my hand, asleep; contained

Within her dreams my heart—  
break: her black eyes grey

Her hair white all  
at once.

My Grandmother all dreamspeak. Up  
She floats, reels the popcorn ceiling & back  
breaks heavy, glass mind shatters my bedroom

My Grandmother, shelter while  
I unraveled

My Grandmother, sheltered  
Unravels—

~

All Pigeons are Rock Doves

Someone told me, symbolic  
of peace and good news

Blessed are the meek  
Sky rats flock a pizza crust.

I feel for the one: footless straggler

Wingtorn, nubbed flutter  
Worse for wear

–I cheer for that one:

*Ain't dead yet, bud.  
Good for you. Bird.  
Don't need feet to fly, Bird–*

*Mourning doves, they never  
bothered me; dumb things, all murmur & free.*

They rush the tops of buildings all  
at once

What same circuitous thought  
propels them to *leap–?*

What keeps my Grandmother  
Tethered to this world– hard bed & ceiling?

*No TV, headache–  
No sleep, all horses her legs fused  
& bow tied*

Determined beatific thing won't you let go?  
Oh, pathetic, gentle

*Hobbler, I cheer for you*

~

At home we fuss and mourn  
At night I listen while she dreams

*No sleep, headache–  
Shouts and incantations, all horses  
Old histories, her legs bowed to God*

My Grandmother sees birds on the ceiling  
Describes them the same. Asks:

“Aren't you tired, Pigeon?  
Don't you want  
to stop?”

Let go  
& rest,  
now  
Gentle  
Dove?”

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## GROUNDLING

1.

I hold anger like my mother  
wedged between shoulder and spine  
where wings should have sprouted  
but didn't.

Where the nubs grew over, skin and feather  
left her back hunched,  
her lips pursed,  
her gaze flitting elsewhere, elsewhere  
but sky.

I hold it like disrupted prayer,  
two palms clenched

Or an unfinished poem,  
impatient, pacing.

I hold anger like my mother  
who did not have poetry

Who felt the itch of becoming  
plucked each new feather

And stuck around,  
filled the emptiness  
with other beasts.

Anger, like my mother,  
Who did not have poetry  
No words to tell me why.

2.

Mother, my wings are heavy  
with beasts I have carried

As I have seen you do,  
I learn by sight and feel,  
and like you I am deaf to caution.

Mother, I have discovered a word  
for those who fly away – *Wisdom*  
*Hope* – for those who stay

3.

My daughter will be born a wingless thing  
like her mother, like mine

I wonder if hers will sprout at all,  
if she will fly –

Or, if woman after woman, the body  
has forgotten how

Groundling,  
Do not discard your wings,  
hope alone will not provide

But should they never come  
do not stick around  
and place your anger  
between blade and bone

Do not shoulder the empty beast  
and stay.

My Groundling, remember  
the house of your own embrace

Remember  
your two feet  
and walk.



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