

The Birds: BIRDS WHO OD'ED

written by Bryan William Myers | August 18, 2016



I used to have this theory that birds were dead people. What I mean by that is once they were no longer living – the people whom they represented – they began life anew as flying creatures looking for worms. Often, when I'd be driving to work at some job near to where my parents lived, and I was living there too, I would take a strange detour down a road. And then I would make a left onto a side street where I had no business being at all, save these two birds. They hung on a wire. I wanted to watch them. I was drawn to them. And I didn't know why.

Whenever I drove around, after these little detours I took in secret, I would watch up at the sky and think and hope and pray that life made sense and that we weren't all just wasting our time here on this planet that is supposedly doomed to death, forever, in burning flames and water-levels rising and all the rest of it. That's why people come back as birds. It's the cycle of everything, which we know nothing about but we pretend to. The birds fly and flap their wings and squawk and hang on to wires and they fly in pairs in the sky, the deep blue sky, high above the clouds – soaring – and they are waving at us. But we are too busy to comply. We are too focused on things that don't really matter. Until somebody we love or care about dies.

And then they come back as birds. They come back as a flying, flapping, feisty son-of-a-gun, trying to get our attention, in order to tell us that everything is okay now. No more suffering. No more desperation. There are no more needles to be stuck into their arms. It is only the swiftness of the wind carrying them along in their paths, which circle the earth, which encircle time and space like whirlwinds of effervescent light that is good and warm for them, now that they have passed over. That's what we like to say. It's a nice and easy way to say that the people we love have gone elsewhere. Somewhere inexplicable. Distant. Yet right under our noses.

Birds can be magic. They can be magical. They can be majestic. And they can be dirty. They can summon our attention when the whole world is heading for the crapper. They fly and flap and drift and their eyesight is superb, even when grocery stores get built over top of forests and there are less worms and less trees for their nests. They still survive. And that's what life's about: survival.

So I guess it was always strange for me to stare out at the pair of birds that followed me along in my own path. Just keeping an eye out for me. Soaring, up there in the sky. To say, "Hello."

And I went to that side street because I needed answers. I needed consolation and reconciliation, and I needed closure.

A heroin epidemic had entered our town, the one in which I was supposed to grow up and I did. But it was too fast. So I clung to my imagination, when everything else had failed. There was total chaos in the town, and we, as kids, were part of that dichotomy. It was a peaceful town. But the world was at war. And the creeping plausibilities of protecting a poppy field somewhere in Afghanistan was working its way towards the rest of the world. Be that as it may, it would take me years to justify that truth in my own mind. I didn't know what the hell any of that meant, at the time.

I only knew that I was watching my dead friend, a kid I'd grown up with, who wasn't around anymore. And I remembered the times when we'd be outside of his parents' house, in the backyard, smoking pot. And his mother would come out, catching us in the act.

"What's that smell! Damnit! *Michael!*"

"Oh shit guys!" he'd giggle and we'd all trounce out of the yard and he would be left in the trenches to defend our indefensible actions. Clouds of pot smoke erupted out of our mouths and up to the staunch-white moon. His mom would be there, her hands on her hips as her eyes adjusted to darkness. We sneaked away in the shadows, crossing the street and hiding in the shrubbery outside of some old house that George Washington had used as a hiding place. And the lines were drawn in the sand.

"Mom, it's nothing. They're just running because they're afraid..."

I'm guessing or assuming he'd have said something like this. I didn't really know. But I bring it up because it's important to relate, in the sense that his energy – in the moment – would stick around that house, long after he was dead.

The way that he died was sad, because what had started out as smoking weed became a trip down a lane that would always be there, no matter what. It didn't matter that his family would move away, after it had happened. And it wouldn't change the fact that what had happened had happened in that house, once it was sold to another family. Just like George Washington's old haunts, across the street, the energy we had exiled him to and his fate – that was the mischief of the neighborhood that would return as that pair of birds, hanging on the wire. Right outside of the place where I used to buy weed from this kid I used to work with, that was where those two birds would wait for me.

Maybe they were waiting to see me buy another gram. Maybe they weren't waiting for anything. But I felt this strange sense that they *were* there to let me know that everything was okay, now that it was all over and there was

no more secret pain.

Well, you're probably wondering why there were two birds. And I'll tell you why. It was because another kid had died, in the same way. A terrible death, like a living nightmare. Blue, from head to toe. It would be a motif that wouldn't leave my life, for some time. And with it, the birds.

These two kids I'd grown up with, went to school with, played little league with, got drunk for the first time with – they had died from heroin overdoses, in a town where mostly everybody was middle-class. They all had jobs. They were educated. They went to good schools, attended their proms, and went down the shore during the summer to get drunk and to sit and rest in the sand. Two of those kids had been plucked out from the river of life, before they had even known where the heroin had come from, that it was because the world was dying. It was corrupt. And we were paying for it.

It was a sad way to end, in myriad ways. And it happened over and over again. That's one of the worst things about a living hell. That it never stops. It doesn't go away. Until a change has been ultimately aroused in the collective consciousness to make us more aware of a reality that gets buried beneath the facade of the middle-class lifestyle, here in America.

What a way to bring it to the faces of those paying attention! Looking for something. As I always was, back then. I was continually staring up at the sky, waiting for an answer. There were no fingers pointing at me, in the clouds, and there were never any clashes or crashes of lightning to let me know that I was on the wrong path.

But there were these two birds, they used to follow me everywhere. And when I used to pass by, on that side street, I saw them hanging on the wire – almost daring me to try and pretend that they weren't real.

It was so beautiful, to watch them with their wings spread out. Like they were no longer afraid of being alive.

And maybe that was the message. Who knows?

I know that they were always there when I was ready to see them. As the years went on, I believed less and less that everything was going to be okay. I saw these people die. I'd watched them falling to their death, and it was like I couldn't do anything about it. That stayed me, until this day. I feel it, still, as I am walking down the street.

But back when I used to watch for that pair of birds flying in the sky, it was very calming. It made me believe in something that I didn't quite understand. But I didn't doubt it. And I was sure that I was being told something by somebody who was no longer capable of using their mouth or vocal chords. Instead, they could communicate with me from another realm, as they were, but still in the very same one that we shared together. This bleeding planet, which is so ready to cauterize. So ready to heal.

Everything is going to be okay.

And they would fly. Their message would get lodged inside of my brain. I even told a girl I liked, at the time, that I wanted them as a tattoo on my body. She was somewhat of an artist, and I wanted her to draw them for me.

She never did, of course. Because she was perpetually preoccupied with some other occurrence in her life, and it always made her forget.

Anyway. As I got older, I didn't think about the birds anymore. I didn't have to. They simply became a part of me. In fact, I turned into a bird. Though my direction was lacking, and through the years I would have to suffer this strange sense of looking for worms that were always inside of me.

Because that's what happens when you give up on somebody you love.

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