

The Birds: The Wren / The Finches

written by Guest Contributor | April 20, 2015



The Wren

“He who hurt the little wren, shall never be loved by men.”
– William Blake

It weighed as much as two nickels. It's spirit even less.
Yet, there was impact. They hadn't intended to collide. Below the windshield, in the vent, a cluster of autumnal leaves seemed to be collecting, forming a recognizable curve of soft, petal like formations.
The sun vanished behind the horizon just as a flag of surrender appeared, a sole gesture for mercy, the fanning of a wing.

But it couldn't be.

The possibility was denied for blocks, there had been no sound, so her gaze remained fixed just past the hood on the faded horizon.

Impossible.

The wing fanned in the wind, undeniably, black feathers sprawling open.

The smell of fear, its flat, rotten aroma mixed with the dirt vaporously rising about the tires as the brisk evening air struck the opposing warmth coming off the engine, steam hovered.

The formation was more oval than round, misshapen, a bird with one wing caught in the hood and the other pressed against the windshield. Singed feathers, sticking in spots, left a map of impact and motion. It was still breathing, its closed eyes mere lines.

It looked to be bravely facing its demise wearing a mask of zen-like surrender, while pinned there for miles, the arc of its wing bending its body in ways never intended.

Shock fell over her. Dismay.
Guilty to accompanying harms way.

Denial of existence, the weapon.
Denial of collision, the sin.

So began the attempt to remove the evidence cooking on the hood.
It resisted, pained amplified cries rang out.
Then a silent pause.
She nestled it into a box, Its fragility palpable.
In little time it morphed back to proper shape, sitting silently in a corner,

its large eyes blinking slowly, staring into hers questioningly.

Though a cautious bird, it was not afraid.

She began to stir, her numb reserve giving way to feeling. She pondered the nature of wrens; their ability to nest quickly, to fill in empty spaces, the volume of song proportionately larger than their size.

This bird brought movement to her bones, an audible pulse inside her veins, the craving to be outside of herself for something else; reawakening a sense of desire, a longing to connect.

Day broke, with the bird set into the truck she began to sing lullabies. The morning air visible in every note of her breath.

The wren remained silent.

At the sanctuary the bird moved from her hands to another's. The parting was unnatural in feeling. Their collision, though silent, felt full of purpose.

In a mere night the connection had become a bond.

The sun rose and set. She wondered.

It was relayed in time that the injuries from the impact were severe, blood on the brain was to blame.

Stunned, she considered the weight of its being to the volume of its sound, the power of its soul filled song compared to its almost weightless form. A sole, brief incident altering a life's trajectory.

Out the window less than two nickels of a spirit evaporated into the golden light, the wren's absence echoing loudly inside her, a soft beat now in time with a heart beat, building into a blinding song of silence.



The Finches

“The bird hunting a locust is unaware of the hawk hunting him.”
– Proverb

She still owns the denim shirt she wore that transitional season she first saw the finches. It was some time ago, the start of spring, the air held the promise of winter's demise. There were few leaves and she could easily see the pair but she heard them first. So disruptive in their banter her own call was interrupted. Whatever topic they were in song over, clearly they were

passionate about it. Each calling out back and forth while hopping from limb to limb, one right after the other, deeply involved in the sound of their mutual song. Two yellow finches, a rare display of bold color in the barren landscape, sat in the courtyard tree, their posture astute, bodies slender, their speak alive in note and key. She had met the man months before. The finches reminded her of them; the energetic exchange, the apparent passion, the affection doted back and forth, the obvious magnetism filling in the space between them. She stared at the pair for some time that lazy afternoon, reminiscing about the love the birds mirrored.

Now weeks from that initial sighting she returned home with a bag of seed. Her gift for the birds, a symbolic act of defiance against her thread barren bank account, a minor action to remind herself that her faith had to be bigger than her fear.

She stepped into the courtyard, detecting a commotion in her peripheral vision, frantic movements, erratic sounds, confused motions. A cluster of finches was breaking a part, all dizzily jumping limbs in acrobatic fashion, clearly a looming threat at hand, yet no feline to be seen.

A shadow and a hush fell.

Her mind, slow to clue in to what her eyes were already bearing witness to, captured the scene in slow motion stills.

Click, Click, Click.

The last remaining pair of finches separated as a large raptor swept in, its talons open, preceding its expansive presence. Ten feet away she could clearly observe its commanding focus as its claws gingerly surrounded the tiny songbird, the finch's wings down at its sides like a mesmerized soldier standing at attention.

In split seconds, the hawk attempting to ascend mid-route with its prey, struck the gate, its velocity so great the wood snapped in half, the sound separating what *had been* from what *now was*.

She screamed aloud in quick succession while the predator recovered with flawless grace, prize still in hand. The slow motion stills of her mind switching back to real time. The bag falling from her arms, spilling seed echoing along the porch into the solid hush of the earth.

Mere seconds passing, everything altered.

One seizing an opportunity.

One losing a mate.

Another baring witness to life's contradictions.

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