

Bird Visitations

I was a crow caught in a pot. They were going to cook me, to make crow stew. I flapped my wings, clang-clang, and the lid flew off the pot. "But we were going to eat you, Crow!" they said. "Eat another crow, not me," I squawked. "I'll have nothing to do with your ceremonies." They watched me fly through the back door, their arms hanging at their sides.

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"What can I do?" he said. "Eat crow," I said. We went out, shot a crow, came home, steamed it in an inch of water. "I'm going to watch," I said. First he pulled the feathers out and licked each quill, setting it aside on a plate. Then he ate the whole, stringy crow. He was making faces the entire time, but I didn't let him stop. Finally, he finished the crow, belched. "Satisfied?" he said. "No," I said, and flew out the window.

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Two birds were clinging to my shoulder, a finch and a parakeet. Every so often, they would deflate and I'd have to revive them with food. I gave birth and my baby turned into a parakeet the size of a thumb. I forgot to feed it and it withered like a dry condom.

I saw a shining, dark blue bird on the grass, unable to move. I bent and saw its neck was choked in a band, the head turned wrong way around. I put my hands around the bird and was able to pick her up and unwrap the noose. Instantly, her head turned around the right way and grew normal-sized, and she flew free.

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"How can we atone?" they chanted. "Revive all the birds you murdered," I said. They took slingshots, held them up, tried to coax the

stones back in, but the stones lay mute and unmoving yards away on the barren ground. "You see," they said, "there's nothing to be done." "Then," I said, "I will take away your book of birds." And I took it, and wound it in wire so that it could never again be opened. If they needed to identify the remaining bird species, they would have to find a new language.

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They say the god entered her in the form of a bird. I say change the old stories to new ones. Say that he was the sky and she was the bird and he cradled and carried her. Say that he was the pond and she was the stork and drank from him. Say that he was the tree and she pecked at his bark and was fed deeply. Even say that she lost herself in the maze of his twigs. Only don't say that he entered her in the form of a bird. If I could dictate the laws, I would make it against the law to say that.