

Bird Divination: A Woman's Accounts of Bird Related Phenomena Per Incidents in the 21st Century

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The Inciting Incident

This incident poses a mystery. I came across the unfortunate discovery of a raw chicken in the middle of the street that had clearly been run over by a car.



The chicken smooching incident happened in such a pivotal transitional period, and I know it meant something. I came across the poultry massacre walking between my new apartment and his. I had made a goal to make this year better than the last, yet here I was, falling into old habits.

I will record my findings and the journey of my research here. What else is there to do, really? The two years of college so far have been horrifically unpleasant, and this year after the

majority of my cohort has dropped out, I find myself more alone than ever. Except for *him*, of course. This year will be different, though. I am committed to that. Hopefully, I will be able to interpret whatever premonition encapsulated itself in the corpse of this fowl as a symbol for what is to come.

Bird Divination

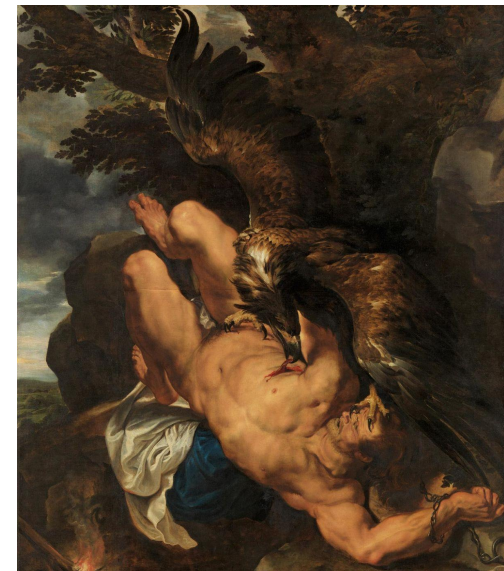
People have been attributing meaning to birds and behavior for centuries. There is, sort of, a science behind it, or at least a pseudoscience.

Greek

With some rudimentary sleuthing into such websites as "Wikipedia," I learned that Ornithomancy is the practice of interpreting omens in the behavior of birds. The word originates from the Greek word *ornis* "bird" and *manteia* "divination."

The Ancient Greeks not only looked at the color of a bird, but its flight direction to read messages sent by the Gods.

"Homer's Odyssey" is referenced quite a bit. An eagle passes Odysseus three times with a dead dove in its talons, representing



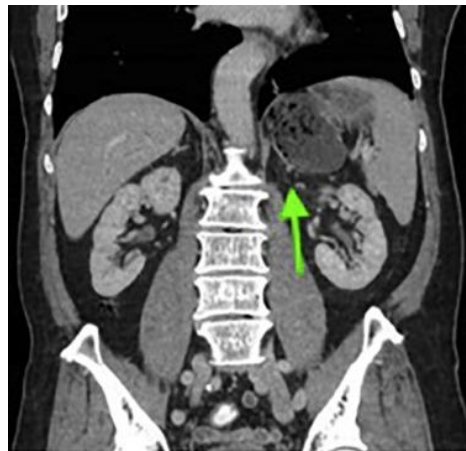
the death of his wife's suitor.

Prometheus was tied to a rock, and an eagle ate his liver every day.

The liver was thought to hold all human emotions. How relatable.

Alcohol is hugely responsible for liver disease, and now knowing that the liver is the root of all human emotion. Cyclical liver abuse and an overarching lack of human emotion. Is *he* Odysseus?

When I was maybe eight or nine, my father had surgery to remove something called a gastric diverticulum. My brother and I named it Larry and referred to it as my Father's second stomach. My dad's only physical weaknesses are his incredibly short toes (it's almost like they are missing a knuckle) and his acid reflux. He can't eat certain meats without getting them lodged in his throat. He will get really quiet and stop eating during meal times, allowing tension to gently settle around the table, at which time he will excuse himself to hork up whatever is obstructing his food passages.



In recent years I have experienced the same affliction. At 23, I suddenly became allergic to bananas and avocados. One time, I ate guacamole (one of my all-time favorite foods), and my face turned beet red, and my mouth filled with saliva. I thought I would throw up or die or both—what a cruel way to leave this world. Whenever the News says that people have been killed from the ecoli often found in romaine lettuce, I feel a specific kind of sadness. Imagine going through your whole life, overcoming all you have, and then having it all snuffed out by romaine lettuce.

Imagine rejecting the FREE guacamole that comes with a veggie burrito at Chipotle because your body decided to sabotage itself a quarter of the way into your life.

My dad went to the doctor for acid reflux because he has a hard time eating chicken, one of his all-time favorite foods. My mother cites that it is like our old cat Linus, who lived to be twenty years old. She would put turkey lunch meat on the floor for him, and he would get so excited that he would just drool everywhere, becoming so overwhelmed with the prospects of floor meat that he couldn't enjoy it. There are parallels between my dad, Bruce, and Linus the cat. Bruce and Linus always had a complex relationship. My dad is allergic to cats (as am I), but my mother loves cats (as do I). One year for Christmas, my dad got my mom a barn kitten from some obscure Pennsylvania farm. He handed it to her in a paper bag, holding it as far from himself as possible. When you think about it, it's a true testament to my dad's love for my mom. It's a perfect example of my dad's love for all of the people in his life. He isn't mushy-gushy, but he allows himself to be uncomfortable for the benefit of others. IE spent years

and years at a job he did not like at all so that we could all have a comfortable life. The man deserves to have the ability to eat chicken whenever he pleases. So he went to the doctor for the acid reflux, and the doctor found Larry, the diverticulum.

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Diverticula are incredibly rare. The doctor who would remove my Father's second stomach was highly excited. He said they



hadn't seen one in years and years, and the last person who had to have theirs removed was cut from his sternum to his lower abdomen to remove it. Luckily, with the development of modern medicine, they went in with six different entry points, effectively turning my Father into a lifesize game of operation and removing Larry. I know what you're all thinking- what happened to Larry? He was essentially a part of the

family, the third child, this time carried by my Father. We suspect that the doctor who removed him has him proudly displayed in a floaty jar. The acid reflux didn't go away. So, in essence, my Father had an organ harvested for the sake of antiquity. Was this my Father's 15 minutes of fame? They say a person dies twice, once when their spirit leaves this Earth, and another when people stop talking about them. Larry has

been immortalized, not only in our family but perhaps in the larger medical community. Long live Larry the Diverticulum.

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I couldn't find too much about what the Ancient Greeks thought about the stomach, except that it was where all disease began. They also believed that nervousness and the stomach were highly connected. My Father was born in a WASP family in the 1970s and raised as a man. Maybe he has so much nervousness in his gut that he had to make more room for it. The removal of Larry the Diverticulum and quitting corporate America may have done something for him, but he still has acid reflux.

Roman

"Augury" is the Roman equivalent of Ornithomancy. The word Augury comes from the Latin words "auspicious" and "auspex" which translates to "one who looks at birds." The ancient Romans often looked to a batch of extraordinary chickens to help them make important decisions, usually about war tactics. They were revered as "sacred chickens." People would study their behaviors and interpret them into predictions for the future.



To get even more niche, another subcategory called "Alectryomancy" comes from the Greek word, "*Alectryon* and *manteia*," which means rooster and divination. In Alectryomancy, an interpreter looks at a bird, preferably a white rooster pecking at the grain, and interprets the markings left after the bird finishes eating. In Africa, they use a black hen or gamecock to "foresee, to be inspired by God" in the same practice. Alectryomancy is essentially Ouija, but with Chickens.

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These practices in deciphering messages from birds are promising. I am reassured that a chicken is a sacred vessel that provides premonitions of the future. However, we hit a speed bump when it comes to studying the chickens' behavior, as my chicken's

behavior was being dead and squished...

According to Augury, chickens hold several meanings. To see a group of chickens is a premonition of prosperity and wealth. I doubt that; I just paid six hundred dollars to get his car out of impound. A hen could mean fertility, a positive or negative omen depending on your life situation. I sure as hell hope not. A rooster often poses a challenge, which can be interpreted as either positive or negative.

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I wish that I could attribute any of these meanings to my chicken, but something about its less-than-pristine state leads me to believe otherwise. Could it be the antithesis of these notions? Wealth, prosperity, and fertility have all been obliterated?

The First Incident

I suppose I should back up to explain why I so vehemently insist that this bird appeared to me to tell me something. My first encounter where a bird sent me a message from the great beyond happened after my grandmother passed away. She was an incredible woman, as many grandmothers are. When the bird appeared to me the day after she died, it was so clear that it was a message from my grandmother that everything was okay and she was saying goodbye. She grew up right before the vast feminist boom of the 1960s. It was a time when one had to consider the status of a person's family before they married. My grandmother has two sisters, and her father died when she was 19. It was the 1950s. She went to college at the Lake Erie college for women, or as my grandfather described it, the lake college for eerie women.

They were set up on a blind date by two of their friends. They went to a veterans ball where he found her drinking a fishbowl, and I suppose the rest was history. They had five children. My Father was the second to last, and her food budget was 100 dollars a week for seven people. She was also always a health nut and very strict about food. The only time she ever yelled at me was when I ate a strawberry that I was not supposed to eat. She told me I was stealing from my cousin's mouth. In hindsight, I can understand.

My grandmother always had an affinity for angels, doves, and red cardinals. These were the things in which she decorated her home. She had these symbols knitted on sweaters and sent them to her grandchildren on cards to stay in touch. The day after she passed, I was walking uphill, and I saw the biggest plumpest red cardinal I had ever seen. We stared at each other for a long moment until it flew away, and there was no doubt in my mind that it was not a coincidence. She had passed over, and she was well fed.



When I began looking into bird means for this project, I discovered that I was not alone in this observation. There is a saying, "if cardinals are here, angels are near ."To some,

spotting a red cardinal means that their loved one is safe and happy, even if they are far away. This interpretation blew my mind because I thought I had created this cardinal connection by myself, as it is always a bird that I attributed to my grandmother. It turns out that cardinals have been sending this message all along.

The cardinal sighting solidified my belief in bird divination. It seals the concept that birds can and will make themselves known to send a greater message to be deciphered by those who receive it. This one was obvious. The chicken is not. The ambiguous nature of the chicken's intent compels me to dive deeper into bird divination than I ever have before. I decided to cast a wide net and learn the basics before I honed my search to my specific situation.

At this point, it would be inappropriate to bring up "Peck Peck," the red cardinal that plagued my grandparent's side-view mirror when they lived in South Carolina because it doesn't fit with the flow of these notes. Peck Peck would fly around the window and peck incessantly at the car. Later, my grandparents would see streaks of clear-ish residue next to the mirror. I can only imagine what it was. They rectified this issue by covering the side view mirrors with plastic grocery bags. Peck Peck was a narcissist. Telling him to go fuck himself would only please him.



China

In Chinese culture, birds often symbolize love. Dear God. The Chinese word for bird, "niao," also means penis and is a commonly used expletive. How sultry. Specific birds give meaning to Chinese paintings.

The cockerel or rooster is an honored creature in Chinese culture. Roosters are seen as fierce, wise, and "lucky ."I got a bit excited when I read this, thinking that maybe this year was meant to be a good one. But I was then let down immediately when I discovered the qualification that these birds were not killed for food. The hen, on the other hand, is not seen as wise. They symbolize "long domestication," and hens in Chinese are another word for prostitute. What the hell?



The differentiation in the meaning attributed to male and female chickens reeks of male privilege. Why are men allowed to go about doing whatever they want and be revered while women are meant for "long domestication" or prostitution? I suppose this isn't fair because boy chicks are ground into dog food in America.

Native Americans

After this fruitless dive into eastern bird iconography, I felt it best to look into my geography. Multiple indigenous tribes of North America attribute meaning to birds. This symbolism arises through folklore, totems, and spirit guides. The symbolism varies among different groups, but the link between spirituality and nature coincides with the meanings attributed to birds. Birds of flight often symbolize ultimate freedom.



However, the only thing I could find regarding Native American Chicken symbols. Native Americans have spirit or totem animals meant to illuminate, support, and guide you.

Chickens as spirit or totem animals mean to teach you to stick to your word and understand the hidden meaning behind what others say.

Maybe I am supposed to understand the hidden meanings of what others say. That is, my "other." What is the hidden meaning to "I'll quit drinking" when you take a sip of their orange juice to discover it's merely vodka tinted orange juice? I learned that "I have a job" means I got fired and never told you. Or, "I don't have much to say about my classes" means I dropped out. Perhaps the mangled nature of the chicken reflects that words are meaningless. The hidden message is the lies that the words feebly cover-up.

The United States of America

The United States uses the eagle as its national bird. There is a rumor that Benjamin Franklin wanted the national bird to be the turkey, but through my research, I learned that this is not true. Another political scam, how disappointing.



Turkeys are a bit terrifying, so I think it would make more sense as the national bird of the United States.

Each state also has its bird, but I don't care. I thought I'd look more into the region in which my chicken originates. Therefore, I chose to look into Appalachian superstitions and folklore.

Appalachia

In the Appalachian language, a bird means a quaint or comical person. If a bird flies into a building, it is an omen of death. This interpretation is unfortunate because a bird flew into the restaurant I worked at, and I had to catch it under a bowl. The website where I found this information was written in comic sans, though, so I don't know how much weight it holds.

Vulture

Where I live I see turkey vultures everywhere.



They mostly live in the abandoned insane asylum/ art museum where I go to school.

Turkey Vultures are grey animals in terms of their meaning. Here is a quote I ripped from "World Birds dot com."



"The vulture is a bird capable of using all its senses to achieve all that can be completed in this life and embraces every day with its wings wide open in front of the opportunities the Sun brings to the new day. This Sunbathing is a cleansing ritual in which the bird dries the dew from its feathers and lets the ultraviolet radiation kill the remaining bacteria from the last meal. The vulture symbolism is

linked to death, rebirth, equalizing, perception, trust, seriousness, resourcefulness, intelligence, cleanliness, and protection."

This depiction of the turkey vulture is generous in opposition to the meanings other cultures have given it. The Native Americans believe vultures are a symbol of death and the unclean. A flying vulture can mean bad luck. However, in Tibet, vultures are considered sacred for the very reason they feed on dead bodies rather than living creatures. Thus the sense of cleansing and the reinforcement of reincarnation because the dead are transformed into new life.

On the other hand, Christians link vultures to the kingdom of death, and they are seen as unclean animals because they feed on corpses. Leaving bodies for the vulture showed an exclusion from society and God. They symbolize the devil and signify judgment, shame, and a diseased soul. (Another surprisingly compassionate take from the Christians).

I suppose it depends on how you look at it. I choose to believe that these turkey vultures live at the abandoned insane asylum to cleanse the spirits who inhabited it. It would be far too spooky to think that these turkey vultures lived at this abandoned insane asylum for any other reason.

Raven

Traditionally, ravens or crows are revered as a symbol of loss or death. In the Bible, the raven symbolizes vice, while the dove symbolizes virtue. While the raven is often the death omen, it is not necessarily symbolic in the state of death.



Of course, you have "The Raven" by Edgar Allen Poe, where the raven symbolizes grief. Then you have the crow in Greek's "Coronis", where the crow points to being a snitch and getting Coronis's baby cut out of her womb for sleeping with a mortal man. I think the Native Americans are the closest, as they believe the raven symbolizes wisdom and intelligence. Ravens are spookily intelligent. They know to drop nuts on the street because the cars will run over them and crack the shells. Furthermore, they learn to drop nuts on crosswalks because there is a period when cars will not cross the crosswalks, and they have time to eat the nuts without getting run over. They also remember people if they are nice to them and they will bring you shiny presents if you feed them. I would have chosen to see a raven or a crow that day over what I did see.

At this point, my research has naturally segued into more contemporary examples of bird divination. It feels like the right place to be, as I need to know what the chicken means about my current situation. Bird divination is prevalent and ongoing in our culture.

The Second Incident

The second incident erased any doubt in my mind that birds communicate with humans in mystical ways. In the summer of 2015 through the spring of 2016, sixty-two thousand dead or dying birds were found on Pacific Ocean beaches from California to Alaska. At the same time, Donald Trump was in the midst of his presidential campaign. Coincidence or Psychic Phenomenon?



Dead birds are a symbol of grief, hopelessness, and failure. It's appropriate that thousands sent this message to the United States when Trump was elected. Some scientists estimate

that up to one million common murrelets died in this freak mass die-off.

Sea Birds

Sea birds take up their own subcategory of bird divination, as sailors incorporate them with the superstitions of the sea. In the eighteenth century, it was believed that a seagull carried a sailor's soul, and the bird's screeching was the dead man's cry. Sailors also looked to the gulls to predict upcoming weather.

Seagulls have been attributed to positive messages like community, resourcefulness, adaptation, and freedom. On the other hand, the word "gull" stands for gullible. Seagulls swallow everything they can fit down their gullet. In essence, a gull prompts its diviner to discern and not to follow without investigation blindly. Smells like Q anon. Seagulls also never shut the fuck up, which could be another connection to Trump Supporters.

I've never been a big fan of Seagulls. I have not trusted them ever since I was a small child at Disney World and a massive seagull attacked me in hopes of stealing my funnel cake.



The Albatross

Killing an albatross is incredibly bad luck, according to sailor superstition. The albatross correlates with a psychological burden. Calling someone or something "An albatross around your neck" means they cause you turmoil that you cannot escape, preventing you from achieving your goals. *He* is the albatross around my neck.

The first time we broke up, I told my therapist, and she told me, "if your best friend told you about your situation, what would you say to them?" Of course, I would tell them to get out immediately. We established the three-strikes rule when it comes to



blatant lying. The first was when I found out he dropped out of school, but since I found out that *he* had been fired simultaneously, I lumped those two together. The next was when he moved to Athens when I was still at home for the summer, and he lied about getting blacked out belligerently drunk. Perhaps *he* didn't recognize how the first big lie changed my thinking process. He had shattered whatever

trust we had that made me believe the more minor lies that came before.

Our good friend (and his new roommate) 's drink of choice is a screwdriver. When he posts a photo of said friend drinking orange juice in your new place and doesn't respond to texts for 12 solid hours, there is a reason for concern. He was freshly "off the leash" after moving out of his parent's home, where they had a strict "no drinking" policy, which I thought was odd because he was 21. My therapist doesn't understand that *he* is my best friend, my only friend. So we go on, still together, a third strike hanging over our interactions like the threat of a nuclear blowout.

The scariest bird is the pelican because they can turn their throats almost entirely inside out when they yawn, which is dramatic and attention-seeking.



How to Derive Meanings from Birds

Courtesy of the World Bird Oracle dot com

1. Identify the type of bird:
 - a. What kind of bird is it? It's a headless chicken.
 - b. Is it a native bird? Yes. Domesticated
 - c. Is it seen daily? Possibly- it's often eaten.
2. Identify the number of birds: numerology comes into play with augury bird divination. A basis of numerology is helpful but not required. Two birds are often representative of love. I saw one bird, which points to a need for the individual to be alone and learn a personal lesson.
3. Look at the bird's behavior:
 - a. Are they acting abnormally? Hmm... It's not acting at all.
 - b. Are they fighting? Nope.
 - c. Are they flying away from a predator or toward prey? Definitely not.
 - d. Are they looking for food or a mate? A bit too late for that.
4. Is the bird acting "strange"?
 - a. If a bird flies into your window, they have an urgent message.
 - b. Is it trying to escape? No.
 - c. Is it comfortable? Absolutely not.

The following section is all about Bird flight patterns. Chickens are naturally flightless birds regardless of their living status, so I skipped this part.

In theory, if one were to follow these steps you can harness the ability to predict the outcomes of your decisions. You could refrain from entering dangerous situations or have confidence in future actions. So far, I haven't been able to do any of this.

The Orange Chicken Incident

But why do I continue to allow it to fail? To be fair, I am culpable in the same way *he* is. For example, when we drove to Columbus to see a show. It was possibly the worst night of my life, and I cannot remember all of it. We went down there and had a few drinks. Not enough for me to black out the way that I did, but that is something to speak about with a therapist. I remember him saying, "Yeah, I'm going to go ."I suppose *he* didn't like that I was dancing and having fun? Who is to say? He left me alone and incapacitated. I didn't know what to do, so I went to his car and slept in the back seat. I woke up hours later with vomit on my clothes, alone in the back seat. I found him lying in a pile of trash, surrounded by a group of people trying to get him up.

I claimed him and put him in the back seat of his car, and I waited. I drank water, and when I was okay to drive, I drove us two hours back to his apartment. He didn't remember anything the next day, and how could I be mad at him because I was drunk too? He didn't apologize. He wasn't even that phased by

it. I had a massive bruise on my arm, and I had no idea how.

I just remembered! We got Chinese food the next day, and he ordered orange chicken which he immediately dropped on the ground. It was sort of funny. Everything that could go wrong did, but he dropped chicken on the ground!

Could there be some parallel here?

Pop Culture

To put bird divination into an even more contemporary context, I've decided to move on to pop culture. What do birds mean in our culture today?

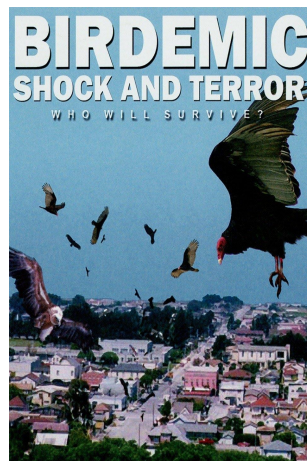
I wanted to delve into this and have a whole section educated to Birds in film, but I got bored and overwhelmed with this idea, so this is all I have.

Prominent Bird Films:

The Birds (1963)- Alfred Hitchcock
Capitalism and the Cold War?

The Crow (1994)- Alex Proyas
Revenge? Reincarnation? RIP
Brandon Lee

Birdemic: Shock and Horror (2010)- James Nguyen
Apocalypse



March of the Penguins (2005)- Luc Jacquet
Antarctica is cold, but not for long!! Apocalypse

Prominent Chicken Films:

Chicken Run (2000)- Ardman Animation. Feminism-
Capitalism- Wage theft.

Chicken Little (2005)- Mark Dindal.
Mass hysteria, courage, identity.

They are coming out with a *Chicken Run 2* in 2023!

What does it mean to call someone a chicken? They are a person who is apprehensive or afraid.

Why did the chicken cross the road? Is this an anti-joke? Is it about a chicken crossing over from the side of the living to the side of the dead?

Dead Birds

I kept running into the issue that bird divination is often attributed to still living birds. The bird in which I am trying to find meaning is dead. I believe it has been killed more than once. It was initially slain in its feathered form, presumably to be eaten. It was then plucked, gutted, refrigerated, and transported to this dingy town in southeast Ohio. It then met





yet another demise when some form of impact transformed it into the sorry state that it resides in now.

I'm no stranger to dead birds. But it makes you wonder, why did this squished chicken make such a lasting imprint instead of the smattering of bird carcasses one might pass a few times a month?

I've concluded that dead birds

are so pervasive in society that it takes an added layer of strangeness for a dead bird to make an accurate impression. This need to make a vast impression must be why all of those common murrens had to off themselves to tell the United States not to vote for the Cheeto Man. Perhaps the universe has been trying to tell us something for a long time, but we have become desensitized to it in the mundanity of seeing an



expired feathered friend on the street. As we have established previously about the mass bird extinction in correlation to the host of the Television show, "The Apprentice," "dead birds are a sign of grief, hopelessness, and failure.

Our relationship feels like a hopeless failure. They say you have to choose to love people every day, and *he* is the one I have decided to love.

We finally live close to each other, so I feel the need to try to make this work for my past self, who wanted so desperately for him to be close. We only used to see each other on weekends. It made sense for us to be drinking because it was the weekend, freshman and sophomore year of college.

A few weeks after finding the dead chicken, we went to an AA meeting. We sat next to each other in a circle of alcoholics. We were the youngest ones there. At least he said out loud that he is an alcoholic. It was something along the lines of "I'm starting down a bad path, and I should stop before things get worse." As if the disease has some sort of quota you have to reach. I suppose he hasn't hit his rock bottom yet. Dropping out of school and losing your job and your girlfriend wasn't enough to see that the drinking was out of control. *He* stuck by me through my rock bottom. Last year when I hit 100 pounds, he was there, sort of. He didn't get it. It's Maslow's hierarchy of needs.



I have always had the bottom two needs solidified. The love and belonging waxes and wanes, but I have always had a supportive family for which I am so grateful. The self-esteem level is the one that I struggle with, which manifests itself in my eating disorder. In my individualized situation, anorexia is the most privileged white girl kind of problem. On the other hand, he knows that you eat when you have to and move on to the next issue. He needs therapy after joining the airforce straight out of high school. He got injured and went straight to the self-medicating veteran pipeline.

Last year I saved myself because I realized that nobody else would do it for me. There is a definite connection between drinking and anorexia. We are in this self-mutilating spiral that I have come out of, and he is still stuck. I owe it to him to give him a chance, to be honest with me. It's him and I against the problem, right? Except he chooses alcohol over me much of the time. We left thanksgiving a day early because he needed to drink four lokos and drive me back to school. Boy, was that a fight. It's possible the dead squished chicken was a sign of the strife to come in this struggling relationship, but I have no

clear indication through my research that these things are connected, so I soldier on, trying to find meaning.

Several different meanings from the great beyond can be derived from seeing a dead bird. Is it an omen of death or rebirth? Is it a loss of freedom, as live birds are often associated with freedom? Is a dead bird a sign that a dream has died?

Furthermore, the type of dead bird is essential. A dead seagull represents the end of a period of freedom and indicates a challenge in resourcefulness in the future. A dead eagle or hawk means losing independence, predicting loneliness and solitude. A dead vulture symbolizes the loss of opportunity and prompts one to make the best of a bad situation.

"Waving a dead chicken" means doing something technically futile or superstitious in nature or doing something you know won't work. The definition of insanity is doing the same thing repeatedly and expecting a different result, which is how I have ended up here. Maybe I should have picked the dead chicken up from the street and waved it over my head.

I stumbled upon an article stating that finding a dead bird in the road has a nuanced meaning. The road symbolizes a journey and a flying bird symbolizes freedom. Therefore, a dead bird on the road means a troubled journey. It could also mean that your time on this path is ending.

Costco Incident

This incident that started this project is not the first time I've seen a chicken meant for consumption strewn across the sidewalk. Costco has been a part of my family culture for as long as I can remember. One of my first real memories is of trips there. The smell of chlorine clinging to my hair from swim lessons and the sound of my jelly shoes which gave me horrible blisters slapping against the concrete floor. My brother, with his ill-advised haircut he got with our dad. My mother specified a two on the sides and a four on top. Something must have been lost in the adult transfer of information, and my brother left the Great Clips with a fuzzy kiwi head.

We loved Costco, the free samples, the cold room, and the glorious flesh carousel at the back of the store where one would pick up their rotisserie chicken. My brother and I called them "Chicken Butts" and had a habit of naming them after the main cast of the beloved sitcom "I Love Lucy."



Before my Mother was properly medicated, she had a short temper. I can't blame her; we were handfuls. A rule in our house was "No Opera on the Hardwood," which was primarily directed toward my brother, who would yell at the top of his

lungs in the hopes of ill-gotten attention. If he did this in rooms without carpeting, we feared the echo would hit a decibel that would cause the windows to blow out in unison. Imagine my horror when I dropped our freshly begotten Lucy on the driveway. Her juices spattered on the ground. The once-a-month five-dollar chicken we all looked forward to reduced to roadkill. My mother wasn't happy, but no blowout, like when I accidentally ripped the sunshade on her brand new minivan in the color "arctic pearl ."She had had the car for 13 hours before one of her children made their mark on it. I had the sunshade up, and I was not used to automatic sliding doors. The door continued to move while I held it, and the shade ripped. My mother was furious. So furious that she brought me cookies later at school to apologize. I'm lucky to have a Mother who is fiercely kind and able to recognize an overreaction and apologize to a child. I don't think she realizes that she taught me to be a compassionate person even in her faults.

She had that car for years and years. One year we went to the beach and got crawdads to boil in a big pot for a family of 26. Some crustacean juice leaked in its back, and the car reeked like dead fish, giving it the name "The Krabby Patty Wagon ."The drive from South Carolina back to Memphis was not particularly fun. No matter how much dawn dish soap and Resolve we soaked into the carpets, the faintest waft of rancid seafood would kiss your nose en route to church or school or wherever.

Soon after I dropped Lucy, my family learned that we were moving to Savannah, Georgia, to an undeveloped neighborhood. By undeveloped, I don't mean

underdeveloped. Our house was one of the few with walls and a floor. What surrounded us were plots of dirt with PVC pipe sticking out and the skeleton frames of future homes. We got our beloved family dog Peanut there, and we would walk her around the construction sites, touring the naked structures and imagining which rooms would go where.



That time was probably the hardest for my mother. She is a terminally happy extrovert wholly isolated on a muddy swamp island. Perhaps seeing Lucy strewn across the sidewalk was a harbinger of an isolating and challenging journey ahead. We went to Savannah Christian Preparatory School, an hour away and in the middle of a swamp. Our class pet was a turtle—something about second graders and active salmonella doesn't sit right with me now. I got sent to the office because I started a rumor that the recently deceased president of the school came back to haunt the grounds. Perhaps leading small catholic children to believe a beloved faculty member walked among the living was not my finest moment. Still, in my defense, everyone says Savannah is the most haunted city. Who is to say that the ghosts didn't leak into the outer swamp. Luckily we only lived there for eleven months before my dad's job took us away again.

Yet Another Incident

My mother has always had a healthy fear of birds. They are just something she has never been a fan of. On my Mother's honeymoon with my Father, it was cold and miserable. They couldn't go to the beach because they were violently sandblasted every time they tried.

One night, my parents had ice cream on their nightmare honeymoon, and a bird shat right onto my mother's head. The bird poo then slid in what I can only imagine as perfect comedic timing into her bowl of ice cream. The lady who worked at the ice cream shop did not let my mother use the "Employee's Only" restroom to wash the bird poop out of her hair. Instead, she gave her one of those miniature brown ice cream napkins to remove the massive clump of bird excrement.

Naturally, one could see this as a poor start to a marriage. However, I looked into it, and it turns out that getting pooped on by a bird is good luck! The

Catholics believe that birds are angels (doubt it) and that you are actually being blessed when they poop on you. Spiritually



bird poop is cleansing. Birds are messengers from the spiritual realm to Earth. Any time a bird comes into contact with your body or does something near you, it is communication between the two realms. So pooping removes negative energy. However, based on this experience, I do not think my mother felt cleaned, nor was negative energy erased from her body when she was denied a sink.

My parents have been together for 41 years. They met in high school when my mother was a junior, and my Father was a senior. They dated for seven years, both finishing college together before they married. Then, seven years later, my brother came along. They have only ever been with each other, besides the eight months or so my Mother dated some guy named "Bookie" in 10th or 11th grade. It was only difficult when I went through my first heartbreak at 15. Nobody could relate to what I was going through because my parents have been together four times longer than they had ever been apart. After 34 years of marriage, they are still together, so I guess bird poop is lucky.

Dreams

The dead chicken is haunting my dreams. I didn't even want to touch dream divination because that is another book. Then the chicken visited me. I woke up covered in sweat, thinking of glistening poultry viscera. So in a hail-mary, I googled what I probably should have at the very beginning, "Dead chicken meaning," which led me to a dream interpretation website. There are tons of meanings associated with dreaming about a dead chicken.

Seeing a dead chicken in a dream usually relates to conflicts in your personal or professional life; it relates to your irrationality or possible loss. In dreams, a chicken relates to a family member. Therefore a dead chicken may mean losing someone close to you.

For couples, the dead chicken will pertain to the issues affecting them for a very long time—Ding ding ding. Alodreams.com cites, "If you dream of a dead hen, you might not be getting the appreciation of your partner. You likely feel neglected, which will lead to many problems."

Dreaming of a dead hen, which my chicken was a hen because it was meant for eating, means you need to be careful- your partner will likely be involved in an accident.

Dreaming of a slaughtered chicken is a prediction that someone close to you will die.

Whelp. That's it. Now that the chicken has infiltrated my dreams, *he* is bound to die. Another car accident, some fight, his liver exploding. *He* is doomed.

Strike Three

I read a statistic that if a man puts his hands around your neck, he is 90 percent more likely to kill you. This was the third strike.

I broke it off and fled the country.



Here is a photo of me at thirteen with a bird I cannot identify. I still have these flip-flops.

Epilogue?

It's been a while since I worked on this project. I think I know what the squashed chicken meant. I went to Ireland and spent a long time away from *him*. I saw more dead birds on the street there than anywhere else. One of my friends cited global warming. They're probably not used to it being so hot at this time of year. On this trip, I became close with a new group of people. People with aspirations for the future, who wanted to participate in life, and I did not feel alone for the first time in a long time.

In the few weeks of summer I had left, I did not reconnect with *him*. There is a finality. I walked around the pond by my house and thought about the time I invested in chicken research. Now, looking back, it screams to run away, turn around, do not go back to *his* apartment.

It's amazing the connections you can make when you are searching for meaning in something. Since the strike three, things have been still, quiet, isolated. Taking a lap around the pond once again, I wondered "what next?"

Then, I found this gooey little baby bird on the ground.

It was apparent that it had fallen from a closeby tree. I grabbed a trashcan and dragged it over to the scene. I turned the trashcan over and climbed on top of it with the baby cradled in my hand. I gingerly placed the baby bird back into its nest. It's easy to think I saved it as I saved myself, but couldn't help but think it was a sign of a new beginning.

