

# Bird Vomit

by Kate O'Hara

She felt for her shoes under the booth. These were stolen from a junk store and were only socks with a light plastic sole. She always brought a pair of shoes to replace the ones she was taking. Guerilla bartering. She traded the pair she was wearing the day they cut down her favorite tree. She had called the parks department when she had seen the orange ring. The guy, Larry, had assured her it wouldn't be cut. She glued the shoes onto the stump. Days later they appeared back at the junk shop.

The cook stared through his kitchen window at the food he had made as it disappeared into mouths. She sat sniffing her coffee. It smelled like the dishpit, like sanitized yolk. It was dark as she left the diner. The outside looked like a run-down house whose owners, instead of repairing the original structure, built additions out of happened upon materials. The smell of yolk solidified in her nostrils as she breathed the winter air.

She could not feel her hands by the time her house came into view. Across the street was The Destination Mall. Her favorite business was a store called Zany's, which displayed a dozen jerseys, posters, CD's, speakers, and swirled jumbles of woven together wires that hung down from various shelves. The dimensions of the store were such that, by standing in the center, all merchandise could be closely examined with minimum movement. When she had gone in earlier a man behind the counter had stared deeply into her eyes and said, "Can I help you find anything?" As she now passed the mall, she was interrupted by a parade of beautiful bird girls. Her nickname growing up had sometimes been bird. She stopped to admire the rainbow as it passed in front of her and disappeared inside. She stopped a turquoise bird and asked, "Going to a party?"

The turquoise bird didn't answer.

She asked, "Are you celebrating?"

"It's just a get together for friends," said turquoise bird as music was turned on inside. She asked if her Audubon membership qualified her as a friend but by then the last of the feathers were being mangled through the doorway on account of a mis-executed dance-step entrance. She listened to the music for another moment and then crossed the street to her home. Once inside, she lied down on a pile of clothes and slept.

She awoke the next morning with the sun, pulled her hat back down and walked out the front door. The first rays of sun shone down on the layer of frost covering the world in glitter. Her gaze fell upon the mall. Music and friends all gone, something caught her eye. She crossed the street and found, centered on a gray and green cement square, a circular pile of yellow and orange vomit. On top of the vomit was a beautiful splay of turquoise feathers. She picked up the feathers, turned, and went home.