

Queen of the Birds

Oh no. Another week's gone by and I haven't changed the world. I hate it when that happens, don't you?

When I was kid, I imagined my grown up weeks would be filled with world-changing antics. I'd have foiled some major robberies and caught assassins.

I wouldn't fly in through windows wearing a cape, nothing silly like that. These were realistic ambitions. I'd just have a way of looking at people to make them think:

"Oh, crime and evil just don't pay, she's right."

I would stroll into laboratories and say to scientists, "That cure for all diseases should have bit more of the purple stuff in it."

And I'd be right.

I would arrive at the ballet and hear the lead ballerina had broken her ankle. I'd say, "I had a few classes, maybe I could try..."

Then I'd leap on stage, barefoot, and be astounding.

I would turn out to have a natural genius for most things.

And I would of course be displaying this genius while wearing diamond shoes and swishing my beautiful long blonde hair.

These imaginings filled my head at around the age when I also suspected that I might be Queen of the Birds.

I don't know why birds specifically, except that we had a home festooned with house martin nests the summer of my sixth birthday and a tree in the garden topped with some other kind of nests. Birds of all shapes and sizes hopped around our lawn in the mornings and dive-bombed the trees at night.

I remember my mother commenting on the rush of birds to our house that summer.

“I’ve never seen anything like it, next door has a bird table and they don’t get this level of bird harassment.”

Little did she know.

I thought about telling her, quietly, modestly, that the reason for the bird population was the presence in our house of the actual Queen of the Birds; but I felt she wouldn’t understand.

Just recently she bought a stone birdbath for her garden and when she showed it to me she said:

“I thought you’d be pleased, what with you being Queen of the Birds.”

Then she told me how she used to find my regal notes to the birds scattered all around the garden.

“I’d collect them up and save them. I must still have them somewhere.”

As Queen, one of my duties had been to write to the birds every day. I’d fold the notes and push them into the cracked brick outside my bedroom window. I was sure the birds were taking them, thus confirming my queenly status. It didn’t occur to the six year-old me that they’d fall out of the brick, be blown around the garden and subsequently be scavenged by a nosy mother.

I couldn’t remember what I’d been telling the birds. But my mother did:

“Oh you were only six so they were mostly along the lines of,

‘Dear birds, hope you are well. I had chocolate custard today, your Queen.’”

I’ve no idea where the Queen of the Birds notion came from, or went to. I now have no interest in wildlife and as for being a diamond shoed superhero?

I don’t even have beautiful long blonde hair. It’s short, peroxide streaked and more like a bird’s nest than something belonging to a bird queen.

I live a contented but fairly unspectacular life.

The childhood me would be disappointed. Childhood me would be tutting and writing to the birds, “Dear birds, yet again she’s had a boring week. No chocolate custard, hope you are well, your queen.”

Part of grown up me would like to be more spectacular but then again, spectacular lives seem tiring, dangerous and involve missing a lot of good television programmes.

Am I a disappointment to myself? Not really. For one thing, I no longer have all that pressing responsibility to the birds. Who never, it has to be said, showed any gratitude by flying down and carrying me away from school as I’d ordered them to in many, many notes. In fact, all they ever did for me was let my notes fall into my mother’s hands. The bird notes made her worry I was lonely and she forced me into the Brownies.

Which I hated.

So thanks birds, don’t come tweeting to me when you need help, you’re on your own: I have more important things that I’m not doing to worry about.

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