

## Stories from the brainreels podcast

July 24, 2015

### Introduction

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CHERYL: Welcome to Stories from the brainreels. I'm your host, Cheryl Green, from StoryMinders up in sunny Portland, Oregon. This is a monthly podcast about brain injury and disability with a focus on art, culture, and disability pride. Contact me at [info@storyminders.com](mailto:info@storyminders.com) with questions or topics and guests you want to hear on an upcoming show.

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Today I thought I'd bring you a little bit of a different type of podcast. Because this weekend is the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, there have been a lot of efforts going on to [collect stories](#) from the [disability community](#). Often, that means stories about disability experiences, but it doesn't have to. No matter what the topic, if disability is part of your life or identity, then it will have an influence on the stories you choose and how you tell them.

I'll be doing these shorter storytelling mini-casts here on Stories from the brainreels from time to time so that it's not only a longer, interview-based podcast. Stay tuned for those.

The transcript for this story, as always, is at [www.WhoAmItoStopIt.com](http://www.WhoAmItoStopIt.com). You can subscribe to the blog there, and you can subscribe to this podcast through iTunes, Stitcher Radio, SoundCloud, or Pod Directory. However it is you came to this audio or text today, thanks for stopping by. I appreciate your support.

Today's disability community story is by me. And I think I'll just call it "Chicken Nap." Just so you know, every word of it is true. Enjoy.

### The Story

[ambient outdoor noise, birds chirping]

I woke up from my nap one sunny spring afternoon, rolled over to lean on my pillow, and took my position up at the windowsill for scanning. That's what I did a lot back then: napped and scanned the backyard. I wasn't looking for anything in particular, I don't think, just checking that everything nearby was still in order since the last time I'd checked. I had to look for order outside of myself a lot because it wasn't there on the inside. But I'll tell you about that later. Right now, you need to hear about what I found on that afternoon scan.

A bald eagle. That's right, in the middle of an urban neighborhood in Portland, Oregon, a bald eagle. Dead. On my fence. Sure as the sun was shining, I had a deceased bald eagle in my yard. Remember how a minute ago I said I didn't have a lot of order inside my head?

I dressed and ran downstairs. I stepped out into the yard as silently as possible to investigate. You have to be silent around dead bald eagles in the city because they might not really be dead. Or bald eagles, but just in case. You should always tiptoe around wildlife in the city. Just in case.

I floated up to the back fence, lamenting that I didn't have up-to-the-elbow leather gloves in case it wanted to perch on me like they do at the Audubon Society. But it was just one of those chickens, the kind with the big, white tufted head. She was there, not dead or even perched, but lying down precariously on top of one fence post. Huh. Imagine that. A sleeping chicken in the city.

The next step I figured was to find an expert chicken remover. I was concerned that if I went out there and got up on a chair to try to reach her, I would extend my arms, go for the grasp, it would bite me. So I went around to the next block to knock on doors and find the chicken's owner.

When I found the chicken's mom, she took great delight in the dead bald eagle part of my story, too much delight in fact. I stood in the driveway with her while her completely competent 10 year old kid went out to retrieve the chicken from my fence post. A sense of shame and embarrassment washed over me, as we stood awkwardly together, old neighbors who never had cause to meet before. Why did I have to tell her the eagle part? Gawd. Why did I think it was an eagle anyway? Where was my mind? Who thinks that kind of crap AND tells it to a stranger?

But I giggled along with her about how ridiculous and who would ever think and how could it possibly have been. Inside, I seethed with a sense of alienation. Note to self: Nice lady, cute kid, don't tell her what's really going on. She's not an ally. She's not your community. She laughed at you just because you told her what you really thought.

The kid came around to the front of his house with a fluffy, fat chicken gingerly tucked into his arms. She looked a little like me with a dreamy, disoriented look of having just gotten up from a nap and seen something weird. In my case, her. In her case, how did I get up onto that fence post?

The son asked me to hold her, but I told him I was too scared. He didn't laugh. He told me her name, which has escaped me now. He showed me how to stroke her feathers and casually threw out that one day, a long time ago, she was under a picnic table, and she jumped up to fly but she was under the table. So she hit her head on the table. And now she has a head injury, and she does weird things like sleep in strange places and act a little slow.

Impulse control in conversation, not one of my strong suits. A smile overtook me when he said these things, and I blurted out at him in what was possibly a half-yell, half-sob of relief, half-croak, "Me too! Me too! I mean, it wasn't a table, but it was a head injury and a bike. And that's why I'm standing here right now in the middle of the day talking to you instead of working at a job. I don't work anymore. I stay home now, and I sleep a lot!"

"Like her," he responded, unfazed by it all.

"Yeah, like her," I offered back as I reached over and tested out a small couple of pets to her silky feathered back.

### Wrap-up

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CHERYL: Thanks for joining me for another episode of Stories from the brainreels. Find more handy info on brain injury and disability art and culture on my disability arts blog, [WhoAmIToStopIt.com](http://WhoAmIToStopIt.com).

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