

Pigeonhole Episode 09

[bright ambient music]

Introduction

CHORUS OF VOICES: Pigeonholed, pigeonhole, pigeonhole, pigeonhole, pigeonhole, pigeonhole, pigeonhole, pigeonhole.

The Story

I woke up from my nap one sunny spring afternoon, [rustling sheets] rolled over to lean on my pillow, and took my position up at the windowsill for scanning. [opening plastic window blinds]

[ambient music]

That's what I did a lot back then: napped and scanned the backyard. I wasn't looking for anything in particular, I...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. Yeah. That's right, in the middle of an urban neighborhood in Portland, Oregon, a bald eagle. Dead. On my fence. [music fades away] Remember how a minute ago I said I didn't have a lot of order inside my head? [ambient music slowly returns]

I dressed and ran downstairs. [sliding door scrapes open to reveal birds chirping outside and cars passing] 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. Just in case.

[footsteps crunch the grass]

I floated up to the back fence, lamenting that I didn't have any up-to-the-elbow leather gloves in case it wanted to perch on me like they do at the Audubon Society, in case it wasn't dead yet. [footsteps come to a stop] But it wasn't even a bald eagle; it was just one of those chickens, the kind with the big, white tufted head. She was there, not dead or even perched, but full-on lying down on top of one tiny fence post. It didn't look comfortable to me, but I don't really know what goes on in the head of a chicken, you know, around tastes and preferences and all.

The next step I figured was to find an expert chicken remover. I was concerned that if I tried to get her, either I'd fall off the chair I might stand on, or she would bite me. So I went around to the next block to knock on doors and find the chicken's owner.

[lawnmower in the distance, cars continue to pass]

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 around and let himself into my yard to retrieve the chicken from my fence post. [ambient music fades back in] 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? God. 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. [music builds in intensity, cars rush past] She's not an ally. She's not your community. She laughed at you just because you told her what you really thought had happened. I didn't think any of it was funny at all. The dead bald eagle part was scary, and the sleeping chicken part was just confusing. [music settles back down]

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.

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.

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 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 stay home, 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

[bright ambient music]

Every episode is transcribed. Links, guest info, and transcripts are all at WhoAmIToStopIt.com, my disability arts blog. I'm Cheryl, and...

TWO VOICES: this is Pigeonhole.

CHERYL: Pigeonhole: Don't sit where society puts you.

Music in this episode:

"[What True Self? Feels Bogus, Let's Watch Jason X](#)" by Chris Zabriskie. (Source: freemusicarchive.org. Licensed under a [Attribution License](#).)