

Summer Day

By Logan Henke

When I was a boy, I stood fast, struck dumb
by what I had done. The small creature, innocent -
completely so - peeped weakly atop the thistle-strewn
dirt. My eyes welled, tears ran down my dirty cheeks and
I scooped up that little robin into my ballcap, soon
racing toward my blue house. Mother was in there, attending
to some maternal, domiciliary task.

I must have left the BB gun in the ditch.

"Feed it to the barn cats." Terror welled within my heart, for
I had anticipated a little shoebox (perfect for the wounded fowl's
recovery), a little eyedropper with some form of nourishment,
and loving stroking of feathers to undo the damage I had done.
Instead, misery was her suggestion.

I trudged toward the barn.

Its peeping edged toward squawking: fearful, pitiful,
desperate.

The ligneous door seemed so heavy then. I pushed through
and into the damp, dank room. Dust danced in light beams, penetrating
knotholes. The red-breasted bird quieted as I laid it on the cold floor
center stage.

At first they did not notice, the three of them. Mangy and unpleasant
to pet, I assumed their diet of kibble, wolf spiders, and mice must
have seemed paltry in comparison to this rarity. They slunk
at first, soon bounding toward the bird, and though I knew
this was a lesson being taught to me, I could not remain
for its duration and I fled.

The little bird screamed and all that remained upon my subsequent
investigation was various detritus, feathers stubbornly attached to
bones. I kept one for a time.

The bird was just an introduction.

I embraced the sensation of sheer control, and made a habit
of what comes naturally to us. I have been nothing more
than the rest:

a taker of life most precious
with no consideration for the price.