

## **Caged Birds**

By Drew Drake

On Sunday mornings,  
You can hear a choir of birds singing on every corner,  
A court of blue jays playing basketball,  
You can find a cardinal and a canary,  
Sharing a park bench,  
Playing a game of chess,  
Or either life,  
Whichever one they recall before they doze off again.  
You will find a oriole,  
on a Brooklyn stoop,  
Braiding an orange sun kissed glow into her daughter's hair,  
You will find Big Daddy Crane,  
getting his grease together for the family fish fry today,  
Uncle Toucan Sam,  
will be liquored up with Gossip by the liquor store.  
Grandma Sparrow,  
Ain't letting her hummingbirds of grandbabies sing Nothin' But Gospel.  
If only for one day,  
Because Sunday,  
Is the only day we feel free enough to come out of our cage.  
And Sing.  
Cause we all know the tar of yesterday.  
We all have a Ray-Ray,  
A Pookie,  
A Hastag yet to be filled in,  
A parakeet cousin selling cigarettes,  
A papa owl in the driver's seat with wife and daughter streaming his own execution,  
A flamingo with a broken tail light,  
A dove, whimsically waiting for his wedding day,  
A young raven, wearing the wrong hoodie in the right neighborhood,  
A young parrot, resting on the swings with a water gun,  
awaiting for momma birds return.  
And though this collection of dead birds is far from closed,  
When Monday returns  
All Blacks,  
I mean birds,  
Are released into the steel cage of America.  
We are all freed into this artificial dome,  
To play a game of Duck Hunt.  
A birdwatching experiment,  
With rifle and scope.

We've been scooped,  
as triumphant ones,  
As hardworking,  
As vigilant,  
Strong backs,  
Strong enough to carry culture,  
But not strong enough to fly to our own freedom.  
And there is a painted sun on the proscenium.  
Cardboard clouds that don't feel like feathers,  
But yet feathers fumble from the sky,  
From clipped wings of fallen brothers  
And sisters,  
And these days even babies gettin' hit.  
They say the American Dream,  
is a rags to riches story,  
A novella,  
about whose gun is the biggest,  
A sacred sacrament for the privileged.  
But for us Birds,  
The American Dream,  
is a underground railroad.  
A code switch,  
To make it home safe thru the week to Sunday.  
A mantra,  
to keep flying even though that bullet barely missed you.  
Its a negro spiritual.  
"A Ride on to King Jesus",  
Even though some of us Birds will never get the chance to see him.  
And is that the allegory of living?  
Or is watching death a systematic depression?  
It's the blunt force trauma,  
Of seeing your Ray Ray  
Or your Pookie,  
Or Hashstag yet to be filled in,  
Swan dive from getting their wing clipped  
By America's ceiling.  
A barrel, whose cup will never run dry  
From seeing us Birds bleeding.  
A hunger games with no selection process needed,  
It's a stop and frisk with no questions,  
A shoot to kill with no warrant,  
And some days the victims didn't even know they were targets.  
But if you can still hear the sound of this bird's chirp,  
That means you're a step closer to Sunday,

A step closer to Joy,  
A inhale closer to Freedom,  
A flap closer to Breaking out of America's Plexiglas Ceiling.  
I used wonder why Maya Angelou said  
"I KNOW WHY THE CAGED BIRD SINGS"  
Because it's still alive right?  
Because It's still here,  
Still breathing.