

RETURN OF THE BIRDS



Joe Moore

Also By Joe Moore

The Santa Claus Trilogy

Believe Again, The North Pole Chronicles

1st Book in the Trilogy

Faith, Hope & Reindeer

2nd Book in the Trilogy

Glaciers Melt & Mountains Smoke

3rd Book in the Trilogy

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by

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Dedication:

This book would not exist if it had not been for the genius that is Sir Alfred Hitchcock. I remember seeing *The Birds* shortly after its 1964 release. I have seen it several times since then, and it has always left a big impression on me. To say it “loosely” followed the original short story by Daphne du Maurier is an understatement, and after reading her story, I think mine walks the fine line between them both.

So I invite all those who needed answers from the movie, or the short story, that were never answered to finally learn what was behind it all and how it ends. But to Sir Alfred Joseph Hitchcock, KBE, dubbed “The Mystery of Suspense” I thank you for your inspiration and all the entertainment you have given me, and so very many other people.

I hope my readers find a modicum of your whispers into my ear.

Acknowledgments:

This book is meant as a continuation, and an answer, from the horror film directed by Alfred Hitchcock, which was loosely based on the 1952 story "The Birds" by Daphne du Maurier. This movie had a profound impact on me, but I always felt cheated that many of the questions from the plot were never answered.

Thankfully, as it turns out, I am now able to finish the tale and answer all the questions I had because of my fertile and active imagination (and with the help of the internet), and share the 'rest of the story' with you.

This book was in my head even as I wrote Faith, Hope & Reindeer (my first novel) in 2005. It was meant to be my second book, but became my fourth after I finished the Santa Claus Trilogy. After ten years of rolling around in my head (I tried to start it once and got one chapter done, but jumped back on another project) I am proud to finally put this story into your hands.

As with any book that is even remotely based on fact, a good deal of information was based on research done with the Center for Disease Control, Wikipedia, WebMD, and Medicinenet.com. The research for the viruses discussed and their vaccines came primarily from Vaccines.gov, and again the CDC.

Of course the possibility of birds developing the condition I describe in this book is almost beyond

remote. But the fact of them spreading or causing the spread of disease is both factual and historic. While certain events mentioned in this book are indeed historical, I do not profess to draw any conclusions, or even summations between the events of this book and actual events. This is a work of fiction and the events I have drawn upon are of my own making.

As with all my books, I have had some great help with this and wish to thank my beta readers and those who have assisted in the polishing of this story into the shiny gem you read today. The most important of these is a lady who has become a good friend. Ashley Snipes, I cannot thank you enough for all your encouragement, suggestions and assistance. This book has a lot of your touches in it, and for that I am truly grateful. Other people who have really helped out on this project are: Mary Johnson, President of Web Site Helper, LLC, Terry Reinitz, and a name I have brought up many times before, my friend and almost always editor of my books; Tracy Lewis Sheppard. Thank you all for your honest comments and suggestions. Most of which I have needed and heeded.

PROLOGUE

The corpse looked like it had been through a meat grinder. Except for the bloodied blue jean shorts, everything else had been ripped open and the body butchered underneath. There were parts of organs overflowing the body and the face and extremities had been ripped to shreds.

The captain had not seen anything like this. He came up through the ranks in some pretty tough areas, but nothing as ghastly as this. Especially not in this sleepy seaside resort area. This just didn't happen.

He couldn't see that the victim had been shot when he looked, not the usual knife wounds, although there must of been some kind of sharp implement to do this much damage, no bruising or apparent head trauma, nothing indicating foul play. But there he lie, or what was left of him, so something attacked, killed and butchered him.

Answers would come easier once he got the teenager to the morgue. Nothing more would be learned here. As he started to turn to head back to the attendants waiting to take the remains, his deputy asked him what he thought happened.

Joe Moore

CHAPTER 1 – DAY 1

It all began with Sebastian. He was a happy bird, an expensive Cockatoo that had been presented to the Edwards family many years ago. It was a token of appreciation for all they had done for their community. He was actually shipped from a pet store in San Francisco to the city council in San Clemente, California.

Sebastian was an important part of the family for many decades and over a couple generations. He had always been content to sit on his perch and loved to get treats from the various family members. Unbeknownst to anyone in the Edwards' household, Sebastian was born with a strange anomaly that was similar to rabies in mammals. But being the carrier, he never displayed any symptoms. Fact was, he had never been sick a day in his life. However, before coming to San Clemente, he did contaminate a pair of love birds when his food tray was switched with the other birds tray by mistake. Those birds created a major pandemic in Bodega Bay, California when they were purchased by a young woman to impress another man. But that story was already told. Even if never understood as to what caused that problem.

Sebastian lived a long and happy life. He had always been an attentive bird and never once bit or tried to bite anyone, ever. But at age 60, he began to show his age. He was not moving very well, molted frequently, and was becoming cranky with pain. When he finally passed at 62, his family was more relieved than bereft. By then they had been waiting patiently for his inevitable end. Since they loved Sebastian, they decided to make a special place for him in their garden. So they wrapped him in a special linen cloth and placed him in the garden behind the runaculas. They thought he would enjoy the annual blooms and felt it was fitting for his years of status as their family pet.

Unlike Sebastian, Boomer never really belonged to anyone. This dog was a mixed breed of sheep dog with Labrador Retriever and was a large, mostly white, fun loving animal. He had lost his family a couple weeks after he was brought home, little more than a puppy, when he ran away and became permanently displaced. He became a feral dog, but was so good-natured that many people left out scraps for him and made sure water was always available. Everyone called him Boomer because on the rare occasion when he barked, you could hear him for blocks.

A couple days after Sebastian's ceremony in the backyard, Boomer was doing his normal neighborhood trot when he caught whiff of something. Even from a fair distance dogs have a sense of smell a million times more acute than the most sensitive person. He entered the Edwards' back yard and loped over to Sebastian's grave.

He immediately dug up the bird and complete with the linen wrappings took off with his prize to his favorite hiding spot.

That place was an open field, which was part of another home that had been for sale for about a year and a half, and left unattended for nearly as long. Boomer unwrapped and played with his new found toy for a while. He thought about eating the bird, as he had done so many times before, but he had just received a good meal of scraps from the nice lady up the street. So after nibbling at his prize, he decided he should save this treat for later. Feeling restless and wanting to continue exploring again, Boomer reburied the bird in a hastily dug shallow pit and covered it with his nose.

An hour after Boomer left, a shadow came over Sebastian's remains. Moments later it crossed the body again. After a few more times, the owner of the shadow landed at the scarcely covered bird in the ground. The female turkey vulture began picking at the carcass and soon the feathers were spread all over. The vulture saw Boomer coming back and knew a confrontation would be inevitable and moreover, she would lose. As the final remains were small enough to carry in her beak, the large bird decided to take what was left of Sebastian to her nest where she had several young.

It was spring and a good many birds were hatching their first broods and food was needed to feed the hatchlings in ever increasing amounts. This pair of vultures had three young and each was hungrier than the other.

The gray covered young vultures still needed to be

mostly fed by their mother. With her help, the brood made short work of the cockatoo, and soon nothing was left but a few bones and feathers. Those were thrown to the ground and were being picked over by crows and other birds trying to gain anything from the meager pickings. That was the end of Sebastian, but the beginning of everything else.

Several days later, the mother turkey vulture began to battle her own mind between the instinct to feed her young, and the need to conquer her own unending desire to feed herself. Soon her mate also began becoming more voracious in his appetite. When the young vultures were just two months old, the male decided to move away before he devoured his own chicks. The female who was continuously feeding, had now begun the extraordinary practice of searching farther and farther from the nest to get enough food for herself and her fledglings.

She was also more blatant in taking meals from the road and took great risks of being struck by cars. Had it not been for her large size and the fact she was easily seen, she might not have lasted after those first few foraging days.

Her young seemed to have no end of needing to be fed, either. They consumed every last morsel she brought. As they began flying around they increased their territory and went far beyond what would be normal behavior to gain food. And so it began.

CHAPTER 2 – DAY 5

Andy had lived on the beach for the past three years. At 63 his needs were few, and he had almost forgotten what it was like to have his own home, or a regular bed to sleep on. Many people around town knew him and would slip him a dollar or two once in a while. He stood about 5'10" and weighed 180 pounds with dark brown curly hair. He never could grow facial hair like many men, so rarely did he look like he was unkempt as many did living off the land in San Clemente.

The authorities didn't bother Andy, since he never caused any trouble. With all the problems going on in the state, the numbers of the homeless showing up was on the rise. Trying to run them off or get rid of them all was becoming an impossible situation.

Occasionally they would load some of the hapless onto the train and try to disburse them to other parts of Southern California. More often than not they would return to their pristine beaches and would retake their residence in the area. There were shelters around that would help feed them from time to time, and every Thanksgiving they would offer a bounty and pack up food

in bags for them to live off of for a short while.

Most lived in the area off North Beach, a place that afforded good hiding and cover during storms. Andy had lived there for his first year, but moved further south to avoid the “crowds” that were ever increasing in that area. It had become even more heavily patrolled in recent times, as the city wanted to make sure the people wouldn't try looting or damaging the expensive homes and property sharing the beach.

He had found a hillside that was leeward of the winds blowing off the ocean and provided a nice shelter. It was also close enough to the trash barrels that were used by restaurant patrons visiting the beach. He could watch for any large deposits that might help him stay fed.

Lately, he had been seeing an unusual site. A large turkey vulture had begun trying to get at and into the barrels that were Andy's literal bread and butter. A couple times he had run down to chase the bird off. Vultures were easily scared off and one rarely saw this bird in a populated area. This one had pulled out food several times, and before Andy could chase him off, the bird had dropped the food onto the sand and ruined it for Andy.

After that, the food was only good for the seagulls hanging around, so they got the spoils of what might have been a decent handout. Seagulls were opportunists and always looking for any kind of edible treat. They were far more aggressive in their pursuits than almost any other bird, and had been a nuisance to beach visitors for ages. They would steal food from picnics or bags of snacks given half a chance.

Lately Andy thought the gulls had gotten worse. They seemed to steal food at a much higher rate, and he even witnessed a gull attack a man who was trying to eat a sandwich the other day. He got scratched up pretty badly from two of the aggressive gulls. But Andy guessed he was more surprised and shocked rather than injured.

Other unwanted visitors newly seen were the crows that had taken up residence of late. Andy used to see one occasionally here and there, but now more were appearing with regularity. It seemed that as the gulls were coming from the sea in greater numbers, so too, were the crows from inland.

Pigeons rounded out the majority of the winged pests. They mostly stayed on the pier, but again began hanging closer to food sources. Andy laughed to himself and thought, I always knew this place would go to the birds. Andy did enjoy watching the pelicans glide across the surf and these were the only birds he thought were worthy of being around this beautiful coastal community. Those birds he could watch for hours and had even approached a few while they rested on the pier.

After a day of foraging and walking along the beach, Andy went back to his shelter under the bluff and settled in as the golden sun began to turn crimson, sinking slowly into the sea. Another perfect day in San Clemente was coming to a close.

Sometime during the night, Andy had a terrible dream. He was being attacked by policeman trying to drive him from his home on the beach. But instead of using guns, they were using a cattle prod or something similar. They

kept sticking him on his right side pushing him toward the sea. His one side was getting wet from the surf, and though he kept fighting the officers off, new ones kept coming with more prods and would stick him again and again.

Finally, Andy woke to a sight more terrifying than his nightmare concocted. There was the giant turkey vulture setting on top of Andy and poking his side with his beak. The bird had urinated on Andy as it was tearing at him. It had broken the skin and an ugly wound was leaking blood onto his shirt and pants. Andy screamed and threw the bird off him. The vulture took off and was gone before Andy could do anything to it. He couldn't believe what had happened and almost went into shock from the incident. He searched for help, but the beach was deserted. He went up to the center of the village and began going up Avenida Del Mar, which ran down the center of the town until he finally saw a police car.

He flagged the patrol car down and when the officer on the right side lowered his window, Andy started yelling about how a giant bird attacked him. The officer shook his head and said, "Look buddy, why don't you go home or wherever you stay and sleep it off."

Andy protested to the officer further and showed him the wound the bird inflicted. The cop and his partner guessed that Andy was drunk and most likely fell and cut himself. He stunk terribly and both officers figured that Andy wanted them to tend to him and let him stay the night at the station. The closest patrolman wrinkled his nose and told Andy to back away from the car. He had his

club out ready to make Andy leave if he wouldn't do so willingly.

Andy stepped back but continued his protestations. The car pulled away as if he wasn't even there. Andy yelled a few obscenities to the disappearing car, but it ignored him and continued on its way. Realizing no help was coming tonight, Andy thought he better tend to his cuts himself for fear of becoming infected. He could barely stand his own stench where the bird soiled him. He went into the public restroom on the beach and wet his shirt to begin cleaning the place he was attacked. The wound was a nasty gouge about 6 inches long and was deeper than he first imagined. He thought another inch or so and his innards would be outwards.

After about fifteen minutes of washing off the blood and holding his wound with the shirt until the blood clotted, Andy again smelled the strong ammonia reeking from his pants and began pouring water from the sink down his leg. At first his efforts made the smell even worse, and he thought he might get sick from the stench. He finally removed his pants and soaked them in the sink until the foul smell dissipated. He was already cold and figured it would take all night for his pants to dry enough to keep him warm, but at least he no longer reeked from the bird.

When he emerged from the bathroom he looked around as if expecting to see the bird again. He wondered if his enclave would be safe and looked around for a safer haven to rest. He decided to rest where the park came close to the railroad tracks on a bench. Although

concerned about the openness where he laid, he thought it would be easy to spot any approaching predators.

The vulture was again on the hunt. He was cruising up and down the Interstate 5 highway and looking around the Pacific Coast Highway and surrounding roads that were nearby. There was almost always a roadkill near one of the highways, and he had been cruising these streets more often than he ever did before. Got to eat. Got to eat. It was the only thing on his mind. Long gone was his mate, his brood, his other companions.

This vulture used to spend long lazy days hanging around the electrical towers in San Juan Capistrano with dozens of his companions. Afterward one by one they would take flight and begin riding the thermals higher and higher until they were almost impossible for the human eye to see. For hours they would hover taking one warm current, then another, as they searched the landscape for an easy meal. It needed to be far from danger, far from traffic and completely dead to the point of decomposing. If the bird could smell it, then it was ripe for the taking.

Now he sought out anything that wasn't moving. The other day he had found a small injured dog and while the dog tried to bite him, his strong beak bashed through its head and stopped the animal from moving while he tore at it in big chunks. He preferred meat long dead, but would now feed on anything he could find. Got to eat, got to eat.

He saw others of his kind were beginning to take up the night foraging as he had done. A couple of these he noticed were from his old nesting area. He didn't visit this sight any more as it no longer meant anything to him, only

his need for food, from which he rarely wavered. Once in a while he would perch in a high tree or a telephone pole, but mostly his hunger drove him on endlessly.

He spotted a dead opossum on a side road up ahead. It looked like another of his kind had gotten there first. He landed just short of the dead animal and began to approach, got to eat, GOT TO EAT! The other bird began grunting and flaring out its wings. Ordinarily this would have caused the new intruder to hold off, but this bird came in and started grabbing anything in front of it.

The other bird tried to fend off the newcomer and spread its wings wide, but the vulture kept taking beak fulls of anything it could grab. The first vulture decided that the only way to decide this fairly was to eat as much of the carrion as it could ahead of this unwanted guest. The two birds grabbed chunks of the animal until there was scarcely a bone or patch of fur left.

High above another bird watched the sight but decided there was not enough left from the one animal to challenge the vultures below. This bird was another that rarely, if ever, did nocturnal flights. It was a red tailed hawk and unlike the vultures, he could attack other animals and was well equipped to do so.

CHAPTER 3 – DAY 6

The next morning Andy was trying to tell a lifeguard about last night's incident. The lifeguard was Chris Palmer, and Andy had spoken to him many times before. Chris stood about six foot one and was a handsome man, even by lifeguard standards. He had steel blue eyes and brown hair that felt softer than it looked, and he kept it combed to one side. The guard listened to the man and looked at the wound under his shirt. He winced a bit and said, "Andy, that looks nasty, has anyone looked at that?"

Chris pulled out his first aid box and Andy let him administer some antiseptic cream and bandage the wound. Chris thought Andy should see a doctor about it, but Andy shrugged and said he would be fine.

"Chris, I tried to tell the cops but they acted like I was drunk or something and practically rolled over my toes to get away from me," Andy explained, "Thanks for your help. That is probably all I needed."

"I gotta tell you man, I have never heard of a bird attacking anyone, in their sleep or otherwise. Are you sure it wasn't a nightmare?" asked Chris suspiciously.

"I'm tellin' you," insisted Andy, "In fact, I was having a

nightmare that the police were after me, until I woke to find Birdzilla on me!”

“You know there's a gal in town that perhaps you could talk to,” Chris said, “She's studying to be an ornithologist and is up here from the Wild Animal Park studying sea bird migration. She's working on her thesis.”

“She's a what?” asked Andy.

“She studies birds,” said Chris, “She's going to be around for a few more weeks as she is observing pelicans and other seabirds during their breeding season.”

“Yeah? I hope she knows what is going on around here. Have you seen all the damn birds hangin' around now? Look at all the damn things,” Andy spat as he looked and pointed at the gulls.

“Probably no more than usual,” commented Chris, “After all it is mating season and they're all out looking for a piece of tail.”

“Yeah, well I wouldn't mind scrambling up a few omelets with their fuckin' eggs after last night,” Andy growled, “When they start attacking me, all's fair after that.”

Chris tried to settle the man down. Being a third year lifeguard, he knew many of the homeless people that hung on the beach. He met Andy his first year on the job and always liked the man. Andy rarely was upset like he was now. He mostly was jovial and even would kid Chris about the female tourists that flocked to the sand and his lifeguard chair every year.

'All these damn women want is your hard body out of those red shorts,' Andy would tease him and often say that

they would serve him up on plate if he would allow it.

Andy liked Chris as well, and thought he was one of the more tolerant and easy going of the guards. He thought some of them had their shorts too tight and it cut off blood to their brains making them either mean or stupid, and sometimes both. Many acted like Andy had chosen this nomadic life on the beach and that he could afford any one of the multimillion dollar homes on the sand at his whim.

Chris told Andy that he would talk with Tory when he saw her next and ask her to meet him. "You need to hang around here where I can find you," said Chris, "I don't want her thinking I'm sending her on a wild goose chase."

"Let's leave the stupid bird analogies out of this, okay?" grumbled Andy, "So you like this gal? I get it. I'll be at your beck and call."

Chris just chuckled and ignored Andy's observation.

Later that morning Chris saw Tory McKnight carrying a cup and her notebook. She was in her usual outfit of khaki cargo shorts and a green scooped-neck shirt with teal overshirt hanging open to the breeze. He wondered again what she might look like in a bikini instead, and hoped that someday soon he might find out.

He had run into her one morning at the local coffee shop while in line. She noticed his red jacket and shorts and asked if he was a lifeguard. After they got their respective orders, since the place was full, she invited him to join her at one of the smaller tables to the side. She was a pretty lady about the same age that he was. She wore her cinnamon color hair down to the middle of her back, and permed with tight curls. She had hazel eyes, a few freckles

and a little mole below her lip on the left side of her face.

He learned about her study program and that she was working with the zoology department. She was getting her masters degree and planned a doctorate in ornithology from San Diego State University. She then hoped to get a permanent position at either the Wild Animal Park or San Diego Zoo.

Ever since that morning, each day Chris watched to see her working at the pier. He had a hard time concentrating on the swimmers before him rather than spying on her. She noticed him in the guard stand and waved to him. He beckoned her over and saw she changed direction.

A few moments later she came up to his stand and asked, "And how is the protector of the waves this fine morning?"

Chris laughed and returned, "Just dandy, and how is Ms. Ornithologist?"

She did a mock curtsy and said, "I'm fine, thank you for asking, so what's going on?"

Chris answered, "Funny you should ask, have you ever heard of birds attacking people?"

The smile left her face and she scowled saying, "Only extremely rarely. It would be about as common as a lion walking down this beach."

Chris sighed and said, "Yeah, I kinda thought so, but I got this guy..."

That moment Andy came jogging up and out of breath asked Chris, "Is this her? Is this the bird lady?"

Chris gave a look of apology to Tory and said to Andy, "Andy this is Tory McKnight, the future ornithologist."

She looked at Andy and said, "How do you do Andy. Yes, I'm the bird lady." She couldn't help but grin as she said this.

"Hey doc, I need to talk to you about a buzzard that attacked me," Andy began at once.

"Uh, I'm sorry I didn't get that," she just stared at him, "What kind of buzzard, and how did it attack you?"

Andy began his tale of how he was asleep when the turkey vulture began pecking at him during the night. In the end he asked, "Is there something wrong with that damn bird?"

Tory started pushing the sand around with her right foot and bit her lip. She eventually looked up and said with a very straight face to Andy, "I'll have to look into this. Could you do me a favor, I can't really act on this information until I see the bird close up. Could you alert me when you see this bird again?"

Andy nodded and said, "Well I gotta tell ya miss, I really hope I don't see him again, but if I do I will point him out at once, except they all look the same to me. A big black buzzard with an ugly red head hopping around the beach, can't miss it."

"Thank you, Andy. Now if you would excuse me there is something I need to talk to Chris about right now."

"Oh, sure," Andy grinned, "I won't get in the way of the mating season here, heh, heh." Andy turned and walked away.

Tory turned back to Chris and he asked, "So? Is there anything to his story?"

Tory looked disgusted and said, "God, what are they

drinking on this beach? That guy is totally and completely off his rocker.”

“So there's no chance of any truth to his tale?” Chris sounded disappointed.

“Not a shred, first off vultures are the most docile and easily spooked bird species. And they aren't buzzards, that term relates to hawks. Vultures wouldn't get near anything that was moving no matter how hungry they were, or how many young they had to feed,” her nose began to flare, “Second, those birds can't attack anything as they they have no talons and can't carry anything in their feet, which are very sensitive, and their necks and beaks aren't large enough to carry anything much bigger than a mouthful.”

“Whoa, calm down Tory,” Chris said defensively, “I just thought you could straighten him out about this. Could it have been a gull or crow or something else that he just thought was a vulture?”

“He's not right in the head. None of the birds you mentioned forage at night and they don't attack people either, unless you were disturbing a nest or harassing the birds in some way,” she said shaking her head.

“He was saying that there are more birds here than usual, and I have to agree with him. They seem everywhere this year, is there a possibility there is too much competition for food and that more of them are coming here?” Chris asked.

“Some years more birds migrate back and forth than other years, but most of the birds around here are year round and don't fly off,” she explained, “Maybe they are congregating differently than in years past, but they have

been here, and will remain here in roughly the same numbers as before.”

“Well something got to him, and I have to say he's carrying a nasty gash on his side,” Chris added.

“He probably landed on a rock wrong while drinking his jungle juice,” Tory said with contempt.

“Hang on Tory, there are a lot of homeless people here but I've not known Andy to be a drunk, or have I ever seen him drinking,” Chris was a little upset and let her know it, “These people have nothing left but their reputation and I've never known Andy to make wild claims or exaggerations about anything. Come to think of it, this is the first time I've ever heard him utter a complaint.”

“Okay, I'm sorry to be judgmental, but there is no way he was attacked by a turkey vulture or any other kind of bird,” she said more softly, “I guess I am a little defensive about my winged creatures.”

“Has any bird ever attacked a human with the intent to cause serious harm?” questioned Chris.

“Not for more than 50 years, and that was an isolated instance, and it was never really discovered why,” she said, “The birds all died out and no study was ever done to reveal anything unusual. Unfortunately the people attacked couldn't say too much about it either.”

“Was it like that bird flu thing in Asia?” Chris asked.

“I don't think so, besides the bird flu virus is a recent problem and not anything that we aren't getting under control,” Tory answered in a matter-of-fact tone.

“Well since my sneaky plan of asking you out to dinner to discuss this disturbing report has failed, I'll guess I will

just have to ask you without a pretense. How about dinner sometime this week?" Chris asked then held his breath.

Tory laughed out loud, "You felt you needed a pretense? Do I seem that unapproachable? Yes, dinner would be lovely. How about tomorrow night, as I have to take care of some things tonight."

"That sounds great where do I pick you up?" he said letting his breath out.

"I am actually staying with a family in this neighborhood," she said while she scribbled in her notebook, "This is the address and why don't we say 7:00 tomorrow."

"I'll be there," he grinned, "Now I need to get back to work, I might have lost several swimmers by now."

"Yeah, and meanwhile an entire species just passed by that I needed to catalog," she chuckled.

She turned and began to walk away, and Chris still had trouble looking toward the surf.



On the southern part of town was another park owned by the state. It was a rocky outcropping that had a variety of shallow caves and enclaves. This area had also been a refuge for a few of the homeless occasionally, but an even bigger hangout for teenagers. They would bring their illegal contraband to this area, and hiding out from everyone else, they would make small fire pits and drink

or pass their contraband under the stars until they either went home or passed out.

It was also known for its nudity as the police couldn't see the beach from the parking lot and most never got out of their cars while patrolling. This was the biggest area for first time skinny-dipping adventures that were mostly harmless. However, a few teenage pregnancies started on that beach, too.

Weekends were the worst for these illegal activities, but some week nights had sponsored a few of these parties, as the weekend was so crowded in spring and summer. This week had pleasant temperatures in the high 60's and the kids were feeling a little restless after the cool days of the last several weeks.

A few of them decided to visit south rocks, as they were called, and had met up about 7:00 that evening. Greg had brought some firewood and charcoal, Tommy brought "refreshments" as he called them, and the others brought mostly snacks or just themselves. There were eight in total, five boys and three girls. They began passing around the two bottles Tommy brought and after a short period, the tongues came loose along with some of the clothing. A couple of the guys were hitting on the girls and Tommy was holding court, complaining about his life in San Clemente.

John, one of the other guys started asking Tommy what his problem was, "Shit man, you got two of everything, two big houses with pools, two sets of parents, a couple cars, everything you ask for you get from your folks and with plenty of time to enjoy them all."

“My parents are losers,” Tommy argued, “They come home at night and have a couple cocktails before dinner, talk bullshit about their fucking jobs during dinner and pass out in front of the TV. They pay no attention to my sister or me. They drink so damn much that they don't ever even notice when I take their booze.”

“Well,” said John, “At least you got parents, I only have my old lady and she works two jobs to keep us living in that shithole of an apartment we're in.”

Tommy went on talking about his sad state of affairs as a rich son to a son-of-a-bitch father, who he was convinced had to be reminded of his own son's name. John told him he was starting to slur and should knock off the Canadian Club. Tommy waved him off and then gave him the finger when John tried to insist.

John said he was heading home and a few others watching the exchange got up with him. The two couples that had shown interest in one another had already left to find a quieter stretch of sand below the outcropping.

Tommy now sat by himself, poking the dying fire and drinking the whiskey. He was just fine in his own pity party and cursed his friends for not caring anymore than his parents. Fuckem all, he thought to himself. He began to get sleepy and thought maybe he should head home, but he couldn't seem to move as the liquor had already done its work.

As he upended the last of the bottle he was holding, he fell over on his back and passed out. His actions were being witnessed. To the hawk watching from the bluff above, it looked to him that the human was going through

his last death throws. This would be an easy meal. Got to eat, Got to eat, GOT TO EAT!

Once the bird was sure the being was dead he swooped out over the rocks and circled for a while, watching and waiting, but impatient to get to his prey. He finally landed next to the boys shoulder and neck and eyed the passed out kid. With one lucky strike, his sharp beak had hit and severed the carotid artery with the first onslaught.

Tommy's eyes popped open and he grabbed for his neck but it was already too late. The last thing he saw was a yellow eye looking into his own green one and then he passed out again, this time for good.

Before long, as the hawk was feeding voraciously, seagulls began showing up and trying to take morsels from the hawks meal. He tried fighting them off at first, but the body was too large to covet the whole thing. More large birds fell from the sky and before dawn the next day, much of the boy was gone. New birds had come in the early morning and picked up where the others had left off. It was easy pickings now as so much damage had been done during the night. If not for his school ID, he would not have been able to be identified from his remains.

RETURN OF THE BIRDS

The last attack happened more than fifty years ago in another sleepy resort-side village called Bodega Bay. Little was known about that attack, since several of the principals involved either fled or died off soon afterward. And many of the records were ordered burned along with the dead birds. In fact, no one can be sure it is the same situation after all these years.

Tory McKnight, a future ornithologist working on a migration project, at first refuses to believe the reports she hears. Later she feels there must be a reason for what is taking place in the quaint town of San Clemente and begins to investigate. As things progress from bad to worse, more professional help is needed, and it may already be too late.

For everyone who was left hanging with more questions than answers from the movie *The Birds*, and for all those who like a good suspense horror book, this will satisfy your cravings. Joe Moore's first book in a darker genre will keep you on the edge of your seat and searching the skies. Hurry and read this before the next gathering.



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