

Trashbirds

(A Hidden Herald play)

By Marge J. Buckley

Location: United Hospital area

CAST (in order of appearance)

HERALD...*a pigeon*

NICOLE (Peggy)...*a visitor*

STU (Matt)...*a nurse*

HERALD

Ah, the 1980s:

a fascinating time of population expansion, capitalist growth, synthesizer music...

And right here,

United Hospital came into being as St. Paul's medical infrastructure began to consolidate...

Hey! Here's a couple folks chatting on a bench.

I wonder what they're talking about.

And why are they smoking cigarettes so close to a hospital?

STU

Oh god...I don't wanna go back in there.

Awful day.

NICOLE

You said you're a nurse?

STU

Yeah. In the children's hospital.

NICOLE

That must be so difficult.

STU

Yeah. Yeah.

What about you?

NICOLE

Oh, I'm visiting.

My sister is...she's on her way out.

STU

I'm sorry.

NICOLE

That's okay.

She's had a very full life. Seven children, and most of them have turned out very nicely.

Do you have a light?

STU

Yeah.

(STU lights her cigarette.)

NICOLE
thanks.

STU
Do you have any?

NICOLE
children?

STU
yeah.

NICOLE
No, no. But I've always liked being an aunt.
I write mystery novels, and I'm in a bird-watching club.

(STU laughs.)

NICOLE
It's very serious work.

STU
Mystery novels?

NICOLE
Bird-watching.

STU
What's your favorite bird?

NICOLE
You know, people always think I'll say herons or eagles or loons,
and I do love those birds very much.
But I have to say...I adore street pigeons.

STU
What? Why?

NICOLE

They're survivors.

They're scrappy, and resilient...they're a lot like us, actually.

Some birders call them "trash-birds", but...birders can be very judgemental.

I don't know how you do it with those sick kids.

Sometimes this world can feel so bleak.

STU

On days like this I try to remind myself that they're here to get better...and a lot of them do.

NICOLE

And things are getting built.

I saw the hospital is raising funds for a new radiation center.

STU

That's true.

I'm still kinda bitter the monorail didn't work out.

NICOLE

"The People Mover"? Are you kidding me?

STU

Of course!

We deserve robust systems for public transit.

NICOLE

And I deserve to live in a grand castle on the ocean shore.

STU

I mean, if you care so much about the birds,

Surely you're concerned about car pollution.

NICOLE

Concerned, yes.

But I'm not naive, either.

STU

I don't think I'm naive.

NICOLE

Of course not.

I didn't mean anything by it.

I mean, to your credit:

the public seems to have a better understanding that species are disappearing, for example.

And we're making progress there, too.

You know the Minnesota DNR just announced they're going to re-establish peregrine falcons?

But somehow I don't think we're going to be giving up our cars en masse anytime soon,

Or regulating corporations in any meaningful way.

STU

But if enough of us want those things, and say it, and fight for it,

It might not be impossible.

I don't believe in miracles, exactly,

But I've seen people make incredible recoveries.

People I was sure we were going to lose.

...I feel a little better, actually. Thanks.

NICOLE

Oh, there's one!

STU

A falcon?

NICOLE

No, a pigeon!

Hey there, little fella.

HERALD

Is she talking to me?

I better get out of here...

And remember: don't smoke cigarettes! Don't you dare!