

When Seagulls walked as Shakespeare

By Daniel Parsons



As I made my way back to the train station the sun was already starting to rise. I had just left an all night party and had been drinking for about twelve hours. It was fair to say that I was a little bit pissed.

The streets were empty and everywhere was quiet; hardly surprising for 5 o'clock on a Sunday morning. I made my way down the hill towards Lewes Road and was starting to regret the amount I had been drinking. Fortunately the fresh seaside air was pleasantly filling my lungs and the walk seemed to be going quickly.

Just before I reached the bottom of the hill I heard some voices coming from the other side of the road. I couldn't make out what they were saying, but heard something about food and fish. I stopped walking and looked across the road; I heard a voice saying 'sshhhh, he's seen us, be quiet'.

By the time I had turned my head there was no one there. The street was empty! I looked behind me and then back to where I thought the voices were coming from. Nothing! After waiting a few seconds I started to carry on my journey. I was feeling slightly paranoid.

A moment later I heard some rustling, I quickly turned my head and saw a black rubbish sack fall over onto its side. A seagull's head peered over the bag. Its beak stabbed the bag and within a blink of an eye all the contents were spread over the pavement. Two other seagulls had now joined it and they began to eat the scraps of food. One of them looked up and saw me looking at them, the other two stopped eating and all three of them were staring at me.

My drunken eyes focused on the trio, I swear they all appeared to be 4ft tall. I must be seeing things I thought to myself. I shook my head and tried to refocus, but no, they still looked about 4ft tall. One of them raised his head high and pointed his beak towards me.

I felt slightly threatened and then realised I was being stupid, after all they are only birds. The one with the raised head started to squawk at me, it was getting louder and louder. After a while the squawking no longer sounded like the noise of a bird, instead it sounded like real human words. Again I shook my head and plucked up some courage to walk across the road towards them.

As I got close to the pavement all three of them raised their heads and shouted 'fuck off'! I stopped in total shock. I must have been 2 metres away from them and could definitely tell they were 4ft tall. Again I walked towards them, the middle one spoke, 'fuck off and leave us alone'. I was now really scared and started running down the hill.

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As I turned the corner at the bottom of the hill I stopped to gather my breath. I was in total shock and thought I must have been more drunk than I originally realised.

I carried on towards the train station. By now the sun had fully risen and after only a few minutes I had reached The Level; an area of open space divided into four bits of grass with two paths running through the centre. I was walking towards the other side when I heard more voices.

I didn't bother turning round to see who was talking, after the earlier incident all I wanted to do was get on the train and be back home. But the voices became louder and clearer.

'When shall we three meet again, In thunder, lightning, or in rain?'
'When the hurlyburly's done, When the battle's lost and won'.
'That will be ere the set of sun'.

Shakespeare! Someone was reciting Shakespeare! I looked round but could not see anyone; however I could still hear the voices. I was puzzled. I continued to look around and just before giving up I saw three seagulls coming out of a near-by bush. They had not seen me and continued to recite the opening act from the Scottish play.

'Where the place'?
'Upon the heath'.
'There to meet with Macbeth'.

Again these gulls looked to be about 4ft tall and they were talking. At this point I was seriously freaked out and thought I must be losing my mind. More seagulls started walking into The Level from all directions and started to group together. What the hell was going on?

Fear was setting in, I ran across the path to the main road. I looked back and saw about forty of these 4ft gulls lining up much like an army role call. One of the gulls (who I believe was the one I saw earlier) was pacing up and down the line. He was talking to them but I was too far away to make out what he was saying. I wanted to run away but the intrigue kept me there. I couldn't believe what was going on.

Eventually they all nodded and rearranged themselves to form a single line. The leader shouted 'March' and they all started heading towards me. I immediately started running to the station. I knew it was usually a ten minute walk but I planned on getting there much quicker.

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As I ran through the Lanes towards the station it occurred to me that since leaving the party I had not actually seen another human this morning and there had been no cars driving on the road. This is fucking strange I thought to myself and kept running.

I could hear more and more voices and looked up to see dozens of seagulls standing on the roof tops of shops and houses. They were all around me.

'There he is' said one, 'Get him' said another. I was not quite sure what I had done wrong but these gulls were after me.

More and more were following me, they appeared from every lane. There must have been something like two hundred 4ft seagulls marching towards me. I found it slightly strange that they were not flying; they were just casually marching in my direction.

For a brief moment my mind went off on one and I was thinking about why they weren't flying. 'Maybe it's because they are so tall' I thought. But at the same time their wings were still in proportion to their bodies and in theory they should be able to fly.

'Maybe they are proving a point' I thought, but what point and why? I drifted off into a world of possibilities and it was refreshing for my mind to be clear from the thought that I was being chased by them. Then I remembered I was still being chased by them.

I wasn't far from the station, I just had to go under the bridge and I'd be there. As I passed the Price Albert on my left I saw loads more seagulls walking towards me from yet another direction. I was feeling tired and out of breath but I managed to keep going. I was now pretty sure that I was sober after all this running.

The gates to the station were still locked. They usually opened them at 4am for the first train back to London. I had no choice but to jump up and climb over them. By now my legs were like jelly and the seagulls were closing in.

After a couple of attempts I made it over the gates and I ran onto the concourse. The station was empty; there was no one in sight. I looked at the screen and saw that there was a train to Three Bridges leaving in five minutes from platform four.

I looked towards the gates and could see hundreds of seagulls standing on the other side. I doubted that they could jump over the gates but I could see a few were starting to attack the locks with their beaks and I was sure they would manage to get in soon.

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I jumped over the ticket barrier and made my way along platform four. The train was there but there was nobody on board, I ran all the way to the end of the platform to find the driver. Suddenly my heart sank; there was no driver. I was fucked.

My next thought was that I could run all the way back to Crawley, 25 miles away. I realised this was impossible. My legs were dead and if I were to leave Brighton I'd have to go down the train tracks which I thought was a stupid idea. I also toyed with the idea of trying to drive the train myself, again I realised this was a stupid plan.

Suddenly I heard a massive crashing sound and saw that a load of seagulls had broken the lock to the side gate of the station and they were making their way to the ticket barriers. I watched as they ducked their bodies and walked under the barriers.

I quickly made my way back down the platform trying the doors on the train, they were locked. I kept trying and about half way down the train I found one that worked. I jumped in and peered out of the window.

The seagulls were searching all the platforms; a vast number were heading down platform four but I don't think they had seen me yet. I ran through the train up towards the drivers' carriage and found an unlocked toilet.

I got inside and locked the door, all I could do now was hide and hope that they wouldn't find me....