

The Bird King's employees

by James Knight

The Bird King's advisors and ministers are a range of rusty kitchen utensils. They all observe a respectful silence in his presence.

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Contrary to popular belief, the Bird King is not an atheist. His meathook priests do their rounds at twilight.

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The Bird King's suits sit in a windowless office, operating the free market through a system of levers, sewers, testosterone and windup toys.

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The Bird King's secret police are mosquitos. When you're asleep they suck dreams from your veins, for analysis at the Ministry of Desire.

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The Bird King considers the dangers associated with conflagrations grossly exaggerated by those with a vested interest in spreading fear. Consequently, his fire brigade comprises a blind old man, two goldfish and a gadfly.

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Although he lacks the patience required to tolerate most entertainment, the Bird King is nevertheless a fan of the Carnival of Monkeys, whose shrieking parade is commissioned to process through his palace every Christmas Day.

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New ideas terrify the Bird King. He deploys an army of postmodernists to tame them and remove the stings from their tails.

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The Bird King employs chimps, scarecrows, effigies of Christ, lobsters, armadillos, sausages and rocking chairs as his domestic staff. They don't perform their duties well; the Lord High Executioner (a faulty toaster) is frequently called upon to remove them from the payroll.

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The Bird King hires mannequins only as librarians, bar staff and assassins. He doesn't trust them sufficiently to employ them in his home.

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As for the most coveted posts, the Bird King usually grants them to Shakespearean characters. His Prime Minister is Macbeth. His head chef: Titus Andronicus. His Lord of Misrule, meanwhile, is King Lear. Ophelia is his gardener. Malvolio has the honour of running the Bird King's private playground, a reconstructed Bedlam.

