

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.

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

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

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

