

Flamingos

by Jim Breslin

There are two types of people in this world. There are those who laugh if they find plastic flamingos on their front lawn and those who are mortified. My mother was the latter.

I was in my bedroom when I first heard the shrieking downstairs. We lived in a split level house on a busy street, and I ran down the half-flight of steps and saw my mother standing in her robe at our bay window peering out over a sea of pink.

Over fifty plastic flamingos stood silently at attention, some staring straight ahead while others had their heads down, as if eating sea urchins out of our lawn. The flamingos faced all directions. Cars slowed as they passed, and heads turned to stare at the menagerie in our front yard.

A blue Mustang slowed and the passenger, a girl I recognized from my high school, held out her cell phone and clicked an image. My mother said softly, "Oh God," and stepped back away from the window.

I placed my hand on her shoulder and smiled. "Everything is okay, mom." I said, "Somebody is just having some fun."

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If someone had *flamingoed* our lawn three years earlier, my mother would have stood in the bay window giggling with wonder. When I imagine this, I envision my father's arm draped around her, and the two of them embarrassed and laughing, tossing out names of possible culprits.

I often recall, as if I've seen it on video, a scene where I drop my Tonka truck and run across the carpeted floor, launching into their laps as they sit together. My mom and dad would hold me down, and all four of their hands would be sliding up and down my race car pajamas — my father tickling my armpits and neck while my mother tickled my stomach and the soft spot of my feet or my toes. I would writhe around laughing in their laps until tears formed. I would escape their grasp, run to the other side of the room and pump my

fists to celebrate my freedom, and then willingly run back into their outstretched arms.

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On the day we were *flamingoed*, I finished packing my schoolbag, grabbed my lunch, and waited at the end of our short driveway. When I peered out over the flamingos, I grinned and thought this would be a good school day.

As the bus pulled up and the flashers started blinking, I saw the arms of a few classmates stretched out the windows with their cell phones. I shook my head with a smile as I stepped on the bus.

The bus driver asked, "What's up there, buddy? Is it someone's birthday?"

"No." I laughed. "Just a prank I think."

As I walked towards the rear of the bus, a few friends slapped me on the back and laughed. Some kids that didn't really know me just stared, but I was used to that.

"That is sooo funny!" Eric snickered.

"Hilarious!" Caitlyn laughed.

"Why do you have flamingos on your lawn?" Tommy asked.

I shrugged my shoulders and lied. I acted as though I didn't have a clue. As the bus pulled away, we watched out the back window, laughing and nodding at the scene on my front lawn, as if we anticipated the birds making strides and launching into flight. Yes, I thought, this is going to be a very good day.

