

The Flying Orvagineuse

by Kyle Hemmings

It seemed to come out of nowhere. I was digging up the bodies of dead girlfriends when a flying orvagineuse leaped over my head. One wing, I noticed, was damaged, but its colors were fuller than a peacock's. The cemetery was located at the outskirts of the city and to my knowledge there had never been a zoo. I thought the flying orvagineuse was extinct, hunted to the last one by predators, a victim of its own beauty.

The orvagineuse scrambled from the grounds with such speed and grace that I could only admire it from a distance. If I could catch this flying orvagineuse, I thought, I might become famous or richer in some sense. Perhaps this orvagineuse had escaped from the clutches of some renowned zoologist and could even use sign language to some degree. It might be a genius orvagineuse, the prized possession of some foreign dignitary, and it could understand the underlying structure of human language and the subtle gestures of despair. Perhaps I could take this orvagineuse home and we would make each other feel less lonely. Perhaps the flying orvagineuse could fill the existential cracks and spaces of my existence with its simple needs and its complex wants. Perhaps this orvagineuse could teach me how to fly in a twosome. Perhaps this orvagineuse could teach me where and how to find precious leaves and shoots in a city that no longer believed in its gods.

I found myself racing down the city's streets, questioning pedestrians, stopping children sucking on lollipops or their mothers pushing their younger brothers and sisters in baby carriages. To

each one, I asked, Did you see a flying orvanginateusse go by? They looked at me as if I had swallowed a fatal mix of hallucinogenics.

I was now running past intersections, racing blindly. My eyes were to the tops of skyscrapers, the clouds, the sky. The thought occurred to me. How amazing it was that from such a distance, the flying orvanginateusse could hold me entranced. Imagine, I thought, a world without them, without the possibility of color or flight.

I turned a corner and thought I saw a flash at the end of the next block. The flying orvanginateusse was dashing across the busy street without looking. I knew it was looking for me. I knew it needed me even though it would act as if this weren't true. It would forever insist on playing out its torturous game of hide and seek. It would cheat on me with a beautiful male orvanginateusse and I would drool and spend the rest of my life in denials, suffer from unexplained headaches. But I knew a flying orvanginateusse could not exist alone in a city of strangers. It would never blend or make new friends. Its cries would wake up the city at night. Children would draw its figure in coloring books and their mothers would pronounce their sons and daughters as artistic savants. This orvanginateusse would find itself in new prisons and would be fed horrible table scraps. It would still believe in the possibility of kindness.

I searched for the flying orvanginateusse more intently but I had lost sight of it again. The screech of brakes startled me. The sound of the collision was something uglier than my own sordid past, the memories of women burying me under fathoms of deceptive love. Or the ones I had lured into cages then turned away. I could recall their bodies as a summer breeze under my sheets and would wake up with a strange sense of loss. I scurried over to the scene, pushed my way through a circle of onlookers.

The flying orvanginateusse lay dead on the ground, its feathers broken. A cab driver got out and removed his cap. I'm sorry, he said, I didn't see it coming. Slowly, I picked up the flying orvanginateusse and cradled it. I wept. My tears ran into its black marble eyes, now staring straight up at mine.

Was he yours? asked a woman with a large shopping bag.

Yes, I said.

What was his name, asked another.

I said, it was a she.

I made up some name, but I couldn't remember which one I gave it. I said I had her for years and on several occasions, she had saved my life.

You don't understand I told the circle of onlookers. This was an exotic creature, one of its kind. There will never be another one to replace her.

I carried the flying orvanginateusse along the sidewalks. People formed lines on either side and bowed their heads. The policemen looked sad. Men stared out from the safety of glass windows, jewelry stores, restaurants. There was now a silence in the city that was uncanny. I had never heard such a silence. I carried the flying orvanginateusse to the cemetery and there I buried it alongside the bodies of the girlfriends whose lives I wished I had gotten to know so much better.

