

I HATE PIGEONS

By Anne Hughes

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CAST: one female or one male

(The actor might appear very drooping and depressed, arms stiffly out to the side and from time to time making to and fro movements with his neck.)

I wasn't always like this – shabby, unkempt, cadging for food in the streets. I was well thought of. I was a stockbroker, an up-and-coming young man, and an internet wiz with a great future ahead of me. As soon as I got out of college in the Middle West I came to New York and right away I got a good job with a multinational financial company specializing in internet stocks – IPOs. After only a few months I was on the way to a nice, profitable career.

(Trying to brush away an invisible rival.) Here, don't take that! It's mine, I saw it first! Some nerve!

I even got myself a nice small apartment in Tribeca. It was well laid out and convenient to my work. Expensive, of course, by Middle Western standards, but I could swing it. It had views over the Hudson River. I was so lucky. I couldn't believe my luck – only a couple of months in New York and I had a nice job and a nice apartment. But there was one trouble with the apartment: it had a parapet. A parapet, outside my bedroom window. A flat ledge maybe twelve inches wide. Pigeons would roost on the parapet. Whenever I was home I used to hear them all the time – making their cooing noises, raising their squabs, flapping their wings and depositing “souvenirs” all over. At first I thought they were cute and even company for me. I even fed them, God forgive me! But then more and more would come. Everybody told me they could carry diseases; they were dirty. I began to think of them as flying rats. I tried everything to get them to move away. I'd yell at them. I made noises. I'd spray water on them. I even set up some plastic strips that looked like spikes. Whenever I would threaten them they would rise up in a cloud, circle and come right back again. Nothing worked! They would come every day and every day there were more and more of them and more and more white splotches on the parapet. I was at my wit's end. I even began thinking of moving.

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(Angrily to a second invisible rival.) Hey, you! Don't try to shove me aside just because you're bigger than I am. I may be small but I have as much right to be here as you! Have you no shame? You big bully!

The pigeons began to get on my nerves. I'd see them night and day. They began to haunt my dreams. My work was affected because even in my office I could see them roosting and partying on my parapet and laughing to themselves that I wasn't there to chase them away. My work suffered. I got a first warning from my boss for inattention to my work. He said sarcastically, "We would be really grateful if you could check in with us now and then and find out what we are doing." But how could I concentrate? I was always scheming to outwit those pigeons. It became an obsession. Moving was out of the question. I had been lucky to find the apartment in the first place and I simply could not find another that was so convenient and cheap. I looked at quite a few. Maybe I could cut off the parapet?

I went to the landlord. "Whatsammata, you crazie?" he said. "I'm not making any money on this building as it is. And you come along and want to make it smaller? You're outta your mind, Charlie." Incidentally, my name's not Charlie.

I was looking over books on masonry and checking the yellow pages for a stonemason when into my neighborhood moved an animal lover – a woman who actually fed the idiotic little things every day. Every morning she would get out there at the edge of the little local park with seed and breadcrumbs and start throwing. I'd pass her every day as I was going to work. Hundreds, thousands, millions of them surrounded her – wings flapping, beaks poking the ground. They filled the square; they filled the sky with their wings, flapping, feathers, feathers everywhere, making deafening noises! Deafening! I pleaded with her to stop and so did some of my neighbors – but no, Ms. Do Good would just glare at me, "If I want to feed pigeons, I'll jolly well feed pigeons, and you can't stop me. I know my rights." I went to a policeman, but he looked at me as if I were nuts. "Get outta here! You think I ain't got enough to do chasing bad guys and you want me to stop some dame from feeding pigeons. Get real!" I pictured them flying in from Texas and the West Coast to take advantage of all this free food.

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