

Dead Birds

Where are the dead birds?

Can you tell me where the dead birds are? Take a minute and look around your yard. What do you see? If you don't own a yard, go to the park. What do you see? Trees, grass, a few bushes, one or two squirrels, and a sky full of birds. Am I right? Isn't that the way it is?

Everywhere you look you see and hear birds, even in the middle of winter. So tell me, where are the dead birds? Where are their corpses? Where in the world could they be? Are they stuffed in the trees? I don't think so. How could they be? Gravity would pull them to the earth. Are they lying on the ground or in the bushes? I never see them there. The only time I happen upon a dead bird is by the roadway after it's been hit by a car. Dead birds seldom appear in the backyard. And if they were devoured by insects, their tiny bones would litter the ground like an elephant graveyard. So there you have it—no bones, no feathers, no birds. They're not there. They don't exist.

Squirrels present a similar dilemma. Besides finding them by the roadway in a puddle of blood or with their guts squished against the pavement, you rarely ever see a dead squirrel. So what's going on?

I started looking into the cause of this phenomenon last week and am here to tell you that there is no explanation for the missing animals. But I think the mystery runs deeper than that. I think something else might be going on. Sometimes at night before I go to sleep, I hear voices that hint at unsolved mysteries and nefarious deeds.

Take gasoline, for instance. Where do you think that much gas comes from? There are over ten million cars in the United States consuming more than 100 billion dollars worth of gasoline a year; not to mention trucks, vans, and campers. Now think about the other combustible

engines. With a straight face you're going to tell me that a few countries in the Middle East along with Alaska, Mexico, and some areas in Russia have that much oil underneath them? It doesn't seem possible.

And what about electricity—where does that come from? I flip a switch and a light goes on because of some invisible power plant on the outskirts of town. Does that seem sane to you? Can you explain it?

And plumbing? Am I to believe the entire country is connected by underground tunnels that I can neither see nor understand?

And World War II? Does it seem explicable by any leap of imagination that our enemies systematically eradicated six million people in the course of a few years? Or Rwanda? Given your knowledge of the world around you, is it possible that over half a million people were slaughtered in a month's time by their own countrymen? Do you think that happened? Does it make sense? Does it seem plausible?

I think it's a conspiracy—a cosmic ontological conspiracy unified in the minds of men. The only question is "Who's at the center of it— you or me?"

Let me explain. Reality is ephemeral, here today, gone tomorrow. When the lights go out for good, so does reality. We know there's only room in the universe for one of us. You can be certain only of yourself. I can be certain only of myself. And since I'm certain of me—well—I think you see where this is headed. I think you understand my intent.

A few days ago I said to my psychiatrist, "Are you an alien? You sit there in your leather chair without moving a muscle or saying anything with your mouth, so you must be a right strange fellow." He tried to deny it, but without proof, who can tell? So I fired him; who wants to be analyzed by a foreigner?

This isn't going well.

My reality is exclusive of everything else, correct? Only what I perceive exists; nothing else is real. As I'm writing these words, there's no one to read them but myself. But the situation is worse than that. Not only are there no other readers, there's no earth as I understand it—no Africa, Antarctica, North America. They're not there.

I can purchase a ticket, board a plane and fly to Paris—and Paris will be there. But before I land at DeGaulle International, it won't exist! No Paris, no France, no nothing. Do you understand? Outside of my perceptions, there are no perceptions. The world is a conspiracy I can neither prove nor disprove. As Descartes said—who needs Descartes—I think, therefore I am. Beyond that, there is nothing but the illusion of you and me.

The above solipsism is quite simple, I understand, except for the aforementioned flaw—the dead birds. Figure it out for yourself. There are holes in the theory—flaws in reality—that command an inevitable conclusion: reality is not real. If it were, you would see the dead birds, modern conveniences would not exist, the carnage in Germany and Rwanda could not have occurred.

What's going on you ask? Why do I consume food in the morning and sleep at night? Who are my mother and father if not my mother and father? What in God's name are you talking about? What in God's name is happening?

Everything I perceive around me is the manifestation of a study. My psychiatrist, who is sitting there staring at me with his beady eyes and malevolent talk that I can neither hear nor understand is a projection of those who are scrutinizing you.

Do you get it? Do you finally understand? You're the one. This story, this paragraph, this sentence is **your** revelation. This is **your** wake-up call. Do you feel the recognition pinching at your soul? Can you not feel your

heart accelerating as the doubt moves forward to paralyze?
Is it not what you've suspected all along? Is it not what
you've known to be true?

The reputed author of this rant does **not** exist. He never has. No parents at birth, no food in the morning or sleep at night, no urination or defecation, nothing. Only you have substance, reader. Only you are real in the field of illusion surrounding your senses. Only you. Only you and me and neither one of us is really here.

As a matter of fact—since we're being brutally honest—I can see you sitting there right now. I can see your face—your nose, your hair, your lips. I can hear your breathing, feel your warmth. I can smell your sweat. I'm right behind you as you're reading this sentence, but you'll never see me until the analysis is complete; and by then, what will it matter? By then, what will be left?

Charles Sutphin