

Bird on a Wire, 1989

you know, I never have forgotten
that pretty bluish-black bird
perched high on the telephone wire
near the entrance to the trailer park
nor the baseball I kept hurling
from down in the scorching street
just to see if I had that kind of aim

I did not, but the bird most certainly did

and with astonishing precision he dropped
his wet white warning onto my forehead
and deep into my gaping mouth
before fluttering off for friendlier climes

and all the way home the other children
and even a few adults
laughed at me and made clever remarks
such as *hey, you look like a bird*
just shit on your face
and *baba, did your face just get shit on*
by some kind of a bird?

and me, poor me—coughing, hacking,
bawling and swatting at my mouth
with the back of my catcher's mitt,
mind full of scarlet rage and murder

some days I'm sure I must have
learned a godly lesson that afternoon—
kindness, humility, the golden rule,
some wisdom that bettered me forever
and allows me to be a stronger husband,
a gentler and more generous father,
to contribute more to society at large

which is why it shames me to admit
I usually surface from that memory
clinging wildly to a single wish:
that my control had been
just a little bit better

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