



The Featherless Bird

Dan Pinkerton

Even as the doctor ratcheted my chest, peeled and pinned the skin, severed the sternum, even as he reached his gloved hand into the cavity, drawing forth reams of black-tipped feathers, I waited—saying nothing, gassed and fuzzy. Now the post-op observation reveals a constant hissing, as of air through a punctured lung.

The assembled watch me quaver at the podium, hacking then falling to one knee, ears ringing with applause. *They think it's part of the act.* Somewhere the bird, plucked skin the color of cartilage, wants his feathers back, each one a word he might have cosseted.

