

Pigeons

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1.

Occasionally, driving down my city streets, I come upon pigeons. Right there in the road. Marching back and forth. In the middle of the street where there is absolutely no food, no grass, or any kind of statue to sit and shit on.

It makes no sense to me at all why they would chose to hang out in the middle of the street, dodging oncoming cars. Right there in front of my car and me. Pigeons....

2.

Some pigeons wait until the very last second to hurry on their short legs, fly up at an angle, to get out of the way of my car. I have always thought this is weird. I mean, why wait? Why not take off when you see my car coming? A car is pretty big, and it arrives from a distance. The pigeon – it's a bird, it's got good eyes – it has time to take in the approaching object – big, heavy, wide, rushing at them – they have time for some mental process to kick in and tell them, "There's something big coming at me, I better get out of the way now". Not, "I think when this big object coming right at me is just a few feet away, I'll do something."

Like a pigeon death wish. Or stupidly. Or a denial of reality.

3.

I made a reason up for them. For this behavior.

I figure pigeons are playing a dangerous game of chicken with cars because it proved their pigeon bravery to members of their gang, or clan, or flock, or whatever.

It's probably some rite of initiation in order to get accepted into some pigeon secret society we humans have no knowledge of. The initiation rite is that they are required to go into the middle of a city road and face down oncoming cars while other pigeons, there to bear witness and testify to the success or failure later, pace besides the road.

The longer a pigeon waits before scooting out of the way of an oncoming car, the longer they hold their ground, only flying at the very last instant to appear flapping around a fender inches from death, the more status they gain in other pigeons' eyes. The more they were honoured in high places during meetings, cooing about how they did on the street that day. Strutting their pigeon stuff.

That's the only explanation I can think of that sounds reasonable.

4.

So driving down an average street on an average day, when I see some pigeons in the distance in the middle of the road, as if waiting for me, daring me, I figure there's nothing unusual. It's the way of the pigeon.

I will, on occasion, swerve a little, not too much, seeing whether I can run over one. They want to play? I'll play.

Some people call pigeons *doves* and think that makes them poetical and slightly more elevated, but I'll confess. Whenever I see a dead pigeon squashed on the street, a result from zigging when they should have been zagging, I have yet to feel remorse.

More like, one down, millions of disease bearing pests to go.

5.

Today I saw at one end of the street a pigeon calling me out. Daring for me to run it over. It no doubt glanced over to its mates and winked, Watch me, boys.

We approached our twined destinies slowly.

I sighted the pigeon padding left, decide something else and switch directions, going right, keeping an eye on me, its wings folded calmly behind its back.

I speeded up unexpectedly.

I got close. Closer. His little feet began churning quicker as I came upon him and he disappeared from sight under my car and I kept my

peripheral vision alert, curious to see a flutter of wings appear around the corner of my car as he saved his sorry ass.

Instead my front right tire did a little bounce, as though going over a mini-bump. Then, my rear right tire repeated this same movement, only less.

I looked in my rear view mirror. Two feathers twirled in a circular wind.

Squished pigeons in the road always look the same. Flat right down the middle, with one wing raised vertically in the air, as though waving goodbye forever.

There would be some sad cooing in the pigeon bar that night.

One down, millions to go.

Watch the video:

<http://bit.ly/8gWblc>