

## Hog-tied, I Am a Pigeon

Remote-controlled explosives strapped to two women with Down Syndrome detonated in a coordinated attack on pet bazaars Friday. Local police said the woman in the first attack sold cream in the morning at the market and was known to locals as “the crazy lady.”

Police initially said the bomb at al-Ghazl market was hidden in a box of birds but determined it was a suicide attack after finding the woman’s head, an officer said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he wasn’t authorized to release the information.

“I just remember the horrible scene of the bodies of dead and wounded people mixed with the blood of animals and birds” said a pigeon vendor named Ali. He noted that the market had been particularly busy because it was a pleasantly crisp and clear winter day after a recent cold spell.

Two weeks prior, during the worst of the bad weather, a long-eared hedgehog, two Turkish hamsters and a white-toothed shrew roamed the frozen brush at Amatzia Woodlands, searching to restore their depleted winter reserves. The air was thin and dry, and the ice crystals suspended from tree limbs were wholly without brilliance. To the foragers, death seemed imminent and all four turned their faces skyward as they were gripped by a staggering vision. The dull clouds had parted as a golden head revealed itself. The eyes, nose and mouth flickered like the spinning emblems of a slot machine, without ever resolving in an identity of form. Each rapt animal saw the hovering apparition as a perfect representation of his own genetic type; hedgehog, hamster, shrew, respectively transfixed by a luminous mirror image; the self presented as pure schematic ideal; a universal physiognomy with an unmistakable suchness suspended between the brittle webbing of trees. The forest was still as its inhabitants from all corners paused on the depleted earth to gaze up at the unintelligible face, its celestial fur smoothed to the texture of cream.

## It Wasn't a Graven Image

A story is like water in a box, filling it so full that the walls get wet and often begin to soften.

In a dry desert colony, a young girl enacted a nightly ritual in which she put inside a cardboard box small objects collected from her day. She would then stow the box under her bed, cover her eyes, and sing softly to the room "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one," before going to sleep. No one knew about the box, and her nightly address to God, though never spoken in words she herself had phrased, felt personal and intimate. One night, after completing this sequence of actions as usual, she fell asleep and had a dream. In the dream, she was lying in bed with her hand over her eyes, just finishing up the words "the Lord is one" when she heard a sound at the window. It was a boy, jimmying open the screen. She lay still, watching as the boy climbed through. He said nothing and stood close to her bed, looking at her. His eyes were large and dark, and she could see that they were wet because they shone in the moonlight. His mouth was closed firmly and it made a perfect red oval shape. She wished the oval would open so she could see inside. She reached out with her finger to touch his lips and as soon as she brought it within an inch from him, his body came apart and fluttered into leaflets which spread all over the darkened bedroom. A few had fallen onto her blanket. She picked them up and looked at them. In the bars of light cast by the moon she could see that they were all pictures of boys with wet, dark eyes and oval lips. She looked closer. Their faces were different from each other, but also in some way the same. She realized that she had not learned the boy's name and now he was gone. She carefully collected all the pictures and put them into her private box under the bed.

No one ever found the box.

But many told stories, and stories reproduce like rabbits; indiscriminately and without relief, such that the sibilliance of consonants and gust of vowels fail to align decidedly with either ravishment or rage. Siblings bear new siblings, more than the eye can count, and from the first maternal gust, Nation is born. Then, in the end, who can tell whether the boy is fiend or friend?

*Credit:*

*"It Wasn't a Graven Image" first appeared in the Poetry Project Newsletter*