

Birdman

For Pat Beckett

My first bicycle was dark blue,
but it looked purple under streetlights.

My sister Pat sent me, without training wheels,
into the hedge that lined our driveway.

I stayed in that hedge.
I became Birdman, the hedge my nest.

Pat asked,
David, when are you coming out of the hedge?

I am Birdman, I said. *I am staying here.*
I could not face my failure to ride a bicycle.

Summer turned to Fall. Pat asked,
David, will you get out hedge already?

I am Birdman, I said. *I am happy here.*
I did not tell her how I really felt.

Fall turned to Winter.
My brothers and sisters built snow forts.

Pat asked,
David, get out of the hedge?

I am Birdman, I said. *This is my home, now.*
The hedge stood against the chill.

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Winter turned to Spring.

My sister gave me a bird calendar, and I fell

in love with April, her poetic lines, her plumage.

She flew out of the calendar and fell for me.

April said, *We need to find a fine tall tree and build
a burgeoning nest together. A hedge is no place to bring up a birdling.*

We found a fabulous tree. We built a beautiful nest.

Pat found us, said, *Hi*. We said, *Hi*.

She asked, *Birdman, when will you visit home?*

Our father is 15 years dead, our mother is turning 80.

I am sorry, I replied. *I am too busy raising my birdlings.*

I then took a moment to throw up in their mouths.

They each have their own personalities,

I said, after the feeding.

Their wings are a beautiful dark blue like that first bicycle I had,

I added. *Tomorrow, I will teach them how to fly.*