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## Angry Birds

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# Angry Birds

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*Josh Mathews*

When my son turned five he asked  
for a stuffed black angry bird. He likes  
angry birds, you see, a phone game  
he plays in which he slingshots  
colorful aggressive birds into elaborate structures  
of wood and ice, where ugly green pigs  
relax and snort. When he flings the birds just so, creating  
the kind of chaos he aimed to create, demolishing the pigs  
and their structures, he shakes his body,  
stares wide-eyed, and says, “Daddy, I got them.”  
It turns out, as he well knows, there are angry birds  
for all times and seasons, angry birds in Brazil,  
where monkeys, not pigs, are the objects  
of attack, angry birds in outer space,  
angry birds at Christmas, at Easter, too,  
a time when pigs and bunnies and eggs  
all get blown up together.  
He got his birthday bird, of course.

I know he hasn't quite thought  
through yet why exactly these birds are angry.  
You'd think, given the point of the game,  
that the angry ones would be the pigs. For there they sit,  
those pigs, peacefully at home, launching themselves  
at nothing and nobody, only for some black bird  
to come crashing hard into their house of wood  
and ice, igniting and exploding like some screeching  
bunkerbuster with a big enough blast radius  
to pulverize those complex structures into pixelated dust.  
These days people rack up points for this  
sort of thing, at least he does, my young son.

I know he hasn't yet seen the wrath of birds.  
I mean their real wrath—  
not some cockamamie Hitchcock fantasy—

not even the kind of acidic aerial raid  
known to melt paint off sports cars and sedans.  
There's more to birds than an innocent  
bombing campaign or drone attack.  
Once, you see, such a bird assaulted me.  
A bright red-and-black bird—  
a gull, I think—long as an M16—  
took a dislike to my entrance into its  
unmarked domain. Here I was, in the middle  
of an open field, newly planted, on the heartland prairie,  
and this bird believed that I was some kind  
of dangerous predator. Well he—or she, perhaps—  
circled high above, making an awful racket,  
and then proceeded to take a hard, fast dive  
at my head, straight down at me, a real  
kamikaze attack aimed to puncture my brain,  
intending to keep its precious domain safe,  
protecting its young ones—if it had any—from  
the likes of me, a man with a son of my own.  
Well that bird, you  
might've already guessed—  
and you'd have done the same—  
was not long for this world.

A lot of good anger did then.

I gave my son his bird.  
Maybe one day he'll see the world  
from the pigs' point of view.