

DESTINY CALLING

by M Hanlon

Introduction to "Destiny Calling"

I still believe in the vast majority of tenets held in "Destiny Calling." Written well over a year ago, that could be considered quite impressive. Of course, since not many of the tenets are actually *held*, but more often than not never gotten around to, it would seem logical that I still believe.

I once heard a man tell a story about his Life, a long, slow story. I will sometimes tell slow stories, I will sometimes. I will sometimes tell stories that last ages.

I will never ever dispute that I am very, incredibly lucky, though.

_m

1999.06.01

DESTINY CALLING

by Matthew Hanlon

A woman in Denver is sitting on a bed, holding a toaster in the substantial way you apprise a shiney metal toaster, when she exclaims that the hour is too late and she must be off.

No one knows what she was thinking.

Until now.

I have never been to Denver, I have just finished reading a book in which a passing mention of Denver is made. I've always liked reading.

She was, this woman, sitting on a bed not her own, in Denver, holding a toaster for no apparent reason outside of discomfort. Not that her holding the toaster made her uncomfortable. It was more a symptom than the cause.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge is now credited, quite famously, with being an incredible scatter-brain. He got an idea for a poem about a place called "Xanadu," coincidentally, also mentioned in passing in the book I've just finished reading, and, in the midst of writing it, lost his train of thought: either because opium dreams are

notoriously fleeting, or because someone interrupted him in the middle of transcribing his vision and Xanadu's stately paradise wound up being passed over for a visitor asking how Coleridge's plants were. I seem to have had the same loss of direction, in which you find yourself seated, at your writing, when you realise you've forgotten why exactly it is you wanted to write it down. Or haven't forgotten why, but have forgotten the one little thing that was holding it all together and didn't pass from the point of origination of the idea to the point of writing. Coleridge couldn't sleep-write, apparently, I don't have means to a waterproof pen and pad of paper for the shower.

Because, you see, I know *why* I am writing this, I just seem to have forgotten how to make it work, as it was so ready to do in the shower.

And I've never been to Denver. So "Denver" is just sort of standing in as a useful city name, let's call it a fictional city that I've made for this woman sitting on a bed with a toaster.

Though if you're familiar with Denver, the actual city, feel free to associate with this version whatever you will from the actual version.

The man, all right, a young man, and the woman, both of whom were sitting on the bed prior to the woman's departure, though the man did keep getting up and pacing occasionally, were in his house. And the part which may seem difficult to believe, to *identify* with, is that they had just been run into the house for fear of the monster outside.

And, for those of you familiar with (stories, at the least) cities, and the tales of human monsters, this was not one of those. It was, from the conversation that followed in the bedroom, a giant bird that frightened them into the house, and from there into the bedroom, and was terrorising the city, whether it meant to or not. It was just a big bird, of larger than normal proportions, Roc-like, you might say, and I do because there was also a fleeting mention of it in the book I've just read. And a bird that big is bound to be terrorising, no matter it's intent or desire, because it's different, and not different in a way that would make you feel comfortable making fun of it. So it was frightening, and they were making fun of it only after they'd escaped to the safety of the man's house, until the bird flapped it's gigantic wings against the

door, either accidentally because it wasn't used to being in the city, or because it was just trying to provoke a reaction, breaking a window in the top half of the door. If it was trying to provoke a reaction I feel almost badly for the bird, as it must be lonely being a large bird in a city that's frightened of you. I feel badly for it if it just didn't judge correctly how much room it had to turn around or the like, also, just in a different way.

After the window broke, the man and woman ran to the next room in the house in from the kitchen, which was where they had been sitting, making fun of the very large, very different bird outside, and found themselves in the bedroom.

Another visitor stopping by, inquiring after my plants, was getting my first credit card ever as I took a break to get some groceries. I can use it at over 12 million locations around the world. It's a nice colour. It means I am responsible now. Not necessarily as a quality, but as a duty. Moreso than I am responsible to or for the woman, who has left the toaster and the man for the lateness of the hour in an awkward swirl of her skirts and the swirling toaster cord, which was not plugged into anything that might allow it to do what you would expect a

toaster to do. Moreso than I am to the man, who has been left, sitting in the room, alone, watching the awkwardness of the woman leaving around the corner of the bed and out through the kitchen. The bird is another story. The toaster's story is probably along the same lines as the bird's, only indoors.

And I don't know when it's all going to end.

They were talking in the bedroom, in hushed tones, about the immensity of the bird outside, and why, for no apparent reason, it attempted to follow and kill them. The bird was not, in fact, trying to kill them, though the woman and man talked about the bird wanting to kill them, and following them, quite large, and quite frightening, the way something that would kill you would be.

"Unless it's a cancer or something, that's not so big, and it can kill you."

"Well, yeah, so can bacteria."

"Bullets."

"Electricity, too."

"Well. That's not so solid, though."

"So then it's really small, isn't it?"

"All right. Things stopping."

"What? What things stopping?"

"Well, like your organs."

"Oh. Right."

"And lint."

"Lint?"

"Well, ok, maybe not lint so much, then."

I, however, am lucky enough to have a good deal of talented friends, and be young, looking forward to saying when I'm older, "When I was younger, I wasted the hell out of it." And we rarely have problems with gigantic birds or look to toasters for the time. I may or may not quote that last sentence. I would change the tense if I did quote it, at any rate.

It was probably because I was born in the year of the rabbit in the Chinese zodiac, which is yet one more visitor asking after my plants, though this time one that offers to water them. I visited a Chinese restaurant, where I read that those born in the year of the rabbit were lucky.

I guess I lucked out.

She had been staring at the toaster for a while, after having picked it up off the floor. While he talked and once in a while paced, while they both fell silent, while she was talking about how large the shadow of that bird was when they first noticed the very large shadow swooping down towards them.

Of course, shadows don't swoop, she probably would have been better off saying that the shadow had gotten terribly and frighteningly large, rather than saying it "swooped."

As the man had stood up once again, and was questioning whether or not they had been drugged without their knowledge, maybe by the government or the mafia, they were always doing things like that, he had read, or maybe they should take some drugs, and either get rid of first drug's effects or take advantage of the other drug's non-large bird inducing effects, the woman suddenly realised, through the toaster, that it was late, too late to be talking about taking drugs or being drugged or large frightening birds or the government, and that she had to go. She had to go out and away from the house and out into the street on the way to her own home, where she had plants and frozen chicken in the freezer, waiting to be thrown

into an oven and cooked and then eaten in the company of some canned peas.

And she did this, posthaste.

The only thing I can say is, at least *I* didn't get imprisoned in a lime tree bower. That wasn't in the book I just read, that was Coleridge, poor, beset-upon-on-all-sides Coleridge. When you realise there are so many ways to play an Aeolian Harp.

Luckily.