

## Free-Ranging Turkey

*But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you.  
~Job 12:7–10*

There was a chill in the air that morning a week before Thanksgiving. Upon waking, I staggered out of bed and poured myself a cup of coffee. Still sleepy, I plunked down in my recliner to warm up in front of my electric fireplace.

Sipping my coffee, I thought of all the preparations I needed to make for our traditional holiday at my sister's house, but I couldn't seem to muster up any holiday spirit. The dancing flames took me back to the carefree days of my childhood when cozy holidays were spent by my grandparents' red brick hearthside, and neighbors stopped by to say hello. ~~To greet one another.~~

Maybe it was the lack of sunlight that comes with the long winter days or the heaviness of the divisiveness our nation had seen in recent times. Whatever the reason, I needed to shake this mood, so I pushed myself to get started on my holiday cooking in hopes that it would spark some cheer.

I headed out into the cold November air and drove toward the village of Williamsville, New York, for baking supplies. As I approached the corner of Paradise and Klein, I saw ahead of me a procession of taillights lined up bumper-to-bumper. Slowly, cars began creeping closer to the traffic light. Suddenly, just ahead, tires screeched, and the car ahead of me came to a halt. What could be the hold-up?

Then I saw it whirling across the intersection like a Tasmanian devil. I gasped at the sight of the culprit. Pausing underneath the stoplight, he stood there like a traffic cop on duty. It was a wild turkey.

The traffic remained gridlocked. The turkey surveyed the situation, spotted my red Malibu, and slowly moved toward me. Stopping and looking every few steps, he darted right to my driver's side door. With a tilt of his head, he gazed up at me through the car window as if to beckon me. Our eyes met.

Having enjoyed birds as pets, I found him a handsome creature with sleek bronze feathers mixed with iridescent tones of green. His brightly colored head indicated it was a male turkey. We seemed to make a connection, and I almost wanted to open the car door and take him home. Strangely, something was endearing about this bird.

The light turned green, and the traffic finally proceeded. Eager to move with the ongoing flow, I rolled down the window and waved my hand in a shooing motion. Still, he did not move. Finally, I honked my horn, and he nonchalantly waddled away from my car. Relieved that he had moved on, I quickly grabbed my cell phone and shot a piece of photographic evidence as I was sure nobody would believe me about my strange encounter with a turkey. I left the scene intrigued by such a presumptuous creature but also feared for his safety.

Later that evening, after baking two pumpkin pies, I excitedly shared a Facebook post about my experience with the turkey. Shortly after posting, someone commented that they were familiar with the turkey in the picture. Upon some research, I found several newspaper articles about this bird pecking at tires and “playing chicken” with moving vehicles. It seems Calvin was well known by the community. Throughout the week of Thanksgiving, posts were made by those who went to see him. People fed him, children adored him and he was a friend to many, young and old.

The locals gave him many names. Some call him Gus, others Tom, but I call him Calvin after the clothing designer Calvin Klein because of his fine, luxurious feathers and his Klein street location.

I eagerly awaited a sighting of Calvin whenever I drove by the corner of Paradise and Klein. Someone even caught him on video running after a moving postal truck like a dog chasing the mailman! Another person posted a picture of him standing in the rain at his intersection like a ~~watchman~~ guard on duty, seemingly unaffected by the storm. I couldn’t stop laughing at his vigilance. Sharing this connection over Facebook with the community gave me a much-needed sense of unity that had been so desperately missing in the world today.

With all the excitement of my new turkey friend, I no longer felt down. Who would have thought a wild, traffic-chasing turkey would chase away my blues?

**Previously wrote:** *Then one day, Calvin was nowhere in sight. I hadn’t seen him near Paradise and Klein ~~when I drove by~~. My heart sank. Could he have been hit by a car? I later read in the newspaper that he had become such a public-safety concern ~~that he had been taken to a wildlife refuge~~. Officials had relocated him once before, and he managed to find his way back and reclaim his territory, but this time he did not return. Calvin’s community of Facebook followers mourned the loss. I would miss him, too.*

*As Thanksgiving approached once again, the holidays were wrought with restrictions, political division, and the uncertainty of the ADD COVID -19 pandemic. But no matter how tumultuous the times, ~~I counted~~ my blessings and ~~found~~ comfort in the unity of belonging to a community of people who were touched by a free-ranging turkey.*

Then one day, Calvin was nowhere in sight. I hadn’t seen him near Paradise and Klein. My heart sank. Could he have been hit by a car? I later read in the newspaper that he had become such a public-safety concern that somebody had taken him to a wildlife refuge. Officials had relocated him once before, and he managed to find his way back and reclaim his territory, but this time he did not return. Calvin’s community of Facebook followers mourned the loss. I would miss him, too.

As Thanksgiving approaches, again, the holidays are wrought with restrictions, political division, and the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic. But no matter how tumultuous the times, I count my blessings and take comfort in the unity of belonging to a community of people who were touched by a free-ranging turkey.

—Lori Carpenter Jagow—

