

EXHAUST KILLS

by

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FADE IN

EXT. AN OVERPASS ABOVE A BUSY FREEWAY - DAWN

BOB, a plump PIGEON, perches alone on a WIRE which stretches from streetlamp to streetlamp along an overpass. The overpass itself spans ten lanes of freeway below, all choked with morning TRAFFIC crawling at a snail's pace in either direction.

Bob's eyes are closed, his face peaceful as a mild updraft gently ruffles his feathers. At a FLUTTERING SOUND, Bob opens one eye, then lets it drift back closed, even as he shuffles over a few inches along the wire in wordless invitation.

EDDIE, a large GRACKLE, wings down and lands next to Bob on the wire.

EDDIE
Mornin', Bob.

BOB
(nods slightly)
Eddie.

They share a silent moment as Eddie shuffles his feet and settles himself.

Bob's eyes drift open to take in the crawling traffic below, then lift to study the clear morning sky.

BOB (CONT'D)
Nice day for it. Peaceful.

EDDIE
That's the best part about this spot.
That and the updrafts. Don't know why
the others get their feathers in a
ruffle about it.

BOB
Getting grief from your flock?

Eddie grimaces and lifts his to twitch them in air quotes.

EDDIE
"Bad influence." "Flock pride."
"Exhaust kills." The usual squawks.

Bob chuckles.

BOB
Exhaust kills. That's a good one.

Bob's chuckle turns into a mild cough.

EDDIE
Your flock say anything?

BOB
(snorts)
Pigeons. Won't say anything to my
face, just coo, coo, coo behind my
back.

A STRONG GUST sees both birds pause, eyes closing and wings
lifting slightly as an updraft sends their underfeathers into
a flurry.

EDDIE
Mm... more updraft for us.

BOB
Aaah yeah, that's the stuff.

The wind settles and a HORN BLARES below as vehicles continue
to jockey for position along the freeway. Both birds open
their eyes to study the traffic.

EDDIE
Look at that guy. What a dick.

BOB
Was the woman's fault. She cut him
off.

EDDIE
It's a zipper merge. She was just
taking her turn.

BOB
Should have gotten over ages ago. Not
like there aren't signs.

EDDIE
In a zipper formation, drivers should
stay in their own lanes and only merge
when the lane actually ends.

BOB
Been driving long, Eddie?

EDDIE

The rules of the road are common
knowledge. I don't need to operate a
vehicle to...

He trails off as a CAR approaches, speeding toward the
overpass. In the distance a SIREN WAILS, the sounds of police
giving chase (albeit a fair bit behind) to the car and its
criminal occupants.

Through the open car windows, ANGRY VOICES can be heard
arguing, the sounds growing louder as the vehicle draws near.
As the car nears the birds' position on the wire, it suddenly
SCREECHES to a halt on the overpass, the angry voices from
inside rising over the sounds of traffic and distant sirens.

MAN (O.S.)

Enough! It's not my fault! I'm sick
and tired of--

WOMAN (O.S.)

--You're sick and tired? Oh, *he's* sick
and tired!

Eddie and Bob exchange a glance. In tandem, both turn around
on the wire to face the car on the overpass. They settle in
to listen.

MAN (O.S.)

I've apologized. It's done. You need
to let it go!

WOMAN (O.S.)

Let it go? I need to let it go?

MAN (O.S.)

I'm trying to... what the hell?

WOMAN (O.S.)

This is me, lettin' it go!

MAN (O.S.)

Hey, calm dow-- *Shit!*

Both birds blink with mild interest as a black, cast-iron
SKILLET flies out of the driver's side window.

Their gazes follow the skillet as it whirls toward the
pedestrian fence, passes through a ragged gap in the chain-
link, and soars almost leisurely out over the traffic below.

EDDIE
(mildly)
That can't be good.

The skillet arcs through the sky, accelerates in a downward trajectory, and plunges with a loud CLANG through the hood of an SUV. The SUV SCREECHES to a halt.

HORNS BLARE, tires SCREAM, and metal SQUEALS as motorists veer to avoid the SUV and multiple collisions ensue, bringing one entire side of the freeway to a halt.

In the opposing lanes, vehicles slow as the spectacle unfolds. CRASHING SOUNDS of more collisions ring out, and within moments, all ten lanes of the freeway are completely motionless in either direction.

On the overpass above, the SHOUTING continues in the stopped car.

MAN (O.S.)
I can't believe you did that! You
could have killed me!

WOMAN (O.S.)
Oh, I'm not that lucky.

The growing WAIL of a police siren silences both voices for a moment. Tires SQUEAL on pavement as the car lurches forward.

MAN (O.S.)
This is totally your fault!

WOMAN (O.S.)
My fault? This whole thing was your
idea...

Their shouting voices fade as the car speeds away, replaced by the WAILS of police sirens as a squad car races toward the overpass, closing the gap on its quarry. It ROARS past, followed by more WAILING squad cars.

Below, VOICES SHOUT and car doors SLAM as the drivers on the freeway emerge from their vehicles to assess the damages. New SIRENS rise in the distance as emergency vehicles begin to make their way through the snarl of traffic.

On the wire above it all, Bob and Eddie turn to study the tableau below them.

Eddie glances back at the receding cars on the overpass, then at the gap in the fencing where the skillet had passed through.

EDDIE

What were the odds of that, do you suppose?

BOB

(shrugging)

Not the first accident we've seen.

EDDIE

Yeah, but leaving aside the amount of force it would take to reach that trajectory from within the confines of a moving vehicle...

Bob rolls his eyes as Eddie warms to his subject.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

...a couple inches to either side and that skillet would have hit the fence and landed harmlessly on the walkway. What were the chances it would go through the exact spot where the fence was broken?

BOB

Not a mathematician.

EDDIE

Makes you think, though, doesn't it? One well-placed hole in a fence can change everything between one flap and the next.

BOB

Life is risk, buddy. It's what flocks are for. Safety in numbers.

EDDIE

And yet here we are. Defying our flocks.

Bob coughs lightly. He studies the brightening sky thoughtfully as the morning sun peaks over the horizon.

More police vehicles race past behind them on the overpass, SIRENS WAILING.

Below them horns continue to BLARE, and humans continue to SHOUT and gesture angrily as RADIATOR STEAM rises on the breeze.

BOB

Worth it for a little peace and quiet.

EDDIE

(nodding)

And good thermals. Hope we get a few more breezes before the day heats up too much.

Both birds flutter their feathers slightly and settle into a companionable silence as the sun rises over the chaos below them.

Bob's eyes drift closed.

Thoughtful, Eddie ponders the sky. After a moment, his head tilts queryingly.

EDDIE

Hey, Bob.

BOB

Hmm?

EDDIE

Why a skillet, do you think?

Bob sighs, but after a moment his brow furrows and his eyes open. His own head tilts to the same angle as Eddie's as he considers the question.

FADE OUT