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Not all one is obliged to do in this life attains to high-minded adventure. Besides suffering at the hands of the innumerable bureaucracies, one must also weather the obdurate amongst the other lower forms, albeit domesticated, and/or near domesticated survivors from Noah's contrivance against extinction. If it had not been for the indulgences of that ancient Biblical soul, our first devotee of the wildlife, we would not be provided with opportunity to engage in the anecdotal, a most pleasant relief from the never-ending dire emergency facing our species. Thus, as adventurer, I had come upon this Island to which I have repeatedly returned to partake of whatever it and I become together, some unnameable presence about whom or which I may only infer a very general lineament. So much has my nature yearned for something of which it cannot identify, even after a lifetime of probing, it has had to be content with the polarities, the attractions to people and to places. One might imagine himself a hound with his nose ensnared by a scent which on the one hand demands an action, a pursuit, a searching, and on the other (paw) becomes as much an annoyance for the lack of the finding. One must become grossly weary, almost falling in his tracks, as it were, to find, at last, solace in sleep, whereupon, if it does not madden one in his somnabulations, it renews its insistency upon the waking.

In arriving upon the Island, the scent seemed to disappear; I had been abandoned to my own devices; I might lie down to apprehend the balance, (or imbalance, as the case may be) of the Universe. As manna in the wilderness, such intervention in the affairs of my life, my very own spouse volunteered my services as caretaker for those aspiring to escape the ardors of a laborious toil emanating from their various farming activities, which pretended to relieve the boredom of their otherwise inactive retirement in Paradise. This escape coincided nearly with the autumnal equinox, after the harvest, before the seasonal deluges, darknesses, and generalized gloom to which every Eden must answer, if it is to be appreciated in its finest moments. Incident with the dreary aspect, mother nature served up as dessert to my imaginings, the march of frontal systems peculiar to this latitude during that impeding season. I leapt at such opportunity as was presented to caretake, and to indulge, nay, steep myself in the tempests, 'til doubtlessly o'erbrewed; but alas!, I could but attain to strong drink upon such occasions as seemed to account little circumspection with regard to my health; I walked amongst trees that leaned precariously, straining far to one side, and whose limbs were dramatically rent asunder as strange flying presences; sometimes the whole corpus would simply uproot; or its very

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top would plummet away. Occasionally a gust would regale my hat into a tumbling, racing beast that would outrun me down the trail; at times the blasts would nearly pitch me over a cliff to the water below. But I reveled in these tempests; there was something mighty in them, something humiliating, something fearfully thrilling as one's little two-legged equilibrium felt the firm grip of the boisterous blasts from Leonardo's bellows. The world was animate, livening that which lie dormant in one.

In exchange for the luxury of such 'terrestrial' abandon, I found myself the caretaker of sundry beasts; as well I found myself the proprietary occupant of a dwelling equipped with such devices as to suffice with all the accommodations of a home whose circumstance harkened to my own childhood in its basic and essential ingredients. Not only was I to be comfortably ensconced within this very place, but was to be considered the inalienable possessory lodger upon such a sizable piece of the Island as to reign as King over pastures, marshes, swamps, forests, rocky knolls and precipitous promontories, here and there traced with the rudiments of trails that one might the more easily access such a vast Kingdom. Perhaps I overstate the actualities, but only a little; one's fancy is another matter; there we may never attain to its limit.

Now I am brought closer to the aforementioned activity one might pursue as the benevolence associated with the tendering of Noah's offspring. To properly frame the scene that follows I should mention that as this writing unfolds fortune has permitted seven such recurring equinoctial attendances upon the Island, over which period of time the number of the Arks passengers has dwindled markedly, having lately reached a token number sufficient as to dress the realm that the eye might behold the animate part. What unfolds then has taken place during the zenith of the domain, when it was thought that the protraction of farming activities was to be considered part of what one was, what one did; a timeless imperative, emanating from the agrarian within us, without which we would have lost contact with something vital.

One partaketh of the Bird, giving Thanks.

One sweareth at one's brethren likening him to the Bird - in recognition of his doltishness - disesteeming him.

Not to expose the farmer entirely to some unjust abuse at the hands of the vernacular, but at the same time not allow him to escape some culpability in transferring to my care his feathered beasts without some succinct and appropriate admonitions, I assign, none the less, some measure of blame for his only jestingly alerting me to the wiliness of these less than abiding creatures, as the following narration will attempt to elucidate.

However conscientious a caretaker, I am but a casual caretaker of animals. My casualness stems from naught but a casual knowledge of them. While 'seeing to it' these creatures meet not with some raven-ing

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predator, I am apt, otherwise, to treat them as dumb brutes needing my tenderer ministrations, an unwarranted presumption on my part; there's little more required than herding them into their pen; must I tuck them in and recommend them to prayer? Surely, I did not stand as guardian all throughout the night.

In particular I relate of turkeys, with whose 'stupidity' I had some marginal acquaintance, having caretaken them in the previous year for the selfsame farmer, for a period of two months. In hind-sight, while this husbandman of animals had more familiarity than I, with farm animals in general, my first turkey caretaking adventure coincided with the farmer's own incipency in the raising of this fowl. His very first flock consisted of a domesticated White Holland variety which came provided with (or without, as the case may be) its toes and beaks altered (somewhat lessened) in order to prevent them from clawing and mauling each other (only somewhat domesticated, not unlike homo sapiens). Despite her familiarity with the breed, and knowledge of its lineage, and some of its history, and the traditions surrounding these beasts, it was with trepidation that Mrs. Farmer accepted this latest experiment in her husband's husbandries. As a girl the Mrs. remembers her parents raising these Birds, she recalling their proneness to disease, a consideration which would deter her in choosing this kind of animal, or fowl, for a casual farming practice.

It was Karl who very succinctly assessed the measure of the turkey's intelligence by stating "If you moved their feed trough two feet they would starve to death". But hearsay evidence is not best evidence. While the Bird may stand condemned for other manifestations of denseness, his demeanor with regard to food was one of insistent ravenousness, likened to those pangs familiar to us, which we labor to control as we sit in polite array about the dinner table fumbling with bibs, serviettes, utensils, carvings, passings from right to left, or left to right, in addition, asking of the Lord a blessing, which in some households may develop into a recitation of the day's events. This aforementioned pursuit of an immoderate appetite caused these domesticated creatures, of a band, small in number, but in confined space, to forego all semblance of manners, dispensing with Grace and all other formalities, in their impatient voracity, to literally dislodge from my hands the bucket containing their food pellets. I offer this latter as best evidence to contradict Karl, who, however, is not to be swayed in his opinions; turkeys - notwithstanding - as a life, have a right to a fair assessment.

As I have revealed these Birds were a first for the farmer. He desired to raise these gross fowl as burgeoning meat-lockers, on-the-hoof (on the claw) as a variant in foodstuffs which he might himself proudly raise, partake of, and pass around or trade during the Island's year-end convivial festivities. The farmer had determined a judicious portion of the commercial 'turkey-starter' feed, basing his decision on so much cost

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per pound, not calculating as judiciously the Bird's need for the sustenance required to attain the prescribed growth, which may be calculable in so much per pound but may not achieve the desired result.

As mentioned, this turkey business was also a first for me, thus, any independent observation of the facts and any possible opinions or judgments adduced, were systematically precluded as part of my caretaking effort. Mine was to follow the regimen; I followed, to the letter, each motion of the farmer, that is, until the incident involving the dislodgment of the feed pail, this latter manipulation requiring some modification - if I was to preserve my equanimity as a caretaker.

Turkey and trough, during feeding, were located under cover in a small box-like space defined by a grillwork of boards, one part a gate through which the farmer, or caretaker, entered carrying feed and water, and another part, a removable lattice for allowing the beasts access to a small fenced pasture area in the corner of the orchard.

I had devised a masterful piece of deception that, in the end, 'bore out', somewhat, Karl's estimation of the intelligence, or lack thereof, contained within that ugly crypt carried aloft upon their rather gawky, scrawny and unadorned necks. This piece of daring-do on my part witnessed my arrival at the early morning feeding time, leaving the bucket outside the feeding gate, followed by the act of climbing over the fence into the pasture in order to remove the lattice, thereby admitting the Birds to their larger confinements in the pasture. I then walked to the furthest extremity of their outdoor enclosure with them in 'hot pursuit', they, all the while, pecking every available morsel of edibility and inedibility along the way. And while so engaged I would run full tilt towards their box-like pen disappearing within, pulling the lattice behind me, the turkeys always a fraction of time slower in their pursuit, being hobbled, in a race they never would win. This eluding allowed me to leisurely change their water and fill their trough unmolested. I would then leave through the feeding gate clambering, once again, over the fence to remove the lattice to their cage through which opening they would awkwardly locomote, as though in some automatic mode, 'forward' being the only direction to follow though one claw tangled in the other and each other's; they never seemed to lose ground in their ravenous orgasm.

Well, already I lengthen these matters pertaining to the first year's caretaking efforts, beyond what might be considered reasonable and appropriate, in preparing you for the events to which this narrative purports to lead in the subsequent.

I should add one comment, making it known herein, that one quite often unwisely foregoes his intelligence apparatus in yielding his judgment to first impressions. I had assumed after two months I now understood how to handle turkeys and outwit turkeys, as well as care for them. I will also mention that the ravenousness of these birds was

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greatly relieved upon the return of the farmer who sought to fatten them for their eventual slaughter. The mere addition of more rations seemed to assuage their eagerness for the pelletized matter serving as their sustenance. Ah-Hah!, hunger assails thee and satiation avails thee. That's not hearsay.

I must mention still one other small matter, only because it involved some of my expertise as a caretaker and gave rise to some thoughts pertaining to the higher animals. The weaker of these beasts was best served by the toelessness and the blunted beaks of the stronger, for in their efforts, for whatever reasons, to dominate one another (this factor is even not apparent amongst humans) the weaker were seemingly turned upon as some form of prey; there seemed to exist an insistent persuasion to 'rub out' those who were unwilling to maintain their rightful place on this earth, notwithstanding all we have heard regarding the meek inheriting that selfsame place. Perhaps the scant rations triggered and promoted some heightened activity in the area of eliminating the competition (again one cannot learn much from his own species behavior since we seem to 'rub out' one another for a multitude of reasons).

It did become necessary to isolate one of those who became lame, for all the others seemed wantonly persuaded, as children sometimes do, from out some senseless meanness or malice to 'peck' upon the weakest amongst themselves, perhaps in obedience to some still more remote instinctive programming that professes to maintain a virility in the gene pool, or that observes some innate pressure to maintain a strength in all members of the group, the survival of the collective enhanced thereby. And was it not so that Che Guevara was captured in Bolivia because Che, a Doctor imbued with the Hippocratic tradition, could not abandon a *camarada* greatly incapacitated with lumbago; he was thus impeded in his own movements, was subsequently captured and executed.

Of course I speculate endlessly upon the behavior of turkeys and men, not shedding much light on either.

To continue, then, with this last accounting of these white birds, serving as prelude to what follows. The fenced off portion of the orchard did not exceed three feet in height on one side and four feet on the other; these creatures were easily able to fly out there-from to far greater expanses, yet they did not do so. They would occasionally fly atop a post or board that formed part of their enclosure, easily encouraged to dismount, always in the direction of the enclosure; now there's obeisant submission or dutiful compliance, eh wot? For Karl's sake one may still wish to conjecture at length upon their lack of intelligence.

As hinted earlier, the farmer having only casually and jestingly alerted me to the propensities of these new birds, it was my assumption to perceive the second year's batch in no ways differently than those of the first, although they were different in appearance. While I cannot recall the

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exact statement made by the farmer, he did say, in essence, that on one occasion he had to chase some of the newer turkeys who had escaped, capturing them with a fishnet. No further mention or elaboration was tendered. The fishnet was left leaning, perhaps rather eloquently, against a stump near the turkey pen; however I did not feel unduly and dutifully alarmed, nor did I anticipate any particular alteration of circumstance from the status quo ante.

There is surely a tale to be told, although it is one which fulfills none of the criteria of an epic or the ingredients of high drama, it is more what one might characterize as a farcical circum-stance in an otherwise utterly staid and mundane world. I shall thus take you by a long road which will eventually lead to game - so tag along.

The different appearance of these new birds was manifested in their coloration which bore some resemblance to their ancestors, which, according to the literature are denoted as 'wild' turkeys, and were indigenous to that area of the globe now known as Mexico and the Southwestern United States, but, at the time of their discovery in the early fifteen hundreds, was really a nameless undelineated place, subsequently called New Spain. Therein the Spaniard is purported to have found some of them tamed, presumably by the indigenous population, one tome naming the Pueblo Indians as the tamers, not as poultry, but as a source of feathers which were plucked from live birds to be used as burnt offerings in propitiating their Gods. The Spaniards were in the process of conquering whatever would yield to their will; some of the turkeys were already tamed. These tame fowl were transported o'er the high seas in 1518 to Europe, their progeny, perhaps, to eventually appear in England, as perhaps some royal gift, in 1524. And as fair turnabout were, after successive breedings and generations, brought back as live fowl to the new England coast by the Pilgrims in or on the Mayflower in 1620. At least that's one story as perhaps told by the Spaniard. Another, as perhaps the English would like to suggest, the Cabots brought 'wild' birds from the North American coast, where they were native, also in the early fifteen hundreds. Which ever variant of the introduction to Europe is the truer does not alter the fact of the Pilgrims being the agents of reintroducing turkeys to North America. The 'wild' turkey of those times has all but been decimated in their North American habitats, both in the Northeast, and in the Southwestern part of the United States and in Mexico.

Without entering into the genetics of producing varieties of these fowl since their introduction to Europe and reintroduction into North America, suffice it to say these birds (I was caretaking) possessed the same white tail feather tips of their ancestors, the balance of their coloration, in the Cock, being a distribution of white and brownishness speckled with black, and the Hen, being mostly without the white. I assume this

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particular 'breed' would answer the description of the nominally Naragansett variety.

And who knows what traits of their ancestors were harbored in the genes of these domesticated creatures.

Besides not being white, this second crop differed from the first in not having their toes and beaks remodeled. One could observe a general alertness and quickness, and what I would characterize as a wiliness; whether or not their quickness was related to being in possession of all their toes, I know not.

Despite these differences, in my relative innocence I was 'taken in' by their seeming complaisance as I entered their quarters, this year comprised of a small building equipped with a roost (so they didn't have to sleep in it), the same feeding trough, and decapitated plastic jugs nailed to the wall studs serving as water containers. The Birds appeared inured to the intrusion of one carrying buckets, to the pouring of water from the one and feed from the other. After a few days it was easily determined their feeding rate was less than those of the previous year; the same amount of 'turkey starter' sufficient for this larger group (eight birds as compared to five of the previous lot) had been insufficient for the smaller group. The buckets I carried into their quarters thus remained unmolested through any ravening spasms - all very obliging and encouraging.

One further comment upon the differences between these two batches of birds could be made concerning their size, this latter being noticeably smaller; it was the farmer's opinion, upon his return, these would indeed 'weigh out' less on the claw than their predecessors.

Perhaps one ought not volunteer his services when they are not specified, as requirement, especially as a consideration in the caretaking of turkeys; and one ought pay strict attention to, even casual remarks, voice inflections and other innuendos uttered by farmers in a hurry to leave town (for vacationing), their attention diverted thereby.

My troubles began when I elected to exceed the requirements of my profession as caretaker. In exercising my office as dutiful care-taker, in good weather, and in observance of some anthropomorphic generalities, it occurred to me a good cleaning of the turkey's quarters was in order; in addition I remonstrated with myself that 'an ounce of prevention was worth.... some proverbial end', this latter assumption pertaining to cleanliness (without becoming proverbial), perhaps assuring for a more disease-free turkey coop, and, turkey bird, as well.

In preparation for the event it would be necessary to remove the turkeys from their house, for while they might not object to buckets engaged in familiar patterns of movement, a shovel served as a frightening provocation that quite alarmed these *non compos mentis* beasts, into a flapping nightmare, threatening to break the glass

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windows forming part of their accommodations. Such provision was already accounted for in part, the farmer having constructed an outdoor enclosure attached to the building, however, much smaller than the previous year's, approximately equivalent to the floor space of the building itself. A small trap door, only a foot square, located approximately two feet above the ground, at floor level in the coop, opened from the coop into the enclosure. The building itself measured approximately eight feet by ten feet on the floor by eight feet in height; the outdoor enclosure perhaps measuring eight feet by twelve feet.

Not dismissing entirely the farmer's casual remark regarding the chasing of a bird with a fishnet in hand, I decided to cover this outdoor enclosure, which stood at three feet in height. The enclosure was constructed of some cattle fencing with large openings, these openings being mostly covered by a fish netting draped to the ground cursorily tied with twine to the fence's top wire. The trap door, when opened, swung up against the top of the now-covered enclosure; a steep narrow ramp, constructed of a board with wood strips nailed as treads, was leaned against the building from the ground, beneath the trap door.

All in readiness it was time to exercise "Be kind to dumb animals". These creatures being not too keen on changes in their routine, as perhaps intimated by Karl, and, as we may observe in all orthodoxies, were reluctant to go outside; but with gentle coaxing and mutual persuasion, they made their exit to the great out-of-trap-

doors, seemingly content in the bright morning sun. Thus was I easily able to accomplish the task of cleaning their quarters. It being a nice day, I abandoned the birds to their leisure in the enclosure, periodically checking their disposition, finding them preening and otherwise behaving nonchalantly. Very pastoral, No?

They remained for the better part of the daylight hours. When the time arrived for them to be returned to their condominium, they seemed not too inclined to climb the treaded board and to enter through the smallish opening. After some coaxing using a stick as prod and myself as a mobile demoniacal threat outside the fence, they eventually flapped, beat and clawed their way in for the night. Hah!, something accomplished; a little self-congratulation was in order; a good deed done, and such a healthful experience for these, so des-tined for the Christmas platter. Amen.

With such a success behind me, I thought nothing of turning these beasts loose again upon the next bright sunny day; without as much as coaxing them, they found their way to the out-of-doors to take an airing in the sunshine where they remained - Alas! - until dusk.

Having dallied in my conversation down the road, imbibing both wine and conviviality, darkness approaching rapidly, twilight already upon the world, a sense of duty calling more and more loudly and urgently

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within, I departed for the quarter-mile walk to the farm. It was time to check the disposition and security of all the feathered beasts, hoping to find them snugly ensconced upon their respective roosts. To my amazement and ensuing frustration I found little compliance with previous behavior; some suspicious from of anarchy, ... la Animal Farm? The ducks and geese had voluntarily entered their house contrary to previous behavior which required their being herded into their nighttime barrack, the old wash-house. Very nice! Very cooperative!!, Hmmnn!?

Having entered the farmhouse on my way to attend these feathered ones, I had picked up and carried a flashlight in order to perform the usual chicken count ensconced upon their roost. Upon entering their quarters, it was immediately apparent they were not all present and accounted for; Never!! before had they not all stood evening muster perched upon their prescribed nighttime accommodations. One half of them had decided to roost in the covered lean-to outside the barn which served as a sheep-pen. Thus with the flash-light turned on, resting atop a post nearby, I was obliged to carry each damned bird (they have a high resistance to being herded) one by one, to their protected perch, all the while the Gods of darkness were swallowing whole, thus engulfing, the luminescent earth.

The concern herein manifested for these fowl involved their protection from the whims of predatory creatures, namely raccoons, whose presence was repeatedly noted during this particular fall, they having absconded with some three-hundred pounds of the farmer's plums despite vigils with shotgun at the ready (a man's gotta sleep some-time). Now with the fruit season passed it was suspected this resourceful omnivore might decide to include fowl in its diet.

With the chickens safely tucked away, I proceeded to the turkey's quarters - and predictably, they simply had not flapped, beat and clawed their way into their coop. Instead they had taken to huddling together in a corner of their outdoor enclosure, resting upon the ground.

With flashlight in one hand, illuminating the hatchway to their quarters, and using the handle of the fishnet as a prod in the other, I attempted to persuade these gobbledegobbles to take a walk, 'up the plank', as it were. It became apparent they did not get the idea, or found the idea repugnant, or were too indisposed by fright brought on by a glowing Cyclopean eye which caused more alarm than the illumination (lighting of the way) the torchbearer had imagined. Some of this conjecture is necessarily borrowed from hind-sight. If I had it to do all over again.....

While these fowl appeared agitated indeed, it was not unexpected they would be so, but relying on a persistent prodding, accomplished with fishnet handle through the holes in the enclosure, I had expected to succeed finally in persuading them to comply with my wishes - and, indeed, one did respond to the urgency, however, not without the

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characteristic fluttering and darting about; as a matter of fact, all were darting and flapping in a state of agitation -Whoops! - somehow one escapes the enclosure; one of the smallish birds - a hen. Tally Ho!; with flashlight and fishnet in hand (one in each), I rushed to capture this lickety-splitting two-legged. Wise in the ways of catching turkeys, since I had listened well to the farmer (and queried him at length on the procedure, No?). The beast galloped towards the fence at the edge of the forest - Ah- Hah! -surely she'll be captured in a trice. Now, 'tis against the fence made of vertical cedar slats (about three inches wide, rough-split, shake thickness, obtained from beach logs); Again - Hah! - it shoves its head and neck between a slat and a tree (acting as a post) - I'll simply grab it - My God! (My What?) - in a mad thrust, bending the limber slat, the damned bird escapes therethrough. HOI!, now I must negotiate the fence, all the while keeping the flashlight upon the bird hot-footing it to freedom; all somehow accomplished, but barely - with a wild pursuit to follow - such wild pursuit!.

For a few minutes the chase scene is all straightforward, rather a clambering scene, through the woods, over logs, through brambles, down rocky slopes, plunging into this declivity and that, not stopping to ascertain the proper footing, probably looking like a bronco rider with all the sudden graceless jolts experienced on the uneven terrain. Suddenly! I lose sight and sound of the wily creature, itself the color of the forest floor. I listened intently, breathing hard; I searched with the light; it must be near - There!, There 'tis! - the chase is renewed. I gain, finally driving the creature between a rock and log; I raise the net in one hand, bringing it down upon the beast; it struggles and struggles, finally beating and flapping its way free as I'm holding the net with only one hand supplying insufficient leverage, the flashlight in the other - away it goes over the log - disappearing again. By this time I'm some distance from the fence, in the, now, dark wood, with only the flashlight for illumination. Again I listen and search; again believing the bird to be near - this time - nothing. Alas!, one less turkey repast in the making. Exeunt. I stumbled my way back to the fence; then to the remaining turkeys.

And, Lo!, there's another bird outside the enclosure lying alongside the fence, in the company of the others still outside the hutch (but inside their fence). When the creature perceives the light, it begins to run hither and thither towards the fence on the other side of the pasture, with the caretaker in hot pursuit, once again driving the bird against the fence, lunging for the beast, a large cock; it eludes capture, running in another direction, away from the fence towards the barn in the middle of the pasture. By this time darkness has virtually devoured the light. The pursuit suddenly ends, as the turkey disappears behind a vehicle situated beneath a lean-to adjoining the barn. I altered my pace to a slow stealth, light and net in hand, approaching the hidden side of the vehicle.

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Ha! There 'Tis!, lying still, crouched upon the ground, feigning hiddenness; simultaneously, without hesitation, I dropped on all fours, letting fall the flashlight, grasping the net with both hands, snaring the fowl beast with the net, as it begins struggling and flapping wildly - but I lay upon the whole wriggling mass, grasping the bird with both hands through the net and entwined therein - HE WILL NOT BE FREE!!! I then transported the bundle of bird, net and feathers, holding the whole in a 'death-grip', to the hutch, discharging the bird therein through the outside doorway. Tally = two inside the coop, five outside, in the enclosure, and one off stage.

Return to battle. This time I crawled inside the enclosure, getting about in a squatting position. Once again, with prod and flashlight I began to persuade the birds up the narrow sloping ramp, through the small opening. Amidst much commotion of fluttering and grabbing hands-full of feathers I managed to persuade, first one, then in the crouching, stooping position, waddling about like a duck under the three-foot headroom, as another is crawling, slipping, clawing, flapping its way inside, two others go 'bananas', and one disappears behind me; and still more hands-full of feathers as I force another banana up the ramp inside, and still another. This is really not a lesson in mathematics, but there are now six of eight inside the coop at this point in the narrative. I turned around to seek out the one who disappeared behind me - Nowhere to be seen!. No doubt it had flapped, clambered and clawed its way out; the netting had been pulled down exposing large openings in the cattle fence through which the alarmed beast, the largest hen, easily could have escaped.

The darkness, now, has fully engorged the light. I scanned everywhere with the flashlight - not a sign - not a sound. I crisscrossed the bog, the swamp, and the pasture, slowly covering all the ground in the vicinity of the enclosure, fanning out from there. I had imagined the bird squatting somewhere in the tall grass, playing hide and seek. Many times I traversed the pasture without flushing the beast.

Enough!!!. Six down - two to go - full of self-recrimination for having dallied down the road, partaking of homemade wine and Island conviviality. Still there was hope on the morrow, in the daylight, that is, if the raccoons did not succeed in discovering them first.

AYE!!, that will teach me to be kind to dumb animals!! I eagerly awaited the next morning in order to continue my pursuit and capture of the wily beast I believed to be somewhere in the pasture, one success having given me some encouragement. And sure enough, there 'twas, outside the turkey house gobbling away. Heh!, she's a wily one; upon catching sight of me she takes flight, running towards the woods as fast as her legs would propel her, in the same manner as the first one. I could not head her off to keep her in the pasture; as a consequence, she becomes driven against the vertically picketed cedar fence; with fishnet in both hands I

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swing the netting to surround the beast - SHIT!! (**Blistering Blue Barnacles!!**) - the netting becomes enmeshed in some loose barbed wire remaining from an old fence, becoming completely tangled. Unable to free the net, the bird still attempting to get through an opening in the slats, its head and neck between a pair, its legs digging in for all they are worth, attempted to propel the too-large body through the too-small opening. I grasped for the body of the bird - obtaining a hold - Suddenly!, in its plunging and digging, as though it was a football player in 'red-dog' mode, - CRACK! - a slat snaps - and I'm left with a handful of feathers as the beast gains its freedom through the fence - SHIT!! - once again (**B. B. Barnacles**). I lose the bird, the net is tangled; something isn't proceeding according to the script.

I ambled off to the 'can' to meditate (a two-holer situated on the edge of the pasture with its doorway facing towards the forest). Then I try again, climbing the knoll in the woods behind the pasture fence. I hear the hen clucking away (it doesn't sound much like 'turk!, turk!, turk!', although it sounds more like 'turk!' than 'gobble!'). I see her, engaging her in pursuit, attempting to steer her towards the pasture. Being cagey, she looks for an opportunity to get around me, but eventually I succeed in driving her between the knoll and the fence. I lose track of her in the bramble and jumble of limbs of recently fallen (felled by man) coniferous trees. Once again, a bird seems to play dead - not a sound. I gave up again, going off to imbibe some coffee and tend my other chores.

As time passes I hear her again, in the bush. I went to investigate with weapon in hand. My back is 'killing me', so I sit on a stump in the woods waiting for some sight or sound. Ah! - did I see a movement in the bramble along the fence? I wait, intently staring towards that furtive place - sure enough!, there 'tis again. I deliberated for a bit; there's no coaxing it in the dense brush; finally issuing myself an ultimatum 'nothing ventured, nothing proverbial'. Away we go - my objective to drive her against the fence, hoping she would escape through it, in the other direction this time, into the pasture where I could have a less encumbered run at her. It seemed this would be the case as she put her head between several pairs of slats, only, as luck would have it, there was not one single hole in the fence; a standoff!. If I moved in too close she would get around me; being in the bush I was very restricted in my movements; the terrain was definitely in her favor.

The challenge to my venturesomeness still remained; my back was tired; a standoff was only a sure route to frustration, so I chanced it, chasing the beast along the fence still hoping for a hole; final-

ly, as expected, she darted away from the fence into the dense brush, only to play dead again. I couldn't flush her out with poking, and probing into the bramble and bush. It was raining; I yielded the field of battle to the unvanquished nothing gained'.

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It was now midday; it had been raining heavily for two hours; the bird ought be soaked to its pinfeathers, wishing it was back in jail, eating turkey starter, enjoying the conviviality of her friends in their clean, dry quarters. What price Freedom! ?

I thought I would try again, but was found counseling myself "I've made a sterling effort". I began a new approach: in the 'recognition scene' I said unto myself, "I owe thee farmer, for two of thy birds, 'tis a plain and simple truth; I tarried long, when homeward should have I wended. Aye!, and unto thy beasts I ought not have tendered kindly ministrations". And still more unto myself to soliloquize, "I could try once again to espy the beast, carrying a shotgun, shoot the damned thing, stash it in a freezer, at least salvaging something".

No doubt the birds (in case you had forgotten there are two birds on the loose) will die of starvation or pneumonia if the coons, dogs or humans don't get them first - and if they survive - Imagine!, range-fed turkeys!. I had thought of sponsoring the first Island 'Real' Turkey Shoot (every year the Island holds an imaginary Turkey Shoot, at least that's what they call it, conducted in the school-yard, using Bull's Eyes...targets...). At least the farmer might appreciate the humor of a real turkey shoot.

Alas! my back had taken a 'turn for the worse' through this turkey-chasing - NEVER AGAIN - I'll shoot 'em!!!.

"Turkey or not to turkey....."

I had begun to inform the other islanders of my turkey fortunes (slings and arrows), mostly to humor myself and to seek some form of comforting gestures or expiation of my deeds. Some offered to help corral and capture the beast, the next time it appeared (I had given up on the first bird, having neither heard nor seen it since the night of its departure). Even this didn't help, for upon the first occasion that I availed myself of this assistance, the wily hen flew-up thirty feet into the trees, threatening to fly even deeper into the woods. A shooting seemed the simplest way to recover some of the apparent loss. So Karl said he would come by one day to shoot the bird, which I had managed to keep nearby, on the wooded side of the fence, enticing it with scatterings of turkey feed, cast thereabouts, which the ravens also found to their liking. However, when the bird caught sight of me, it would immediately 'skeeedaddle' into the forest. I did not pursue this cagey beast any longer.

It had rained heavily, turning the whole pasture into a bog. Karl never did come by. A couple of times the bird flew into the pasture to be near its companions, taking flight as soon as I appeared. One day it even ventured as far as the barn to be under the cover of the sheep's lean-to where the other barnyard fowl congregated during the inclement weather - again lickety-splitting at the sight of me.

As alluded to earlier, I had given up on the first escapee, never seeing feather nor hide of her. Finally, one day, two weeks after the episodic or epic jailbreak, the second escapee once again seemed

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challenge for my determination, despite my earlier resolve of NEVER AGAIN. The condition of my back, which now seemed reasonably 'stable' made it possible to decide, especially since the bird boldly, affrontingly, haunted the very step to her own house communicating with her brethren, in broad daylight, perhaps preaching insurrection. It was raining ducks, geese, chickens, cats, dogs, the whole cast of Noah's characters, a swelter of deluge; a most disheartening day for man and beast; a cold miserably boggywet, wherein not a creature alive could do but suffer. It was upon this very occasion, this very day, in late afternoon, that I staged my attack.

Coolly and collectedly, I donned my yellows, pulling on a pair of the farmer's gumboots, covering my head with the sou'wester, prepared for the rain-infested siege, and the immortal murk, if there was any existent. Thus armed, with fishnet and all kinds of determination I set out to accomplish my task. Once again, almost immediately, the turkey took flight - on the wing - to the tree tops. Undeterred, or unruffled, as one might say, I cast stones at her, causing her much discomfort, uncertainty and loss of balance; she could do naught else but leave her perch - and 'twas so, she took flight in the direction of the open pasture, my intended strategy, now paying dividends. A 'merry chase ensued' (over hill and dale)...er... over stream and bog. My only hope of capturing her resided in her not taking to wing; and indeed the creature hot-footed herself towards the pasture fence, which, with, but a few flaps of her wings, she could have unceremoniously cleared to unknown freedoms; instead she sought an opening through some horizontal rails (instead of the predominantly vertical slats she had broken before in her previous thrusts towards freedom), making a poor choice in her initial selection of spaces, allowing me sufficient time to cast my net, landing upon the beast with net and all fours in a slurry of yellows, grass, leaves, feathers and mud!

ELATED WAS I!!! Victory!!

And surely the bird must have been relieved to quit the winery weather and to be somewhat cheered in rejoining its brethren. It was necessary to catch this bird in order to redeem myself in the eyes of the Islanders who viewed me as one who was outsmarted by a 'turkey', of whose intelligence they held a very low opinion.

If you have been unable to follow the actual count of the number of birds, this narration not intended as a math exercise, herewith I attempt a recapitulation; the turkey scene began with eight birds, four larger, of an older batch, and four smaller, of a later batch. Three birds had escaped, one hen, perhaps the smallest, from the younger batch, lost to her freedom in paradise, hardships unknown. The second to escape was a large cock from the older batch, it being captured soon after its escape. The third was the largest hen, also from the older batch. Her freedom lasted two weeks. She was returned to the hutch to preach insurrection or the pros and cons of freedom; however I was unable to detect any plots

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to overthrow the regime. The fishnet suffered its demise in the last capture having broken off at the base of the handle where it begins to form the loop upon which is strung the netting; in landing upon all fours, it was my intent to subdue the bird - without finesse.

I delivered to the farmer seven birds which most likely were sufficient to supply **husbandlie fare** for his neighbors and himself during the forthcoming yuletide celebrations...as a matter of fact, one potential customer requested two birds, a number the farmer felt he could supply.

In the end, the farmer did confess or reveal a more involved chasing of turkeys which required both he and his Mrs. in securing their capture. His earlier casual statements to me did not do justice to the final revelation. In some small part I felt only slightly deceived by the farmer, thereby shedding some minute portion of my guilt - as adequate recompense for so small a deception.

It is possible there could be a sequel to this epic; a third experience might reveal more fully what I had learned from the first two.