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## ***BIRDS***

G. M. Carr

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## Mythcon 51: A VIRTUAL “HALFLING” MYTHCON

July 31 - August 1, 2021 (Saturday and Sunday)

<http://www.mythsoc.org/mythcon/mythcon-51.htm>



## Mythcon 52: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

Albuquerque, New Mexico; July 29 - August 1, 2022

<http://www.mythsoc.org/mythcon/mythcon-52.htm>

### Abstract

The birds nest in the broken gutters,

### Keywords

Mythril; Mythopoeic; Poetry; Birds; G. M. Carr

**BLACKBIRD PIE** FROM PAGE 15  
suit her better. She curtsied deeply and withdrew.

King Toby gnawed his whiskers thoughtfully for a moment, and snapped his fingers at the nearest page.  
"Summon the royal scrivener and the keeper of my seal. I wish to make a decree."

Elianora mounted the stairs to the North wing, still wearing her self-satisfied smile. Lady Margaret and Lady Viola, who had been made to wait outside during the Queen's visit to the King, trailed behind at a respectful distance. Lady Margaret had remarked on Her Majesty's benevolent air and had concluded therefrom that the Queen had once more prevailed upon her boor of a husband with characteristic gentility. Elianora's composure, however, was doomed to an untimely end: it shattered abruptly as angry footsteps came toward her down the hall. A moment later, rounding a bend in the corridor, she nearly collided with the Grand Duke, who scowled at her in a most ungracious manner.

"Why, your lordship," remarked the Queen in a voice that managed to convey both surprise and mild reproof of his rudeness. "Has something upset you?"

"Upset me!" shrilled the Duke, nearly dropping his eye crystal. "Madam, I have been grossly deceived! You led me to believe that Her Highness the princess was an accomplished musician, who would soothe my aging ears with her melodies! I took the liberty of following her to her lesson--"

Elianora's heart sank at this.

"--in hopes of enjoying some ease from the unnerving events of the afternoon: but the sounds which I overheard through the door were hardly more musical than the racket of those infernal blackbirds! I had been prepared, Madam, to overlook the--peculiarities--of Her Grace's behavior for the sake of the advantageous match, but this is too much! Never would I consider taking a bride without musical accomplishments! You may send servants to my apartments, Madam, this very hour, for I shall take my leave ere nightfall. Good day, Your Majesty!" He stomped off.

Elianora ran her hands over her headdress, straightened it slightly and patted her cheeks to bring the color up. From her emotional state, she supposed (and rightly)

that she must look downright pale. Then, dismissing her ladies with a wave of her hand--how unfortunate that they had overheard his Lordship's outburst!--she swept down the passage to her parlour, from whence the Duke had just made such a hurried exit.

Clarissa looked up as her mother opened the door, and detected trouble. Master Pickenby, who was equally perceptive, sprang to his feet and bowed deeply, clutching his beribboned lute. Joan bobbed.

"Master Pickenby," said the Queen, "you may retire."

The music master did so.

When he had closed the door behind him, Elianora, who had apparently not noticed Joan, seated herself opposite the princess and folded her hands in her lap. Clarissa waited.

"First of all," said the Queen, "the Grand Duke has withdrawn his suit for your hand. This is entirely due to your deplorable lack of accomplishment in your music, the results of which he unfortunately overheard today as he passed by the parlour."

The Queen was too well-bred to repeat the Duke's own admission that he had stooped to eavesdropping. It would never do to set Clarissa a bad example.

"Secondly, and corollary thereto," continued Elianora, "His Majesty has given me orders not to permit you out of doors. This is for your own safety," she raised her voice slightly at Clarissa's expression of protest, "since the blackbirds displayed an especial interest in your chamber during their--um, their 'attack.' You will, therefore, remain within the castle until such time as His Majesty may deem it safe for you to venture out. Accordingly," she went on, "I have devised a schedule for you which will be in keeping with this new development. On Mondays in the morning you will assist me..."

Clarissa's attention strayed from the hateful work schedule to her father's unfairness. She, who had so valiantly taken charge of the castle's defense, was to be shut up inside while the men-at-arms, who had done nothing but crowd her doorway, would be allowed to join in the ensuing campaign! It was downright unjust, was what it was. She'd show them somehow! But how?

She returned to the matter at hand in time to hear her mother say,

"...and since you do not at present have a suitor to entertain, you may spend not one, but three hours each afternoon on your embroidery. This will relieve Juliana a little of her duties, and will provide you with an opportunity to complete that hanging more quickly. You may keep your maid Joan with you for company: she seems to have a good influence upon your industriousness. Otherwise, you will see no one."

Elianora rose, and Clarissa, in a daze, rose with her.

"This schedule will commence on the morrow," she heard the Queen say. "You may go now to prepare yourself for dinner."

Clarissa curtsied and went out with dignity, followed by a silent and docile Joan. They proceeded without speaking until they had put three beads of the passage behind them; then Joan burst into giggles.

"Chirping chaffinches! Chortling chokecherries!" shrieked the princess as loudly as she dared. "Did you hear her? Three hours!" She whirled Joan around in a circle. "I'll be able to go all the way to Thorn Wood and back!"

"But won't it be dangerous?" said Joan, suddenly serious. "If the blackbirds are after you--"

"I'll be disguised," Clarissa reminded her. "They wouldn't know me from the lowliest milkmaid in the dairy. I shall come and go as I please. I'll show those silly men-at-arms! I shall track the blackbirds straight to their lair and--phomp!" She made a prancing gesture. "What marvellous, marvellous luck!"

And Joan, dreaming of crisp, snowy linen and of the glowing colors of embroidery thread, could only agree.

TO BE CONTINUED

## BIRDS

by G.M. Carr

The birds nest in the broken gutters, in crevices of ornamental eaves. They hide between the buildings, among the broken bricks... No soft shade of leaves for these poor nestlings. But mother, with quick soft, bird-talk, utters lullabys for their rest.



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