

The Bird
A Play by Matt Buchanan

Characters

Joe
Frank

A bus stop. A bench, a lamppost. Frank and Joe sit, apart, on the bench. Frank is reading a newspaper. Joe is eating fries, and dropping some on the ground. We can hear the sound of pigeons, and although we can't see them, they seem to be eating the dropped fries. Joe watches them absently. Frank turns the page. Joe eats and watches the birds. Suddenly he sees one fly away, and follows it with his eyes.

JOE

Whoah!!

FRANK

Pardon?

JOE

That bird.

Frank returns to his paper. Short Pause.

Just took off with a fry bigger than his whole body.

Pause. Joe is still shaking his head over the bird.

Man alive!

Frank snorts contemptuously.

FRANK

Pigeons.

JOE

(Angry.) Pigeons!

Frank looks at Joe for a moment, then goes back to his paper. Pause.

That wasn't no dang pigeon.

*Frank is not paying Joe any attention.
Short pause. Joe holds up his last fry.*

You ever see a french fry big as a whole dang pigeon?

Frank looks up.

FRANK

No.

Frank goes back to his paper. Pause.

JOE

That doesn't make sense.

FRANK

Sure it does.

*Pause. Joe tries to work this one out.
Frank continues to read. Finally, Joe turns
urgently to Frank and takes his arm.*

JOE

Look. Okay. This bird flew away with a fry bigger than his whole body. Right? And you say you never saw a french fry big as a pigeon.

FRANK

Never.

JOE

But you said it was a pigeon.

FRANK

No, I didn't. I said, "Pigeons."

JOE

What about 'em?

FRANK

Nasty, dirty creatures.

*Joe is beginning to think he's conversing
with an idiot.*

JOE

Okay, granted. But this bird wasn't a pigeon!

FRANK

I don't care if it was a turkey. Leave me alone!

JOE

(Almost apoplectic.) A turkey! A turkey! A french fry bigger than a turkey? When did you ever see a french fry that big?

FRANK

I didn't say it was a . . .

JOE

You just show me that french fry! You just show me when anybody ever saw a french fry bigger than a turkey!

Joe stares in fury at Frank, who has given up and is reading his paper again. Long pause.

(Very quiet.) You just better take that back.

Pause.

(Louder.) I said take it back! You take it back!

Joe is on his feet now, in an exaggerated boxing stance. Frank looks up at him, then resignedly puts down his paper.

FRANK

Fine. I'm sorry I insulted your bird. I'm sorry I suggested it was a turkey. It was obviously not a turkey. I most humbly beg your pardon, on behalf of your bird.

Joe calms down and sits. Frank resumes his reading. Longish pause.

JOE

(Meekly.) He's not my bird.

Pause.

He's not my bird. He's just a bird. I think he was a swallow. Or a sparrow. Swallow or sparrow.

Pause. Frank turns a page.

Maybe he is, though.

Pause. Joe prods Frank.

Hey, maybe he is!

FRANK

A swallow?

JOE

My bird!

FRANK

(Looking up.) You have a bird?

JOE

No!

FRANK

(Shrugs.) Makes sense.

Frank goes back to his reading. Joe begins to pace excitedly, working things out in his head.

JOE

(Half to himself.) It all depends on if it was a swallow or a sparrow. Or a wren! *(To Frank.)* What does a wren look like?

FRANK

Pardon?

JOE

See, I think that bird was a message to me. From God or somebody.

FRANK

Couldn't happen to a nicer guy.

JOE

So I need to know what kind of bird he was.

FRANK

Why?