

The year is 2069. After graduating high school, all citizens of Globalandia, the global national state, are forced to pick what kind of bird they would be and are thus sorted into one of four bird categories. There's the Hunters: Eagles, Hawks. The fittest of the fit, they strut their feathers with pride. Elon Musk and Lana Del Ray are in their number. Then there's the Beauties: Peacocks, flamingos. Their looks help them fly above the rest. We're talking Kardashians, Ted Kaczynski, the like. Then there's the Peckish: hummingbirds, woodpeckers. Their eagerness and resilience (if birdbrained nature) are nothing to squak at. And lastly, there's the waterfowl. That's the most boring group, it's just reserved for people who are good at swimming. It's a system that encourages balance, order, freedom through unity.

But I knew there was something desperately wrong with this system. How can we be truly free if we are all tethered to our respective flocks? Birds of a feather must learn to live apart, too. And that is when, when the Grand Inquisitor asked me "If you were a bird, what kind of bird would you be?" on that fateful day up on stage at the all-State assembly, I loudly exclaimed "I'd be a kind one!"

The crowd gasped, then collectively guffawed, then exclaimed "Well zoinks, that ain't a kind of a bird, innit?" in unison.

"Now young man, that is not a kind of bird. That is a state of bird. As Thomas Nagel would say, you're conceiving of what it might be like to be a bird – you might have qualitative experiences that may steer you toward a moral framework that prioritizes kindness, however you'd care to define it. But that is not a biological Bird Class. You must choose from the pre-approved list. Why not a Merganser? or a Great Blue Heron?"

"I TOLD YOU! I'D BE A KIND ONE! AND CAN IT WITH THE MUMBO-JUMBO!" I then broke out into an ear-splitting a cappella rendition of Free Bird by Lynyrd Skynyrd. I go limp the Grand Inquisitor gingerly punches me square in the nose and his handmaidens drag me off stage.

I snap to and awake in an octagonal room of about 110 square foot. The furniture is reminiscent of Hobby Lobby. A banner reading "Williams College" hangs from the wall. It appears as though I am in some sort of riot-proof cement prison. Outside my window, a robin with a VoiceMod begins spewing propaganda:

"YOU WILL CHOOSE A BIRD. HOO HOO."

And then I threw myself at the window and the glass broke and I ran off into the Berkshire woods and everyone clapped. And that's how I topped the new bird order in a few short steps.