Storms

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Reflection

During a flash nonfiction class, we were given a prompt to write about something on the compound, preferably something outside or natural. I thought of the ibises that showed up one day to join the pigeons and turkey vultures. My original draft focused on my interactions with the ibises, but when a friend read the piece he thought the birds were a euphemism for my biological family. That became the nucleus for creating the woven fabric between my two families, and the thoughts, feelings and emotions they evoke.

I wonder if they miss me. If they realize I left Food Service six months ago. If anyone cares for them the way I did.

Every morning after breakfast I dug through discarded cabbage cores, inedible outer leaves and pinto bean juice to unearth the treasures. I flung heels of spongy white bread like skipping rocks across a glassy lake, and they waited. Long, down-curved bills speared bread slices. They’d strut away on spindly stems, non-pescatarian catches in tow.

Rarely confused for the regal heron or beautiful egret, the ibis is the physical outcast of the wading bird family tree. Toughness and character are not bound by beauty, nor is the ibis. The last wildlife to take shelter before a hurricane arrives; the first to reappear when the winds subside.

Pigeons, magpies and tiny finches parked on the periphery of the bread buffet, in deference to ibises. Bagels mauled by daggered beaks. Cranberry scones shredded to crumbs.

Solar rays cut through the morning haze of the eastern sky, erasing remnants of last night’s rain. Ibises gathered and multiplied, from two to six and six to twelve, cautiously approaching, appetites swallowing care and concern.

I wonder why they’re so far inland. If they felt about me like I felt about them. If our time together was a memory.

These moments slide into thoughts of family that collide in places unseen and sounds unheard, only to escape without a trace.
I wonder if they miss me. If they realize I’ve been gone for nine years. If they think of me as I think of them.

I sift reds and greens and yellow hues of produce, displaying marbled proteins and earthen grains. Slicing and dicing, sautéing aromas of ginger, baby bok choy and oyster mushrooms wok-sizzled in peanut oil. Stir-fried love served on plates, in bowls. Memories of nightly family dinners and conversations stretching beyond the midnight hour. I can’t recall what we talked about, but I remember feeling that I mattered, that I was safe, that I belonged. And now...I’m lost and alone...drifting.

Family support ebbs like the evening tide lapping the shore, continually eroding my fractured relationships. Remnants of hope are the tides of tomorrow.

I wonder if they’ll be here when the storm ends. If I can find my way back. If all that remains are euthanized memories.

Author Bio

Adam Craig has been communicating through the written word since sending postcards home to his parents as a young boy from summer camp, but he is relatively new to the world of publishing. His preferred genre is flash nonfiction, where he can mine adventures from a beautifully chaotic life to tell his story. He looks forward to returning to the physically-free world in 2030 after sharing 17 years with the Florida Department of Corrections. Any literary success can be attributed to the influence and impact Exchange for Change has made on his life.