

# EATING

as a Hawk does

by Jared Helton



The wind rushed by with such ferocity it made enough noise I thought it would give my presence away. But alas, the mouse never seemed to realize what was about to happen. I thought with anticipation that this might actually be my first catch. Could it possibly happen this time?

I readied my powerful feet and entered the crucial final seconds that would mean hunger or food for one of us; life or death for the other. The creature quivered and looked up. I was almost on top of him. Just as the mouse twitched and started to scamper away, I spread my wings again and felt the tremendous drag slow me down. I reached out at the same moment with my taloned toes and felt resistance in my right foot. On reflex, I closed both feet tight, and landed somewhat shakily. A quick glance told me I had been successful: The mouse was firmly within my grasp. Its legs were moving and an occasional squeak of defiance came from it. Quickly, instinctively, I bent down and twisted its neck with my hooked beak to end its suffering. It was over in an instant.

I let myself calm down for a few seconds before I considered eating. The sheer rush of adrenaline had tightened my muscles and quickened my heartbeat like I had never experienced before. After so many attempts, so many death-defying stoops and aching bruises, I had finally won. The hunger that had built within me for the past two days would finally be satisfied. It was not hunger for killing or death; but simple hunger for food.

Looking carefully around, I saw no other Hawks or threats to my well-deserved catch. I spread my wings over it, feeling the need to guard it against other hungry eyes, and bent down to tear into my first mouse.

In one small corner of my mind, I was somewhat repulsed. It was the remainder of my human memories; my human history. It intensified and threatened to force my mind to think. But my hunger was greater and would not allow it. As I clenched it firmly in my feet, I pulled its head off with my beak. It took a greater amount of effort than I had imagined, but once swallowed, my strength renewed. I tore a couple large pieces of flesh and downed them as well, my mind dimly trying to consider the taste. Only a portion of the small mouse remained and this I swallowed whole, gulping only twice. The feeling of food in my crop was new and unexpected, but caused my hunger to slowly abate. The warmth from the flesh was somewhat relaxing as I inspected my talons to be sure nothing was left.

I folded my wings and looked about. The field was desolate and empty. The silence was only interrupted by the distant sounds of songbirds. For the first time since I had first become a bird I felt like a true Hawk again. The demanding hunger, the thrill of hunting, the excitement of the dive and the catch, and finally the satisfaction of the meal; all were important and all had happened.

I remained where I stood a few moments more to contemplate things. The taste of the mouse remained in my beak, and now I examined it. There was nothing disgusting or dreadful about it. Although salty, perhaps, it was a good taste. But as hard as I tried to think about it, I realized there simply was not much sensation to analyze.

The wind picked up slightly, and I took to the air with spread wings as I concluded that my first food as a Hawk had been a far cry better than what some of my dying human impulses had suggested.

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