



augur

by caro asercion



*one for sorrow,
two for mirth,
three for a funeral,
four for a birth...*

you're well familiar with the idiom. a nursery rhyme, a schoolyard chant. *count the birds*, the children tell each other. *they will be able to tell your future.*

it's more complicated than that, of course. it's not just the number of birds, but also their demeanor, their flight, their nests, their song. any number of elements must be considered.

at its core, however, the nursery rhyme holds truth – the birds do know many things.

consult the deck, traveler. let the birds help you divine what is to come.

augur is an interpretive oracle for one or more readers. in augur, participants observe a flock of strange and wondrous birds (represented by the deck of oracle cards) to tell a story, foretell an outcome, or play to find out what happens.

you will need two things for an augur reading:

access to the augur deck – this can either be a hard copy of the cards, printed and cut out, or a digital version where the cards are listed. use whichever is easiest.

some sort of random number generator – for a standard reading, a single twelve-sided die will be sufficient. an online random number generator will also serve the same purpose.

if you are participating in this augury as one of multiple readers, take time before you begin to establish norms with each other. decide how you will resolve disputes or move forward in the event that participants have conflicting ideas. play and discussion should be loose, freeform, and balanced evenly between all readers.

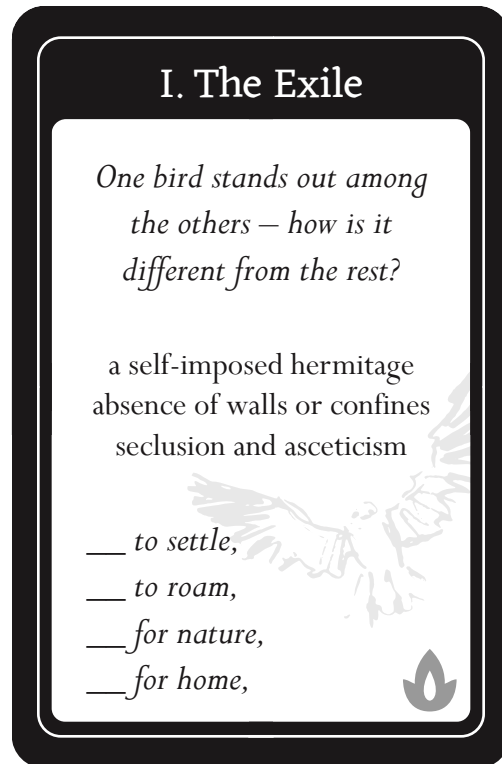
to begin your reading, pick the location where this augury takes place. where are you reading the birds? are you in a forest, listening to the chatter of songbirds as they construct their nests? on the edge of the coastline, watching seabirds dive into the waters below? on a rooftop in a bustling city, looking at the corvids as they dot the surrounding telephone wires? on another planet, observing species of birds that are strange and alien to us or yourself?

choose a place that holds personal significance or interest to you. don't worry about justifying whether it makes sense for birds to be there, or what kind of birds you might expect to see. they will show up in their own time.



to read the birds, shuffle your deck of cards, and lay out three cards face down. from left to right, turn over each card in sequence.

every card consists of four key components:



title – an overarching idea, an archetype, a symbol.

question – an inquiry, a focus, a lens, a state of mind.

body – viewpoints, perspectives, and interpretations of the title. variations upon a theme.

feathers – a couplet, a rhyme. a collection of potentialities, three to four in number. a cluster; a flock.

read the card, aloud or to yourself. answer the question to the best of your ability; offer as many details as you see fit. interpret the card's meaning.

the first card displays a **circumstance**. the status quo, the mundane. values and creed. the outward society. *what do you believe in?*

the second card portrays an **obstacle**. a problem, an antagonistic force. a consequence of the circumstance, or perhaps its opposition. *what is disrupting your natural state of being?*

the third card offers a **course of action**. a way in, a way out, a way past, a way through. an answer or solution – temporary or permanent. *what would the birds have you do?*

lastly, recite the rhyme that is created by your three-card spread, filling the blank space in each feather with a number; replace the first space with “one” and count upward for each following blank. roll a die or a random number generator with as many options as there are lines in the feathers section of the three-card spread, then count out the feather that corresponds to your roll. this feather is the **final omen**. it is the birds’ parting gift; interpret it as you see fit.

when you are finished, clear the cards. if this reading had multiple participants, thank your fellow readers for their time, and take a moment to highlight a contribution of theirs that surprised or delighted you.



additional considerations

the augur deck is divided into three suits:



wilds are individuality, vestige, chaos. that which supersedes the boundaries of society.



civils are proximity, connection, balance. that which fits into the order of systems.



bridges are liminality, transience, equinox. that which exists between and beyond.

you may decide to consider the suit of each card when interpreting it. is the a card driven by the internal spirit, or an outside force? does it travel against the grain, or with the flow?

attribution and thanks

augur was inspired by historical augury practices, traditional british magpie rhymes, and *the gentle oraclebird*, an immersive installation created by shing yin khor.

many thanks to jammi and manu for their advice and suggestions during the design process for this project. both of them offered insights that were integral to the final iteration, and i'm grateful for their support.

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credit

augur was designed and created by caro asercion.

to find more of their work online:

[@SeaExcursion](#) on twitter

seaexcursion.itch.io

patreon.com/seaexcursion

for more esoteric birdwatching simulators, visit:

twitter.com/ornithopolis



I. The Exile

One bird stands out among the others – how is it different from the rest?

a self-imposed hermitage
absence of walls or confines
seclusion and asceticism

___ to settle,
___ to roam,
___ for nature,
___ for home,



II. The Sower

What make it difficult for the birds to live here? How have they adapted?

fertile but untilled land
necessary sacrifice
suffering that yields reward

___ for the spade,
___ for the soil,
___ for the work
of a long day's toil,



III. The Thief

One nest contains a precious artifact or trinket. What is it?

ill-acquired fortunes
knowledge of the underbelly
fool's gold

___ for swiftness,
___ for grace,
___ for silver,
___ for lace,



IV. The Firebrand

How do the birds treat their young?

passionate swirl of thought
a moment at a crossroads
deliberate and decisive action

___ for the match,
___ for its embers,
___ for the hatchling that
no one remembers,



V. The Weaver

The nests here are lined with a strange material. What is it?

hard work unrecognized
refining what is coarse
a looming threat

___ brings linen,
___ brings flax,
___ calls the laborer,
___ calls the axe,



VI. The Poet

When did you first learn to read the birds?

fresh perspectives
a newly empowered voice
the right word in the right place

___ for a song
that is yet to be sung,
___ for the elderly,
___ for the young,



VII. The Gambler

The birds give you a gift. What is it?

a calculated risk
devil-may-care whimsy
knife's edge

___ for virtue,
___ for vice,
___ for luck, and
a toss of the dice,



VIII. The Archivist

The birds show you something they have never revealed to anyone else. What?

a lesson learned too late
diligence in the face of chaos
hidden gem of wisdom

___ for the desk,
___ for the squalor,
___ for the book,
___ for the scholar,



IX. The Wayfarer

*What sort of landmarks or features does this place have?
How do the birds use them?*

uncharted territory
shelter amidst danger
embarkation upon a new journey

___ to go east,
___ to go west,
___ for the wilderness,
___ for the nest,

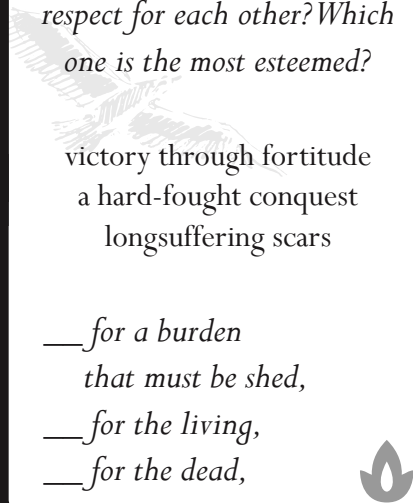


X. The Champion

How do the birds show their respect for each other? Which one is the most esteemed?

victory through fortitude
a hard-fought conquest
longsuffering scars

___ for a burden
that must be shed,
___ for the living,
___ for the dead,

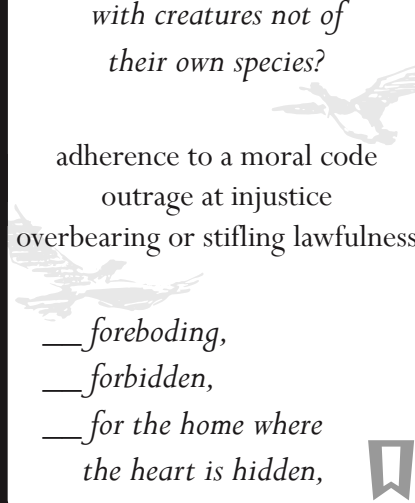


XI. The Sentinel

How do the birds interact with creatures not of their own species?

adherence to a moral code
outrage at injustice
overbearing or stifling lawfulness

___ foreboding,
___ forbidden,
___ for the home where
the heart is hidden,

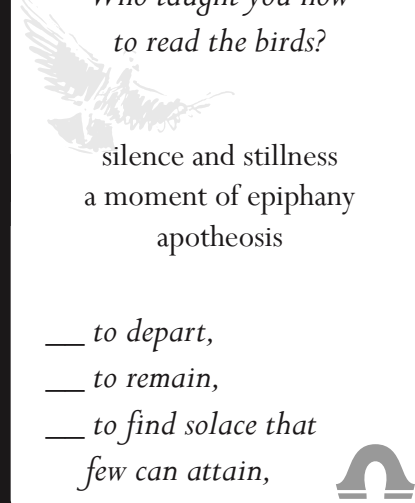


XII. The Ghost

Who taught you how to read the birds?

silence and stillness
a moment of epiphany
apotheosis

___ to depart,
___ to remain,
___ to find solace that
few can attain,

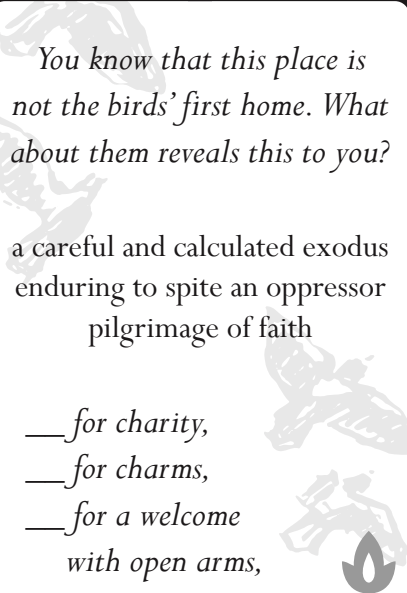


XIII. The Nomads

You know that this place is not the birds' first home. What about them reveals this to you?

a careful and calculated exodus
enduring to spite an oppressor
pilgrimage of faith

___ for charity,
___ for charms,
___ for a welcome
with open arms,

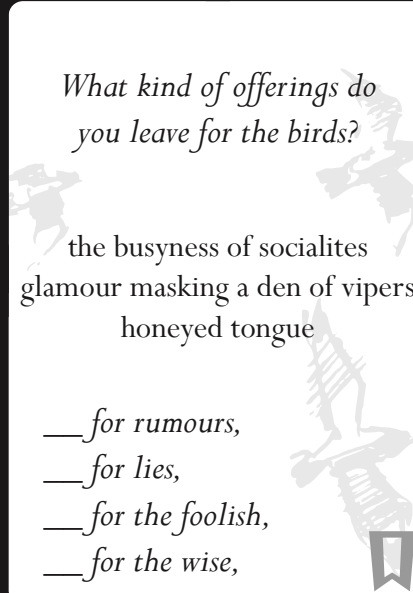


XIV. The Gentry

What kind of offerings do you leave for the birds?

the busyness of socialites
glamour masking a den of vipers
honeyed tongue

___ for rumours,
___ for lies,
___ for the foolish,
___ for the wise,

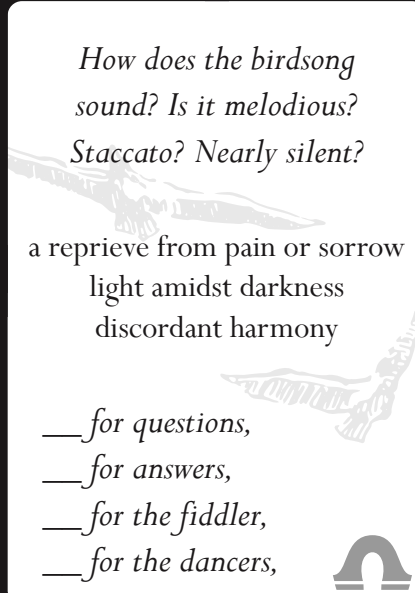


XV. The Player-Troupe

How does the birdsong sound? Is it melodious? Staccato? Nearly silent?

a reprieve from pain or sorrow
light amidst darkness
discordant harmony

___ for questions,
___ for answers,
___ for the fiddler,
___ for the dancers,

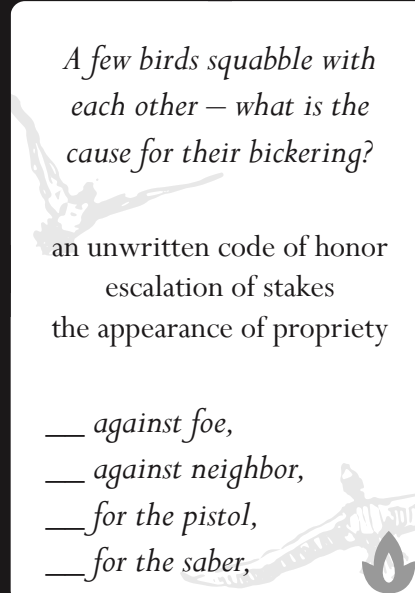


XVI. The Duel

A few birds squabble with each other – what is the cause for their bickering?

an unwritten code of honor
escalation of stakes
the appearance of propriety

___ against foe,
___ against neighbor,
___ for the pistol,
___ for the saber,



XVII. The Wedding

What kinds of courtship rituals do the birds perform?

a suitable partnership
simple comfort
a new phase of life

___ for tragedy,
___ for laughter,
___ for right now,
___ for hereafter,



XVIII. The Festival

What makes this place ideal for the birds to live? How have they made it their own?

a moment of joyous revelry
meeting the needs of the many
camaraderie and companionship

___ to carouse,
___ to heed warning,
___ until sunset,
___ until morning,



XIX. The Beast

*What do the birds fear?
How can you tell?*

insatiable hunger
battle between impulse and will
power without control

___ from blood,
___ from stone,
___ from the spirit,
___ from the bone,



XX. The Regent

How do the birds treat the weakest among their community?

an imbalance of social capital
striation and division of culture
control without understanding

___ for the country,
___ for the town,
___ for treasury,
___ for the crown,



XXI. The Prophet

How do the birds react upon your arrival? What is different about their reaction this time?

knowledge of the old ways
a predestined fate
understanding without power

___ points to glass,
___ points to mirror,
___ points to omen that
couldn't be clearer,



XXII. The Tempest

What do the birds look like in flight? Are they elegant? Nimble? Spontaneous?

the potency of raw nature
tradition-shattering iconoclasm
revolution

___ brings warm weather,
___ brings grey skies,
___ brings a storm that
takes all by surprise,



XXIII. The Judge

How has this place changed since you last read the birds?

retribution for a past misdeed
vindication for a past slight
the completion of the cycle

___ comes heaven,
___ comes hell,
___ comes a story
you'll never retell,



XXIV. The Reaper

Why do you choose to read the birds over other omens?

rebirth and resurrection
acceptance of absence
preparation for new beginnings

___ for the cowardly,
___ for the brave,
___ for an open and
hungering grave,

