

The Great Extinction

By Saraiya Ruano

Ectopistes migratorius, the wandering dove
Who will wander in extinction forever more
Pushed off the face of this earth with a single shove
In our skies they will no longer soar

The most abundant bird on the planet
Flying in "Countless Numbers" and "Infinite multitudes"*
A pigeon with eyes the color of pomegranate
Nuts, fruits, and grains were its favorite foods

East of the Rockies they flew
In flocks that blackened the sky
No one ever knew
That in a century they'd bade us goodbye

Nesting in giant colonies,
One hundred birds per a tree
An opportunity did hunters seize
They could not just leave them be

A single chick alone in a nest,
Representing a future that did not exist
Hunters put their guns to the test
And we knocked the species out with a single fist

Netting, shooting, and using long sticks
To knock the victims out of their nests
The clock of extinction began its ticks

If only pigeons could wear bulletproof vests

Sold in the market for fifty cents a dozen
What does it matter, they're abundant, right?
They're so much prettier than the Mourning Dove, its cousin
And so easy to kill when in flight

The numbers fall, like raindrops in a violent storm
Four billion pigeons, three million pigeons, one pigeon, no more
The fire of extinction has started to burn warm
As pigeon after pigeon drops dead on earth's floor

Martha, Martha, I weep for your people**
The only Passenger Pigeon left to mankind
Martha, Martha, I weep for your people
For my own people have been so blind!

She dies in September at age twenty nine
And is mounted with a plaque that reads EXTINCT
Us humans, oh, how we've overstepped the line
It seems that the Passenger Pigeon has been hoodwinked.

Down with the Eskimo Curlew
Down with the Labrador Ducks
Hopless as the Battle of Waterloo
Do you like your birds cooked deluxe?

Say farewell to Bachman's Warbler
Kiss goodbye to Iceland's Great Auk
They're life on Earth was but a blur
You'll never see *them* on a nature walk

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* Quoted from explorers Samuel de Champlain and Gabriel Sagard- Theodat

** Martha was the last Passenger Pigeon. She was named after George Washington's wife.

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