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#19

by stanley lieber

Stan had always self-identified as a stork, but he had come to realize, in his old age, that he was more than likely descended from the *Threskiornis aethiopicus* species of ibis—the African sacred ibis. This transmigration made no great difference to him; he'd still collect his pension.

Stan had passed the civil service exam online, with help from a contract hacker. He figured that exhibiting the resourcefulness required to pull something like that off had to count for something. Anyway, no one had ever complained about his work after he got the job.

He liked to drive the mail truck.

He wore the hat, and the weird socks, pulled up over his long, slender legs. His beak checked the windshield as he rolled over potholes, or turned too quickly inside the tiny cabin. His articulate wing tips quickly sorted the mail. The families on his route always smiled and waved when they saw him ambling down their street.

Stan glanced in his rearview mirror and inched back onto the road, rolling slowly toward the next mailbox. His next package was too large to fit, so he extricated himself from the vehicle and made his way up to the residence's front door.

"What in the hell are you supposed to be?" asked the resident when he opened the door.

"A bird, sir," Stan sighed, leaving aside for the moment the question of his exact, accurately identified species. The debate was all too familiar.

"Fucking liberals," the man said.

"Indeed, sir," Stan replied, and walked back to his mail truck. He didn't feel much pride as a bird on a normal day. It was hard for him to get worked up over verbal abuse. If the man tried to assault him it would be a federal crime. And Stan was more than capable of defending himself. Anyway, this was his job.

Stan's tall knees bucked against the underside of the mail truck's dash as he pulled back onto the highway towards town. He adjusted the small fan mounted over the mail tray and hummed to himself an original composition that he planned to commit to tape some time in the following week.

Friday was payday.

So be it.