

The Birds

A Modern Adaptation

By Don Zolidis

(based on the play by Aristophanes)

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Cast of Characters

PITHETAERUS
EULPIDES
HAWK
EPOPS, king of the birds
PROCNE, his wife, the Nightingale
TITMOUSE
BLUE-FOOTED BOOBIE
HUMMINGBIRD
SEAGULL
PASSENGER PIGEON
DODO
KIWI
PARROT
CROW
BAT
OSTRICH
INVESTMENT BANKER
LAWYER
INSURANCE AGENT
ACTIVIST
INTERNET SPAMMER
IRIS, a minor goddess
PROMETHEUS
POSEIDON
HERCULES
MGRAUCHUCHUK, a barbarian god

(Numerous roles may be double-cast. If more parts are needed, additional chorus birds may be added.)

(A rocky area. PITHETAERUS enters first, followed by EULPIDES, who is struggling. EULPIDES takes a deep breath and sits on a rock.)

EULPIDES

My feet hurt.

(PITHETAERUS turns to stare at him.)

I brought the wrong shoes for this. I should've brought my boots. I don't know what it is, these are just a little snug on my feet, so there's some rubbing. I can't stand the rubbing.

(EULPIDES begins removing his shoes.)

You know, if you had said earlier we were going mountain climbing, I could've brought the proper boots, so really, I lay the blame on you. It's your fault my feet hurt. I have sensitive skin. And issues. Dermatological issues. I mean, did you even think about bringing some sunscreen up here, because I'm going to peel, and then I'll just look like a mummy, you know, just this peeling, ridiculous mound of dry flaky flesh and then I'll never get a girlfriend and then I'll die alone. With my cats.

PITHETAERUS

Eulpides, I'm going to give you two options. You can either put your shoes back on and shut up, or I can stab you.

EULPIDES

Well that's just not very friendly.

PITHETAERUS

Tough.

EULPIDES

I think I want to go home. Yes, I'm going home.

PITHETAERUS

No you're not. We're up here to find the king of the birds—

EULPIDES

There's a king of the birds?

PITHETAERUS

Were you listening at the Oracle?!

EULPIDES

It was dusty in there, I have sinus issues.

PITHETAERUS

He said that the only way to escape the problems of city life was to find the king of the birds. And he would know where the best place on earth was.

EULPIDES

Why are we doing this again?

PITHETAERUS

Do you want me to go through the entire exposition again?

EULPIDES

That would be nice.

PITHETAERUS

Fine. Life sucks. Got me so far?

EULPIDES

Huh?

PITHETAERUS

Modern life is a pain. I got insurance bills, I got rising health care costs, I got internet spam, I got telemarketers calling me at all hours—

EULPIDES

They're friendly.

PITHETAERUS

I am sick of it. I am so sick of it I could scream. So I did the only thing a sensible person could do: I found the nearest homeless guy claiming to be a prophet from the future, and I had him spread out some sheep intestines in the lobby of the Marriot.

EULPIDES

I think they were goat intestines.

PITHETAERUS

Does it matter? And then I spun him around three times, made him suck on a can of glade for two minutes and asked him what to do. And after he woke up, he said—

EULPIDES

Where are my pants?

PITHETAERUS

Yes, but after that he said, walk to the tallest mountain and find Epops, king of the birds, and he'll know.

EULPIDES

And so you think that was good advice?

PITHETAERUS

I admit, I've had some doubts, but if I've learned anything from our political leaders, it's the importance of seeing through an insane plan to its insane conclusion in the face of factual evidence.

EULPIDES

Well I can't argue with the wisdom of our elected officials.
(HAWK pops up from behind a rock.)

HAWK

Who goes there?!

EULPIDES

What in the hell is that?! IT'S A TALKING BIRD!!

HAWK

Aaaaaaaaaaaaaah!
(HAWK dives back behind its rock.)

EULPIDES

DID YOU SEE THAT THING?!!

HAWK

Go away!

PITHETAERUS

Calm down! Everybody calm down!

EULPIDES

IT WAS A TALKING FREAKING BIRD!!!

PITHETAERUS

Of course it was a talking bird!

EULPIDES

That doesn't freak you out?

PITHETAERUES

It's a conceit of the play, all right! Birds can talk! Just relax.

EULPIDES

Well I wish someone would tell me these things. Can rocks talk too? Hello rock!

PITHETAERUS

No rocks can't talk, don't be stupid. Excuse me. Mister Bird? Can we talk to you for a second?

HAWK (*from behind the rock*)

I'm not converting to your religion.

PITHETAERUS

No, that's not what we're here about—

HAWK (*from behind the rock*)

I don't need a magazine subscription. I don't care that you're poor and trying to get yourself out of poverty, I don't need any new magazines.

PITHETAERUS

My name is Pithetaerus, and an oracle told us to come find the king of the birds.

HAWK (*from behind the rock*)

Which oracle?

PITHETAERUS

A dirty one.

EULPIDES

He had kind eyes. They were a little dazed. You know, from the force-feeding of inhalants. But they were kind.

HAWK (*from behind the rock*)

We don't recognize the legitimacy of that oracle!

PITHETAERUS

What—

HAWK (*from behind the rock*)

We only accept legitimate oracles!

PITHETAERUS

I don't even understand what you're talking about! Can you please come out from behind that rock?

(HAWK finally, tentatively emerges.)

HAWK

All right.

PITHETAERUS

Hey. What's your name?

EULPIDES

Oh, the birds have names now?

HAWK

I am known as Hawk. Because I'm a hawk.

EULPIDES

That's not really a name. That's more like a class.

HAWK

And I am the guardian of the gate.

PITHETAERUS

What gate?

(HAWK turns around.)

HAWK

Aw dang it! Who took the gate!? This isn't funny guys! Fine, I am the guardian of this area of ground here with nothing really in it.

PITHETAERUS

Well, we're here to—

HAWK

This isn't about suburban sprawl is it? Cause I've had just about enough of that. Every time I find a nice place to circle and suck the sweet, sweet blood juice of some little rodents, along come a bunch of you damn humans to lay down some roads, throw up some houses and wreck everything for the rest of us.

PITHETAERUS

Yeah, we don't like that either—

HAWK

I mean, do you have enough strip malls? Seriously? Do you think it's fun to sit on an electric wire all day—it hurts my talons. Okay? You try it. There are enough Home Depots in the world.

PITHETAERUS

We're here to escape all that.

EULPIDES

I like Home Depot.

PITHETAERUS

We have renounced the world of man!

EULPIDES

Where else can you get all those tools at reasonable prices?

PITHETAERUS

And we wish to meet with your king, Epops!

HAWK

Nobody meets with Epops.

EPOPS (*off-stage*)

Who calls for Epops!

(The HAWK dashes off to shush him.)

HAWK

Just shhh! Okay! We're trying to cultivate an aura of mystery!

(HAWK returns.)

He's in a meeting.

EPOPS (*off-stage*)

Tell them I'm in a meeting!

HAWK

Epops is a busy man, I mean bird. He doesn't have time for every straggler who comes up here and wants to talk to him. Unless, you know, she's hot.

PITHETAERUS

I have something shiny.

(PITHETAERUS produces something shiny.)

HAWK

Shiny?

EULPIDES

I have a hot sister.

(EPOPS is there suddenly.)

EPOPS

Who brings something shiny and hot to Epops?

HAWK

Your majesty!

(The HAWK bows.)

EPOPS

Fetch me some popcorn and a bundle of twigs. And a hot chick.

HAWK

Sire, your wife...

EPOPS

All right forget the twigs. Ha ha ha! Just a joke there from Epop to you. But get me that popcorn.

HAWK

As you command, sire.
(*The HAWK exits.*)

PITHETAERUS

Your majesty, my name is Pithetaerus and this is my companion Eulpides—

EPOPS

Oh it's like that is it? I've heard about you Greeks.

PITHETAERUS

He's just a friend. And we are here—

EULPIDES

Where are your feathers?

EPOPS

You need to shut up.

EULPIDES

I thought birds had feathers.

EPOPS

Epop is molting, got it? It happens. Deal with it. Epop doesn't look at you and comment about all the horrible things about your appearance.

PITHETAERUS

Your majesty. We come with a humble request.

EPOPS

We'll get on with it already.

PITHETAERUS

What we are coming to ask you—

EPOPS (*interrupting*)

So how is humanity, anyway? Anybody tell you I used to be a human?

EULPIDES

Wow.

PITHETAERUS

Humanity is in bad shape, that's why—

EPOPS (*interrupting*)

Yeah, it was a bright sunny day in early March. I was in sitting by a stream, as I was wont to do in those days, and I saw the foxiest little filly this side of the Antilles—

EULPIDES

A horse?

EPOPS

No, I'm using that as a figure of speech. Anyway, her name was... I don't know, I'm forgetting her name—not important. What is important is that we made sweet, sweet love by that stream. The water was crisp on our ankles. Butterflies flew by and made faces at us and then went on their merry way doing those things that butterflies do. We had a pretty good day of it. Course then my wife found out. Gentlemen, if you ever have the opportunity to marry a girl that is a close personal friend of Apollo, I would advise against it. Needless to say, I'm now a gigantic bird. What the hey.

EULPIDES

Cool.

PITHETAERUS

But why did He make you king of the birds? Shouldn't you be like a servant bird of something if she really wanted to get at you?

EPOPS

The gods work in mysterious ways when they curse you for eternity. But you learn and move on, you know? I developed a taste for corn mulch, learned how to regurgitate worms into my youngling's mouths and I can poop on people from above. Like I always say, life hands you lemons, poop on people from above.