



FAMILIAR

Silence is kin to peace,



it's not always clear that something has slipped awry.



CHARACTERS



MARGARET


A caretaker, a giver, a grinder.
The estate is not her property, but it is her refuge.
There is peace in caring for the grounds, in protecting the wildlife.

MAURICE


The illustration is a symmetrical, sepia-toned drawing. At the top, a dark banner contains the name 'MAURICE' in a white, serif font. Below this, another dark banner contains a short biography of Maurice. The main scene shows a woman in a white dress slumped over a table, her head resting on her arms. In the center, two cats sit on a small platform. The background is filled with various creatures, including bats and owls, and the entire scene is mirrored across a central vertical axis. At the bottom, two stone tablets with cursive text are visible on either side of the woman.

Maurice is an artist-actor, star, old diva.
His life, his heart poured out for his craft.
It is all he knows. It's his only virtue.


Maurice believes he will return to the theater. He waits for the call.




The siblings live uneasily under one roof.
Margaret tends to plant and bird as Maurice's mind groans with the stress of waiting.
The estate taunts him with its untouchable luxury. Like an invasive species,
he lashes out to claim his own ground.




Surrounded by the nature she has nurtured, Marçaret finds her roots grow strong to protect her world from subversion.




The cat arrives to make the true nature of Marçaret's dreams clear:
they are prophecies she has the power to accept or reject.

A black and white photograph of a forest scene. Two large, thick tree trunks are prominent in the foreground, framing a central path or clearing. The background is filled with more trees and foliage, creating a dense, natural setting. The lighting is somewhat dim, giving the image a somber or contemplative mood. A dark, semi-transparent rectangular box is centered in the lower half of the image, containing white text.

Maurice grows weak as his sister grows strong. The strength of her bonds decides the fate of those in her care.

A painting of a large, dark tree in a field. The tree is the central focus, with its branches spreading out. The ground is a mix of green and brown, suggesting grass and earth. In the background, there are some small, dark structures that look like haystacks or small huts. The overall style is somewhat impressionistic, with soft, blended colors. A dark rectangular box with white text is overlaid on the middle of the image.

Overhead, the birds cry out to each other in an unfathomable code.



This is a fairytale through the eyes of the aged,
who know with certainty
that magic is always tied to mortal peril.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

A few years ago, I accompanied my bird-enthusiast mother-in-law to an evening titled "Bluebirds and Bacardi" at Irvine Nature Center in Owings Mills, MD. It was a pleasant evening, but I received a shock towards the end. The evening's main speaker, a woman who had written several books on conservation and bird habitats, very casually mentioned that, should sparrows invade your bluebird box, the solution was to snap the delicate necks of the newly hatched babies. I looked around the audience, expecting horrified reactions, but the birders were all nodding in understanding and agreement.

It was a shock to my perceived notions about animal advocates as gentle folk. It was a life lesson on the ways in which the practicality and ruthlessness of nature can inform the people dedicated to it, a lesson which never left me. In this story, animals serve as both spirit guide and indication of a character's spirit: familiars in the old sense of the term.



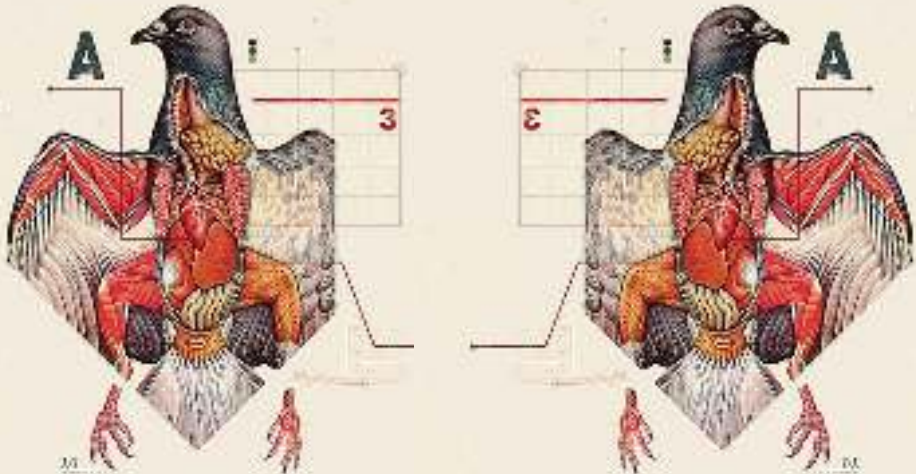
THEMES



CONNECTION

The memory of friendship. Warmth under a hand.
Seeds grown in the same soil, reaching for the same sun.

SURVIVAL



The red beak of a threatened bird, the swelling of a snake after its swallowed a mouse, the sturdiness of a weed that shoves against flower, grasping for the sun, until the flower stem withers, shrivels into nothing.

The background is a highly detailed, symmetrical painting of a garden scene. It features a variety of butterflies in different colors and sizes, some perched on flowers and others in flight. The flowers include purple, yellow, and white blossoms. The overall composition is balanced and intricate, with a soft, painterly texture. The color palette is rich and varied, including blues, greens, yellows, and browns.

BELONGING

A home. A place of rest. A conviction of value.
A desperation for the long struggle for home to end in peace at last.