The little friends I played with every day each lived in a different house on the same big tree street. Each morning we would all do something different that was the same. Work was scarce for us in an elegant way that Depression Fall of 1935. We were all about 2 years old. We had almost learned to talk with perfect authority about what we thought was important: How the incredible Jimmy Burnside could get in and out of the most elegant escapades faster than anyone could make up stories of how he burned down his mother's mink coat stuffed cedar storage closet while smoking when he was one and a half years old, how the extraordinary Arthur Mintz might drive us out to his farm full of cows, how you broke your leg if you ran with your shoe laces untied Or perh aps the truly great Herman Groffsky was going to drive us down to hi s Glass Wareho use in Newa rk. and let us climb over the giant trucks and wood crates full of glass wi th a green p aper four leaf clover on each pane. Sometimes we ineptly tr ied to climb tr ees or just c hugged around enjoying the newness of walki ng. Sometim es we would w alk up the sidewalk the great distance of seven lawns to see if the myste rious old bird people who no one had ever seen had left their garage door op en. It was my deepest earli est most profound dark secret ambition to be some sort of a s ecre t bird garage p er son when I grew up and I am happy to report in my own humble wa y I am. Sometimes the garage door was open and sometimes the garage door was closed. We would discuss why the door was open sometimes and sometimes closed or why if you could have birds or anything else in your garage, every one just had cars or last years garbage When the garage door was closed we walked away in an elegant sophiticared high hat depression realizing that soon the door would be open. When the door was open we eagerly peered in through the chicken wire covering the wide opening of the huge dark Burchfield garage and listen to the squawky radio left on for the birds and look in and stare as the charming silver throated feathered prisoners of the golden air waves danced, pranced, leaped, squeeked, beaked and screamed at us:

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Squawk Squawk
                                              Squawk
                                                  Squawk
                                                 Squawk!
O! What a beeg!
                                                Bunch of midget Reubens!
S quawk! Cheep! What an!
E au de dwarf de
                                                   Velasque<sup>z</sup>
                                                   Atmo
A n d i ts heaven to think the great blue
                                                 sphere!
                                                                nly 5 seconds from he r e. S q u a w
                                               way's o
ucks! Qu
        q u a wk! They have Chickens, D
                                                             ack! Geese on the far m! S q u a W
           The y don't have peacockst hat look do wn at their ugly feet and scre a m!
              B u t in this little Cheep! garage unlike any other of which we co u 1 d m a w k,
                  W e h a ve Peacocks, Cheep! Tibetan Pheasant, Parrot, Co c k a t o o,
                         o k a hama Rooster, Swan, Squawk! Wren, and Can a r y t o o.
                             u r key, Squab, and Pidgeon, Cheep! Eagle a n d E m u,
                                 De a d branches, fake trees, thin rope s
                                        (Froms)(Nurk)(dat)(sings)(dark)(gutterese.)
                                         Squawk! Squawk! Squaw k!
                                          Cheep! for sleep swing ease. Squaw k!
                                           Squawk! Squawk! Squaw k!
                                           Childrenz iz duh kwaziest people s!
                                           Squawk! Squawk! Squaw k!
                                           I got to ask: How doooo you do?
                                           Squawk! Squawk! Squ a w k!
                                          I got beautiful feathers. Give m e
                                         S quawk! Squawk! Squaw k!
                                        S ome corn! Some peanuts. Ple ase!
                                     S q uawk! How a bout some bann a n a?
                                  S q u a wk! How abo ut some pu mki n s e e d?
                              A friend in ti ny food p arcels is a fr
                                                                    iend in deed.
                                      Squ awk! Squ
Ke y See! Sla
                          S q uawk!
                                                       awk! Squa
                                                                     wk!
                                                                            Squ a w k!
                       Whee!
                                                         vies! Fre
                                                                                 Spree?
                                                                       e!
                 L i fe?
                                          ursuit of
                                                          Happines
                                                                       s?
                                                                                     Free?
                                         Free! Free!
                                                            Free! Free!
                                                                                         Fre e!
                                         Get us the
                                                             goddamn
                                                                                             ke y!
It,s all Can't When you're not in it why)(is)(youse)(so)(good?)(what)(is)(youse?)(little) the goddom?
                            Yes
                                                                                                     yes, the
                                             Yes
                                                        Yes.
                                                                          Yes.
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extravagant
little feather prisoners
wished to fly away to freedom
but we little slaves of small town
growth believed in the rewards of enslavement. Every morning at about ten, no matter
what we were doing, one of us children in the
uncanny spontaneous compulsion of child ritual
would yell, "Let's go see the Cookie Lady!" as if it
were a new idea no one ever heard of before. Whoever
yelled this was accorded a non-verbal Great Prize of
respect and honor. It was considered a sign of genius.
We would skip over to the side door of an old house
and each yell over and over again like exotic giggle
birds in as many funny tones of voice that we could
hear, "Cookie Lady! Cookie Lady!" A thin white
capped white haired lady would come to the
door with a box of ginger snaps. She would
unwrap an inner foil in a Franz Hals
wink. She would give each of us a
cookie with a smile. She
was very jolly.

This was not an Eisenstein winter of discontent. this was a summer of pale white millionaires in opera hats, white ties and tails and evening gowns on the radio mill ing around on the mirror polished Automat marble sing ing somewhere just around the corner there's arainbow arainbow in the sky so let's have another nickel cup o fcoffee and let's have another piece of ten cent pie. And one afternoon that summer a man who looked down in old clothes came to our front door. Taking gray hat and wiping his sniffle with it and off his looking down, he asked my mother if he could do some work for a piece of pie and coffee. He was try ing very hard not to faint from hunger. With a sad look my mother searched my little being with her clever eyes, turned to the man who looked down and said, "My son does all the work here. We don't have work. Come around to the back steps and we'll give you pie and coffee.

> I was very proud of my mother. I followed the poor man around to the back of the house and watched him look down, sit on the back steps, look down, sniffle near tears, look down, eat the *pie*, and drink the coffee. I was just about to tell the crying man about the Cookie Lady when my mother yelled at me out of the back pantry window, "Let the man eat in peace." It is over 60 years later. I sti*ll see p*eople who look down. I still wish I could give to all I see who cry dark misery: In all ways quick foiling any shadowy or dense, depressing desolate shade: My mind: The *Cookie* Lady y: D**ige**sting gi **gg**les he**r lo**v ers ma de.