

# *The Book of Birds*

*met here and there and on exotic trips*

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## *Our Correspondent Writes from Mexico----*

### **First Installment: How I found Mo & Jo working..**

Mo and Jo are two brothers from the South Side. That is, they are from Tlaquepaque on the South Side of Guadalajara, Mexico. Tlaquepaque is one of the poor areas of Guadalajara like the Southside of Chicago. The people live in run down and small apartments made of brick. And it appears that the walls in some buildings are about to come tumbling down. When it's hot, which is a lot of the time, there's dust almost everywhere.

Also like Chicago, Guadalajara, the capital of Mexico's state of Jalisco, is an important giant metropolis in the industrial, farming and geographical center of the Mexican nation.

Mo and Jo, like most Jaliscoans (or Tapatians, as people from there call themselves) love their Guadalajara. They also loved Tlaquepaque where their parents and brothers and sisters all live. But they didn't love the smell of the hood, the overflowing toilets and sewer problems. And few of the people there in Tlaquepaque would set out seeds or plants for them to feast on. You see, Mo and Jo were--they still are--common pigeons, and they didn't attract a following.

One day, when they were both 3 years old, Mo and Jo decided to move to the center of town, down where all the tourists visit. They had flown there on outings before and seen, three different times, people who work selling all sorts of stuff at the parks throw seeds and popcorn to the pigeons. So they gathered up everything they owned--which wasn't much--into little purses around their necks and flew off to El Centro.

Once they arrived, however, they were quickly confused. There were so many pigeons in the parks that they often got lost from each other and only got back together by using the secret whistle their mother had taught them. Most pigeons just sing Kuurooo, kurroo...But Mo and Jo knew how to sing like this: Kurroo, Kurroo, Kurroo, Kurru de de doo de doo. Mother Flo had picked this up from a Mariachi trumpeter she once dated at the Mariachi Plaza.

Anyway, Mo and Jo got over their first travail by using this secret whistle to find each other. But this caused a different problem. Hundreds of pigeons heard their whistle and coo and were so impressed that the word spread on the wing and like a wild fire all over Central Guadalajara. Pigeons were flocking from every park to see and hear and meet Mo and Jo. They were overnight sensations. Being "backwoods" birds, Mo and Jo were at first very shy and reticent. But they were treated so royally by their fellow brethren that they soon felt important.

That's when they were invited to teach all the pigeons the hat dance trill (which is what their secret whistle was called). "Oh my", said Jo to Mo, overwhelmed. "What should we do? If we teach everyone this call we'll never find each other. And besides we're not experienced teachers and we can't lead big classes. There are just too many birds who want to learn."

"Too many birds that want to learn?", scolded Mo. "The whole world should have such

problems. Listen here: this Mexican hat song is part of the mestizo culture. And we should trill two birds with one clone."

"Please stop talking in riddles that way; you always do stupid jokes", an exasperated Jo responded. "What does two birds with one clone mean, anyway? What are you talking about?"

"What I am talking about", declared Mo, too self-righteously for his own good, "is culture, and you and me."

"I'm listening", said Jo.

"Maybe we can't teach them all," said Mo. "Perhaps we could start a school for teachers here in town and bring in lots of our sisters and brothers from Tlaquepaque to study to become the pigeon teachers we need. Then, once we have taught all the pigeons the trill, we can ask our friends the Huichol to become teachers to teach people what they need to know."

"People", cried Jo. Now you're going too far, and beyond the seed pail. People know everything; and why should we hop into that kettle of fish. We might wind up as pigeon soup. We should stick to pigeons."

Whoa. Don't get so wired, Jo. Where would we be today without our imaginations? Back in a smelly hovel, that's where. Instead, here we are in the eves of the Cathedral, cooing away."

"OK, OK," said Jo, "but teaching pigeons is going to take a very very long time, and I still don't understand your metaphor about clones."

Just then a big gust of wind, a remolino (which is a whirlwind) swept through the park and blew Mo and Jo up from their perch. With sand in their eyes they drifted Southeast and settled down into the courtyard of an old colonial hotel off the square, the Frances. Mo jumped up into a sheltered alcove in an internal hallway and Jo followed.

"See, just like I said.", Mo started in again: "Two birds from one clone. Don't forget you and I came from the same yolk. We're identical twins, gemelas. That makes us a clone. And here we are, safe and sound together again in a new home."

Mo and Jo spent the next months learning all the little places to walk and perch inside the Hotel Francis...in flower pots, on rooves and fences and frescos, and on bamboo and iron furniture. Every hallway and balcony could be reached through interior courtyards open to the sky. So they were living both indoors and outdoors, sheltered and free, a pigeons paradise.

In the meantime, they visited Tlaquepaque and brought back other pigeons to teach trilling in the parks. And this was a very successful adventure; so that when I visited there all the park pigeons not only whistled the hat dance trill but some of them danced in couples around hats on the square.

Also as Mo and Jo became accustomed to the Frances they learned the jobs of the hotel workers. And so when I stayed at this hotel Mo and Jo would always walk me down the hallway and lead me along the railed porchway above an open courtyard patio to my room (which was #222). Then they would either sit in a large planter pot in the corner of the courtyard or perch on my window sill and tell me stories, like this one.

MSnipe 4/99

Mo and Jo pose in the flower pot. Jo is the shy bird lying low behind the plant.