



*Over the season, you are treated to a recurring dream, one which comes to you on in the third, sixth and ninth weeks of the waning summer.*

*It begins simply, with the place you grew up in, the view from your childhood bed. A hand on your hair feels warm and kind. You look up into the faces of your parents - albeit the parents you remember had fewer feathers, and no beaks at all. For some reason, this doesn't disturb you. Your parents are birds now.*

*"Think on this," they ask, their voices dancing, melodious. "If excommunication hinders the soul's journey through the labyrinth, is it unvirtuous to allow a person to die whilst excommunicated?"*

*"Is it unvirtuous to excommunicate at all?"*

*You lie thinking for a while, but when you draw breath to answer, you suddenly realise you're awake, and you have been for a while. Your parents - or rather, the birds that mimicked them - aren't here. You're just left with the dream, and the question to think about.*