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Seagulls in Utah

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Seagulls in Utah

Religious Supernatural Legend

Informant:

Christine Cole is my college roommate and friend. She is 21 years old and is studying elementary, early childhood, and special education at Utah State University. She was born in Salt Lake City, Utah and moved to Las Cruces, New Mexico when she was two years old. Christine is an active member of the LDS church. Her mother is also LDS, but her father is Methodist. Throughout high school Christine played the oboe and saxophone in concert and marching bands. Christine has a deep interest in all things supernatural and aspires to go ghost hunting. Her other interests include reading, volunteering, and all things comic book.

Context:

Christine and I were sitting in my car eating a late lunch when we observed a seagull in the parking lot eating trash remnants. We were out shopping for the day and were quickly eating before entering another store. Christine made a comment about her disdain for the bird, and launched into a rant about their introduction to the state. As we sat there we observed at least three other birds join the one, and it furthered her point about what a nuisance they are. The informant was first told the story of the seagulls when she was a young child in Church. It would have been after she had moved to Arizona, centralizing the story more within the LDS church community than the state of Utah. She thinks it may have been in primary, but she is not sure. The story is typically told to give praise and revelation to the power of prayer. It is meant to be a testament for people who may need prayer to help them feel more hopeful. However, when it was told to me it had very few of the aspects the church highlights.

Text:

So, when the Mormon pioneers settled in the Salt Lake Valley they started planting all of their crops and they got this wicked bad infestation of grasshoppers [pause to cough] it was so bad that they weren't going to have enough food to make it through the winter. The Mormons got together and prayed for a solution to their strife. [more coughing] God sent a flock of seagulls that came and ate all of the crickets. The crops were able to be harvested with enough to last them through the winter. That is why the seagull is the state bird of Utah, even though they are terrible, and I hate them. It's also why they are protected, and the population cannot be controlled.

Texture:

The story was told with anger and annoyance at the presence of the seagulls in the state of Utah. Despite her feeling toward the birds it was clear that Christine completely believed that the birds were

brought there through prayer as an act of God. Throughout the story she would raise her voice as more birds showed up, but for the most part her tone remained conversational with only a light air of annoyance. The informant saw the importance of the story but does not appreciate the residual seagulls in a landlocked state.

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