

Birdman

Ancient Egyptians believed a human's spirit lived on after death, for a time.

Ba, the bird with the human head, was a manifestation of the dead's entire being.

For a common man, it was his face, his character, a compilation of all he was and everyone whom he had loved.

For a Pharaoh, it represented his divine power, unquestionably deserved, bestowed by the gods.

Ba traveled between worlds. Each day, Ba flew from the tomb into the land of the living but was made to return to the grave each night.

If Ba lost his way, if the birdman could not reunite with the body, if the spirit was separated from the human—the soul disappeared. Forever.

When I was a child, in my sleep, I often dreamed of flying.

Soaring. The sky enveloping me. Free. With my arms splayed as wide as I could reach— and stretched between my wings all the possibility for which a little boy has not the words.

Everything an endless blue, without limit, without end.

I became a man and while I still dreamed of flight, even in my imagination, I no longer soared. I was not a fierce falcon-headed deity. No king of a kingdom. My arms flapped, like a toy on a string. I rose and dipped, desperate to climb, bobbing without grace.

Then one day, that dream was gone.

I've never experienced the feeling again. Not asleep, or awake. Of gliding. Of floating. Of flying.

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