

## Swarm of Grackles Descend on Texas

By Rebecca Faria

Grackles are rather beautiful birds from far away. At least I thought so as I stared at clouds of them flying in all kinds of directions forming waves in the sky. During the winter, flocks of grackles fly south to avoid becoming frozen to death. I did not know that, yet. I stood outside the hotel, close to the border of Mexico, in the town of McAllen, Texas, waiting for you, watching the grackles. Their yellow Halloween-themed eyes were not visible from where I was standing. The black long-beaked birds flew in chaos from one electric wire to the next, then to the palm trees (which looked out of place in the middle of the desert), then to the hotel roof. Hundreds of them, everywhere I looked. Their screams sounded like an off-tune choir, but still a choir trying their best to romanticize our moment.

I felt like Cinderella in a more realistic universe. Instead of having magic dust twirl around me while I waited for my prince, I had desert dust. While Cinderella sang and cute tiny birds brought her the most beautiful outfits, I had grackles. Nonetheless, I stood there feeling like a princess. I was in love enough to admire grackles, the birds usually used as props in horror films.

We had decided to walk around the pond but as soon as we got there, the gates were closed and we could not go in. We walked around the gate, with your hand warming up mine as we pushed and pulled from each other. Then you stopped and I did not know why. Your squishy hand let go of mine as you grabbed two black boxes then I slapped you in surprise. You grabbed my cheek as you promised me many things. I am sorry I can't remember your exact words. My mind felt like the flying grackles, or maybe my stomach felt like them, or both. I wish

I had prepared a poem or a letter. I wanted to promise you many things, but my thoughts flew away from me. Surprised with the tiny size of my finger you put on my ring and I put on yours, size ten, double of mine. The rings were to hold the spot of the ones we will wear forever. Then finally your lips fit into mine, in the parking lot of the closed pond.

The day I was swarmed by grackles I had to understand what was happening, you know I like to understand *everything*. So I googled, “Hundreds of black birds flying together in Texas.” To my surprise, the first link that popped up was titled, “Is it legal to kill grackles in Texas?” Why would someone want to kill the birds that made this place feel so magical? They were probably not in love. They probably don’t know you.