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The Participant Perter Desy

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Peter Desy

THE PARTICIPANT

A man, in a state of half-indifference, bought two birds and readily forgot the name of the species to which they belonged. He brought them an elaborate wooden cage with several tiers and perches where they sang their same song all day. He fed them a birdseed mixture he got at Kroger's.

Their cage was just above a common potted plant where some of the seeds dropped and sprouted in wild disarray. Some of the new plants began to take over the original one and to grow in great profusion and variety. The man thought perhaps the birds' song began to alter slightly.

He was in a state of wonderment as he mused, This is how plants and trees are brought a great distance to infertile places, like Hawaii a million years ago—by birds, perhaps like these in some respects.

He began to think of his apartment as a small laboratory of evolution. He moved various pots of soil underneath the birdcage and grew many plants. This is what it means, the man thought, to be an instigator and participant in the great evolutionary project. Maybe he would cross-breed the plants but knew that would be too great an intrusion. The variations should be more natural.

He sat for hours thinking what might happen if he placed several small animals in the apartment, arranging them strategically... The possibilities seemed endless. He might have to buy a house with many rooms and floors, parapets.