

## MARI KLOEPEL

*Immature Brown Pelican on Rocks*, 2010  
Oil on Linen, 39 x 29 in



courtesy: Winfield Gallery, Carmel

## PATRICIA SMITH

### Extinct

#### Kettle of One

Igor was a smart bastard. That's what Pete the trapper said. But Igor was also an only bastard, the last free-flying California condor on earth. Condors are sociable birds; they roost and preen and feed in groups called *kettles*, and by the spring of 1987, Igor was a kettle of one. No doubt he was lonely. That was about to change.

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Cassie was a smart little miss. That's what her father, the Colonel, said. Cassie was not an only: three brothers (all older), fifteen hundred high school classmates, six hundred thirty-nine thousand fellow citizens of Washington, D.C. (the census of humans and condors had gone precipitously in opposite directions). But in the fall of 1982, starting a new school in a new town where she knew no one, Cassie was lonely. That was about to change.

#### Nets

In the dark before dawn on Easter Sunday, at the Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge, southwest of Bakersfield, Pete began to dig. Not wanting to be seen, he worked quickly. Research shows that crows recognize individual humans for good and ill, and Pete knew this was true of condors as well. For five years, Igor had watched the Condor Recovery Project: the bait-and-shoot, the chases into caves. When Pete wrestled the second-to-last wild condor on earth, American Condor 5 (AC5), into a Sky Kennel six months earlier, Igor was watching from the crown of a nearby oak.

But they couldn't get him. Igor disdained the tasty bait. He was spotted only in the air, on distant ledges, or high in trees, and cannon nets tangle when shot into trees. So Pete resorted to the old Indian trick.

When the hole was big enough, Pete dragged a calf carcass within reach, laid his shovel in, and then got in himself. He piled dirt and straw over his body and settled a debris-covered basket over his head. Through the slits, he watched the sun travel across the sky as ravens went to work on the carcass.

Condors' sight is average, their sense of smell poor, and