

The Birds

by Jake Barnes

My wife goes away for a few days to the little town where Hitchcock filmed *The Birds*. Her sister goes along. When she comes back, I ask her if she had a good time, and she says no.

Her sister is a mess, my wife says. All she did was pop pills and drink. My wife says she is just like their father, an alky who quit drinking but spent his golden years zoned out on prescription drugs.

The next morning she is up when I get up. I wander into the kitchen and pour myself a cup of coffee. "What are you doing up so early?" I ask. She paws at her face. "Spot?" I ask. She nods. Spot is the name of one of our cats. He doesn't like it when people sleep late.

My wife tells me to go take a look outside. I ask why. She points skyward. I step out onto the deck and look up. A tree next to our house is full of silent blackbirds. My wife comes up behind me and puts her arms around me. She whispers into my back. "They're massing," she says.

