

Bird-Watching

by Tina Barry

You huddled on your side of the bed and I on mine as we watched a bird outside our window spy on you. It was an ordinary pigeon, perched on our sill, swiveling its head.

“Quiet!” you hissed. “It’s listening.”

I looked at the bird and then at you with your broad back shoved against the wall. “I don’t think it’s a spy,” I said. “It’s not wearing a trench coat or sunglasses.”

You made that prissy tisk-tisk sound. Tisk-tisk. You don’t understand. You don’t understand. Again. I didn’t understand that you held secrets, important secrets of interest to that bird. I didn’t understand that if you called my friends a “bunch of Lesbos,” you did it to protect me. Why, you wondered, couldn’t I recognize their seductive ways--or acknowledge your act of heroism? You were baffled when I wouldn’t let you kiss me after you took my young face in your hands and with a finger drew lines on either side of my mouth. “Old,” you whispered. I didn’t understand, you said with a hoot, that it was hard to get hard when my ass was soft.

I arose and peered through the glass at the feathered sleuth. “I was wrong,” I said. “There is something suspicious about that bird.” I wanted to offer that moment of understanding before I left. Because I did understand. Finally. “Yes, I was wrong,” I said, not to the man whimpering on the bed, but to the you I remembered, the you who would have laughed at the thought of a spying bird.

