

## New Normal, Spring 2020

Robin Wright

Tulip bulbs hang on their stems as dogwoods paint the sky with pink and white blooms. I turn on the news. More cases of Coronavirus, more shortages of protective gear and ventilators, more death. A female cardinal, brown with red trim around her wings and an orange beak, flits around my Jeep. She sees her reflection in the deep blue paint while walking on the driveway. Other times she flies to the mirror. I haven't driven my vehicle for a couple of weeks since working from home, so she's become attached to it. Today, her cheer, cheer, cheer, birdie, birdie, birdie summons a male. After they've flown off together to the fence next door, I turn off the news and Google "cardinals" on my laptop. This female's recent behavior is usually attributed to males. They'll see a reflection as another bird and are usually aggressive. Hmm. She acted more enamored than frightened by her reflection.

When I return to watch the bird, she's sitting on top of the Jeep, bird shit all over the vehicle's door, mirror, and handle. I grab a bucket and head outside. My back groans with the effort, but I wash the Jeep. When it shines once again, I set a small container of pepper nearby, hoping not to evict her but to keep my Jeep clean. Evictions have been put on hold here, in my city, on my property. The pepper does not dissuade her. She resists my efforts to relocate her as if she knows about the virus and the mandate.

I clean more shit off the vehicle then toss a blue tarp over the Jeep, hoping she will now frequent the fence, a tree, or a bush. Still, she hovers, flitting up from the driveway, trying to find a way in at the tarp's edge on the door. Unsuccessful, she flies to the top of the Jeep. More research. I do not click on articles about the virus. Blue is a color cardinals are attracted to. I sigh, rub my sore back, and look out the window.

After a day of not seeing her, I think she's found a new favorite spot. I hope somewhere near so I can still get a glimpse of her. Surely nothing has happened to her. I pull off the tarp. She comes back with her bright highlights, her sweet song. And more bird shit. I clean the vehicle again; my back rebels. I ice it. No more research. I tie plastic grocery bags around the mirror and door handle. Two days pass. No dash of red or chirping song. No bird shit. I watch the news and wish I were that cardinal.