

Boy Crazy

Nadine belongs to an owl now. They imprinted while I was on vacation. I scowl at my hot pink crop-top & try to pull it down over my belly button. *Boy Crazy* is printed in puff letters across my chest.

She exhales out the window. All she has to do is call its name & the bird will come, silent as smoke, to perch on her arm. They are so connected, she says, that with a single command it would gut me like a fish.

But I know better than to look an owl in the eyes.

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The new dog howls down by the river. He has one blue eye & one brown one because he is half wolf / half dog. The air is spiced in the cologne of lupines.

I close the window.

I've been warned about the unpredictability of half-things.

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The new garden is ringed in marigolds & nasturtiums because the new neighbors have a natural way of living. They string up decoys made of tin plates & ribbons that whip & rattle & reflect all around the tomatoes.

But the crows steal the ribbons & leave them on my windowsill, sometimes with a piece of river glass or a bead from a long-lost necklace.

I hide them under my pillow in case sleep requires payment for passage.

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Nadine spent all summer reading romance novels. She bought a Harlequin each week from Shop 'n Save & now she knows *everything* about love.

I pull a paperback off the shelf & tuck it down my shorts.

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Lights flicker. Maple leaves go belly up. The TV cuts out & her mother curses from the living room, in French. She pulls her nightshirt off over her head. Curtains billow. Her underwear, a crumple on the carpet, tells her it's Tuesday. Wings beat against the window, knocking out the screen. She holds up her wrist. Eight talons click into place.

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In the morning, balanced on my windowsill, is a knot of hair & teeth & bones.

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