



The Fabulous Reality Show

by Ruth McArthur

Day 1: I notice copious amounts of bird poop on the driver's side of my car. While in town I run it through the carwash.

Day 2: Bird poop is back, plus more. Has the carwash gone downhill?

While standing at the kitchen sink in the afternoon, I see a male cardinal swoop down from the oak tree, swan dive onto the roof of my car, roll off and slide down the hood onto the ground. He flutters and then flies around to the mirror where

he spies "another" cardinal. He goes wild flying into the mirror. Again. Again. Head-butting the mirror with a bit too much vigor, he stuns himself and wallows in the dust. He flies to the mirror housing, poops on it, flies around to see if the "other" cardinal is still in the mirror. It is. Head-butting continues.

Day 3: Have lunch with friends, then a carwash to get cardinal poop off the hood of my car. Return home to find cardinal in tree above my parking spot. He makes his first attack before I have my foot off the brakes. Repeats yesterday's bombing of the hood, taunting, and pooping on the "other" cardinal.

Day 4: Take the dogs walking in the fields across the creek. On our return walk along the creek, cardinal is waiting at the edge of the forest and follows us along the creek through the trees. We cross the creek, he perches in the oak, dive-bombs my hood, rolls down, falls under the car... off to the vegetable garden to plant some more lettuce, can't wait to see what he does next.

Day 5: Cardinal is on the fence singing his tiny heart out. His throat warbles as if it might burst. He swoops from the fence to my car. Please refer to above descriptions of bombing, swooping, and pooping. I wonder why he can't go mate like a normal bird. My niece overhears me pondering this and thinks I'm talking about my husband. My best friend suggests that perhaps he can't mate until he destroys the "other" cardinal and perhaps I don't want his genes being passed on to other cardinals anyway.

Day 6: Got to go out again. Scout the fence and tree for cardinal. He's nowhere to be seen. Turns out he is under the car (think Twilight Zone theme music). Due to numerous washings, the undercarriage gleams and the "other" cardinal is now clinging to it. Actual cardinal flies up to the undercarriage, stuns himself, falls into the dust, ad nauseum. How can a bird be that driven and not even crack his beak?

Day 7: Assassin cardinal is perched on my fence, beady eyes trained on the side mirror of my car. Please refer to description one of attacking the mirror and description two of attacking the undercarriage.

Day 8: Return home from meeting around 7:30 p.m. The little fella is sitting on the fence by my parking spot. He dive-bombs my hood before I even have the key out of the ignition. Gonna have to consider a restraining order.

Day 9: My husband thinks there is a deeper spiritual lesson in the little guy's behavior. Something about how we as human beings keep running ourselves into walls by not realizing things aren't what we think they are and that it's not what God intended for us. His buddy thinks the bird needs a 12-step program.

Day 10: I'm back in the veggie garden planting lettuce, escarole, and edamame - Cardinal spends his time attacking the undercarriage. Once I'm in the house he circles said house singing his tiny lungs out.

Day 11: I'm on the patio sipping coffee. Cardinal's thumping against the front bumper is soft and soothing, regular as a heartbeat. How he can do this for hours on end without a headache or bent beak is beyond me. Meanwhile, other male cardinals are encroaching - one looks like he may be claiming the creek, another the horse lot, and yet another the far corner of the front field.

At press time, cardinal continues to assault author's auto.