

Dear Readers,

As you probably know, I am a writer. My job is to sit at home and make up stories.

(I don't draw very much. Or very well.)

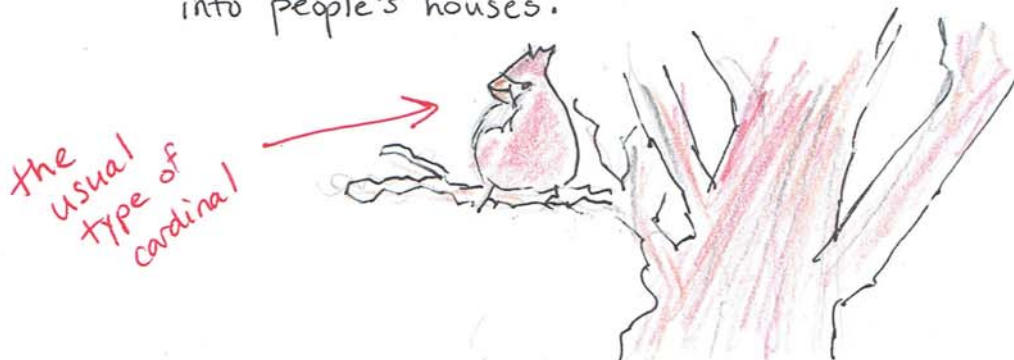


But today I thought I'd share a real, true story with you. It's about a friend of mine named Pete.



Pete is a male cardinal. You may already know a few things about cardinals, such as:

- (1) They have a pointy crest on the top of their heads. It looks like a hat.
- (2) They sing a very pretty song that sounds like "cheerup-cheerup-cherree ree ree ree" (sort of).
- (3) They live in trees and don't like to go into people's houses.



Pete, however, is not like other cardinals.



Pete comes to my birdfeeder every day, so I see him often. He might have a pointy crest, but it's always flattened down. It doesn't stick up like it does on other cardinals. Maybe it can't.

Pete can sing a pretty song, but most of the time he doesn't.

He just makes this short little chirpy noise that sounds like "Peet-peet-peet-peet." He talks a lot while he's eating. Sometimes the birdseeds fall out of his beak because he's so busy talking.



Maybe I just like a sleek style. Ever think of that?

You're making me sound like a slob !!



Still, the funniest thing about Pete is that even though he lives in a tree, he does want to come into people's houses. Every day, he flies from the bird feeder up to my patio door and flutters around it. He taps his beak on the glass and calls, "Peet-peet-peet!"

Sometimes he'll go around to the front of the house and land on the windowsill outside my office. He flutters up and down, trying to find a way in. "Peet-peet-peet!"



Since the whole operation is pretty fruitless, he spends the rest of his day flying around to the neighbors' houses, knocking on their windows and doors. Eventually, he comes back to my feeder for dinner, and then goes off to bed.



I can't say why Pete acts the way he does. Why does he want to get in the house? What would he do if he got in? My guess is that he wouldn't really like it. Wild animals usually panic when caught in an enclosed space.

Who are you calling "wild"?



But I do know he's a special bird, and I plan to make sure he always has a tree to roost in and his favorite safflower seeds to eat. And maybe, if Pete is lucky, he'll find himself a friend this spring. Maybe you'll see a Pete of your own someday by your feeder. If you do, say hi for me.

Your Friend,  
Claire



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