

from LILLIAN WHISTLES BACK
by Alexis Kozak

Walter—late-30's to early-40's.

Walter—who was engaged to Lillian's recently deceased daughter—has nailed boards over all of the windows in Lillian's house to prevent the spirit of her daughter, whom he believes is inside a bird in the backyard, from flying into a window and killing herself.

WALTER “Cats eat birds,” huh? People *think* cats eat birds. But they don't. People watch too much “Tom and Jerry,” you know? Too much, uh, whatchamacallit, Looney Tunes, okay? Sylvester and Tweety. You know? The cat eats the bird, but then, an old lady comes along, or a big dog, and the cat just spits the bird right back out again, like nothing happened. Like all the damage is undone. Well, it's not like that, okay? It's not like that. The cat holds the bird down—think about how scary *that's* gotta be—the cat on top of you, just holding you down. But that's just to start. Okay? It holds you there until you stop moving; until you've given up. And then, this cat, this thing that is twenty times larger than you, that is laying on top of you, after all your breath and fight and hope has gone out of you, that's when it really starts. It takes its claw, and it starts to rip at your heart, at your middle. And it pulls out your feathers, until you are so naked, that nobody can even tell the difference between *you* or a mouse or a dead human fetus. And then it brings it to you. To the human. To the thing bigger than both of you—bigger than a bird and a cat, and a dog. To the human. Like bringing a sacrifice to a god. And lays it at your feet. “Look what *I* did. For *you*.” Look what I did. For you. Birds are tough sons-of-bitches. You think they are afraid of a couple of degrees? When they can be struck down in the prime of their lives by...by anything. By any damn tiny switch of fate? And you think they are afraid of heat? Believe me, they are not afraid of a little heat.