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### **Flash Nonfiction by Don Lyman**

#### **Animal Warmth on a Winter Night**



I haven't seen them in months, but I know they're there. They sit on the air conditioner in my bedroom window, up on the second floor. I hear them chirping and fighting and scratching and flapping. I hear them in the morning, when I sit at my computer and check my email. I peck at my keyboard, and they peck at the windowsill.

I hear them at night, too, when I'm back at my computer or watching television as I'm falling asleep. I can hear them scratching around, ruffling their feathers, sometimes letting out soft peeps. They must be sleeping. I often wonder if they can hear me typing or if they hear the TV. What do the noises from my side of the curtain sound like to them?

## The Birds Behind the Curtain

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Strange, exotic, or as familiar as the highway traffic in the distance and the wind in the trees?

I think they're house sparrows, but I don't dare open the curtain. I'm afraid I'll scare them away. A few times back in the spring, I peeked at them—small brown birds—through a crack at the side of the curtain, but that startled them, and they flew away.

I've been delaying removing the air conditioner. I haven't turned it on in months. It's November now, and I can feel the cold draft from the air-conditioner grill at night, but I keep putting it off. Every day I think, *I need to take the air conditioner out of that window*, but I still haven't done it.

I don't want to take away their roost. What would they do if they came back at night and it was gone?

I can't leave the air conditioner there through the winter, but it's comforting to hear the soft chirping and scratching, to know there are other living creatures just a couple of feet away, huddling against the window on a cold night.

Maybe they feel the same way about me.

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### Art Information

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Don Lyman is a freelance journalist, biologist, hospital pharmacist, and graduate student in the Master's in Journalism program at Harvard University Extension School.

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