

DAVID EBENBACH

Holding Feathers

One time—I was just off the 42 bus, backpack-heavy in my youth—there was a pigeon, and it had gummed its feet with tar. Talons like dark dough. Already in a circle was the whole gang of people who'd never seen each other, but still they had their roles. One guy lived in that row house right there and so he had a towel, like a thick dish towel, and there was one woman who knew about birds because she had cats. Somebody held the pigeon and someone else got rubbing alcohol while I bent over the scene and knotted my hands. People had Q-tips out. At one point two of the neighbors looked at each other—squatting on the sidewalk, a knee each on the slate—and said *This isn't working*. And then they were holding feathers.