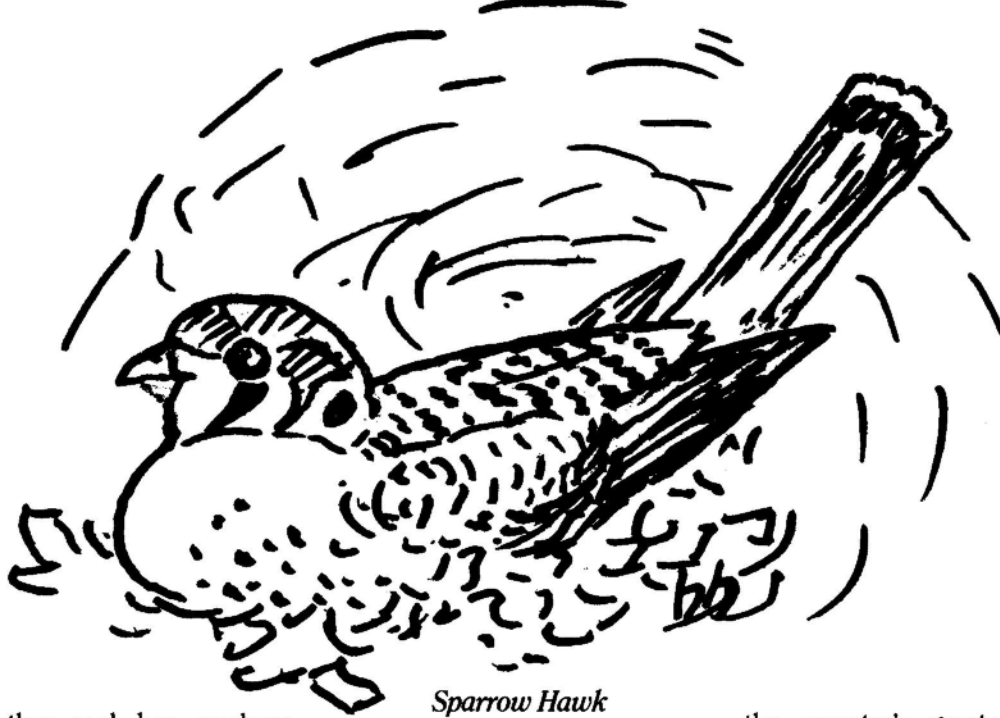


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Sparrow Hawk

A mother and her newborn twins lived in a one-room apartment forty feet above ground level, in an otherwise vacant dwelling. So old and rotten was this wooden house, it swayed with each gust of wind. The mother's single room had no window and lacked even a door to close its one entrance. Its only furniture was a bed of chips.

Yet this was the abode of ideal happiness. Here, the mother knew tranquility and a sense of fulfillment. She herself had been born and reared in just such a home.

Suddenly the deep sense of security was shattered by a tremendous pounding on the underpinning of the house. The bludgeoning stopped briefly, then began again more violently, shaking the whole house. The mother drew her twins more closely to her breast, and lay still.

A heavy tread came close as some menacing giant advanced upward. The little room rocked from side to side. Now the beast

MOTHER LOVE

was at the doorway. She saw the threatening form, the great glaring eyes. She recognized her arch enemy—the most cruel of all animals. Helpless, she saw an open way to freedom, but self-preservation is not the first law of nature. This mother knew a higher law, a commanding instinct that whispered: Lie still; give no sign; obey your mother heart.

A large paw tried to enter the doorway. A short pause followed, too brief to give the mother hope; then a long gleaming fang, edged knife-sharp, ripped off a chip from the entrance. The chip fell in front of her. The fang ripped again at the narrow passageway, then again and again, until chips falling inward covered the back of the mother as she lay shielding the twins with her body.

When the chips stopped falling

the monster's great hand, followed by a hairy forelimb, reached through the enlarged opening toward the mother and twins.

Exploring claws raked the fallen chips from the mother's back. She made no move. The paw reached under body and slowly lifted her; the sleeping twins murmured as they sensed the withdrawal of warmth. The mother paid the last full measure of devotion.

She never knew the fate of the helpless babies. Nor did she know that the despoiler, hiding in ambush, his three dead trophies beside him, soon waylaid her husband as he returned with food for his family.

In a proud civic Museum of Natural History, there is a certain glass fronted case now, bearing this label:

*Habitat group No. 73
Sparrow Hawk
(Falco sparverius)
Adult Male, Female,
Young and Nest*

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