

# Tales From The Squirrel's Nest

Terrence P. McGarty

Copyright © 2010 Terrence P McGarty, all rights reserved

Terrence McGarty





## CONTENTS

---

<b>CONTENTS</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>1 THE CHIPMUNK AND THE MOUSE</b> .....	<b>5</b>
1.1 <i>Mr. Red Bottom</i> .....	5
1.2 <i>Mr. Antnee Squirrel</i> .....	7
1.3 <i>Mr. Mortimer Turkey</i> .....	10
1.4 <i>Mr. Tomasso Turtle</i> .....	13
1.5 <i>Mr. Sheldon Spider</i> .....	15
1.6 <i>Souvez les Souris</i> .....	17
1.7 <i>Snap in the Middle of the Night</i> .....	18
<b>2 SAINT FRANCIS AND THE SQUIRREL</b> .....	<b>21</b>
2.1 <i>The Garden Edge</i> .....	21
2.2 <i>Relatives</i> .....	21
2.3 <i>Saint Francis</i> .....	22
2.4 <i>Other Descendents from Assisi</i> .....	25
2.5 <i>The Crow</i> .....	26
2.6 <i>The Rock</i> .....	27
2.7 <i>Kazantzakis</i> .....	29
2.8 <i>Farewell</i> .....	31
<b>3 THE SQUIRREL'S CHRISTMAS</b> .....	<b>32</b>
3.1 <i>Antnee and the Nest</i> .....	32
3.2 <i>The First Christmas</i> .....	33
3.3 <i>Christmas Morning</i> .....	37
3.4 <i>The Night of Christmas</i> .....	38
<b>4 TERENCE PUBLIUS SCIURUS AND HIS FRIEND MARCUS AURELIUS</b> .....	<b>41</b>
4.1 <i>Antnee and the Snow</i> .....	41
4.2 <i>Terentius Publius Meets Marcus Aurelius</i> .....	42
4.3 <i>The Battle with the Germani</i> .....	44
4.4 <i>The First of the Meditations</i> .....	45
4.5 <i>Discussions on Offspring</i> .....	48
4.6 <i>Death of Marcus Aurelius</i> .....	50
4.7 <i>Return to the Forests</i> .....	51
<b>5 HARRY BAILEY SQUIRREL AND HIS FRIEND GEOFFREY CHAUCER</b> .....	<b>53</b>
5.1 <i>The Storyteller Returns</i> .....	53
5.2 <i>Harry the Squirrel</i> .....	54
5.3 <i>Harry meets Chaucer</i> .....	55
5.4 <i>Trip to Bath</i> .....	58
5.5 <i>The Summoner</i> .....	59
5.6 <i>The Widow of Bath</i> .....	61
5.7 <i>People and Places</i> .....	63
5.8 <i>A Pilgrimage</i> .....	65
5.9 <i>On to Kent and Greenwich</i> .....	66

5.10	To London .....	69
5.11	The Passing .....	71
<b>6</b>	<b>LADY ISABELLA SQUIRREL AND THE BARD .....</b>	<b>74</b>
6.1	The Potting Beds .....	74
6.2	Lady Isabella.....	76
6.3	The Mission .....	76
6.4	Meeting the Bard .....	78
6.5	The Great Prince Hal .....	82
6.6	The Enigmatic Julius.....	85
6.7	Hamlet the Prince.....	88
6.8	As You Like It .....	91
6.9	The Duchess of Pinus.....	93
6.10	The Death of the Queen.....	94
6.11	The Parting with the Bard.....	95
6.12	Back at Greenwich .....	97
<b>7</b>	<b>HERR PROFESSOR DOCTOR GUSTAVE M. SQUIRREL AND HIS STUDENT ALBERT .....</b>	<b>98</b>
7.1	Antnee and His Corn Cob .....	98
7.2	Gustave and Albert .....	99
7.3	The Lessons .....	103
7.4	Photoelectric Effect.....	104
7.5	Brownian Motion .....	108
7.6	Relativity .....	112
7.7	Zurich, Prague, Return, Off to Germany, and Farewell.....	115
<b>8</b>	<b>MAJOR NATHANIEL SQUIRREL AND HIS EXCELLENCY.....</b>	<b>117</b>
8.1	Meeting a Friend.....	117
8.2	Nathaniel Meets His Excellency (January 1777) .....	118
8.3	Conversations with Billy Lee.....	120
8.4	Nathaniel Receives His Commission.....	122
8.5	Battle of Short Hills (June 1777).....	124
8.6	Meeting Lt. Jean Pierre Menard.....	127
8.7	Scouting the British at Philadelphia (August-September 1777) .....	129
8.8	Battle of Germantown (October 4, 1777).....	131
8.9	Winter at Valley Forge (Dec 1777 to May 1778) .....	134
8.10	Battle of Monmouth (June 1778) .....	134
8.11	Interlude Year and The Battle of Paulus Hook (August 1779).....	136
8.12	First Morristown Winter (December 1779 to May 1780).....	138
8.13	Battle of Springfield (June 1780) .....	141
8.14	Second Morristown Winter (December 1780-May 1781) .....	143
8.15	Onto the Battle of Yorktown ( July - October 1781) .....	144
8.16	Fraunces Tavern (December 4, 1783).....	145
8.17	President George (April 30, 1789) .....	148
8.18	Epilog .....	152

## 1 THE CHIPMUNK AND THE MOUSE

---

IT was a warm summer day and I was sitting on the grass near the edge of my flower garden when a amiable chipmunk ran across the stones along the edge of the garden. I could see that it was my good old friend Mr. Red Bottom, a fat and talkative chipmunk who had been in my garden for several years.

### 1.1 Mr. Red Bottom

I looked towards the chipmunk and said:

“Mr. Red Bottom, would you have a few moments to discuss a problem that I have?”

The chipmunk stopped, looked up at me, and then standing on his hind legs, face stuffed with seeds, his cheeks almost exploding, replied:

“Why yes, I do, but it is a fine day, is it not?”

When he said “*fine*”, I was showered with seeds, the ones stuffed in his cheeks, and they flew at and past my face like shells from some shot gun, and he took no notice at all. He was clearly oblivious to his failings and I was certain he had very poor social training. However, that must be his mother’s fault, I thought, mothers are always so fussy and even chipmunk mothers must be careful to bring their children up with good manners.

I looked at him, and perhaps I was not as amused as I should be, for here I was talking to a chipmunk, with a stuffed set of cheeks, standing upright on a stone, and spitting out seed, but I continued non pulsed. I said:

“Mr. Red Bottom, I have been seeing that you appreciate the bird feeder that we have placed upon the tree. And, so also do many others friends we have back here in the garden. I see Mr. Antnee Squirrel, that fat fine friend of yours, and his family is there all of the time. Your family, those in the back and those in the front, the birds, and many others. We keep it filled you may say, because we enjoy your company. And in fact I enjoy our conversations.”

He smiled and said:

“Fat, Fine, Friend!” and with each word I was blasted from those cheeks with seed of all types and size. My face, my hair, my ears, my clothes, they were now stuck with seeds of many types. He continued:

“Well I enjoy your conversation also. After all, we live on the same land and you are kind to share with us some of the fruits of your labor. So my big hairless friend, what is your question?”

I shook myself from the seeds, many had gone down my shirt and were now itching my belly, but I disregarded that to get to the point. I replied:

“Well, the Mrs. has seen, and I also have seen, a new set of intruders at the feeder. They look like rats, or at least very large mice. You know that these creatures have no respect for property, they come into our home, eat our food, leave their droppings, and just are a dirty mess. My question is have you seen them and what can we together do to rid ourselves of these characters?”

He sat down, recognizing that this was likely to be a longer conversation than he thought and said to me:

“Ah, the rodents!”

I found that a bit humorous since frankly they were all rodents, including the chipmunk, but I felt that now was not the time to bring up the biological facts to which only I had knowledge. I said:

“Indeed, the rodents. So what are we to do?”

He looked at me this time I could see in his face and true signs of deep thought. He started his reply slowly and deliberately:

“You know, Sir, that we chipmunks sleep all winter. We gather our food, dig our nests, bury our food, sleep to keep safe, and from time to time we may awake, if perhaps it is too warm spell some winter, and we use our stored food in just such an emergency. But those rodents, they come down our homes, eat our food and put us all to peril, we could die, I mean that Sir, a true death, a freezing in the coldest of the winters. Do we ever seek refuge in your home, no, indeed not Sir, we would rather die. But rodents, true animals of evil, Sir, true animals of evil.”

I was thinking how indeed this poor creature of God who was subject to the most severe of extremes but that he obeyed his code, what was his and what was someone else’s remained that way. What dignity, what nobleness for this brave and charming animal. But it was not getting me anywhere. I pressed on:

“But Mr. Red Bottom, what are we to do, they are varmints, unwanted interlopers, takers of what they have not earned, and takers from those in need. What, Mr. Red Bottom are we to do?”

He sort of wiggled into a large ball of brown and red fur sitting on top of the rock, the look of thought on his visage was relentless, and then he replied:

“I can think of only one person to seek out on this sir, one person.”

In a panting breath I asked:

“Who would that be Mr. Red Bottom, who would that be?”

He replied slowly:

“You must speak with Antnee Squirrel.”

I said:

“Antnee Squirrel, why him? He seems to just eat everything in sight, he is the fattest squirrel in the area. He is here all year long. Why him?”

The chipmunk looked deeply into my eyes and said:

“You live in New Jersey, you have been here for many years, and you do not know Antnee and his family, the family, the family of all families. Why we chipmunks go to Antnee, we call him “The Great One”, and we plead our cases, and then Antnee, with the help of the large squirrel family, they call it “The Family”, they take care of our problems.

The Family has helped the Rabbit family, the Turkey family, even the Pigeon family, why do you suspect that you see so many pigeons at the feeder, totally undisturbed. He helps us, he advises us, and then when he needs a favor, well, we do the favor, no matter what. Antnee is the individual who keeps us safe. But, and this is important Sir, Antnee also dislikes the Rodents, they have no respect for Antnee or any of the other Families. You must go to Antnee, Sir, you must, and respect him. He will advise you, he will help you, but remember, you will owe him.”

He jumped off the rock and ran towards the stone wall, jumped on its top and off he went to the edge and down, down, down the hole to his home. He left me now waiting for Antnee, I did not even know which one was Antnee, other that he was the fattest squirrel. The sun was setting so I would look in the morning.

## **1.2 Mr. Antnee Squirrel**

I awoke the following morning to a bright sun, and cool air. I went out to the garden and looked about, and there before me hanging upside down on the feeder, fatter than any squirrel known to mankind, was Antnee.

I walked towards the feeder and Antnee was so busy stuffing his face, dropping seeds upon the ground at the same moment, that he paid no attention to me at all. I came aside the feeder and coughed a bit and said:

“Excuse me, are you Antnee Squirrel perhaps?”

He stopped for a moment, seed falling off the sides of his mouth, shells run a scanner and he looked at me, rather strangely since he was still hanging upside down on the feeder and we were now both at eye level to one another, and he said:

“And who is asking for me?”

I replied:

“Well Mr. Red Bottom, the chipmunk you know, suggested I come and seek your advice on a problem I am having here in the garden.”

He went back to eating, but I could see that he had paid attention. He then turned his head upward and crawled to the top of the feeder and then sat atop a small bird house looking down to me, I would guess it gave him a sense of superiority over me now that I looked up at him. He then said:

“And what perhaps is your problem?”

I responded:

“Well you see it is like this....”

He interrupted me and said very bluntly:

“I do not have all day, you can see I am busy, now if you have a request of me make it quickly and in a succinct manner. Unlike you humans who loll around all day, we squirrels have a great deal of work to do, we have little time for these pleasantries you waste your time with.”

I could see this would be interesting. I wanted to tell him the food I had paid for with money I had made and that making money took work....and even more, I wanted to tell him that all he did was play around all day and run up and down trees, but that would not solve my problem, so I replied:

“It is the rats, or the mice, or whatever the rodents are called, they have been eating here at the feeder, and I am afraid that they will come into my house. Mr. Red Bottom said you could help.”

He looked at me, the whiskers twitching and the eyes set aside his head, looking both ways at the same time, then they moved to look at me, a strange thing, I have never seen a squirrel like this before. He then said, somewhat raising one eyebrow:



“Ah, the rodents. The neighborhood has never been as bad since they arrived. But you know they came here because of you, we were just fine, thank you very much, before you arrived, and then you show up, and then the rodents!”

I was aghast. We had been here thirty years, and now the rodents come, what was the causal relationship, and Antnee was at most seven years old, fat as he was, how could he remember who brought whom! This fat arrogant squirrel was going to be difficult to deal with. So I decided to be blunt. I said:

“Let me be a bit direct, Antnee, first, this food is mine, I work for the money which buys it and I put it here on the tree. I do not mind you stuffing your fat face, but I will not tolerate rodents, got it. I also don’t get too mad when you bring your fat carcass into my basement in the winter and lay down on my seedlings, on the warm heating pad and warm sun lamps, now do I, and if I cannot get a straight answer out of you, I will stop buying seed, I will seal the basement, I will set traps, and I will tell the chipmunks and pigeons that you, yes you my fine fat friend, were the cause of all of their woes. Then, my tubby little ball of fur, you will be slimming down like the end of the world is upon you and yours. Now, I want the rodents out, I am holding you personally responsible, and I want answers now!”

I stopped and thought to myself, why was I out here screaming to a fat furry squirrel looking down from his perch atop the birdhouse. He now he looked down upon me as if I had just told him he had no mother or father and that he was an orphan from birth. He was on the verge of tears, then he said:

“Look here, I am trying to do my best, we have a, well I call it a pecking order here, and I sort of control this feeder. But I do not control the entire back yard no matter what Mr. Red Bottom thinks, besides he sleeps all winter and I have to dig up my old acorns and scrape out a meager meal here or there....”

I shouted:

“Stop, I feed you all winter, you sleep in my house, I saw the nests in my attic, seed shells and corn husks, now tell me what we can do to rid ourselves of the rodent!”

He replied:

“Well, you need someone wiser than me. I suggest you talk with Mr. Mortimer Turkey.”

I shouted:

“A turkey, you want me to talk with a turkey, why a turkey, they are never here?”

He smiled and said:

“Alas there you are in error my friend, for when the sun sets, they all fly back here, they are great flyers you know, despite what many humans may think, and they clean up all that I have put on the ground. You may think I am up here just eating on my own, oh no, hardly, I am here at the beckon call of the turkeys, they need seed, they need it on the ground, and I become the one who is responsible for getting it there. No seed, and I am in deep trouble. I will get to Mortimer, and he will see you on the morrow. He too is concerned about the rodent, and he is big and powerful, he can tell you what to do.”

I was now a bit less flustered, but so far, two days, two animals, and each was suggesting another. I was concerned that this would go on for quite a while.

### **1.3 Mr. Mortimer Turkey**

The next day, I arose quite early to meet Mr. Mortimer Turkey. Now I had seen the Turkey family many times, a few in the garden, but it had never occurred to me that they could or would have been frequent visitors to my charity works. But alas, as I sought to rid my lands of rodents I am finding more and more who have come to rely on my generosity. It was just past dawn when I saw the Turkey family, a crowd of almost two dozen large birds walking in a large but tightly connected group savaging the land, and heading towards my fence which protects my garden from real rodents, the deer. But alas, that is the tale for a different day.

They approached my fence, these large masters of the land, their waddle, their attention for detail upon the ground, until they meet the fence. Then with the grace of a flying elephant, they lifted their bodies sky wards and flew over the fence, like a C5A and three landed atop the fence, as lookouts. Thirty pounds of prime turkey each, feathers and all, like sentries, some special forces group, guarding the rest of the family now cleaning the ground of seed, corn, sunflower and whatever else was in the costly bags my wife brings from the store.

I approach the three on the fence, it is a six foot fence and the birds are another two feet higher, and I speak to the three on guard. I say:

“I am looking for Mortimer Turkey, perhaps you know him, I was told to speak to him by Antnee Squirrel.”

The three look at each other and are silent for all too long a while. Then the one in the middle looks at me and says:

“I am Jonathan Turkey, Mort my brother is the big one eating the corn, over there, next to your violet garden.”

I replied:

“Thank you, and I would like to get through the gate now if that is okay with you three?”

The two on the gate waddled across letting me open the gate at the end of the fence, they continued to scan down my driveway looking carefully at the street. I wondered what threat they were so concerned about. Then it hit me, here I am talking to three thirty pound turkeys sitting on top of my fence, and I have just asked them politely to move, and they did. Perhaps something is going on in my mind, I wonder if this is real, but then again these are the turkeys, I have seen them many times, all the detail is here. Dreams only focus on limited detail, reality has overpowering detail, and this clearly is overpowering. Perhaps this is what happened to Alice, yet she also had taste and smell, so far I had not eaten a one of them, and the smells were not too great to endure.

I walked in and approached Mortimer. I said:

“Mr. Mortimer Turkey, I presume?”

Ah, it is like the finding of Livingston by Stanley, but now it is me in my own garden talking to a turkey. I hope no one ever finds out about this event. They will have me committed. Just thinking about this could be damaging enough. Then he says:

“Ah, yes, I am Mortimer, Antnee my good friend had spoken about you and your problem. What can I do to help?”

I was surprised, pleasantly so, in that he was more receptive than the little fat squirrel. But we had just started our talk, it could still go less well than I suspected. He then said:

“Rodents, your are infested with rodents. I see them on my travels, we try to avoid them, they are dirty, and frankly they are dumb creatures. Did you know that Benjamin Franklin wanted to have us turkeys as the national bird, we are much smarter than the eagle, a dumb bird indeed, you would never see an eagle doing this.”

I said:

“Do you mean speaking to a human?”

He snapped back:

“No silly, working as a group and eating this good corn. We work as a group, we keep the family together, we value the family you know, not like eagles, they are solitary, loners, the fathers do not stay with the family, they just fly off. We, however, we are what America is great for, family members, hard working families, and we stay local, we keep close so that we can hand down tradition. And here in New Jersey, there is no hunting, so we have no risk of seeing you people shoot each other, at least in the process of hunting us.”

He continued:

“There has not been a turkey killed in New Jersey in over 150 years. That is much better than you humans in Newark, Trenton, Camden and other cities in New Jersey. Why even here in your own neighborhood you had three killers arrested and now doing time. You humans, you have much to learn from us. Too bad old Ben was over-ruled. We would have been a much better national bird.”

I stand with mouth ajar, I am being lectured by a 40 pound bird with dark brown and green tinted feathers. He is also making sense. Well I must get back to the problem. I then said:

“So tell me, what do you suggest to rid the garden of the rodents.”

He replied:

“Why rid the garden, there is plenty of room, plenty of food, and we are in no way even competing with one another, we take our turns.”

I then said:

“Perhaps you missed my point, rodents eating out here is not my problem, but rodents eating and defecating in there is my problem.” as I pointed to the house.

Mortimer then said:

“We never go in there, that is not of interest to us.”

I replied:

“I know, I know, but the rodents go in there.”

Mortimer then said:

“But I am told by Antnee that he and his friends also go in there and you have no problem with him, why with rodents?”

I replied:

“Now let me make this clear, I don’t want Antnee there either but Antnee does not eat my food in my kitchen and then leave his droppings on my plates and mess my house up. I can deal with Antnee but I cannot deal with rodents. The rodents leave behind droppings which have disease, they eat food and deposit disease, and these diseases can kill us humans. Neither you nor Antnee can kill us.”

Mortimer kept pecking at the corn and said nothing for many seconds and then turned and said:

“There once was a large cat in this area, not a house cat but some wild and vicious cat. He would kill us and our kind and it is said he would even go after Antnee’s relatives from many generations ago. So what did we do, did we try to kill the cat, no, we just moved away, and with no food, namely us, for the cat to eat, he moved away as well. So just move away.”

I was aghast. I replied:

“This is my home, I paid for it, I buy the food for you all, I have a right to be here and to not have rodents here.”

Mortimer replied:

“You humans and your property. Well, I suggest you talk to someone not involved in your property, a wise man, he is Tomasso Tortoise, he has been here many years, as all tortoises live a long time, and he may help you. I seem not to have the wisdom you seek.”

At that point he went back to his corn and the conversation ended. I then thought that the eagle was a good choice, for truly turkeys while not dumb are very thick.

#### **1.4 Mr. Tomasso Turtle**

Tomasso Turtle was also known as “Fat Tony T” in the neighborhood. He waddled around the back yard, from time to time spending a cool afternoon in the garden pool, collecting meals from a variety of sources, and I am told that the seed we put out was one of the sources.

I went out at noon one warm day and there was Fat Tony T laying in the grass getting some sun. He was round and well proportioned and he was like so many others, an eating machine. I walked up to him and greeted him:

“Mr. Turtle, Mr. Turkey said I should talk with you about a problem.”

He turned his fat neck upward and said:

“Hey, just call me Fat Tony, everybody else does, it is my name in the neighborhood.”

I had never thought that my garden was a neighborhood but as I met more and more of the residents I saw that what I had here was almost a continent. There were multiple interest groups with multiple agenda and each wanted to gain for themselves and yet protect the joint interest. This would be a interesting conversation.

I then asked him in a soft manner the following:

“Well Fat Tony, perhaps you can help me with my problem. It is the rodents. They come into my house, eat my food, leave droppings, and spread disease. I want them to stop. What do you suggest.”

That was the fastest version of my problem recited by me yet. Clear, well put, and I hope Fat Tony would help. He rolled his neck around, that fat fleshy neck with that pointed almost beak like face, the two small shiny eyes, looking directly into mine and he said:

“What disease, what are you talking about?”

I replied:

“Look Fat Tony, first you tortoises and turtles have their own diseases, it is salmonella, we get it from you and the kids are quite ill for many days. Now....”

He stopped me bluntly and brusquely and said:

“Sal who, I don’t know any Sal Monella, I know Sal Marzella, he is an older Raccoon, he lives near the edge of the pond, I see him sometimes at night. Then there is Sal Garabella, he is the middle aged ground hog, lives behind the barrier next to the highway. Never comes over this far though, he somehow likes to look at the cars all day, but Sal Monella, nope, never knew him.”

I was floored, I never thought this would be so dense a conversation. Tortoises, well they are supposed to out run the hare, but this guy had the intellectual power of a flea, I must be careful with these thoughts, I may have to meet a flea next, and then I remembered, fleas, and the plague. I continued:

“Look, the rodents carry fleas who carry *Yersinia pestis*, the plague bacteria. It killed half of humanity in the fourteenth century. It is deadly, truly deadly. And while we are at it, Raccoons carry lyssavirus, that causes rabies, another deadly disease, but not spread as quickly as the plague. Rodents are dirty, dirty, dirty, and I want to find a way to get them out of here!”

He then said:

“Calm down sir, you seem to be taking all of this very personally. Now I don’t get upset when you call me a carrier of some Sal Monella, and I am certain Mr. Raccoon, namely Sal Marzella, does not get upset calling him a carrier of rabies, but you seem to have a real problem with the rodents, and I believe they are mice. So what do you want me to do, it seems to be your problem.”

At this point I have tried every one of the creatures, every animal, none will assist, none will provide guidance, it is as if they are all saying it is just my problem, and they fail to see that it is I who keeps their garden alive. No me, no garden, nor place to live. They all seem to have some

form of logic but they all seem so focused on their own interests. Strange, Stranger even that I have been having these conversations.

I then continued:

“Look Fat Tony, I need to get rid of the mice, any suggestions?”

He looked at me, I feared another prolonged discussion, but he just said:

“Oh is that all, talk to Sheldon Spider, he is ruthless, besides he is not an animal, he has no true heart.”

I replied:

“Thanks.”

Then I turned and went in my house. I was exhausted with all of these talks. Hopefully this would be helpful, a spider.

### **1.5 Mr. Sheldon Spider**

So off I went to seek wisdom from Mr. Sheldon Spider. There amongst the daylily leaves, atop of the violet plants, under the shade of the oak trees was his web, a large, even gigantic web, and he was in the middle of the web awaiting my arrival.

I sat down on the grass and admired the complex web. Sheldon was in the middle and he was colored in a regal manner, a gold body with dark black tripe with red tinged legs, all eight of them. He looked quite wise sitting there in the middle of the web with a sense of control. This was the first member of my estate who had not been relying on my seed for their day to day existence.

I spoke:

“Mr. Spider, Fat Tony T said I should speak with you, that you are wise, and can help me,”

The spider turned his head and looked at me. I had never looked at a spider this way before but I was game at this point to try anything. He responded:

“Call me Shelly, not Sheldon. My mother was the only one to call me Sheldon, and when she did I know I had done something wrong. Shelly is good.”

I then said:

“Well Shelly, let me lay out the problem, simply it is rodents, we hate them, they eat our food and leave their droppings in our home.”

Shelly replied:

“I know all too well, I keep a very neat home here and I have all sorts of stuff flying into it other than a good meal from time to time. But why not just get rid of the problem as I do, just catch it and eat it.”

I was a bit repulsed by the eating part but the catching made sense. I then said:

“So Shelly, you are telling me you would recommend catching and disposing of the rodents.”

Shelly said:

“Let me be clear, I have nothing to gain or lose in this deal, I keep my home here neat and clean, and anyone who enters is considered a meal. Got it.”

I was wary after all my other talks for he like so many others would then turn and say I was violating some unknown law of nature. I asked again:

“But all the other animals want to be left alone, including leaving the rodents alone. You seem to take the other course.”

Shelly sat up with his back on the web, his eight legs waving at me in a shouting manner and his fat spider belly glistening in the sun, he replied:

“Mammals, you are all alike, you all want your own way and at the same time seek to please while being seen as benevolent. We arachnoids have a much simpler existence, we eat, we reproduce, and we build. We seek to please no one but ourselves, to our own selves be true so to say.”

I then said:

“Shelly, I get it, I should do what I must do, despite the screams of the others.”

Shelly replied:

“Yes sir, do what you must, and scream they will. You feed them, you water them, you give them warm spots, you even protect them. You have that fence, it keeps out the cats, the dogs, the others who would prey on them. And do they thank you, no. The next thing they will do is protest. It is in their nature, they just whine all the time, they want more and will do less. Those rodents are little monsters. You should have struck at the beginning, you spend too much time



being nice. I don't spend time being nice, come into my web, slam, you are lunch, dinner, a snack, whatever. Take my advice sir, strike before they strike you."

Shelly turned over and walked across the web, the beautiful, well architected web, not some Frank Gehry design which will fall apart in a few years by one of true artistry. I now knew what I must do. The river Rubicon would be crossed!

## **1.6    *Souvez les Souris***

The rodents, no they insist on being called mice, had been working the locals in their support. The next morning I came outside to see if the feeder need replenishing and there in front of me were three dozen animals; chipmunks, squirrels, turkeys, tortoises, a toad or two, and of course at the front were the rodents, oops mice. They were all singing to the tune of the Marseille the tune in French, "Souvez le souris", "Save the mice". Sheldon was right, they ganged together and I would be their target.

French!, yes French, it is bad enough talking to squirrels in English, but now they have a protest song and it is in French, they man the barricades, they are motivated to protest, to stop the elimination of the rodents. Why me? I just want to get rid of rodents and I have started a movement amongst these free loaders and it has become an international movement. Talking has moved on to signing, protesting. Is there a Robespierre amongst these animals, is this the beginning of some revolution, are we humans in danger! All of these thoughts were running through my head.

Here I am at the barricades, with animals, a revolt of the locals, if you will, all ganging together to protect a dirty rodent, or frankly rodents, and for what, because I am human and they are not, it is my food, it is my back yard, what is going on here?

I was approached by Antnee, and he said:

"You went to MIT we hear, and we further hear that you had mice there who helped many of the engineers and scientists. I have here in my hands a letter from one of your illustrious graduates. They tore down the sacred Building 20, the home of the radar development, of lasers, of many brilliant research efforts."

He continued:

"They then built a new center, one of those Gehry disasters, of steel, glass, glass you can never clean, of cold inefficiency and dead to any form of life, any form of inspiration. Your people tried to rid the mice from the building, but we hear they have returned, and one of the illustrious alumni writes the following:

*"I read this about the attempt to rid the new building of the mice and I felt I must reply...for the mice for those of us who lived, and I mean lived, in the old building 20, one of our many late*

*nights friends were the mice. They scampered above our desks, under our feet and ate sandwiches which we had abandoned weeks before perhaps these wee creatures are the direct descendents of those mighty stalwarts who let us know at the strangest hours that there was life on the planet besides just us and our thesis problems.*

*I therefore humbly suggest that we may want to view these descendents with awe, that they have deigned to enter the new edifice, and that as a sign of their great intelligence have found their way back again where their early ancestors roamed hand in hand with many an MIT grad student. I have no idea why I am spending time doing this but your mice rang part of my limbic systems memories of days gone bye...*

*What is becoming of me in my dotage? Back to the mice indeed "save the mice", we must have brilliant mice, they manage to find their way through a Frank Gehry building, something even the eminent Professor Chan admitted difficulty doing. Also they come to us, whereas those body snatchers at Broad and Whittaker ensnare the poor creatures into experiments with dubious and deadly ends.*

*These must be genetically selected and superior mice, MIT Course VI mice, capable of sneaking around on off hours and having productivity well in excess of many a graduate student and, in our multi-cultural environment, we should share with our murine relatives the wonderful community we have at MIT. Perhaps they could join in a committee or two, or even a staff meeting, we could elect them to mini faculty appointments, what else.*

*Again for some reason the mice are striking a chord but didn't we have the mouse before Stanford, they were still palm trees and surf boards when we had sturdy upstanding furry friends. Perhaps one can envision a movement from the 60s again, "save the mice", make them honorary MIT Course VI alumni"*

I was astounded. How did these creatures communicate some two hundred and fifty miles, how did they get a letter from MIT and how did they know so much about me! Who are these mice, are they not the same descendents who brought the plague to Europe in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, who almost wiped out civilization. It was not the turkey, the chipmunk, the squirrel, it was the mouse. Why this level of attachment? Why, even more, am I standing here in front of several dozen animals listening to a squirrel read a letter from Cambridge while to remaining group is singing *Souvez Les Souris* in French!

How did he get it, this letter, by email! Are these creatures using my computer at night, are the marks on my keyboard squirrel claws as they sit atop my desk communication with one another, I must check when I go back inside. This is a terrifying thought.

### **1.7 Snap in the Middle of the Night**

Well, I have talked and talked with every creature out there. I have spent days, and days speaking to squirrels, chipmunks, spiders, tortoises, turkeys, and the like, and all I have gotten

in return is a massive protest, a demand for good treatment of rodents. And why, I wonder. Does talking help, or does it just raise the expectations of those already receiving. How, I wondered, did these little creatures evolve to where they are now without the hand out from humans, for it is said that we as a species arrived on this planet well after them. Had they just come to expect us to support them and not to return some respect for that support?

Well my wife still wants to feed the birds, and along with the birds comes the squirrels and chipmunks, but alas also comes the rodents. The squirrels and chipmunks agree not to enter the house and mess up the kitchen area, but not the rodents. In fact the other animals will not even discuss this with the rodents, that I do not understand. Also I see not use in talking with rodents, and moreover they never agreed to even meet with me to discuss the issue. They stand aloof and to the side, they talk through their surrogates, the other animals. My only piece of wisdom comes from an arachnid, my new friend the spider, the one who in no way depends on what I provide, a hard working architect of beauty.

Alas I have no other option. I go and set the mouse traps, small wooden boards with spring loaded bars where I deposit cheese or peanut butter. No “have a heart” for the rodents, just direct removal.

It has now been six weeks and I think I have gotten them all. I lie awake at night awaiting that now all too familiar “snap” and I will go and remove any remains. It is 3 AM and I lay awake, just listening. The wind outside blows strongly, the snow is on the ground, I wonder if my flower beds in the basement are home to vacationing squirrels, for I have put fencing around them to protect the seed as the grow, but alas the squirrels lay atop the netting, now ever so close to the sun lamps, it is a squirrel tanning salon, but not to worry, they cause me no harm.

Then, as the quiet descends and I am about to sleep, “Snap!”, there is another. I go downstairs and open the closet where we keep the cereals and the cookies, my wife eats the cookies, and there in front of me is another rodent, still and caught in the bar of the trap. Scattered about are cookie crumbs and mouse droppings, for the rodent must be an eating and processing machine, in with cookies and out with droppings. I empty the trap in the garbage bag and then clean up the droppings, thrown out the half eaten cookie bags. I take one look around, and then I feel I must sleep. The remains are now in the garage garbage tins, the evidence of the neutralization of another rodent is eliminated. But, as usual, I go and reset the trap, just in case, the war continues, but at least I am winning, with the rodents.

The next morning I go out as usual, the snow is blowing hard, the temperature is below 10 degrees F and I walk to the feeder and bring it back to the garage. I fill it with prime sunflower seeds, good expensive sunflower with many oils to help keep the animals warm, the sun has just risen, and I replace the feeder. Immediately the nuthatches return, the cardinals, the birds are grateful, then old fat Antnee comes out. I look at him and say:

“Well good morning Antnee, you seem to be faring well in this winter.”

He is a large ball of grey fur and fat, he must weigh ten pounds and he walks up to me and says:

“Well good morning to you too. I see we have the good sunflower seeds again today, thanks to the wife, she really has exceeded herself this winter.”

I was set aback, here I am in the snow, freezing myself and he thanks my wife who is still in bed. How about thanking me. Well, I should not expect any more than what I get from him.

I wait to see if he says anything about the lack of rodents. Not a word. I am anxious to see what he thinks, especially after the protest last fall, but I know that frequently silence is the best alternative. I continue:

“Are you enjoying the winter, the snow, the beautiful white?”

He answers:

“We enjoy every day, sir, we are squirrels you know.”

I then asked:

“I gather that the chipmunks are sound asleep, the spider is in his cocoon, and the turkeys are here from time to time. How are the turkeys?”

He replied:

“The turkeys are fine also sir, and I have even seen Mr. Turtle for he has spent time in the frozen pond by the outlet for the storm sewer. He seems quite well but like all tortoises he slows down a bit when it gets cold.”

I decided to return inside. I finished:

“Well Antnee, I am going in, I will keep this filled, enjoy the snow!”

He responded:

“Sir, I also thank you for that fine resting place under the sunlamps, it is much better than laying on the wet seeds you had there, and my cousins and I really enjoy the days there. See you some time sir.”

I replied as I closed the gate:

“See you Antnee.”

## 2 SAINT FRANCIS AND THE SQUIRREL

---

Fall was about ready to descend. The leaves on the ash trees had yellowed and the first strong wind had torn them from the branches, the redbuds had turned greenish yellow and the ginkgo has begun its march to that glorious gold of Fall. Also the metasequoias had turned that deep rich gold red color just before their descent for the winter, a descent which unlike the oaks leaves no trail, no reminder on those cold winter days of the summer past.

### 2.1 *The Garden Edge*

I was sitting in the back garden where I was moving my daylily plants about trying to improve the display for the following summer. It was an endless process, like paint on a pallet, like a Manet or Monet, but a living color palette which seemed unlikely to ever converge, but one persists at this process with nature. So there I was, sitting on the edge of the garden and digging and moving and patting the soil.

Then, along the edge of the railroad ties which line the garden came one of my local squirrels, it was not one I had seen before, but a new one. He seemed quite friendly and as he approached it almost looked as if he was smiling at me, a whiskered squirrel smile. I smiled back, and then I stopped, and thought, perhaps I was taking this animal conversation stuff a bit too far. Perhaps I should spend more time with humans, but, alas, he walked up and said:

“Hello, Sir, I see you are preparing for winter.”

I replied:

“Yes, I am, and who perchance are you Mister Squirrel?”

He replied:

“ I am Francesco Squirrel, and a distant relative of that Antnee, the rather rotund young man who as you have learned is a bit filled with himself.”

I replied:

“Yes, yes, indeed he is, a bit. But I gather it is the affliction of youth, older men learn patience and wisdom, and gardening helps a great deal.”

### 2.2 *Relatives*

Francesco then began to tell me his family history. He started:

“Well, Sir, as we have recorded it, we came here more than one hundred winters past. Our great-great etc grandfather, Guiellmo Squirrel, he came from Assisi in Italy, in the baggage of a family who had a small but failing farm in Assisi. The man’s name was Giuseppe Gargiuolo.”

He continued:

“Old Giuseppe came with his wife and three children and one of the children, Maria Gargiuolo loved our old great-great-grandparent Guillermo so much she hid him in her coat, and fed him across the great waters. When he arrived at the island in the water’s end they were going to take him and well, you know sir, what they do to us, well, our grandparent escaped, ran across the water pipe connecting the island at the end of the water to New Jersey, and then, here we are. The winters here are of course much colder but we survive, we have you humans as usual to help us. “

“That was one of the things that Saint Francis promised us in return for our help. He said: *“For all time, God will make certain that humans will feed and care for squirrels, and that squirrels should stay close to humans to remind them of the joys of life and the glory of God.”* That is a nice thing for the Saint to have done, is it not sir?”

### **2.3 Saint Francis**

I then asked Francesco what the squirrels remembered about Saint Francis and he sat back and said in a somewhat more austere tone:

“Well Sir, we do not record our memories in writing as you do, we record in memory and word, handed down from squirrel to squirrel, and we try our best to be exact in each handing down. We have a group of the squirrels who all remember and we have a senior remembered, in the current case, that is me Sir, yes indeed, I am the senior *rememberer*, and I am the one who will hand it down to the next generation. It is an awesome duty, Sir, we have seconds just in case I were to perish, Sir, but until I do I have the duty, yes Sir.”

He continued:

“So let me tell the tale. The good Saint, Sir, when he first started to understand God and when he desired to be a better man, the Saint, Sir, he often went to the forest to pray. There he saw us, carefree, and running about, and in those days we just ignored him, for he was a human devoid of food. We did our usual things; we found nuts, we ate, we played chasing one another up and down the trees, we slept in the sun, and when it was cold and rainy we sat with our tails over our heads covering and warming ourselves.”

“The Saint, Sir, was troubled, he had great wealth and he had a family who wanted him to work just in growing the wealth. The Saint you may know Sir was also a soldier, he had see war Sir, he had seen men die, and he had killed men himself in battle, Sir. That made him question, Sir, for he also believed in God and wanted to do good, but what did that mean. So the Saint would

spend many days in the forest and soon we began to talk with him, as we do with you Sir. He asked us how we could be so carefree, he asked us what we thought of God,, and we explained to him that God gave us freedom, and that we scamper about, because in this freedom we found joy. That joy does not come from possessing but from the freedom to do good to others.”

“We could see Sir that this made him suffer, since he had great wealth and a family which demanded much from him. He continued to talk with us, he gained much insight and one day he came and said to us: *“I shall forsake all and live like you in the forest, I shall do God’s will and I shall be like your squirrels, free to tell men of what I have found and free to seek the joy of God.”*”

He continued:

“Thus, Sir, began the journey of the Saint.”

Francesco continued:

“The Saint befriended many animals, for that he is well known Sir. There of course is the story of the Saint and the birds. Well this one, Sir, we take exception to, yes indeed Sir we do. For it was said that the Saint drew the birds to him and he preached to them about how fortunate they are that Gods feeds them and waters then and dresses them. Yes indeed Sir the Saint did say that but the facts Sir are a bit different. We Sir brought the birds to him, we thought it would create a greater crowd, in fact we spoke with him afore hand, and he agreed, and we wanted him to speak to all of us.”

“ We were so busy Sir managing the crowd, pushing the people close to him, watching overhead, that he forgot about us until the end. But then he did remember and he said: *“People, as the beautiful birds about you have been praised let me also give praise to those who work with me those who share my mission those who obtain their food and sustenance from the kindness of the many as we all go about praising God, my close friends, the squirrels and the crows, for they show that true joy results from our actions, joy in the acceptance of God and his kindness, joy from being amongst you and seeing your faces as we preach his words and your acceptance of them. For God will leave to each of you as a reminder of his joy, both squirrels and crows, dressed plainly as we brother are so dressed, and seeking your charity as we brothers do, and praising God every day as we brothers do, and sharing God’s joy with you. So play with my brothers, for they are my reminder to you every day.”*”

I sat there enthralled that here was a squirrel with such a deep theological understanding, he was lecturing me, and I, his student, sat listening intently. Francesco was now on a roll, and he continued:

“Then there is the story of the Saint and the wolf. Well it goes as follows Sir. The Saint was in the city of Gubbio not far from Assisi and there was a wolf outside the city in the forest and it

was terrifying the city people. The Saint went to the forest and prayed and waited for the wolf. In fact, Sir, if truth be told, we were there, the squirrels, and also my friends the crows. We could see the wolf, a very ferocious wolf indeed, and we went to the Saint and suggested that we had a possible solution. The wolf, like us, wanted food. He did not want to do harm but he was just a wolf. Like the scorpion, who also did not want to do harm, but he was just a scorpion and all too often would jut bite people and animals. Thus we said to the Saint, Sir, that we would speak with the wolf, and if the people would feed him then he would not attack the people. For indeed, Sir, that is what he had done for us, he had told people we were God's creatures and they should both feed us and take joy in our presence."

"Then we found the wolf and spoke with him. Wolves, Sir, can be difficult, especially if one is a squirrel, but we spoke with him for several days, we told him that he would be fed, but he said the townspeople would trick him and then kill him. He could not trust them. We then spoke to him about the Saint and how he had helped us, for now we were fed, we did not toil in the fields as we once did, people fed us in the town squares, from their homes, and indeed we became good friends of the people. After many days, Sir, the wolf agreed to meet the Saint."

"When the Saint saw us coming he did have some fear, since man is meant to fear wolves Sir, but we assured the Saint that the wolf would be no danger. The Saint then spoke to the wolf, and the wolf agreed to do no harm if he were fed, for he was still a wolf, and it was in his nature. The Saint said he understood, for if it was in his nature then God had made it so and man could not change it."

"Then we all went to the square in Gubbio, the Saint in front, the wolf along his right side. The crows were lookouts, and we Sir, we were all along the side, letting the people know that they should have no fear. It was a long procession, Sir, a parade of animals so to speak Sir. For the people knew us and knew that we would not bring fear to their lives. The Saint then told the towns-people of his plan, they all looked about and agreed. From that day forward, the wolf was always fed, until his last day, and no one was ever hurt in Gubbio. The people there remember this to this very day."

I replied:

"That is a touching story. There are I believe many poems about this event in Italian, the Italians remember this about the Saint and have written extensively."

Francesco then said:

"Sir, I do not mean to demean the Saint, but the people fail to remember us, for we were playing a great part here, all too much goes to the wolf, was he dangerous, yes Sir he was, but he was an old lone wolf, and whenever we got someone like him to the Saint, well Sir, I must say, we always seem on the edge of history, not quite in it."

I replied:



“Francesco, I can now see that you squirrels did indeed play an important part. For how would we have joy if we had to speak with wolves, few of us would. For is it not true Francesco, that people will sit in a park and will feed squirrels all day long, with no fear, black ones, grey ones, brown ones.”

Francesco replied:

“Point well taken Sir, thank you for that insight. I guess we have been respected, we continue to work for the Saint.”

#### **2.4 Other Descendents from Assisi**

Francesco then continued:

“You must remember, Sir, that Saint Francis was closest with squirrels and crows, and the image of him with the other birds and rabbits is truly a fiction Sir, a true fiction. I suspect it was because we squirrels and crows were the smartest, also we had the most fun, and Saint Francis enjoyed fun, yes Sir, he thought fun was God’s way of showing humans that God was good and cared for them.”

He continued:

“I offer you as proof of the Saints remembrance of us squirrels, Sir, the fact that the Franciscans are in three orders; the grey, the brown, and the black. Do you know why they chose those colors, Sir, do you know? They did indeed choose them Sir because we squirrels come in three colors; grey like me, brown like those in the north and black like many you see in the cities. The colors the Good Saint’s followers chose were to honor the work we did to help the Good Saint himself. Does anyone ever remember that, alas Sir, no, but we do, we squirrels, and to us it is an honor to see the colors wherever we do, it gives us a sense of a bond, yes Sir, a bond, to all of God’s creatures.”

“The descendents of our relatives from Assisi went to many places with the followers of the Saint. They went north to England, Ireland and France, they went west to Spain, and east to Russia and China, then to India and many places. All we needed were a few trees, a few nuts, a little water, and humans of course, we always need to stay near humans, it was our mission.”

I asked him:

“Were there any places where you did not go.”

Francesco replied:

“Alas Sir, we could not go to the deserts, there were no trees, and for that reason there is little joy there, we could not help spread the Saint’s message to the treeless sands and the humans who live there. We have gone around them, for we are in the south of Africa, but alas not in the true deserts. We have spoken with the camels to help but they speak very little and the work very hard. They seem also to have little joy, have you ever seen a camel playing Sir, indeed not, they work very hard sir, and thus joy is little in them.”

## **2.5     *The Crow***

As we continued our conversation I heard the flapping of wings and in no time before us landed two crows. Before I knew it walking to me is a large black crow, elegant and standing in a direct upright manner and approached Francesco and said:

“Francesco, good to see you again, and how is this human going, are you preaching to him as usual?”

I was stopped by this statement.

Francesco said to me:

“Sir, this is my good friend Carmine Crow, Carmine, and like our family came from Assisi. Also his cousin Antonio Crow. Remember that I told you of Maria, well Carmine’s ancestor was brought over by Maria’s cousin, Isabella. Isabella was also from Assisi. Carmine, tell Sir how your family came here.”

The Carmine turned and with his large crow beak looked into my face and began to speak:

“As Francesco may have told you, Sir, Maria Gargiuolo had Francesco’s ancestor in her coat, and Isabella had taken my ancestor along as well. We four had a great time on the crossing, Francesco’s ancestor would go up and down the ships masts, and mine would fly between them and they would.....”

Francesco interrupted:

“Carmine, tell what happened when we arrived, Sir does not have all day...”

He turned to me and said:

“Carmine likes to tell all the details, if we let him he would talk all day, crows are like that you know, talk, talk, talk.”

Carmine then continued:

“Well, as we remember it, when we all arrived on the island at the end of the water, the families were told that no animals were allowed, and that the animals would be caught and....I cannot even say it Sir. It would have been tragic, yes indeed tragic Sir. Well, our two ancestors decided to escape, and we asked which way? For Francesco’s relative there was one sure exit, over the ramp from the island to the mainland. There he scampered and the two girls waved farewell, they knew they would meet again however. Then my ancestor, well, he was a crow, and before anyone knew it he was aloft and following Francesco, so we went west, they always said go west young man.....”

Francesco interrupted again:

“Carmine, focus, focus, keep to the story, Sir does not want to hear your musings of going west. He always wanted to go west Sir and be with cowboys, I try to tell him they may not be as receptive, but, Sir, he continues to dream. Continue Carmine.”

Carmine was a bit ruffled, he strutted around a few times, in small circles, as if trying to gain his composure. Carmine then continued:

“So off our ancestors went, Sir, they knew that they must spread joy, for that is what the Saint has sought, what we had taught him, and what God desired. So west they went, to New Jersey. But we were sad, for they knew Maria and Isabella were now alone, could they find them. They stopped on the docks on the shore and discussed a strategy.”

Carmine went on:

“Then, Sir, at the edge of the island, the two saw Isabella and Maria, there they were, waving, and each put a red ribbon in their hair. They now knew Sir how to follow them. So for weeks, our ancestor crow would fly above and track the two little ones with the red ribbons, and then the day came, they were let out, and the families moved to Hoboken, just where we were Sir, a miracle, indeed, Sir, a miracle. The Saint had heard our prayers. In no time we were reunited. We have stayed close ever since. That is why we have moved out here. It is close to the family.”

I said:

“That is an amazing tale you two, very loyal, very intelligent.”

The three animals smiled at me, Francesco, Carmine and Antonio.

## **2.6     *The Rock***

I then asked the two of them what they meant by joy, what was the Saint trying to tell people through the squirrels and the crows. Then I saw a smile on Francesco’s face and he turned to Carmine and he said:

“Let’s give Sir an example.”

Francesco then turn to me, along with Carmine, and it was as if both were ready to burst out laughing. The Francesco said:

“Sir, do you remember last summer, when you and Lady Sara were trying to remove that great rock?”

I replied:

“Ah yes, that 300 pound boulder.”

He then went on:

“And do you remember, Sir, let me recall for you, since we all saw it from a better vantage point.”

I interrupted:

“You were watching me?”

He replied:

“Yes indeed Sir, you bring us great joy too. Carmine and all his family stopped their wanderings as did my entire family, we all sat atop the large ash trees and looked down, it was quite amusing Sir.”

I replied:

“Yes I remember.”

Francesco continued:

“Sir, you were sitting in the mud, the large boulder between your legs, and the good Lady Sara holding the large iron bar, leveraging the boulder as you rolled it out of its hole. Then the boulder rolled, you sitting there Sir, and the boulder rolling towards you out of its hole, and we saw that your pants, Sir, yes you pants, were now slipping totally off and into the mud and the boulder, and you Sir, in front of the good Lady Sara, were now bare as a chipmunk, bare butt but not bushy tailed as they say Sir, and then what did you do Sir.”

I smiled and replied:

“I looked at the Missus and said that we should look at ourselves and see how foolish we looked and then we both laughed.”

Francesco replied:

“That is joy sir, indeed that is true joy.”

I replied:

“Francesco, I see what you are saying, we did not fight it we just, to use a phrase, rolled with it, loss of pants and all. The mud was a bit cold however.”

Francesco said:

“You did not lose your dignity, you did not scream and yell, and now the boulder sits at the edge of the garden, a backdrop for the lovely grasses you planted, and it add beauty and gives continuing joy Sir. And also you and the good Lady Sara have something to remember, that also is joy Sir.”

I replied:

“I see Francesco, I am beginning to understand the idea of joy. So that is what you taught the Saint as well.”

He replied:

“Yes, our ancestor taught the Saint that joy is from God and joy comes from the small things, it comes from how we handle the small things and how we then take and look at them as small but growing achievements for ourselves and others.”

Carmine then spoke:

“And frankly Sir, no disrespect meant, but you looked funnier than any one of God's creatures as you were bare bottomed in mud with a boulder rolling towards your middle. That shows us that that the big brain you are so proud of may sometimes function less well than ours.”

He then laughed as I have never heard a crow laugh. I too found it amusing to recall.

## **2.7 Kazantzakis**

I then looked at the two of them and asked a heavy question. I said:

“You both have heard of Kazantzakis the man from Crete who wrote a book of the Saint, who portrayed him as a man suffering, suffering with the pains of the human flesh, its desires and the like.”

Then the squirrel and crow burst out in laughter, I had never seen such from any animal, the crow bent over cawing and cawing, and Francesco went on his back with his four paws holding his fat little tummy, laughing only as a squirrel could, and then Francesco said:

“Cretans, they are not Greeks, Greeks are happy, the Cretans, they always are suffering, and Nikos, poor Nikos, he suffers the most. The Saint, Sir, he was a happy man, he had found God, after all Sir he played with us every day, he taught us and we taught him, we are all God’s creatures, and we show that in our joy, not our pain and sorrow.”

He continued:

“Why God could have chosen a worm or a turtle, not a fine squirrel and crow for the Saint, a smart elegant crow, and a happy joyful squirrel, that Sir is what God gave the Saint, not what the man from Crete would like you to believe, we have been there Sir, we know, and we live our lives every day with that understanding.”

He continued:

“But poor Nikos, he was always suffering, always looking, always not listening to what was at his very feet. For it is told, Sir, told by our very ancestors, for we had a distant uncle, one Phondas Squirrel, his real name was Xenophon but we all called him Phondas, who knew the good Nikos personally. The stories from Phondas, Sir, the time he tried to bring joy to Nikos, but to no avail sir, Nikos would not see what joy was, he always looked upon the dark side, Sir, the dark side.”

I then asked:

“Tell me, what did Phondas say about him.”

Francesco replied:

“Well Sir, Phondas had a good eye, he was from Athens, that is Sir, he was born there, and as he grew he jumped a ship one day and ended up in Herakilon, the large city in Crete. Well Sir, Phondas went about old Crete and he saw something he found amazing. The statues in Crete, Sir, the old statues, they have no smiles, Sir, no smiles.”

“He would always say, Sir, that the Greek statues always had a twinkle, that smile of joy, Sir, a true smile. He would say you could tell a great deal about a people by looking at their statues. The Cretans had no smile. Nikos also had no smile. His view of the Saint was a man who suffered, no Sir, the Saint did not suffer, he sought the joy of God, and joy comes from having little and enjoying every day by being with others and helping them, yes Sir, that is true joy, not having things, but in having just the minimum, and sharing. We, Sir, look at the feeder in your own yard, we share, we are up there dumping the seed upon the ground, so all share. Some think, Sir, that we are pigs, I mean no disrespect Sir to those pig friends, but they do over eat a

bit Sir. Yet we share, we send seed down and whenever a sparrow needs space, Sir, we move aside. We let all share.”

The more I listened to Francesco the more I was learning. The Saint had himself gained a great deal from these small creatures of God, they taught him that sharing was important, they taught him the joys of life, they showed him how to share this with others.

## **2.8    *Farewell***

When the leaves begin to fall, when the trees start their winter slumber, when the green goes gold, then gone, then, and only then do we settle softly in the slumber of the long winter. The snow silently sifting through the oak trees, branches holding flakes upon flakes, each balanced so delicately one atop the other, then out my back window I see Francesco, atop the rail on the deck, tail atop his head, snow blowing the strands of fur hair in the wind, I see the smile, I see the glint in the eye, then jumping across to the maple and up to the empty bird house, the entry gnawed open for his furry flesh to fit, and in he goes, then out pops his head, I can see the wink in his right eye, the wave from the paw, and then good night, and oh by the way, “Merry Christmas, Francesco”.

### **3 THE SQUIRREL'S CHRISTMAS**

---

Winter, it has arrived in its full force. I am out checking the pots of flowers that I have left out to overwinter, making sure that they do not get too frost burned as they sit in the dry freezing west winds atop of their small benches. They are nicely packed about with leaves in an attempt to keep the effects of the winds at a minimum. I hear a rustle in the leaves at my feet and whom do I see but it is my old friend Antnee Squirrel.

#### **3.1 Antnee and the Nest**

I look down and I see his face packed full with dry oak leaves and he is gathering more by the second and continuing to stuff them in his mouth. I looked at him and said:

"Well, Antnee, what are your about?"

He said nothing, he just continued to stuff his mouth with the leaves from the pin oak tree, more and more of the lobed leaves were somehow shoved into his mouth. He turned and winked at me and then scampered over to his large ash tree and up the tree, round and round till near the top, at a fork in the branches, I could see his large nest, and into it, he went stuffing his mouthful of leaves. Then up behind him went Maria, his wife, she also holding large amounts of pin oak leaves and she then stuffing them into corners and crevices of the now growing nest.

Then down he came and over again to where I stood arranging the pots for winter. He looked up at me and shook his fluffy head and said:

"Wives, they are all the same, all she wants me to do is stuff the nest, as if I don't have a life."

I was a bit taken aback; I had never heard him speak that way before, so I responded:

"Antnee, why so upset, I thought that stuffing your nests was an important part of the winter ritual, it is important on those cold days when you have to shield yourself from the winds."

He replied:

"Really Sir, you know what we do, that hole you left open in your attic, many thanks, for we go up there, soft, warm, and we get to peak at your TV when you are watching at night. Nests, let the birds have their nests. It is a territorial thing for Maria, she wants her nest just right. I cannot go and just stuff leaves any which way, she has her way of stuffing, one atop the other, carefully placed, and then we repeat the process. Drives me a bit crazy Sir."



Yes indeed, I could appreciate that. Wives have their ways and husbands have their duties. Somehow organizing leaves was something, which I had never thought of as a husbandly task. But alas, as I came to know Antnee's and his clan better I came to understand the differences we share but at the same time, the commonalities we all share.

So up and down Antnee ran back and forth many times, his mouth stuffed with the oak leaves, stuffing the nest. I never truly understood Antnee and his wife Maria, as they never went from the leaf pile to their nest by any direct route. They always seemed to jump around, in an almost chaotic manner, gathering the leaves, then going up a small white oak, to a tall branch, then jumping to an ash tree, and up to another branch, over to an elm, and up to an even higher branch and then off to the top of the Norway spruce, and into the nest, then back down the trunk of the spruce. Never direct, never really the same, but back and forth, halting about every twenty or thirty steps, looking about, then proceeding.

Finally, Maria gave Antnee a break and he and his fellow males came down to eat and talk. The flowerpots and stands were lined up along and around the bird feeder, which frankly should be called the squirrel feeder, but alas, we still get birds. Then after some stuffing their mouths the group, led by Antnee sat atop my gallon flowerpots and looked up at me as if to let me know that now they could amuse me with conversation.

I responded:

"Hi guys, you all seem very busy today."

They just lined up across the flower pots as before and just shrugged. Antnee start first as usual:

"Work, we are not made for this!"

I replied:

"It's your home, Antnee, why not take pride, look at my home, you see me working all the time."

### **3.2    *The First Christmas***

I sat down upon an empty pot stand, the sun was bright and Antnee and the other four squirrels sat opposite me on the pots that were lined up waiting for spring. Antnee was in the middle and each sat upright with their tails blocking the wind, slight as it was.

Antnee then began his tale:

"Sir, I am certain that you have heard many stories about the first Christmas. You have that Manger I see through the window; filled with cows, goats, sheep, camels, but Sir, do you see a single squirrel, no Sir your don't. Have you ever asked why?"

I was a bit amazed that he even asked that question but knowing Antnee as I do I played along and responded as best as I could.

"No Antnee, I do not. But perhaps it is because there were no Squirrels in Bethlehem."

Well it was as if I had lit a match in a gasoline storage tank. The five of them jumped and bounced about screeching like all get out. Their tails fluffing about as they jumped and screeched over my flowerpots. The Antnee came to rest and said in a rather blunt manner:

"See Sir, you are like all others, you thought that there were no squirrels in Bethlehem. Sir, did you not know that the land was filled with trees, that the Lebanon Cedars were plentiful, that we ate the seeds of the Lebanon cedars and that we squirrel's were also plentiful. Yes, I admit that now, two thousand years later, few if any of us survived, but Sir that is a tale for another day. As for then, we were there en masse, yes Sir, we truly were. So why no squirrels in the crèche, a tale of woe Sir, a true tale of woe."

Knowing Antnee as I do I thought it best to keep my silence for in a brief moment I would soon hear that tale of woe. Antnee then continued the tale.

The other squirrels then looked at me intently; whisker fluttering about their noses, and Antnee began.

"You see Sir, those many years ago; Bethlehem was surrounded by many cedars and other trees, well before the Romans had cut them down. And our ancestors lived happily amongst them. As we have passed down many generations the story goes that when Joseph and Mary arrived in Bethlehem it was late at night and indeed Sir as the tale goes there was no room at the Inn, in fact even we had been chased out, you know Sir, some Inn keepers are not very kind to us. So there was a large shed in the rear of the Inn and the Innkeeper told Joseph that he might use it for a small fee. Imagine that Sir, charging a man like Joseph to use a barn. But lucky for Joseph it was our barn, Sir, indeed it was the barn of Micha Squirrel, our long distant relative. Well, Sir, Micha had lived there with his large family for many years and he was a kind old squirrel, and his wife Lady Esther was also a kind old squirrel. When Joseph and Mary entered, they jumped down and spoke with them and Micha was the first to offer help. He said to Joseph that he would help him get some hay to let Mary lay upon, indeed a good squirrel, Sir, a good squirrel."

I was as usual amazed by the clarity and detail of Antnee's story telling and perhaps it was a result of it not being written that it took such life, the life of the story tellers of old, an oral tradition so noble that story tellers have always been revered, as ones close to prophets, for the story teller remembers and conveys the past which becomes so much a part of the future.

Thus Antnee continued:

"Then Sir, Micha and the good Lady Esther called their family to the barn and when the good Lady Mary saw them all she began to laugh so greatly that her large belly shook frightfully so. It appeared that she had never before seen so many of us at any one time, but Sir, we were just trying to help her, for she was near that time Sir, indeed, she was near that time.

Then the Lady Mary said to Joseph, as well as Micha and the Lady Esther, that she felt the child within also laughing, but one knew that children still within Sir do no such thing, but Lady Mary said for certain, Sir, for certain indeed, that the child within was laughing."

"Micha said that the child would arrive soon, and that they needed to set the Lady Mary to rest, so that the child may come. It was then Sir, that the good Micha set about his task. He first sent his family to clear out the other animals, for cows and sheep Sir, they are not that smart, Sir, they just sit and eat Sir and their droppings foul the floors, not a good thing for a new child Sir, no indeed. Thus Micha shooed the large animals out, indeed Sir, they also were eating all of the hay, and at that rate there would be none for Lady Mary."

He continued for now Antnee was on a roll:

"Then Micha and Esther went and, seeing that Mary and Joseph were hungry from their long journey, scrambled out and collected the nuts that they had stored away. Hundreds of nuts. Micah also enlisted the help of his family members, which counted for almost fifty of us, scrambling collecting straw, nuts, and arranging the manger in anticipation of the birth. The warm fire was enough to roast the nuts and Mary and Joseph had a good meal."

"Then Sir, a miracle, for the child was born, and Sir, it was born as if it happened in a split second, one second the Lady Mary was sitting there eating roasted nuts, and a second latter, well Sir, there was the child, wrapped in the cloth that the Lady Mary had wrapped around her shoulders. The fire was warm and the baby was laid into the manger where Micha and all the family had gathered soft fresh straw. There was a quiet amongst the family that made it all silent, not a whisper, not a squeak, then the Lady Mary Sir said to Esther, that all of the family could come and look upon the new babe, and all fifty, Sit I believe that was the true number, all fifty Sir, they climbed up on the beams, atom the trees overhanging the manger and peered down at the new babe, and Sir, we are told that the babe smile ad great smile at all of us, his very first smile Sir, yes indeed, his very first smile was given to us, a gift indeed Sir, a great gift indeed."

I was amazed to hear the story told in the style, which only Antnee could do. He clearly has taken on the task of being their storyteller.

But it was clear that there was more. This tale was one I had never heard of and moreover one that I could never imagine, were it not for Antnee. So I cleaned the snow off an edge of one of

the potting benches and sat down for I knew that there would be a great deal more and I wished not to miss a word. Antnee then took a small breath and continued:

"The babe was fed, and they all looked at Lady Mary and she spoke to Esther and said, "Esther, we thank you for your help, for we were hungry and you found food, we were weary and you brought soft straw, and we were burdened with worry and you brought joy, and now we are all so happy." The Lady Mary patted Esther on her head and gave her a small kiss. Micha was sitting over the head of the small babe and suddenly he started to talk to the babe. Lady Mary was startled and she said to Micha, "Who are you talking to Micha?" and Micha replied, "Why Lady Mary to the babe, to the baby Jesus, he tells me that he too is thankful for all our help. He is such a nice babe, friendly and of good spirit." And with that the Lady Mary was taken aback as was Joseph."

At this point, I was truly amazed, there was truth to this or over the many years, it had been embellished beyond belief. Yet I knew Antnee well enough by this time that he was a bearer of the details, a holder of truth. So I then asked:

"Antnee, this is amazing, so then what happened?"

He again ruffled up his tail over his head to block the light wind, and squatted a bit lower and fluffed if fur, for he appeared to be feeling the cold, but no matter, he continued:

"Then amazing to all, the Baby Jesus looked around at all of Micha and Esther's clan and said to them in a soft and quite kind voice, "To you I give my thanks, you are creatures of goodness and kindness and you have brought me great joy upon my arrival. For such gifts I ask that you continue to bring joy to all mankind as a sign of goodness and love, you must frolic in front of mankind and become one with them. In turn, you will be protected and you will journey across all the earth and you will be loved by all. My thanks again and you are true creature of joy." At that Micha and Esther were elated and all of the family scampered about, over the edge of the manger, up through the rafters and jumped to the branches, and all of the time the babe was laughing in his new found bed."

Finally, Antnee said:

"From that time on we have been on a journey and always close to mankind. Sometimes we get to find some men not too friendly but we adjust. Like you Sir, we have many friends like you. And as the babe said Sir, it is joy we bring, for that is an important part of our daily lives."

I replied:

"Indeed Antnee, you bring great joy."

I saw that the light was almost gone and I said:

"Well my friend, I must go in, it is getting late and my good wife will want dinner. Merry Christmas my friends."

The replied in unison:

"Merry Christmas Sir and to Lady Sara."

### **3.3 Christmas Morning**

On Christmas morning, the snow was covering all the pots atop the wooden planks and it was deep enough to cover the holes in the cinder blocks, which held the wooden planks above the ground. I went out and filled the feeders, adding an excess amount of sunflower seeds to give Antnee, Maria and the others a treat. The storm was clearing, and there may be a chance for a clear day but the wind had built up from the west and it was quite frigid.

I went out with new seed and a Christmas present for my fine furry friends. I had a dozen corncobs replete with dry corn kernels, all yellow and glistening above the white snow. As I approached the feeder, there was Antnee and Maria, and I spoke to them:

"Good morning good friends and a Merry Christmas to you all, I have some great corn for your Christmas present."

Antnee looked at the corn and turned briefly to check Maria, who was sitting there with a bit of a smile, and said:

"Merry Christmas to you Sir, and many thanks. We do enjoy that corn, indeed we do Sir, a bit tough but very tasty. Is there enough for daily eating, Sir, or is this just a onetime treat?"

I looked at the fat furry Antnee and wondered if he had any idea that he was the biggest and roundest squirrel perhaps in the entire world. Then Maria said:

"Sir, you perhaps see what I do, a fine but fat furry husband. You see Sir, he waddles up the tree to the nest and recently when he has tried to jump, well Sir, snap went the branches, never before have we squirrels seen such, snap Sir, not from the ice, not from the wind, Sir, it was from that..."

And Maria pointed at the rather round belly on Antnee, a large round and comfortable squirrel belly. She continued:

"I am certain that the promise of the Baby Jesus on the first Christmas that we squirrels would be taken care of by man did not mean that we would become gray round balls of fur and fat!"

And with that, she turned and scratched Antnee on the belly, and he just sat there and giggled. I was amazed since I had never seen him giggle before, in fact, I doubt that anyone has seen a fat furry giggling squirrel, but there before me was Antnee. I placed the corncobs on the white snow and said:

"Well, I have to get back in; my wife wants me to make some muffins. Here is the corn and again I wish you a very Merry Christmas."

Antnee and Maria replied in concert:

"To you and Lady Sara, Merry Christmas."

### **3.4    *The Night of Christmas***

As we sat about the chimney, the fire in the fireplace burning now for a couple of hours with a good bed of coals, it was dark and I thought of my conversations with Antnee. I thought that he should be warm in his nest and hoped he would enjoy the day as I had.

The large glass door behind me faced out onto the large deck now covered with snow and the four leaf stuffed boxes of tree seedling were jammed against the bottom outside in hope that my new trees would get safely through the winter. My fondest was a Franklinia I had take in seed from Mount Vernon, a gift to George Washington many years ago, when on top of the Franklinia, and now tapping at the door was Antnee, and nine other members of his family. I could see the smile and my wife looked with amazement at the crowd.

I invited them in over the loud objections of my wonderful wife; after all, they were my friends.

They rumbled about, jumping here and there and then Antnee came upon my small crèche. From that, I hear a screech. Antnee said:

"Sir, look here, this is what we said. Your crèche has a cow, a sheep, a goat, and not one squirrel!"

It was as if I had betrayed him to the core. I said:

"Antnee, relax, we will fix this."

I took the crèche and moved it towards the fire, a warm spot in the room, and I took out the cow, the sheep and the goat. I even took out the camels.

I then said:

"Guys, get here in front of the crèche and I will take a photo, a photo of the real Christmas."

The nine of them bumbled their way to the crèche; somewhat overthrowing it in the jumble, but there was the crèche, the statue of Joseph, Mary and the manger with baby Jesus. And there were the nine squirrels up on their haunches about the crèche with the fire burning in the background.

I took several photos, just to memorialize this splendid occasion, and recognizing that anyone who saw them would never believe me, but who cared, the nine of them then had me print the best one out and they sat before the fire admiring it the rest of the evening. My lovely wife just sat there shaking her head!

Then, if things were not already a bit strange, Antnee jumped over, as well as a slightly obese squirrel can ever do so, and said:

"Lady Sara, let's all sing Christmas Carols!"

At this point my dear wife thought we all had lost our minds. Here she was with nine squirrels, a roaring fire, an empty crèche her husband communing with the animals and now one of them is asking to jointly sing carols! She was without reply. I thus jumped in and started it off.

We echoes some of the standards and when we finished the third my wife said:

"Oh what fun, this reminds me of that Chipmunk song from Christmas time. It was Alvin and the Chipmunks!"

Well, I could have expected this, up spoke Antnee:

"Lady Sara, Chipmunks indeed, why that was just another one of those Hollywood tales which twist the truth, it was squirrels!"

I interrupted for I knew Antnee would again go off. I said to them:

"Okay guys, we know, we know, it's Christmas, let's just sing."

We sang for another dozen or so songs and the fire died down. Maria had cuddled up on the edge of the sofa and she was sound asleep, Antnee was near my foot, now snoring away and the others were slowly going into their deep sleep. My good wife looked at me and said:

"I suppose we should go to bed ourselves, what do we do with them?"

I replied:

"Well it is still Christmas, let them stay here and we can let them out in the morning."

So we went to bed and slept. Upon awakening I felt fur on my nose, and as I opened my eyes there were nine squirrels all nestled in the bed from our heads to our feet!



## 4 *TERENTIUS PUBLIUS SCIURUS AND HIS FRIEND MARCUS AURELIUS*

---

History, I had never thought that the good squirrels had a sense of it, but of late, I have been listening to the tales from Antnee and his various squirrel tales, those of Saint Francis and then the time in the Manger. Tales of valor and great acts, past times, and with details that can only be achieved by an oral tradition, well preserved.

### 4.1 *Antnee and the Snow*

January has been a cold and snowy month. I managed to keep the Squirrel feeder well stocked and continued to place the corncobs for their consumption well on the top of the frozen surface. And in thanks, from time to time Antnee and his friends would return a half eaten cob to my door step, not that I had a compelling interest in consuming the reaming kernels but their hearts were in the right place.

I shook some of the sunflower seed on the ground and was ready to return when Antnee popped his head from behind a branch. He startled me and then said:

"Sir, well good morning Sir, I am sorry if I startled you. Many thanks from all Sir for the seed, we do appreciate it Sir, we do indeed. Did you enjoy the corn Sir, we enjoyed it and we thought it best to share it, we share Sir, it is our code, save and share."

I looked at the furry little face, which I now recognized from our many conversations and replied:

"Cold day today Antnee, is it not."

I suddenly realized that I was picking up his cadence of speech, I was talking like a squirrel, and I wondered if he would notice, I just did.

Antnee just kept talking, as was his way but the direction truly amazed me.

"Sir, cold, no Sir, this is not really cold, why Sir, I remember the tales of one of our famous ancestors, Terentius Publius Scuirus, Sir, yes old Terentius Publius, Sir, his tales are tales of true cold Sir, indeed they are."

I stood back and was amazed. I asked him:

"Antnee, and just who is this Terentius Publius, another one of your historical tales?"

He sat there, ruffled up his whiskers, and looked at me with a slight bit of disdain for my ignorance. I guess somehow I should have known of this squirrel. In addition, my ignorance of squirrel history was vast, so I continued:

"Sorry Antnee, but could you refresh me on Terentius Publius, I just am unaware."

That clearly was unnecessary for he was ready to regale me with this spot of history. He started:

"Well Sir, Terentius Publius was the confidant of the good Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Yes Sir, the personal confidant of a true Roman Emperor."

I was again a bit taken aback and said:

"You mean the Marcus Aurelius who wrote the Meditations, that Marcus Aurelius?"

He again ruffled his nose and whisker and stared right at me with that side slanting squirrel eyes and said:

"That very Emperor, Sir, that very Emperor. And Sir, he had great help on those Meditations from Terentius Publius."

I knew I was in for another Antnee tale so I rushed aside the snow on one of the planting planks and sat down. Antnee jumped atop a large pot, whisking the snow away with his tale, for he too knew this would take a while, and he sat upright, his hands in a teaching manner pointing at me as he began to speak.

#### **4.2 *Terentius Publius Meets Marcus Aurelius***

The tale begins at the encampment called Carnuntum on the Danube River. Carnuntum is a bit east of where present day Vienna is. It was built by the Emperor Tiberius and the Danube marked the border to the Roman Empire. Tribes from the north, the Macromanni and the Quadi were just two of the German tribes who were pushing across the Danube in search of land. These German tribes were highly aggressive and warlike and the Roman Legions had battled them for over a hundred years at this time. They were excellent fighters and the tall pine, oak forests along the Danube allowed them to fight in unconventional ways, and as such, they often overcame the Romans, which was unheard of. The reason was that the advantage the Roman Legions had in weaponry and organization played little role in this deep forests.

The Danube had many small tributaries and its flow created islands and strips of land, which were excellent as barriers for any attack from the Germani tribes. At Carnuntum the Legions had settled on the south side of the Danube, across from a wide portion of the Danube which had split from the main River, and between the main body of the Danube and the small stream was an island covered in grasses and other weeds, difficult to cross but a protection from

frontal attack. The Legion's fortress was a large wooden structure, which abutted this small stream and was covered on the three land sides by strong log walls. There were roads on the south side of the Danube, which the Legion used for patrolling the border between Roma and the Germani.

I sat there not feeling the cold, listening to every word from the mouth of Antnee, for he was telling a tale in a manner only a world class story teller could do. I knew that region of the Danube but his telling drew me back almost two thousand years, before Vienna and before Budapest, to the time of the wandering Germani tribes.

Marcus Aurelius arrived from Rome at Carnuntum to take up the battle against the Germani tribes. His wife Faustina had died a short while earlier and his counterpart as Emperor Lucius Verus had died. He was tired, he was aging and he knew he had to battle on. Marcus Aurelius settled in his quarters at Carnuntum, a quiet and private man, not one for false praise, a fighter respected by his men but a man of justice. He was it was said a true Stoic.

On his second day at the fortress, he went out in the afternoon, on the south side of the Danube to look at the land and regain a feel for this tall tree forested terrain. It was then that the great Marcus Aurelius met Terentius Publius.

Marcus Aurelius walked amongst the oak and pine. The air was crisp and cold, and winter was soon to arrive. The acorns were falling at his feet and the pine cones dropped from the tall trees as the strong wind twisted their tops. Then suddenly as Marcus Aurelius turned a great oak, he ran smack into Terentius Publius, who smashed into Marcus Aurelius' leg shins and bounced off. Stunned, Terentius Publius looked up in amazement for he had never seen an Emperor before. And there before him was a tall bearded man with black and gray curled hair, his beard also speckled, his face rough and lined from being in the field and his eyes a penetrating blue. A strong face but one of kindness. Then the Emperor spoke:

"Ah my little friend, I hope you are unhurt, it must be a fright to smash your little head into the shin of an Emperor."

Without thinking, Terentius Publius replied:

"Good Emperor Sir, it was my fault, for I did not see you there Sir, no I did not, my humble apologies, Sir, my humble apologies."

Marcus Aurelius was taken aback, a talking squirrel! He had never seen one before. Terentius Publius was also shaken for he forgot the main credo of squirrels, keep quiet in front of humans. But alas, the mouse, in this case the squirrel, was out of the bag.

Then Marcus Aurelius said:

"Squirrel, who are you and how is it that you speak and indeed speak quite well, using our finest Latin."

Terentius Publius at this point not thinking at all, for he was a very flustered squirrel replied in a manner to even make things worse:

"Emperor Sir, I also speak Greek and several of the Germani dialects. You do not want to eat me Sir, for I fear that all we are for the Germani is a meal please Sir, let me not be a meal."

Marcus Aurelius smiled and said:

"Young friend, I need someone of your talents, you not only will not be eaten but I shall feed and care for you. We can talk, you can provide me with information, we can be of great mutual benefit. For all people and all animals are one with nature and a friend like you will be of great comfort to me."

Thus, off they went back to the fortress with Terentius Publius following at the feet of the Emperor. After a short walk the Emperor turned and said,

"What shall I call you small friend, do you have a name?"

Then Terentius Publius replied:

"My name is Terentius Publius Sciurus, and I have been here and I have travelled once to Rome with my uncle, Julius Lucius Sciurus."

The Emperor laughed and looked down at Terentius Publius and asked with the laughed still coming out:

"My little friend, who decided to call you Terentius Publius?"

He replied:

"Oh Sir, my mother loved the plays by Terentius Publius Afer, the comedies Sir, they bring joy, and we squirrels are bearers of joy Sir. Thus my mother, I miss her so Sir, she named me after the great comic playwright Sir, that I may always be reminded to bring joy Sir."

And Marcus Aurelius lifted him upon his shoulder and walked into the fortress at the amazement of all the men in the Legion and he whispered to Terentius Publius:

"Then my good friend let us bring joy to each other."

### **4.3     *The Battle with the Germani***

The winter settled in and the snows had begun. Terentius Publius had grown his heavy winter coat and if necessary, he had his large tail to wrap about himself to protect from the biting winds. Along the edge of the Danube, looking up and down river, it was now a mass of ice, ice covered in drifting snows as the winter winds blew it in dancing swirls, twisting and spiraling as if performing some dance of nature, blowing up funnels that collapsed again and formed new swirls. The river was strangely alive with currents of snow flakes, and it gave a strange sense with the rest of nature so much at its winter rest.

Marcus Aurelius looked from his window and turned to Terentius Publius and said:

"We have battled the Marcomanni and the Quadi, and yet we have invited the Naristae, their neighbors to join us in the Roman territories. We need people, peaceful peoples to settle our many lands, to be farmers and producers, yet the Germani, with some small exceptions. want to do battle. The Marcomanni especially are forever in battle."

"We seem to be winning these battles, why now we even are getting deserters from the Germani tribes, yet, I feel uncertain. What do you see in these Germani Terentius Publius?"

Terentius Publius jumped up on the window, which opened upon the river, it was covered by large curtains to block to cold winds, as well as some strange substance, which was hard but permitted light to flow through, yet no wind, and he looked at the cold and then turned to Marcus Aurelius and commenced:

"Good Sir, this is a complex question you put to me. As you know, we do not treat territory as so sacred as you humans, we also do not battle to the death in such a brutal manner. Perhaps because we have our own dangers, such as hawks and wolves in winter, and others who see us more as food than as an enemy. But good Sir, you have vast lands, vast spaces, and many mouths to feed. I know Sir, in my trip to Rome, Sir, many people, many mouths, and few workers Sir. I gather that it is through your kindness that they eat, grain is given free to the people. For us Sir, we must find our own food, and thus Sir we travel great distances, for we do not farm as you do, we gather from what the gods have provided us. But you Sir, have great needs, especially in Rome, and these people out here may become good farmers and meet that need."

Marcus Aurelius looked at the blowing snow and contemplated what Terentius Publius had been saying. It had merit he thought but these were Germani, not Gauls, not even Britons, they were by nature warlike and uncontrollable. Yet Terentius Publius did make a point for indeed, if they had lands and were farmers then he could get grain and reduce the burden on a dwindling treasury in Rome.

#### **4.4    *The First of the Meditations***

Late at night, in the light of oil lamps, Marcus Aurelius would sit at a long wooden table, he would read some of the Greek authors and think of the meaning of their words in the context

of his life as Emperor. Since he was joined by Terentius Publius, he would now talk with him regarding some of his thoughts.

Marcus Aurelius started one night by asking Terentius Publius:

"Terentius Publius, do you believe in god, or the gods, what is it that you hold a key to your life?"

Terentius Publius replied:

"Good Sir, we manage day by day. We lack any long term vision of where we are going and we have very few philosophers. Our worries are finding some new nuts, some seeds, a warm place at night, we play with our friends, we do not fight, we do not war with one another. We are at one with most of what we live with. Yes Sir, we do indeed have enemies, but those enemies look at us from the viewpoint of their survival not as an enemy Sir, we are their food so to say, as horrific as that may sound. We do not hunt, we just gather, we take what nature has delivered to us, we are one with nature."

Marcus Aurelius replied:

"I have studied many philosophies, and the one that keeps resonating in my heart is that of the Stoics. The god of the Stoics is in all of nature, in me and you. In fact Terentius Publius, the mere fact that we are such good friends is in a way an affirmation of that belief, for in us is the same god, a manifestation of our oneness."

Terentius Publius replied:

"A weighty observation Sir, and then is your task as a Stoic one who seeks wisdom, as for example I seek nuts and seeds, or is it more, say as I seek joy, the pleasure of every moment?"

Marcus Aurelius replied:

"Terentius Publius, you have an interesting conundrum. You speak as one seeking wisdom, but your words, even your actions in seeking joy as you say make you look like an Epicurean rather than a Stoic. Yet your sense of oneness with nature again brings you back to the Stoic. Our beliefs as a Stoic have three avenues which we pursue; first is knowledge, which we gather through the many impressions which we perceive from the world and then which we compare to the many other realities and finally we are able to reach a true but critical knowledge of what nature truly is. This we call the logic of our ways. Second is the physical and mental existence we all share, the tension between the mind and the body, the very physics of the physical and metaphysical. It is in this context that we have souls, souls which reason and those souls which do not. Third, we have the fact is that the true end of man is happiness and that happiness is achieved by living according to nature. This is the ethics of our lives."

Terentius Publius moved slowly across the large wooden table and placed himself between two warm lamps and looked up at Marcus Aurelius. He then replied:

"Sir, you have just told me what you think you should think. But Sir, perhaps you should tell me what you yourself think. Your thoughts Sir, your Meditations on life and its meaning and what for you is goodness. That Sir would be important. Perhaps Sir we could help each other through this understanding."

Marcus Aurelius pushed his chair back, and a smile came to his face. He replied:

"Terentius Publius, that is a wonderful idea, I shall prepare my thoughts, we can discuss them, they will become my Meditations, my private notes on living a good life. Let us begin now my little friend. Let us begin and write them down, help me through this and I will be ever so grateful."

He continued:

"What shall we discuss first, my friend?"

Terentius Publius then asked:

"Sir, you rest on reason, your ability to think through the details, so why not say that, write that down Sir."

So Marcus Aurelius wrote:

*"Do you have reason? "I have reason" Thus use it. If reason functions as it should, what else should you do."*

Terentius Publius then said:

"Sir, very well said Sir, use reason and then rely upon its results, very good Sir."

Marcus Aurelius smiled as he started his writings. His small friend was quite supportive. Then Terentius Publius said:

"Sir, perhaps this is of a private nature, and you know how people look at your words to seek an advantage, Perhaps Sir you should put this in Greek. In addition Sir, in Greek it tends to take an air of true reason."

Marcus Aurelius then said:

"Terentius Publius, a fine idea, my Greek is somewhat good, can you help me on this?"

Terentius Publius agreed and they wrote together:

*"λογον εχεις εχω τι ουν ου χρα τουτου γαρ το εαυτου παιουντος τι αλλο θελεις"*

"Very good Sir!" said Terentius Publius. The Greek flowed well, simple and direct.

They spoke through the night, idea after idea flowed, was translated into Greek as they were discussed.

Then Terentius Publius said:

"Sir, remember your words about the arrogant, they are often looked upon as bearers of truth, they by their pressing and influence look down on others and seek the truth they only are holders of. How would you phrase that Sir."

Marcus Aurelius then wrote:

*"Do not copy the ideas of the arrogant or let them lead you, always look at things as they truly are."*

"Again very well said Sir!" replied Terentius Publius. Late into the night they worked, night after night, writing about how to deal with neighbors, impulses of the body, the pleasure of work, the complexity of the words of philosophers. They spoke of the transitory nature of this life, that today they work and live and think and reason and that in battle on the morrow all may end, or a tree may fall, but that each day one must live with righteousness and goodness.

After several months, Marcus Aurelius had amassed many such observations with the help of Terentius Publius, all in a very simple and readable Greek. At night, they would discuss both old ones and add new ones. Terentius Publius could see a calm coming upon Marcus Aurelius, he had begun to understand life, in fact, Terentius Publius too had come to understand Humans. What a difficult existence he thought these humans have, they reason but reason so complexly. They reason at times with so much of their emotions and they are not directed towards the simple things.

#### **4.5 Discussions on Offspring**

Then one night Marcus Aurelius was stricken with pain, it was after a meal even though the food was consumed sparingly. He knew that this might be the beginning of his end. His physicians recommended a poultice and some warm herb broth to expel the poisons, but Marcus Aurelius thought it to be much more, for he had begun to achieve what he was searching for, knowledge and understanding. He knew he was human and mortal and he understood he was nearing that time.



That evening he and Terentius Publius sat at his table and instead of talking about philosophy, they spoke of the future, a future without either of them.

Marcus Aurelius started:

"Terentius Publius, one of the things we humans have to do, especially an emperor, is to plan for when he is no longer here. He must choose his successor, the person who follows him after his demise. I have thought well of my son Commodus, I have selected him to follow me after my passing. Yet there are times I see that he may not be the best choice. You have met him, you see him in a way I do not, what say you of him?"

Terentius Publius then said:

"Sir, good friend, one is always kind to one's children, we let them loose quite early. You humans on the other hand overlook their shortcomings and keep them about for long periods. This good Sir about that which we spoke, of reason, and arrogance, of friendship, and knowledge. I know Commodus, he in all respect to you my good friend he is not your true heir. It is not that he is not your son, Sir, it is that he does not have the values one seeks in such a person. In fact my good friend I feel he will do your name a grave disservice."

Marcus Aurelius replied:

"He is my offspring, the son of my lovely departed wife the Lady Faustina. It is in her memory that I keep him, he reminds me of her, he is Faustina who still lives on."

Terentius Publius then asked:

"What of the good Tiberius Claudius, Sir, your fine son in law, a fine pick Sir, a fine man. And if I say so myself, mature and with good judgment, like you yourself say Sir."

Marcus Aurelius then replied:

"I agree Terentius Publius, but then with him as a choice there would be a great deal of civil unrest, it must be my son Commodus. I see no other choice."

Terentius Publius then said:

"Sir, I suggest then you think of Valerius Maximianus, for he won many victories for you this year alone, Sir, a fine and well seasoned man Sir."

But the conversation was continuing to go nowhere, the heart and not the mind was playing the tune. In the end, Marcus Aurelius stayed with Commodus, which in his eyes was a link to Faustina.

#### **4.6    *Death of Marcus Aurelius***

Towards the end of the third winter together, having finished the Meditations, and still at the Danube, Marcus Aurelius had clearly weakened. He ate little, and drank little. His face was worn and he was tired in the evenings. Instead of discussing philosophy each night, which challenged the brain, they spoke of the past, of battles, of victories, of defeats and of old friends. So many friends but so many no longer with the world.

Marcus Aurelius' face was turning a deep orange-yellow. His pain increased and his physicians treated him with herbs that Terentius Publius knew well but he also knew that they were of no benefit and indeed all squirrels were warned to avoid them, for they were poisonous. But the good Marcus Aurelius was in his final days.

The night of the 17th of March of 933 Ab Urbe Condita, the good Marcus Aurelius took to his bed for the last time. His physicians continued to treat him but to no avail. He quietly asked all of them to leave, for he wanted to be by himself.

Then he softly called out:

"Terentius Publius, are you here?"

And thereupon the good friend, Terentius Publius, jumped from the rafter in the Emperor's quarters and ran to the bed of the good Marcus Aurelius. Marcus Aurelius then said:

"Terentius Publius, good friend, my time is close, the new Emperor will arrive shortly. I want to thank you my good friend for helping me make this life somewhat worthwhile. You have brought me some great joy, the joy of a friendship, which was so enlightening. I am afraid that there is nothing I can truly do for you, but my friend, remember that I was truly your friend indeed."

At that moment, Marcus Aurelius patted the head of Terentius Publius and his gray tail folded up into a large ball. Terentius Publius went to the cheek of the Emperor and licked it kindly. He then said:

"Sir, you too were a great friend indeed. I shall go forth and tell all I know what a great man you were. Indeed, your Mediations Sir, they must find great acceptance, for your insights are truly insights of a wise man."

Marcus Aurelius then said:

"There, there Terentius Publius, take the copy of our writings, for they are indeed the work of us two, and do with them what you will. Fare well good friend."

At that moment, Marcus Aurelius let out one final breath and he succumbed to that great rest.

For a moment, there was a tear in the eyes of Terentius Publius. Here was a friend of the like he had never had. A true friend of mind and spirit. Then he heard the others returning and he grabbed the Meditations and off he ran.

#### **4.7     *Return to the Forests***

Then Antnee moved in a more somber way and repositioned himself on the largest pot. The day was getting late and I was enthralled by this tale, the detail was magnificent. He looked more closely at me and I at him and I said:

"Then Antnee, what happened?"

He replied:

"Then Sir, the good and generous Terentius Publius saw that he must leave. The new Emperor Commodus, Sir, an evil and cruel man Sir, truly an evil and cruel man, for we squirrels can see that type immediately Sir, not like you or like Marcus Aurelius Sir, but a man who seeks true evil, that was Commodus Sir. So, Terentius Publius saw it was time for him to leave, and he went one more time to the place where the ashes of the good Marcus Aurelius were spread, the edge of the Danube, and he could see the beginning of Spring arrive, the flowers just appearing, and he sat upon a tree stump, and he recalled the good Emperor, their time discussing his Stoic beliefs, and the times they shared with true questions of import, a man Sir, a true and kindly man, who loved the trees and rivers, the ferns and flowers, who was at peace with himself. It was that man he would remember and tell his story for generations to come. Then Terentius Publius knew what his mission would be. He would be the chronicler of the good Emperor Marcus Aurelius, he would set out, as all good squirrel chroniclers do, and go from tree to tree, trunk to trunk, valley to valley and tell all he met of this kind man and his ways."

"It was by this path Sir that I today tell you and others have told others for many springs and winters. I hope Sir that you too can tell many of your kind the story also."

I looked at Antnee in amazement and replied:

"Indeed Antnee, this is a story worthy of great merit, and I will be honored to convey it to many more. Well good night my friend, sleep well in your nest."

Antnee smiled and looked at me and said as only a close friend can to another:

"Sir, you know that your warm seed beds are on in your basement Sir, do you not, well Sir I will sleep there this evening."

I replied without skipping a heartbeat:

"Well Antnee, let's go into the house for the night, you can use the backdoor with me."

Thus, we both walked in, I went upstairs and he down to the basement. Sleep came refreshingly with visions of the great Marcus Aurelius.

## 5 HARRY BAILEY SQUIRREL AND HIS FRIEND GEOFFREY CHAUCER

---

April, it comes with a soft change, a light rain and then deepening greens, with the daylilies jumping forth each and every day, tantalizing in their anticipation of a first bloom. The ferns unrolling from their tightly curled crosiers and stretching their beautifully patterned leaves to the warming sun. The softer rain breaking the solid earth apart so that the small leaves can rush upwards towards the warm sun.

### 5.1 *The Storyteller Returns*

While walking in the garden, checking what damage the winter had done this year, I ran into my good friend Antnee as he was scratching the earth looking for long lost acorns. I smiled and walked over to where he was busy scruffling through the softened earth and attempting to retrieve his stash from the past fall. He did not see me approach I gather for when I greeted him he jumped in a rather startled fashion and then turned and looked at me as if his fur had been all electrified. He said:

"Sir! please Sir, never walk upon a squirrel un announced like that, it gives me fright, I am looking, nay sir, searching for my good and needy acorns, and you sir, you caused such a fright, for you could be a coyote, a fox, a large cat, sir, some monster!"

I smiled and replied:

"Antnee, my good friend, there is a large and impenetrable fence around this garden so that the only creatures in and out are squirrels, and of course chipmunks and rabbits. So you really have no fear from such monsters as coyotes, foxes and of course the deadly house cat."

Antnee replied:

"Sir, you miscast that cat, I fear the wolf and coyote less, that cat, Sir, that cat is indeed a deadly hunter, for the cat hunts solely for sport, to catch, to play, then to bring their trophy home and place it upon their door step. Sir, cats, they are deadly monsters Sir, evil creatures indeed, not like dogs, those dumb smelly lumbering creatures who have somehow attached themselves....I say too much Sir, I say too much."

I replied somewhat shaken by his intensity:

"Antnee, my apologies, I did not know how sensitive you were to this. But that aside, how are things going this spring, a fine spring is it not, after such a cold and snowy winter."

He turned and was obviously a bit calmer, now that I was engaging him in his favorite pastime, telling me what he thought, and he replied:

"Sir, yes indeed Sir, a fine and beautiful spring. Why Sir it reminds me of tale of Harry B. Squirrel, and it was spring like now, green warming, fresh rain and new growth, shall I tell you Sir?"

By now, I had become accustomed to my small gray furry friend. I was beginning to truly enjoy his tales. Somewhat far-fetched as they may be, but it was a warm day, the sun was out and my wife gave me the leisure to roam my garden. So why not spend some time with Antnee, his tales were always well told.

## **5.2 Harry the Squirrel**

Thus began the tale of Harry.

Antnee prefaced his tale by standing atop the tallest flowerpot, and then up upon his haunches, holding out his small arms and in his loudest voice, he proclaimed:

*"In April fall the showers down,  
The dryness of March roots be now drown,  
Soft rains wash limb and bower,  
Brings forth each lovely flower,  
Young Zephyr, soft his touch,  
That brings the leaves, flowers, such,  
Green shoots and bright new sun,  
The heavens now show the Ram has come,..."*

I stopped and replied:

"Antnee, you are a poet, but this sounds a great deal like Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, the opening lines, but not quite, what is this, is this story of Harry Squirrel?"

He smiled and in his inimitable way said:

"That Sir was Harry Squirrel! That is what he said, some five hundred or more years ago when he met the good Geoffrey Chaucer. You see Sir, it was Harry Squirrel who put such an idea in the good Chaucer's head. Perhaps not just the same, but we squirrels marvel each Spring when

we see the green come forth again and we are all reminded of the famous words of Harry B. Squirrel, yes indeed we are Sir, we all remember. Now Sir, let me tell you more."

At this point, I was captured in this tale. Here I was with my friendly neighborhood squirrel and he had just recited a version, albeit changed, of the lines of Chaucer, in modern English, and here he had said that these very lines were given to Chaucer by a squirrel, one Harry B. Squirrel!

I found a small chair, now totally enthralled and sat down to hear the fullness of this tale. For even if it were small truth, it was a most enlightening exercise in squirrel wisdom, as is usual from Antnee. But for a moment, a very brief but chilling moment, I thought here I was, sitting in front of a gray squirrel, on a chair, in my garden, listening to him recite a variation of the opening lines of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, and I was now, a mature, somewhat intelligent adult, and day by day an older adult, listening to this squirrel beguile me of the tales of his ancestors, so, for that moment I wondered, but it soon passed and I was enthralled indeed.

### **5.3 Harry meets Chaucer**

Thus, Antnee continued his tale in a rather officious and pompous manner:

"It was the spring of 1391, and it was in the Royal Forest of North Patherton, a fine a great woods, near the western coast of England, on the southern side of the Bristol Channel, south of Wales...."

I interrupted and said:

"Antnee, I get it, I have been there, and so what happened?"

He was a bit ruffled and but he continued in his more common manner:

"Sir I see, I will tell this a bit more casually then. Well Harry Squirrel was a recent resident of this woods, his family having moved down from Oxford, he was from a well bred family Sir, an Oxford family of squirrels, but they fell upon hard times sir, yes indeed hard times, and off to this forest they had to go. Well it was spring, and the forests. like your garden sir, here, sir, had turned green, and the young Harry was collecting seeds as we are all wont to do, a perpetual task for us squirrels sir, and he was busy as was I, not paying attention to his surroundings, a very dangerous thing for a squirrel to do sir, even here sir, and all of a sudden, behind him sets the foot of a man, and upon that foot was this awful large foot with an awful long shoe, and the show had a long narrow tip, with a massive point and without noticing the tip of the long shoe on the large foot, well sir it smashed upon Harry's tail, flop, right there, and without stopping Harry shouted out:

"Hey, you with the big foot, watch where you are walking!"

and then Harry turned and before him stood this rather portly soul with a beard, a long cape, and with the sign of the Royal Forrester upon his cape, and with a round cap, of red material, and this gentleman was aghast, for truly Sir this gentlemen had never conversed with a squirrel before, and he said, not think of course that now that he had heard the squirrel he was now talking to one:

"Who are you?"

I thought of the uncountable idiocy of the whole scene, a man, suddenly hearing a squirrel speak to him, and then without hesitancy responding in a logical manner. There must, I thought, be some preprogrammed set of neurons that makes all of this sense.

However, I quickly rejoined my friend and his story.

"I am Harry Squirrel, sir, new to this wood, but late of Oxford, where I was born, but alas, sir, my family came upon hard times, and we moved here sir, for better pickings if you will sire, better pickings. And who good sir are you, for you appear to me to be an elegant person, late of London I gather from your stylish shoes, court shoes if I say so myself sir, and your badge, a badge of the royal house of Richard the King, sir, are you the new Royal Forrester?"

The man responded:

"A very smart small one you are my good friend, may I call you Harry?"

The squirrel replied:

"Indeed you may sir, for my full name is Harry Bailey Squirrel, Bailey from my mother's side of course, as is common amongst us squirrels. However, indeed, you may call me Harry sir. And how do you call yourself?"

He replied:

"My name is Chaucer, Geoffrey Chaucer, indeed late of London, but now the Royal Forrester here in the woods, appointed by good King Richard, Richard II indeed. "

Harry then asked:

"Sir, good Geoffrey Chaucer, you seem like quite an educated man, a man of letters perhaps, not just a man in Royal service. Have I surmised correctly. It is sir your way of talking, your words, your manner, sir, for we small squirrels can sense those things, you see sir, for we, unlike humans, need our sense so much more, since we have much less girth."

Chaucer replied:



"Smart young Harry, yes indeed I write, I have done so with plays and poems, with translations and letters. Not that many have read them, for copying is so costly, yet the few who have said I have some talent. Perhaps you would like to read some of my recent work?"

Harry replied:

"Indeed I would sir, for when at Oxford, I would sneak into the library and there at night, when all the scholars had gone to their rest I could rummage through the many texts, with great pictures and wonderful words, great thoughts, fine ideas sir, it must be so good to be able to write. We squirrels have to keep all our thoughts in words sir, in words, and remember them, without error. I am from an old line of keepers of the word sir, I would guess like one of your authors."

Chaucer was amazed, the depth of the conversation, the ideas, the fact that young Harry was both an amazing fact, yes a fact, and a companion with whom he could share his ideas, thoughts and aspirations. He had been sorrowful since his wife Philippa had passed on just four years earlier, but this squirrel gave both a smile to his life and a sparkle to his mind!

The next few weeks as Chaucer went about his duties Harry would join him, best as he could, and when the time was right the two would sup and talk of many things. One evening they sat after supper and Harry said:

"Sir, I have been reading your poems about people, the tale about the Knight, a classic tale sir of chivalry, a tale of goodness and torment, and well written sir. It is a style which is much about your sir, the poetry flows with the speech, it must be spoken, and it is not for reading but for announcing, for telling it to others Sir, a powerful poem."

Chaucer replied:

"Why thank you Harry, I appreciate that a great deal. Those are very kind words indeed."

Harry went on:

"Sir, your verse, not to be annoying in any way sir, it is the type where as you speak it goes *da dum, da dum, da dum, da dum, da dum*. Five *da dums* Sir, an interesting melody, like a drumbeat, a pattern of words, smooth and keeping your attention. Then Sir you take lines and combine them sir, so that they rhyme, but in a strange way sir, not just one with another, Sir, but such a complex pattern, from line to line, thus the first is not the second, but the first the third, the second the fourth, then the fifth the forth as well and the sixth and seventh the same. You have three blending in a swell and flow of sounds, within each line and then amongst the lines themselves. A brilliant set of words Sir, indeed a brilliant set!"

Chaucer was set aback. Here was this furry creature not only complimenting him on his writing, but phrasing it in a manner that made it so much more clear even to him. This furry creature is not just his own as a poet but he can be a teacher to poets.

Thus, the friendship was solidified.

#### **5.4 Trip to Bath**

After the spring and summer had passed, and as the fall was well on, Chaucer received a message from the King that Chaucer was to conduct some Royal business in the town of Bath. The trip was long, for they traveled from North Petherton to Bristol, a small town with some ship building for it was at then lands end of the seas inlet, and then from Bristol by a less well kept road to Bath.

Chaucer was concerned for it was but two years earlier that he had been robbed thrice on such a journey for the King, and in those robberies, he was sorely injured. He felt a sense of terror in this trip through the heavily wooded areas from Bristol to Bath. Yet Harry made him feel a sense of comfort, for from time to time Harry would take flight up into the trees and fly from branch to branch. Like a bird, looking above and through the trees for the highway robbers who frequented this land, and talking with his cousins, alerting each other of the presence of the robbers and other interlopers as may come from the dark forests, each ride along the path, carefully orchestrated for Chaucer's safety, the safety of a good and close friend. For the squirrels had their reputation at stake, no creature, man, wolf, fox, would come near him. They thus arrived safely at Bath, just as the day was darkening, and entered the town.

Bath was an old Roman town and the Roman baths were still there but were in severe disrepair. The buildings still stood and the town, small as it was had grown up around it. There was some farming there and small millers making wool cloth. The town was prosperous, there was also a large abbey with many monks, and it appeared that the town also prospered off the works at the abbey.

They settled in the Inn, a small wooden building with a grass thatched roof, which about 50 yards from the ruins of the old Roman baths. The Inn had a host who was a merry fellow, tall, with a great belly, a friendly host who made each a friend of another and who it was clear liked his own food and sought to endear each traveler with his smile and warmth.

Thus in went Chaucer, seeking refuge from the chilling night, for fall was now setting upon them, and Harry scampered to the window, avoiding his presence being noted for the fear that there might be some who may see him as a familiar and thus to accuse Chaucer of some form of witchcraft.

Yet Harry could sit atop the large window looking out to the main street of Bath, and could see the large fireplace, and there he sat, eating some nuts and corn, that Chaucer had left for him while he went inside the Inn. He sat there for a while and then as he was watching the people

inside sitting for dinner, a woman joined them, an older woman but still with the remnants of the beauty, she once possessed. She was broad across her hips and wore bright clothes, and she stood out amongst the other guests for she seemed to Harry to be the leader of the talk, strange in an Inn for a woman.

The woman spoke with Chaucer, as Harry could see, and Chaucer and all the men listened attentively. The Host was, himself filled with interest, as she spoke, he stood a still and wandered little, but from time to time, the Host would sparingly deliver wine, and she went on from tale to tale, telling of the travels hill and dale, how she had gone to great Jerusalem, and then returned through many a chasm, yet never once was she at fear or need, for there was always men indeed.

Harry could see that the woman had eyes that captured the glance of each man, and each man responded as if he was alone in the room with her. He watched and wondered. He saw all the others talking but this woman seemed to attract the attention of all the men, and the jealousy of many of the women around. Alas, he would have to wait until Master Chaucer returned. Harry thus found a safe place to rest his head, atop the Inn, in a small corner upon soft straw thatching. It was warm, dry and soft, and ideal combination for a good night's rest.

## **5.5    *The Summoner***

In the morning, Harry heard such a commotion that he scampered from his rest over to the edge of the roof of the Inn. Below him was a group of children, scattering as before some approaching monster, some feared creature on the prowl. The behind the children came this man of severe ugliness, a reddish face exemplary of a life of debauchery, small eyes, closing those windows to the soul so none can see, eyebrows, large, dark, bushy, unkempt, like the hair upon the back of some irritated skunk.

Harry could see from his safe perch that the man had large carbuncles around his neck, and upon his face, a sign of lack of cleanliness, for indeed any squirrel with a mother knows that one must always groom, always keep clean, lest vermin take up residence in ones fur. And about this man's head was a garland of some kind, as if he were a winner of some event or some minor royalty. In his arms, he carried a large round cake, as if to use in the event of some attack.

Unlike all others, he spoke Latin, not the common tongue. Why thought Harry, even Master Chaucer spoke the fine common tongue, very few spoke such a poor version of Latin. This man knew very little and what he knew he knew poorly. For Harry knew Latin, and he knew it well, for while still an child he had studied with the scholars at Oxford, well he sat upon the rafters and listened in, to those who were expert at Latin, Greek, and even Hebrew. For beneath it all Harry was a true intellect, a master of tongues and of men.

And this man, the man they called the Summoner, seemed to strike fear in the hearts of all whom he approached. Almost a terror.

Harry found this man of great interest. He thus decided to follow him a bit, but from afar.

After a bit, this Summoner comes upon a Tavern owner, and Harry had seen that this Tavern owner had kept certain ladies in his shop, in violation of the Church law. The Summoner, instead of reprimanding the owner, instead smiled, and the owner took from his belt a large sack containing many gold coins, and placing them in the hands of the Summoner was then embraced and the two parted the best of friends. Harry was aghast of this man, for he was appointed by the Bishop to control the moral fabric of the town but in his way, he was promoting further degradation.

Harry then jumped from roof to roof, tree to tree, following this Summoner. It was an easy task for he also reeked of garlic and poor wine, he had not bathed, and he continued to spread before him the fear of small children.

Harry watched as this Summoner came upon an old widow woman, sitting in the front of her small cottage, preparing some vegetable for a meal, and dropping the peeled items into an old worn pot. The Summoner approaches this old widow and seeks to get money from her. Harry can hear his threats, for the Summoner tells her that he will say she is committing sins and that unless she pays him, he will bring her before the Bishop and the council. The old widow cries a great deal and this greatly upsets Harry, for this Summoner is truly evil. The widow finally screams out to the Summoner, "Oh God, the Devil take this Summoner's soul!"

Harry is intent to stop this now, but he wonders how. Alas, he sees a way, for humans see in talking animals the presence of truly evil spirits. Harry jumps across to a tree, swings down a branch, and places himself just atop the Summoner's head, center atop his garland. Harry is fearful most of the smell of this wretched man, but he must assist this poor old widow. He puts his small claw upon his nose, and diving head first, lands single pawed upon the filthy greasy head of the Summoner, who is startled by this unseen attack. Harry then crawls about his head and towards the ear of this Summoner and whispers so that only the Summoner could hear, "The Devil is here to take your soul, as this Widow asked. Now off with you!"

As the Summoner tried to rid his head of poor Harry, hearing this set of words, just after the appeal by the widow to God to take his soul, believe that indeed the Devil was now there to take his reward, and then reaches up and throw Harry across the ground, landing him at the feet of the old widow, and the Summoner goes running off screaming and crying till there was not even a glimpse of his dust remaining.

The good old widow smile at Harry and fed him some fine nuts she had in her apron, and she quietly fined her vegetable and left more nuts for Harry's lunch.

Harry smiled, and was happy that he had done a good deed and he would tell good Master Chaucer of his experience on the ride back to Bristol.

## 5.6 *The Widow of Bath*

The business for the King ended and Chaucer and Harry headed back to the forest, first to Bristol and then southward towards the trees. This gave them an opportunity to discuss the stay. It was Harry who spoke first:

"Sir, I was most interested in that fine woman who seemed to be controlling the conversation at the Inn. Perhaps you can tell me about her?"

Chaucer replied:

"Ah the widow, the Widow of Bath, what a woman, five husbands, you know, all dead, and she is well preserved for all of that effort."

Harry said:

"Sir I believe there may be a tale there as well. Your Knight is a classic tale Sir, a fine and noble man, but this woman, even from the outside window, she sparkled with a part of life that the Knight seemed to lack. The Knight was duty and chivalry, the Widow, sir, pardon my words, but she was earthy, like a woman I once knew, Isabella Squirrel."

Chaucer said:

"Isabella Squirrel, why you old man, you were hiding this from me, let me know more about this fine woman, I mean squirrel, where, what, we have time as we ride along, tell me here tale!"

Thus did Harry tell Chaucer about the good lady squirrel Isabella, a young beauty with fine reddish fur, frisky and bouncy, a good tree climber. Yet somehow, the details did not seem to ignite in Chaucer the same feelings that they had ignited in Harry.

Then Harry asked Chaucer,

"Sir, so tell me the tale of this Widow, for she seems to have ignited in your some fever of inquisitiveness. Perhaps age has not crept upon you as swiftly as you may have suspected Sir, perhaps your are still young and sprite, still, as they say Sir, in there for the whole game."

Chaucer replied

"Harry, you are a squirrel of many words, but great insight. Let me tell you what I heard."

The Chaucer recounted the tales from the Widow of Bath:

"She is a fine woman of great spirits, a widow five times over, married five times and buried five husbands. She counts three of them a fine men and two of lesser character. Her last husband was half her age, yet she appears not to be that old of age. The combine husbands have left her quite well off, and they seem also to have left her with many opinions and willing to tell all what they are. Unlike the fair coy women at Court, who have assumed personalities fit for the purpose, this Widow of Bath, although common in many of her ways, is also quite straight forward and direct, avoiding the niceties one comes to see at Court. She says what she feels and there is no bracing of the words with flowery talk, no indirect allusions, just the simple words. It is somewhat refreshing to hear her speak yet to some there is a sense of fear, for she places women on an equal with men, and in some cases places them above. For that it what her tale depicts."

Harry then spoke:

"I find this trait of you humans quite strange. For with us there is no difference. When a nest is to be built, the husband or the wife equally carry up the leaves and pack them tight, and then, without direction, the pair proceeds down again and repeats the process until there is warmth for winter. As for our offspring, the share is equal, if nuts were gathered then the one with the energy to do so goes down and collects and returns. In addition, we have a joy of everything, we see each task as a way to spread that joy to each other, whether it is climbing a tree or burying nuts. You humans Sir, you seem to have almost self-inflicted burdens, especially when it comes to these rules, strange rules Sir, quite strange. But please Sir continue the tale."

Chaucer continued:

"Well my good friend, your points are well taken but let me continue. What I found most interesting was that she spoke with authority but the authority of reason and experience. The men questioned how she could marry so many times, although within the law and religion, but frowned upon, for a widow one made should stay as such. She then countered with the facts, facts that such a state, one without a husband, legally and in the eyes of the Church, is permitted, so legal, thus natural. She then said that it was men's view that made it improper, not the law's view or Gods. The strength of her logic, a logic based on the practical, was most compelling."

He continued:

"Then the men asked her outright, "What do women most wish from their husbands?" and her reply was most curious. She replied, "Women want most to rule their husbands" and she said that such a rule must be one where the husband has no knowledge that it is being affected. Thus, the rule exists but the husband goes on unknowingly! We men all stopped for a moment, and then like a chill of an early winter wind, we all realized the great truth in what she had just said."

Harry, sitting atop the mane of Chaucer's horse, then laughed and rolled in such laughter down upon the ground rolling over and over. Chaucer stopped his horse in the wood and looked down at this furry friend as he contorted himself upon the ground and said:

"Harry, what my good friend is so funny about this tale, it became a fearful reality for us!"

Harry regained himself and scurried up a tree and again upon the mane. He briefly turned to the horse and said. "Apologies my good friend, but these humans are so funny." The horse for a moment could be felt giggling to himself. Chaucer thought that all he needed now was the comments from the horse as well. He went back to Harry and said:

"Harry, tell me what is so funny!"

Harry looked at Chaucer, having regained his composure, wiggled his wet black nose and began,

"Well Sir, it is so clear to me just looking at you all that you eventually do what the woman says. It starts sir with your mothers. Does it not Sir. If not a mother, say for the wealthy, then the nurse, or the other woman who controls their lives from birth till manhood. Then men think they are free, but women are trained to rule, and they allow you men to think they will sit behind and take no part. But hat is the trick, Sir that is the trick!"

Chaucer was silent as he thought. Then he said:

"Harry, this tale is then a tale of truth, a truth we seem to hide from. Perhaps I can find more truth from those like the Widow than the Knight."

Harry responded:

"Indeed you can Sir, for truth is not with the Royal, the upper class, it is from all. And indeed, your tales should speak to all the players. Now let me tell you of the Summoner."

They continued on until they reached Bristol, where the then rested for the night.

## **5.7 People and Places**

They rested at an Inn in Bristol, one they had not been to before, and again this time Harry stayed on the roof, secure and warm. After the dinner Chaucer came outside, the evening was warm for fall and he walked with Harry who came down to talk.

Chaucer asked Harry:

"Do you see the people in there Harry, so many stories and so many people, like those in Bath."

Harry replied:

"Sir, as I told you, we all know Knights Sir, we all know their bravery Sir, but there are so many of us that are not knights, so many of us who are just plain Harry Squirrel, or even Geoffrey Chaucer Sir, Esquire though you be. People want to hear about themselves. Think of Plutarch Sir, a fine storyteller, indeed a fine storyteller, but Sir, his stories are all about the rulers. What of the carpenter, the widow, the student, those whose day-to-day lives make up the true society. Sir, with all respect Sir, good King Richard, he will go down in history but will the Widow of Bath, sir, or the Summoner Sir, the evilness of the man, not unless you write of them. That should be the task Sir, common people, all kinds, for no one has ever done that before Sir, it will be the first. In your day-to-day tongue, not some butchered Latin, read only by those who study, but in your tongue so it may be spoken and spoken amongst the people Sir. Like Home did with Odysseus."

Chaucer sat upon a bench, a short distance from the Inn, Harry sitting upon a branch on the tree next to the bench. He was thinking. Then he said:

"But Harry, my good friend John Gower, he writes in Latin and he writes of the royalty, for his audience is all those who read. How can I write for people who can neither read nor who would have access to my writings, for they may be made into just a few."

Antnee stopped here and looked at me. He wanted to interject some historical connection. I had been engaged in this tale, long as it was, for a while. He then said:

"Sir, John Gower, Sir, you know he is an ancestor of the good Lady Sara Sir, your fine wife. A fine ancestor Sir, and a good friend of Chaucer Sir."

I replied:

"Antnee, no I did not know that. It is amazing that over six hundred years and we have all these connections. Am I related to any of these Antnee?"

He replied:

"Not yet Sir, yours were at war with the King, but we shall not get into that Sir. I return to the story." Antnee then continued:

Harry replied:

"Sir, good John Gower is a fine poet, admired by the Court, and one who writes for the Court. Yet Sir, remember, the Court will come and the Court will go, but the people are always here. This is your chance to write for the people."

Chaucer thought deeply about this. This was truly a new idea. Poets and authors always wrote up to their lords and masters, thinking that this would reward them for their work. This would



be looking at all men, and setting out how people were at this time. What were their feelings, how did they act, what was important, their likes and their fears. He said:

"Harry, this is a wonderful idea. All we have to do is pay attention to those about us, then record them in what we see is their essence. Common folk."

Harry then replied:

"Sir, I believe we should try all of the common folk, millers, reevers, widows, and the like but also friars, monks, parsons, the collection of religious, for they play such a great part, they are almost a third of all the people. Then too we should look at students, lawyers, and others, who are learned but common. The world is changing Sir, since the great plague these almost forty years ago, or more, and now more people are making it on their own, not belonging to a Lord or Knight, as part of his vassals, but in the cities, as shopkeepers, as those with crafts. Include these Sir, include the common person!"

Thus Harry and Chaucer went off, from time to time and listened to common people, to millers and carpenters, to cooks and lawyers, to students and merchants, to monks and friars, to nuns and parsons, for physicians and sailors, none of them royal, all common, those of the Church and those of the people.

Each time Chaucer would listen, Harry would peek, and after the two would talk about what they had seen. Then Chaucer would compose their thoughts in words. Harry would look at it and recite it back to Chaucer who would refine the words. Again and again.

## **5.8    *A Pilgrimage***

The two had now been close friends for some time. They had seen many different people and Harry saw that Chaucer had a tremendous eye for people, and when Chaucer and Harry would sit for supper from time to time, they would go over the characters that they had met, as if the first time they met the Woman in Bath. She was a great person, a strong woman, and her point of view, her ability to deal with life as an individual, as one alone, was of great interest.

At dinner in the late fall of 1392, with Harry and Chaucer back in the Forrester's residence, they spoke about the many people they had seen.

Harry began:

"Sir, you have written now about many of the people we have seen, and their stories. You should try to connect them all in one story, so that the readers, the storytellers, have both depth and breadth of these views of humanity. Perhaps there may be some way to bring them all together?"

Chaucer replied:

"Yes my good friend that is an excellent idea. What have you to suggest?"

Harry replied:

"Sir, remember our trip to Bath. Where we saw that widow woman and heard her tales at the Inn. Indeed sir, that Inn where there were also many people readying for a Pilgrimage to Canterbury, in honor of the good Saint Thomas a Becket. Also the home of that good Saint Augustine who was sent by the good father Gregory the Bishop of Rome. For it was Augustine who again started the religion of Rome. Well Sir, these people, these many fine and some not so fine people, then we have just the group upon which you may place your tales. Use a pilgrimage sir; use the travels to Canterbury to tell your tales."

Chaucer replied:

"Ah, an excellent example Harry. However, we must be careful. The Church members can see through our little tale. Canterbury, Saint Thomas a Becket, the man killed for opposing the King, the Saint of doing the right thing, not like many of our recent Archbishops, wouldn't you say Harry, not like the not so good men now. Especially that Thomas Arundel the young Archbishop of York, and his father."

Harry replied:

"Yes sir, indeed, sir, that Arundel, a strange man indeed sir, I would say we should beware of him. The Archbishop Courtney is not such a man but he seems to be at odds with the King, a position I suspect is not one of comfort giving sir, in fact one which sets the spiders loose on one seat, eh sir?"

Chaucer laughs as he listened to his little friend. Then the two of them went off talking of the many people and how they could be all set into the story of a Pilgrimage.

## **5.9 On to Kent and Greenwich**

As time went by, Chaucer was always on call for the King, performing errands and tasks, talking with local leaders and even Church figures. He moved to Kent and then to Greenwich.

Greenwich was a few miles down the Thames from London, along a twist in the river, a fine place, with woods and estates, and Chaucer would live there and write. It was wonderful for Harry. There were many oaks, with an infinite supply of acorns. There was peace, quiet, and time to collect the thoughts of these many years and many journeys. From time to time, the King asked Chaucer to attend to some business, they would travel together, and from Inn to Inn, and they would again meet people, characters, and collect tales. From those tales they focused on the common folk, their sense of the day and of the crudeness of life. They found

humor in the things that would disgust the royalty, the educated, and they would snicker at their own failings, and at the failings of others as well.

One evening as Harry and Chaucer were writing up the tales, as they were wont to do upon their return to Greenwich, for they would write, then talk, then laugh, then write again. The words were really meant to be spoken, not just read. Chaucer was a great teller of the tales. That one night they spoke of tales with animals. Chaucer asked Harry:

Say Harry, we have many tales of animals and how they reflect the character of man. Of all of them which is your favorite?"

Harry replied without hesitation:

"The Scorpion and the Frog Sir, let me tell it and see if you do not agree."

He thus began:

"There once was a frog, a fine friendly green frog that spent his time on the edge of a wide stream. There also was a scorpion, with a venomous tail that would come upon the streambed from time to time and the frog would keep his distance knowing how this viper could kill. One day the scorpion came to the water's edge and called out to the frog, "Frog, Frog, my friend, I need help" And the frog replied, "Go away, you will bite me and I will die." The scorpion said, "No I will not for my family is across the river and they need the food I have or they will surely die. My wife and my many small children will face imminent death. I need your help to cross the river." The frog replied, "But you will bite me and we both will die!" The scorpion replied, "No, my family would also die as well, I would never let that happen." The frog felt sorry so he let the scorpion upon his back and across they went. In the middle of the river, the scorpion stung the frog. Just as the frog was dying it asked the scorpion, "Why did you do that, it will kill all of us?" The scorpion replied as it sunk with the frog into the raging water, "I can't help it I am just a scorpion.""

Chaucer said to Harry:

"Well told my furry friend, well told. But it is such a sad tale, a tale that says men are not in control of their natures, that they do evil things just because of who they are. Do you believe that Harry?"

Harry replied:

"Sir, we have seen much and we have seen much evil in what we have seen. There are many with whom it is their nature, they are just evil people. I have never seen such with squirrels Sir, but some humans, not all Sir, not even many, but a few Sire, one must beware."

Chaucer replied:

"You have a dark view Harry perhaps that explains why you always scurry first and look second."

Harry replied:

"Indeed that is why Sir, as you say, safe than sorry. Now Sir tell me your tale."

Chaucer began:

"Ah, my favorite is Chanticleer, the vain rooster. There was this old widow who had three daughters and they lived on a small farm with three pigs, a cow, six chickens and a very large rooster, named Chanticleer. He was a handsome rooster and he knew how handsome he was. But there was a fox who prowled about and wanted to eat the chickens."

Harry interrupted:

"Sir I know those foxes, they are treacherous animals sir, and we beware them always, for they sneak upon us when we are eating nuts Sir..."

"Chaucer interrupted him:

"Harry, let me tell the story, you have already told me how many time you do not trust a fox, like your scorpion tale. Now, Chanticleer tells the widow that there is a fox outside but she does not listen. Then one day the fox slyly sneaks up to the fence around the chickens and says to Chanticleer, "What a handsome bird, I am told you can sing so well. Will you sing for me?"

Chanticleer being vain agrees and starts his crowing. The Fox says: "I can't hear that well, can you move closer?" Chanticleer moves, a bit cautiously but closer. He again crows. Again the fox says "So wonderful and handsome but I still cannot hear well enough, can you move ever so more close." Chanticleer does and as he does, the fox jumps and grabs Chanticleer about the neck dragging him from the safety of the fence and off to the woods to be a meal for the fox. But the noise startled the widow and her daughters and they set out chasing the fox calling and screaming at the fox, screeching at him. The fox was very annoyed by these women and Chanticleer said "Fox, are you to let these women talk to you this way, why you are an honorable and good fox, why you must tell them so, you must not let them talk to you as such!" The fox, also a vain animal thought and agreed, and he let the rooster loose and began shouting at the women who were startled. However this allowed Chanticleer to fly to the top of a tree well away from the fox, and he crowed and crowed and crowed. The fox realized that he had just been out foxed by a rooster!"

Harry says:

"Well done Sir, well done. The fox looses. You speak of vanity, I speak of trust. But I ask you sir which can cause the more harm?"

They then went and spoke all through the night.

### **5.10 To London**

In mid 1398, Chaucer is asked to return to London by King Richard (II). The Royal Messenger arrived with the letter and Chaucer has no choice but to comply. He settles with Harry after dinner and they discuss their plans. Over the last few years, the two had passed through London many times but it has not been for a long while.

The low cold skies of February 1399 brought with it the sudden death of John Gaunt, the sponsor of much of Chaucer's works and in many ways his protector. Harry found Chaucer sitting morosely in his room, looking out at the city of London, with a very aged look upon his face. Harry spoke:

"Sir, my sorrows go with you for your friend the good John of Gaunt. I sense his loss is a great pain for you."

Chaucer replied:

"Yes Harry, it is, for many reasons. John represented the old stable ways, whatever one thinks of King Richard, John was the anchor, he stabilized him, and as he fell ill, the King became more reckless. This is both the loss of a sponsor but also of a protector, a protector of not just me Harry, but the kingdom. For John Gaunt's son, Henry of Bolingbroke will sure to move to return. I just hope the King does not act recklessly. Things can get very bad before they ever get better."

Harry then replied:

"Sir, my cousins also tell me that rumor has it that Thomas Arundel shall also try to take the Archbishop of Canterbury, to be second to Henry if Henry takes the throne?"

Chaucer looked surprised and turned to Harry:

"Harry, beware what you say, to speak such could be treason!"

Harry replied:

"Sir perhaps you forget, for I am still a squirrel, and few listen to us, and we speak even to fewer! Also in all memory there has never been a squirrel hanged for treason!"

Chaucer smiled briefly and then said:

"Point well taken good friend. Then the advice must adhere ever more strongly to me. This will be a time of danger. Keep me apprised my good friend, we may have to take actions to stay far from the wars which may come. The pen may be strong but it is not a good weapon to defend against the broad swords of an army."

Harry then spoke again:

"Sir, in these times, should not King Richard stay here in London. I hear that he plans to travel to Ireland again to deal with the Irish kings."

Chaucer said:

"The King shall do what the King shall do."

Spring passed into summer and King Richard had gone to Ireland. But on July 13, a late Sunday night, Harry came scamping to the window as Chaucer was lying down to sleep. He was breathless. He screamed at Chaucer:

"Sir, Sir, awake, there will be peril. Sir, Sir!"

Chaucer rolled over and looked at Harry. He asked still half asleep:

"Harry, what is the problem, I hear no riots!"

Harry then still breathless breathed out:

"We have been alert Sir, all my cousins Sir, and it has happened Sir, it has happened. The Duke of Lancaster, that Henry Bolingbroke, Lancaster has landed in Doncaster and he is joined by many, and Sir he is heading to London. The King Sir, he is still in Ireland, and Lancaster means war Sir, he means to have the crown!"

Chaucer replied:

"Harry, be calm, the King will return. Perhaps all Lancaster wants is his inheritance. The King I believe foolishly disinherited him when his father the good John Gaunt died. A foolish act but the King is the King. I think we should let this just work out."

Harry said:

"As you wish Sir, but this is not one of our stories Sir, it is not the rooster or the frog, this is a real man who has a vengeance in his heart. Lancaster is not like his father, he has deep troubles. And that Arundel Sir, Churchmen with power Sir can be devils in a cassock."

The summer passed as word spread of the meetings of the King and Lancaster. Fall arrived and London became a bit chilled again. Harry arrived at Chaucer's window to again greet him:

"Sir, well as I said Sir, on the morrow Lancaster is crowned King. Richard abdicated on the 29th of September and now just two weeks later, on the morrow, the 13th of October in the year of our Lord 1399, that Lancaster will be King. Sir Arundel has already declared himself Archbishop, Pope be damned, and he has begun his purges. Sir I fear that he sees you, sees your writing, as threats. Sir, I believe that you should seek safety, go to Amsterdam, to Ireland, land of the writers, somewhere so as to be safe."

Chaucer replied:

"Harry, good friend Harry, I am English, I am safe, I know the new King, he has been kind to me, and I can correct my problems with Arundel, I shall write a retraction in my tales, I shall say that I am a true believer, not a Lollard, not a follower of Wycliffe. That should be more than enough."

Harry replied:

"Sir, there are men like Arundel who harbor hatred and evil in their hearts. Such men in a position of Gods, is a victory ever so brief for the Devil himself. I shall keep alert Sir, but please Sir, keep yourself from harm. These are dark days Sir, dark days indeed!"

### **5.11 *The Passing***

Henry IV was now the King, the Henry Bolingbrook who had given Chaucer gifts, the son of John Gaunt, the young man who Chaucer had befriended but who now was turning inward, who had dethroned Richard, and it is rumored had Richard killed in France. This Henry was now aligned with Thomas Arundel, now the appointed Archbishop of Canterbury, and a powerful position to reinforce the control by the King through the control by the Church.

Harry had been speaking with his cousins and the news was not good. King Henry was out to eliminate all who had been opposed to him. Arundel, having taken the role of Archbishop of Canterbury was personally directing the elimination of any who took positions, which threatened his position of that of the King. That meant attack all the Wycliffe Lollards as well as any who disparaged the King or the Church, as a partner with the King in ruling the country.

Harry met with Chaucer in his new rooms at Westminster. It was late in the fall of 1400 and Henry had been King for more than a year. Harry spoke with Chaucer:

"Sir, the time is dire. My cousins tell me that Arundel, the Archbishop believes Sir that your tales are sinful, Sir, even more Sir, he believes they malign the King, the very sovereign he works so closely with. My cousins Sir even say that they want you gone as they rid the country of King Richard!"

For Harry was quite concerned and he felt the threat was imminent. Yet Chaucer seemed resigned to his fate. He replied:

"Harry, good and faithful friend, I see my fate coming upon me, I am old, I am tired, my work is as done as it may be. I thank you for all your help, but there is a point where a man cannot run anymore. I must just wait until they take me, and whatever happens is meant to happen."

Harry just got more upset. He said:

"Sir, I really mean it Sir, they are coming. My cousin said so. Arundel is sending his priests to take you Sir, and I fell that they mean to kill you!"

He continued:

"Sir, I have cousin in Amsterdam, we can get you there, it is safe, also I have cousin in Ireland, away from the English, in the west of Ireland, and there too you would be safe."

But it was to no avail. Chaucer was committed to his fate.

Night came. And soon, two priests from the Archbishop arrived at Westminster and sought out Chaucer. They climbed the stairs and Harry could see them. There was nothing he could do, he screeched, he got his cousins to screech, he got the owls to screech, the noise was overwhelming, but the priests went to Chaucer's room, and there was a struggle, and he was thrown from the window to the ground. He did not move!

Harry was distraught. He waited as the men left and then climbed down to find Chaucer. He was still, breathless still, like a squirrel hit by a wagon, no longer with life.

He must get off and make sure the story of this night, of this life, of this great man is told. He thought, yes he thought, to Ireland.

Then down he ran, and ran, over the next days he made his way to Bristol, which he remembered from his first days with Chaucer. There he met another cousin; he got passage on a ship from Bristol to Dublin. A trade ship across the Irish Sea, away from the rats in the hole, he sat atop the mast. He arrived in Dublin and then ran west, day after day to get from English lands. Finally, along the River Shannon, near the Atlantic coast, he stopped.

There he rested.

There he found Maria Squirrel, a gray squirrel, brought back from the west by the ships of Saint Brendan many years ago. She was a beautiful young squirrel, he was English red, she western gray, but they settled down. They had many children and each had the duty to record the tales of Chaucer, to record the evils of the English clergy, of the English troops, of the English kings.



They were to tell not only each other, but the local humans as well, since the Irish were more friendly to the squirrels than any English save the great Chaucer. Harry would make certain that the Irish would be friends to the writers, that they would cherish the humor of Chaucer, the respect for the common man. Harry would do his job, keep his promise, for someday the English Kings would eventually destroy themselves and the Archbishops of Canterbury would be no more, but the Canterbury Tales would last forever.

## 6 LADY ISABELLA SQUIRREL AND THE BARD

---

May, Sweet Breezes blow softly upon the new blooms in the garden. The green is a green like no others, the green of the new leaves before they have been worn down by the heavy sun of summer, a green of new life and rebirth. Plants, unlike animals, have the chance every year to start over again, to push out new growth and to re-bloom in the glory of a fresh sun

### 6.1 The Potting Beds

The plants were in need of some restoration after their long and cold winter sleep. I was taking each of the pots up, clipping them and pulling the weeds which had managed to find homes amidst my flowers. Nature is a continuous battle between the beauty of human selection and the raw attack of the rest who seek protection and nurture. Weeds are nature's attack force, the destabilizers of human imposed order.

I was going through each pot and as I soon discovered that each and every one was jam packed with acorns. Acorn after acorn after acorn. Some were already sprouting and others were just rotting there. I mumbled to myself, "What do these squirrels do with all of these nuts?"

I must have spoken a bit too loudly when behind me was the familiar voice of Antnee who said:

"Sir, do not blame all of us Sir, no indeed Sir, not all of us. For that collection Sir is from Nutty Nancy Sir, one whom we all have a bit of a caution towards Sir, one whom we stay back from, even her sweet husband Crazy Paulie Squirrel."

I turned and there was Antnee, atop the feeder, looking down upon me as I worked the pots. I turned and said:

"Nutty Nancy Squirrel, why do you call her that, is she a crazy squirrel?"

Antnee jumped down and sat atop a large pot sprouting the fennel plants. His fluffy gray furry spread out across the bright green fennel leaves as they were sprouting for the season. He replied:

"No Sir, she is called Nutty Nancy Sir because she goes about collecting everyone else's nuts for herself, just herself Sir, and then she decides who gets them. She says she has learned this type of behavior from your television Sir, perhaps you could explain to us where this is from."

I replied:

"Let me see if I understand this. Nutty Nancy goes about taking the nuts from other squirrels so that she can distribute them to other squirrels?"

Antnee replied:

"Indeed Sir, indeed, that is what she does. She wants to be in charge, Sir, she says you humans have people who are in charge and she wants to do this herself. Her poor husband Crazy Paulie has also fallen into such a way also Sir. You see Sir, Crazy Paulie is now taking over the old nests that are left by the many squirrel families from the last winter and trying to get new squirrels to pay him nuts so they can use them without needing to build their own. A very strange idea indeed Sir, very strange. Between Nutty Nancy collecting the nuts from others and Crazy Paulie taking the nests from others, well Sir, we have a small problem."

I replied:

"Indeed you do, Antnee, greed, conflict, intrigue, and the like. And amongst squirrels at that!"

Antnee replied:

"Well Sir, I agree, but it is only those two, and we squirrels can adjust, they will be shunned, we all have our small difficulties Sir, small difficulties."

I replied:

"Well Antnee, it is almost Shakespearian in dimension, at least for squirrels. Oh I am sorry; perhaps the allusion to Shakespeare makes no sense..."

Before I could finish he smiled and jumped over to me and looked into my eyes, and then he started:

"Ah the Bard, Sir, you remind me of one of our clan."

At that moment, I knew I was in for another long and detailed history lesson about the squirrels. I was glad it was warm and still mid day, for I now knew that when Antnee looked at me like this I was in for a long but interesting tale.

Antnee started:

"Sir, you see, amongst all creatures there are stresses and indeed Sir the Bard was a great man in describing them. He of course, Sir was helped in his efforts by the good Lady Isabella Squirrel."

I was startled, for each of these tales was ever so more intriguing, but here I was meeting a regal squirrel, a Lady Isabella. I wondered where this one was to go. Starting from the local intrigue and greed of Nutty Nancy and Crazy Paulie, I had jumped five hundred years into the past. Well, it was Antnee and he told a great tale.

## **6.2 Lady Isabella**

Antnee started his tale:

"You see Sir, Lady Isabella was the daughter of the Duke of Quercus. The Duke, her father, lived on the Royal estate at Greenwich, and the family had been given that from Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine, during the last years of Henry II. The family had been there for four hundred years before Lady Isabella was born. They took care of the Royal Forest and under Henry VIII, who was born there; they took care of young Henry in his youth. In fact young Queen Elizabeth also was taken care of by the Duke's ancestors as well."

Well I had heard many of these tales but this one was to be the most extreme. Here we now have a furry little animal as a titled part of the Royal household. No one would ever believe me on this one. If I told this tale to anyone, they would have me committed. Only an insane person, I believe, would even think this as possible. Yet here I was, settled down for another lecture by my neighborhood storyteller. A Duke, a Lady and the Royal household. There was no record of this but then again there never was a record of any of Antnee's tales, but he told them so well, and in so doing created both the characters and their times, and after listening to him I oftentimes believed!

Antnee continued in his rather intense fashion:

"Lady Isabella was a fine young squirrel, with a beautiful coat and a smile that was filled with warmth. She was very bright and had befriended the Queen. You see Sir, Queen Elizabeth, she Sir, was aging, it was 1591, and she was under threat from many fronts. She ruled in difficult times Sir, many people sought her demise Sir, and she could trust very few humans. Yet we squirrels were always trusted Sir, always trusted. It was to Lady Isabella that the good Queen Elizabeth could talk, confide, and seek guidance. For the Lady Isabella Sir, she was so bright, and so faithful, that the Queen oftentimes used her for special missions, secret missions Sir, ones that required the ultimate in trust and confidence."

I thought I was now starting upon one of the most complex tales that this gray furry friend had ever taken me on.

## **6.3 The Mission**

Antnee thus went on as was his way, looking and talking at me, as if he were lecturing a young schoolchild at some old English Private school, a gray furry don, now engrossed with a history albeit foreign to us humans yet precious to my fine furry friends.

"You see Sir, Lady Isabella was one day summoned to Court at Whitehall palace by good Queen Elizabeth, for you see Sir, the two had become close, if I may say Sir, close friends. The Queen you see Sir, had great intrigues at Court and there were few if any amongst her courtiers whom

she could trust, very few indeed Sir, yet amongst all of their domain, they could always trust the squirrels, for we were loyal, true, and faithful servants. Thus on that fateful day young Lady Isabella entered the Court in her usual manner, across the tree tops, down the edge of the Palace, through the small hole in the roof which only the squirrels had knowledge of.

Then Lady Isabella entered the picture gallery of the Palace, she jumped across the tops of the frames as only an agile young squirrel could, then she entered the privy gallery, that long hall, jumping again so quickly from picture frame to picture frame, over the door frame where the Privy Council advised the Queen and jumping down she ran into the Queen's private rooms, past the Queen's own library, for the Queen was an avid reader and into the Queen's private rooms. She was breathless.

She propped herself up atop the Queen's dressing table, panting yet not allowing herself to be seen in any form of distress and awaited to be addressed by the Queen, for protocol dictated that no one shall speak first before the Queen, only after one has been addressed.

The Queen was in her morning dressing gown, for she had awakened just a while ago, and her Chamber Maids had been dismissed. She turned and looked at Lady Isabella. She spoke:

"Lady Isabella, so good to see you, I hope I have not made you rush here too swiftly."

Lady Isabella replied:

"No your Majesty, I was just on the outside of the Palace, in the grounds, when I received your call, how may I be of assistance?"

The Queen replied:

"Last night, that young man, the actor and playwright, that Shakespeare of Stratford did you enjoy his play."

Lady Isabella, briefly wondered where this was going, the Queen was always circuitous in her questioning but perhaps this time she was just being direct. Thus, she responded:

"Your Majesty, he is quite delightful. He takes many of the classic themes we have seen before and uses words quite well and he has, what shall I say your Majesty, a way with phrases, a way to say what is both obvious and not so obvious, all at the same time."

The Queen smiled and then spoke to Lady Isabella:

"Well put my loyal friend. Thus, I have a task for you. The good Master Shakespeare lives in Bishopsgate and the theatre is The Theatre, just a bit north of the area. I think he would do well to move to Southwark, get a home there, and I could see him from time to time, perhaps have you communicate with him, for I have ideas for several new works. For he builds upon old plays

and the works of Plutarch, and that man Holinshed and his Chronicles, he talks of the royals as he did in his plays of Richard III and those of Henry VI. I wish he continues but I also wish he expresses for our pleasure and our crown slight nuances, shall we say, slight emphases, that only he is so well adept at doing. Thus, go off quickly, advise him of my wishes, and let him know that I shall make him a new theater in Southwark and that he is to reside there as well. This will allow many to go back and forth. For there is now little on the south side of the Thames of interest, yet the bridge does connect and the boats are many and yield great ease of transport. Let the good Master Shakespeare know of our wishes. Then we shall work with the young man, and he will be our mouth to the people, for through him we can certainly say what we could hardly do for the Palace. Go Lady Isabella, go and see this Master Shakespeare."

At this point Antnee was in the full story-telling mode and I was now enthralled. His detail and wholly unlikely tale was taking on monumental substance. Here I was sitting upon my small wooden bench amidst my flowers listening to a gray squirrel speak authoritatively of Queen Elizabeth herself, in details that I had hardly ever thought of. The tale was becoming a real portrayal, a reality in time of true characters. He continued:

Lady Isabella then bid the Queen farewell and then she jumped out the window of the palace. She would try the fast way to Bishopsgate, she would go to the Thames and hop across the many boats crossing and then to London Bridge and up towards Bishopsgate.

Off she went, the boatmen paying no attention as she hopped from one small boat to another, quietly hiding in the stern as they rowed their passengers back and forth, the river busy as an ant hill with small boats, then large ships, the cargo coming and going from this great port of London, the Thames flowing and still somewhat salty even this far inland, and the human refuse floating in and on the Thames as it was being thrown out by its ever growing residents.

There was the London Bridge, the only crossing of the River other than the boats, she hopped up the side of the stones and then across the top of the bridge. Now on to Bishopsgate.

#### **6.4 Meeting the Bard**

At this point Antnee was fully engrossed in telling his tale. He clearly was enamored of Lady Isabella, a truly royal squirrel on a mission. He now was standing on all fours, as was his wont, and he walked back and forth telling the tale. He had now taken the true story tellers approach, now and then looking into my eyes with those slightly side looking brown squirrel eyes, and then pacing without even a nod, telling the tale ever so more intensely. He went on:

"She was cautious going from the London Bridge and up towards Bishopsgate, then beyond the old Roman wall that was around the city, through the old gate, now left torn asunder as the buildings were continually expanded and to The Theatre. She jumped across the trees and into the rafters that covered the parts of the Theatre where the audience sat. She looked around and down. Below here was a play in preparation, and the players were those of The Chamberlain's men, the troupe of Master Shakespeare. The Chamberlains Men were sponsored

by the Chamberlain, using the good name as the protector, and little did they know that they had become secretly The Queen's Men.

Lady Isabella sat quietly observing trying to understand who this man William Shakespeare was and why the good Queen was taking such an interest. For Lady Isabella had seen the good Queen's was aging, she was stressed by many things and the burden of ruling the ever growing England, the stress of the foreign powers and their unending threats and moreover the never ceasing political fights within her own walls was tiring. She found not only solace in this man's words but she found vision and strength. Lady Isabella wanted to know why and she wanted to bring that strength and solace to the good Queen.

Here was Master Shakespeare, a man of medium height, modest build, no portly figure he, yet well fed, a balding head, for humans had so many problems with their hair, not a squirrel problem, and he had a long narrow face with a sharp nose and bearded to a point on the chin. He had blue eyes and he walked and strutted about the stage with the excitement of a chipmunk in a feed patch. He would work his words and then he listened as they were spoken. The sounds were critical, the resonance, the sweetness or the sense of fear and panics, his words created moods, resonated with feelings. She sat for two hours as they practiced for the next play.

Then she decided that she would see the play, a play called the Merchant of Venice.

She sat there as the characters came out, one after the other, the conflicts, the stress, the human nature being so well told.

The audience sat there, masses of humans, smoking their pipes, the smell of tobacco wafting over the audience, men and women in large hats, with people behind them getting up to see the play, drinks of various types, and humans going off to the side to relieve themselves. The smells, the noise, the colors, what a mass of involved humanity.

Lady Isabella watched in awe as the characters, Portia, and her soon to be wedded Bassanio went back and forth, Bassanio borrowing money from Antonio who in turn goes to the ruthless moneylender Shylock, who in turn decides to take no interest but if Antonio fails to pay he must deliver a pound of his flesh!

At this point Antnee turned to me with a rather pained look on his face. He said:

"Antonio, that is Antnee, my namesake, a pound of flesh! How horrible, for I am a mere pound all by myself! Where did Shakespeare ever get this tale, I have often wondered Sir, do you know?"

I could see Antnee was grieved at what had been said, his own tale, and I could see that must often have thought about this tale. I replied:

"Antnee, I have no idea, it is a gruesome thought. I know it also goes to the heart of this play for I have seen it many times."

He replied:

"Indeed Sir, but each time I come to this part, Sir, so cruel, so cruel. Yet let me continue Sir."

He went on:

"Then the tale thickens with others all so entwined and ends somewhat happily for all the couples save Shylock who is driven by his sense of greed at all costs.

Lady Isabella watched as Portia, disguised as a lawyer pleads the case of the good Antonio, due to his failure to pay Shylock, and then Shylock demanded his pound of flesh from Antonio, and Portia, pleads for him at the trial.

Antnee then interjects:

"Sir, here is a wonderful part, as Portia pleads for Antonio. Sir, the words Sir, listen to them, for they are like the soft and warm spring winds against the new soft leaves, so soft, yet strong Sir."

He continued with the speech.

"Portia speaks:

*The quality of mercy is not strain'd,  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest;  
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:  
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes  
The throned monarch better than his crown;  
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,  
The attribute to awe and majesty,  
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;  
But mercy is above this sceptred sway;  
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,  
It is an attribute to God himself;  
And earthly power doth then show likest God's  
When mercy seasons justice.*

Lady Isabella could hear the words, she now could understand the human talent of mercy, she was part of the pleading crowd, and she could see the audience in total silence, she saw the reaction of the audience to this plea before a false court, by a young man dressed as a young woman, but they suspended reality and for a brief moment the audience was there in that



court and heard the pleading, and when all turned out well they cheered. Now Lady Isabella could best understand what the good Queen liked.

The play ended and the cast departed leaving Shakespeare alone on the stage writing some notes under the light of a globe lamp. Lady Isabella jumped from her perch and down towards the stage and ran to confront this master of words face to face. She jumped up on the outer edge of the large oaken table and was beside the globe lamp and then said:

"Master Shakespeare, I am Lady Isabella Squirrel, daughter of the Duke of Quercus and I am here to speak with you upon demand of the good Queen Elizabeth."

I thought for a moment, as Antnee enacted this tale with gusto, if at all true, what it may have been like when Shakespeare sees a furry red squirrel, talking, and more importantly when she says she is a Lady and from the Queen. He must have thought he had lost all sanity!

Antnee could see I was, well not bemused but perhaps bewildered and he said:

"Sir, keep with me Sir, for this tale has just begun, and you must be with each and every detail Sir, for indeed it is that way and that way only that you will see the full import of what I impart today!"

I had been lectured and thus I would obey. Yet the images were flying inside my brain. Antnee continues:

Shakespeare looks up and sees Lady Isabella. Surprised, shocked, possibly feeling possessed, he actually replies:

"You, my fine red haired friend are talking to me. A squirrel, talking! I must be working too hard or this wine must be much too strong. It may be some evil spirit come to possess my soul. Begone you evil creature! Begone!"

Lady Isabella was not used to being spoken to that way, especially by a commoner. Squirrel or not she was to take possession of the situation. You see as a Royal she had been raised that she had certain rights, for alone amongst all creature squirrels were allowed to sit before the monarch, not even the Monarch's highest Dukes and Barons were honored such. Well Lady Isabella thought I must take control here. She replied in her most authoritative manner:

"Master Shakespeare, beware how you talk to a Lady of the Court, for I am the good Queen's confidant and I have been sent here on a mission from her. You my good Sir are all too abrupt and presumptive. I am not, I repeat sir, I am not some evil vision. I am a loyal subject of her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth I and so my good man are you. Hold your tongue and listen what I have to convey from her Majesty!"

Well did that set Shakespeare sitting upright? He was now sober as a judge and his heart was ticking as if he had truly seen a ghost!

Lady Isabella then went on:

"Master Shakespeare, her Majesty really does desire that your new theatre be in Southwark. As you know, the prison, the Clink, abuts the Thames, and there is great room behind the Clink, room for your new theatre. Her Majesty suggest you call it The Globe, for all the world, for her Majesty!"

She continued:

"And Master Shakespeare, her Majesty also asked that I convey to you from time to time, certain ideas for plays and themes that her Majesty would greatly like to see in your plays. She knows from whence you draw your themes and drawing from others as well would be compliant with your actions as they are as now. Yet her Majesty has some needs that you alone can meet the need to inform the public of the Crown, as you did in your play today. I felt strongly of the good Portia, a deliverer of justice, a good judge, a woman Sir, as is our good Queen. Her Majesty seeks that I be that confidant between her and your works."

Shakespeare was now drawing in the full import of what was before him. He now understood that this fine small creature had almost royal stature, red fur notwithstanding.

He replied:

"Lady Isabella, you can tell her Majesty the Queen that I William Shakespeare will be her humble servant and I greatly appreciate both her confidence and her guidance."

Antnee then finished by saying:

"Thus Sir began the Majestic Collaboration, the working between Queen and playwright."

## **6.5     *The Great Prince Hal***

Antnee then continued:

"The first play Sir, one of your favorites Sir, about good King Hal, and the glorious victory of the Kings army against the French at Agincourt in 1415."

The winter of 1598 was a cold winter. It snowed and the skies were dark and gray. The plays went on, and Shakespeare had a great deal to do as the Globe was under construction.

One day in late November, Lady Isabella came to Shakespeare in his new residence near the Globe in Southwark near Bankside. His new home was close to the Clink, the prison for London,

and just a few small streets from the London Bridge. He was a few steps from the Globe but Bankside was unlike the City of London, for there were no covered streets and in the wet London winters, there was heavy mist and other messes afoot. There always was a sloshing from one location to another and whenever one went from their dwelling to the theater the result was mud splashed everywhere. The cold was that damp piercing winter cold that made London famous and there was the smoke from the ever-growing number of fires in the dwellings and shops. There also was the almost ever-present fog that crept up from the river and hung aside each building.

Lady Isabella was in a hurry, the Queen had sent her on a mission. The Earl of Essex had been causing problems, he was to have handled disruptions in Ireland but he was slowly disregarding the Queen and delaying his assigned mission. Essex was clearly a thorn in the side of the good Queen and she must do something. The 1588 victory of the Armada was now well behind the Queen and the past ten years had taken its toll. She clearly was aging and she needs to bolster the people. A play was the solution, a call to arms, a call to the Queen.

Thus, the good Queen had an idea for a play, a twist in how it could be done to help her, to motivate her people, and to disgrace Essex. This was Lady Isabella's task on this rainy day. She scampered from rooftop to rooftop.

Arriving at Bankside Lady Isabella saw that Shakespeare was alone and she jumped in thru the window. She said:

"Ah Master Shakespeare, we have a project from the Queen we two, we have a royal commission, a secret royal commission."

Shakespeare was now all too familiar with this tiny messenger and he thus treated her as due her position, an immediate extension of the Royals. He replied:

"Lady Isabella, and how is her Majesty this dreary day?"

Lady Isabella responded:

"Fine but to work, to work, Master Shakespeare, we have a crisis. We need a new play. You have heard of the grief the Queen has with Essex, we must join that with a play."

Shakespeare responded:

"And do "we" have any suggestions?"

She looked sternly at his face and continued without the slightest hesitation:

"Master Shakespeare, we do, we will do Henry V."

"A play about the wild young partying prince, another Falstaff tale?"

For the Henry that was well known as the cheerful and drinking Harry or Hal, and the rotund Falstaff, his sidekick and co-conspirator, who would hang happily about London's drinking establishments and avoiding any of their responsibilities. Comedies were made of these tales not heroic exhortations.

Lady Isabella replied:

"No Master Shakespeare, we need a Henry as leader as king as we have Good Queen Elizabeth. We want the people not to question but to follow. The good Queen needs to see Henry as the beloved and the leader and the king. Not young Harry the easy living prince. Now Master Shakespeare, let me tell you how the good Queen wishes the play to go. Your words are most important. We must make him look like a great king, beloved and great. The good Queen says we must make him deal with the battle of Agincourt and his victory; it must make that victory a stimulus to support our good Queen. Do you see Master Shakespeare?"

Shakespeare responded:

"Indeed I do Lady Isabella; we begin to write now..."

They then spend days and nights, writing and talking, for words were the medium, and Lady Isabella would, take parts back to Whitehall where the Queen was, the Queen would read and comment, and Lady Isabella would go back again, and this was almost endless. After two months, poor Lady Isabella was weather worn, crossing back and forth with Shakespeare's words, then the Queen's comments, then discussing them, and then again and again. She was near exhaustion.

Shakespeare was told by the Queen to make the Irish, Welsh, Scots and English fight as one. Thus, Shakespeare made four Captains one from each land, fighting together against the French. Then Antnee turned to me and said:

"Sir, you know Sir that Shakespeare at the Queen's insistence made the Captain of the English a Gower, as was Lady Sara's family, and Sir the Irish was a Morris as was your clan. Interesting Sir that your clan and the good Lady Sara's clan fought side by side at Agincourt."

I was amazed, for Antnee always knew how to drag you into the story, you were now connected to the Battle of Agincourt as Captains under Henry V expressly named! I was amazed having seen the play many times that I had never made that connection but here was my furry friend bringing it to my attention.

Antnee then continued:

Then they started to read the play. They reached the exhortation of Henry at Agincourt. Lady Isabella then said to Shakespeare:

"Master Shakespeare, please read this one more time, for the good Queen thinks that our words are a true exhortation."

Shakespeare then stood and in his best voice said:

*We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;  
For he today that sheds his blood with me  
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,  
This day shall gentle his condition.  
And gentlemen in England, now abed,  
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here;  
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks  
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.*

In late March 1599, just at the end of Lent, in the palace at Richmond, Shakespeare presented the play.

Shakespeare could see that the Queen was most impressed. She smiled at the end of the scene, and he knew that her words had been heeded and that indeed they did add well to the work. He saw the Queen look upwards from the great room and towards the rafters, ever so slightly and there was Lady Isabella in all her glory sitting and clapping her small paws in appreciation for what Master Shakespeare had done, When Lady Isabella saw the Queen's glance of appreciation, she bowed her head in appreciation ever so slightly that Shakespeare alone could now the great and deep bond between Lady and Queen.

## **6.6    *The Enigmatic Julius***

The April rains made the surface of the Thames ripple with waves, the ships endlessly tilling their paths back and forth, the gray sheets of wind whipped water splashing into the window of Shakespeare's new residence in Bankside. The warmth of spring had not yet arisen from the earth, which still held tightly to the gritty cold of a long and chilling winter. Then suddenly a tapping at the window, and Shakespeare knew who would be there.

He opened the window and behold, the soaked Lady Isabella, red fur clumped in patches, muddy paws from the paths below, and mud even splattered across her small nose. She looked a fright.

She, without a word, jumped in and went to the corner where Shakespeare had a warm fireplace. She shook herself, spraying water to and fro and then carefully groomed herself free of the spoils of the street.

She almost as if as a result of some miracle turned back into the elegant Lady Isabella that Shakespeare knew well. At that point she spoke:

"To work, Master Shakespeare, to work. For we have another play and as we did with young Henry, we must do here. We shall, at the request of her Majesty, write about Julius Caesar!" Shakespeare then asked:

"'Tis good to see you again Lady Isabella..."

She immediately cut him off, as a Royal is often wont to do, saying:

"No time for pleasantries, no time Master Shakespeare. You are safe here in Bankside but at Whitehall, Master Shakespeare, at Whitehall, there are many plots and schemes. We must tell the people, yet we must educate them. The fear Master Shakespeare is the Earl of Essex. The Queen has allowed him an army to deal with the Irish, yet the Queen is concerned that Essex with an army may try to overthrow the monarchy. Master Shakespeare we must tell the people of this fear, yet do so subtly, for Essex has many friends who could twist the words of the Queen, we on the other hand good Master Shakespeare, we it seems, as we had done with good King Harry, can twist the public in our way. Thus on to Julius Caesar."

They went about this play with massive power for it must be true but subtle, of the current time but well hidden in Rome. Lady Isabella ensured that Shakespeare used the best knowledge of Rome, the Senate, the Republic, and did not allude in any way to the day at hand. For it must portray a tyrant, a usurper, but must retain dignity. For on the one hand it must praise the dignity of the emperor while shielding the tyrant but little from scorn.

As before, as sections were prepared, Lady Isabella would affix them in her mouth, then again the trip across the Thames, then to Whitehall and to the Queen's bedchamber, and in the silence of the night of Whitehall, a silence that under penalty of death could only be broken, the two, well out of the ears of any, worked night after night, and then in the morning Lady Isabella would again take the changes and jump from the window, down to the edge of the Thames, hop aboard a boat ordered by the Queen, and across to Bankside, up around the wall of the Clink and to the window of Master Shakespeare.

Then they tried two orations, one of special interest to the Queen was that of Antony after Brutus had assassinated Caesar.

Antnee turned to me and smiled, and he said:

"Sire, you see Sir, Antony is a great man, at the hand of the Queen, Lady Isabella and the great Master Shakespeare. I, Sir, am named after that Antony, a favorite of the Queen and of Lady Isabella, a great name is it not Sir, a very great name!"

I smiled and said:

"Yes Antnee, a great name and one so well deserved."

He smiled and then went without interruption back to the tale.

The Lady Isabella, acting as Antony read the oration:

*Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;  
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.  
The evil that men do lives after them;  
The good is oft interred with their bones;  
So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus  
Hath told you Caesar was ambitious:  
If it were so, it was a grievous fault,  
And grievously hath Caesar answer'd it.  
Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest--  
For Brutus is an honourable man;  
So are they all, all honourable men--  
Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.  
He was my friend, faithful and just to me:  
But Brutus says he was ambitious;  
And Brutus is an honourable man.*

Shakespeare smiled, his beard curled up the sides of his chin and the end of his goatee stuck out with glee! He said:

"Well done fair Lady Isabella, well done, for I can see the power of this speech. I believe we have it. The Queen will be happy. I only regret that I cannot place you upon the stage, you do so well. Unfortunately the law only allows for men upon the stage, perhaps someday it will change."

Lady Isabella said:

"Master Shakespeare, perhaps it is perchance that I am a squirrel may also be of concern, may it not?"

Shakespeare laughed heartily, and said:

"I am forgetting that!"

The two finished the play and in early June back at Whitehall they performed the play for the Queen. As before, Lady Isabella took her place and she and the Queen were quite pleased. The people grasped the threat of the Earl of Essex, unfortunately, the Earl did not grasp the words of Shakespeare, the Lady Isabella or the Queen!

## 6.7 *Hamlet the Prince*

I had to take a break, the tales were so interesting and Antnee told them with such gusto that it became like a whirlwind. He clearly wished to continue, for he always told the whole story. I spoke briefly to pace the tales:

"Antnee, again I am amazed as to the detail, your memory is superb. It is truly astonishing."

He replied:

"Then I shall continue Sir, shall I not?"

I interjected,

"Perhaps Antnee before we continue you may enlighten me as to why all these plays were so important, I understand the problem with the Earl of Essex, but why the plays?"

Antnee saw that I had asked a question which he could again enlighten me, for he was now treating me more as his student than his feeder. He walked back and forth on all fours, his gray tail flapping left and right, as if an aid to his thought and then he turned, sat upon his haunches and began as if he had not missed a beat:

"You see Sir, in those times there were no newspapers, no television, a dreadful invention of you humans, no computers, a rather useful invention even if I say so myself, and one would have to be careful as to what one said, Sir, since the Queen, and even others might take serious offense. Even the Queen, Sir, she could not say what was on her mind so to say Sir, for even she had to walk carefully so as to maintain her alliances. These alliances Sir shifted like sands in the winds, the blow and twist about and at times Sir could become most dreadful. Therefore, Sir, one spoke in nuances, not in whispers, but in metaphors, and yet all knew what you were speaking of."

I then replied:

"Well these are all Kings, of sorts, Henry and Julius, well let's continue, what other work did Lady Isabella assist on?"

Antnee was now pleased, I was getting back on topic. He waved at me to sit down, as if I were some student in his class, and here I was sitting in front of my lecturer, tail upright, on his haunches, arms out stretched, wiggling his nose in preparation for his greatest lesson. He began:

"Hamlet Sir, yes another royalty, and this time Sir, a true tragedy. But one of if not the greatest play ever written, Sir, even if I do say so myself!"



I paused for a moment to take in the import of what had been said. Here I was in the midst of my continuing lecture and here was this squirrel making me now fully believe that his opinion was of such value that I a mere human should absorb each word. And here I was doing so, a bit of irony.

I asked Antnee:

"Why is this play so important?"

Antnee smiled and waddled closer to me, looking up into my face, like a miniature Buddha, round bellied from the winters oil rich seed, and fluffy coat of fine hair, and he said:

"Sir, the truly magnificent difference here is that Hamlet looks in unto himself Sir, a truly different view. Unlike Henry, Caesar, and all the others which look upon others, look upon the world as people interacting with people, Hamlet looks upon the man interacting with himself, the conversations are with himself, they are inward Sir, and this Sir, indeed this very play Sir, is the first time that such a look inside oneself occurred. It was in many ways the defining moment Sir between the Medieval mind and the Renaissance mind, the mind of looking at things and ideas and the mind Sir of understanding ourselves!"

I was aghast. Here was my philosopher squirrel. I must be going out of my mind. I thought that if I ever spoke of this to anyone that they would consider me out of my mind, not in any way looking into my mind. Tales of fluffy little squirrels and funny tales of adventures are one thing but having a philosophical lecture by a backyard animal was now quite something else. Yet I let him continue since he was making a great deal of sense, yet I was hardly a Shakespearian scholar, and I was just a mere attendee at the plays like some many of the plebeians of London.

Antnee then started to unfold the tale, having lectured me as to the true importance. He continued:

"You see Sir, the Earl of Essex had been sending threatening message to his friends in London that he sought to have the Queen removed and James the King of Scotland put in her place. This was treason Sir, true and bold faced treason. Yet the Queen, she was aged and she was listening to far too many advisors Sir, she hesitated."

"You see Sir that the Earl of Essex left to fight in Ireland in March of 1599, he even did so the very afternoon Shakespeare was playing Henry V in the new Globe! He used that as a, what would you say Sir, a sending off greeting. He knew the Queen had other intents for the play but he usurped it for his own ends. An bad thing Sir, indeed, quite a bad thing. Yet what could the good Queen do!"

"Then that fall Sir, a ghastly thing happens. The Earl of Essex returns to London, not having accomplished his task, and he goes to the palace at Nonsuch and Sir, it is horrible to even imagine, he bursts upon the bedchamber of good Queen Elizabeth, for she was not yet even up,

she was ill, and failing, and slams his way in, and demands from her of all sorts of things. That Sir was truly the end, truly the end, indeed she must now act. And act she did, she had him jailed, yet he had many friends Sir, many who would conspire and seek revenge. A very tense time it was Sir, so very intense."

"The Queen did not wish to act too abruptly for she knew not of his allies. She had him confined and then she need prepare the people, thus again Lady Isabella and the good Master Shakespeare. They were to write and tell of intrigue, revenge, and do so in a new and penetrating manner. Sir, you see, the Queen was a very insightful person, age had taken away from the body but had added to the mind. Somewhat like your Sir."

I stopped this tale promptly. I was not to be told I was informed by a squirrel. I replied:

"My good furry friend, now you just wait, I am the Queen's age but this is four hundred years later and I am in great physical condition! I beg to differ with your scurrilous remarks!"

Antnee replied:

"You mean squirrelous remarks!"

He then tittered away knowing he had just told a joke. A joke telling squirrel, off to Atlantic City with him!

He continued:

"Now Sir, back to the tale. Thus did the Queen again summon Lady Isabella. They spoke and the Queen asked Lady Isabella to set out to Master Shakespeare, for they must do a play on the Prince of Denmark, afar from England, but close and known. The play must look at why the Prince does what he does, the play must not so much deal with the facts, historical facts, but must deal with how people think, and thus why they do what they do. It would make people think of the Earl of Essex as a self centered greedy man seeking to dethrone the good Queen. Then and only then could the good Queen deal with the evil Earl."

"Thus did Lady Isabella Sir, strike out upon her mission. As she had done before, she went to Shakespeare and informed him of the need. The two of them then discussed the play, and Shakespeare worked tirelessly portraying the prince of Denmark, they talked back and forth of bringing his very mind, if not his should Sir, into the play. The torture and the end results."

Antnee was now on a roll. He continued:

"That scene Sir, wit Hamlet looking deeply into himself, let me see, Sir, all we squirrels have remitted this to our memory, for Sir, it was a true joint effort of Lady Isabella and the Bard."

And Antnee stood atop his wooden plank and raised his little paw into the air and began:

*To be, or not to be: that is the question:  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;  
No more; and by a sleep to say we end  
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks  
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation  
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;  
To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;  
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  
Must give us pause: there's the respect  
That makes calamity of so long life;  
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,  
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,  
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,  
The insolence of office and the spurns  
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,  
When he himself might his quietus make  
With a bare bodkin? who would fardels bear,  
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,  
But that the dread of something after death,*

When he finished, he dropped his paw, lowered his head, there appeared bits of squirrel sweat upon his small wet nose, he was rent. A magnificent performance, better than Olivier, and unfortunately not one I could tell many about! But Bravo Antnee!

## **6.8 As You Like It**

After the success of the three plays, the Queen was satisfied. Lady Isabella would from time to time revisit her friend Master Shakespeare.

On one occasion, they were talking and Lady Isabella said:

"Master Shakespeare, after all our work on plays, and after all my time at the palace, I see that plays and real life are at time one and the same. People act, in plays and in life."

Shakespeare then replied:

"Ah Lady Isabella, indeed they do. We have discussed this you and I and I have just finished a play. I call it As You Like It. You gave me some ideas. This tale is about people playing other people playing other people. I had read the tale by Thomas Lodge, the romance, Rosalind, who

Lodge did say was from Chaucer himself, The Tale of Ganylon, and I did find this tale one to twist and turn how people play as actors, depending upon the moment and also upon the whim." Let me read you one of the words:

*All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players:  
They have their exits and their entrances;  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,  
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.  
And then the whining school-boy, with his satchel  
And shining morning face, creeping like snail  
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,  
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad  
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,  
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,  
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,  
Seeking the bubble reputation  
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,  
In fair round belly with good capon lined,  
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,  
Full of wise saws and modern instances;  
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts  
Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,  
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,  
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide  
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,  
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes  
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,  
That ends this strange eventful history,  
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,  
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.*

Lady Isabella smiled and said:

"Master Shakespeare, so well said as usual. A Comedy, indeed, but one with a twist as is your usual manner. Indeed, all the world's a stage, and we are all actors upon that stage. Tell me more, Master Shakespeare, tell me more."

They spent hours with Shakespeare telling of Rosalind, and Orlando, and of Oliver and of Frederick, of Celia and the Duke and the many people in the land of the Forest of Arden. The people playing roles in a play to fool the other players and then to get back again into their original role. Humorous, a fine witted story but with a moral within.

## 6.9 *The Duchess of Pinus*

Antnee then interjected:

"And now Sir, a part of the tae of which we are most proud, indeed Sir most proud. For her service Lady Isabella was made a Royal, on her own merits, a true Duchess Sir, a true Duchess."

I was amazed as to Antnee's true and total devotion to Isabella, now to be a Duchess, and not knowing anything about royalty gave my fullest attention. He continued:

"As the Queen was aging, she called Lady Isabella into her bed chamber one day. Lady Isabella saw the Queen was fading, that her end was nearing, she was losing strength, her skin sallow, and her eyes were watering with old age. She was not dressed as was her wont but was still in her bed clothes.

Lady Isabella approached and bowed as was her custom and awaited the Queen to speak. Slowly and with clear effort the Queen started:

"Lady Isabella, good and long friend, we have accomplished a great deal together. My works, and our works, and of course those with Master Shakespeare. I wish to thank you for all your efforts. I know your father has passed on and your older brother is now Duke of Quercus. But my dear friend, I wish to reward you for not only your friendship and loyalty but for your accomplishments. For the words in Henry V, Julius Caesar, and Hamlet, those words I know are yours, mine and Master Shakespeare. For that, all our other works here on earth may pale, I truly believe that those three works shall prevail. For that we should be proud, for mankind will hear them again and again, and it will make them think again and again, to praise a good king, to beware of the usurper, and then be careful to control our revenge."

Lady Isabella bowed before the aging Queen, as she was perched on the end of the bedposts looking down across the topped bed where the Queen was lying. She said:

"Many glorious adventures your Majesty, and Master Shakespeare is indeed a good and close friend."

The Queen replied:

"As are you Lady Isabella. For that reason I am making you the Duchess of Pinus, and you shall have domain over all this Kingdom, as does your brother the Duke of Quercus. For at heart the help of men and women are equal. As in your brother's descent the title goes from son to son, it shall be in yours that the title goes from daughter to daughter. You shall have residence at Greenwich, and so I proclaim."

Isabella responded:

"My deepest thanks to your Majesty, I and my descendents shall be forever in your debt and shall continue to serve the Crown."

The Queen then said:

"Come here Isabella."

And Lady Isabella jumped across the bed sheets to the pillow where the Queen lay. The Queen drew Lady Isabella close, the two hugged.

### **6.10 *The Death of the Queen***

Antnee then appeared a bit sad, strange for my friend, and he curled up in a ball, as if both resting and hiding, to continue the tale. He said:

"Now Sir, a sad part, but inevitable Sir, always inevitable. You see Sir the good Queen had reached the end of her days, and as she slowly faded, the tale of Lady Isabella, now the Duchess of Pinus, pause for this passing of such a good friend. We always find this a sad part Sir, so I thought I would advise you, but we see this also as the strong bond between we two, squirrels and man, friendship that lasts Sir, like you are me, am I correct Sir."

I smiled and reached out to rub his furry little head and responded:

"Indeed my good friend, indeed, we are true and loyal friends. Now on with the tale, all things change."

He replied:

"Well said Sir, well said, now to the tale."

"In March 1603, the winter lingered, the skies remained gray, and the Queen was weakening. The Duchess of Pinus knew that the time for her parting was near. She was to lose a Queen and a good friend. She felt great sadness. There would be many changes but alas she would go on, for she had committed to the Queen and would stay until released by the Queen's successor."

She had been with the Queen every evening and this evening as she approached, she could see that the final weakness had arrived. Her breathing was slow, her face lacking any color, almost a transparent parchment, absorbing light and reflecting nothing back. The shell was becoming empty.

When the Queen was alone after her staff had left she jumped down upon the Queen's pillow, and for once she spoke first, breaking all protocol.

She said:

"Your Majesty, you are so pale and wane, Is there anything I may do?"

The Queen, tired and pale, turned her head, her eyes still bright blue but now almost transparent, smiled and replied:

"Duchess, you address me first, I suspect that you know my time is here. Alas, I have much to be grateful for, I have accomplished much and I die with my head upon my shoulders."

They both laughed. The Queen continued:

"Let my successor know that he also has your trust and devotion. Your guidance is a welcome thing. And tell our friend Master Shakespeare that I shall miss him, he was a great help in times of need, and his plays a great enjoyment during troubled periods. Now my good Duchess, you must raise a family, be not like me and be childless, return to Greenwich and tell our tales. They are so important."

The Duchess of Pinus nuzzled to the Queen and slept at her head for the remainder of the night. Her breathing slowed, and then, the time came, and she breathed no longer. The Duchess of Pinus gave one final kiss to the cheek of her Queen, and as people entered the room, she swept herself behind the bed-board, up the post, out the window, and she sought the comfort across the Thames with good Master Shakespeare. The world would change, it never stops.

### **6.11 *The Parting with the Bard***

This was a telling tale and now Antnee again shuffled about to continue. He said:

"Again Sir, a tale of parting, but on moving on, not leaving. You see Sir, the Duchess was to leave the Palace, for the new King James had treated all well, a fine King he was. Then the Duchess must go to Greenwich. So she must bid farewell to Master Shakespeare. To this tale of farewell I now move Sir. A bit sad but like all of life Sir, we see change, otherwise Sir it would indeed be dull."

Antnee then went on with the tale:

The Duchess of Pinus spent a year with the new King James I. A different person than the Queen, but all are different. At first he, like all monarchs took time to adjust, but he was fond of the works of Master Shakespeare and from the start that was the nexus. For after a short while, The Chamberlains Men became The Kings Men. Thanks to The Duchess of Pinus.

After the end of a year, the Duchess had brought in her cousin, the Lady Portia, named after one of Master Shakespeare's characters, and Lady Portia was to take her place. She bade farewell to the new King, King James, and before she departed she would visit Master

Shakespeare one more time. King James gave her the use of a boat, which she used to go one last time to Bankside, and from there to Greenwich. It was a sunny day, early June 1604, and off she went.

She disembarked at Bankside, and scampered up to meet Master Shakespeare, for he was busy at the Globe. There at the Globe, a fine wooden structure, rounded on the outside, built of sturdy planks, thatched roofing, and a play being had. It was Othello, one she had seen before, but she scampered to the top of the balcony and took her usual spot, watching and listening till the end. The words, the spoken words, like rippling water, fresh, clear and uplifting.

Then after the play she scampered down to meet the Bard. He smiled and asked:

"I suppose you are off to look after family matters now my Duchess?"

She replied:

"Yes good Master Shakespeare, and I shall sorely miss our discussions. The good Queen did provide us with exciting times, a brisk year that 1599, brisk and so enjoyable. I shall remember your words always."

Shakespeare smiled and replied:

"Our words, you mean Duchess, all three of us. We were a great team!"

She replied:

"Indeed we were, but alas, and for good, Master Shakespeare, your words improve and do better. Othello is a fine work, fine indeed. You have not slowed. I am pleased."

They spoke for a while longer and finally caressed softly and bade farewell.

The Duchess went down to her boat and departed to do her family duties.

Antnee looked up at me with a smile, he again had a tear dropping off his nose. He was a marvelous story teller, whether this was embellished over the centuries or not, it was a wonderful tale. He then said:

"A wonderful tale Sir, indeed, Sir a wonderful tale. Such good friends, Sir, such good friends indeed. And in such trying times. Their friendship lasts and their words remain Sir, truly great words. And indeed Sir, that year of 1599 was a frightfully productive year Sir, as I am certain you have yourself experienced!"

I sat back a moment and thought. Yes indeed, there have been such times, times with good friends where we did monumental tasks, tasks which lasted and have lingered well beyond



their immediate time. I saw that Antnee was both a story teller and a seer of the human and perhaps the squirrel spirit as well.

### **6.12 Back at Greenwich**

Antnee was now nearing the end of his tale. It seemed to not just be the end but a new beginning. He said:

"Now Sir, a brief set of details on the Duchess, for indeed Sir, she returned to Greenwich."

He continued:

"Then, after a final catching of a boat at the river's edge, the Duchess of Pinus travelled on her own boat towards the mouth of the Thames, around the edge of the city, then beyond its bounds, around every curve and after a few hours of a slow ride they reached Greenwich. Whereupon she disembarked to return now as a full Duchess, a domain to manage, a true Royal, and knowing that Master Shakespeare was well upon his career and would continue well under the new King."

For now she would have to raise a family and uphold the honor placed upon her by the good Queen and continued by the King. She had a duty and her family would have a continuing responsibility. They were now of a class that demanded much and she was certain that they would be up to this challenge.

I looked at Antnee, he was truly exhausted, for we had gone on at this for well over two hours, and I was amazed at how I now saw Shakespeare in so different a light.

I said to him:

"Antnee, that was the best tale yet my good friend. You are a brilliant and engaging teller of tales. You must rest now my friend. I will get some more sunflower seeds."

He turned and said:

"Thank you so much Sir, it is wonderful to have someone who appreciates true history. Oh, and by the way, bring out a few of those corn cobs, and perhaps an apple of two."

Ah, my Antnee, always eating. I then went to gather the food and reward my good friend.

And for a brief time, as Antnee had spoken the tale, I had been drawn back to the time of the Bard, to the smells and sounds, to the words and emotions, to the conflicts and friendships, and to the three players who, even in Antnee's mind, were so intertwined in their time and ours.

## ***7 HERR PROFESSOR DOCTOR GUSTAVE M. SQUIRREL AND HIS STUDENT ALBERT***

---

German, not a tongue I had ever been fond of, perhaps too much television after the War. So as I sat there working the pots as usual, I was struck by the cackling above me as Antnee was trying out his German on his fellow squirrels. I had no idea what he was counting but he did so in German, a strange thing for a squirrel who purportedly had Italian roots, as best as any grey squirrel could claim.

### ***7.1 Antnee and His Corn Cob***

I was trying to get the pots in order and I kept hearing the mumbling of the squirrels above my head. Then out of nowhere, I get struck upon the top of my head and the object bounces onto the ground before me. It was a fully eaten corncob, and it was totally bereft of any kernels of corn, chewed down by that hungry collection of furry friends.

I looked up and shouted:

"Hey you guys, I am down here! Stop trashing the yard with your used food. Find some other place to drop them!"

Then a scurrying ruffle was heard through the branches, and just as he is always wont to do, good old Antnee jumped limb by limb, down to where I was. I looked at him and said:

"Was that your ear of corn?"

He smiled and said:

"Sir, no Sir, that was young Albert squirrel. He just eats the last of everything and then, whoosh, Sir, flips it over the side. I have spoken to his parents Sir, but the new generation, you know Sir, they have no manners. They just let their children do whatever they wish Sir, truly like barbarians, Sir, so unlike us, indeed so unlike us Sir."

I briefly thought this here was my grey furry friend saying that he and I were of the same older generation and that these young ones were so uncontrolled. Imaging that, humans and squirrels with the same generational problems! I was amazed.

Antnee scrambled down, looked at me, and continued:

"Sir, you are unhurt Sir, I do hope, no wounds Sir, no wounds?"

I replied:

"No my good friend, a bit startled but other than that, woundless. But perhaps you could tell me why the German lessons? Are you helping the young ones with their education as well?"

He scurried atop the bird feeder, or perhaps correctly called the squirrel feeder, and stretched out looking me in the eyes and I could see his rather corpulent buttocks billowing over the wooden plank which was the top of the feeder support. He then said:

"You see Sir; I have the responsibility to give them some culture. German is something which I believe Sir trains the mind. It is a structure language, one that many of the great minds of the past used. I believe Sir that the young should have some exposure to culture, difficult as it may be Sir."

Interesting but it made little sense to me at the time. Thus, I asked,

"But why German, what is so famous about German. It is not one of those languages that we speak today. Italian I can see, since many of you had come from Italy, a nice sweet language. French, now there is a structured tongue, sophisticated, complex, like the French mind."

I continued:

"Spanish, so many of the workers speak a dialect of it and it is truly a simple language. Of course, your lessons could be in Latin or Greek from your past tales. But why German?"

He placed his front paws under his chin and wrinkled up his nose before responding. Then, and now I could see I was in for another tale, he responded:

"You see Sir, I was also telling them about the story of Herr Professor Doctor Gustave M. Squirrel and his pupil Albert. Gustave, I use his given name Sir, to keep it simple, those German titles Sir, like Spanish names, Sir, so long, so important, but Sir, Gustave was Swiss, not German, but German Swiss, Sir, if you know what I mean."

I was a bit startled, a Professor, a Doctor, what kind of squirrel was this and who I wondered was this Albert that required educating the inhabitants of my trees in German. I asked, which by now I knew was the protocol with Antnee,

"Now just who is Albert and I guess Antnee you should tell me more of Gustave."

He smiled, and rolled around on his now rather comfortable belly and started what I knew was to be a long and intriguing tale.

## **7.2 Gustave and Albert**

"You see Sir, Herr Professor Doctor Gustave M Squirrel was a brilliant Professor of Physics, world renowned Sir, in our world, Sir, a great and wonderful teacher Sir. He lived a hundred years ago or more in Bern, that Sir is in Switzerland. Just outside of the main down town area."

He was now on a roll. I knew where he was headed, and that it was a tale worth hearing and also worth getting a lawn chair for. I stopped Antnee and said:

"Antnee, just stay there I will get a chair. I have been potting all morning and at my age the old back can take so much."

When I returned he had remained in his comfortable nook and the shade was cool despite the warmth of the summer day. So here I was on my lawn chair, in my garden clothes, hat in hand, looking up at my friend who without a moment's hesitation restarted his tale.

"You see Sir, it was 1903, and Bern is the capital of the Swiss cantons. They have no true central Government Sir, not like yours, and the Swiss, well Sir, the Swiss are a bit different. They keep apart from the others, they have the mountains, and they have a mix of French, German, Italian and even a small tongue called Romansh, like a Latin tongue. Bern is on the Aar River, Sir, a beautiful site, mountains to the north and south, a high plain with many trees, a fine place Sir for squirrels. Not that we do not enjoy New Jersey Sir, for indeed we do, you are all so friendly here."

I found that rather humorous, well New Jersey is not that bad, we have been here thirty years plus and after all I have Antnee and his friends, what more do you want.

Antnee then continued:

"Sir, Gustave had studied Physics in Berlin, a student of Planck, and he was a good friend of the great Professor. The two would talk a great deal about physics. Then he had to leave Berlin, family issues Sir, we squirrels you see Sir, we have them like you. His mother was in Bern, and he had a brother who had some problems, Sir, you know the type."

I sat there now totally bewildered. Now we have squirrels collaborating with the great minds that created quantum mechanics, Planck amongst them. I really wondered where this tale was going. And as usual Antnee was now totally engrossed in his story telling, I could see by the wiggling of his nose and the flittering of his whiskers. He was truly into the tale. As now so too was I.

I asked:

"So when this famous squirrel returns to Bern, then what did he do?"

Antnee replied:

"Good that you should inquire Sir, for he took care of his ailing mother, an aged old woman, but Gustave loved her dearly Sir, you know how mothers are Sir, for we all have them."

Here I am imagining squirrel mothers, and I wonder if there is a Freud for Squirrels as well, it is the old hand that rocks the cradle argument, or whatever it is for squirrels. The possibilities are spinning in my head!

Antnee rolled a bit on his belly, seeking a more comfortable perch, anticipating the long tale was just beginning. He then continued:

"Well Sir, it was one fine day in September I believe Sir, yes indeed it was September, in 1903, that Gustave was in the fine park in Bern, taking a Sunday walk, when he noticed below him on a park bench a young man who was so intense that he jumped down to the ground to observe him better. This young man has a mustache and a round head, a head of hair which was a bit wild and almost furry like. So Gustave walked in front of this man, looked up at his face and he could see the level of intensity of thought that was quite high. He thought that perhaps he could assist this inquisitor into the laws of nature and thus Sir he spoke out."

Gustave then spoke to this intense young man:

"Sir, good Sir, may I perhaps be of some assistance, Sir, you appear so intense, so concerned, perhaps I may assist you in your quest?"

Antnee continued:

"The man was a bit startled, for he could hear Gustave and he heard the Berlin German, that high German tongue, which he had some familiarity with, but he saw no one in front of him. He appeared even further confused. Then Gustave said:

"Down here Sir, at your feet."

The man looked down and to his abject surprise was Gustave, a grey squirrel with hair atop of his head all long and furry and curly, almost electrified, a bush like head of squirrel fur, and his whiskers looked like a moustache, a thick grey moustache. The man said to Gustave:

"And who or what are you. Squirrels are not supposed to speak my little friend. Do you have a name my small little creature?"

Antnee then became a bit agitated. He continued:

"Sir, you see Sir, Gustave came from the old German, if I may say Sir, the Prussian way, and one did not talk to a Professor that way, especially one who has studied under Professor Planck in Berlin, one did not talk so freely Sir, you understand, so Sir, Gustave then spoke so as to inform this young man who he was. He said:"

"I am Herr Professor Doctor Gustave M Squirrel, late of Berlin, where I studied with Professor Planck. I am not, my young man, some plaything that you can address so casually. Now that you know me perhaps you will be so kind as to inform me as to who you are and why I should waste my time attempting to assist you in what appears to be a significant plight."

The young man was startled beyond belief. His first reply was:

"I apologize...did you say Professor Planck in Berlin....you know him?"

Gustave replied:

"Know him, my young man, I not only know him but we worked together developing his theory of radiation from black bodies. I suggested some of the key elements; I ran tests on the infra red spectrum, why young man without my help the good Professor would still be working with those dumbkofts from Munich who act as lab assistants."

Gustave took a breath and then continued:

"So young man, who are you, what is your problem, and since you know who Professor Planck is tell me what interests you in physics."

The young man responded:

"My name is Albert Einstein; I work at the Patent Office here in Bern. I studied in Zurich at the Polytechnic, and I truly want to be a Physicist, I so envy you my furry friend, to have known the great Planck, for here I am a humble employee of the Patent Office."

Gustave replied:

"Pity is so unbecoming Sir, and self pity the worst. You are what you are and you will be what you make yourself to be. You seem bright Albert, if I may call you so, perhaps you may become my student, since I too find myself in Bern, and perhaps I can teach you so that we both may learn?"

Albert looked down at the wise squirrel and replied:

"Oh Herr Professor that would be kind. I have so many ideas in my head, I have very few to talk about them with, so few."

Gustave replied:

"Albert, you have good fortune, for you can think without the burden of the Academy. The Academy as we all know it has far too many distractions, meetings, conferences, affairs of

protocol, too much overhead as one can say. Here in Bern, at your quiet Patent Office, you can do your day work, and then we can meet at night and start our true work. Are we agreed Albert?"

He replied:

"Herr Professor, I look forward to this."

The Antnee looked at me and said:

"You see Sir; another case of squirrel leads man, Sir, and a most famous one indeed."

I then said:

"Well Antnee, what happened, don't tell me that Gustave invented relativity and the like!"

Antnee sprang upright in an almost scolding manner and replied:

"Sir, I am disappointed in you Sir deeply disappointed. You see Sir I am not finished with my tale, for there is much more to tell, you see Sir, Gustave helps young Albert, for indeed young Albert is quite smart, yet he is alone in Bern, despite having been recently married, he feels, shall we say, that at so young an age that all may be lost, and it is Gustave that makes him take hold of what he has and build upon it Sir, not create it. For Gustave Sir was a great teacher, not one with the answers but one with the questions. You see Sir; it is having the right questions, the important questions, the properly phrased questions Sir that are as important as having the answers. Thus Albert had Gustave to help him with the right questions, and also to give young Albert a true sense of his own abilities."

I then asked:

"Well Antnee, then what happened? Did Gustave teach Albert?"

### **7.3    *The Lessons***

Antnee then spoke on:

"Then Sir, every week they would meet in the garden in Bern, summer or winter, Sir, cold, heat, sun or rain, there they would meet and talk. You see Sir, Gustave was both a teacher and since the passing of Albert's father he became a father to Albert, the father Albert did not have in life, a wise squirrel Sir, a true teacher and soon to be true friend. Each week they met and talked, for Albert was given lessons to read, things to think about, many things. For it was at this time Sir that physics was changing. And it was Gustave who understood the change. Gustave's famous dictum to Albert Sir was always "The world is filled with uncertainty" and he insisted

that Gustave learn to deal with it. For in Albert's world sir, a world of physics at the time, all was certain."

Antnee continued:

"Thus each week, Gustave would walk about the park, it was along the edge of the River Aare, and they would walk, sit, talk. Gustave would tell Albert:"

"Albert, physics is about understanding the universe, big and small. There are so many things we yet understand. You can select whatever ones you want. Unlike at a University, you do not have a niche, a corner, you can look at many, some good, some you should abandon. And Albert, physics is understanding the phenomenon, explaining it, digesting it, so that it becomes part of you. You must learn to get the idea, have it digested in your brain, create thought experiments to test it, you do not need a great laboratory with many assistants, you just need your brain, and you have a very good one. And Albert, avoid the mathematics until the very end and keep it simple. One can always get lost in lots of equations, lost and forever trapped in the love of manipulating them. I have seen many students Albert who believe that because they have equations they have discovered something. The discovery is in the mind not in the equations."

#### **7.4    *Photoelectric Effect***

Antnee rolled around a bit, and nibbled on a few sunflower seeds, I said to him:

"Antnee, perhaps you are eating a few too many seeds. You seem to be getting a bit plump."

He smiled and responded:

"Ah yes Sir, but they are so good, my thanks to Lady Sara. She selects the best of foods. I especially liked those apples, and she cuts them into fine small pieces so I can take them home and eat them at night before I sleep."

I replied:

"Antnee that is not my point, you are getting fat; your butt hangs over the side of the feeder!"

Antnee smiled again and said:

"Ah Sir, the joys of the contemplative life. Why Sir, if there were no food here we would have never met. Besides we squirrels do not suffer as you humans do, I just save it all for winter."

I gave up. He was just plump and there was nothing I could do. He finished off a few dozen more sunflower seeds and then said:



"Now where were we Sir, ah yes, the first true discovery. Well Sir, it was in the fall of 1904 Sir, the leaves had dropped and Gustave and Albert were on one of their walks, and when the wind blew down from the mountains, across the garden lawn, it created waves of leaves, mass waves, Sir, and Gustave was jumping in and out of the waves, when all of a sudden he was hit with a large magnolia leaf, slap, right in his frizzy haired head. Well Sir it knocked Gustave over and down. Then Sir, Albert walked over to see if Gustave was all right. Well Sir thankfully no harm was done."

I stopped him and asked:

"Well Antnee how does this lead to a great discovery?"

Antnee replied somewhat scolding manner:

"Sir you must have patience Sir, for discovery comes often from observing the most common things in an uncommon manner, the prepared mind Sir, the prepared mind."

I said:

"Okay, okay Antnee, I will be patient."

Antnee continued:

"You see Sir, Gustave and Albert had been talking about Maxwell and his theory of waves, light waves and electromagnetic waves, you know Sir radio waves. So the two of them had been trying to understand the ether of Maxwell, when Gustave emerged from the pile of leaves and shouted to Albert:

"Albert, they just look like waves Albert, they just look like waves, they are really particles!"

Albert ran over to Gustave and said:

"Herr Professor, what do you mean?"

Albert responded:

"The leaves, Albert, they looked like waves but that was from afar and especially when you are big like you. But when you get down here, it is not the wave that hits you it is the leaf! It is the leaf, the particle. Maxwell is describing the average in the large, but on the small, like me Albert, it is a particle!"

Albert stepped back and like a flash of lightening, he suddenly saw:

"Then Herr Professor, say light shines on a metal, and then it emits electrons, then the light that hits the metal is really a, say we call it a light particle, it is that particle that breaks loose the electron!"

Gustave replied:

"Exactly Albert, it is a particle, yet in the large it is a wave. One and the same, Albert, one and the same. Now Albert, to work, I have some ideas which may help you, ones that Professor Planck and I had developed. To our study Albert, to our study!"

I was amazed. Here was Antnee telling me it was Gustave Squirrel who gave Einstein the idea for the photon and the photoelectric effect. It was that paper which won the Nobel Prize for Einstein more than a decade latter. Here I am being told that Professor Gustave discovered the effect by getting hit by a dead magnolia leaf in the garden in Bern! You cannot make this up!

Antnee could see my incredulity, and he said:

"Sir, perhaps this is a bit too much for you today?"

I replied:

"No, that is not the case; it is just that your tales of squirrels are such that we humans just kind of do what you squirrels tell us."

I heard snickering above my head and looked up. It was Maria Squirrel, she was listening intently. Then I looked around, the branches were filled with up to fifty squirrels, all intently listening to the tale, it was a scene from an Alfred Hitchcock movie but without the terror. It was as if Antnee was lecturing to a large classroom of his own students. I now also had an audience, since they were not only listening to Antnee regale them of the wisdom of the squirrel, but they had been observing my own education at the feet of this master teacher, my friend Antnee.

I replied:

"Okay Antnee, then what happened, don't tell me Gustave wrote the famous paper!"

He replied:

"Oh no Sir, it was Albert, indeed it was Albert. Gustave just assisted him along the way, as we squirrels are wont to do."

He continued:

"May I continue Sir, may I continue?"

I smiled and answered:

"Antnee, of course, this is getting more interesting by the minute."

He continued:

"Well Sir, they went back to Albert's small rooms, his wife was busy, she Sir for some reason did not like squirrels, not like Lady Sara Sir, but alas there are always a few Sir. There Gustave started the conversation. He said:"

"Albert, when I worked with Professor Planck we developed the expression for the emission from a black body radiator, that small black cylindrical hollow ball and we developed a formula assuming that energy was, let us say, quantized. Now Albert we can use that result to show the entropy of the radiator."

Then Albert replied:

"But we can also use the entropy equation to show its relationship to the volume."

Albert began sketching equations and the Gustave stopped him:

"Remember Albert, think this through, and then write the equations. Now think Albert, where does this lead?"

Albert thought and then smiled at Gustave and said:

"Why Professor, this means that if we have a single color of light then it consists of a whole bunch of particles of light, each having the same energy, like the leaves in the park!"

Gustave replied:

"Just exactly right. Now one more thing, and then you can write. There are many experiments with light. Remember when you shine light on copper, cesium potassium, and other materials, the light turns into electricity, namely it bangs off electrons, which if we place the material in an electric field we can get a current of electrons and control it with a battery. The flow of electrons is instantaneous. If the light were a wave it would take time to build up, like a wave on an ocean cliff, it does not collapse all at once, it erodes. But like a leaf hitting my head, the unit of quantized light energy hits an electron and then bang off it goes, to the other end, a current."

Albert said:

"Herr Professor, that is exactly what happens. May I write now?"

Gustave replied:

"Albert, now write."

Albert wrote all night, word after word. He did not sleep and in the morning, without waking his wife, he left for work. Gustave looked over the paper, moving page by page and he smiled and said to himself:

"Not bad for a young human, even if I say so myself!"

### **7.5     *Brownian Motion***

At this point I was near exhaustion. It was a tale from some thriller novel, trying to understand who did what to whom when. But I was amazed at how well Antnee told the tale. And of course the Professor Gustave, a rather interesting fellow, if indeed he ever existed, but to Antnee and his students now lining the tree branches above my head, Professor Gustave was not only real but typical of the intellectual squirrel. I could see the muse theory, thus Shakespeare and Chaucer made sense, even Marcus Aurelius, but a scientist and Einstein of all of them, rather extreme indeed.

Antnee now reassembled himself and looked down and started anew:

"Now after a couple of months, spring came and Albert and Gustave sat aside a small pond. Albert had submitted the first paper and the two of them looked quietly at the water surface. There were skating spiders. Moving back and forth across the small waves on the pond. Albert remarked:

"Their movement, totally random, like the flies in the air above us, see Herr Professor, they go one way, then change and fly another, no sense to their movement, both direction and distance being almost chosen at random."

Gustave replied:

"Albert, look also at the pollen from the pines, the air blows it in one direction but despite that the small pollen grains float in their own random paths. I had read a paper by a Professor Brown in England who described this motion for pollen in water; I can see it here at the edge of the pond, just bouncing about."

Then Albert replied:

"I think we should next try to explain this motion. It may be of use."

I stopped Antnee and said:

"Ah, now we are going to attribute the Brownian motion paper to Gustave as well. Did Einstein do anything?"

Antnee looked serious from up on the feeder perch and replied:

"Sir, you can see Sir that he did indeed do a great deal. You of all people should know what Einstein did on Brownian motion, for you Sir are an academic direct descendent of the famous Gauss, are you not Sir. And also Sir's book was not your first book on such a topic as was Einstein's work."

I replied:

"Yes indeed, but I did not get a Nobel Prize!"

Antnee replied:

"Ah correct Sir, but we had not met back then Sir, had we."

I paused for a moment and thought about what I had just been told. Antnee was starting to position himself as the lecturer and I was becoming the student, a rather strange thought. But oh well back to the tale. I replied:

"Okay Antnee back to Einstein!"

As I said this, I could see Maria Squirrel and all the rest above my head settle themselves in a resting position to listen to the now great story teller. As I saw this, I better understood the dynamic in this rather strange community.

Antnee then continued the story:

"Well Sir, Gustave then met several times and spoke with Albert. They discussed many things, but Gustave helped clarify them. One afternoon, after many talks Gustave said to Albert:"

"Albert, the particle movement is like a butterfly trying to move in a swarm of mosquitoes. The mosquitoes are all flying around; they are small compared to the butterfly, but there are many of them, all flapping their wings. We know that the hotter it is the more they flap their wings and bang ever so slightly into the butterfly. Thus the butterfly is changing its direct every so often as it collides with the swarm, and its movement in many ways is akin to what we are discussing."

Then Albert replied:

"Ah, Herr Professor, then if we take that analogy and apply it to a mixture of say water and larger molecules, we see the same thing. The water is akin to the flies, their wings vibrating and like the water vibrating under higher and higher temperatures. The larger molecule, our butterfly moving about in the Brownian motion manner."

Then Gustave said:

"Yes Albert like motions we are all very familiar with!"

Albert replied:

"Ah I see Herr Professor, on one hand they move like lake particles in some form of osmosis and at the same time balance by diffusion. The pressure of the osmosis and then the removal of that by diffusing. Like crowds in a train station, they all come down the stair rushing to catch a train, they cling by osmosis and they spread apart by diffusion and in the end, the two forces must balance. Yes Herr Professor, I did something like that for my doctoral thesis, let me show you."

Then the two of them worked through the details and in the end, just about three hours, they arrived at the constant term, which described diffusion. A very simple term. I showed how the rate of the diffusion, or the spreading out of the butterflies or people was dependent on a few simple variables, temperature being one. Then Albert said:

"Ah, Herr Professor we have a wonderful relationship, but how do we now relate this to the particles, there are so many?"

Gustave replied:

"Albert, like Boltzmann and Planck, we look at an average collection of the particles, because like the leaves in our analysis of light, sometimes one is enough but other times we need to collect them together. You can do this simply, we just calculate the probability of the number of particles as they depend on distance and time, the density of people in the train station as they pour down the stairs, rumble around, and flow onto trains! You saw that in Zurich all the time, remember the train station. People going everywhere, Berlin, Paris, Geneva, Bern, Basel. Everywhere, but they flowed."

Albert replied:

"People are like atoms and atoms like people, just a difference in size. Herr Professor, I know how to do this, simply, we use the mathematics of simple diffusion again!"

Gustave said:

"Albert, brilliant, now write it down, use the constant we have and....and Albert!"

Albert replied:

"And Herr Professor here it is! We have solved it; we have a simple result, the function that Professor Gauss described, the answer for our diffusion."

Gustave smiled and patted Albert on the head with his paw and said:

"Ah fine work Albert fine work. Now just one more point. What is the average distance any one of these particles moves about and what is the standard deviation of the movement, like asking what were the grades in class and then asking what the curve is to grade them on. Look Albert, it is in front of you!"

Albert scanned the few equations he had scratched down, and then smile and replied:

"Herr Professor, quite interesting. They move nowhere on average, they just wander about but on average go nowhere. Like the people in the train station, they just wander about but stay in the train station; in fact, they stay pretty much, where they started. But, Herr Professor, the movement is quite interesting if you look at the standard deviation, it grows not with time but only with the square root of time! A rather interesting process, a process which has strange growth!"

Gustave then turned to Albert and said:

"Now Albert, go and write this up, this is a fine result, I believe it will set many minds working."

Then Antnee turned to me and said:

"Sir, you I recall took this work and carried it even further some seventy years later, did you not Sir?"

I replied:

"You know me very well now Antnee, yes I did. I never understood how it all worked Antnee, when young I looked at equations and not at the world, you and Professor Gustave look at the world and then the equations. You have insight, it makes one think first and act second. I now appreciate that much more. A fine tale Antnee, a fine tale."

I looked up and there were almost fifty smiling squirrels atop many branches looking down and listening. I was amazed as to their attention, for I had thought these furry friends all had attention deficit disorder since they were always jumping and flying about. Why I even saw three chipmunks and five rabbits listening as well. This was expanding!

## 7.6 *Relativity*

Then Antnee turned and started to regale me again. He said:

"Sir, the final work and the final tale. This is the one which we all know Albert for. The first two were just a preparation for this third. This one Sir is the theory of Relativity!"

I now was truly amazed. I asked Antnee:

"Now Antnee, you are now telling me that Gustave invented the theory of relativity as well? Let's see, first the photoelectric effect which gets a Nobel Prize, then Brownian motion which led to my early work, and finally Relativity. Frankly, I tried to study that when I was young, no good references, and I remember a lecture or two at MIT, but engineers did not really get into relativity. So you are now going to tell me how Gustave did this too?"

Antnee replied:

"No Sir, Gustave just helped focus, but he did assist on some key points. You see sir, the photoelectric effect led to photons and photons go at the speed of light and they have energy but they have no mass at slow speeds. This got Gustave and Albert thinking. For you see Sir, Albert had been examining this problem for many years until Gustave came along. Now the two of them were ready."

Antnee continued:

"Well Sir, one day, in the park, I believe it was the middle of 1905, possibly earlier Sir, Albert and Gustave were discussing motion, movement Sir, in two different frames of reference. Let me explain Sir how Gustave introduced this. He said:"

"Albert, I have been thinking of the problem you mentioned on the movement on a train versus the movement on the sidewalk. I can think of a similar example but from a squirrel perspective. You know we have the hawk as an enemy. Many times the hawk sees us and then attack from above. This often happens when we are jumping from one branch to another. Thus we have two frames of reference. In the tree to tree frame I have to consider how fast and what angle to make my jump so that I can reach the opposite branch and in far enough so I do not fall. Every squirrel knows that. Then there is the second problem, the second frame of reference, for when I am jumping there may all of a sudden appear a hawk, and I must calculate my relationship to the hawk, so as to avoid becoming his dinner. In the tree cases I am jumping to the branch and in the hawk case I have to avoid the hawk. I must calculate my jumps and my rolls to as to achieve both goals and do so in two frames of reference!"

He continued:



"But curiously Albert two different things happen. When the hawk dives it screeches, which for me it's good because I can hear his screech and determine from the pitch how fast he is approaching. Sound travels faster when he approaches. However when I look at him, his color remains the same, namely light travels the same whether I am watching him from below or if I am flying away from him amongst the trees at a great speed. My senses, squirrel sense are very accurate for color and sound so we can see what you humans cannot,."

Now Albert one final point, I was reading and we spoke about the Michelson and Morley experiment in the United States, The tried to see if there was an ether, which we showed was not the case with our paper on the photoelectric effect. But in so doing the two men showed also that as I suspected light travels at the same speed no matter what frame of reference we have, light speed is the thing that remains constant not distance or even time, they are relative, relative to the frame of reference!"

Albert replied:

"Herr Professor, as I also have been saying, but perhaps not as well, for I have studied the work of Professor Lorentz, and he developed a method to deal with this. He allows us to calculate what distance and time would be if we kept the speed of light the same for every frame of reference, it is a simple calculation. Here let me show you."

Antnee continued:

"Sir, and this was the crucial moment Sir, the moment which capped off all that Albert became truly known for Sir, the moment in which relativity was created, relativist of distance and time, and the constancy of the speed of light, a brilliant idea Sir, the two men working so closely."

Antnee continued:

"You see Sir, the two of them suddenly had all the pieces in front of them. Albert continued:"

"Herr Professor, now let me summarize. First, all the laws of physics must be the same for any frame of reference, you and the hawk and you and the tree."

Gustave replied:

"Albert, that is correct."

Albert went on:

"Herr Professor, light speed is the same for any frame of reference, your hawk or your tree. Indeed if your hawk was going near the speed of light, the speed of light in the hawk-squirrel frame of reference would be the same as that for the tree-squirrel frame of reference, correct Herr Professor."

Gustave replied:

"Yes Albert well phrased, and you have yet to swell the idea with a mass of equations. In addition you know that fact one must apply perforce of the laws of nature and fact two must apply because of Michelson and Morley's experiment. Keep going Albert, now where does this lead to?"

Albert stopped for a moment, looked out across the river Aare and turned to Gustave and replied:

"Herr Professor, it is simple, now distance is relative, time is relative, and mass is relative! Namely the faster you go the shorter the time, the closer the distance and the more the mass, and we just use the simple relationship of Professor Lorentz!"

Gustave replied:

"Exactly Albert, you are brilliant. Now what else can we determine, what about the energy, the kinetic energy?"

Again Albert got up and walked to the edge of the Aare, he walked back and forth, which Gustave found some fresh acorns and was munching. He had gotten a bit paunchy as a result of these lessons, the food was excellent along the river bank. Then Albert turned and said:

"The kinetic energy Herr Professor is different, because now it has a rest value, and at the rest value, let me write this Herr Professor, at the rest value we have...."

And Albert wrote on the pad of paper on the bench along the Aare the formula:

$$"E=mc^2"$$

Gustave looked up at Albert and there was a great smile on his furry face. He said:

"Albert, my fine young man, this is amazing, do you know what this means, it means that there is inherently tremendous energy in all mass, the rest energy. I truly wonder how many people will ever understand this, I truly do?"

Albert responded:

"Herr Professor, this also explains another fact. The element in the photoelectric effect, we called it a photon, it has zero rest mass and all of its energy is what it has going at the speed of light! Why that explains everything Herr Professor, that explains everything!"

Gustave replied:

"Indeed it does Albert, indeed it does. Now go off and write it up. You can use the equations now, and make sure you are clear on the one with E you wrote down, many people may remember that one, indeed many people."

Albert replied:

"And many squirrels Professor, many squirrels!"

### **7.7 Zurich, Prague, Return, Off to Germany, and Farewell**

Antnee was now winding down. There were some loose ends but he wanted to close the story. At this point the audience above my head and at my feet was wandering away, I had guessed that the best parts were over. But Antnee was always wont to finish in his own way.

Antnee then summarized what happened after. He said:

"Well, Sir, Gustave and Albert finished the papers and they were sent in and published. Imagine Sir, an unknown Swiss Patent clerk, sending in these three great ideas, and getting them published. His style, Sir, not quite that of Planck or those in Berlin, but the ideas, Sir, he presented ideas, with equations backing up the ideas, not the other way around Sir. A brilliant move. Each was short, simple, focused, and new Sir. Albert learned a great deal about style from Gustave, they made a great team Sir.."

"They continued for a few more years and then Albert got a Professorship in Zurich. He convinced Gustave to move with him, and he did. Albert was there for a short while when he got a position in Prague. Albert's wife was a Slav Sir, and he felt that this might help his marriage. Unfortunately, it did not Sir. You see Prague, and you know it well Sir, was and is a strange city. At that time, it was German and Slav, and separate Sir, a great distance between the two. You had told me so yourself even now Sir. Thus Albert returned again to Zurich."

"Finally Albert was offered a prestigious Professorship in Berlin. Gustave was now quite old. He could not go Sir, and they both knew that this was to be a final farewell. Their parting was somewhat sorrowful, like two friends, an old one in Gustave, and the young Albert, now getting the recognition he deserved. Gustave Sir was so proud. His best student, his lessons learned, and now he was to be off on his own in the biggest University for Physics, Berlin. Yet Sir, Gustave knew Germans, Sir, this was over a hundred years ago, even then Sir, they were always ready to turn, to be elite to themselves and brutal to outsiders. Gustave wished to let Albert get the best but he did want to warn him of the den he was entering."

"Thus Sir, the day came to bid farewell. Albert and Gustave went to the train station. Albert's wife stayed behind. So Gustave was the only one to bid him farewell, a good thing Sir."

Albert looked about the train station, smiled at Gustave, and said:

"The train station Herr Professor, our Brownian motion paper, we are a great pair the two of us Herr Professor."

Then Gustave said:

"Farewell Albert, you have been a good student, in fact my best. There will be great things for you in Berlin. But a word of warning. The Germans are not like the Swiss, you should know that, and some Germans are shall we say less than accepting. So beware and be careful. Remember you always have a home in Switzerland. For you are Swiss now. So farewell Albert."

Gustave jumped up on Albert's shoulder and gave him a hug, a very un-Germanic gesture.

Albert walked towards the trains and said:

"Good bye Gus!"

Gustave, his full head of grey fuzzy hair blowing in the wind, smiled and waved goodbye, Albert was now on his own.

## **8 MAJOR NATHANIEL SQUIRREL AND HIS EXCELLENCY**

---

Jockey Hollow is a wonderful park in Morris County and a beautiful place to take a long walk on a warm summer day. The trees are tall, over a hundred feet tall, so that air is cool and breezy beneath them.

### **8.1 Meeting a Friend**

My wife and I decided to take a break from the heavy task of working the nursery plants and walk quietly through the park, a break from my friends, and the constant talk with my little furry acquaintance. We were ten miles from the house and felt a sense of separation from the almost constant demands of the summer nursery work, a simple day off.

We walked down the paths towards the huts, which were built in the style of those used by Washington's troops. The path was cool and dry and the woods were all dark green with midsummer growth. Then after about a mile we came upon the open field with the hill filled with the huts, before going any further we sat down and rested in the breeze coming off the meadow.

I laid back and looked up into the tall ash trees when what to my surprise, I see Antnee and about twenty squirrels, sitting on branches as Antnee was lecturing them in his inimitable manner. I was now terrified that my quiet afternoon would suddenly become a lecture on some ancient squirrel and how he changed humanity.

I looked to my wife and said in a whisper"

"Sara, let's go quietly, now."

Apparently, she was snoozing and she replied in a rather loud voice:

"What did you want!"

At which point I could see Antnee's ears pop up and he looked down. He had that squirrel smile to which by now I had become accustomed. He shouted, as best as a squirrel could shout and said to the two of us:

"Ah Sir, so nice to see you and Lady Sara here as well. Why I was just starting to tell my nephews and nieces about old Major Nathaniel Squirrel and the adventures. You Sir, will clearly want to hear this, you're being here and all, let me get a bit closer. And how are you today Lady Sara, you look so fine in your hiking attire."

My wife responded as if she were communicating with one of her friends from the Equestrian Federation, very classy and so solicitous!

Before I knew what had happened, Antnee had jumped to a branch just above my head and in front of where I was resting. My wife had sat upright and it was clear that she was to be delighted to hear the tale firsthand, having only heard them from me after the many lectures by Antnee.

Yet she and Antnee were close friends for she was the provider of the sunflower seeds, which had plumped up my fat furry friend. In fact, in the morning if we were both home and eating breakfast it was Antnee who jumped on the deck and knocked on the door to remind her to fill the feeder. She would stop her breakfast, retrieve the seed, fill the feeder and then return to eat! It was as if she poured his cereal each day, a grown squirrel, somewhat extreme if one asks me, yet no one ever did.

So back to Antnee. In his moving down, the now thirty or more other squirrels, I gather his family, moved ever so close. It was clear that they were not as acclimated as he was, and in fact, they were all lean trim woods like squirrels. Antnee then began his tale:

"Sir, let me begin, Sir. Today is a fine tale, a tale Sir about one of my own ancestors. That is important to us squirrels as well as you humans, you see Sir, we hold our ancestors in great esteem. This ancestor was Major Nathaniel Squirrel, a member of the officer corps of the great George Washington. For you see Sir, it was here and many other places where Major Nathaniel assisted the great General Washington."

At this point, I knew I was in for it. This was most likely going to be one of his longest tales. My wife was at this point totally absorbed in this story telling. Hopefully she would follow, for some time he did digress.

## **8.2    *Nathaniel Meets His Excellency (January 1777)***

Antnee continued:

"It was the winter of 1777, January to be exact, and like now, it was a cold winter. General Washington had just won the battle of Trenton and the Battle of Princeton and had come to Morristown to spend the remainder of the winter. You see Sir, and Lady Sara, in those days the winter camp was required during both the cold months of January thru March and the wet months of April and even May. It was necessary to have freedom of movement on the roads."

"You see Sir, in 1777, Morristown was safe and secure on the west side of the Watchung Mountains, between here and New York, where the British had hidden themselves. So the General decided to stay in Morristown, which had about 70 homes and farms and the town itself was almost like today, a small green in the middle, the same old church, and stores, just a few. There was Arnold's Tavern, which down stairs had a goodly tavern with fine ale and whisky

and up above there were a few rooms for travelers. The General, you see Sir, was in need of a place to stay and plan for the coming year of fighting with the British. And Sir, Mr. Arnold, and in fact Sir, all those in the Morristown area, were true patriots, not British loyalists as they were in New York. They like the General Sir sought freedom!"

I looked at my wife and she was now captured by this storyteller. Yet she had not been through as many as I had. I on the other hand now suspected that this was going to be not only a history lesson and another example of how squirrels save humanity but would be a morality tale, for Antnee was moving in that direction as he regaled me over the past few months!

He continued:

"Well Sir, it was a cold morning in January 1777, and the General, oh Sir in those days he was called his Excellency, that is the way he was addressed, well his Excellency was out early walking the square about Morristown, as he was an athletic man, and he enjoyed the exercise. He was pondering what chances the troops would have against General Howe and his British forces. He sat beneath a large oak in the green, for they had places to sit, and the sun was shining brightly. He spoke softly but audibly to himself and said:

"What will Howe do? How will I know, whom can I trust?"

When out of nowhere came Nathaniel. He jumped on the ground in front of the General and the General said:

"Ah my hungry little friend. Here, I have some walnuts from last night, they will fill you up."

Upon which Nathaniel ate the nuts and then looked up to the General and said:

"Your Excellency, I will help you. I mean we will help you. You need scouts your Excellency, and we can deploy them. You need information and we can gather it for you. We can serve you your Excellency."

For a moment, Washington thought he had lost his mind, recounted Antnee, but he quickly looked at Nathaniel and asked:

"Without my sounding too insane my small friend but whom am I addressing? And how did you know me?"

Nathaniel replied:

"Your Excellency, you are well known, and I know you well since you sleep on the second floor of the Tavern and I use the rafters on the third floor these cold winter nights. I am Nathaniel Squirrel, and I propose that me and my many squirrel friends can assist you as scouts. We too want freedom. For your Excellency did you know that the British cook squirrels and eat them,

they are barbarians, they even have squirrel cookbooks? The British I am told cook and eat squirrels and Irish children, so says Jonathan Swift, one of their great writers! We are devoted to you your Excellency, and I can lead your scouts!"

Washington sat there a bit befuddled for he had never spoken to a squirrel before. Especially one who was so strong a patriot. Either he was losing his mind or perhaps this was a solution to his problems. He indeed needed to get better intelligence on the whereabouts of the British and he saw in this fine furry friend a way to do so that the British would never suspect.

Washington replied:

"Nathaniel, allow me to sleep on this request. It is most interesting but it comes with many issues, and as you very well know if my officers found that I was using a squirrel to spy on the British they may very well decide that I should retire early."

Nathaniel replied:

"Your Excellency, I truly understand. We do not, as a matter of course, enter into such conversations. But alas, your Excellency it is important for the future of all that you are successful in your mission. Perhaps I could communicate with a confidant?"

Washington thought for a moment and he considered who was both most loyal and most discreet. He replied:

"Nathaniel, speak with Billy Lee, my servant, for he is both loyal and discreet. I shall send him out later today and he shall meet you here. If he finds this workable, then we shall proceed further."

They parted for the day.

### **8.3    *Conversations with Billy Lee***

Later in the day, Nathaniel returned to the park, and sat on a branch above the seat that his Excellency had sat upon in the morning. After a while, a tall man arrived, dressed in a blue trousers and blue coat with a red scarf about his head and neck. He was tall, yet not as tall as his Excellency.

The man sat down where his Excellency had been in the morning. His head turned back and forth, looking somewhat nervous. Thus, Nathaniel jumped down to the ground and looked up. He said nothing. The man spoke:

"You the animal that his Excellency sent me to speak to, Oh God, please don't speak to me. The poor man is just working too hard, speaking with animals, next he will want me to speak to the Lord himself."



The man sat there just looking at Nathaniel and Nathaniel said nothing. The man then said:

"So speak animal, I am getting cold out here!"

Thus, Nathaniel felt he had to speak, he had sized the man up and felt he could communicate. He said:

"I suppose you are the one Billy Lee that his Excellency had told me about this morning. Shall we begin our talk?"

Billy Lee jumped almost three feet in the air. He screamed:

"You, you, talk! You, what are you, a devil, a beast!"

Nathaniel said nonplussed:

"I Sir am a squirrel; perhaps you have seen a few of us in your lifetime. I am volunteering to assist his Excellency in obtaining intelligence about the British and his Excellency asked that we speak, perhaps that is what you were told."

Billy Lee just sat there with his red scarf now all askew and his mouth wide open his big white teeth glistening in the late setting winter sun. Then Nathaniel said:

"Speak Billy Lee, for both you and I shall be cold soon."

Billy Lee came back from his sheer surprise and said:

"All right my friend, let us talk. What is it you propose?"

Nathaniel said:

"First Billy Lee, I suspect you are one of his Excellency's senior officers, so we can talk strategy, correct?"

Billy Lee laughed. He replied:

"I am his Excellency's servant, a slave, he owns me, I am no officer, no slave will ever be any officer. We are not free to be so."

Nathaniel was confused. He asked:

"Billy Lee what is a slave. How can one man own another? No squirrel owns another squirrel; we could not survive that way. We need to work with each other, there are many dangers in

the forest and we need each other to stay protected from the coyotes, wolves, bobcats, and even the hawks from time to time. What is a slave?"

Billy Lee replied:

"Slaves are people who were taken from our homes in Africa and sold to people here in your land. We have always had slaves, sometimes the Arabs take people and sell them in the east, sometimes the people from the north sell us here in this land. We are sold like shoes, like corn. We have no freedom, no family. His Excellency owns me and he has educated me, I read and I help him, yet I am still a slave. Slaves are Africans; cannot you not see our skin?"

Nathaniel replied:

"No Billy Lee, see we have black squirrels, brown squirrels, red squirrels, and grey squirrels, like me, but we are all squirrels! Such a strange thing. If we need something done we do it ourselves or we help each other. There are times when I find you humans strange. Can you buy your own slave?"

Billy Lee laughed, he laughed so loud that one could hear him across the green to Arnold's Tavern. He looked at Nathaniel and said:

"Young man, I can see now why his Excellency wants you to help, you are honest and direct, yet you ask interesting questions, the ones that look through man's ways. So tell me, what do you propose to do?"

The two of them spent two more hours discussing Nathaniel's plan. The conversation was quite intense and at the end they two clearly had become close friends. Then Billy Lee said:

"Nathaniel, I will tell his Excellency that you are a good person, I mean squirrel, no, I mean person. You can be of great help. Tell your friends we will use them. I will be your channel if you need to tell his Excellency something and he is not around. We can work with each other. I will find this most interesting. Farewell Nathaniel, we can meet again in a week, same place my friend."

They departed and the sun had set.

#### **8.4 Nathaniel Receives His Commission**

At this point I could see that my lovely wife was totally taken by this wandering storyteller. But for a brief moment I wondered if it was a story or based in fact. It was bad enough that I had become the Boswell to this squirrel dynasty. I thus interrupted and said:

"My dear friend Antnee, are you now telling us that this relative of yours was to become a part of the Revolutionary War and had a personal knowledge of George Washington? This may be a great story but what proof do you have?"

My dear wife looked a bit askance since one did not need to be so blunt, after all she was from Boston and I from New York, but alas I pushed on:

"Yes Antnee, how complex does this tale get?"

Antnee, I suspected, would be irritated, but this time he took a different tack. He jumped down from his branch and skipped over to my lovely wife and looked at her in the face, his eyes, placed more to the side of his head than the front, pulled together to look into my wife's eyes, his deep brown and large globes of persuasion and said:

"Lady Sara, do you have any doubts?"

And my wife said:

"No Antnee, clearly Nathaniel was a great patriot; perhaps my fine husband being from Staten Island has residual loyalist feelings."

Then the two of them, and about sixty of pairs of squirrel eyes looked at me, the loyalist! At that point I knew I had lost and replied:

"Oh well, I am overpowered, please continue."

They all smiled and Antnee cuddled himself aside my lovely wife for comfort and she fed him select peanuts she had brought, and now, with a stuffed mouth my fat furry friend continued:

"Well Sir, Nathaniel waited a week, and returned to the same location. The snow was falling and the green in Morristown was covered with a few inches of snow. Nathaniel, Sir, was freezing, for you must recall Sir that despite the fact that we have fine fur Sir, very fine fur indeed, that we must move about, but Nathaniel did not want to miss his Excellency. Then he heard feet approaching across the green, two pairs of feet. He jumped atop a branch and saw his Excellency and Billy Lee. His Excellency had a thick blue cape and a three-cornered hat, trimmed in shiny gold, and Billy Lee wore the same red scarf, and it wrapped his head and blew like the flag on some great sailing ship. They approached."

"Then, Sir, his Excellency spoke."

"Captain Nathaniel Squirrel, come forth."

And Sir Nathaniel did not know what was being said, he jumped down at the feet of his Excellency and sat upright on his legs and looked forward, staying at a full brace salute. Then his Excellency said to Nathaniel:

"Captain, for I hereby give you a commission as a captain in the Continental Army, you are hereby commissioned to seek out and perform such scouting as we may require and further you are hereby ordered to assemble other such scouts as you may need from time to time and order them in like manner to seek out and report such information as we may find useful and necessary for the prosecution of this war. Furthermore Captain Nathaniel, you are ordered to report to me and if I am not available then to Billy Lee, my servant, who I trust fully, and he shall in turn report to me."

Nathaniel never expected this much but he was ready. He replied:

"Your Excellency, I am honored and I assure you that we squirrels will be the best scouts you will ever have. We shall be truthful, diligent, timely and will cover all as may be needed. My many thanks your Excellency."

Then Washington bent down and patted Nathaniel on the head. He said:

"Captain Nathaniel, you must ready your forces for the spring engagements, we must know what Howe is doing and we must have eyes and ears in New York and on Staten Island. That shall be your first mission. I suspect that the British will in the spring move towards Morristown. Off with you now!"

Billy Lee also replied:

"See you soon Captain Nathaniel!"

And Nathaniel ran off to the trees, hopping from branch to branch, seeking out his friends and relatives, rapidly building his band of scouts, the Squirrel Scouts of General Washington, and their leader Captain Nathaniel Squirrel!

### **8.5 Battle of Short Hills (June 1777)**

Antnee now settled into the telling of the tale. At this point I could see he was approaching a portion which he was most proud of. It soon became clear what he was to tell. He continued in a most intense fashion and the collection of his friends and family, who must clearly have heard this many times before, settled down for the intensity of his presentation. He said:

"Now Sir, we come to the first battle. You see Sir, Nathaniel had formed his contingent, many of his associates were drawn together gathering information in the local area, around these parts. You see Sir, we normally just range over say a half mile radius, but since January 1777, Nathaniel had personally covered a radius of over thirty miles, from tree to tree, through the

cold of the winter, for Sir it was a long and cold winter, like that of last year Sir, not a day above twenty degrees, and Nathaniel went from Morristown to Perth Amboy, to Princeton, to the west, almost half way to the Delaware, and north Sir, to what is now Patterson, telling all who would listen to join him in his mission. They were to watch for the British, those evil eaters of squirrels, and that they would serve the good Patriots and his Excellency. It was easy in places and difficult in others, but day after day he persevered. By early June he had a network which was well organized, sending information back and forth to his Excellency."

"It was late June in 1777, and General Howe of the British forces was seeking out Washington. Nathaniel had scouts in Perth Amboy and had also gotten across to Staten Island. Sir, you were born on State Island and you may remember how rural it was Sir, a forested island, part of New Jersey at the time Sir, and the British occupied all of it. They used it as a protective resting area and they could easily move between the southern tip across to Perth Amboy on the mainland. Sir, General Howe set out to capture Washington. But as fate would have it Nathaniel was warned by his scouts. He rushed to Morristown and warned Washington. Then Washington had him go forth, with Billy Lee, to tell General Alexander, who was guarding the eastern part of the Watchung, down where Scotch Plains is now Sir, you know, down on the plain just east of the Watchungs. So off goes Nathaniel and Billy, off to tell Alexander. Well Sir, you could imagine Alexander, for he Sir did not know Nathaniel and he knew Billy only as the servant of Washington, and Sir, servants, or slaves, were never considered as important, but time was short Sir, and Washington sent his two most trusted men."

"As Nathaniel and Billy approached the Metuchen Meeting House in Scotch Plains, Nathaniel got news from his scouts from Perth Amboy, they had travelled all night and all day Sir, they were truly devoted scouts, and they told Nathaniel that the British General Howe was on the way to capture Washington, a dreadful thing Sir, a truly dreadful thing. Nathaniel was quite concerned Sir quite concerned indeed. The two reached Alexander and Billy approached the General. He said:"

"General Alexander, his Excellency has sent me to tell you of the approach of General Howe, and he asks that you take actions to stall him here so that his Excellency can move the troops."

Alexander was somewhat of a British person in attitude and he sometimes did not take instructions from a servant well. He then said to Billy:

"And who has provided that information, I am not aware of such movements, and I am here and his Excellency in Morristown. From where did this great piece of intelligence come from?"

Billy was a bit concerned because he did not want to say that it was from Nathaniel and his squirrel scouts, no indeed, for the General would not believe it. Nathaniel sat on the tree next to Billy and whispered in his ears:

"Tell the General that you got the information from a network of reliable slaves in New Jersey that you have befriended."

Billy told Alexander which seemed to put the General at some level of ease.

Antnee continued:

"Well Sir, Nathaniel left Billy with General Alexander and he set out to scout General Howe's advancement. The best they could do was to delay Howe so that Washington could harass the other British troops and avoid capture. Nathaniel ran back and forth, communicating with his fifty scouts who followed Howe and his forces, and Nathaniel would come back and tell Billy who would tell Alexander. Then Sir, on June 26th 1777 Howe and Alexander clashed!"

At this point Antnee was in a near frenzy, he told of the battle, the bullets whizzing by, some men falling, and how Nathaniel was hit almost three times as he was overseeing Howe's forces, and running back and forth, it was a real fight.

Antnee said:

"Nathaniel was above the fray when the British started firing on Alexander, Sir, a volley of bullets, lead balls, flying past the men. Nathaniel was on a branch one time when from the British ranks a lead ball went over his head and smashed into the tip of his tail slicing off almost an inch at the end, wham, and splat! Sir, poor Nathaniel had never seen it coming, and the blast knocked him down onto the head of Billy Lee, and that was when General Alexander saw him! Sir, the General was shocked, and Nathaniel spoke:"

"General, so sorry, but I see them, the British, I see General Howe, Sir, we must retreat back to the ash swamp, Sir, I will tell his Excellency!"

Antnee continued:

"Well Sir, poor General Alexander was so terrified, a talking squirrel, but he had the good sense to see that Billy Lee was composed so he too listened and replied:

"My little friend, time is not right for my surprise, action is essential. I agree, I will move my forces to that ash swamp, you tell his Excellency and I will hold off the British and allow him to regroup, God's speed my new friend, God's speed!"

Antnee continued:

"At that point Sir, Nathaniel sent out a message to his scouts and then headed west hopping from tree top to tree top, at a record speed, almost twenty miles an hour Sir, a tremendous speed, faster than any squirrel had ever gone before, his stubby tail now being of less help in the balancing which was so important. Then Sir, in about thirty minutes he reached Middlebrook where his Excellency was and scampered to his side. He said:"

"Your Excellency, your Excellency, General Alexander has moved to the ash swamp, west of Metuchen Meetinghouse, General Howe was in pursuit but he has stopped, you must move west!"

Antnee took a breath and then continued again:

"Washington looked at Nathaniel, saw his now crimped tail, some blood still dripping and said:"

"Well Captain, it appears as if you have been struck by the British, but you look fine, many thanks we will move quickly. Can you let me know what Howe is about, then we can reform and see what to do next."

Antnee, now almost exhausted from his tale, came to a closure:

"Sir, Nathaniel, exhausted from his trip to Middlebrook, took some water, spoke to his scouts who would accompany his Excellency west, and he proceeds back to the ash swamp. When he got there General Alexander was now safe, and he spoke to his scouts, Howe had retreated back to Perth Amboy. Sir, not a victory but a well-played move Sir, for Howe would not return, and Washington Sir, Washington was secure. Nathaniel Sir was exhausted, and Alexander protected him in his tent as he slept and recovered. A great day Sir, and the scouts performed gloriously, Sir, indeed, gloriously!"

## **8.6 Meeting Lt. Jean Pierre Menard**

July had arrived and it was hot and humid. Nathaniel has lost his winter coat and they were pleased with the success of the Battle of Short Hills. He had developed a spying mission on Staten Island and was providing reports back through Billy Lee to his Excellency.

He and Billy Lee were becoming the best of friends. They told jokes to each other and often were amused as to the manners of some of the older men who were more formally British in their way of dealing with others. Almost no one knew of the relationship between his Excellency, Billy Lee and Nathaniel, yet the information was flowing. Some of the junior officers under Washington had suspected that it was Billy Lee who had the intelligence network. Few if any suspected that Billy Lee ran the network through Nathaniel.

A new young General arrived one day when Nathaniel was in the back of the Tavern speaking with Billy Lee, it was a Frenchman, one Lafayette. He was young, well-dressed, well spoken, and apparently, his Excellency wanted him as part of his general staff. Nathaniel and Billy Lee just sat in the shadows and watched. They just sat and the two of them munched on a few walnuts, for Nathaniel enjoyed them every time he visited Billy Lee. Apparently Billy Lee would always find a new batch to be sure they had plenty.

Now it was one day in late July, Nathaniel and Billy Lee sat on the back porch of the Tavern and were talking about their varying life experiences when from nowhere came a well-groomed

squirrel, a red squirrel, who even had a hint of lilacs exuding from his fur. He walked out into the shade of the back porch, looked at the two of them, and asked:

"Monsieur, and are you Le Capitain Nathaniel?"

Nathaniel was shocked and he was silent but Billy Lee answered:

"And who my little friend are you and why do you inquire."

The little red squirrel replied:

"I Monsieur am Jean Pierre Menard Ecureuil Compte des Chenes, aide to Monsieur Le General Lafayette. I am, Monsieur, looking for Capital Nathaniel Squirrel, for I have been appointed a Lieutenant in his forces. Perhaps you may be of some assistance?"

Billy Lee burst out laughing, and slapped Nathaniel on the back, which sent Nathaniel rolling across the wooden planks of the Deck at the Inn. Nathaniel recovered and replied:

"Lieutenant, huh, well I am Captain Nathaniel and I did not know about any red furry Lieutenant. We have a real army here young man, what do you propose to do. Oh, and just to remind you, smelling that way will let even the British know you are on the way, not good for a spy, eh Billy Lee?"

Billy Lee looked a bit concerned after the back slap but he was happy Nathaniel was not hurt and he replied:

"Yes Captain Nathaniel, even I can smell the sweet scent of our new friend here."

Jean Pierre was a bit ruffled. Then Billy Lee said:

"Want some walnuts?"

Jean Pierre tried a few and declared:

"Somewhat primitive but one could say it is tasty."

Billy Lee and Nathaniel looked at each other and laughed. Billy Lee then said:

"Perhaps you may have liked the elephant brains my mother made back in Africa?"

Jean Pierre was somewhat startled and he replied:

"Ah you are from Africa? I am from France. There seems to be a growing number of countries here helping these colonists against their British oppressors. Yes?"



Nathaniel replied:

"Yes Jean Pierre and you are now with us. So you are to report to me as part of the scouts? What experience do you have?"

Jean Pierre replied:

"Ah Capitain Nathaniel, I was part of the Court of Louis XV, and spy from a long line of royal spies. Why my family spied for Louis XIV and Louis XIII. We were experts!"

Nathaniel then said:

"Well Jean Pierre, I need to have someone get into Philadelphia, we fear the British are going to settle there and we need a network. Can you do that?"

Jean Pierre smiled and replied:

"Capitain Nathaniel, I am deeply honored, you shall honor me and I shall make you proud with my efforts. Now Monsieur Billy Lee, some more of those wonderful treats, eh?"

The three of them spent the afternoon on the porch talking strategy and bringing Jean Pierre up to date. There was now a growing contingent of intelligence officers.

### **8.7 Scouting the British at Philadelphia (August-September 1777)**

Antnee slowly curled himself into a more comfortable position. It was clear that this was to be a long tale and his audience above and around us was clearly acclimated to the great storyteller, in fact it was apparent that his telling of tales was often the high point of their lives. I will have to admit they let me see events in history from a totally different perspective for I had never know how much of fox and hare existence that Washington led during the Revolution.

Antnee now returned with some vigor to his tale:

"Sir, this was a dark time Sir, for the Americans, their very government and existence were in Philadelphia, Sir, and there was fear that Howe and the British would march on Philadelphia. The questions was how, where, and when, Sir, not if. So Washington met with Nathaniel and asked him to scout for the British, to find where they were and how they would attack, a mighty task Sir, a truly mighty task!"

"This meant Sir, getting his scouts in New York and Staten Island, to watch the departure of the fleet, then having scouts watch, as best they could Sir, all down the New Jersey coast, why Sir there were hundreds of scouts and messengers, and Washington had Nathaniel stay in

Philadelphia and Nathaniel Sir, he sent Jean Pierre to be with Washington, so that the lines of communications were kept open, Sir, a truly monumental task."

"Then Sir, he for a moment thought from reports that Howe was to come up the Delaware, but his scouts at Cape May said Howe continues south. Then a message from scouts in Chincoteague, the Pine Tree Scouts of Virginia, a fine a brave band of squirrel scouts sir, truly brave, they sighted Howe's forces off the coast, and followed them down to the mouth of the Chesapeake, why Sir Howe was to sail north and approach from Delaware, a truly difficult task Sir, the heat, the warmth of the summer still oppressive."

"Nathaniel received intelligence from his scouts that the British had landed at the head of the Elk River, a tributary to the Chesapeake. This was about 40 miles southeast of Philadelphia. He immediately ran to Washington and they met in Philadelphia. He said to Washington:"

"Your Excellency, my scouts say that Howe and his Hessian troops have landed and are marching from the Elk River along the roads. Sir, I have scouts along the road and I fear they are coming directly to Philadelphia. You must move to stall them. Should I go south?"

Washington replied:

"No Nathaniel, I need you here in Philadelphia to coordinate the intelligence. I will take Billy Lee with me and Lieutenant Jean Pierre as well. We will go and try to stop their advance. If there is any news that they are splitting it is necessary that you notify me or Billy Lee immediately. I will work with Lieutenant Jean Pierre and he will be with General Lafayette. I see great things in that young man, I have known him for a brief period, but he has become like a son to me. Nathaniel, I suspect we may be able at best to stall them and then they will come here to Philadelphia. Be sure you establish a good network in the city, for when it is captured we need good intelligence, your job is critical."

Nathaniel replied:

"Yes your Excellency. I will speak with Lieutenant Jean Pierre. Good luck and stay safe your Excellency."

Antnee continued:

"Then Washington took some of his troops and marched to meet Howe and his army. It led to the battle at Brandywine, in Chadds Ford. Washington lost many men and had to retreat. Generals Howe and Cornwallis managed to defeat the troops of Washington. Nathaniel wondered why he did not get the intelligence he needed and he later found that the British were shooting the squirrels as fast as they could, over 200 were lost! Sir the British were butchers! Abominable men Sir, those British. Also it was in that Battle that Lieutenant Jean Pierre, a heroic squirrel Sir, with Washington, received a wound in his hindquarter, serious but he soon recovered, but he had a limp from then on. Billy Lee took care of him, at Washington's

direct command. They became a wonderful team, Billy Lee and the scouts! Billy Lee it was said cried all night after he heard of the British atrocities, he was a great man Billy Lee Sir, a great man!"

"Then Sir, the British went marching to Philadelphia. Nathaniel stayed fast, strengthening his network, and now warning them of the British murders. The British now knew of the scouts. On September 24th the British entered and took Philadelphia. Nathaniel just hid from them in attics of the many buildings still standing. Sir this was a dark day, Sir, a dark day indeed."

### **8.8 Battle of Germantown (October 4, 1777)**

Antnee now moved to what was in his opinion one of the turning points, albeit not a victory. It was the fall of 1777, and the results of the war to date had been mixed to say the least. Washington wanted to take one more opportunity to attack the British. They were encamped at Germantown, a small town about ten miles from Philadelphia. There was a large contingent and they were settled in anticipation of a winter encampment.

Antnee now continued his tale:

:Sir, by this time Sir, Nathaniel had established a close watch on the British in Philadelphia. The Loyalists, Sir, they were the ones who wanted to stay with England, well Sir they welcomed Howe and his men. In fact Sir, Nathaniel could report to Washington that the officers with Howe were not only welcomed but had begun to enjoy the comforts of Philadelphia, as they had in New York. Howe, Sir, a cautious man, very cautious Sir, stayed in Philadelphia and left his troops in Germantown, aside the Schuylkill River. You know that area Sir, somewhat flat farm land, like a great deal of Pennsylvania, not like us up here Sir, why we are more like New England."

"On the 2nd of October, Sir, Washington and Nathaniel spoke. It was late and they spent hours talking of the British. Nathaniel said:"

"Your Excellency, Howe is comfortable in Philadelphia. The Loyalists entertain him, they have dinners, even the officers of Howe put on plays and other entertainment for the Loyalists. It is quite comfortable. The settlement here at Germantown is filled with his troops, your Excellency. They are strong but they are encamped. The senior officers are in Philadelphia resting. Germantown your Excellency is filled with junior officers and the troops. But your Excellency, beware, they are heavily armed."

Antnee spoke:

"Then Sir, into the room came Lafayette and Jean Pierre. Poor Jean Pierre was still recovering from his wounds. But he was brave and ready to fight again. Then Washington spoke"

"We have an opportunity to deal the British forces a blow at their camp, a victory like Trenton and Princeton. We can attack them when their leaders are at rest, not expecting our attack. I suggest that we attack with four columns, one from the south with General Armstrong. To the north we use Smallwood and Forman, with Greene inside between the main center and the north attack. In the center, a direct attack, we use Wayne and Sullivan, and there Nathaniel I suggest you assist Wayne because he thinks highly of you. It is a strategy which allows us to surround and defeat. What do you think. And General Lafayette I want you to assist General Greene, a fine man, but he has General Stephen, and I am told, by you Nathaniel and others, that he has a problem with the drink. We leave at dawn on the 6th of October. Do you have any concerns?"

Nathaniel replied:

"Your Excellency, this is a very complex plan, and if it works, then we have a great victory. But your Excellency, it all depends on the five thrusts combining at the center, and any delay, any confusion, why your Excellency, it could expose each and every thrust with a direct attack from the British. Our enemy, here at this battle, will be delay possible confusion."

Lafayette also said:

"Your Excellency, I agree with Nathaniel, but I am also concerned that we have militia and Continentals. The militia are good woods fighters but have no training to match the British. The Continentals have likewise no training. This action demands coordination, considerable coordination."

Washington replied:

"I trust my generals, and we must deal with the British on their own ground, we must show that we can be more than just a group of rebels attacking from the bush. I accept your concerns, however, the men need to learn and succeed. This will be a success no matter what we do, it is necessary, one last action before winter. I will inform the Generals and we leave then just before dawn. God speed to all."

Antnee then spoke:

"Sir, Nathaniel and Lafayette were aware Sir of the weakness of the troops, their ways were still confused. Washington Sir had news that General Steuben, a great Prussian General would be joining them in winter camp but he could not wait. No matter what Sir, the men needed to try, to show that they could behave as an army, not just a collection of ragged troops, ill trained and ill equipped. You see Sir Nathaniel was also concerned that they had too little ammunition and their cannon was too light for a true battle, but the General Sir had ordered and all the men prepared."

"So then they attacked Sir, the forces of Washington, a direct attack Sir. But that morning there arose a ghostly fog, Sir, a fog of the like that you rarely see here Sir, but in the farm fields around Philadelphia Sir, quite a common occurrence, quite common indeed Sir. Nathaniel and Jean Pierre were with the troops Sir, and you see, we squirrels, well we see what you do not, you see Sir, we see in the infrared better than in what you see, thus we can see the others better in fog. And Nathaniel and Jean Pierre were critical to guiding some of the troops. Unfortunately General Green refused scouts and thus he wandered about, with no direction, in the fog. They tried to warn him but he just refused. He became useless."

"Washington, a brave man indeed, why Sir he took the brunt of the British fire, out in front Sir,, a true leader, a leader of men and squirrel, Sir. That is what a leader does, a leader is out there showing his men what they too must do. At that point Sir, Nathaniel rejoined Washington, and told him the bad news of Green, and the General, Sir, he decided to attack the stone house which contained British soldiers between his forces and the main British line, the Chew House Sir. He said to Nathaniel:"

"Nathaniel, the Chew House sits on my path to the British. I cannot allow it to remain occupied while I go past, it threatens my rear troops. Go with Jean Pierre and ascertain what its defenses are, I must subdue it."

"The two went off and jumped from tree to tree across the edge of the field leading to the house. Musket rounds were flying all about and they both were fearful of being hit again. Jean Pierre had just recovered from his wounds and poor Nathaniel had not had his tail re-grow from the last time he was struck. They approached the house, scrambled to the roof, saw an opening atop the kitchen fireplace and scampered in. Why Sir, the house was full of British soldiers, dozens and dozens, and with weapons and ammunition Sir. A veritable fortress. The walls were solid stone, and well stacked by its builder, and reinforced like a castle. They assessed the total threat and then scampered back to Washington. Nathaniel said to him;"

"Your Excellency, this is a true fortress, cannon cannot penetrate, and they have a great many weapons and men. Your Excellency perhaps one may just march around it and leave a small force to harass and contain it. I fear your Excellency that any attempt to overcome and neutralize it will be for naught."

Then Washington replied:

"No Nathaniel, we cannot take the risk of them being at our rear as we attack and at our front when we return, if we were to use the same path. We must attack."

Thus did Washington give the orders, and he personally took command as the forces of Generals Sullivan and Wayne repeatedly attacked the house. Attacked again and again, but to no avail, and then, Sir, an awful thing Sir, they ran out of ammunition!

The fog now covered the field Sir, it was a scene of fog and flashes from the muskets, a true sense of pandemonium Sir, true chaos. Washington withdrew his men after the British had killed a young Lieutenant under a flag of peace, true brutes Sir, those British."

"At his point Sir, neither side had truly won. Washington retreated, he made Lafayette a full Lieutenant General with command, for he Sir would not make the mistake again of choosing the older and less competent over the younger and better. Yet Sir, this was a victory, Sir, the men had fought and fought equally with the British. It was not just a hit and run skirmish, it was a true battle Sir with a great army. More importantly Sir, the French when they heard how well the Colonists did they signed a treaty and sent forces, a true turning point Sir, a true turning point."

### **8.9 Winter at Valley Forge (Dec 1777 to May 1778)**

Antnee now had a smile on his face, he was in his stride, a true storyteller, holding the attention of his listeners now with bits and pieces of true history. He slowed the pace a bit, as it appeared it was the mid game stretch, and recalled Valley Forge. He said:

"Winter in Philadelphia is not as bad as here Sir, it is warmer and there was flatter land and many sources of food. Washington decided to encamp in Valley Forge, a way from Philadelphia while Howe and his replacement Clinton stayed comfortably in Philadelphia. The men Sir in Valley Forge built small houses to stay in and they had food, some new clothing, and were able to stay put. In February von Steuben arrived and he immediately began to train the troops. Sir, it was amazing, these bands of untrained Colonials were responding to this Prussian General and taking it all in Sir, they really became an Army, rather than just a lot of uncoordinated farmers. Why Sir it was glorious. And Sir, Nathaniel and Jean Pierre, who now were close allies, were sent to Philadelphia to spy on the British. They ensconced themselves in General Howe's residence, a fine Philadelphia abode, and they ate the Generals food, delighting in his taste in nuts! Sir, it was a fine winter."

"But Sir it was not to last. Clinton who took over from Howe realized that he had not captured Philadelphia but that Philadelphia had capture him. For he had a stronghold in New York but here in Philadelphia he was like a prisoner. Thus Sir in June of 1778 he decided to march the troops back to New York. Sir, at that point Nathaniel and Jean Pierre saw a great opportunity, to engage the enemy on Continental turf, back again in New Jersey. They rushed back to Washington and Lafayette Sir and presented their proposal, follow Clinton and then attack on the flat lands of central New Jersey, before they could get off to New York. Well Sir Washington agreed, and they set off to meet destiny!"

### **8.10 Battle of Monmouth (June 1778)**

Antnee now was back to his histrionic story telling. He continued:

"Sir, as Nathaniel had reported, Clinton left Philadelphia and marched towards Sandy Hook, right across the center of New Jersey. Washington decided to attack them at Monmouth, a large area of rolling hills and farms, very much like Virginia, with hedgerows and the like. The day of the battle was Sunday June 28, 1778. It was very hot Sir, you know like what we may get here in July, Sir, but worse. The large farms were plowed and growing wheat and corn, acres and acres Sir. The temperature was well into the 90s Sir, some say it was 100! And the humidity Sir, beastly, and then the sun. We can hide in trees Sir, but there were no trees! No trees Sir, the sun was unbearable. It was early when they started. Yet even then the heat had begun!"

"The British Sire were encamped across several farm fields. The fields had been planted a month prior and now the crops were all destroyed, thousands of men marching."

"The British Sir also had cannon with them and had them deployed for safety on the surrounding hills, not true hills Sir, rather small inclines above the well plowed fields."

"Running from east to west were several tributaries of the Spotswood Brook, a north, middle and south branch of the Spotswood Brook Sir, small, muddy, with much vegetation, but truly little water. That would be a problem later in the day as the heat burned down on the men! The brooks provided some protection from advancement of the enemy but they also blocked any retreat or fast movement."

"Well Sir the day started with General Lee, he was one not for taking advice. As you father told you Sir, *"Prior planning prevents poor performance"*, well Sir General Lee was one for poor performance indeed. He did no prior planning Sir."

Antnee then went through the Battle, the attack by Lee, its failure, the berating by Washington of Lee, the presence of Washington on the battle field, the exhausting heat, how Nathaniel and Jean Pierre ran back and forth with messages and information on the enemy. Antnee described how the two little officers would arrive soaked to their fur, but turn about and repeat their tasks!

Antnee was now almost breathless. He looked at us and above at his remaining audience and then stated:

"Perhaps Sir you have heard of Molly Pitcher, the famous heroine at the Battle. Why Sir, let me tell you what really happened. You see Sir, her husband was a cannonier for a Pennsylvania militia and he was wounded Sir, a severe wound. And she stood forth and manned the cannon, from the very hill in the fight. Well Sir, she could load the cannon but she could not fire and aim it all at once. So who do you think did those two things, who Sir, well I tell you it was Nathaniel and Jean Pierre. Jean Pierre held the wick for firing in his teeth, and Nathaniel mounted the cannon and as any good squirrel could see how to aim it to hit the targets. Molly Pitcher cleaned the bore and loaded the charge and cannon ball or grapeshot. Then Sir, a dire moment. The British targeted them on that hill, the three of them Sir, with a great cannon. In a moment, Nathaniel and Jean Pierre were thrown into darkness, they were engulfed with a loud sound

and then slammed to the ground, totally dark, and for a brief moment Sir, they thought they had joined their ancestors. The next thing they heard was Molly screaming and cussing, a cussing of the like they never heard from any man. They soon realized that the darkness was from the cloth over their heads, and the cloth was, well Sir, to be a bit discrete, it was Molly's skirt! You see sir the cannon ball aimed at the three of them went through Molly's legs, tore off her skirt and jumbled Jean Pierre and Nathaniel in a rumpled mess! The two of them climbed out of the cloth, looked briefly at Molly who stood madder than all get out, cannon ball in hand and she screamed at them:"

"Get back to your post boys, we got to get those British bastards!"

"Well Sir, Jean Pierre and Nathaniel did not know whether to laugh or jump to. They went back to their posts, and Sir it was Nathaniel's best aim, and Molly loaded and Jean Pierre fired, and Sir, out went the British cannon in a large explosion that almost took their lives just moments earlier. They rejoiced and danced around, Molly still in her bloomers, and Nathaniel then suggested that perhaps Mrs. Molly would care to reassemble her skirt!"

Antnee took a rest. I thought for a moment that this may have been a bit of an exaggeration but as I later learned most of it is true.

Antnee slowed down to take a break. He looked out over the now fully attentive crowd and said:

"Well, as you all may know, Clinton retreated to Sandy Hook and from there by ship to New York. More men were lost that day to the heat than to the gun fire. A truly hot day."

### ***8.11 Interlude Year and The Battle of Paulus Hook (August 1779)***

Antnee proceeded now at a somewhat casual pace:

"Well Sir, there was now the winter of 1778-1779, and during that winter Washington let most of his troops spread out at many places, and the militia as usual went home. You see Sir Monmouth was a victory of sorts, it finally got the French into the War and Steuben was training the men and Washington was getting a real Army. But Sir, there was still a long War ahead, a long War indeed."

I then asked,

"What did the British do? What was going on? It seems that there were a few big battles and lots of skirmishes. This was not like World War II or even World War I. It looked like things were just happening when they did and otherwise people went back to normal."

Antnee replied:



"Indeed Sir, I guess that we see wars differently now, on your television each day, something must happen. But it was not that way. Just look at the battles Sir, just a few, just a few, and even then very few men died Sir. Remember more than half of the dead at Monmouth were from the heat Sir! And more men died of disease at Valley Forge than in all the battles, almost 2,000 men Sir."

"Well Sir, Antnee went back to Morristown and settled down to start a family, you see Sir it was that time and his mother, Abigail, that was her name, wanted to have grandchildren, you know mothers Sir, oh I apologize Lady Sara but we all have mothers. The old adage, I believe you say it Lady Sara, the hand that rocks the cradle, well Lady Sara it is the same for us squirrels, yes indeed. Thus Nathaniel went home and Jean Pierre stayed with Lafayette."

I then asked:

"Antnee what happened at winters end?"

He replied:

"Well Sir, the summer of 1779 was somewhat slow for General Clinton kept his British forces in New York. But there was a small battle, for Colonel Lee got permission from Washington to attack the British Fort at Paulus Hook, now where Hoboken is, you know Sir, across from Manhattan."

"Well Sir it was a small fort, and about only 250 British soldiers. Nathaniel was assigned to scout out the territory, and this was easy. He snuck in late on the 16th of August 1779 and determined their strength, looked at their fortifications and returned to Colonel Lee to provide the details. That Sir is also "Light horse Harry" Lee to many, Sir. Oh and Sir he was to be the father of Robert E Lee of the Civil War fame, and the Colonel Sir was a fine Virginia Gentleman, but Sir, like so many from the south he was a slave owner and Nathaniel and Billy Lee often spoke of this issue."

"But I linger Sir, the Paulus Hook battle happened on 16th August 1779, and Lee attacked the fort. It was a true skirmish Sir, and Nathaniel spent time watching from the trees nearby, he had over twenty scouts deployed. It was a mild victory Sir, but it was more of an embarrassment to Clinton. Well Sir no sooner had Clinton seen the loss at Paulus Hook then he heard that Spain had entered the War on the side of the Colonists, this was truly becoming a great War Sir, so many nations, and it was now the British against many others. It seems Sir that no one likes the British. I apologize Lady Sara but I do not mean to offend, you ancestors were on the British side, but alas, they did have a heavy hand."

"But Sir, Nathaniel did have a quiet summer after that to start his new family. He chose a large tree on the Ford Mansion, for he knew that Washington wanted to return and he would stay there. It was a large oak, quite a nice place for a home and he and the lady built a massive nest, high in the crook of the tree, packed with sturdy oak leaves, minute after minute, day after day,

back and forth, building a sturdy nest, working on true squirrel instinct. Then November 1779 came."

### **8.12 First Morristown Winter (December 1779 to May 1780)**

Antnee now turned and looked at his audience, with a bit of a sense of seriousness, and then looked at us and said:

"Now we come to the winter of 79-80. Sir, a winter unlike so many others. It was October, late October 1779 and Washington had decided upon Morristown to rest his troops. He had over 10,000 Sir a very large number. The Militias Sir went home, but the Army was to stay. Washington was to use the Ford's home in Morristown, you know the one Sir.

Well, he met with Washington, Lafayette and Billy Lee, he and Jean Pierre. You see Sir he was now home and he had started a family. When he and Jean Pierre entered the room Washington said:"

"Nathaniel, Jean Pierre, what has happened to you two?"

Antnee continued:

"You see Sir Washington spoke with great concern but the two of them felt normal, they wondered what had happened. So Nathaniel said:"

"Your Excellency, I believe we are fine, what your Excellency can be the matter?"

Washington replied:

"Your fur, the both of you, it is thick and standing up as if you took part in one of these crazy electricity experiments of the good Benjamin Franklin. Look here my friends, in this mirror."

Antnee then half laughing to himself said:

"Well Sir, the two of them walked over to the mirror and at first Nathaniel said nothing but as Jean Pierre looked at himself he screamed:"

"Sacre bleu, what has happened, I look like some wild animal, my fine fur, it has grown like some bear, some wolf, why I am a fine Frenchman, I have culture, what is this?"

At which point he scratched his now full red coat of squirrel hair. Nathaniel then replied nonchalantly:

"Ah, your Excellency, General Lafayette, Lieutenant Jean Pierre, it is just a heavy winter coat. We squirrels always get them before a severe winter. Why Jean Pierre you look so rustic now!"

Jean Pierre replied:

"Rustic, rustic, I look like an animal!"

Billy Lee said:

"Ah Jean Pierre, you are an animal."

At which point Lafayette said:

"Monsieur Billy, be kind, for he is French, yes a French animal, but Monsieur French above all, and one must look right to be French."

Poor Jean Pierre just sat there in a state of distress. He no longer groomed nor did he use lilac water, but this, this was just too much. Lafayette laughed but Washington looked stressed. He then said:

"Gentlemen, this is a concern. We have troops here for the winter and it will be cold, very cold. Thus we must be certain they have provisions and clothing. We dare not repeat Valley Forge. I want you two to set out and see that General Green gets the provisions. I want you also to report daily if at all possible as to the status of the troops, to me or Billy Lee. Oh and one last thing, I have some good news. Jean Pierre you have been promoted to Captain, and you Nathaniel are promoted to Major. My congratulations. And there is not more pay, just a few nuts when Mrs. Ford can get them. Now be off, we all have work to do."

The Antnee continued:

"An amusing interlude but this foresaw a brutal winter. I can remember my grandfather..."

I stopped Antnee and said:

"Ah Antnee, I think we may lose the sun, so keep family tales until we get back home. Now you bring us to where we are. What happened next?"

Antnee continued:

"Well Sir they built many huts for the men, but in November it was already very cold, and the snow came early. I recall my grandfather telling me of the winter of 1993-1994 I believe, heavy snows up to 4 feet deep, your hose was weighted down that year Sir, remember, well this winter was as bad, and some say worse, snow and snow. For us squirrels that can become a problem too, we have warm nests but we run out of food, the nuts we buried were below the ground, too deep to dig. And for the troops, they started well Sir but alas they ate too much too fast and there were other problems as well."

"You see Sir the senior officers stayed at Ford's Mansion, the junior officers and men at Jockey Hollow. There were good kitchens at Fords, and none at Jockey Hollow."

"Alas Sir there were other problems as well. The men were not paid Sir, Congress, well Sir it has not changed, still and squabbling group of people who do not understand the true needs, and packing their own pockets with across, I mean gold Sir, truly an unruly group. Poor Washington had to write memos, reports, and all the while the men were starving and freezing."

"For what can one do in the huts? Nathaniel had his home atop the oak behind the mansion and he could go to the kitchen and Billy Lee would always have some corn and nuts to take to his family. He would gather corn on the cob, dry from the summer last, and carry it up the oak to the family. He had not been driven by the cold and his new family was secure."

"Nathaniel kept going back and forth to Jockey Hollow, a few miles atop the ash trees, the tallest and easiest to get to, for the pines had been covered in snow, otherwise he would have used them in his path. Each time he returned he saw the men getting weaker, madder, and he was concerned. He would return and speak with Billy Lee and then report to Washington. Then in May 1780 there was the first Mutiny!

Antnee then told the sad tale of the first mutiny. He said:

"Sir the winter was long and cold, the snow was at times to the tops of the huts. There was no food, the men had not been paid for almost six months, the clothes was worn and they were freezing. Spring did not come until mid May, the rains just added to the stress. Then on the morning of May 25th 1780 the Connecticut brigade assembled, and then Sir a dreadful thing, they attacked their officers, killed a colonel, and they threatened to just leave. The ground was wet, muddy, they had little if any food, the wood was still scare for fires, and they were wet through and through. Nathaniel was watching from above and he scurried back to Ford's Mansion and interrupted Washington. He said:"

"Your Excellency, a mutiny, your Excellency, a mutiny. The Connecticut Brigade has mutinied, you must send reinforcements!"

Washington turned and sent the Pennsylvania Brigade, and managed to get some food, scraping up what was left in Ford's Mansion, having Billy Lee lead the effort. Then Washington said to Nathaniel:

"Major, back to the troops, make certain they know we are responding, send a message to the Pennsylvania Brigade, they will reassemble the men, use no guns, we do not want any further injury. Quick my friend, this is dreadful!"

And Nathaniel went down through Morristown, tree by tree, flying over them almost like a bird, until he approach Jockey Hollow, and he spoke with the Colonel in the Pennsylvania Brigade.

They formed and placed the Connecticut Brigade in place. Three hours later the food arrived, small as it was, but it was all they could assemble.

Antnee then spoke softly:

"Sir, they sentenced the men to death, a reasonable sentence, but Washington gave them mercy. A truly brave thing to do Sir, a truly brave thing. But it is said it was Nathaniel who spoke with the General and told him that the men had just gone beyond their limits. Nathaniel is said to have told Washington:

"Your Excellency, the men were just turned into wild beasts. I see this all the time, and this winter I have seen rabbits eating the carcass of other rabbits your Excellency, loving rabbits turned into beasts. Into scavengers of what little there is to survive. Without Billy Lee your Excellency and his corn my family would not have survived. I plead your Excellency to give the men mercy. They were trapped, dying of hunger, and frankly Sir, they became wild animals. Mercy is what they need and your Excellency is the only one who can give it."

And indeed that is what Washington did.

### ***8.13 Battle of Springfield (June 1780)***

Antnee continued:

"Well Sir, another battle, and this one Sir near our very home Sir, our very home. You know the gap Sir, by what is now Short Hills Mall, Lady Sara knows it well, do you not Madame?"

My lovely wife then replied, a dangerous thing to do with Antnee for it may very well lead to a divergence:

"Oh yes Antnee, a lovely mall, I have gotten many things, there, that small bird bath, the one you like."

Antnee replied:

"And a fine bird bath it is Lady Sara..."

"Stop" I shouted, you two, back to the tale, we will be in complete darkness before it ends and I have never heard of this battle. Please, Antnee, keep it focused, we have not even gotten to Yorktown..."

Antnee replied:

"Very well indeed Sir, very well indeed, Lady Sara we can talk off line, I will focus, focus, focus, as I am told."

I guess I had hurt his feelings but we had but one day to tell this tale. I kept thinking how long it would take to write and who would in the end believe any of this, but alas it was for posterity not the scribe to judge. Thus Antnee regained his composure and said:

"Well Nathaniel had his scouts on Staten Island, Lieutenant Robert and Lieutenant William, distant cousins who live on Staten Island, not as some people would say "in Staten Island", only worms live in Staten Island, squirrels live on Staten Island...."

I cried:

"Antnee, the tale, the tale..."

He replied:

"Oh yes, well you see William was sent to Nathaniel who met him in Elizabeth Town across the Kill Van Kull, and reported that General Knyphausen was to move his troops from Staten Island to Morristown in an attempt to take Washington, and he was to take Galloping Hill Road, what you call Morris Avenue and what is now almost Route 24, the highway. Well Nathaniel told William to remain observant and he scurried back to Washington. He reported:

"Your Excellency, my scouts report that General Knyphausen and 2500 troops are in march from Staten Island via the Gap, Hobart Gap and on to Morristown. I believe that they can be stopped short at Springfield if we can assemble a force now."

Washington replied:

"I will get General Greene and his men, we can meet them in a day, the 23rd of June precisely. Tell Billy Lee to prepare and I will inform General Greene. He is a great General and he should be able to blunt those Hessians."

By mid day they had assembled over 2000 troops and started the march east. From Morristown, through Madison, Chatham and over the slight hill at Hobart Gap and then to the east of Springfield. Nathaniel was in the lead with General Greene and he had a total of fifty scouts all fanning out to survey the progress of the enemy. They saw them coming down Galloping Hill Road and Vauxhall Road, 2500 strong, and the battle would soon be engaged. Green positioned his men and Nathaniel was feeding in reports of the enemy moves. Then the battle was engaged, In a mere forty minutes there were five attacks by the Hessians, but Green held. The musket balls were flying fast and Nathaniel was almost struck six times as he came back and forth to General Greene. The Hessians did not know how the Colonists had such good knowledge of their positions, each time they moved the cannon from the Colonists were re-aimed precisely, for it was the fifty scouts who did the sighting, they were the forward fire control specialists, often being so close that they themselves were covered with the dust from the cloud of the cannon ball explosion.

"The battle lasted for a few hours but the Hessians made no progress and more than 50 were killed, a much larger number than what Green lost, which was about a dozen. It was the targeting of Nathaniel's men which won the day. The Hessians retreated and went back to Staten Island. William later reported to Nathaniel that Knyphausen was said to believe that the Colonials had some new secret weapon in their targeting of cannons. They did, Nathaniel's men!"

#### **8.14 *Second Morristown Winter (December 1780-May 1781)***

Antnee was now clearly getting a bit tired or perhaps it was his histrionic way of telling us all that winter was approaching in his tale. I could tell now after many of these episodes how he would present himself as the master story teller setting the scene for the next presentation. For Antnee knew how to combine everything from the words to the movements and even to the scene itself to enhance his tale, a true master story teller that he was. He thus moved on to the winter of 1780 and 1781. He started:

"Sir, during the remainder of 1780 there were many skirmishes and the war was taken to the south. The French Sir now were here as was the support of the Spanish, it was indeed Sir a great War. Clinton had taken rest in New York and on Staten Island Sir, your old home, and the people on Staten Island Sir, I am sorry to say, welcomed the British, not very good patriots Sir, not very good indeed. True Tories as they say Sir."

"The men went back to Jockey Hollow for the winter of 1780-1781 Sir, and not as severe winter as the one before. But there were to be bad omens Sir, bad omens. The Congress was still late in paying and, even more so, men who had signed up for three years were now well beyond their commitments. They desired to return home, yet they were kept."

"Thus Sir on January 1, 1781 the Pennsylvania troops mutinied, a second mutiny Sir. They demanded to be released and they wanted their pay, a very nasty scene Sire quite nasty."

"Nathaniel was at Fords Mansion eating in the kitchen with Billy Lee talking about the future, a good conversation Sir, for they had become fast and true friends. Washington was away at West Point and would return shortly."

"The colonel from the New Jersey troops rushed in with a message for General Wayne who wanted to warn Washington immediately. Nathaniel agreed to take the message to Washington and he prepared to leave immediately, for it was a long trip of almost 100 miles! Off he went to West Point, tree to tree, a trip the like of which he had accomplished many times before."

"Why Sir it took Nathaniel three days to get there and when he did he told Washington immediately, who showed both fear and sorrow in his eyes, for they had accomplished so much but the Congress was always causing this problem, for he had so little control, yet so much responsibility. Congress it would Sir always be such a roadblock."

"Washington returned with Nathaniel and the mutiny was resolved by a meeting in Princeton, but alas another mutiny on January 20, 1781 Sir, by the New Jersey regiments Sir. This time Washington, such a great man, and with a heavy heart had to deal it a swift blow. Why Sir they court martialled the three leaders, and Sir, a sad yes very sad day, Washington had the two leaders executed, a very sad day. From then on there was peace until spring. But then things began to improve greatly, yes sir they improved greatly!"

### **8.15    *Onto the Battle of Yorktown ( July - October 1781)***

Antnee was now geared up for his great moment of a great battle, I could see his true actor character emerging, now that we had dealt with the unsavory winter of the mutinies. He now began:

"Sir, it was now the summer of 1781, a truly momentous time Sir. The French had placed some 5000 troops with Washington north of New York and they were led by General Rochambeau. Nathaniel was there and on August 14th 1781 Rochambeau received a letter from French Admiral de Grasse that the French fleet was to sail and meet the British in Yorktown Virginia Sir, not New York. Washing wanted to recapture New York, but it was so fortified. Nathaniel knew that as did Rochambeau. Jean Pierre had told Nathaniel that Rochambeau would follow Washington but that New York was too heavily fortified. Thus on the afternoon of 14th August Washington went outside to think what was the next move, march to Yorktown in hopes of meeting deGrasse or stay and hope he can find a way to defeat the British in the heavily fortified New York. He was joined by Nathaniel, just the two of them. Washington said:

"Nathaniel, New York is so important, a symbol, that it must be defeated. Yet the French fleet is powerful and we can with Rochambeau defeat Cornwallis, we have such a mighty set of forces, yet it all depends on the French fleet getting there when we do. What do you suggest?"

Nathaniel replied:

"Your Excellency, you have a conundrum, a choice between two less than ideal options. Your risk in New York is great, it is fortified, surrounded by water, many troops with ground they know well. Your choice in Yorktown your Excellency is to meet Cornwallis who is on shaky ground, and even if the French fleet does not arrive you have Rochambeau. Why your Excellency General Lafayette is already softening up Cornwallis with his quite successful attacks. You must your Excellency join him and bring this to a conclusion. Clinton here in New York your Excellency, why he is going nowhere, he is now a prisoner in New York just as if you jailed him, you do not want to enter that prison, you want to defeat Cornwallis, this is your chance your Excellency."

Washington replied:

"Nathaniel, well put, action is better than anticipation. We go to Yorktown!"



Antnee continued:

"Well Sir it was a mighty sight, 3000 Continentals and 4000 French, marching as a combined army, three abreast marching south, through Philadelphia, then Baltimore and then down through Virginia and out the peninsula towards Yorktown at the mouth of the York River, a long march Sir, but a march to destiny, yes indeed Sir, a true march to destiny!"

"On September 28th Sir, Washington marched all of his army, the French and the Continentals into formation at Yorktown, a true feat Sir, 400 miles march in 40 days and the men were ready Sir, indeed they were ready. The stars as they say Sir came together, for deGrasse had his fleet there and they blasted the British in a mighty battle. That Sir left Cornwallis stranded on the spit of land at Yorktown, his escape route blocked by the French fleet Sir, a mighty victory in the offing Sir a mighty victory."

"The battle lasted many days Sir, back and forth and the French and the Continentals were mighty together, sending cannon balls to the British hour after hour."

"Well Sir on the 17th of October, after almost three weeks of this bombardment, well Sir it was the end for Cornwallis. Nathaniel and Jean Pierre had been scouting the British positions and they reported their growing weakness. That was when the British sued for peace Sir, it was victory. It was on the 19th of October 1781 Sir, a truly great day, that Cornwallis surrendered under terms of peace, a glorious moment."

"Yet Sir even at that moment, as Nathaniel and Jean Pierre scampered about the British to make certain there were no assassins afoot they heard the British officers say how poor the Colonials were dressed and how rough they appeared."

"Nathaniel then said to Jean Pierre:"

"My friend, I hear the British tell with scorn how they see us as a rag tag team of Yankee Doodles, poor uniforms, men in shoes, tattered squirrel scouts, but we have what they do not, we have Liberty my friend, we have freedom from an oppressive government and leader, we have his Excellency, a man who leads in the front, who knows and understands what it means to be a leader and in battle. That my friend is what makes us different from the English with their King!"

Jean Pierre replied:

"And that my friend is why I intend to remain here in your country!"

The two embraced and sat and watched as the troops of Cornwallis marched away in defeat.

### **8.16 Fraunces Tavern (December 4, 1783)**

As much as I enjoyed the detail, for Antnee went on and on in detail, I was getting a bit tired. The ground was hard, the battles I knew were over, my lovely wife, ever the patient and proper one, sat there with a look of continued amazement as the tale was unfurled. I had been through many of these before, and I knew we were approaching some form of climax. Antnee in his best histrionic mode, sat back with his tail wrapped around his head and started:

"Well Sir, the British left Manhattan on November 25, 1783. That was it, they were gone, sailed away and left whatever was there as it was. Just gone Sir, just gone! Washington marched in and took command, what there was to command. The Royalists had left, gone to Canada or back to England, and there was no military efforts to take at all. The War was over."

"Washington wanted to return to Mount Vernon before Christmas so he arranged a farewell for his officers at Fraunces Tavern, you have been there Sir, it still stands. It was December 4th 1783, Sir at noon. A luncheon farewell. Many officers were there. The fire was burning, the place was warm, despite the cold New York harbor air. You know Sir that the air at the tip of Manhattan Island can be the coldest in the world, the water, the wind, why Sir it just blows through the fur and..."

I interjected watching the sun begin to drop:

"Antnee, back to the story, I know about your fur and how cold it gets...we had this talk many times before, focus Antnee, the story..."

My lovely wife then interjected telling me that I should allow him a bit to be personal about, that I was being too blunt. Yet she had not sat through his many tales as I have, oftentimes with diversions into areas which I have deliberately failed to record for posterity. But alas he refocused:

"Well Sir the gathering was mixed, some old friends, many recent friends, many were not there because of their death, in battle and just age, and some because well Sir because they just had not performed. It was a mix. Nathaniel was invited as was Jean Pierre and several other of their officers. The nuts were great Sir, truly great, just like what Lady Sara sets out for us..."

I again interjected:

"Antnee, focus, focus, focus..."

He continued:

"Oh sorry Sir, I do digress sometimes. But yes, and Washington stood and spoke:"

"With a heart full of love and gratitude I now take leave of you. I most devoutly wish that your latter days may be as prosperous and happy as your former ones have been glorious and

honorable....I cannot come to each of you but shall feel obliged if each of you will come and take me by the hand."

Antnee said:

"Why Sir, they not only came and took his hand many men came and embraced him, and there were a great many tears. Nathaniel and Jean Pierre waited on the rafter across from the fireplace, its flames roaring as the warmth of friendship spread throughout the room. Why Sir the man was loved, truly loved. Unlike many of today's politicians, this man was one of a kind Sir, a true gentleman, a true father of the country, and someone who should never be forgotten, we certainly do not. Well Sir at the end Nathaniel and Jean Pierre came down and Washington gave them both a warm hug. He remarked:"

"You too do not appear as furry as a few winters ago, perhaps we shall have a mild winter, say you so gentlemen?"

Antnee continued:

"They smiled and went with Washington as he crossed the Hudson on his way home. Washing did not look back at Manhattan but west to New Jersey. He sat there talking with Antnee as the boat was rowed across. He said:"

"Nathaniel, the future of this country will be there in the west, it will grow, and I truly pray we have given it a sound foundation, a foundation of freedom, equality, and strength."

Nathaniel replied:

"Your Excellency, on that note there is a point I would like to make. My friend, and indeed he is my friend, Billy Lee, he is a slave, which means you own him, and well Sir, not to be too blunt, I ask that somehow you free him too, for as we mere squirrels aided you and are free, then another man such as Billy Lee who helped me and helped this country, he too should be free. Is that not possible Sir, is that not even demanded of this new country."

Washington looked as if the truth was before him from the mouth of this little major, and he replied:

"Nathaniel, I will do so, I promise you. I will set him free."

Nathaniel they went on:

"Sir this new country will be meeting many challenges, unlike no other country. Freedom is one, and all slaves must ultimately be free. They are not property, for I have been reading John Locke and..."

Washington laughed out loud and said:

"My little major, a scholar indeed, John Locke no less, I suspect you and General Hamilton were also talking..."

Nathaniel replied:

"Well yes Sir but that is another issue. Yet we agree, the ownership of property, property based upon our labor, is a cornerstone of our freedoms."

As the boat moved slowly across the Hudson in the darkening light they spoke on and on. For Washington was not a true intellect like Hamilton or Locke, he was a man of duty and honor and this was to be an important talk. Indeed it was.

When they reached the ferry terminus at the point just below Paulus Hook, they spoke one last time. Washington said:

"Nathaniel, what are you off to now?"

He responded:

"Your Excellency, I now have a family and have my duty as well. I depart west back to Morristown and to them. And you Sir, back to Mount Vernon by Christmas?"

Washington replied:

"Indeed my good friend, back home, after so many years. Farewell my good friend, perhaps we shall meet again, and my felicitations to your family, and yes I shall remember our talks, and Billy Lee."

The two embraced and Washington took to his horse and headed south towards Philadelphia and Nathaniel scurried along the tree tops on his way to Morristown crossing the gap in the Watchungs he used so many times before. Both were home for Christmas.

### **8.17 President George (April 30, 1789)**

Antnee started again:

"Washington had returned to his farm in Mount Vernon aside the Potomac River. There he farmed again and he prepared his will as he had promised Nathaniel and insured that Billy Lee would be freed. He knew that Nathaniel would never forget the promise and he would hone that."

Antnee now settled back on his spot and it appeared as if he was nearing the end of his tale. He began:

"News had come to Morristown that his Excellency had been elected the first President of the new United States. He would be inaugurated on April 30th on the steps of the building on Wall Street in New York. Nathaniel was now quite old but he decided that he and his fellow squirrels from the War would all go to honor the new President. Thus, Nathaniel set out from Morristown; it would be a long trip, for he was quite aged. They went to Bottle Hill, then Chatham, over the pass of the Watchungs at Short Hills, remembering the Battle those many years ago now. Then across the plain to Paulus Hook, again memories. There was a ferry, which took them, and hundreds of others who were going across the Hudson to the west bank, a somewhat sloppy bank of the Hudson before it opened into the harbor. They walked across the terrain to Trinity Church, and then down Wall Street. The crowd was immense."

"Nathaniel was helped up a large sycamore tree just across from where the oath would be given. Then the moment came. Hundreds of people, crowds, and mass numbers! The sycamore was filled with well over a hundred of Nathaniel's scouts, for they came not just for Washington but to honor Nathaniel as well. This was more than just one ceremony. Nathaniel was given a wonderful perch atop the sycamore."

"Then Nathaniel noticed Billy Lee, who also saw him and walked over to the tree. Billy Lee said to Nathaniel:"

"Good old friend, I am so pleased to see you here. You look well. How is the family."

"They spoke for a while as the crowd and dignitaries gathered. For no one relay paid attention to an old grey squirrel and a slave. Nathaniel said:"

"Billy Lee, we are so fortunate that his Excellency is the first President, he is a fine and glorious man, a leader of men, and a true friend. I am told he will free you Billy, and I will speak with him one more time to be certain, you hear Billy, he is a good man and he will honor his word."

Billy Lee replied:

"Indeed Nathaniel he has told me such and it is written. I want to thank you."

Nathaniel than replied:

"What will you do Billy, and your family, what will they do?"

Billy replied:

"Oh I will farm in Virginia, I can do that as a freeman, and my oldest son, he is to be freed to, why Nathaniel he wants to go back to Africa, and go east there to a land called Kenya, some place just south of Egypt, a young man of adventure I guess."

Nathaniel continued:

"Well Billy, we are getting old, and I older than you, and such travels are all behind us now. You be well my friend, and my best to your family and especially to that son of yours, I remember the days of my travels, glorious days, yes glorious days. Perhaps Billy your son, or your son's son may become President someday like his Excellency?"

Billy Lee laughed and replied:

"Nathaniel, you joke well my friend, imaging an African as President, next my friend we will have squirrels!"

The two of the laughed heartily awaiting the new President to be. They then embraced and stood aside awaiting Washington.

"Then his Excellency came out, the oath was administered and he spoke kindly to the crowd."

"Fellow-Citizens of the Senate and of the House of Representatives: Among the vicissitudes incident to life no event could have filled me with greater anxieties than that of which the notification was transmitted by your order, and received on the 14th day of the present month. On the one hand, I was summoned by my Country, whose voice I can never hear but with veneration and love, from a retreat which I had chosen with the fondest predilection, and, in my flattering hopes, with an immutable decision, as the asylum of my declining years--a retreat which was rendered every day more necessary as well as more dear to me by the addition of habit to inclination, and of frequent interruptions in my health to the gradual waste committed on it by time. On the other hand, the magnitude and difficulty of the trust to which the voice of my country called me, being sufficient to awaken in the wisest and most experienced of her citizens a distrustful scrutiny into his qualifications, could not but overwhelm with despondence one who (inheriting inferior endowments from nature and unpracticed in the duties of civil administration) ought to be peculiarly conscious of his own personal lacks. In this conflict of emotions, all I dare ever is that it has been my faithful study to collect my duty from a just appreciation of every circumstance by which it might be affected. All I dare hope is that if, in executing this task, I have been too much swayed by a grateful remembrance of former instances, or by an affectionate sensibility to this transcendent proof of the confidence of my fellow-citizens, and have thence too little consulted my incapacity as well as disinclination for the weighty and untried cares before me, my error will be palliated by the motives which mislead me, and its consequences be judged by my country with some share of the partiality in which they originated....."

Having thus imparted to you my sentiments as they have been awakened by the occasion which brings us together, I shall take my present leave; but not without resorting once more to the benign Parent of the Human Race in humble supplication that, since He has been pleased to favor the American people with opportunities for deliberating in perfect tranquility, and dispositions for deciding with unparalleled unanimity on a form of government for the security of their union and the advancement of their happiness, so His divine blessing may be equally conspicuous in the enlarged views, the temperate consultations, and the wise measures on which the success of this Government must depend."

Antnee continued:

"Then Nathaniel smiled and Washington looked across the street and the crowd, for he was quite tall and stood atop the steps, and he saw Nathaniel, they smiled and waved at each other. Two veterans of a long war. Two comrades in arms, one the President the other a now old squirrel. The new President waved and motioned for Nathaniel to join him for a moment. Nathaniel came down from the sycamore and Washington walked over amidst the swelling crowd. They met in the shade of this great tree. Washington said:"

"Nathaniel, so good to see you again my friend. How are you?" For Washington knew that he was ill, Jean Pierre had told him as had Billy Lee. They spoke for a while and Nathaniel said"

"Your Excellency, did you remember the promise about Billy Lee and his family?"

Washington replied:

"My friend, I certainly did and I will free all in my keep. You are a very thoughtful and dear friend. I leave now for my many ceremonies but we can talk for a few moments. How is everyone and my friend how are you?"

Nathaniel replied:

"All are well your Excellency, and alas as you may know I am aging, it comes to all, and I am not surprised, and I am happy for the many years I had to serve with you your Excellency, wonderful years, warm with friendship."

Washington replied:

"Thank you Nathaniel. But I fear that I face new battles as President. I have John Adams as Vice President, the old irascible man from Massachusetts and Jefferson as Secretary of State. I fear Jefferson is quite duplicitous and not all that competent. I spoke with him about the slave issue, and he may say certain things in his writings but in his actions is speaks all too differently. He has acquired the ways of court from France, say one thing and do another. He cannot seem to overcome slavery, I told him I was freeing all my slaves, yet he will not even look at the issue. He wants to be President, more than anyone, but he had such a lackluster experience as

Governor in Virginia and at War he was comfortable in Paris while you and I sloshed our way from battle to battle. I pray that my successors are men of wisdom but I fear that they will be men like Adams and Jefferson, obstinate opinion and blind personal ambition."

Washington turned and Nathaniel could see the burden he had in his face. Nathaniel knew that his Excellency was about to venture into a battle as weighty as was the war. He was sorry that he would not be by his side, his life was just too short. The Washington turned and embraced Nathaniel one more time and said:

"Farewell my old friend. Go safely; I will see that your way back to Morristown is made easy."

Washington then rubbed Nathaniel's head and they smiled again at one another. Then Washington had ordered a carriage to take them back, all the way to Morristown, for now, as President he had the ability to use some of his power, and his first application of that power was the transport of Nathaniel back to Morristown. In grand style!

That night, in the cool of the April spring, in his nest atop an ash tree in the front of the Ford mansion, Nathaniel passed on. He was quite old for a squirrel but he had lived well, making friends, and seeing his friend now President Washington, and of course his best friend, Billy Lee, who would soon be free. He had done well for a squirrel, and it is always good to pass when you have done your best, and Nathaniel had done his.

### **8.18 Epilog**

Now Antnee sat back and was truly exhausted. For this was one of his most intense and also most personal of stories. He continued but in a somewhat somber tone:

"George Washington died in 1799 and as he had promised Nathaniel he had freed his slaves including Billy Lee. Billy Lee had heard that Nathaniel had passed and that he was buried in the lawn in front of the old Ford house in Morristown. Billy Lee was driven to visit the site where his old comrade was to pay tribute."

"Thus Billy Lee took a horse that the President had given him and set north, through Maryland, Delaware and New Jersey. He reached Morristown; I believe it was October of 1801. In his pocket he had carried several acorns from the tree on Mount Vernon that the President himself had planted years ago, well before Billy Lee himself was born back in Africa. Billy Lee walked up to the lawn of the great Ford house, tears in his eyes, wondering where his old friend was buried. He thought he would never find him. But, as fate would have it along came George and Billy Squirrel, the two grand children of Nathaniel. They immediately recognized Billy Lee and ran up to him."

I could see that my lovely wife had a tear in her eye. The sixty squirrels above and around me were also moved, some were actually crying about this tale of great friendship. This was one of



Antnee's best tales indeed. Antnee took a pause, I suspect he had told this many times before, and then he continued:

"Billy Lee looked down at the two and asked:"

"Would you perhaps know where Major Nathaniel Squirrel is buried? I am here to do him honor. We served together under his Excellency?"

The two squirrels stood before him, bolt upright on their legs and saluted. They said:

"We are George and Billy Squirrel, grandsons of Nathaniel, your old friend. We have heard many tales of you two sir and are so glad to make your acquaintance."

Billy smiled and they spoke for more than an hour. After that time, there were almost a hundred squirrels in the large patch of lawn. Billy Lee said:

"I have brought these acorns from Mount Vernon, from a tree planted by his Excellency, and want to plant them at the site of old Nathaniel. Perhaps you may all help?"

They all agreed and like a sea of grey fur, the now almost two hundred squirrels and Billy Lee walked to where Nathaniel had been resting and they each buried an acorn. For you see, said Antnee, the great oaks at Ford's Mansion are the result of the trees of George Washington and the deep friendship of Billy Lee and Captain Nathaniel!

He finished by saying:

"And every year since we squirrels take the acorns from those trees and the trees from those trees and spread them far and wide to remind all squirrels of the great man George Washington and the meaning of true friendship, as exemplified as that between Major Nathaniel and Billy