



# TALES FROM THE SQUIRREL'S NEST

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## *PREFACE*

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One cannot understand nature in its fullest until one tills the soil by hand. Then on a day by day basis one sees the plants grow, one observes each flower as it grows from a small bud until it blossoms. The thrill of a new hybrid, the excitement when the bloom exceeds in beauty all which have come before. And then there is the wise critic, the voice from behind, questioning and commenting, those grey furry tailed creatures, the squirrels.

These stories reflect perhaps not the words actually spoken but indeed the ideas most likely transferred between me and my everyday companions who seem to be as thrilled as I am when something new comes out. And of one in particular, Antnee, the fat spicy tongued squirrel who adds dimensions to life that are always a delight.

I started writing these tales in response to my furry friends and their antics. Yet after a while their very character took over my writing. In many ways these are truly Antnee's words, his thoughts, his vision, and I became nothing more than his scribe.

So to the readers of the tales herein, I wish that you can also get a glimpse of nature as only Antnee would have and also a glimpse of humanity and the nexus between man and all creatures. Enjoy Antnee as I have, his sharp wit, his manners, sometimes with that edge, but always with loves and insight. For it is from Antnee and his tales that we also learn of man and his mission.

Terrence P. McGarty  
Florham Park, NJ  
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## *DEDICATION*

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To my wife Sara,  
who feeds Antnee and his progeny every day and  
who has enjoyed Antnee as much as I have.

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## 1 THE CHIPMUNK AND THE MOUSE

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It was a warm summer day and I was sitting on the grass near the edge of my flower garden when an 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 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, you 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, hardworking 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 an 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 your 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, “Sauvez 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 descendants 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 descendants 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 by...*

*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 descendants 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 the 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 they 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**

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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 seen 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 just 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 Descendants 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 descendants 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 Heraklion, 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**

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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 you 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 squirrels 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 flittering 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 taken 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*

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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 Sciurus, 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 Legions 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

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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 scuffling 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 one's 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 you are still young and spry, 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, reeves, 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 out, 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 loses. 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 consigned 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 felt 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 the ground. He did not move!

Harry was distraught. He waited as the men left and then climbed down the now still 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 you 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*

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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 many 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, with 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 descendent 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 descendants 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**

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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 dumbkoffs 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 later. 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**

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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 Captain 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 Captain 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:

"Captain 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 turnabout 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 martialed 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.

## 9 *SAMUEL A. SQUIRREL AND PROFESSOR WIENER*

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January, is a cold and imposing month. I set the seeds in my basement and watch the green shoots burst forth in two weeks' time and then seed by seed the little plants begin to fill the flats. A small jungle of daylily seedling grasses appear and in the darkness of winter, atop the heating pad and under the sunlamps, summer returns.

### **9.1    *A Friendly Hello***

I am intently working on the watering and arranging of the flats, and being certain that the resident house mice do not eat the yet to be sprouted seeds. The little peanut butter traps are set and so far I have gotten rid of seven or perhaps eight. Transported to other homes more suited for my taste rather than theirs.

Suddenly I hear that "harrumph" of my old story teller, Antnee, as he settles atop one of the flats, crushing the seedling shots as he places his rotund haunches on the moist and warm seed beds. I look and shout:

"Off my seeds, you...."

He jumps across to the lab bench and looks a bit distraught and says:

"Some way to greet a friend Sir, some way indeed!"

I replied a bit upset:

"Antnee, you should know better, they are my seedlings. You have your big fat self all over them."

He looks up with that quizzical snout and says:

"Sir, my apologies Sir, but perhaps you fail, no disrespect Sir, but you fail to note that we do this all the time outside, is there something different here?"

I replied:

"Yes Antnee, here is my growing beds, and here is where I try to develop new plants, and here is mine!"

He sat there and he did what he did when he was perturbed, he rubbed his nose with his two paws, scratching each side of his dark black wet nose, and then points his right arm at me he said:

"Sir, no disrespect Sir, but perhaps you are over reacting just a bit. I have done no damage and all I am seeking is some small refuge from the cold and perhaps some conversation Sir"

At this point I knew I was in for a long talk. Perhaps, I thought, I should just get into the comfortable chair and prepare for another tale. So I put down my watering pots, moved over to my comfortable arm chair, lifted my feet atop a lab bench and looked over at Antnee and said:

"Well my friend, I suppose you are here to tell another tale, a Squirrel Tale, no pun intended!"

I suddenly found myself laughing at the double entendre but apparently Antnee was not in a fun mood. He replied:

"Sir, no tale today, just seeking the warmth and of course Sir the good company of yourself. And how are the flowers going Sir. I see you have tried to excite your students at MIT, but alas, flowers are not for the young, they seem to follow the crowd, the pack, research things that everyone else is doing. That Sir is the advantage of age, defining your own boundaries, Sir, stretching them beyond those of youth...."

I sat up and said:

"Antnee, just where are you going with this philosophical rant, and why my MIT students, they are all out now with fresh new doctorates and seeking their careers. What is your point?"

Antnee crawled atop the wooden lab bench and laid prone upon the table with his wet black nose pointed directly at my face. He smiled and said:

"Ah Sir, there again your MIT students. Did I ever tell you about one of my distant relatives, Samuel A Squirrel, he studied and researched at MIT, like you Sir, and he was a close colleague of Professor Norbert Wiener Sir, and I believe you owe a great deal Sir to him in your first book, you do indeed Sir."

At this point I knew I was in for a tale, for somehow he wandered around to some nexus and then diving like a hawk upon a prey he got me hooked, for indeed I wondered how he was to connect with Norbert Wiener, a squirrel connection at that. Thus I said:

"Well Antnee, you have my attention, your tale sounds of interest and my work is done and so I have time. You may commence my good friend."

## **9.2 Cambridge 1938**

Antnee began in his usual fashion. He said:

"Sir, Samuel A. Squirrel, well A is for Adams, Sir, his mother was a true New England Patriot, Sir, a true patriot, and well Sam, that is what he was called Sir, Sam, he was a bright young squirrel

and he wandered down from the family home in Harvard Square to the Charles River front and he decided that the MIT Dome was a great place for a new home. You see Sir at the top of the Dome was the library and Sam just loved to read and he often went to hear the lectures, by just sitting on the window edges, Sir, a comfortable place, Sir, for an intelligent squirrel."

Then one day, Sam sat upon the ledge of the second floor of Building 2, where the Mathematics Department was, I believe it was the Fall of 1938 Sir, I do indeed believe that so, and he was watching an absent minded Professor talking to himself while scratching upon the black board. He watched as the Professor wrote his equations and he looked and followed. You see, Sir, Sam lived in the ceiling of the Library in the Great Dome Sir, you know where that is Sir, indeed you do for you had been there many times yourself Sir. Well Sam came every day for several weeks as watched as the Professor drew out his argument, then went to his desk and wrote down the result, all the time holding and smoking his cigar, an awful smell Sir, a truly awful smell."

"Then one day Sir, he saw the Professor make an error in his analysis on the board, imagine that, an MIT Professor making an error, and Sam thought, should I correct him? You see Sir the window was slightly ajar, a warm October day and he could yell in and make the change. Thus Sam did just that, he said:

"Excuse me Professor, but when you tried to prove the convergence on the Fourier integral, you failed to include the full compact set."

The Professor turned around towards the door to see who said that. There was no one there. The voice it seems had come from outside. He walked to the window and all he saw was the grey squirrel, who seemed fearless and would not move. The Professor said almost to himself but out loud:

"All that is here is the squirrel, there is no one, I must be hearing things again."

Sam shouted:

"No Professor it is me, down here, the squirrel, Sam Squirrel, Samuel Adams Squirrel to be precise."

The Professor walked towards the window and looked amazed at the squirrel who now looked up towards his face, with his squirrel smile and his whiskers bouncing as he moved. The Professor said:

"Sam Squirrel you say, and I failed to include the closed compact base, you say, well Sam, you appear to be correct, I am Professor Wiener, please come in and let's talk some more."

Antnee now showed his typical squirrel pride as he interjected:

"Now Sir, there began a true and lasting friendship, a bonding of two of God's creatures of mutual respect and interest. For you see Sir from this day forward the two were lifelong friends."

### **9.3 *Ontogeny Recapitulates Phylogeny: The Ergodic Theorem (1938)***

A few weeks after their first introduction, Sam was working on a particular problem on the ledge outside of Wiener's office, he enjoyed sitting there with the window slightly ajar, for the smoke from Wiener's cigar at times was a bit too much.

At which point in this tale Antnee turned to me and said:

"Sir, you see Sir, we squirrels do not partake of the, let me say Sir, the temptations of the flesh, Sir, of smoking and drinking."

I laughed and replied:

"Antnee, you know those corn cobs you have been fattening up on in the back yard."

He replied:

"Yes Sir, I do indeed, and thanks goes to Lady Sara, Sir, but what has that to do with such vices?"

I replied:

"Well my good friend, I have been noticing that the corn has been fermenting and when it does it generate corn alcohol and that my fine friend is what you are soaking in by the cob! Ha, yes, Ha!"

Antnee looked a bit askance and replied:

"Perhaps Sir you have gotten me in a conundrum, so before I reply, Sir, let me continue with the tale"

On this day Sam had been looking at a paper by Professor Birkhoff at Harvard on the Ergodic theorem. It was an old paper and Wiener was trying to improve upon it.

Sam then looked up and said to Wiener:

"Professor, have you ever heard of Haeckel's theory, Ontogeny Recapitulates Phylogeny?"

Wiener looked over at Sam and replied:

"No, frankly I never have. What is it?"

Sam replied:

"In some ways it is the Ergodic theorem of yours. The time average equals the ensemble or group average. You see Haeckel, in 1866, developed this theory that if you look at how some species develops over its lifetime, especially as an embryo, you see traits like gills and the like, which, when fully developed, disappear."

Sam came across the desk and sat in front of Wiener. He continued:

"The other day Professor, I went out to a small pond on the edge of the Charles River, a small inlet, still water, warm, and atop the water I watched these skating spiders. You know them Professor?"

Wiener replied:

"Yes I do Sam, go on, I think I will enjoy this discussion. They are the family Gerridae which contains insects commonly known as water striders, water bugs, magic bugs, pond skaters, skaters, skimmers, water scooters, water skaters, water skeeters, water skimmers, water skippers or Jesus bugs. There are around 500 known species, commonly placed in around 60 genera. You see Sam, I was once a zoology student and I remember some of those useless facts."

Wiener laughed, as he was wont to do when he found that some fact from his deep dark past held some marginal relevance to the conversation. So Sam continued:

"Well Professor, I did two things. First I watched one spider for a long time, and they are like your Brownian motion, skating back and forth, at one instance ahead, at another sideways, like random particles, bouncing all over, almost. I decided to break the little pond into a few sectors, using twigs as markers in a two dimensional map. Then, I determined how much of the time the skating spider spent in each block. This is the time average, the average that you and Birkhoff talk of. Namely, you take just one spider, watch it over a long time, and then try to get some average, in this case what percent of the time it is in a box on the pond."

"Then Professor, I did a second experiment. I looked at the pond with hundreds of spiders, not watching any one, just at an instant, looked at the pond, and then I counted the number of spiders in the same mental boxes, those squares I drew in my mind from the twigs in the edges of the pond. You see Professor, this is the ensemble, the group, average."

Wiener smiled, picked up his cigar, lit it and sat back and said to Sam:

"Well Sam, let me jump ahead, you found that the "time average" of the one spider equaled the "ensemble average" of the hundreds. Namely the percent of time in any box per spider was equal to the percent of spiders in a box at any time instant!"

Sam jumped up and ran towards Wiener almost jumping up to his goatee, and said:

"Precisely, the Ergodic Theorem, the paths are the same, whether you average in time or across the group! Why Professor, we can extend what Birkhoff did, we can make it stronger, and better yet, we now have reality at our hands. I am certain that will be really important, even to engineers! Why this ties together a great deal of your work, Brownian motion, the Ergodic Theorem, and a great deal more Professor."

Wiener went back to the blackboard and for hours he and Sam explored the new ramifications of this added structure. The time went by, and as Wiener wrote on the board Sam copied on paper, hour after hour, till way past dark. Then the elements were all complete.

Wiener smiled and said:

"Well Sam we have it, we will write this up. How are the notes?"

Sam ran cross the yellow pads of notes and said:

"All done Professor, I guess it's time for dinner?"

Wiener replied:

"Yes, let's walk home."

They put the lights out, walked down the second floor of Building 2 towards the great court, Wiener waved farewell as Sam hopped up to his home atop the library. Sam thought that it was a good day's work!

I then asked Antnee:

"My good friend, how do you ever remember the stories word for word like this? And frankly why did Sam not appear as a co-author? There is a slight disconnect with reality Antnee."

Antnee looked as if I called him some disdainful epithet. He replied:

"First, Sir, with all due respect, we record these tales for posterity, and we do so with great attention to detail and fact. If you were to hear this tale say in California, or Moscow, it would be essentially the same. Now as to co-authorship, is that not evident, Sir, would you want to have to put me on the author page of some of your work? Sir, I believe not. Besides we do not have that desire that you humans have."

I replied:

"But Antnee, you know that I have been writing these tales down, so that others can enjoy them. Why have I not given you full credit?"



He smiled and walked up to my face and replied:

"Sir, we do hope you stay out of one of those places that you humans put one another when they are perceived of, how Sir do you call it, going nuts."

I smiled and replied:

"Oh I get it Antnee, you think just because I tell these tales that people will think that I think that I talk with squirrels...."

I figured it was best to shut up at this point.

#### **9.4 Meeting Feynman (1938)**

Antnee returned to a comfortable position and he continued his tale.

Late in the Fall, Sam had been out collecting nuts from the few oaks around the campus, just in case, as any diligent and prudent squirrel would do. As he came back towards Professor Wiener's office he saw what appeared to be a student and he was sitting in the late fall sun with some small sets of drums pounding away and making frankly a racket.

Sam felt it was not his place to complain because after all this was a student and students pay for their tuition and thus they have certain rights. So he just climbed up the face of Building 2 and into the Professors office.

As soon as Wiener saw him, he shouted:

"Sam, what is that awful noise, and can you stop it, I cannot even think!"

Sam replied:

"It was a student Professor; I shall go down and tell him to move on. Calm down now, have a cigar!"

Wiener picked up a cigar and Sam ran back down the wall over to the student. He ran in front and started to shout and to no avail. He was desperate so he jumped atop the drums and the hands came slamming down time after time and he jumped at the anticipation of each beat. The student saw him atop his drums and just kept the beat going changing its tempo just to watch Sam dance. He was now laughing his head off, and Sam was near exhaustion!

Sam jumped off and shouted:

"Stop, you are making a racket!"

The student was laughing with great gusto, with peals of laughter, and tears coming down his cheek, until he heard Sam. Then he abruptly sat up and said:

"Whuh!"

Sam replied:

""Whuh" indeed young man, do you not know that this is an academic institution and that there are very important faculty members doing, or should I say trying to do critical research, and you are down here acting like some buffoon."

The student turned and said matter of factly:

"And my little friend, just who are you, some MIT Professuh?"

Sam stood tall and said with pride:

"I am Samuel A. Squirrel, assistant to Professor Norbert Wiener, world renowned mathematician. And young man, just who are you."

He laughed again with tears from his eyes and said:

"I am Richard Feynman, physics student, senior that is, from New York."

At this point Sam was now hearing this sharp accent. The York came across as Yawk, and the New sounded like Nieuw. He wondered if this student was some foreigner. Or perhaps he was some import from some strange part of New York. But he continued his interrogation.

"And why do you suppose you can sit out here and make this racket, Professor Wiener is trying to think!"

Feynman laughed and said:

"Well Sam, if I can call you that, Sam you see I think by doing this."

Sam stopped for a moment and thought it would be best to engage him rather than confront him. He replied:

"And what, Mr. Feynman, are you so deep in thought about?"

"Fields, Sam, fields, and do they exist. I suppose that even as a mathematician's assistant that you may be aware somewhat of fields."

Sam replied:

"Mr. Feynman, indeed I do. They are those artifacts that you physicists use to simplify your dealing with forces, which are themselves real. Fields are just that, artifacts, in a semiotic manner if you please."

Feynman sat upright now taking this little squirrel a bit more seriously. He said:

"Sam, you are exactly right, an artifact, a semiotic and hermeneutic artifact. I never thought it that way."

Sam said:

"Look, Mr. Feynman, I understand physics, it is almost the exact opposite of mathematics. The mathematician works with rules and step-by-step puts the puzzles together, looking at edges and colors. You physicists, the good ones, and not mathematicians, you develop a "feel" for the answer, and understanding of nature, which controls you, not the laws of mathematics, and then you have a gestalt of an answer around which you hang your mathematics. Correct?"

Feynman was now warming up to this grey fur ball. Frankly, he seemed to have answers that Feynman had been searching for again and again. The sat and spoke for a few hours, and Feynman shared with Sam many of his ideas and Sam told Feynman much about the difference between the physicist and the mathematician.

### **9.5 Computers: Analog versus Digital (1940)**

Sam had spent more time with his old friend Feynman who had then gone off to Princeton. In the process, he was becoming more interested in the field of partial differential equations and he and Wiener would discuss them at length.

In one conversation, he said:

"Professor, you know what you are doing with your Brownian motion, and the simple ways you look at things in time. Well, time has a direction, forward or even backward. However, it goes in but one way, forward. The spider on the pond has two ways, up and down and back and forth. It has another dimension to contend with, and it may go forward or backward. So Professor, I have two questions."

Wiener looked across at Sam and now after two years of working together, despite the travels that always seemed to interfere, he knew that something of merit would spew forth from Sam, Wiener said:

"OK Sam, so tell me where you are going."

Sam replied:

"Two things Professor. First we can solve the many equations in time by simulating them on one of Professor Bush's analog computing machines, but it is not as easy to do that for many dimensions, not even the water spider problem. To solve that we should have a better computing device, and I suspect one that deals with numbers, like the digital numbers we see in some of the old techniques. Second, the Brownian motion we see in the water spider, well just look at the Charles River, look at the surface, how would we apply your analysis to that, it has no beginning or end, it does not flow in one direction all the time, the waves I mean, they are just random, random in space and time Professor, how do we handle that."

Wiener smiled and said:

"Whoa, slow down. The second question is truly a set of many very complex set of questions. The first question is however very interesting. Let me tell you how I would approach this problem."

As usual, Wiener went to the black board, Sam suspected that it was his poor vision, or perhaps that is the way he thinks, and then he began to lecture, from notes not even written, for that was his way. He said:

"Sam, you present a very interesting set of issues. You know that Vannevar Bush has been building his analog computers, devices that match the characteristics of some larger system in a smaller one. They are "like" the real thing, like what is in an equation, and then they get the results. But that means for every equation we need to solve we have to do two things."

"First find and then set up a model "like" the equations, and then change the parts each time we want to look at another possible set of assumptions. That is long and cumbersome. It is a collection of wheels, linkages, and the like. Frankly, Sam it is not elegant, between you and me Sam, Bush is a tinkerer and not a thinker. Don't get me wrong Sam, he is a brilliant tinkerer, and at times a good thinker, but he looks at the here and now, not at what can truly be."

Sam replied:

"So true Professor, but alas as we all know, the fate of great thinkers is often to be so right, but often right so early that others do not understand and others forget that they had it right in the first place. Success is a combination of being right and being on time!"

Wiener replied:

"So thoughtful Sam, so very thoughtful. Now back to the computer model."

Wiener went to the board and began as usual, but this time with boxes and names and not equations. He started:

"Sam, first to do these equations in many dimensions we need to have a way of doing two things. First, we need to convert the values at each point into some value, which is itself a digitized version. Like what Shannon was talking about with his relays and Boolean logic. That means we use 0s and 1s. That is simple, yes, that is very simple."

"Then we need to have a way of dealing with say things in two dimensions, as we see on the oscilloscopes over in the electrical engineering folks. They scan the screen with fine lines and the screen glows if there is a signal there and its glows long enough so that when the line goes somewhere else it still glows. Perfect. The two key elements. Can you think of anything else Sam?"

Sam replied:

"No Professor, but now we have input and output, how does it work?"

Wiener said with glee:

"Ah, good that you ask, now watch this. We need first an input method or a way to imprint the data, such as tape, running linearly and second we need a way to get the data out. Third, we need at least a summing device, a very fast one, which can do all the calculations. We can always get subtraction and multiplication and division if we have a device which adds."

Sam looks and copied some of this down in a separate picture. Wiener continued:

"Fourth, we need some formula to process the input to the output, and fifth we need a way to get rid of the data we have used up, a sweeper. Then we connect these up and we have our device."

Sam said:

"Professor, I know from some friends in the electrical engineering area that they have vacuum tube circuits which do just this for the 0 and 1 inputs, I think that will work. But how many do we need?"

Wiener did a quick calculation, and he turned a bit pale when he said:

"Sam, we may need a thousand or more if we want to get this to work. They may cost a great deal."

Sam looked at him and replied:

"Professor, that is a small part of the problem, the other is twofold. First the tubes do not last very long, you will need a team just to replace them all the time, and second, the heat will make the place an oven!"

Wiener said:

"Well Sam, we have the idea, let's write it up and see if anyone agrees."

They spent a few days on a write-up, yet they did not all the engineering details and Wiener sent it to Vannevar Bush in Washington since Bush had funding money just for this.

As Wiener had suspected, Bush turned it down in a letter in December 1940. Wiener said to Sam when he got the letter:

"Sam, I guess we expected this. We are mathematicians, not engineers; he likes and feels comfortable with engineers. Our time will come Sam, and this was a good idea, it will not die. The digital computer will eventually have its day."

Sam nodded. They both went back to their equations.

### **9.6 *Sparks Squirrel and the NROTC (1940)***

The Fall of 1940 came and the War in Europe was clearly heating up. One day when Professor Wiener and Sam were working on a few interesting problems there came a tap at the window and Sam was overjoyed to see his cousin Sparks. He jumped over to the window, which was slightly open and shoved it up a bit so Sparks could enter. In his usual style, Wiener had been totally oblivious to the entry of a new squirrel until Sam tapped on his shoulder and said:

"Uh Professor, a moment please, here is my cousin Sparks. I think you may like to meet him."

Wiener turned about and there before he was, well a scruffy squirrel, clearly not polished like Sam, but almost swaging in his walk, like some seaman, that Wiener had seen at the docks in his many travels. Sam said:

"Professor Wiener, this is my cousin Sparks Squirrel, he lives up Massachusetts Avenue in the Harvard Yard actually. He has been working with the NROTC on the Harvard campus, Sparks is sort of an electronics buff and is also working with them on their, what do you call it Sparks, fire control systems."

Sparks perked up, not knowing who Professor Wiener was and shot out his paw and said:

"Pleased to meet you Prof, I kinda like this place, the River, water view and all, beats the poor beaten up trees in the yard up the street away, always like to see the water close, Prof, always do, reminds me that I can get to sea quickly. So what do you do here Prof, I am working on fire control with the young students, I do the ranging and aiming."

Wiener was taken back, for he had never been spoken to in such a well "common" manner, as if he and Sparks already shared a common bond. On second thought, they did and Wiener replied:

"Well Sparks, I was in fire control also, in the last War, I was in the Army and I worked at Aberdeen which is in Maryland, and we did all the sophisticated ranging for the new guns."

The two of them slipped into a long conversation swapping war stories, for Sparks had just come back from a Navy convoy trip across the Atlantic and avoiding German subs. Wiener was fascinated by the real life experience of one who had already been in this undeclared War.

Then Sparks hit upon a chord that resonated well with Wiener when he said;

"Prof, you know smart guys like you, well really smart guys like you, can help us with what I see to be a really tough problem. You know that if we get into battles with the Germans or even the Japs, well it will be ship against plane, and those planes go very fast and training the 20 mm or the 40 mm to hit them is a really tough job. Right now, it is like hunting hawks, you guess where they will be; you lead them with the gun, and pray. But, as any good squirrel knows, hawks are a mighty smart bird, especially on a dive, and can turn on the dime, Prof, and boy do they do that. So any thoughts?"

Wiener looked to Sam and the two of them immediately saw this as the next great step. It put all the pieces together into a single problem; they could apply all that they had been working on into a productive tool for the war effort.

They then spent a few more hours talking about the problem. Sparks was delighted to tell them all he knew for he had been trying to tell the Navy Brass but who listens to the ship's squirrel. They just kept sending him up the mast to be the lookout for subs, and he did spot a dozen in his trips and they even sank two. But, it was cold up there and in the North Atlantic, well it was often sickening, the pitch, roll and yaw, especially at the top of the mast.

Thus, Wiener wrote on the black board and Sparks jumped back and forth shouting what was to be done, and for the first time Wiener saw the interaction that is common with engineers but rarely if ever occurred with a mathematician. He was solving a real problem using the tools that he had spent a lifetime developing.

Wiener was now having new ideas at the rate of many per minute. It was the catalyst of listening to this salty squirrel, which motivated him, and they bonded as the discussion went on. Sparks was not the academic as was Sam, but Sparks had a sense of reality which was essential.

Sparks came back a few more times before he was to ship out again from the Boston Navy yard. Wiener and Sam managed to prepare a proposal, which they forwarded to the Government for the use of Wiener's theories to shooting down enemy aircraft from ships like a destroyer.

On Sparks' day of departure, Wiener and Sam went to the Navy yard to wish him well and see the ship off. It was a destroyer, they did not recall the name, and it had just been launched. Sparks jumped to the top of the mast as the smoke came from the stack, waving all the way to Wiener and Sam as it made its way to the Atlantic, patrolling for German subs. They wished Sparks God's speed.

Wiener and Sam returned to the campus and they wrote up a short proposal as to how to track and predict the position of aircraft when attacking ships and how the guns could be used to shoot them down. They showed how much better it was than the old techniques.

Then Wiener went and spoke with Professor Caldwell, who was working with the servomechanism group, and they took the idea and ran with it.

Wiener and Sam sat in their office and smiled. Sam said:

"Well Professor, we did not get them to take the digital computer, but we got the fire control system. You know what I think did it, it was Sparks, we learned how to speak in their language and they got it. With the computer, thinking back, we did not know the language they spoke, and most likely they never heard us."

Wiener smiled as he puffed on his ever present cigar, and he replied:

"Sam, you know, you have hit upon a great idea. It's like resonance, like organ pipes and the right sound, it is a mental resonance, the mind of the listener is tuned to hear certain things and they filter out those things that do not resonate. I think there is a project there as well, Sam, I really do."

Sam smiled and said:

"Oh Professor, you have an idea a minute, let's just help through on this one, they still need us!"

Wiener puffed out the smoke and made curls across the room, am ducked and ran for the slightly open window.

### ***9.7 Trip to Bell Labs Whippany (June 1941)***

It was June of 1941 and Wiener had proceeded on his tracking problem with some success. He had been asked to go and meet with the Bell Labs team which was located in Whippany in New Jersey, a rural part of the state about 40 miles due west of the Statue of Liberty. Wiener agreed and decided to take his assistant Bigelow along with him.

On the sunny day he and Sam were chatting about the solution when Wiener said:



"Sam, Bigelow and I are going down to Bell Labs, want to tag along for the trip, you may find it of interest?"

Sam was surprised and happy. He knew Bigelow and yet stayed out of his way, for at times an interfering squirrel can cause a bit of a mishap. Besides Bigelow was the engineering type and Sam was, like Wiener, a thinker.

They set off on a clear and sunny June morning, from the home in Belmont, to South Station to meet Bigelow and take the train to New York. Sam stayed in Wiener's brief case, his head bobbing back and forth as they walked to the train and then to their seats. Many men were in uniforms of all sorts, and it looked as if the War had already begun, although at this time the US was still on the sidelines. Wiener placed his briefcase next to the window and Sam stuck his head right on the glass and had great views on the ride down. Wiener and Bigelow fed Sam some packaged nuts they got on the train and these were great treats. It was the first time he had ever had a cashew.

The train neared New York Grand Central station and the three of them got off the train and into the colossal station, with its ceiling covered with paintings of the heavens in gold. Sam stretched his head out, looking at the great mass of people, the lights, the colors and smells. At this point Wiener said to the two of them:

"Boys, let's walk to the ferry to New Jersey, I want to stretch my legs."

Bigelow looked at Sam with a sense of dread since they both knew that Norbert had no sense of direction, not even south. Fortunately Bigelow had some experience in New York and Sam thought that any good squirrel would be able to find the river on an island. So outside on 42nd Street they went, and in no time at all, the noise, people, smells, sights, no creature would ever find their way out. Sam immediately saw that there was not even a single tree, how did people live here he wondered.

Then off they went, following Wiener as if he really knew anything about his trip. He walked west and then south and then west and then south. It was clear that this algorithm was not to converge. As they got closer to the west, Sam shot his head out and jumped in front of both of them. He said:

"Stop! Professor, permit me to climb this building and see if we are in any way getting near the Hudson River. Do you agree Bigelow?"

Bigelow was a bit set back but it was clear that if they kept this up there would be no ferry to find. Wiener replied:

"if you think so Sam, I am a bit tired anyhow and feel like a cigar."

Wiener sat down, took out a cigar and started his smoking. Sam by this point did not really like cigars so he rambled atop the seven story building, then over to the west side of the roof. There in front of him was the Erie Lackawanna Ferry! He was amazed that Wiener in his random wanderings with no sense of a goal, devoid of a map, had gotten them just a block away. He scrambled down and stood before the two of them, Wiener slowly puffing on the cigar, and said:

"Professor, I really, really, do not know how you do this, but the ferry is at the end of this block and one street down. Amazing!"

Wiener slowly finished the cigar and smiled and they continued walking and leisurely boarded the Ferry for the trip across the Hudson.

They then boarded a train to Morristown, where Bigelow told the two of them was the residence of George Washington during the US Revolution. Another train ride and the sun was setting. They were to be met by some people from Bell Labs and would be staying at a local hotel. After an hour they arrived and at the train station there were two young men in white open collar shirts and dark trousers and they had a large black Chrysler ready to take Wiener. They greeted Wiener and Bigelow:

"Professor, Dr Bigelow, we are glad to see you made this train, we were a bit concerned after so long a trip."

Wiener replied:

"I have been to China, all of Europe, and many other places in the world young man and this is truly just a short journey. Yet we would enjoy a rest before our meeting in the morning."

They drove off to the hotel and were dutifully picked up at 8:45 in the morning the next day. Another beautifully sunny June day in the country-side of New Jersey. Just down the road a short distance, say a half mile, they drove and they arrived at Bell Labs Whippany, looking like so many other military like installations of stark buildings and hundreds if not thousands of men and women walking in from a great parking lot in the front, busses unloading them from places of residence unknown. They walked to the front door, as did all others in this sea of humanity and were greeted by two slightly older men now with jackets and ties. They all signed small documents, their identity was checked, security waved them through, but now wearing badges on their coats.

Sam sat silent in Norbert's brief case since he did not have a clearance, and also most likely he was not to be allowed in any way if they knew. So snuggled down in Norbert's briefcase they went in pass the guards. Norbert wondered if they would look afterwards but that would be a problem he would solve then.

They entered a large conference room, with boards, a complex overhead projector for some slides which none of them had seen before, and in the room must have been twenty five or more

people. They were all in jackets and ties, many smoking, and there was coffee and pastries on a side board. Sam was hungry! But he stayed put.

The Executive Director of the Laboratory stood before the group and welcomed Wiener and his colleague, he did not know Bigelow's name even! But there were three, oh just two, from MIT, and almost now 30 from Bell Labs. One would guess they have nothing else to do.

Wiener was introduced and he was asked to go to the front of this crowded and soon increasingly warm room and speak. He patted Sam's head to keep it down and motioned to Bigelow to watch him.

Sam stuck his head out just a small bit so he could hear Wiener speak, and speak, and speak. There were hundreds of questions and it lasted a few hours, until poor Norbert was exhausted. Sam was now quite hot having been stuffed in the brief case and Bigelow was wondering what all the questions were about, they were talking to Professor Wiener as if he were being interrogated.

At the end of Norbert's talk they all took a break and left the room. Sam popped his head out and looked at Norbert and said:

"Professor, I think they are just getting information from you and we may very well get nothing in return. I think this is unprofessional. Also I really think that these are not some of the smartest people I have ever seen."

Wiener replied:

"I agree, I am here as if I were defending my doctoral thesis yet none of these people have read the report nor do I think they have any understanding of what is in it."

Sam replied:

"They are here for the doughnuts. Oh and while you are up, throw me one over here Professor."

Wiener grabbed another doughnut, it must have been his fifth, nervous energy, and Bigelow just sat wondering. He turned to the Wiener and Sam and said:

"We are just two, and were designing and assembling a real tracking system. They have more managers than we have students in our Department, and we have yet to see anyone who can comment intelligently."

Sam said:

"You know, I think this Bell Labs place is just a front, there may be a few smart folks, but it is also filled with hundreds of doughnut eating and outright stupid managers, sorry Professor."

Wiener smiled and as he did the crumbs bounced from his goatee to his vest, which thanks to his girth kept them from his trousers.

Sam then ran across the table to sip some water from a glass. He came back and sat before the two of them and said:

"Professor, Dr. Bigelow, look, you are telling them everything, and so far you have gotten nothing back. I thought this was to be collegial. Let's see if you can get something from them. As I understand it, they are building the tracking system and parts of the radar and the Rad Lab is using the British magnetron and they developed the electronics for the radar system. Remember, we have relatives out there depending on this all working, remember my cousin Sparks, Professor, he and the crews needed this, and they need it soon."

Wiener calmed Sam down, he gave him another doughnut. Somehow there was an endless supply of doughnuts.

The afternoon was to be the Bell Labs staff telling Wiener and Bigelow, and of course Sam, what they were doing. Yet all of them felt that the Bell Labs folks were evasive, at the least, and, if not, truly un-professional. Yet Wiener remained calm and just smoked his cigar ever so slowly. Sam was at the boiling point since they had given these people all they had worked on.

By 5PM, almost like clock-work, the meeting was called to a halt, they all shook hands, and Wiener asked to walk the mile to the hotel. Sam popped out when they had left the parking lot end ran alongside the two. He suggested that they might stretch their legs walking about the home George Washington stayed in during the Winters at Morristown. They were all game and off they men, like men with a mission. After the tour they went to the hotel to rest before the long train ride back.

### **9.8    *Return and Heaviside Conversation***

They managed to get from their hotel to Grand Central in little time. Surprisingly the way back is always easier than the journey there, at least if you are not climbing a mountain.

The three boarded a 10 AM train for Boston and they left Grand Central Station heading back.

Wiener sat back wondering what had transpired and he was truly annoyed. He sat up in the car and faced the two of them and started:

"You know, I had heard a great deal of these Bell Labs and AT&T people. I especially heard as to how they treated that brilliant man, Heaviside. You see, I know some of the people there, back at those Labs, and some are very good, kind and decent. But Heaviside. Let me tell you about him and how those demons at AT&T and Bell Labs treated him."

"When I was first asked by Bush and others to work on putting some mathematical credibility to the operational calculus that Heaviside invented I also learned a great deal about him. You see he was just a somewhat self-educate electrician, he worked on transmission lines and the like and he knew some things about mathematics but not really a great deal."

"Yet he had great physical insight. His operational calculus allowed us to analyze complex dynamic systems with the simplicity of simple algebra. Then he went on to invent amongst many things the loading coil for telephone lines, allowing long distance calls and reducing echoes. Brilliant. Yet his one weakness was he hated patents. So he just published his results! Imagine that, he just published them. Frankly that is wonderful, imagine if we mathematicians patented each theorem. Nothing would get done."

"Now here is where AT&T came in. They needed this patent for their monopoly, and having it out in the public free was not to their interest. So they paid some Columbia University Professor, a Pupin by name, to "invent" and patent this! Imagine that, they took Heaviside's work, gave it to some Professor, who had the total lack of integrity to patent it and then sell the patent to AT&T. And what do you think happened to poor Heaviside, well he died penniless in a small shack! Yes, penniless, and yet today we remember Heaviside and no one would ever think of remembering Pupin!"

Sam had never seen Wiener so intense. They all sat quiet as the train rolled on. This had been a bad trip, and Wiener rarely showed such intense emotions amongst his close colleagues. This event seemed to have brought out memories from the past and Sam wondered if they would come out again.

### **9.9    *The Yellow Peril (1942)***

I then asked Antnee why they even went to Bell Labs and did not Wiener write a document describing his work. I said:

"Antnee, did not Wiener write his famous book, the "Yellow Peril", named because the cover was yellow and the math rather difficult. Did the Bell Labs people have that when he went there?"

Antnee replied:

"Sir, no Sir, for it was this meeting that drove the good Professor and Sam to get the document completed Sir. They did not want to have all of their ideas stolen, Wiener did not want to become another Heaviside with the Bell System."

I replied:

"But did not everyone already know what he had done, he had recognition."

Antnee replied:

"Sir, those people at Bell Labs, at AT&T, they could be quite evil Sir, they would take whatever actions they needed to claim ownership Sir, especially if they could see it maintaining their control and making money."

I said:

"Antnee, I am surprised, you sound a bit hostile towards them. I can see Wiener but my friend why you?"

Antnee was now worked up. He was going to let me have it with his pent up distrust and for reasons I truly wanted to understand. He almost stood erect, his furry belly pushed out and his gesticulating with his right paw and he said:

"Sir, you see, I have cousins, they live on the land at Murray Hill and at Whippany. The very sites Sir. Well, those evil people, they got vicious, and Sir I mean truly vicious dogs, sent to kill, horrors at the very thought Sir, horrors, kill the family. Now any group of that sort Sir, well true evil Sir, true evil. Why Sir, we had lived on those lands for ages, well before any of their comings and goings. And look at them now, gone, disappeared, empty shells, no Bell Labs, no dogs, well Sir we survived, we prospered, and they as the evil they represented Sir, gone, good always wins Sir, truly it does."

I interjected as best I could under the circumstances and asked:

"Antnee, thanks for the tale, but the Yellow Peril, what happened there?"

He continued:

"Ah Sir, I digress, my apologies Sir, but there are times, indeed Sir there are times that even a harmless joyful squirrel and revolt, yes indeed, truly revolt!"

I stopped him because he was on a rant, there must have been a lot more bad blood between the squirrels of New Jersey and Bell Labs, but I was not in for the Encyclopedic history of squirreldom, just finish this tale, to which I was already committed. I raised my voice just a bit as I shifted in by chair, for I wanted to let Antnee know that I was not going to be his psychotherapists here. I said:

"Antnee...."

He replied:

"Oh Sir, I do get carried away a bit, well you humans have your ways also. I believe that there is no love lost between you and those wretched Bell Labs people."

I thought for a moment and realized he had a point but I just railed a bit less than he. I replied:

"Case well taken, yet Antnee they were an example of a dinosaur of a company, slow to move, with massive heads and little brains atop. Well like dinosaurs they are now history."

Antnee replied:

"True Sir, true indeed. Now to the tale."

Wiener and Sam had returned to campus and they proceeded to put together the thoughts on the time series and estimation methods that had been developed. They had long discussions, some would deem them arguments, regarding the need to make things simple. Wiener wanted it to be mathematically correct and yet Sam kept saying that the audience was the engineer and not the mathematician.

They also struggled by having discussions regarding the applications. Wiener and Sam discussed the context and both agreed that they should look as broadly as possible.

Bigelow and Wiener would talk through the applications and the math. One time they wanted to know if they could focus on the issue of tracking aircraft. Bigelow had built the system and it was working. Yet they wanted to track targets. They had no plans so Wiener suggested tracking Sam. Wiener asked Sam:

"Sam, we need to test this on a real target, that will be you, so go out to those sycamores and we will track you."

Sam thought for a moment, looked at his sycamores in the court in front of the Great Dome, and thought he would give it a try.

For hours the three of them "played" attacking and tracking. Sam jumped and evaded the system while Bigelow, to Wiener's delight, tracked Sam.

After what seemed an eternity Sam returned huffing and puffing, and he said:

"Ah Professor, Dr Bigelow, have we not done enough?"

The two of them laughed at the site of this sweaty frizzled squirrel. The replied:

"Sam, we got you every time!"

It was events like this which punctuated their effort. It was clear that generalizing the results was better than using specific examples. They all agreed and Wiener set about the task of writing. He insisted again to provide all the details as if there were no text to refer to. In fact there was no text to refer to, he had created it all.

The most difficult task was that the estimation and prediction resulted in systems which were statistical in nature. As they had remembered in their discussions with Sam's cousin Sparks the enemy evades when it attacks and does not follow the straight line that he may be on initially. Thus the approach Wiener used, the statistical approach took that into account.

But solving this one problem solved so many more. It was not just a solution for a fire control system on a ship, or a process control system in a chemical plant, but for signal detection and processing, for communications, and perhaps even for more. Wiener suddenly understood that he had spanned many areas of expertise with a ground changing approach, namely he could now deal with the uncertainty of nature!

### ***9.10 Sparks Returns and the End of the War (1945)***

It was New Year's eve in 1945 and Wiener and Samuel were sitting in his office at MIT. Wiener looked out at the Charles, the ice had formed and the snow covered Memorial Drive. Sam was curled up on the banging radiator warm and snug. They had been discussing the results of the past year and Wiener was to go back home after he had done some small efforts in his office. The Institute was vacant, the students and faculty were gone but since the War was now over it was open and readily accessible almost anytime.

There was a scratching at the door and Wiener got up to see what it was. Samuel sensed it was another of his clan so he jumped up to see what was there. When Norbert opened the door it was instantly clear that it was his cousin Sparks, home from the War. The two of them jumped forth to grab hold of Sparks, who in turn was happy to see them as well.

Sparks looked as if he had aged greatly. He also showed signs of having been wounded which the two of them had known from letters Norbert had gotten from Lieutenant Pfeifer. They did not know how badly he had been hurt but he seemed happy to see them both.

They all sat and spoke of the War. The intensity of Sparks was gone, he seemed almost morose. He had seen a great deal of the War and its pains and he now felt them. He had lost friends, humans and of course his monkey friend, who was hit by an enemy shell at the Battle of Leyte. As Sparks spoke, as he told of the men and their gallantry, of the enemy and their intensity, Wiener was changing, he saw that this was not the game he had played with Sam in the sycamores, it was true life and death. It was at that very moment, in the midst of those very words, that Wiener became a hater of war, all war.

Sparks stayed a bit but it was clear that he just wanted to go back up to the peace and quiet of Harvard yard, eat acorns and nuts from the students. Wiener said he could come and live in the sycamores but Sparks said he needed his own family, but many thanks. The group shook hands, paws, and Sparks departed. Wiener and Sam just sat for hours that day, silent, watching the sun set in the west end of the Charles, watching lights in Boston come on, night settle in, just quiet.



### **9.11 The Shannon Paper (1948)**

It was mid July 1948 and the summer was not overly warm. Wiener had been travelling as was his usual way and Sam had been watching his children and grandchildren running about on the sycamores in front of the Great Dome. He had managed to continue to stay current but now that the War was over there was to some degree less pressure. The Rad Lab was closed and Building 20, the old shacks, were now turned into classrooms for the returning students. Sam felt content. He was wandering in and out of Wiener's office when he saw on the desk a package from Bell Labs. He recalled the bad visit they had had there many years earlier and he decided to look through it.

To his surprise it was a preprint of a paper by Shannon on "A Mathematical Theory of Communication". It was to be published in the Bell System Technical Journal, the in-house technical organ of Bell Labs.

Sam and Professor Wiener had been working on the revision of the book on Time Series, which characterized the work they had all done during the War. The work they did related to real time continuous signals, or any real time motion, from aircraft to chemical plants to the human body.

But as soon as Sam saw the Figure 1 and then Figure 11 he knew that Shannon had taken a step forward. He had the paradigm, that example change, that single "image" or icon which would be used again and again to tell the story. It was like the images that the American Indian used about the white deer, the golden bear, the image, that lingers in the mind, like the benzene ring, that changed how chemists think. It was there in a simple block diagram and a simple chart converting 1s and 0s across a channel. This was the example!

He sat there and wondered how Wiener would take this. For Shannon had come up to see Wiener so many times and Wiener had been totally open and supportive. Also Weaver who had been the manager of Wiener's work on his tracking and prediction systems was collaborating with Shannon.

Sam was worried as to how well Wiener would take this. He was concerned that Shannon may have just used Wiener to work through the issues and then publish the work ahead of Wiener's, the perils of academia. He wondered when Wiener would return and how best to tell him.

In a couple of days Wiener had returned, and it was clear to Sam that he had not yet seen the paper. When Wiener came and sat down Sam popped through the window and said:

"Professor, so good to see you back. Good trip I hope?"

Wiener seemed quite happy to be back and he replied:

"Sam, wonderful. I had some more thoughts on the book on Time Series. How has it been here?"

Sam wandered over to his desk, and then atop the pile of papers, and took out the Shannon pre-print with his teeth and paws and dragged it in front of Wiener. He said:

"Professor, perhaps you may want to read this."

Wiener read the paper and Sam could see he was a bit concerned but like the Wiener Sam knew personally he managed to keep it in. He would keep his temper for those who deserved it and not for Sam. Wiener read a few pages and then said:

"Sam, I see what you mean. Yes Sam we gave this young man many hours of our time, and frankly educated him a great deal. And yes Sam the book has not yet been published. Yet Sam, our focus is on the continuous signals and not these discrete ones, and secondly we differ on the entropy definition, for this was an argument Shannon and I already had, but that is a minor issue. This is communications, not what we have been doing. Yet it is so simplified. It lacks the rigor of mathematics."

Sam replied:

"But Professor, and I mean this quite respectfully, the simplicity is its elegance, and moreover the almost school boy tone is very powerful for it opens the work to be read by anyone, not just the professional. But most importantly, Professor, the simple diagrams, they tell the story, they stick in your head, like yours a the feedback loop. You see Professor he has simplified it down to basic thoughts and almost a high school level interpretation, but the conclusions are quite powerful. The idea he has about capacity, frankly Professor it is quite powerful. We should make sure they get in the book, those ideas of yours about time series."

Wiener spent the afternoon reading. Yes, he thought, it was simple, simple and elegant. It had an almost early Einstein elegance and simplicity. It was a tutorial for a large audience, a simple set of examples which seduced the reader to think this was a simple journey, this theory of communications, whereas when they got near the end, they had actually been led across a gorge that they would never return to.

Wiener thought that Sam was correct, in focusing on the totems of the diagrams, making the problem a simple set of 1s and 0s, Shannon had expanded the audience greatly for his ideas. Wiener now knew he must do the same.

Sam said:

"Professor, there are some simple observations from Shannon. First, it is always good, if possible, to have a simple structure, example, upon which to build. Shannon had his 0s and 1s, we on the other hand deal with complex signals. Second, Shannon abstracts away the detail. He focuses on the essential. Thus the 0s and 1s are received as 0s and 1s, and there are no complex devices in between. We on the other hand have to deal with reality, and reality is all too often complex and tends to confound the simplicity of the idea. And professor, one thing I see again in Shannon,

with the simple structure, as one expands on reality, with the real stuff we must deal with, having at the core a simple structure will be all important."

Wiener replied:

"A friend of mine once said, that a complicated problem is one whose structure is not understood. To some degree it is like Biology, a collection of facts, of observations, with no simple underlying principle. We must do the same, we must abstract the similar 0s and 1s, yet as a Mathematician I feel the need to show the correctness to my fellows, otherwise it will be viewed as mere manipulation. We must be careful here Sam, we must establish what we have done very carefully."

I stopped Antnee as he went on and was curious about Wiener and Shannon. Wiener was much older and an accomplished mathematician whereas Shannon had just gotten his doctoral degree before the War and had been at Bell Labs for a few years. So I asked Antnee:

"Antnee, I hear that Wiener may have been a bit struck back by Shannon. After all, he had helped Shannon during the War on his research and he had worked on a much broader problem. Was it really the fact that Shannon had solved a simpler problem with a simpler method than Wiener that made the difference?"

Antnee replied:

"Sir, a fine question indeed, Sir. One always wonders about those things. Egos are so fragile, especially when they relate to ideas and who gets credit, and I particular in the Academy, Sir. So let me say, Shannon was so well received because his presentation was so simple, he neglected all the hard stuff, so to say, Sir, he just focused on what he believed was important at the time, the 0s and the 1s."

I replied:

"I see, Wiener was truly a brilliant man, he was a mathematician, a philosopher, a biologist if you will, and even a good linguist. Perhaps he was so smart that he had all of the dimensions in his head at once and could not focus on the simple issues."

Antnee replied:

"Yes Sir, the curse of the genius. Sir, it was felt that Shannon was very smart in his area, yet he was limited, unlike Wiener, who had broad brilliance. Yet it was that singular focus, Sir, that simplification, Sir, that allowed for the great victory of ideas."

### ***9.12 The Revised Yellow Peril and Cybernetics (1948)***

After the Shannon paper Wiener and Sam knew that they must press hard to finish the revision of the book they had done during the war, the one on time series.

Sam had found out that Wiener had agreed to write a book on Cybernetics almost at the same time getting the revise Yellow Peril out. Wiener had told Sam early in 1948 that he had agreed to write a book on his ideas on Cybernetics and that redrafting the Yellow Peril would be simple, and he would hand it off to Sam.

Thus all through the year 1948, they finished the rewrite of Time Series and got it off to the MIT Press. Sam was tired. Then Wiener came in at 7 AM as was his wont one morning and planted the draft of Cybernetics on the desk. He looked at Sam and said:

"Read it and tell me what you think."

Same looked at Wiener and replied:

"You have done this in three months! Let me see how this differs from Time Series."

He scanned Cybernetics, and yes as Sam thought it was Wiener again, he just could not hesitate to use as many equations as possible. But Sam noted the breath as well as the depth of this work. It was massive, just weeks after seeing the Shannon work, here Wiener had put all of his ideas on systems together in one document.

Wiener looked at Sam and said:

"I have asked Pitts and Selfridge to edit this, my eyes are failing, the cataracts you know. I guess we two are aging my friend."

Sam replied:

"Good idea Professor, I am exhausted just from Time Series. Will you permit me Professor to read this."

Wiener turned and sat in his desk chair, looked out to Sam and said:

"Be kind old friend, be kind. I poured everything into this work."

Sam said:

"Of course Professor. Let me sit in the corner here and I will be quiet."

So Sam took the draft document, neatly typed by Wiener's Secretary, and started at the beginning. Sam thought that this was unlike Shannon, there was no simplifying example, no easy entry for the engineer, it was expansive, it was a statement of a new world order, one where we

could view all of nature in a new way, as a system, as a system definable by mathematical entities, and that by using those entities and what we knew about the system we could then change nature, improve it, by curing the afflicted, and creating intelligent machines. The path was described and as he read further it was clear to Sam that this was not a Shannon insight using simplicity but a Wiener revelation using the very elements of nature.

I stopped Antnee as he spoke and was now quite intrigued:

"Antnee, you seem to be saying that Sam's interpretation was that the book Cybernetics was in many ways a response to Shannon and yet in many others almost a Magnum Opus for Wiener. Is that how you tell the tale of Sam?"

Antnee curled up against the back of my lab bench chair, the one with the soft cloth back, and he replied:

"Sir, a good observation Sir, for when one writes that Magnum Opus one often wonders what was the event that precipitated it. Often too, Sir, the Magnum Opus is a flash of brilliance, a burst of intellectual activity Sir, and it is that one singular event, Sir, that brings it forth. You know Sir, I suspect that one could do an interesting study here, yes Sir, a very interesting study. Now with the good Professor, Sir, even Sam we are told wondered if it was a culmination point, perhaps Sir, or was it that he agreed to write this over a fine diner in Paris, which may be the case Sir, or was it the, shall we call it Sir, the nudge from the Shannon paper. You have done that yourself a few times Sir, indeed I have watched you, one little nudge, and there you go."

I replied:

"Okay, Antnee, so the answer is we really don't know and most likely could not ever really know."

He replied:

"Indeed Sir, very so, indeed."

He then returned to the tale.

Thus Sam sat there all day, into the night, after Wiener had left, and read till the sun came up and Wiener returned. As Wiener came in he looked at Sam and asked:

"Sam my good friend have you been here all night?"

Same, with drooping whiskers, blood shot squirrel eyes, and yet a wet black nose said to the Professor:

"Brilliant Professor, absolutely brilliant!"

Wiener smiled and said:

"So Sam, if it is good, tell me more."

Same sat back, grabbed a cashew in his teeth, holding it with his small paws as he nibbled on it till it was totally consumed and replied:

"Sorry Professor, no food for a while makes for a shaky squirrel. Now where was I, ah yes, brilliant. It is intense, not focused at say the Bell Labs type engineer, but expansive. I feared that the equations would be imposing, yet, I was surprised that if I just ignored them then the reading was excellent. Yet, having the equations will be a foil to any saying that is nothing more than speculation."

"It truly picks up Professor when you get to feedback. Then we see the simple paradigm of the feedback loop but it is not a simplification as was that of Shannon but it was a generalization of life."

Then Sam went through chapter by chapter, and the two made a few comments and Wiener wrote them on the board since his eyes were truly failing.

Sam noted how Wiener kept asking the question of how would his peers receive this, had he been rigorous enough here and there. The document did have that schizophrenic structure of intense and proper mathematics and grand expositions of insight and evaluation as well as the ability to envision a future well beyond the then present.

I listened as Antnee recounted the conversation but again since I had read the work almost fifty years earlier I interjected my comments:

"Antnee, I can see further how Shannon and Wiener differ the more you speak. Shannon was held as some god like creature by engineers yet Wiener, in my mind, was far ahead, albeit on trails that may have required backtracking yet always in the correct direction. Yet your tale seems to let me believe that he was always questioning how he would be received by his peers, even at the latter portion of that career. Was this always a concern or was this just with Sam?"

Antnee reshuffled himself as he does when he pontificates and then replied:

"As best as I can recall from the records, for Sir we have detailed records, squirrel records, which we keep very accurately. So Sir, let me relate. First Sir it is always interesting to see how you humans are so always concerned as to how you appear, so strange at times Sir, yet you Sir do not have as much of a problem given Sir how you appear in the garden...."

I interrupted:

"Antnee, I am gardening, not meeting with the CEO of some company! And yes Antnee, when I work, I shall we say, perspire and thus I leave to you the result..."

Antnee interjected:

"Yes Sir, Pigs and humans, the only two species with little hair and sweat...."

I stopped him:

"Antnee, stop it, back to the tale, tell me if you can!"

Antnee looked a bit taken aback which is his way and he replied sheepishly:

"Sir, I apologize Sir, now to the tale."

Wiener spoke a few more times with Sam to fine tune certain parts and he gave the details to Pitts and Selfridge to work through and finalize the document. Then when it was ready, just a few intense days, they took the document to Wiener and he was to sign the cover letter and post it to Paris.

The week after the posting Sam was looking over what he thought was the unedited copy when he became aghast at the fact that they had sent the wrong copy! He ran down to Wiener's office screaming at his high pitch squirrel voice:

"You sent the wrong one, you sent the wrong one!"

Poor Wiener was now in a terrible spot. What should he do? Was this a disaster. They took a day to reach the publisher in Paris yet by this time the document had already been type set! It was on to the printer!

It would have to stand on its own two feet.

Antnee then became quite intense:

"Sir, poor Professor Wiener, Sir, he thought all the world would now see his errors, mere typos, but errors as they were, small ones, but as a mathematician, small means large Sir, indeed reputation shattering. There was nothing he could do! The waiting till the publication in a week or so, terrifying Sir, sheer terror indeed. All thoughts of reputational collapse Sir swam through his head, he could think of nothing else, but of errors here and errors there. Sam tried to console hi, no use Sir, no use."

Sam actually said:

"Professor, the professional world knows your capabilities Sir, and as an old friend once said to me, fear not typos, for that is what they made erasers on pencils for!"

Antnee said:

"And Sir, such a statement to the Professor did not assuage his fears Sir, not the least, indeed, not the least!"

"Well Sir, the reviews came out, they were bad Sir, many were truly cruel, they errors did resonate, and this made the Professor worry even more. Then, Sir a strange thing happened, the bad reviews from the profession were overblown by superb reviews from the general Press, despite the math, the words, the ideas, the vision, it came through Sir, and day after day the reviews showed the Professor that his vision not only had merit, Sir, but that it was correct! He became a prophet!"

### ***9.13 The Autobiography (1951-1955)***

Sam was getting old, and as one ages one seems to want to look backward and leave a memoir of what was done and why. One day in 1951 Wiener came in and Sam was laying on the window sill, quietly in the sun, resting as any old squirrel would do, his snout down and eyes closed. His whiskers shook as he snored, a squirrel snore, but a snore no less.

One day Wiener came in and said:

"Sam, I am going to write my autobiography. I want to tell the tale of all the people I have met, the wonderful things that have happened, and how it all started. It seems that there are still many young bright people who as I did find themselves developing intellectually at such a young age. Remember I got my PhD from Harvard while still seventeen. An accomplishment which took me a dozen or more years to recover from. I want to tell that tale."

Sam looked at him and said:

"Professor, beware, what may be important to you may be an annoyance to others. Perhaps you could write a novel, using that as a vehicle."

Wiener replied:

"No Sam, I really want to do this. Here, I already wrote some chapters. Let me know what you think."

Sam read through them and he was concerned. The Professor was saying things that he most likely to keep to himself. Sam thought that all individuals have bad memories but other people do not want to read about them. Sam found himself in a tight spot. He wanted the Professor to



write the book, now, yet he did not want the Professor to find himself the object of scorn. What to do?

Fortunately the solution came from the publisher, who took the Professor by the hand and carefully edited it down to a readable document, and in the process Sam kept at Wiener telling him the edits were indeed better. For indeed they were.

It was a cathartic experience, writing about the past, reliving moments, and Sam would sit there like a psychoanalyst and listen, commend, and edit.

Finally it was done and Sam really thought it was good. He hoped that the readers would also.

#### ***9.14 Trip to India (1953)***

Antnee was now winding down for I could now tell when he was at the end of his tales. This was one more different than others and I wondered what he was trying to tell me. The people were more human, not super creatures, no emperors, queens, no classic writers or Saints. Yes there was Wiener, but there was Sparks, there was Bigelow, there were many other just regular types.

Antnee then went on:

"Sir, a sad ending Sir, but not uncommon, as all things must end, so I bring you all the way Sir. All the way, for this end tells you a great deal about the person Sir, the end tells you their character, yes indeed, their true character."

He continued:

"You see Sir, the good Professor was wont to travel, which was the case, and this time he was off to India. Sam was back in Cambridge, and he was aging as we all do so, and we are lucky to do that Sir, for the alternative is too horrible to think of, remember those dogs..."

I interjected:

"Antnee, we are finished with Bell Labs, it is finished, the dogs are gone, forget the dog Antnee, back to the tale."

He replied:

"Ah Sir, indeed, I do bemoan too much, indeed, I bemoan too much. Now to the tale."

He continued in his manner.

Then one day in 1953 when Wiener was lecturing, he returned and had a telex on his desk. It was from his office. His secretary had written that on the morning that day when she went out to give

some peanut butter to Samuel, he was laying there on the corner where he always took the sun outside of Wiener's office facing the Charles. But this day he did not move, for he had died the night before. She said she wept and they had all the students collect his remains and they had a small box made and buried him at the base of the window. They had a brief ceremony, and student after student spoke of how they had remembered Samuel, how he had been a true friend and they remembered many of his fine contributions to them, the Department and the Institute. He had lived a long and productive life.

Wiener stood frozen, for this was another death and in a way it was another road sign on his own mortality. He walked outside in the heat and humidity, one of his long walks, and he remembered Samuel, their conversations, and the fact that his contributions were never truly recognized. Yet he was remembered. Samuel could have only prospered at MIT, for at Harvard and other places his very presence would have been rejected. But at MIT they accepted many of the strangest, Wiener thought, even himself.

He stood at the edge of a tree and looked up and wept. A Hindu swami approached him and asked what was the problem that made him weep so. Wiener replied:

"Swami, I had a good friend die last night, a good friend, but a strange one. A true collaborator, one who helped me many times. But a strange friend."

The swami said:

"And what makes him so strange."

Wiener burst forth the answer, no feeling, the loss was so great, that being ever so more strange, would not bring more pain. He said:

"A squirrel, a small grey, but brilliant squirrel."

The swami was not the least bit taken aback. He looked kindly at Wiener and said:

"The circle of life always is turning, and your friend will have a better life on his next turn, and you show that he has done well this time and thus will be rewarded for his efforts. So fell grateful my sad friend for he has moved on to a much better place, and your friendship will not only survive but will prosper. Smile my friend, for life is continuing, it is something that you can take to your heart and make part of your own life as well."

Wiener smiled and looked at the swami, he had made friends with the swami at MIT but this man had hit upon the chord which he had been trying to read for many years. He thought that yes, indeed, Sam would live on.

## ***10 CPO SPARKS SQUIRREL AND THE USS ALBERT W GRANT, DD 649***

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March, is still a chilly month with the sun trying to get stronger, the tough plants sending out shoots, and the cold and penetrating rains that are often a part of the day to day existence as we await the warmth of Spring.

The daylilies are starting their shoots up above the ground showing their bright green leaves and the rebuds are about to bloom, for one can see the swollen pink-red buds on the edges of each branch.

### ***10.1 Potting and a Visit***

This is also the time I set my new seedlings to pots, the end of March, still with that chill reminder of winter, I work on my potting bench clothed as warmly as possible, filling pot after pot with the potting soil, spraying in water, an ice cold stream which no matter how careful you try to be gets all over you. It then sets the cold in the air ever more deeply in your bones yet I must get over 400 pots set and seedlings in them.

It is critical to pay attention to detail when doing this for each pot holds a numbered set of seedlings, you must take them from the seed flats, check with your lab note book, place them in a pot, put a label on a white plastic tab and then insert that in the pot and then check off the seedlings in your lab book. Tedious but so subject to mistakes, a missed seed, and that sets them all off. So there I am paying attention, ignoring the world when in front of my face, on the deck, eye level to me, I hear:

"Watch ya doowen?"

I immediately looked up, knowing what I would find, and in front of my nose, nose to nose, lying flat bellied on the deck in the sun, was the fat fur ball Antnee! His black wet nose almost touching mine and his whiskers flapping as he smiled at me, I replied:

"Antnee, I am trying to concentrate, you should know better, never interrupt a person when they are setting plants."

He sat up a bit distraught and replied:

"Well Sir, I am so deeply sorry Sir."

I looked at him and perhaps I had been a bit too harsh. I thought it best to reply:

"Sorry Antnee, but I'm trying to get these seeds in pots, and I really have to focus. Why one year I messed up and got one seed off, and all 150 pots were mislabeled. What a mess, it is like assembling a Christmas toy without directions and having a few screws left over, you always wonder when it will collapse. Do you know?"

He replied now appearing more assuaged from the verbal assault:

"Sir, not really, you see we do not buy Christmas toys, we make them, from what we find Sir, it is easier that way. But I can see your concern, it is as if I were running from that scoundrel cat and up a tree I went and by not paying attention, just trying to elude the feline monster, went to the wrong nest, I see the problem, Sir, yes indeed I do!"

I continued:

"Well Antnee, Spring is almost here, so you must be happy, soon you can get as much food as you want."

He replied:

"Truly Sir, we have more than enough due to the true kindness, true kindness indeed, of the good Lady Sara. She is so good of a true friend to all of us, and Sir, the corn was just wonderful this winter, just wonderful. We all want to give you thanks. So what new things will you be up to this summer, your flowers Sir, there are thousands, so many, so much work Sir. Still writing, Sir, we do so enjoy the tales."

I answered:

"So you have been back in my office again, reading my books, as I write them!"

Antnee continued but in an almost professorial way:

"Indeed we have Sir, and the consensus is that your work's quite good, for the most part Sir, for the most part, but we all enjoy your tales about us Sir, we truly do, so well said Sir, and we greatly appreciate them."

He continued:

"Have you been going up to Harvard as usual Sir, and how are things going?"

I replied:

"Well we seem to have some progress, I told you about that, didn't I, we get a few steps forward and sometimes a few backward but in general we make progress. I find that Harvard Yard a bit shabby in winter, large trees but just shabby. Have you ever been there Antnee?"

He sat up into his story telling stance, and now I knew I had just opened a door for a tale, not knowing what I had said, but somehow it triggered him to tell a tale.

### ***10.2 The Beginning of the Tale***

He started with his tale, on his haunches and his tail almost to the top of his head, and his two paws gesticulating as was his manner, he began:

"Well Sir, Harvard Yard, that reminds me Sir, of a distant but heroic cousin, Sir, one Sparks Squirrel. Yes indeed, a true hero of WWII Sir, a true hero, medals and all. You see Sir, Harvard Yard was the home of Sparks and his family, not that they ever took on airs Sir, no indeed, although they were true descendants of the squirrels that came over on the Mayflower, descendants of Honesty Squirrel and his clan. Yes indeed Sir, true Mayflower descendants, which in Massachusetts I gather means something Sir, it truly means something. And in fact it is said Sir that it was Honesty who was the first ashore, the very first of the Pilgrim voyagers to set paw on land, yes indeed Sir, the very first."

I wondered if this were to be a Pilgrim tale or what. I probed a bit to see:

"So are you now to tell me all about Honesty Squirrel?"

He perked up and said with the intensity only Antnee can evoke:

"Sir, no Sir, the true hero is Sparks, Sparks Squirrel. Frankly we try at times to forget about Honesty, he was, well what can one call him, well "English", don't tell Lady Sara that Sir, for I know how sensitive she was, but we now see ourselves as American squirrels, and well Honesty was truly a throwback Sir, truly a throwback. But Sparks Sir, a true hero, so let me explain."

I knew at this point that I had no recourse but to listen. I set my pots aside, found a warm spot in the sun and out of the wind, sat myself on a stool and listened.

### ***10.3 Sparks and Harvard***

Antnee continued:

"You see Sir, Sparks grew up on the Harvard Common, in fact he was born there, just above the statue of Mr. Harvard himself Sir, right above that famous statue. Sir, he was a real Harvard man, yes indeed, for he attended classes and his favorite club was the radio club, from whence he got his name Sir, for his father was also a member. Why Sparks, Sir, was a wonder at Morse code and he could find problems in any electronic circuit, a wonderful talent Sir, truly wonderful."

"Sparks also was adopted as the mascot of the Harvard NROTC, the Navy officer's training group when just a mere child Sir, a mere child. Why Sir he went to all the exercises, all the training, he even went on a summer cruise, you see Sir the Navy always had mascots like Sparks on their ships, and Sparks Sir was more than just a mascot."

"And Sir, Sparks was not only good at the radio, but he studied radar down at MIT, the only one to become expert in that as well Sir, and he was also an expert in fire control, you see Sir it is the squirrel eyes, we can see much better than you humans, for we can jump tree to tree, great eyes Sir, great aiming judgment! Do you not agree Sir!"

I knew that I had better. Now I suspected that this tale was to take me through the entire war.

Antnee then went on:

"Well Sir, it was now 1943, early in the year, perhaps May if I believe correct Sir, yes it was May, and the NROTC graduates were assigned to their ships. Sparks, Sir, was asked if he wanted to go to Charlestown and join a Destroyer for action in the Pacific. Well Sir you can imagine how proud he was to even be asked, and a Destroyer Sir, a true ship of War, and it was a Fletcher Class one at that Sir, a technological marvel."

"You see Sir, the Fletcher would have radar, advanced radio systems and of course what Sparks like the most, the fire control computer. You see Sir Sparks was a fire control man at heart!"

"Thus Sparks went off to the Boston Navy Yard, you know where that is Sir, do you not, and there he got a ride on another Fletcher, the Cassin Young, Sir, for she is back there now, and they were going down to Charleston, South Carolina. Sparks had been at sea with the NROTC Sir, but never too far ashore, no Sir, not too far. The trip hit weather and it was Sparks first time on a ship, at sea, in weather, a mighty rough ride Sir, might rough. In a week he made it to Charleston and then sought out his ship. You see Sir he was assigned to the USS Albert W Grant, DD649, yes indeed Sir the very ship that your father, the great Terrence I, was on, the very same. You see Sir, that is why this tale is so important!"

I was almost thrown back. How did Antnee know this, did he make this up, was this another tale, possibly true possibly just fiction, or did all these tale have truth behind them. I was shocked, I was now more interested than ever before. And Antnee could see it in my face.

He replied:

"You see Sir, these are true tales, now just sit back Sir, and you will hear what happened."

#### **10.4 *Charlestown and the Cruise***

Sparks arrived at Charleston on the Cassin Young and went directly to the pier where the Grant was being outfitted. It was a crowded area of steel and weapons being moved and assembled

into a fighting ship. The workers looked to Sparks like hundreds of squirrels hoping up and down tree branches and the cranes were in an almost continuous motion moving the steel and guns into place.

Sparks was to report to Petty Officer First Class Ralph Natali, for he was assigned to Natali's crew, the sailors who were highly trained on the weapons systems. He suspected that Natali would not necessarily take well to a Harvard educated squirrel also trained at the MIT Rad Lab but that is what he was told to do and as every good squirrel knows, orders are orders.

Up the plank to the 5" gun on the stern of the ship, and there was Natali, a young man from the Pittsburgh area, who was watching the gun mounted and then was watching for the integration of the fire control system back to the fire control room which was amid ships.

Sparks went up to Natali and said:

"Petty Officer Natali, I am Sparks from Boston, assigned to the Grant."

As was usually the case of such initial introductions, Natali turned and saw nothing and Sparks had to speak twice, and then Natali looked down, growled and shouted:

"Who the hell brought this rodent on board!"

Sparks was patient and then said:

"Petty Officer, here are my papers, I was assigned to assist in the new fire control system, and integrating the radar into it. My name is Sparks, Sparks Squirrel, I am from Boston, just came down on the Cassin Young from the Navy yard. Where should I store my gear."

Natali was now truly frustrated. They had deadlines, and now he had a talking squirrel, and one of the smart ass types who thought they knew everything. Well Natali thought, might just store him away and perhaps he can deal with it later.

Sparks went below and to the crew quarters. On the way he passed the chow area and he wanted a bit to eat. As he scrambled about, Randolph, one of the cooks, came out and looked at Sparks and said:

"What you doin here, y'all better get off afore Mr. Chief sees y'all."

Sparks decided to be nice and not too formal and told Randolph:

"I am part of crew, my name is Sparks, Sparks Squirrel, I am assigned to the fire control team, I will work with Petty Officer Natali, we are in Lt Marsh's team. Is he on board?"

Randolph smiled and said:

"Well I be damned, a talking squirrel, I guess we won't have y'all for dinner tonight."

Sparks had a shudder of abject terror go down his spine. This was the first time he knew he was in the south. Imagine the cruelty, eating a squirrel, how barbaric, and he thought that they thought the Japs were bad! He better get through this war quickly.

He ran up to the Combat Information Center, the IC, where the fire control equipment was, and there was Lt Marsh. He saw him bent over the targeting board and computer and he tapped on the door.

Marsh turned around and did not see him at first but in a second he notices the little grey fur ball at the door. He immediately recognized him and said:

"Sparks, welcome aboard, good to see you got here in one piece, no rebel squirrel hunters along the way?"

Sparks had heard that Marsh was a salty character having worked his way up from enlisted even being a Chief Petty Officer at a young age. But Sparks liked Marsh, and it appeared that the feeling was mutual. Marsh said:

"Sparks, hop up here, tell me about this radar we are installing, I hear you worked with the wiz kids up there in Boston, MIT I hear."

Sparks jumped up and Marsh and Sparks spent a few hours going over the details. Sparks had a lot of experience since he had done a few dozen installs and also had tested them at sea. It was clear that he and Marsh had bonded, not like the relationship with Natali, who was more interested in just getting the job done. Sparks could understand.

At the end of the talk, Marsh turned to Sparks and said:

"Well Sparks, we might as well make you a Petty Officer as well, you have the training and you need a pecking order on the ship. So Sparks, you are now Petty Officer Third Class, Fire Controlman, Sparks Squirrel, welcome aboard."

### **10.5 Pearl Harbor**

The ship set sail from Charleston escorting a carrier through the Panama Canal. On route they hit a massive Atlantic storm, and the ship tossed and turned as it pitched and rolled in the waves trying to keep up with the carrier. The men were getting terribly ill for the first time, there was no place to hide or ride it out, they just had to get through it. Sparks was atop a bunk with the crew but he kept getting thrown to the top or slammed to the deck.



Sparks finally thought it best to go back to his station atop the radar, just behind the antenna, so up he scurried, and sat there, tail curled safely atop his head, like any good squirrel, in the weather, but safe from the storm. The view of the waves help calm him and the sight of the carrier at a distance was a sight to behold. He felt he was a true sailor for the first time.

In less than a week they made Panama, the east entry to the canal. Sparks was atop the Director, the fire control spotting system atop the ship, and it gave him a great view of the canal and its environs. He watched the vegetation, Palm trees and other tropical plants, of the types he had never seen before. He wondered what these tropical nuts were like. They passed through the canal and started north to San Diego to refuel and get the remainder of the crew.

In San Diego Sparks found a tremendous Naval Base, and outside of that it was a desert which went well up to the mountains. This was a hostile place, except the water, and he wondered why anyone would live here. They spent minimal time replenishing and getting the new men aboard. He was now a seasoned seaman, having gone through the canal and weathered the Atlantic storm. Yet now they were to sail west into harm's way.

But first they set out to Pearl Harbor, one final stop before battle. The trip from San Diego to Pearl was uneventful, for on a ship there is always work, from running drills, to testing equipment, firing guns, to just chipping paint. Four hours on and four off, day after day, no breaks, no place to go, just sleep, eat, work, and do it again. Sparks was getting better atop the Director, Mr. Marsh was getting the entire team at top level, they could hit a fly with the 5" gun at 5,000 yards! Sparks could always double check and redirect if necessary.

Then they arrived in Pearl. Sparks was atop the mast, trying to get the first view, and when he did, he called below, "Pearl ahead!"

When they arrived at Pearl they had a few days of leave and they took advantage of it. One of the seamen, Homer Burns of Tennessee had befriended Sparks, they both loved the woods and traded stories about life back home, and Homer and his other mates took Sparks with them to see the town.

At this point I stopped the tale and asked Antnee:

"You mean to tell me that Homer and the crew took Sparks with them to well, you know, see Pearl?"

Antnee replied:

"Sir, you seem to miss the point entirely. These were young men, never before lose on the town, and they needed something to, well Sir, stand out amongst the locals."

I interjected:

"You mean the used Sparks to hit upon the ladies?"

Antnee paused not really knowing how best to answer, and then he said:

"Well, you are correct Sir, Sparks, well how do we say it Sir, Sparks is cute, is that the word, a cute squirrel. Yes indeed Sir, a cute squirrel is a way to again how do you say it Sir, the way to a woman's heart."

I paused and replied:

"So what you are telling me is that Sparks was a "Chick Magnet" and Homer and the boys took whatever advantage they could of their crew mate."

Antnee was now boxed in a metaphorical corner and he said:

"Indeed, Sir, perhaps your choice of words could be a bit more elegant yet I believe Sir that it reflects the facts at the time, yes indeed, it does."

Antnee went on to tell how the crew went through Pearl, danced their nights away, especially good old Harold Olson, who seemed to have no need for sleep, and whenever they needed a new batch of dance partners they shoved Sparks to the fore and he did his stuff.

After three days of leave they headed back to the ship and when Mister Marsh saw Sparks slowly limping up the plank he burst out laughing. He said to Sparks:

"Well where is my little sprite, my jumping little friend, Sparks, you look worse than the rest of the crew, you are a mess, go aloft and get some sleep!

Sparks dragged himself atop the Director and slept for what felt like three days. For when he awoke they were at sea and Pearl was nowhere to be seen.

### ***10.6 Sparks the Pollywog***

The ceremony of "crossing the equator" most likely dated back to the British Navy. In the US Navy it had become a sometimes brutal ceremony and at times led to men being severely injured. There are several characters in this drama. Those who have already crossed the equator are nicknamed Shellbacks, and are often referred to as Sons of Neptune, the ones who have not yet crossed the Equator are nicknamed Pollywogs.

The collection of masters of ceremonies include King Neptune and his Court (usually including his first assistant, Davy Jones and other similar dignitaries, who are all represented by the highest ranking seamen) who officiate at the ceremony. In this ceremony the Pollywogs undergo a number of tests, ordeals, and initiation steps (wearing clothing inside out and backwards; crawling on hands and knees on nonskid-coated decks; being swatted with short lengths of fire

hose; being locked in stocks and pillories and pelted with mushy fruit; crawling through chutes and large tubs of rotting garbage; kissing the Royal Baby's belly coated with axle grease, hair chopping, etc.), largely for the entertainment of the Shellbacks. Once the ceremony is complete, the new Pollywog receives a certificate declaring this new status.

The Grant was no exception. For many of the men this was another step in their Navy introduction and frankly was a day off from the tedium of their daily tasks, many of which involved the chipping of paint and the swabbing of decks. However, this was an egalitarian ceremony and included all, and that meant all officers as well. On the Grant all officers except one participated freely, and that one apparently had to be dragged down to meet Davy Jones.

Then Antnee said in almost total horror:

"Then, Sir, as part of this barbaric human festival, they shaved the men's heads, totally Sir, and then it came to Sparks, you see Sir he was at the end of this head shaving line. Then Sir, horror just to think, they, well I almost cannot bring myself to say it Sir, they shaved his tail! The thought of such an act."

I interjected:

"You mean he looked like a rat?"

Never before has Antnee scowled at me to such a degree. I immediately responded:

"I mean Antnee, not that he was, or you were, or in fact any squirrel could ever be mixed up as a , well you know, Oh forget I said that, tell me what happened next."

Antnee continued:

"Well Sir, the ceremony passed, and Sparks was now admitted to that most honored society, and I believe Sir, the first American squirrel ever so admitted to the Domain of King Neptune."

### ***10.7 Hollandia and Truk***

They set sail south west towards New Guinea, north of Australia, where the Japs had taken hold. General MacArthur wanted to moved his forces and take control of the jungle infested island. No man could go there it was so thick with vegetation.

The Grant was to assist in what was called picket duty, just sailing around as the battleships did their firing.

New Guinea is a large island just north of Australia. New Guinea is a mass of mountains and forests, tropical rain forests, wet, hot, humid, dense vegetation, impenetrable by anything but

human legs, and then only slowly. Strategically it provided little long term, yet short term it would be MacArthur's proving ground, a territory to commence his redemption.

The Japanese had occupied its northern coast and had entrenched themselves in there in a secure manner. It was defended by both land and air and it represented a gateway to Australia. MacArthur saw this as a way to step to the Philippines. New Guinea is shown in the map below. The Japanese presence represented a knife aimed at the heart of Australia and a path back to Manila. It was essential for MacArthur to control all of New Guinea.

Hollandia is a port in west central New Guinea on the northern coast. It is now in Indonesia. The entire island of New Guinea is a thick jungle and the crew of the Grant recall almost to a man the thickness of the vegetation and often wondered how the Army would ever hack their way through that growth.

Captain Nisewaner had gotten a message that there was an American pilot shot down and was in need of help. The Skipper called Marsh, who suggested sending Sparks ashore, for he alone could get through the jungle, for as they say he had been born in it.

So the Skipper brought the ship so close to shore that he almost scraped the bottom, and then Sparks took a leap from the starboard side down to the water and swam ashore about thirty yards. The Skipper and Mr. Marsh watched his progress as he ran for the trees and scampered up the huge palms, then he disappeared. They gave Sparks a small signaling light so he could get back to them.

Quartermaster Gilbert was watching for the signal as the three men stayed motionless on the starboard side, exposing themselves to enemy fire, but seeking the airman.

In the mass jungle, Sparks found it humid but he could jump from tree to tree just as he had done at home, all the old instincts came back immediately. He could see some Japs below but they were hiding, and they did not have the pilot. He must have covered more than five acres and no sign of the man.

He scampered back to the palm at the edge of the beach and relayed his lack of progress. The Skipper was getting pressure to get away from the shore so Sparks was ordered back.

His first time on enemy territory was not that bad, yet he felt empty that he did not find the pilot.

Antnee then said:

"Sir, the men were so proud of Sparks when he came back. You see Sir, he had risked his life for some other American, and that was considered a heroic feat. The officers invited him that night to dine with them. Why the cook even made him his favorite, peanut butter crackers and cashews, a true feast Sir, verily a true feast for an Squirrel."

They spent a few more weeks just sailing around.

Antnee recalled:

"Sir, Picket duty was a lousy assignment and as a "junior can" they assisted in dropping off MacArthur personal belongings when he moved from Australia In Hollandia and there were natives, Sir, who came up to ship and sold shells and sandals. The Crew bought some for coins. And Sparks wanted to get some pretty shells to wear around his neck, but alas Sir they were too heavy."

### ***10.8 Saipan, Tinian and Palau***

Antnee then moved to their next destination, Saipan. He prefaced this with a sense of doom. He began:

"Sir, Hollandia and its surroundings were just a support effort Sir, they tried to shoot off the guns but the jungles were too dense. But now Sir, they were off to Saipan, a truly deadly encounter Sir, truly deadly. There would be many Marines there attacking, and this time Sir, the Grant would have to show her best. And indeed she did."

Antnee now became somewhat a military historian for he said:

"The Saipan invasion, Sir, was scheduled for June 15, 1944 and that was just a week after D Day in Europe, Sir, just a mere week. Although not as all-encompassing as the invasion in Normandy, Sir, the invasion of Saipan was critical to the US ability to strike the Japanese at their home targets. It created a secure base to bring the threat of a strike directly to the homeland of Japan Sir, right to their very homeland. For Sir, they had just started deploying the long range B 29s and they could make Japan from Saipan."

The Grant was just one of the many players in that action but for most of the crew it would be their first true war action. Half the officers had seen some form of combat and men like Hamill had been at Guadalcanal and prior battles where both landings and attacks from the Japanese fleet were dual threats.

Antnee continued:

"The Grant, Sir, well it played a much larger part in the seizure of Saipan and Tinian, much larger Sir, much larger indeed. In this operation it provided gunfire support for the landing forces. The Grant achieved some distinction in this affair because the accuracy of its 5" gun support. Well Sir, you know who did that, Sir, indeed you do. It was Sparks, atop the Director, that squirrel eyed fire control man, he was now petty officer second class, he was on the move Sir, on the move.

"Well Sir they also had on board a war correspondent named Jim Bishop who wrote an interesting feature entitled Sniper Ship on our part in the affair for the Saturday Evening Post. The Grant was

known for the accuracy of our gun fire indeed Sir, but no one wanted to leak the secret weapon, no indeed, that was truly top secret, squirrel aiming support, "SAS", as they called it, it gave the guns almost pin point accuracy. They kept Sparks out of the way of Mr. Bishop, for that would give too much away to the enemy, indeed it would Sir."

"In fact, Sir, it was during the Saipan and Tinian actions when the Grant managed to develop and perfect its gunnery prowess. It also obtained publicity for its prowess as a sniper ship, firing precisely at enemy locations which were significant distances away. This battle showed how effectively the destroyer could be a precision long range firing platform. The use of the director, the stable element and the computer allowed the Grant and other similarly equipped destroyers to aim at and hit targets with amazing accuracy. In the Saipan and Tinian engagement the Grant had extensive opportunities to demonstrate its expertise and to fine tune it to the highest level."

Antnee also continued to detail some of the events:

"Sir, when off Saipan they spotted two LCI boats coming their way. When they within hailing distance we were asked if we had a Doctor and, if so, could we help as they had a number of wounded Marines on board and only one medic who could not cope with all the horrendous wounds of his men."

"Well Sir, the whole crew turned to with a will, carrying the wounded men on board, setting up accommodations, running the Marines' filthy uniforms through our laundry, preparing as fine a meal as we could put together for them and all the while our Doctor and our Pharmacist Mates took over the medical chores. "

"Well Sir, once the wounded were patched up, they were all re-embarked in their LCIs and off they went. We were left to once again contemplate our good fortune in having Grant to call our home and our haven. Also we wondered briefly just how our beaten up Marines really felt about us. We knew that they envied us our life style though they did say they'd be glad to once again be on dry land."

"Then Sir, on a bright morning, as we more or less drifted by, Mr. Marsh called from his gun director that he had a "target of opportunity" and could he "test" his gunnery with one five inch shell. You see Sir Sparks had sighted a collection of the enemy who were firing on the Marines from a shack on a hill on the island. When given the location the Captain put his binoculars on the hill side as did I. There, racing up toward the shack were three Jap soldiers with guns slung over their shoulders. Without giving the matter too much thought Andy sent word back to Jerry. "OK Jerry, but just one."

"Well Sir, that's all they needed. Sparks heard Mr. Marsh's order, "Number five gun, prepare to fire." and he knew he better hold on to the Director for he was in for it. The number five gun turret, located on the fan-tail at the stem of the ship, was far enough away from the bridge so that there was no muzzle smoke nor anything to interfere with our line of sight. Controlled by Sparks atop the Director, #5 gun fired just as the three enemy were opening the shack door. We

could see our shell's tracer as it went through the door a second or two after the door had slammed shut. The shack and its contents disintegrated. Sparks was shocked, for this was the first time Sir, that he saw what he was really doing. You see, Sir, we squirrels are not a predatory species by nature Sir, we have our fights, but they never end in any harm, and here Sparks and Mr. Marsh had sent one of their shells right slap in the middle of the front door of an enemy shack. It sent Sparks thinking."

### ***10.9 Surigao Straits***

The ship did other duty over the remainder of the summer and through the early fall but they were now focused on the return to the Philippines. This would be a massive attack by General MacArthur and his forces.

In mid-October 1944 a massive number of ships approached the Philippines for the invasion. MacArthur wanted to land at Leyte and then go north. The Grant was to be part of Admiral Oldendorf's group protecting the southern passage in the Surigao Strait. The Grant was part of DESRON 56, a three ship Destroyer attack group.

Sparks took his battle position atop the Director. The radars were turning and the SG and Mark Radars were sending out their pulses and the returns being watched. The CIC was in full readiness, and Nisewaner was at the helm. Hamill was there also as the XO and going back and forth to the CIC.

At 3:35 in the morning in total darkness, DESRON 56 started its run, this was to be a torpedo run and Sparks was communicating with Lt Pfeiffer in charge of the torpedoes. Sparks, with his infrared vision and long range and great sense of motion could sense the Japs at a distance. He kept in communications with both Hamill and Pfeiffer.

Pfeiffer kept adjusting the torpedo ranging system since they needed to launch as many as possible in a spread so that if they were properly timed they could hit their target.

Nisewaner had brought the Grant to full speed following in the last position of DESRON 56, and Sparks at the top of the Director could feel the power of the Grant's engines as they churned up the water moving at top speed towards the Jap fleet. The ship rolled ever so slightly but he was being thrown about by the pitching due to the speed.

At 3:46 they reached the firing range and they followed the other two ships like a flea on a dog. Sparks knew they were in for it now. He could see the Japs at a few miles range, his vision was almost perfect and he kept communicating to Lt Pfeiffer who kept adjusting the torpedo range system.

At 3:50 Sparks yelled down to the CIC, and Hamill got the message with a sense of dread, he yelled:

"Incoming, Yamashiro firing, incoming, Mogami firing...incoming, Shigure firing."

Sparks started giving out the range and angles, and no sooner had he finished than a 16" shell went over his head, and he could feel his fur burning with the heat, then it exploded, almost knocking him off the mast. He hung on ever so tightly and re-sent the coordinates to Lt Pfeiffer who set the torpedoes for firing. Then a shell hit the ship, a great explosion, and fragments went up and sliced Sparks' tail almost off. Not too much pain and he hung on again.

At 3:57 they started firing the torpedoes, they are sent loose and Pfeiffer tries to get the torpedoes which were hit also away so they do not explode and sink the ship.

At 4:04 all torpedoes are sent loose and the ship has now completed its mission.

At 4:06 the cruiser Denver, under the command of one Capt. Bledsoe, disregards his own CIC and orders firing on the Grant. The first shell goes over Sparks' head and this time he knows it is not a Jap, he snaps his head around and can actually read USS Denver on the projectile as it just misses the Grant. He snaps his head around to tell the CIC but then another shell smashed the radar and the communications antenna totally off. The ship is now unable to communicate. Sparks calls Quartermaster Gilbert using his flash. Gilbert is on the bridge and Sparks tells Gilbert it is the Denver firing and they are continuing to fire.

As he is telling Gilbert two Denver shells hit the Grant amidships, and then a third Sparks watches as it literally goes under the CIC, in on one side and out the other. Sparks knows they are using armor piercing shells and that is good since they work on Battleships but not on the foil thin walls of the Destroyer.

At 4:07 shells hit the Grant. He tells Gilbert to reach the Oldendorf by lamp on the Pennsylvania, which Gilbert immediately does. Oldendorf orders Denver to cease fire, but just before doing it the Denver sends another volley which slams into the side of the Grant and one of the shells explodes in the forward engine room, and the explosion throws up metal which cuts right through Sparks' leg and side. Now he is tail-less and he is bleeding from the other two wounds but he holds his position.

4:10 Sparks holds his position as Gilbert continues to communicate. Sparks is providing updated information on the position of the enemy ships but he is getting weaker by the minute from the blood loss and shock.

At 4:20 the Grant is now dead in the water. Sparks cannot hold any longer and he drops down to the top of the Director and manages to crawl to secure himself.

The other Destroyers came along side to assist the Grant. Nisewaner maintained the ship afloat and by dawn she was being towed. She would live to fight another day.



Sparks was brought down to the Officer's Mess and laid with the other wounded crew. He saw the other men and drew himself up and went to the coffee table and sat there. He was getting better and the bleeding stopped. He told the crew to work on the truly wounded, for frankly he would get better or not and frankly it was not as if there was a great deal of squirrel blood aboard anyhow.

At about 7:00 he fell asleep and when he awoke he felt much better. He ate and drank a bit, someone had bandaged his wounds while he slept, so he now walked around comforting the men. They enjoyed that.

The men killed in action were to be buried on Leyte. Their bodies were assembled on the bow of the ship. The fantail had been hit. They were to be transferred by boat to the shore and from there slightly inland to a cemetery prepared by the Army. It was there that they were to be buried.

Lt. Pfeifer led the crew members on the detail ashore and up to the cemetery. The heat and humidity were oppressive and the Army had facilities to bring the bodies to the cemetery. Sparks wanted to go with them and despite his wounds he did. He would scout out since he could move quickly through the trees.

The way up to the burial ground was one sinking path in mud after another. The Army were somewhat prepared with combat boots but sailors were less prepared, mud just oozed everywhere, and there path up to the cemetery was a slippery slope. Looking at the graveyard one saw a temporary and hastily made plot of land filling rapidly with the dead. Sparks fortunately could jump from tree to tree, many of which were split from the bombardment, but he hated the mud as much as all the others.

There were more dead coming from the battle off Samar as well. This graveyard was nothing more than a cleared part of the jungle, with quickly prepared grave markers. There was a strong sense of added sadness to have to leave the men here, and many thought that burial at sea, as all sailors understand, would have been more dignified.

Sparks looked about at the death and destruction and he recalled the moment on Saipan when they shelled the Japs. This was many times worse. War is hell he thought.

### ***10.10 Back to Mare Island***

Antnee was now in full serious mood and I was fascinated by the detail he was bringing to this tale:

"The Grant was now a patched quilt of metal and men, Sir, but it was to make it. The Navy Tug the Chickasaw had managed to repair the sides and keep the ship afloat. There was one engine working and there was limited room aboard to do anything. Men had been transferred to the Hospital Ship USS Mercy and the ship's crew was now almost half of its prior contingent, but

Sparks insisted on staying aboard. Between the holes, the loss of the crew, the space on the ship still inaccessible, and the fact that the Japanese Fleet had just come down from the North and almost destroyed the remainder of Kinkaid's resources in the 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet, this had not been a good few days for the Grant."

"You see Sir, after the battle, the Grant was afloat but it needed serious repairs Sir, serious repairs. Well Sparks, despite his wounds helped out with the lookout as they sailed back to Mare Island. You see Sir they had no radar, it was blown off as you remember Sir, along with parts of Sparks. Yet for the entire trip, day and night. Sparks sat atop the mast and surveyed the horizon, day after day, mile after mile, his eyes Sir seeing both in daylight and in the darkest hours of the moonless nights Sir, a true sentry to protect the men and his friends. It was his duty Sir to see that nothing more would befall this valiant ship. The Captain trusted him up there, hour after hour and it was Mr. Marsh Sir who had him come down for food and water. For he would only follow Mr. Marsh, who he respected and trusted."

Antnee continued:

"The Grant made it to Manus, where it could be repaired. When it arrived at Manus they anchored near the USS Mount Hood, an ammunition ship. The Grant was soon ordered to the floating dry dock which had been brought to Manus. The Grant took our position in the dry dock alongside the USS Honolulu. Tokyo Rose then announced that the Japanese would sink the dry-dock and the Honolulu and the destroyer that was in the company with her. "

"Can you imagine that Sir, Tokyo Rose, a truly evil person she was Sir, truly evil. This didn't happen Sir, but we had one more burial service to attend. This happened because we left Leyte with one man unaccounted for. This man was a Chief Watertender whom we called Pop. Sparks remembered him and Sparks would from time to time go below decks to the engine room and to the steam room. Sparks never really liked that Sir, he enjoyed being up high, even if he became a target Sir, for then he was back in his own territory."

You see Sir, the Chief, old PoPs, he was a small wiry man whom we all respected. He was older than most of the other crew members. But he had sons in the war and felt he should be in it too, regardless of age and draft status. Sir, he was a true patriot Sir, a man devoted to his country. The fire room, his battle station, had been flooded during our troubles and Pop was found at Manus when the compartment was pumped out. Pop was to be buried in the American cemetery at Manus along with the men who had fallen to take the island."

"The men walked up to the cemetery on Manus and Sparks went with them. His wounds were now starting to heal. He was happy he was still a young squirrel. The cemetery was a beautiful place. It was on a hill overlooking the harbor and the ships at anchor there. When we had buried our shipmates at Leyte I had hated the mud and thought that burying them at sea where they had died would have been preferable. But the cemetery at Manus was a beautiful place."

"The grave markers were placed in perfect order and the view was beautiful. Yet as we went about our work an explosion occurred in the harbor, it was the ammunition ship, and Sparks and the other men just hit the dirt, Sparks splayed out next to Hamill and Pfeiffer. Sparks just looked at Mr. Pfeiffer and blinked his eyes in disbelief, it was if they were back in battle."

Antnee then went on:

"They left Manus Sir and sailed back to Mare Island just inland a bit from San Francisco. They just about made it Sir, the water ran out, the fresh water, just at the entry to the harbor, so the Captain, Higgle Sir, told BB Lyons the engineering officer to run salt water and burn out the boilers but it would get them to Mare, and it did."

"Sparks and the other crew were let on leave. So Sparks went down to Berkeley and that is where he met you, yes Sir, you met old Sparks, right there in Berkeley."

I stood up and was totally amazed wondering if this was totally made up or perhaps this teller of squirrel tales had managed to intertwine all humanity and squirrelhood! I said:

"Antnee there are times when I wonder if you are shall we say stretching the truth."

He replied with a strident manner:

"Sir, I tell only the facts, as have been recorded, and yes indeed Sir, perhaps you were too young to remember by Sparks met you while you lived in Berkeley. You see he had befriended your dad and one day when he was in the park there just off the main road, Sparks was sitting eating some peanuts, enjoying the weather when he saw your dad with you in a stroller. The three of you spent the afternoon together, yes indeed Sir you were very much liked by Sparks, why Sir you fed him cashews!"

He continued:

"Sir, it was also then that they were awarded their medals. The Captain and Mr. Marsh had recommended Sparks for the Navy Cross, for his gallant work protecting the ship during the battle, he just stayed up where the radar was as the shells went by and directed the ship so as to avoid as many as possible and to tell the other ships where they were. He totally disregarded his safety for the sake of saving the men on the ship. It was a nice ceremony, and Sparks was speechless, for it was allegedly the first time a squirrel had been given such a medal since the famous Major Nathaniel Squirrel under George Washington himself, a great honor Sir, a very great honor."

Antnee finished:

"And Sir, for Sparks, the best part was that they made him a Chief, Chief Petty Officer, Sparks Squirrel,"

### ***10.11 The Philippines and MacArthur***

Antnee then moved on to another venue. This time the Philippines and MacArthur. He said:

"They soon returned to battle Sir, quite soon. And Sparks was on board. They were to return to the Philippines and there they were to support MacArthur as he did his victory lap, called the MacArthur Cruise."

The MacArthur cruise started June 6, 1945 and ended July 7, 1945. There would be the new captain and the new XO. Higginbotham was the new Captain and was by now somewhat well-known and Slater was brand new as XO.

Elkert had known Slater as the Gunnery Officer, he had replaced Jerry Marsh, and now he was promoted to XO replacing Hamill. The Navy always moved the people around, and this even included the enlisted men as well. Replacements for the men lost, dead and injured from Leyte, had been replaced and were now integrating into the crew.

MacArthur actually went ashore in Brunei leaving the Boise and Grant like sitting ducks in the midst of a raging battle. His Tour was a wandering with intermittent stops where he went to meet the troops, wanting to see the front personally. MacArthur was on and off the Boise with the Grant carefully playing picket, and a local protector.

The Grant crew were to be "on" at all time, this was not typical destroyer duty. To many of the crew there was a sense of wasting time while others had fought. This tour duty was not what a fighting ship was for. MacArthur was never one to see the Navy as anything more than a means to an end...and in fact he disapproved of Nimitz and the Marine approach of attacking so aggressively, despite his own approach to the retaking of the Philippines.

Higginbotham recalls many of the details of the cruise:

"We received the operation order for the invasion of Borneo at Brunei Bay, and proceeded to Manila to escort the cruiser U.S.S. Cleveland (CL-55) in which General Douglas MacArthur was embarked. Cleveland's other escort was the destroyer U.S.S. Killen (DD-593), commanded by Jamie Semmes, class of 1936.

As many of the troops taking part in the invasion were Australian, we embarked an Australian Army major to serve as liaison officer during gunfire support of the troops ashore. After sailing from Manila, we joined the rest of the invasion task force and steamed south to Borneo. We entered Brunei Bay just before dawn, and soon thereafter a lone Japanese plane was sighted heading our way, but he turned away before he came within range of gunfire. The landing went smoothly with very little resistance. We fired several gunfire support missions against enemy targets in response to requests from the troops during the day.

At night we took station very close to the beach and fired star shells at intervals to illuminate areas in front of our troops to guard against a surprise counter attack. It had been a long day. By midnight I had been on the bridge for 40 hours, and I told the Officer of the Deck, Lt. B.B. Lyon, that I was going to get a couple of hours sleep and to call me only in emergencies.

We remained in the area for a day or so, and then escorted the Cleveland back to Manila. The next operation was the invasion of Balikpapan on the east coast of Borneo.

Once again we were assigned to escort the Cleveland with General MacArthur embarked. Upon joining the task force, we were headed for our position in the screen when we lost feed water pressure to the forward fireroom boiler which was supplying steam to the turbines driving the starboard shaft. The boiler had to be secured and, as steam pressure was lost, the lubricating pumps supplying oil to the turbine bearings stopped.

### ***10.12 Borneo and More Animals***

During this period the ship picked up some new passengers. No one remembers where or when but they all remember it was on Higginbotham's watch. The friends were the monkey, the dog, and the goat.

Sniper, the dog, was given a home on deck. He had a house, was sheltered from the sun, had food and water, was looked after, walked, talked to, and had a large extended family. Sniper's home was further glorified with an official Navy stencil of his name and his home was airy so he was comfortable no matter what the weather. Then there was the monkey. No one recalls exactly where this guy came from. However they do remember that it was with Higgie in command and that it frequently caused one racket after another. It drank, smoke, spit, screamed, and other functions one would most commonly expect out of a monkey, or a five year old!

Antnee then said:

"Sir, Sparks and Sniper got along quite well Sir. You see Sir, in reality dogs and squirrels just like to play, and frankly dogs are rather dumb but they can be good playmates. So Sparks would spend time with Sparks, as the sailed from place to place."

Antnee then said:

"But Sparks also does have a memory of the monkey, actually two monkeys, Sir, and monkeys are not really nice Sir, they think they are smart, but they act like children Sir, nasty children at that, and with two, Sir, it was chaos and the crew just thought it was fun."

"At one of our stops at Zamboango, while we were anchored off shore, some natives rowed out to the ship in a dugout canoe and traded two monkeys to one of our crew for a couple of cotton mattress covers. I knew nothing of this until the boat had left the ship and the monkeys were brought to the bridge to get my permission to keep them."

"Since the alternative to keeping them was to throw them overboard, the monkeys remained. They loved to climb the mast and ride around on the rotating radar antenna with their tails swinging in the wind. We later lost one of the monkeys when we went alongside a tanker at sea for underway fueling. He scampered across the fuel hose between ships and the last I saw of him he was riding around on the tanker's radar."

Antnee got rather specific:

"Sparks got real mad at this point Sir, imagine a dumb and nasty monkey taking up residence at a key lookout point, a key point Sir. And why, well Sir because the men gave it alcohol, yes Sir, a drunk monkey!"

"The Monkey sat on top of radar, the SG rotating radar. He especially liked this when he had been drinking, the "pink lady juice". The Monkey was also given cigarettes the crew would smoke them down and give the monkey the short hot burning cigarette. The monkey would never learn, he would always try to eat the cigarette, and then get his tongue burned and run around screaming his head off."

Antnee finished:

"Well Sir, you can see things had gotten a little lax here, the Japs well Sir they were retreating and the battles were closer in, and this really was a good break for the men Sir, a good break indeed, for the next step was invasion."

### **10.13 Victory**

The Grant was on its way north in anticipation of the invasion of Japan. It was August, 1945 and the heat on the surface was intense for many weeks but they were heading north to the Aleutians for preparation. In a strange way they had the tropic heat of August and the anticipation of the chill of the Alaskan islands in anticipation. Sparks was a bit concerned since he had shed all of his winter fur and most likely could not grow back a coat in time. The crew had gotten together to make him a winter jacket, just in case.

He was so proud because it was made from a real Navy winter gear coat, with sheep skin inside and they had painted his name and rank on the coat, CPO Sparks! He was now a fully accepted member of the crew. He even had a bunk in the Chief's quarters, not an officer, but almost!

It was August 6th, they were heading north at 20 knots, and the sun was just rising in the east. Sparks was restless and he went to the CIC, and he saw Lt Pfeiffer there as well. They smiled and looked at the rising sun, another day.

Sparks went to the helm and there was Capt. Higginbotham sitting next to the yeoman watching the due north course, and from time to time looking at the sun slowly rise.

The Captain turned and said to Parks:

"You are up early Chief, what is the problem, just nervous?"

Sparks replied:

"No Captain, just thinking what else we have to do. I have checked out the new radar, seems to work well, they boys back in Cambridge seem to have gotten the ghosts out of it. I met with Mister Slater, he is in the CIC as well. I just wanted to be certain we can detect any enemy aircraft, no problems, just to be certain."

Higgle responded:

"Chief, we are all on edge, just hang in there, keep the men happy and working."

Sparks replied:

"Aye-aye Captain, I am back to the CIC."

Sparks jumped off the edge of the window in front of the helm and ran backwards behind the helm to the CIC, that inner sanctum where all elements of the ship were connected.

When he got there he saw the radio man, and he had just handed the XO, Mr. Slater a decoded message. Slater turned white as a ghost! Sparks was terrified, he wondered what may have happened. He jumped atop the CIC command table and said:

"Excuse me Mr. Slater, Sir, but may I be of assistance, it appears that we may have a problem, Sir."

Slater turned to Sparks and said:

"No Chief, we may have no more problems. It seems we just dropped an atomic bomb, whatever that is on Hiroshima, and one bomb took out the whole goddamned city!"

Sparks was taken aback. He never thought that such destruction was possible, but he had heard rumors back at Harvard, just rumors, but it appears that they came true.

Slater turned and ran to the Helm to tell the Captain. The war was still on but they all thought that there was a chance that the Japs would surrender. At least the prayed for it.

The word spread around the ship, and as usual rumors accompanied it. Sparks as one of the Chiefs was to keep the crew from getting too lax and placing the ship in harm's way.

The scene repeated itself on August 9th when they heard of a second bomb dropped on Nagasaki. Sparks wondered just how much punishment it would take to get the Japs to surrender, they were acting as if they were rabid raccoons, fighting beyond all chance of success.

At this point they were well on their way to the Aleutians and they were now in the northerly currents, the blasting heat of the equator was decreasing and the air would cool somewhat at night.

Then at about 3 PM local time, they were at the edge of the dateline on the western side, on August 15th, 1945, Sparks was again in the CIC with Slater, the XO. He had just come down from the mast checking the three radar units, when the radio man came in with a decoded flash message, and it was clear from his face what was on the decode.

Slater took the message, looked at it, smiled, rubbed Spark's furry head, said:

"Chief, we are all going home!"

He then went forward to give it to Higgie.

Higgie then immediately made an all hands call:

"TO ALL HANDS, ALL HANDS, NOW HEAR THIS, NOW HEAR THIS, AS OF NOON TODAY, AUGUST 15, 1945, THE EMPIRE OF JAPAN HAS SURRENDERED UNCONDITIONALLY. MEN THE WAR IS OVER."

There were a few shouts, but many of the men just sat and cried, they went from anticipating endless bloody war to seeing their families again.

Sparks went back with his men in the fire control area and they were just in dead silence. He saw some just crying, as if a great burden had been taken from them, and in some cases remembering the men who would not be coming home. Sparks thought that this was a moment that they would have in their memories, but deep in their memories.

Antnee paused for a moment and then looked to me and said:

"Sir, you know that your father was in Sparks team, Sir, you know that?"

I replied:

"I guess I do now Antnee. So tell me what did they do."

Antnee replied:



"Well as was said, at first many just sat and wept, you father and his friend Baldy, the Torpedo man did just that, sitting on the bulk head, just rent of emotion from the past few years, but after a few minutes, well Sir, Sparks came as any good Chief would do, and rallied then, and soon that were all patting Sparks on the head, telling him he will never need that winter gear again, and then Sir, then what do you think they did?"

At this point I could imagine anything. I replied:

"So tell me Antnee."

He continued as if anyone could ever stop him:

"Well Sir, the broke out the juice, the pink juice, the torpedo alcohol. And all around the drank a toast, even Sparks, sitting atop the torpedoes they drank a toast to all going home. But then after that Sparks got a bit serious and said:

"Men, another toast, to our crew members who will not be returning, that they stay in our memory always."

There was a moment of silence and then a hearty toast to all. They hoisted Sparks on their shoulders and did a dance about the fan tail, all now a bit shaky from the juice!"

I then asked:

"Then what happened Antnee, did they just sail home, because I remember that my father did not get back till Christmas of 1945."

### ***10.14 Homeward Bound***

Antnee began:

"Well Sir, after the short time in Japan, they sailed back to Seattle, the Navy Base at Bremerton. From there, the men who were eligible to leave, almost all Sir, including your father, Sir, got on a train. Yes indeed, a train back home. You see Sir, this was the first train that Sparks ever took. He was a sea faring squirrel, Sir, from fine Yankee stock, fine Yankee stock indeed, Sir, like Lady Sara and her family, sea farers, and accomplished at that Sir. Well, with the crew they boarded a train heading first to Chicago. It was December, and as they crossed the Rockies it got awfully cold Sir, awfully cold."

"Sparks sat on the edge of the iced up window on one of those big trains, looking out and watching the land go by, trees, mountains, lakes, snow, all bringing back memories of home. No longer a bleaching sun, the heat, the salt spray, the fear of an enemy attack. The slow roll of the train and the repeating noise as the steel wheels went round and round on lengths of track, making that rick-tick noise."

"On the third day out, men sitting and sleeping in the same seats, a group of Marines came through and one saw Sparks, and said:

"Hey y'all, what all do we have here, looks like lunch!"

He took a swipe at Sparks, who had his Aleutian foul weather coat on, proud to be a Navy man. His crew mates all sat there, still in Navy uniforms, now attired with gold eagles showing they had been discharged, and then to a man jumped up to break the attack by the Marine. Needless to say this started a fight between the crew and the collection of jar heads.

At that moment an Admiral appeared at the door, on his way to the dining care, and the men slammed to attention, breaking the fight.

Antnee now became serious. He said:

"Sir, now what do you think happened next Sir, you will never believe it. Guess who the Admiral was? Why it was Admiral Oldendorf, from Leyte, the Surigao, Sir, the very same Oldendorf!"

The Admiral walked down and there was Sparks, his winter jack now ruffled, but his name quite clear, and the Admiral saw Sparks and said:

"Chief Sparks, I believe, good to see you Chief."

Antnee continued:

"Sir, well Sir, the foolhardy Marines were taken aback, for Sir you know Marines, they never retreat, but this time they had no idea what to do."

Oldendorf turned to the Marines and said;

"Men, this is Chief Sparks Squirrel, and I personally awarded him the Navy Cross and two Purple Hearts for his bravery at Surigao. He single handedly directed fire from atop the mast of his ship while enemy fire went off all about him and with total disregard for his own safety and until his ship was out of harm's way, He also assisted in fire direction which lead directly to the sinking of three Jap ships again while sustaining continued enemy fire."

The Marines stood back, for never had they heard anything like this. They just saluted the Admiral and walked away. Sparks said:

"Thank you Admiral. And Sir it is good to see you again."

Oldendorf invited Sparks to join him for dinner. The two of them bounced off together to the dining car and were good buddies for the remaining trip to Chicago. And from that point on Sparks had no fear of any assaults from Marines or anyone else.

Antnee then spoke to me in a rather personal manner:

"They changed trains in Chicago, Sir, and Sparks went to Boston with your father's friend Baldy, and they all said farewell at the train station there. Your father, Sir, patted Sparks on the head, always a good luck token, and said if he was ever in New York to drop by. They were good friends Sir, as men are in war, good friends. Sparks and Baldy got on the train to Boston, along with Lt Pfeiffer, who would go to Burlington, Vermont, from Boston, and they all arrived just less than a day later. It was Christmas Eve Sir, when the train arrived at South Station. Baldy then took a train to Worcester, Sir, Lt Pfeiffer to Burlington, and Sparks, well he was home, so he decided to walk back to Cambridge."

"It was snowing, Sir, you know that Boston snow, I gather is it worse than here, but it was snowing and Sparks, well, he managed to cross the snow swept Boston Common, he saw some old friends, and they waved, but he was intent, Sir, on getting back to the Yard, and to his family. You know Sir, he may very well have met Lady Sara in those days, she lived close by, did she not Sir, perhaps you should ask her. I truly think he did, for he had mentioned a nice young girl who was out in the snow, feeding squirrels that day, little peanut butter on crackers, just as Lady Sara does today, Sir, just as she does this very day."

I paused for a moment and looked at this rather rotund squirrel and saw that indeed Lady Sara was still stuffing these characters, and I thought that obesity was now a trans-species problem!

Antnee as is he would, continued:

"Well Sir, down Marlborough Street and over the Mass Avenue Bridge, Sir, then past MIT, and on Christmas Eve Sir, it was empty. Up to Central Square and for a moment Sir, Sparks stopped and looked in the lighted store windows, he saw a Lionel train set, just like yours Sir, and he watched it go round and round. He thought that looking here there appeared to have been no war at all, things just seemed to return to normal."

"He then went up Mass Ave, the snow getting deeper, but as any good squirrel Sir, he knew how to jump along the walls and bricks, to keep his feet dry, Sir, we are quite good at that, and then he was there, the door to the Yard, he scampered through it, around the back of the Library and there he was Sir, there he was, home!"

At this point I knew Antnee was almost at the end, he was exhausted and my chance of filling these pots was nearing zero, yet I loved this tale, for it was truly a personal adventure, the first one where I could see myself, young as I was, and at least an observer.

He continued:

"Well Sir the family was so happy to see him back and so proud. They were amazed of his Aleutian foul weather jacket and his name on the jacket, for Sir they had never seen such a thing before. Well Sir, Sparks was also happy for the jacket because he had not yet fully grown his winter coat, and of course Sir, there was that lost tail of his. Well Sir they had a wonderful Christmas eve and on Christmas Day Sir they had a feast of acorns, some corn, and pine nuts, a feast fit for a King Sir, indeed for a King."

Antnee went on just a bit more:

"Well Sir, late on Christmas day Antnee was again thinking of the many men who had not been so lucky. The many men from Harvard, the very men he had seen in this Yard, not make it home, and here he was with a medal and they did not even get home in any way. He went down to the John Harvard statue and at its base, he dug through the snow, he dug through the frozen earth, and there at the foot at the statue, in memory of these heroic men, he buried his tiny Navy Cross, given him by Admiral Oldendorf, in appreciation for the many true patriots from Harvard Yard."

I found this very touching but I did want to tell Antnee of what the situation is now. I said:

"Antnee, that was wonderful but you know that Harvard banned the NROTC years ago, they will not allow men or women to do that on the Campus any longer. Perhaps his Navy Cross should have been placed elsewhere."

Antnee replied:

"Sir, I disagree Sir, for in any true land of freedom, with men like those on the Grant, and that Sir includes Sparks, well Sir, we always have hope that they will do the right thing when the time comes Sir, for the memory of Sparks and his crew mates will always live on!"

I replied:

"Well said Antnee, well said."

**July,** hot, but not yet like August, which often settles with a vengeance, driving heat and humidity. July, is hot, and we still welcome summer, blooms are in full growth, the grass still holds the green of spring, and each day there are new surprises from mother nature. I am spending the early hours as I often do seeking out new flowers to cross, new parents to coax into producing hopefully exceptional offspring. When looking for good plant parents, one must look carefully and with total disregard for the surroundings, one look for subtleties, for shades of uniqueness, and one tries to match them in hopes of that one of a kind.

## 11 COMTESSA MARIA AND LAFAYETTE

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So there I am, plant after plant, with my pollen dishes, my note books, my tweezers, my little numbered labels, walking about as if I were some artist seeking the next note or the right hue or mixture of oils. When from the top of the fences I hear:

#

*“Allons enfants de la Patrie  
Le jour de gloire est arrivé  
Contre nous de la tyrannie  
L'étendard sanglant est levé (bis) Entendez vous dans les campagnes mugir ces féroces soldats  
Ils viennent jusque dans vos bras, égorger vos fils, vos compagnes  
Aux armes citoyens !  
Formez vos bataillons!  
Marchons, marchons, qu'un sang impur abreuve nos sillons.”*

I look up and there is Antnee, with a little beret, a red, white and blue tricolor tagged on it and with his arms out stretched and voice at full volume.

I looked up and right at him and responded when he completed his verse:

“What my dear friend are you up to this day?”

He sat atop a ginkgo branch and looked down upon me and said:

“Well good morning to you too Sir, and Happy Bastille Day!”

I suddenly realized that it was July 14<sup>th</sup> as I had already written in my field book. But why this relationship between Antnee and the French, this I had never heard before. There was that French squirrel with Washington, but he returned if I remember. But as usual I thought it best to let Antnee explain, for it was his way. And so he continued:

“And we remember one of our greatest family members on this day, for she was a true heroine, she placed her life at risk for the people, for her nation, and she was also well loved here as well, for she came here and it here where she rests. A true heroin sir, and an example for us all.”

### 11.1 Comtesse Maria

Antnee now began his tale:

“Sir, I believe you recall the great Jean Pierre Menard Ecureuil Comte des Chenes, who fought with Nathaniel Squirrel and with General Washington?”

I replied:

“Indeed I do, that really was a wonderful tale. But how does this relate to him?”

Antnee continued:

“Well Sir, you see, after the peace with England, General Lafayette stayed in American for a few years as did Jean Pierre. Then in 1785 they both returned to France and were accorded hero’s welcome wherever they went. After a while they settled down on Lafayette’s estate where Jean Pierre started a family. His eldest was a daughter which he named Maria, actually Maria Martha was her full first name, since he used Martha in recognition of General Washington’s wonderful wife, Martha, who provided him with warm chestnuts after many a cold night in Morristown. Maria was born in October of 1788.

### ***11.2 Farewell to Jefferson***

I then asked Antnee if Maria had met any of the great people when in Paris. Well, that was like uncorking a shaken champagne bottle! He began:

“Greats Sir, well let me begin, just who do you think came just after her birth, well Sir, none other than Thomas Jefferson! Yes indeed Sir, for he was Ambassador, and when he heard that Jean Pierre had a daughter, well Sir, he was over in no time at all. You see Lafayette and Jefferson, why Sir they were indeed good friends.”

“unfortunately Jean Pierre became ill in the Spring of 1789, and passed Sir, a you squirrel, it was a sad day, and as his oldest, Maria became Comtesse, taking title and land, she now had control of all the oaks sirs, a truly powerful but young squirrel. Mr. Jefferson came to call and offered his condolences, she was so happy, for he became like a second father to her, a second father indeed.”

I then interjected:

“Well what did she think of him when in Paris, how was he perceived, I have many questions.”

Antnee looked a bit annoyed but it was his way. He replied:

“Why Sir, Mr. Jefferson was a great man, he loved everyone, and being in France at that time was so stimulating. The salons, the intelligent talk, the breath of ideas, why Sir so enlightening.”

“But Sir, she loved the Jefferson children, so much fun while Maria herself was so young. Then she would sit and listen to the talk, why Sir, the come and go of so many famous people. And Mr. Jefferson himself, why he had so many books, just like you Sir, and in Paris one could get so many

more. And Mr. Jefferson loved the French, unlike many Americans who were more shall we say still English at heart.”

“Then one day Sir , old Gouverneur Morris showed up, he was from New York like you Sir, and a very wise man, he Sir had written the final version of the Constitution, a great man, but unfortunately never was able to be elected, he was a believer in a strong central government, and he and Jefferson would often not see eye to eye shall we say.”

Then Antnee started giggling to himself. I tried to stop him and asked:

“What is so funny?”

He kept it up but at a lower paces and stutters as he responded:

“Sir, the thought of eye to eye, a figure of speech, why Sir, look at me, just look at me, can any squirrel ever talk eye to eye, no way, we have eyes on the sides of our heads, good for seeing threats but, well Sir, imagine if Morris and Jefferson, well Sir, they could never see eye to eye!”

He then went into another laughing fit. I had never seen a squirrel laugh like this, in fact never seen one laugh at all. I was thinking more of the laughing and then it hit me too, eye to eye, and I laughed also.

Antnee slowly recovered. I then asked:

“So tell me about Morris, why was he there and what did he do?”

Antnee replied:

“Well Morris was representing American business interests, you see he spoke French, and Sir, he had a wooden leg, they say from jumping from some young lady’s window when her husband returned, well Sir, I gather he was a bit of a ladies man, you know what I mean Sir?”

I replied:

“I gather as much, but what of Maria?”

He continued:

“Well Sir, Maria was young, and many say quite attractive, sort of blonde grey hair, broad of hips, good teeth....”

I stopped him and said:



“Antnee, I do not need a detailed description of the alluring young squirrel, you are wandering again, just tell me of Morris, he sounds of interest.”

He caught himself and continued:

“Well Sir, Maria and Mr. Morris became quite good friends, for several reasons. Mr. Morris has known Maria’s father, and also Maria had befriended many of the young ladies in Paris, and Sir, don’t be harsh, but it was through this acquaintance that Mr. Morris was shall we say introduced into Parisian Society, and very exclusive Society if I say so myself Sir.”

I responded:

“Oh she set him up with the “hot babes” is that what she did?”

Antnee replied:

“Um, well, yes, if you say so, but remember Sir this is France.”

“Also Sir, this friendship lasted a long while, you see Mr. Morris would return as Ambassador in 1792 and stay until 1794, a very important time Sir, that I shall get to in a bit.”

“You see Sir, Mr. Morris was a very powerful man, very influential, and he would be a great assistance to Maria and her causes, as she would be to Mr. Morris, for Maria was to become a strong ally of America. Because very shortly after his arrival, the Bastille would fall, a day remembered but also a day feared.”

### ***11.3 Fall of the Bastille (July 1789)***

Antnee became quite concerned as he approached the discussion of Bastille Day. I said:

“You know my friend, on the one hand you seem to relish in the ceremony of Bastille Day but on the other hand you seem concerned by it.”

Antnee rolled his eyes around, in a way only a squirrel can do, you see their eyes are on the sides of the heads not on the front, and looking at these rolling side mounted eyeballs is a bit disconcerting. He then said:

“Well Sir, we do have fun with the beret and song, and all that stuff, but when we retell Maria’s tale it is not so much filled with anything but fear. You see, Sir, on that day she was in Paris, at the Tuilleries, a fine garden indeed, and she was visiting some friends who lived on the palace grounds. It was a warm July day, you know Sir, Paris is a bit like New York in the summer, hot, and a bit humid, but not too bad if you are in the shade and higher up on a tree. So there she was, when suddenly they hear shouts from a distance. Now Maria was young, even for us squirrels, Sir, so she was inquisitive. She and a couple of her Palace friends went off to see what

was happening. They could hear that the noise was from the Bastille area, and when they bounced from roof top to roof top, they got there in just a few minutes. Then Sir, what they saw was horrific.”

“Maria was watching as the crowd stormed through the Bastille, and they dragged the captain of the guards and six of the guards to the street, where the mob proceeded to execute them. Maria remembers the date well. She was the go-between with General Lafayette, for he had been appointed what would be Chief of the Paris Guards. Lafayette sent Maria to see what was happening and when she returned she said to Lafayette”

“General, they have captured the Bastille, the crowd has guns, ammunition, they are wild, and General they have brutally executed the captain of the guards the six guards with him, they just executed them, no trial, no explanation, why General, it is madness!”

Lafayette responded:

“Maria, calm yourself, the people see this as a symbol of tyranny, as oppression, they are doing what they see necessary, you will see, they will regain their stature.”

Maria responded:

“But General, I have great fear, why they behaved like wild animals, like some creatures seeking blood, not meat, and in fact, worse than wild animals. I am afraid General that your optimism may have no basis in reality.”

She got even more concerned and continued:

“Why General, they beheaded the seven men, cut their heads off, like some vicious hawk, but not to eat, just to destroy, and then General the crowd put their heads on stakes and they paraded around, they walked about and all cheered as they saw the bloody heads! Why General, a fury has been let loose, you must flee, truly my General, we all must flee!”

Lafayette was silent, but within moments he was approached by cheering members of the crowd that had stormed the Bastille, their leader approached Lafayette and said:

“General, we have for you the key to the Bastille, see to it that it is never used again!”

Lafayette embraced the citizen and said:

“Citizens of France, this is indeed a day for rejoicing, we are free at last from the scourge of that hellhole. I shall be certain to keep this key from ever being used again.”

At which point they all shouted approval.

Maria turned to Lafayette and whispered:

“General, I fear that you have let loose a viper whose sting shall point many unto death! General, I pray I am wrong, but I can sense that this response is but the first of many which will just result in death after death. This, General, is not the American Revolution, this the letting loose of the monsters from Hell.”

I stopped Antnee and said:

“So it appears that Maria saw what was to happen. Why did Lafayette not see the same, why did he not listen, why did he accept the key of the Bastille stained in the blood of men who had surrendered, in a sense innocent blood?”

Antnee replied:

“Why Sir, that is a question we ask ourselves again and again. Clearly Washington would never have tolerated that, and Lafayette was beloved by Washington, and clearly Maria recognized it for what it was Sir, the beginning of true evil. Those heads on spikes Sir, they were symbols, and never in the American Revolution did such acts occur, never Sir.”

Antnee was silent, one could see that this was upsetting, I had never seen him that way and he had been through many tales. He continued:

“Maria tried to tell Lafayette, she loved him like a father, but he was one with the moment. She never stopped her love and admiration, but from that moment on she was committed to save lives if she could. For she saw this just getting worse.”

I replied:

“Why Antnee, you have a great point. I wonder what made these people so different?”

Antnee replied:

“A questions for the ages, Sir, a question for the ages.”

Antnee then said:

“Well Sir, by September many were concerned. The Bastille had let loose violence that no one had expected. Maria had learned much before her father passed but she had not expected the violence. She knew of war, the Revolution and General Washington, but that was between soldiers, this, well Sir, this was changing.”

Antnee continued:

“Well Sir, Mr. Jefferson had to return in late September of 1789, and Maria went to bid him and his children a safe journey. There is a record of their talk, Sir, and it places a dark cloud on what was to come.”

Antnee went on to recall the conversation that Maria had with Jefferson.

“Well Maria and Mr. Jefferson had a few moments of conversation in his small garden. Maria said:”

“Mr. Jefferson, you have lived through a revolution in America, but I fear that what we are starting here may be much more severe. The French, Sir, are not Americans, they have many years of built up resentment, to the nobility, to the clergy, unlike America where the enemy was in a sense a distant king, here we may have those close to us, it becomes hard to distinguish who we are revolting against, my fear Sir is we revolt against each other.”

Jefferson relied:

“Comtesse, your point is well taken, and I would add the ideas of Rousseau, Voltaire, and the many others; they are the words of those who have not practiced power, they are the words all too often of those seeking to overthrow power. That may have deadly consequences. We had Tories, loyalists who were remaining with the King, they left and returned to where that political existence worked. For the most part, we are becoming a country of Americans, regional yes, but ultimately Americans.”

Maria replied:

“Mr. Jefferson, I shall keep you informed. I have befriended Gouverneur Morris, and he has agreed to forward my concerns. I am worried about General Lafayette, you see he believes in this Revolution, but he sees it as an incremental change. There are others who I hear, I can go places he cannot, and what I hear is upsetting. I hear the cries of Danton, of Marat, and of others who are arising, men of some education, writers, but not men who have led others to success through trials. My fear is that there is no General Washington, there is no Mr. Jefferson, Mr. Madison, or Mr. Morris. They are men driven by revenge, by power, and they have no idea where they want to go, no true vision.”

Jefferson replied:

“Comtesse, you are quite correct, but let us pray that this process does not cost lives.”

She replied:

“My fear Mr. Jefferson, is that little men can cause great flows of blood. I truly fear for France, and I fear for General Lafayette and his family. Have a safe journey back, and please send my best wishes to General Washington and his wonderful wife, my namesake.”

The two hugged and Jefferson returned to America. Maria was left with a deep sense of dread.

#### **11.4 Meeting Robespierre**

Antnee was now on a roll. He continued the history with the flight of Louis XVI. He said:

“Well Sir, in June of 1791, King Louis tried to escape, driven by the wife of his, that Austrian woman. I gather from my knowledge that these Austrian can be rather stubborn and strong willed. Louis you see Sir, well he was somewhat what you call wimpy, and she drove him to leave but under circumstance which would lead to capture.”

“Maria, Sir, was spending more time around the Palace, trying to gather information. By this time she had almost a hundred other friends, yes squirrels, who assisted her, she had a wonderful network, trying to understand where this was going. Why Sir she was becoming a veritable Mata Hari! Imagine, she had access to almost all the private suites, she was confidants to many, and she was more aware than any of the deathly dangerous game which was being played out in all France. You see Sir, her “agents” if we can call them that Sir, were providing information from all over the country, from Normandy to Marseille, from Lyons to Bordeaux. Why Sir, the Revolution was spreading, people saw land, they saw wealth, they saw freedom but not what was seen in America, it was freedom at the expense of those in power! Sir, I believe it is safe to say that Maria was clearly the first to recognize the evils from this Revolution.”

“In August of 1791 she is told that she should meet one Robespierre, who just moved to Rue Saint Honore, just a short distance from the Tuilleries. Why Sir her, shall we call them “friends” Sir, well her friends had been tracking him amongst many others. So she investigates, she climbs up and outside his rooms, she sees a well-dressed man, short of stature, intense, crisp looks, never smiling, always working on speeches, and with people coming and going. He was not Marat, the man of the bloody pen, not the rather rotund Danton, that lawyers turned radical who lived across the Seine, this man had a look of true evil, Sir, true evil. Maria could tell at first glance, and she felt the tension.”

#### **11.5 King Attempts Escape (June 20, 1791)**

Antnee now turned to other issues. I could tell by his pacing about, waving his arms. I had seen this before. He continued:

“Why Sir, the dumbest thing happened when the King and Queen decided to escape, June 1791, if I recall, for until then there was a chance to keep a monarchy, but alas, the poor King, driven by his Austrian wife, load all their goods in a gaudy carriage and accompanied in a manner which could only be seen as an affront to his subjects, sets out to escape France. Not that he got very far. But alas Sir this was the turning moment.

## 11.6 Conversation with Tom Paine (September 1791)

I then asked what other people Maria had met. He replied:

“Sir, many people indeed, in Paris at that time there were many coming and going, seeing what was happening with this Revolution. But one who came and looked particularly for Maria was Thomas Pain, that very same Thomas Paine who wrote Common Sense, who met and befriended Jean Pierre, in fact the two were old friends. Indeed Sir, Mr. Paine was a fine man, a bit impractical Sir, but a fine man. You see Sir he had just finished writing the Rights of Man in London and the King’s men were after him, so where does he go, frying pan to fire, but Mr. Paine did not see it that way. He arrived in Paris in April 1791 I believe and who does he see first, well Maria, Sir, yes indeed, for he was such a fine friend of her father.”

Then Antnee continued:

“Mr. Paine, Sir, why he was an idealist, a man who saw things a pure extremes, never saw the grey, the shadows, the in between. Why I recall a conversation Maria had with him after he write the Rights of Man, and the bad words by Burke in London regarding that work. Why Maria said:”

“Mr. Paine, I have read your book, it is in many ways like Rousseau, a book of ideals, but Sir, the reality of life is often not so clear.”

Paine was always one for an argument, and especially with friends, so he took no umbrage from her comment but saw it as an opportunity to expound his ideas even further. He replied:

“Ah my young friend, we must set out standards of freedom, men have rights, and the state, such as this very state here in France with a King, distorts those rights, each man has his own rights, and together as a government of equals we can govern ourselves best.”

Maria said:

“Mr. Paine you have written, if I may quote you, as follows:

*“The more perfect civilization is, the less occasion has it for government, because the more does it regulate its own affairs, and govern itself; but so contrary is the practice of old governments to the reason of the case, that the expenses of them increase in the proportion they ought to diminish. It is but few general laws that civilized life requires, and those of such common usefulness, that whether they are enforced by the forms of government or not, the effect will be nearly the same. If we consider what the principles are that first condense men into society, and what are the motives that regulate their mutual intercourse afterwards, we shall find, by the time we arrive at what is called government, that nearly the whole of the business is performed by the natural operation of the parts upon each other.”*

*Man, with respect to all those matters, is more a creature of consistency than he is aware, or than governments would wish him to believe. All the great laws of society are laws of nature. Those of trade and commerce, whether with respect to the intercourse of individuals or of nations, are laws of mutual and reciprocal interest. They are followed and obeyed, because it is the interest of the parties so to do, and not on account of any formal laws their governments may impose or interpose.*

*But how often is the natural propensity to society disturbed or destroyed by the operations of government! When the latter, instead of being ingrafted on the principles of the former, assumes to exist for itself, and acts by partialities of favor and oppression, it becomes the cause of the mischiefs it ought to prevent."*

She continued:

"So Mr. Paine, you seem to be in favor of little if any government, and further that you feel that there are shall we say natural laws, laws of nature, which come to play in human interactions of all kinds, including even commerce, and that what is best is to let them flow."

Paine replied:

"Yes Mademoiselle, you are correct. Every time we get large governments, especially hereditary ones, we have chaos."

Maria continued:

"Then Mr. Paine, I suspect that you believe that this Revolution in France will end well, yet I tell you, having seen the blood in the eyes of the people at the Bastille, men and women, I saw a savage animal, one large savage animal, arise, and Sir I have seen such animals in all guise, perhaps your views may lack an understanding of that savagery, that you focus too much on eliminating the wealth of those who inherit, and not looking closely at the evils of the masses."

Paine did not know how best to answer. He saw in Burke a defender of the king, but in Maria there was a voice of reason for the calamity of the crowd. He had not been in France when the Bastille fell, he spoke no French, yet he felt the Revolution was a worthy cause as was the Revolution in America. He focused on royalty, he did not focus on who was to take their place.

Maria and he spoke at length, many days, many times, and as she learned more of what was happening, and as Paine was seduced by the positions and praise he obtained, she saw him lured into the trap of this ever more evil crowd, a naive man drawn into a trap.

### **11.7 Meeting with Napoleon (August 1792)**

Antnee was now at a heightened level of intensity. He continued:

"The Terror Sir, the Terror had begun."

I stopped him and asked:

“Antnee, just what was this Terror?”

He replied:

“Why Sir, they began executions, the guillotine Sir, the cutting off of the heads! How cruel humans can be at times. If you were in any way suspect Sir, off with your head, a word, a look, a twist of the phrase Sir, all made you suspect. Then off with your head! There is a tale Sir of Maria in the Tuilleries, I believe it is August of 1792, and Sir, you would never guess. Let me tell the tale”

Antnee then continued the tale. Maria was in the Tuilleries, sitting atop a bench, when up came a young but quite short Captain, in a somewhat rumpled and worn uniform. He sat down upon the bench, and in a Corsican accent said to Maria:

“Mon petit, you look so sad, what is it that disturbs you?”

Maria was surprised, and then he laid out some pecans, which she loved, and down she came and ate two and then turned to the Capitan and said:

“Captain, it is this Terror, this time of decapitating men and women, for what reason, for what purpose? The King just sits, he does nothing, and death is a daily event. What is your name Captain, you sound as if you are from Corsica?”

The dark skinned young ma responded:

“I am Captain Napoleon Bonaparte, and I too wonder where all this will lead. I wonder who will gain power in the end?”

Maria said:

“I suspect that power will always be gained at the end of a gun, that the guillotine is a distraction, brutal, but a distraction. It will be men like you Captain who will eventually gain power, men of arms.”

Napoleon turned and replied:

“Young friend, I suspect you speak with great wisdom. From where do you come?”

They then spoke at length, of Lafayette, of Maria’s father and Washington. Then Napoleon said:

“You see, General Washington proves your theory, a leader, who got where he is by victories, victories at the end of a gun.”



Maria was somewhat startled by not what she heard but the way it was stated, she saw a man who saw means and power but not purpose, other than sole aggrandizement. She turned and said:

“Captain Napoleon, General Washington is a great man because he did not want power, he was asked, and he will relinquish it when he has served his time. Power Captain can be a disease, if used for a purpose and for a time it can be positive, if however sought for and used solely for personal returns, it is a malignant disease which ultimately kills the holder. So good Captain, beware such absolute power, it has within it its own seeds of destruction.”

Napoleon replied:

“So pessimistic, when there is such tumult, there is opportunity. I must go, it was a pleasure to talk.”

Maris often wondered what would become of a man like Napoleon.

It was now mid-August 1792, the heat was upon Paris, and the crowds went from day to day. Danton, Marat, Robespierre, and others argued back and forth. The Assembly met day after day. They were purging all those whom they disliked.

When Maria heard that the Assembly was to order Lafayette to relinquish his command on the next day, she knew that she must do something, and do it immediately. She first went to Adrienne and told her and then she knew she must get to Lafayette. For on the morrow, August 17, 1792, he would be commanded to be arrested and brought back to Paris, and Maria knew the result would be execution. She was in her own terror.

Thus off she went, hundreds of miles, over tree tops, hour after hour, making 20 to 25 miles an hour, stretching every muscle, stopping only for water to keep here going. Towards the Belgian border, Austrian controlled territory, always well ahead of the couriers from the Assembly in Paris with the orders, the sun coming up, now beating down, the hot August heat, as she ran, no flew from tree to tree, her muscles sore from lack of oxygen, they were working too hard, but she kept flying despite the searing muscles, the penetrating heat, the thirst, time was short, she must get there before the authorities!

I could see that Antnee was wrapped with this part of the tale, he was waving his small hands in the air, he was salivating in tune with the tension he was describing, the poor little squirrel trying to beat the men of death to the good General!

Then Antnee slowed and he said:

“Then Sir she reached Lafayette, and scrambled atop the table around which he and his staff sat. She said:”

“general, General, the Assembly, it sets out this very day to arrest you, your men, to bring all back to Paris, to Paris and death, gentlemen, you are meant to be beheaded, upon return, you must flee, forward, for there you would be imprisoned, have a chance, but backwards, death, only death!”

Lafayette and his men were stunned. They had heard of the Terror but they had been at war. But what had they done. Then he recalled what Maria had told him when the Bastille fell, the evil in men’s hearts, and he knew what he must do. He turned to his men and said:

“I believe Lady Maria has spoken well, we have no other chance if we want to see France recover than move forward and trust the Austrians. Death is certain if we stay and return, death without dignity, death without justice.”

They all agreed. Then Lafayette turned to Maria and said:

“Return to Paris, warn Adrienne, my children, especially George, they must be safe! We shall see one another again. My deepest thanks.”

They hugged, and Maria watched as under a white flag Lafayette and his officers walked across to the Austrian lines. It was an uncertain future.

I turned to Antnee and said:

“But Lafayette was arrested if I remember, held for years?”

Antnee replied:

“Indeed he was, but he lived.”

### ***11.8 Jacobins vs Girondins, Sans Culottes and Society***

Antnee was now to tell me of details, I also recognized this didactic stance, details which were to him important, but which had less to do with his prime character. I shall relate a few, but for the most part what is worth the read is his interpretation of what we may have learned in history ourselves. What I am learning as I hear these tales, is that the telling shapes the facts more than I ever thought, and the perspective of the teller is even more critical.

Antnee turned to somewhat of a lecturer:

“You see Sir, there were the Jacobins, named after the church of Saint Jacques, James to us, where they assembled, that was Robespierre, then the Girondins, another group who hated Robespierre and he got revenge in 1793 by executing them, a bold move but it set up his own overthrow, then the Moutains, those who set high up in the Assembly and of course the san

culottes, those who were common men and had straight legged pants as you wear sir, without culottes, leggings.”

“All of these small but powerful groups, and in fact many more. That was why the Revolution exploded into the terror. There was no true leader, no way to reach compromise. These men were driven by ideals, abstract ideas which had a difficult time being implemented. Maria watched them, and she remembered her father’s words, how the team of men, each a separate and distinct individual, could come together for a common deed and then go apart again, there being the need for the group but the respect and sanctity of the individual. The French Sir never had that insight, that experience.”

I sat for a bit and thought. For I had read many works explaining the Revolution, but Antnee had an observation somewhat different. It was not class warfare, it had no Marxist bent, it was not economic revolution, it was more children never having been taught manners. And this from a squirrel!

### ***11.9 The Terror Begins (July 1792)***

Antnee sat back and an almost tearful look on his face. He continued:

“The Terror Sir was a monumental evil. We blame Robespierre and Danton Sir, but Marat and his poison pen were just as much to blame. These men were not Washington, Madison, Adams, Jefferson, they were base and I believe evil men Sir, truly evil. Let me tell you what happened. Well starting in July of 1792, they began slowly but relentlessly to eliminate people, not just opponents but almost anyone. The guillotine, Sir, the guillotine. And Maria was there.”

Antnee was again on a tear:

“And then Sir, January 1793, they bring the King to Trial and he is to be executed! Why Sir Maria was devastated. She had met the King once, not a very bright man, even for Kings, something about the inbreeding Sir, you know, that was the problem of royalty, Mr. Paine was right but for the wrong reason, I guess he had to wait for Darwin and Mendel Sir. But it was a cold day, January in Paris is always cold, the King was thrown into a cart, driven to the guillotine, dragged up the steps, half clothed, shivering, his head bare, his belly jutting out from his trousers, and then thrown down onto the wooden guillotine block, still fresh with blood from a dozen before him, his head locked, and Sir, gruesome, truly gruesome, and poor Maria watched from the roof top, and for her this was the final turning point, she must get Lafayette’s family free and out of France!”

### ***11.10 Death of Robespierre (July 1794)***

I then asked Antnee:

"This sounds like an unstable plot of madmen. Robespierre seemed to be collapsing. Danton dead, Marat killed, thousands guillotined, Antnee, how did it end?"

Antnee again sat back for his exposition, and as he did so his beret fell to the ground, and he failed to notice it. He said:

"Well Sir, Comtesse Maria play a great part. You see, she had been observing Robespierre, and she saw the he was, shall we say losing it, he was falling apart, the man they called the Incorruptible, he was not corrupted, he was insane, Sir, what we now call paranoid, he saw enemies in every shadow. Thus did Maria see a way to end the bloodshed."

I stopped him and said:

"What could she have done? How could she bring an end to this?"

Antnee replied:

"Very simply, you see we can creep about, through small openings, and we can remove things that perhaps you seek to keep from others. That Sir she did."

He continued:

"You see he had spoken at length with Mr. Paine after she had him released, for he was truly at death's door Sir, truly at death's door, and Paine and she agree<sup>43d</sup> that Robespierre must be stopped. The tale goes this way Sir:"

Maria says to Paine:

"Mr. Paine, this blood shed must stop, and stop now, how can we effect this good Sir?"

Paine replied:

"We must good lady expose the man, expose Robespierre to those who fear him, and then do so before he can strike them, we must give his enemies tools to eliminate him."

Paine continued:

"I know now that he sees all as enemies, and he will try to kill off everyone who he even thinks opposes him. We also know that he sits and plans this in the secrecy of his quarters, he places these plans in writing. Thus my Lady, we must get those plans and given them to those he threatens before he acts. Then we will neutralize this evil."

Maria replied:

“Then Sir what shall I do?”

Paine relied:

“Good Lady, you must go to his rooms, secure your way in un-noticed, examine in detail his writings, and bring to me what we can use to show he has his evil intentions on those who can eliminate him. This may take a while, but I am certain this man will expose his evil ways.”

Antnee was now at full pitch. He came close with that long wet black nose, the whiskers just shaking, and the eyes, those side looking eyes now forcefully trained directly at me and said:

“Then Maria went off, to Robespierre’s rooms, and Sir, there was great danger, great danger Sir, for Robespierre had a dog, a vicious animal named Brout, a true beast Sir, a true beast!”

I replied:

“You know Antnee, when I lived in Paris I always saw women with dogs, not men, strange that he should have one, sounds like something an Englishman would do.”

Antnee became quite serious and replied:

“Why Sir, it was protection, Brout was known amongst many and a true protector of Robespierre, and for Maria to enter his rooms and search, why Sir that would expose her to great harm Sir, great harm. So off she went, and up the walls to the roof across from Robespierre, and fortune shown on her, no Robespierre, but that monster Brout, alas he was there guarding the desk. She thought, how to get him away. She looked about and spied her friend Jacques Squirrel, sleeping in a nest on the chimney across from where she was. She jumped from two roof tops and scampered up to Jacque and said:”

“Jacques! Jacques! C’est moi, Maria, c’est tres important, tres important!”

“Jacques rolled over Sir, still quite sleepy, you see Sir we are much like you, we sleep at night, and most squirrels do not like being disturbed but Jacques recognized Maria and awoke. He said:”

“Maria, why so much noise, cannot you not see that I am sleeping!”

She replied:

“Jacques, it is an emergency, I need help, I have to get into Robespierre’s room but we must get rid of Brout, that ugly dog of his, I need help now, please!”

Jacques replied:

“No problem, let me get a few friends, we can get him out.”

Jacques went off in and about five minutes came back with thirty squirrel friends, all somewhat sleepy, but all anxious to help. Jacques turned to Maria and said:

“Now what is the plan?”

She proceed to explain that the dog must be removed. To do that he must be taunted, distracted, and removed from the room. That would take about ten of the group to lure him from the room, down the stairs, then another ten to make him run in all directions, and the remaining would be guards.

So off they went, a dozen squirrels went scampering up the side of the house, like an attack of killer ants, up gutters, stairs, vines, while ten remained on the ready, once Brout came chasing them, and another ten went through the attics to guard the hall way. Maria went with the first group, leading them towards the apartment, then she jumped to the top of the open window, and waited.

Jacques was the first to tease Brout, he jumped on the window sill, and ran to take a cookies left on the night stand making sure to knock a glass down. The dog jumped up, saw Jacques and began his assault, but by that time three others went after the fruit on the bed stand, and Brout turned abruptly and went after them, smashing down the very stand he was to protect, and then three more sat at the window facing outwards, tails all aflutter, and off Brout went, through the window, down what could have been a fire escape and after the squirrels, one by one groups of three detoured him through the streets of Paris!

Alas, Maria had the chance to go through Robespierre’s desk, paper after paper, Paine had said to look for incriminating documents, then in a brief second she saw his personal note book, opened it, and there on the very first page was what she needed, the list he had compiled to execute the remaining members of the Assembly! In his own hand, a writing well known to all. She grabbed it in her mouth, then jumped up through the roof, saw Jacques, he smiled, and off she went into the Paris night, to the home of the first on his list, to his bedroom, his night stand, and sat there paper in hand letting her tail knock his water glass to the floor! He awoke, saw the list read it and immediately went in the early morning assembled all the others on the list. This would be Robespierre’s last stand. He was now doomed.

In just a few days Robespierre was tried and executed, as he had executed so many, the date July 28, 1794. The Terror had burned out, and yet no one ever knew how the list got circulated. There were many rumors. Almost immediately the executions stopped, everyone took a breath, and waited. Adrienne was now safe thanks to Morris, who intervned time and again, yet she was not totally free yet. Maria had more work to do.

### ***11.11 End of Revolution (July 1795)***

Adrienne and the girls were still imprisoned and George, Lafayette's son, he too must be saved. Maria had been working with Ambassador Morris, and they had managed to keep them from the guillotine, but poor Adrienne's sister had not been so lucky. For no reason, just because they were related to Lafayette, death and its stench lay across all of France. It was a sickness that Maria was truly detesting, her French heritage was no longer her pride, it became her shame, she thought more and more of America. She admired Morris, with his wooden leg, his foibles, yet he was a strong man, he terrified the leaders of the Revolution, why even Robespierre was fearful. Jefferson had no such effect, and even memories of Franklin were of a kind man. Morris was what they called a New Yorker, hard spoken, blunt, abrupt, threatening when necessary, and yet he could do what many others could not. And Maria had a good friend in him.

### ***11.12 Escape from France (August 1795)***

Antnee sat back and was showing signs of exhaustion. He continued:

"Well Sir, after all the heads rolling, and General Lafayette in custody with the Austrians, and the good Lady Adrienne off to see him, there was young George Lafayette, or George Montier as he was to call himself, using his family name. Adrienne wanted him safe, he was to carry on the family name, and there was but one place Sir, one safe harbor, back in America."

"So Sir, Adrienne got passports for him from Gouverneur Morris, and she spoke with Maria, to help him north to Cherbourg, and to depart from there, a safe port. Maria and George then secretly left Paris, and with Maria watching the path, she and young George went from village to village, he on horse, and she from tree to tree, and tiresome journey, making 30 miles a day!"

I stopped him and asked:

"But Antnee, why Cherbourg, why not just north to Le Havre? Cherbourg is such a long journey, and across Normandy and Brittany."

He replied:

"Good question Sir, well thought, for you see the tyrants running the Revolution were watching Le Havre, for it was at the mouth of the Seine. In Cherbourg he was safe, it was obscure, and Ambassador Morris had arranged for an American frigate to meet them there, it was all so secret Sir, quite secret."

"It was a total of 210 miles, and took them most of a week, Sir, across the hedge row paths of Normandy and then out to the tip of the peninsula in northern Brittany to Cherbourg. It was August, but it was cool, for a French August, and Maria could see from tree to tree, assuring a clear and safe path for a mile at a time. They arrive at Cherbourg, and they saw the American frigate, it had guns and it look like a fast ship. But you see Sir, one must be careful, even when one suspects that there is little danger, always be aware. So Maria went ahead and she scampered along the wharf, from rope-to-rope, being watched amusingly by some of the

seamen, but she just played the role of a plain squirrel, a good advantage from time to time Sir. But you see Sir she was exposed, and she feared that any crazy seaman may want to try his musket on her, so she watched all about as she jumped.”

“She reached the American ship, and saw the captain on the bridge, he went inside to his cabin, so she swung about and down the ropes, as the crew laughed at what they thought were her antics, and then through the open window to land somewhat unceremoniously on the Captain’s table!”

I stopped him and said:

“Now wait a minute, did this Captain expect a squirrel to well just plop out of the clear air onto his table, these guys are somewhat strong willed.”

He replied:

“Ah Sir, I see your concern, the Captain you see Sir had orders, Ambassador Morris had told the Navy to expect such an occurrence, and you know Navy men, orders are orders.”

I then asked:

“So what happened, were they waiting for him, what did they know of Maria?”

Antnee wiggled his nose in that way he does when he gets a bit annoyed and replied:

“Sir, I am about to tell you all Sir, now just a little patience if we can, Sir. So Maria looks up and there is the good Captain, in his blue coat looking all prim and proper, and he jumps back still surprised, and then Maria states:”

“Captain, I am Maria, well for you Americans, just Maria Squirrel, daughter of Captain Jean Pierre Squirrel, who fought with President Washington, you have been informed, n’est pas?”

The Captain as is often the case taken back by first that she is a squirrel, and then by her bluntness. Maria it seems is always short on words. The Captain recovered and replied:

“Mademoiselle Maria, I had orders to expect something out of the ordinary, directly from General, I mean President Washington, and you my fair young thing, are well out of the ordinary.”

Marian in her blunt and direct style replied:

“Captain, keep to the point, I have George de Lafayette out there at the end of the wharf, bedding some barrels, and I want to get your men to bring him aboard. I want it done in secret and now, do you understand.”



The Captain was taken aback, first a squirrel, and second a woman squirrel, giving a Captain of a ship of the line orders on his own vessel, but alas it was under command from Washington. So he responded:

“Yes Mademoiselle, and what do you suggest?”

Antnee stopped and looked up:

“Sir, you see, President Washington was well respected and his orders had great weight Sir, great weight. And here was Maria, in charge of George, and he must be brought aboard this ship immediately, well Sir before he was discovered. Cherbourg was remote but this was an American man of war, a deadly frigate just a few dozen miles off the English coast as well.”

“So the plan was hatched, Sir, with Maria giving orders. You see Sir she had it all put together, she would provide a distraction, as well as surveillance, and three shipmen would go down to where the barrels were, with an empty one of their own, there they would get George in the barrel, and bring it back to the ship, roll it aboard, and then off they would go.”

“So Sir, plant in motion, Maria set out to the rigging and she hopped from ship to ship, with a great show of dexterity Sir, and veritable ballerina of the rigging if you will, with all the men watching and laughing at her jumping, and they all tried to knock her down with apples, stones, clubs, and she got ever so close to get them to focus that at time Sir, she was in true peril, true peril indeed, but while she did this the three men got the barrel to George, got him in, rolled it up the plank to the ship, and when done, over jumped Maria, up went the walk, and to sea they went, the fastest time ever!”

“So out in the Channel and heading towards the Atlantic, George and Maria and the Captain, on the bridge, watched as the reached clear ocean and westward the went.”

After three weeks, and some difficult storms, they reached Boston, and George and Maria went across the Charles River to Cambridge and stayed with some family friends.

I asked Antnee what was Cambridge like in 1795. He replied:

“Well Sir, no MIT you know, but Harvard, yes it was there behind the walls, small, safe, secure, and back to teaching, ministers and some small number of men who studied a mix of things. Maria like the yard, great trees, and she appreciated being back again. George stayed in a home just off the yard, up what is now Brattle Street, they stayed there for a month, then they went on to New York, George was to meet Mr. Hamilton.”

I asked:

“You mean Alexander Hamilton, yes Sir, the very same, for he was a good friend of the General and he agreed to help George, and Mr. Hamilton was as you remember good friends with

Nathaniel, for he had passed already, and he knew Jean Pierre as well and was very anxious to meet them both. So off they went. They took a small ship, from Boston to New York, in those days a few days journey, around the cape, stopping in Provincetown, then across the waters of Long Island Sound, stopping at New Haven, then to New York, down the East River and landing, well Sir, if we remember correctly it was where the Seaport is now, there were many docks there. Mr. Hamilton was waiting the ships arrival."

Antnee then recalled:

"Maria was amazed at New York, it was not Paris with the palaces and royal buildings, it was not the small town of Boston with surrounding swamps, or the forested Cambridge with dirt roads and carriage paths, it was smoke, smells, docks, ships of all kinds, people down to the water's edge, and this was on both sides of the widening river, and as the ship pulled in to its docking places, there were hundreds on the wooden dock, some working, some waiting, but everyone doing something, to Maria this was a city of doing things, it was a bit disheveled, but ever busy, pushing, pulling, lifting, and then the plank went down. She jumped over to George who was a bit fearful of all this chaos and said:

"George, we are in New York, look how much it moves, how it breathes, this is the future George, this is the future, remember this moment George, and when we return, bring this back. This is what your father saw George, this is what excited him! I will find Mr. Hamilton, get the things, meet me down on the dock."

Maria then jumped to the rigging, swing herself across the loading rigs, down the wooden lifts, and onto the dock, somewhat surprising those waiting, and she saw Mr. Hamilton, remembering what Mr. Morris had told her, and she ran up to him.

"Mr. Hamilton, Sir, it is Maria, daughter of Jean Pierre, your old friend."

Hamilton picked her up and gave her a hug and replied:

"My, my, you have your father's looks, I am sad to hear of his passing, and I hear you have had a harrowing adventure. Where is George?"

She replied:

"There Sir, on the top of the walk, he has bags."

Hamilton then yelled out to George:"  
"George, George, je suis ici, avec Maria, George."

George saw Mr. Hamilton and ran down the plank, baggage in hand, and he approached:

"Mr. Hamilton, I am so glad to meet you Sir, I hope my English is good enough, Maria and I have been practicing, how are things?"

Hamilton replied:

"George, I am so glad you are safe, and we must thank Mr. Morris and of course Maria, how is your mother, I hear she is well?"

George replied:

"Yes Sir, well as can be as are my sisters, and how is General Washington?"

Hamilton replied:

"Well we call him President Washington now, and he is well, busy in Philadelphia, we moved out of New York five years ago, I never thought New York was good, business and politics never mix, and we agreed to land on the Potomac in Maryland, just up river from Mount Vernon. George you will love that as well."

Maria said:

"Mr. Hamilton, this is a marvelous city, so unlike those I have seen in Europe, can we get a tour?"

Hamilton replied:

"Certainly, get aboard my carriage, I can show you about, and we can have something to eat later."

Maria asked as they rode along:

"Mr. Hamilton, you are no longer in the Government, you are back here in New York, that is so unlike France where once in Government one found reasons to stay. How is it that there is such a difference?"

Hamilton spoke as they crossed over Canal Street to Broadway and then down to the southern tip of the island. He said:

"Well American is made of citizen patriots, people who come from business and the land, we serve and then return, keeping afresh the ideas which made us great. I fear a permanent political class, for if we ever have one we will create the seeds of our own demise, for those who rule must return to those who are ruled and they must sense that return so that they rule wisely. I dread the permanent politician, as does President Washington."

They travelled across the island, and returned to Mr. Hamilton's home, a wonderful house, with trees and a garden, and George and Maria spent many weeks exploring and understanding New York.

Antnee then recalled the many conversations amongst the three of them. Hamilton recalled their parents, the War, and then they discussed the Revolution in France. Hamilton said:

"It is my view that religion is at the heart of this Revolution, a battle between the church and its powers and the people."

George was listening but Maria did respond:

"Mr. Hamilton, I believe that there will be ages of debate as to what led to the Terror, but that I believe should be set aside from the Revolution. In England a century and a half ago the king was also beheaded, and Cromwell went after many and resulting in their death. However, Cromwell did his evil deeds in the shadows on England, whereas Robespierre did his did in the light of current day Paris, with observers from many nations recording every death. Thus I see little difference. Whereas here in America, well, there was war, there was death, but there was no open killing."

Hamilton replied:

"Point well taken. Then what I hear from what you say Lady Maria is that it is the people, their character and nature?"

Maria replied:

"Mr. Hamilton, I believe it is more complex than that, somehow when power is concentrated, there are times when good people get it and do good things and there are times when bad people get it and then we have the evils we are discussing. It is akin to your comment about politicians, and staying too long."

They talked well into the night, with George absorbing every comment.

### ***11.13 Settling in America***

Antnee clearly was tiring on this tale but he was determined to continue. As with so many I never really knew at what point he would reach a conclusion and what type of conclusion he would reach.

I then said:

"Well, did they go to Washington's home in Mount Vernon?"

Antnee, now quite tired, looked pensive, and then said:

“No, there was a parting. When they were close to leaving, Maria went to Hamilton and said:”

“Mr. Hamilton, I have a curiosity of my father’s friend, and his family, Major Nathaniel. I see we are but a day’s journey or less from Morristown, may I go and see if they are there still.”

Hamilton smiled a warm smile. He replied:

“That is a fine idea Lady Maria, that will be good for George as well. I am free so we shall leave at dawn on the morrow.”

Thus at dawn, they set out to the Hudson River, and there they took the ferry across, a broad and strong river to Hoboken, then by carriage they rode over the bumpy roads, hour after hour, going through the ever dense country side, until by later in the day they approached Morristown, and the house that they used when Washington was headquartered there. The big white mansion stood proud and in repair.

Hamilton went from the carriage and with George and Maria introduced himself, and they were invited for dinner. After as the sun was setting the strolled amongst the oaks in the back, when Maria met another George, the son of Nathaniel, for he was at home in the large oak.

George jumped down and said:

“Well what have we here? A damsel if ever I saw one!”

Maria was ataken back, and young George and Mr. Hamilton was surprised. For to this point their discussions had had an air of formality. Who was this country squirrel?

Hamilton asked:

“Who are you my country friend?”

George replied:

“I am George Squirrel, son of Nathaniel Squirrel, friend of George Washington, and who Sir are you?”

The three of them were sent back, how could they have been so fortunate to meet George at their first stop. Hamilton said:

“George, I am Alexander Hamilton, longtime friend of President Washington and friend of your father, and this is George Lafayette, son of General Lafayette and this is Lady Maria, daughter of your father old friend Jean Paul. Surprise!”

Well, was George Squirrel knocked off his tail, ego shot, surprised, without words, he just sat there eyes rolling about, mouth open, tail lying flat, and hands just flapping like broken twigs.

He then said:

“Wow!”

To which Maria replied:

“Wow, what is wow?”

George then replied:

“Wow is wow, like I had never expected this, especially seeing such a beautiful lady from France, Lady Maria.”

To which Maria smiled, and George, she, Hamilton and young Lafayette spent well into the night talking of the past, the present and the future.

They stayed for three days, looking at the old winter quarters, speaking with friends they had known. Upon the night of the third day at dinner, Maria asked George Lafayette and Hamilton to speak in private. She said:

“I really like being here. It is where my father found true friends, where there is joy and peace. George, I believe that you can go on to Mount Vernon without me. Mr. Hamilton, if that is fine with you, then I shall stay.”

They spoke a bit but soon they all agreed. Maria would stay at Morristown.

### **11.14 Conclusion**

I saw this as a great conclusion. I then asked:

“Well did things work out well for Maria?”

Antnee now smiled like I had never seen him smile before, a huge squirrel grin. He said:

“I would say so Sir, for Maria married George, and from that came eventually my mother!”

I asked a bit shocked:

“You mean Antnee that you are descended from Maria?”

He smiled that smile that only an outwitting squirrel can and said:

“You didn’t know Sir, I am surprised, deeply surprised!”

I laughed, he got me again! Then he said:

“Yes Sir, on my mother’s side, straight down a few generations of course, but Maria is one of my ancestors. You know Sir, we too may be related if we go back far enough!”

I replied:

“Antnee, I bet that you could probably show that you and I have a common ancestor!”

I burst out laughing, imagine a common ancestor with a squirrel. Then I looked at him and he was not laughing. He turned and said with great seriousness:

“Well Sir, that shall be a tale for another day, and Sir, you will be quite surprised, cousin!”

## ***12 SIR EGWYN SQUIRREL AND THE GRAIL***

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March is a rainy month but to set up the anticipation of the new spring, the snowdrops shoot forth their beautiful white buds at the slightest bit of warmth. One can see the daffodils slowly sprouting forth, shoots of bright green, and then the tulips just behind them, with darker almost reddish leaf shoots. Anticipation is in the air, a rebirth of the life in the garden. It is time to begin anew.

### ***12.1 Preparing to Plant***

Setting out my seeds in the small greenhouses on a warm day, I chanced to walk back to the fern garden, still covered in wet leaves, and sat upon a bench to soak in some of the warmth. I looked about and saw the dozens of well-gnawed corncobs left from the winter-feeding of the squirrels, dropped here and there, as fallen trees swept aside in some violent windstorm. However, these were all yellowed cobs, every kernel removed, feeding now dozens of wandering squirrels. They must have communicated over miles to tell all their relatives of this stash of limitless food. I laughed as I saw cobs in the most ridiculous places, birdhouses, under chair covers, in tree holes, stuck in fence openings. It looked like hundreds.

I laughed and sat back in the garden chair, and moved my face into the warmth of the sun, shutting my eyes and just feeling the warmth again.

Then without any warning, I heard:

“How why yah!”

I could not miss that voice and of course the accent. It was not the fiftieth state but a greeting, and a greeting from my old buddy Antnee.

I opened my eyes, my face still turned upward, and there above my head but a couple of feet away, hanging upside down from a branch, with those big brown eyes, and that wet black nose, with twitching whiskers, was Antnee. He continued:

“Tired Sir, I did not mean to wake you if that be the case, but you did not appear asleep.”

I almost near broke my neck as I twisted to see the face, and then he jumped across several branches and settled to my left on the bench, staring now up to my face.

I replied:

“Well good to see you my friend, did you have a good winter?”



He replied:

“Good, well yes indeed Sir, but the snow, some small amount is fun, but alas this winter was quite too much, quite too much indeed, Sir. I have heard of such winters but Sir, three months, three long months, and the ground was covered by snow!”

I could see he was happy to be in the warmth of the sun again. He had fattened up quite a bit, and his fur was so thick that he appeared as if he were merely a gray furry ball, with a mouth and tail.

He then continued:

“Well Sir, you must thank Lady Sara for the food, so much good food, I Sir especially enjoy the sunflower seeds, so sweet and delicious.”

I replied:

“Antnee, you appear to have shall we say overdone it a bit.”

He replied:

“Why Sir what do you mean. Overdone what Sir, have I offended Lady Sara?”

I replied:

“Antnee, you must have put on five pounds, and that is a great deal for you, you are the size of a basketball. That is what I mean, you should see yourself, and you must have a more balanced diet.”

His reply was a bit surprising:

“Diet Sir, why we are wild creatures, we strive every day to survive, we must seek out small bits of food ....”

“Wait!” I replied. “Antnee we fed you several bushels of corn, every day three or four cobs, hundreds of pounds of seed, and well whatever else you get. And that being out in the cold, well I watched you go down the roof vents with corn cobs, in the house behind us, into a warm dry attic, which most likely is now filled with empty cobs!”

He responded:

“Point well taken Sir, but you humans make so many comfortable places for us, so comfortable, why that is why you humans were sent by God, to keep us comfortable, or at least that is how the tale goes, Sir.”

I then replied:

“My good friend, just look about you here in the garden, outside the garden, all over, why there are hundreds of corn cobs from you and your friends. Why one day when it had finished snowing, I must have seen more than twenty of your friends galloping like a herd of buffalo over the snow to the feeder, then when each had managed a cob of corn, they all galloped back, to where I can only wonder. I have but two questions; first, where do you all stay, for the nests seem gone, and second, how did all of these friends of yours find out about the corn supply?”

He looked at me somewhat puzzled and replied:

“Why Sir, we rest in those nice warm areas just under the roof of those houses, the people are so kind to give us shelter. Yes, and then we bring the corn up there, for Sir, you see about you, shall I say, just snack droppings, the true store of supplies lies above all those house roofs. Then as to how so many of my family gets here, well Sir, it is my cousin Hattie, you see Sire she just talks to everyone, she tells Lester who lives by the lake, and Lester Sirs will then just tell all to the east. Then Hattie, Sir, tells Phyllis, and Phyllis, Sir, just cannot keep a secret, and to the west and south for miles Sir, the word spreads. However, thanks to Lady Sara Sir, none has gone to want. Many thanks to Lady Sara Sir for she is a fine person, and we all remember her good deeds!”

He made me laugh as usual, as if we human species were an afterthought to help squirrels in their quests. I often wondered how an all-human centric science could just neglect this dimension and then again, I thought that perhaps I am the only one alive holding court like this with the squirrels.

He then asked:

“So Sir, how did you and Lady Sara fare this winter, well I hope?”

I replied:

“Not too badly, but I long to be out in the garden, my friend, out amongst the green and warmth, even if it get too hot, I enjoy the activity.”

He replied:

“The same for us Sir, the same for us. Winter has its glory, the snow, the ice, the winds, why I remember this winter we had a day of never ending blizzard, three feet of snow Sir, three feet of fluffy snow, so much fun Sir, so much fun.”

I wondered what made it so much fun so I proceeded to question him.

“Antnee, what do you all do in the snow, play games, what makes it so much fun.”

He sat tall and wiggled his nose and at that point, I knew I had opened the Pandora’s Box of storytelling, for I must have found a spot that resonated with his list of long tales from the past. He thus responded:

“Why Sir, many games, many fun things to do, but the most special is the Grail game.”

I had been caught and thus I responded out of training as well as out of interest:

“Well Antnee, just what is the Grail game.”

And on cue, he started:

“Well Sir, it is a game based upon a tale from one of our famous relatives, Sir Egwyn Squirrel, when he was out with Arthur’s knights seeking the Holy Grail, Sir, a most exciting adventure, and the game Sir, is in miniature a recollection of that quest. Shall I explain the game Sir?”

I replied:

“No Antnee, tell me more of this Sir, what was his name?”

He replied:

“Sir Egwyn Squirrel, a true knight of the Round Table, a close friend of Sir Galahad. And of the good Queen Guinevere.”

I now knew I was hooked, and sat back and replied:

“Okay Antnee, I am all ears.”

I knew that now I was in for an interesting but somewhat long tale.

## ***12.2 Brendan and the Ancestor***

Antnee began by first snuggling himself against the arm of the garden bench and raising his large fluffy tail over his head. His hands were up and he was gesticulating to add emphasis. I was now well aware of what I was about to hear, not the exact tale but its intensity and innovative view of history, squirrel history.

He began:

“You see Sir, it was I believe 529 in the year of our Lord, and the good Saint Brendan and his fellow sailors had set out on I believe their eleventh voyage, the longest one yet Sir, across the Atlantic, and they landed at the mouth of New York harbor, of course Sire there was no New York there then, just some Leni Lenape tribes people, peacefully growing their crops.”

Well this was going to be a real interesting tale. He had somehow joined Irish history, King Arthur and the Holy Grail. Perhaps this would be a Hollywood thriller. I listened with anticipation of another tale.

Antnee continued:

“Well Sir, Brendan and his men had been at sea many months, and this time they sailed south along the coast of this new land and they went along the coast of Long Island, until they saw the harbor, and there sitting at the edge of the harbor was a tree covered island, which the sailed around until they came to see the outer mouth again. They then sailed ashore, seeking food and water, and perhaps meeting some of the inhabitants. They could see the Leni Lenape settlements, the log cabins, small farms, dried fish racks, and the children at play. In fact Brendan looked upon these settlements on the green hillsides and remarked that in some ways they reminded him of Ireland.”

“They landed on a sandy spot across from the mouth of the outer bay, and just down from the narrows which made the inner bay. All the monks went ashore and they were greeted by the locals, the Leni Lenape tribe. Neither could speak the others language but they shared a meal and the brothers brought fish they had caught on the trip.”

“Towards the end of the second day as they were exploring the island, Brendan was certain he was being watched. Indeed, above him, following him on the lowest branches was a gray squirrel, fearless and overly inquisitive. Brendan looked up and held out some nuts he had in his pouch and the squirrel ran towards him fearlessly and ate them from his hand. Brendan slowly reached out and the squirrel stood still while Brendan patted his head. Then Brendan saw the squirrel look him in the eyes and smile!”

Antnee then reshuffled himself, as was his wont and continued:

“When Brendan saw that it was time to return, he had become befriended with the gray squirrel and his family, and he said to his fellow monks that they should bring these fine animals back with them, they would make fine pets around the monastery. They all agreed. So they said farewell to the Leni Lenape and set sail to return. North they went, and the seas got rough, and the gray squirrels, for there were well over twenty aboard, ran all about the masts. The squirrels would sit while the monks spoke, when they prayed they were attentive, almost as if they could understand. Then one day at sea, the wind came up so quickly that the mast began to swing towards Brendan and it would have pushed him into the churning waves, but just before it hit him Brendan heard a shout:”

“Brother Brendan, duck, now!”

“Brendan responded on instinct and the beam of the sail flew over his head blowing the remains of his hair straight up. Brendan turned to thank his fellow brother and saw his squirrel friend looking at him eye to eye. He was shocked and said. You!”

And to his shock the squirrel replied:

“Yes, good Brother, it is I.”

“Well, Sir, Brendan almost fainted. He had never heard a squirrel before, and coming from Ireland, he had heard of the Druids and their animal friends and wondered if this was some devil, some Druid creature. Had he sent himself and his fellow brothers on a journey to hell. What had he done?”

“Well Sirs like any good squirrel our friend here took charge and spoke softly to Brendan. He said:”

“Brother Brendan, we are all God’s creatures and we must all look out for each other. I am sorry if I have frightened you, I meant no harm. It took these past several weeks to learn your language but we can now talk.”

“Brendan was even more amazed Sir, you can very well imagining, yes indeed Sir, here at sea with a talking squirrel, a shipload at that, of talking squirrels, and one who Sir very much just saved his life!”

I then asked:

“So how many besides this squirrel were there on the ship?”

Antnee replied:

“Why Sir, a few dozen if history is correct, you see Sir, they had packed the ship with dry corn cobs, and well you know us squirrels and corn Sir, indeed you do! And many thanks to Lady Sara for them, Sir, many thanks!”

As I looked at Antnee and I saw this rotund gray furball sitting there, not a hungry day in his cold winter and realized how many hundreds of ears of corn they had already eaten I then thought of Brendan and his Irish monks sailing back across the Atlantic with a carnival like atmospheres with dozens of hungry gray squirrels. I responded:

“Due continue Antnee, what happened next?”

“Well Sir, once they sparked up a conversation, and squirrels like the Irish are some talkers Sir, a fine match, indeed a very fine match, Brendan decided to give each a good Christian name. They named the first to speak, Padric, after the great Saint Patrick, and you see Sir, Padric is the Irish way to spell it.”

“Then they went amongst all the brothers and each had a chance to name one, or two or even three, there were so many. Thanks to the corn the squirrels were well fed, and with the help of the squirrels and their eyesight the monks found great masses of fish which they gladly ate, the corn Sir requires good teeth you see.”

“After six long but peaceful weeks they came upon the coast of the green isle, Ireland. Padric was atop the mast and he was the first to call out land, and Brendan found that a confirmation of the calling of him Padric. They landed near their monastery and all climbed ashore and were glad to be on land again. Although after so many weeks at sea it does take time to adjust. Padric you see Sir, had never been at sea and what he noticed was that climbing about on trees not swinging in the sea was different. Brendan told Padric he must get his land legs, whatever that meant.”

“And after a few years in Ireland, Padric had learned Irish and Latin quite well, and each of his children were also fluent in both tongues. The youngest was named Egwyn, a name from the Welsh lands, a Celt name, and not one of the Saints. “

I paused and took this all in. As usual Antnee had crafted a tale, supposedly true and factual, as to specific squirrels and their involvement with great figures of history. He was telling a Forest Gump tale but not of a single person but of a whole species. Perhaps that made sense as I mulled it over.

### **12.3 *Egwyn and Guinevere***

I sat there amazed for here we have a gray squirrel, along with his family, making his way from what was to become Staten Island to Ireland and then across the sea to England. Antnee always had fantastic detail, and either he was a truly great story maker or he truly had been the keeper of the tales. I am beginning to think the latter.

I then asked him:

“So what happened to all these adventurers?”

That was just the nudge he needed to go into high gear. Off he went:

“Well Sir, young Egwyn was a true adventurer, indeed Sir, a seeker of new lands. So when the chance came to set out for the east, namely Wales and England, Egwyn was the first to jump for it. He bade his family farewell, and set out with Brother Aiden and his men from the Liffey River

and across the water to Wales. It was a three or four day sail, rough, cold, but his thick gray fur kept him warm and dry.”

“They landed and when Egwyn looked about it was different than Ireland, green, but not so green, much more trees, less grass and the winds were not quite as strong, it was softer and sweeter, it had travelled across the great ocean then it had been caressed by Ireland before descending softly on Wales. He went with Brother Aiden to a nearby monastery, where some monks had tried to set up a church and preach to the Celtic tribes who had inhabited this area. But Egwyn being so much more adventurous wanted to set out further east, to the lands where the Romans had been and then see how far this land would take him. So Egwyn set out eastward, having bid farewell to Brother Aiden and his men he just started along the roadways following the route of the rising sun. Each day, a little closer, and now he no longer felt the damp air of the ocean, or of any of the great waters and he made it close upon a settlement of many buildings, and many of them appeared as Romans he had studied in the library at the monastery at Armagh. He knew Roman designs, he appreciated Roman engineering, and here for the first time he saw the buildings in real life. He was cautious as he approached the buildings. There were many people about, and great horses and the horses were covered in colored garments. He wondered what type of people these were and his curiosity got the best of him and he jumped down aside the largest building and peered in the windows. Inside were large pools of water and some was steaming and about were all sorts of ladies, carefully assisting the lady in the bath. These were Roman baths, heated by fires, and again he had read about such at Armagh, and then Egwyn realized he must be in the town of Bath, the place the Romans had used just for that purpose.”

“Egwyn moved closer to the window, for he wanted to see better. There in the bath, surrounded by the beautiful young ladies ever, was an even more beautiful one, and she was called Guinevere. He heard the others say Lady Guinevere this and Lady Guinevere that, and then one said Queen, and Egwyn knew what a queen was and when he heard that he fell off the branch, through the windows, and splat right in the middle of the bath, right in front of Lady Guinevere, and he surfaced with bubbles all over his head!”

“At first he just looked at the Queen and she at him, and he was terrified. The Queen at first was surprised and then when she saw it was a bubbly gray squirrel looking right in her eyes she started to laugh and all others followed suit.”

“Poor Egwyn, he was ashamed, he was mortified, and he had made a fool of himself in such an un-gentlemanly manner. What would the family think?”

“But then the Queen stretched out her hand and pulled Egwyn in and placed him on the edge of the bath, and there he shook himself dry and without thinking he said in his best monastic Latin:”

“Why thank you good Queen, and my deepest apologies for being such a fool. I, Egwyn of Armagh, am your humble servant.”

“At which point he bowed in the best courtly bow he could invent at the moment and awaited a reply.”

“Well you could imagine Sir what happened next, a talking gray squirrel, speaking high class Latin, and furthermore knowing the Queen! This was not Ireland, this was not a land of well-educated monks and kings and queens who felt one with nature. This was England and this was a Celt queen in a partially Saxon land. Why the ladies all screeched and were amiss, except the Queen, for she was truly a royal and showed no fear. She walked out of the bath, whilst Egwyn kept his head bowed, and she walked towards him and she said:”

“Why Egwyn of Armagh, I am pleased to meet you, I am Guinevere of Camelot, Queen of England, and it is truly my pleasure to make your acquaintance. Rise Egwyn of Armagh, and we shall talk.”

At that point Sir Egwyn was both terrified and comforted, he hope not to become dinner nor to be skewered by the guards, whose presence had been delayed by command of the Queen. Egwyn jumped atop the table as the Queen sat in her chair, and the ladies were giggling and shouting about them.

Lady Guinevere then asked Egwyn where he came from and Egwyn related the tale:

“Lady Guinevere, my father, Padric, came from west across the great sea with Brother Brendan and his fellow monks. They are learned men, wise in the ways of the world while still being holy men. The Irish are a learned people who have given up warfare and have taken up the Church, they are true believers and their monasteries have grown in Ireland and have expanded to many other lands. Why there is a young monk, Columbanus, who has just set out to go to the farthest lands to the east, across all waters and to the lands of the Merovingians and the Goths, and the Vandals, and many others. I wanted to seek out such an adventure myself, so I bid my mother farewell, and set out from the monastery at Armagh to cross the waters and see what is in this great land. And alas my beautiful Queen, that is how I have found myself here. I am clumsy but I am smart, at least that is what the Abbot at Armagh tells me. I can speak four tongues, Latin, Irish, Greek and Hebrew. I can even understand some of your local language since it is close to my Irish.”

The Queen responded:

“Well my little friend, you are indeed a worthy addition to my court. Perhaps we shall see how you fare. Come with us, for we return to Camelot, court of my King, Arthur. Camelot is four days journey from here. We leave on the morrow. Till then we can rest and enjoy this old town.”

They sat about listened to music and ate food, and Egwyn had never seen such food. He had berries, nuts, and he even tasted wine, but that was not for him. On the sunrise they started back, seven horses, the Queen and six of her maids in waiting, and not a single warrior. Egwyn was concerned but they told him that this land was safe. It was under the protection of a Sir Perceval,



a Welsh knight new to the court but of great loyalty to the king. Egwyn was always on the cautious side, as any good squirrel should be.

On the second day they entered a woods, dark and heavily treed. For this Egwyn felt at home, for he could readily jump to a tree top and scan about. He rode with the Queen, and she spoke softly to him, trying to gather as much as she could about the Irish. For it seems the British although also Celts were tribes to themselves. Egwyn related the tale of Patrick who was a Briton and the Queen was quite impressed.

Well into the deepest bowels of the forest Egwyn sensed as a good squirrel would that there was danger afoot. He excused himself from the Queen's horse and jumped towards the trees, swinging from branch to branch, ever so higher so he could see all about them. There, just a few dozen yards in front of the Queen and her maids was a pack of four wolves. The pack was hunting and not for squirrels. They were hunting for the Queen. Egwyn knew he must act, and act quickly. He scanned about and saw a herd of deer, twelve in all, and they could distract the wolves, because wolves would rather get the deer if they could see and smell them. But they were fixated on the Queen and her maids and their horses. He must act and do so now, no time to even warn them, the wolves moved within a few yards, close but hidden, if you were on the ground.

So Egwyn jumped as quickly as possible over to the branches which covered the deer, themselves just yards away from the Queen, and with all the strength he had he bit through the branches dropping them on the head of the largest buck, who bolted and started to run, and Egwyn saw the wolves so close as to jump upon the Queen, that he jumped more than thirty feet down from the branch atop the head of the Queen's horse, who was then startled and jumped up, at which point Egwyn shouted to the Queen, "Hold tight good Queen" and as she did, the horse bolted and turned, the wolves aside, just as they were ready to pounce, and the wolves in the rear saw the deer, a better target, and off they went, leaving the lead wolf, looking dumbfounded at the massive horse, alone, and now Egwyn threw himself, claws out stretched, upon the face of the wolf, tearing his eyes, and screeching like some crazed devil. The wolf, now alone and terrified, thought that perhaps he was amidst some cluster of devils, and turned quickly and with his tail behind him, ran to the shelter of the dark forest.

The Queen was shocked, but safe as were the six maids. The Queen looked down at Egwyn, who had been thrown off by the shaking head of the wolf, and said:

"Egwyn, are you safe?"

The Queen dismounted and picked up Egwyn who was a bit shaken by all the jumping and throwing and looked up at the Queen and said:

"Good Lady, I am fine but you, are you unharmed?"

The Queen replied:

“Why Egwyn, we are all fine, you are the bravest knight I have ever seen! Indeed you are a knight and I shall have my husband the good King Arthur reward you as such. Now good friend, atop the horse, and off to Camelot!”

And off they went, the Queen and Egwyn in constant speech and the maids all in admiration of the bravery of the warm gray friend.

#### **12.4 *Arthur and Knighthood***

Antnee was now on a roll. You could see that he was personally involved in this tale, one that he obviously had recounted many times before.

He continued:

“Well Sir, Egwyn was now befriended by the Queen, a good friend indeed. And off they went to Camelot, the castle in Winchester, to the east of Bath. Safely through the forest they came out upon a plain, just to the west of Winchester and there one could see the castle, called Camelot.”

I stopped him and said:

“But Antnee, I thought the location of Camelot was some secret lost in history, why do you say Winchester, I have never been there, but I have gone by there.”

He turned and in those deep brown wise eyes I saw that I was to get one of those Antnee answers:

“Well Sir, have I ever been amiss before, no Sir, hardly not, you see we remember facts, details, they are important, like where we buried our acorns, we never forget!”

For a brief moment I wished to remind him of the futile attempts to find lost acorns and the plethora of oak trees blooming all over the place but I quickly thought the better of that. He would just lecture me ever so more on squirrels and their memory! So I bit my tongue, help my peace and let him continue.

“Well Sir, down they went to the castle, and when the guards atop the walls saw the Queen they quickly opened the gates and squires came out to greet her. Now Sir, unlike all those tales of finely dressed knights and all the people being well so Hollywood, you know Sir, like a Robin Hood in some bright green tights and all, well Sir, the people were frankly dirty and smelly, for they hardly ever bathed, these Brits, and this is what Egwyn noticed first, dirt, smells, and trash just all thrown about, old vegetables, rotting on the ground, Sir what a mess, and why Sir, there was just unspeakable things lying about, like those big nasty deer who mess up our front lawn Sir.”

Well I first never thought of this as “our” lawn, but somehow he had gained property rights, and second he did have a point about the deer, and third, well the dirt and grime was what I had expected in the sixth century, they frankly were not the cleanest folks, and thus the underlying

memory of Arthur and fancifully dressed knights was soon wiped away. I could imagine a realistic scene of people, animals, waste, and smoke and water all mixed in the castle yards, and the squires as young but like others dirty young men, spending their days with the horses. Antnee then continued:

“Well, in no time at all, Arthur, the King, came out front to greet Guinevere and her ladies. Sir, they were in love, true love Sir, not what some of the writers say, for the Queen was a fine and true lady, not what some French poet invents, or some Norman descendant. Upon dismounting the King said:”

“Dear wife, what is this creature you bring with you.”

The Queen replied:

“Creature this is not my good husband for he is Egwyn of Armagh, a brave as one could ever have, one who saved my life and that of my hand maids, single handedly, without weapon, and placing his very own life at risk! A true knight if ever I have seen one. And my good Lord, he is brilliant, for he speaks four tongues, he reads extensively, and he has been educated by the monks at Armagh. We must honor him for his efforts.”

The King, not believing the Queen, or perhaps thinking she was playing a joke, turned and looked at Egwyn and said:

“Well my little furry friend, perhaps we shall find a few nuts.”

Egwyn at this point was not willing to play such a game, first he had to bath, and second he had to get away from these smells! So he was brisk and abrupt:

“Good Arthur, the Queen, the kindest of all women, speaks the truth, I have been educated at Armagh, and as you Britons well know we Irish are the most educated in all of Christendom if not the world. I have saved the Queen from savage wolves, and her words are full of truth. But good Arthur, perhaps we may carry this talk elsewhere since I also must refresh from the journey.”

At which point Egwyn jumped from the head of the Queen’s horse bowed to the King and commenced bouncing up the stone steps of Camelot. He turned to the Queen and said:

“Good Lady, which way the baths?”

She pointed and turned to Arthur and said:

“Well good Sir, has he answered your questions?”

Arthur stood with mouth askew, not since the unproven Perceval of Wales had such an impudent come to court, but unlike Perceval this one is educated but more so a squirrel! The King looked at Guinevere and said:

“If all you say is such good Lady then this young, well this, ...”

She came up to him and said:

“This squirrel, I believe you are trying to say, and making him a knight of the Round Table would be just and frankly my Lord it would improve the class of those there!”

The King shook his head and said back:

“Good Queen, you speak wisely, it is always best to choose those who excel not matter from whence they come, the mix flavors the stew shall we say.”

They both went into the castle at Camelot. After cleaning Egwyn was accompanied to the large chamber, in which was a large round table, around which there stood many brave knights all in fancy fighting garb.

Then Arthur assembled all of them and told them of Egwyn, his bravery, and his wit. Egwyn spoke briefly, thanking the King for his kindness and praising the Queen as a person of extreme beauty and kindness. The knights asked him some questions and the King said:

“Fellow Knights, for his bravery, I desire to knight Egwyn of Armagh and have him join us at this Round Table. Come forth Egwyn, kneel.”

Egwyn come forth and before the King he sat on his haunches and knelt, as best as a squirrel could do so, and the King then took out his great sword and dropped it softly on Egwyn’s head and said:

“Egwyn of Armagh, for your bravery, for your intellect, for your courage, I knight thee Sir Egwyn of Armagh, and I make you a fellow member of this glorious Round Table.

The King then said to those knights around the Table:

“Fellow Knights, we must give Sir Egwyn a shield and crest. What say you all?”

Perceval in his normal and nasty manner shouted out quickly:

“Ah I have just the crest, three acorns!”

The other knights laughed and Egwyn felt ashamed. Yet no sooner had the words been uttered by Perceval then the Queen came forth and said forcefully:

“To any man or knight, which of you has saved me with but their hands from a savage set of beasts, none but Sir Egwyn, which of you has the wisdom of the ancients, none but Sir Egwyn, which of you shows total respect for woman, none but Sir Egwyn and of course Sir Galahad. So Knights I say that his shield and crest shall be three wolf heads, severed at the neck with snouts pointing inward, with a shamrock at the center. That will remind all of his bravery, his feats, and his Irish honor and wisdom.”

As soon as she finished, Galahad, the youngest of the Knights and the bravest, stood, and shouted:

“To Sir Egwyn of Armagh, to join us here and be the bearer of a shield as the good Queen has said, and Sir Egwyn, that you may sit at my right hand and fellow knight, it would be my honor!”

Then all the knights let out a cheer, except for Perceval, who was shamed for his insolence and ignorance.

They all settled down and ate a hearty meal. The Queen smiled at Egwyn and she made for him some select roasted chestnuts along with corn.

Antnee turned to me and said:

“Sir, I have not had roasted chestnuts, perhaps Lady Sara could prepare some when she has the opportunity.”

For me that was an instant disconnect. I replied:

“Ah right Antnee, roasted chestnuts, how many do we need.”

He replied:

“Let me get back to you on that Sir.”

Thus began the saga of Sir Egwyn of Armagh, knight of the Round Table.

### **12.5 Meeting Merlin**

Egwyn spent time about Camelot in Winchester getting to know the many knights and all the more the people of the town about the castle. There must have been several thousand in total, farmers and tradespeople, and Egwyn found England so unlike Ireland. In Ireland they lived across large masses of land and the monasteries were focal points. Here in England the castle is more important and there were no monks nor were there monasteries. The people clustered more about the center and there were many more trades people. Yet unlike Ireland here in England very few read or studied.

After a few weeks, Miriam, the head chambermaid to the Queen came to him is somewhat of a flurry. She told Egwyn the following:

“Sir Knight, the good Queen has sent me to tell you that Merlin approaches and that you should be aware, he is a magician of great powers and many fear what he may do. If you want, you may wait and see him but beware. I must go, I am fearful of that evil man.”

She turned all-aflutter and went back to the Queen’s chambers. No sooner had she gone and Egwyn heard the chatter announcing the arrival of Merlin. Egwyn looked down from his window, and there below was a man of medium height in a black robe, with a hood, and about his waist was a black rope tied in a strange manner. His hair was shaved yet he had a large full beard. The beard was gray, almost pure white, and Egwyn could see his pale blue almost translucent eyes. He carried a large stick, it was oak, and as Egwyn was a master of such things, people swept away as he walked through the crowd.

Egwyn had seen men like him all over Ireland, they were Druid priests, and as Brother Aiden and Brother Columbanus had told him at Armagh they work their ways by fear, and they can make men see what is not there. Thus Egwyn felt well prepared. He wondered if Merlin had come because he knew Egwyn was here. Egwyn wondered whether he should stay aloft and watch or make his presence known. The warning from the Queen had a mixed message. For in truth he could not avoid Merlin, and the sooner he faced him the better. Thus Egwyn decided that a frontal approach would be best, for Brother Aiden had prepared him.

He scampered down to the Round Table room, and walked directly to his seat, when he saw Merlin, talking to the King, and Merlin turned, saw Egwyn, and said:

“Arthur, is this the rodent that you speak so lovingly of?”

Before the King could speak Egwyn said in his strongest and deepest voice:

“Master Merlin”, and he jumped atop his chair, sitting on the highest point, now looking downwards to the eyes of Merlin, “I am he of whom the King speaks, and “rodent” Master Merlin I be not. For I am the son of Padric of Armagh, and have studied under Aiden of Armagh, the renowned abbot of the monastery, and I, good Master Merlin, have met with the most learned of Druid priests as well. I assure you Master Merlin, I am no one’s familiar, and I am unto myself.”

At this point Merlin was turning white, he had not expected what he saw, and less in what he heard. Here was something well beyond any of his training, and one from Ireland, land of the true Druids, and he was but an infant in their world. What strange creature had he met. Merlin was intending to use all his powers but he paused and questioned if this creature might not just know more than he might. If such were the case he might be uncovered and lose what position he had with the King. Thus Merlin decided that befriending the creature might be more to his benefit. He replied:

“Greetings Sir Egwyn of Armagh, I have come to meet you and to converse with the good King on many issues. You look like a fine addition to the King’s Table, and as I understand you have gained the Queen’s respect and honor for your valiant deeds. My respects Sir Knight.”

Egwyn knew that he had just won the first round, and thus he would reply in kind.

“My thanks good Master Merlin, your skills are well known here as well as across the Irish Sea. I am of good friends with Gudried the Druid priest of Lietrim, the head of all Druids, and he has spoken to me of you, your fame precedes you. My pleasure to make your acquaintance.”

Needless to say this further concerned Merlin since he wondered truly what this creature was. It was wiser than any he had ever met, wiser than any human, and he had the ability to duel with his wit more than any of the Knights, who often relied on their prowess for they had little wit. This, thought Merlin, would be interesting to study, but even more so to respect and beware of.

The two of them spoke for a while and Merlin became more comfortable with Egwyn. In fact after dinner the two of them entered into long conversations and Egwyn told Merlin tales of the Leni Lenape Shaman and their powers and techniques, and he described the many Druid priests and priestesses he had met.

In fact during the next few days the two had become fast friends, Merlin having recognized that Egwyn was honest at heart but even more so one who cherished intellect over any magical skills. To Merlin, Egwyn stood apart, not only in form and shape, but in style.

One day Merlin and Egwyn were approach by Perceval, who was always one to be brash and at times cruel in what he said, and he spoke to the two of them thus:

“Ah the two woods creatures, what evil are you two wizards conjuring up? Must we true knights beware, must we sharpen our swords? You two must beware for we true believers will be forewarned and on the guard!”

He then stomped off, in a haughty mood. Egwyn turned to Merlin and said:

“Merlin my friend, what does Perceval mean, what are wizards and what makes him act so?”

Merlin walked a bit and then said:

“Egwyn, let us sit here, I will try to explain as best as I can. You see these men are brave on the outside but they have deep fears, they believe their world is about to collapse, to disappear. Generations ago we had Roman legions which set out order, we knew what to do, where our boundaries were, we even had enemies, the Romans. The individual did not count, for it was us against them. Then the Romans departed, there was no them, it was just us, we became individuals, and we felt fear because being an individual has risks and rewards, but all they saw

were the risks. Thus Arthur formed the Round Table, it became the vehicle to bind men together so they could forget being dependent upon themselves, they could again belong, have a ruler.”

Egwyn interrupted Merlin and said:

“But Merlin, you live alone, you are not like the wolves in a pack, you are like say the chipmunk, you have your own territory, you guard it and you seem to feel comfortable in that role. Why we squirrels are at times alone and at time in groups. Are these men so afraid that they need to pretend to be brave?”

Merlin replied:

“Fear of being alone is a great fear. Much of my magic is based upon that, even the King fears what he does not know. The King needs these men and these men need the King. They then strangely then go out and enter combat amongst each other, causing harm, and that is a contradiction. There are time Egwyn that I truly do not understand man.”

Egwyn replied:

“I agree Merlin, there are times that they fear and then as a result they do combat which is even more fearful. What if Merlin, just what if, they had some goal, some mission. That is they had something to unite them, not in combat, but in a good deed. Would than not perhaps help?”

Merlin sat back against a mighty oak, he was silent, he thought for a while, and then he turned to Egwyn and replied:

“Ah my friend, you are correct, they need a quest!”

Egwyn replied:

“Merlin, what is a quest?”

Merlin replied:

“My little friend, a quest is a glorious seeking, a search of the highest realm, a directive from God to seek a higher good, and a path requiring the fullness of goodness from each seeker. A quest my friend is what they need, and Egwyn, a quest is what they shall have. We have much work to do, we must assemble the quest, and my friend, we must be certain the King and his other Knights never know that the quest came from our minds, that would destroy the integrity of such an effort. Come my friend, to my home in the forest, we have a quest to prepare. We have a quest!”

## **12.6 The Grail Quest**



Merlin and Egwyn had hatched their plot, a quest would be planned. Merlin had devised a way to get Arthur to call for such a quest and he enlisted Egwyn to assist him, for the two of them had bonded a true fellows, men of the forest, men of intellect, and men who could find meaning both in themselves and in others. They now believed they had a way to bond the knights together while strengthening their individuality. But it must be upon Arthur's call, and it must be agreed to by all.

Thus Merlin and Egwyn concocted their plan. It would be simple but elegant. It would be based upon the old tale of Joseph of Arimathea, the man who gave Jesus a tomb when he was executed by the Romans. As the myth went, Joseph went from Jerusalem and sailed west, then north along the coasts until he reached Britain. It was he who brought Christianity to Britain and with his journey he brought certain artifacts from Jesus, which he kept and revered. Key amongst these was the grail, just what the grail was one may not have truly known because it was a myth within a myth. But Merlin suggested it was the dish that Jesus ate off of at his last supper. It was in Britain and the knights would seek it. But now how to get Arthur to seek it.

Egwyn suggested to Merlin a simple tactic. He would ask Arthur about the grail, and then after some discussion he would suggest that Arthur consult Merlin, at which point Merlin would suggest a quest, and Merlin knew how to get Arthur to then believe it was all of his doing. The plan was hatched.

Thus on the morrow did the knights meet about the great Round Table, and sitting as he did next to Galahad, they all spoke of their feats, their jousts, their conquests. When it came upon Egwyn, he spoke, but not of battle, he said:

"Good King, and knights, as I go about the country side, from time to time I hear of the grail, the Holy Grail, a tale that even in Ireland brings fame to Britain, for it is here that Joseph of **Arimathea** had brought such. I was wondering if any know where it is, because such an important relic should have a place of highest honor. Good King Arthur, do you have such knowledge? For I should go to see the Grail and give prayer."

The King found this an interesting question for he too had known of the Grail, but alas where it had rested he had no knowledge. So about the table the knights each had a tale but none was the same and none were certain of their own tale. This further made Arthur curious and he said to Egwyn:

"Good Sir Egwyn, you bring forth a question of great interest and worth. How should we proceed?"

Egwyn replied:

"Good King, perhaps Merlin, a man of the wood, and a man who knows such that is hidden would have an answer."

Sir Gawain said:

“Good King, Sir Egwyn speaks wisely, seek out Merlin, and return on the morrow and we shall decide.”

Thus the King did go forth to the forest and therein he found Merlin, about a large fire with a wide and deep metal pot in which he was boiling herbs for his potions. The King approached and said:

“Merlin, I seek your advice. My Knights have been speaking of the Holy Grail of Joseph of Arimathea, and yet none knows where it is. We all want to place it in a location of honor and respect, for it is truly a miraculous thing, the dish of Jesus. What do you suggest?”

Merlin looked duly quizzical and after a reasonable period of time turned and looked at the King and said:

“King Arthur, I know that it is about but to get to it requires dedication and devotion from each Knight, to each individually, they must go out and prove their worth, not by fighting but by the path of good deeds. Then and only then will the Grail find them. For the Grail hides from the Knights because of their violence, the grail will show itself to those who profess faith, those who perform the deeds for which Christ asked, and those who respect their fellow man, all of their fellows, including the creatures of the forest.”

Arthur said:

“We will do that, what shall I tell the Knights?”

Merlin replied:

“A Quest, a Quest for the Holy Grail, my King, each Knight on his own, sets out, and each Knight does good until the Grail finds him, then return, and place it in the Church in Winchester, and there it shall reside as long as peace rules the land. Go good King, start your quest!”

The King thus returned to the Round Table full of joy. He had a mission, his Knights would no longer fight amongst themselves, and they would go out and be one with the people. He arrived after a long night of travel, the sun was bright and when he entered the Round Table room, the beams of sunlight shone directly upon his chair. Sir Lancelot said:

“Greetings good King, the omen of the light from above bodes well. What news bring you from the forest home of Merlin?”

The King then told them of his conversation with Merlin, and no sooner had he finished the all in synchrony shouted:

“The Quest, off to the Quest!”

And thus did the Quest commence.

### ***12.7 Joining Sir Gawain***

At this point I was totally involved for Antnee had put a twist on the tale in a way that I had never anticipated. So many people have played with this story but the reasons for why the Grail Quest was to be accomplished was always somewhat of a mystery. Here Antnee tells of the collaboration if not outright collusion between Merlin and Egwyn, an almost Druid like tale, albeit with an Antnee twist. I also noticed that as Antnee got into this tale his presentation was becoming almost classic in form and dialog. He had abandoned the Antnee humor and he was not truly a bard of Arthurian legend. I have tried my best to capture this change in style and those of you who have been on these tales with Antnee before I am sure will see what I am talking about. He was becoming more Mallory than Mallory in his presentation. I truly enjoyed that.

Let me return to Antnee.

“And thus Sir the Grail Quest had commenced. Each Knight set forth in a separate direction, seeking the sacred platter, which Joseph of Arimathea had brought with him to Britain. None quite knew where it might have gone nor where their search would lead them. But each had a solemn sworn duty to seek doing his best and to do so alone unless and until the trail crossed with another knight at some time hence. Each had a solemn vow to do their best, and to continue until they had exhausted all possibilities.”

Thus off they went, with Arthur and Guinevere remaining at Camelot, to rule the kingdom. The bishop blessed them on their way. It was a mighty sight, all the knights in full garb, each heading in a different direction, all together at the start, but as they each rode off the distance expanded rapidly between each as they went further from the castle, further and further apart, until no knight could see another, then each was on his own.

Egwyn had headed east towards Londinium, the old Roman town on the Thames, for he believed that there he might find the Grail, for now he too really believed in this quest. After many days, and he had stopped at every hamlet and enquired, he looked from every tree top, he was no farther towards finding the grail than before. Very few had even heard of the grail, and those few who did had no idea where it might be. He crossed into Saxon territory. Those were the tribes from across the water which had invaded Britain after the Romans had left, the tribes that Arthur had defeated at Bath and had pushed back up across the Thames and from Londinium. But they were here and they were fearful. So Egwyn had to be cautious. He was safe with the Britons but with the Saxons, he was in danger.

He wandered about on rumor after rumor and he came to the town of Oxford, and he knew his path had been a winding one. There was a church, he must ask there. He went inside and saw the priest at the altar and approached:

“Good father, I am on a quest for the Holy Grail, the plate ...”

He was snatched up, a Saxon had come from behind a curtain, had seen him, and pulled him up and threw him in a bag. The priest called out but the Saxon struck him down with his broadsword. Egwyn now thought he was doomed. What had he done, what had he done.

He was taken outside and there were other Saxons and Egwyn could hear their strange tongues yet he could not understand a word. They opened the bag and he was torn from it, held by his tail, with a wild Saxon taking a long knife to make Egwyn his dinner.

Just as the knife neared his neck, the head of the Saxon went flying through the air, the grip loosened and Egwyn dropped to the ground. He look up and there was Gawain, sword in hand, bright shining armor, and the other Saxons running at full speed.

Egwyn was so pleased, he scampered to Gawain and said:

“Sir Gawain, you have saved my life, many thanks, you are my savior!”

Gawain replied:

“My fellow knight, it is my duty, God guided me here at this time, and we have a quest, and we need each other. As our rule states, we stay apart until we come together, and God brought us together, so we shall never part while on our search. Come, you are cut, I shall fix your wound.”

Gawain repaired the cuts to Egwyn, then he found nuts and corn to feed him and finally food for himself. The two went to the church where the priest had been killed by the Saxons and then buried him in the church yard and said a prayer over him. Then Gawain said they should vigil the night in prayer that their next journey together would be fruitful.

The two spent the night in the now empty church, and Egwyn was impressed by the faith of Gawain, a true knight, the perfect knight, and his friend.

### ***12.8 Finding the Grail***

Thus Gawain and Egwyn set forth, Gawain upon his horse and Egwyn atop the horse’s head, always on diligent lookout. They would talk and discuss what the best path forward would be. They went from town to town, chapel to chapel, and there was no news of the Grail, for some people had heard of it but alas it was in the deep dark recesses of history and folklore and none had themselves ever heard directly of the Grail.

After a few months of journey they rested in a town near the coast. They were given quarters by the local priest in the stone chapel, a small room adjacent, rest for the horse, and time to think and pray. After two days they saw a rider approaching, and as he grew nearer it was clear that

the rider was a knight, and the closer he got they saw it was Galahad, a fellow knight of the Round Table. Galahad came upon them and he was covered in mud and dirt from his journey, his horse needed rest, but when he saw Gawain and Egwyn he smiled and dismounted.

They embraced and wished each other greetings and then Gawain asked:

“Have you heard any news?”

Galahad replied:

“None, some have recollections, some even recall others saying where it may have been, but none have any news worth following. I feel we may be on a fruitless task. I am weary and just seek rest. It has been a long quest and I feel we may be letting our good King down, for we should be able to find the Grail.”

Egwyn responded:

“Good Sir Galahad, seek some rest, for we have been here but two days and already our spirits have begun to mend. We had been sent out apart and alone when we first travelled, but now I believe we must go together, and each support the other, for I truly believe that we shall prevail on our quest. Bathe, rest, and we shall care for your horse, it too needs rest and repair. We shall speak on the morrow.”

Galahad repaired to the small rooms and did bathe and slept for many hours. Egwyn and Gawain took his steed and did the same, they washed him down and gave him feed and water. All rested.

In the morning, they went to the chapel and prayed with the local priest and others in the parish. The day was bright and sunny, it was getting to be late spring and the air was now warm. They spent several more days this way, and Galahad returned to his normal self. His spirits improved and the presence of all three made for a better team. They spoke of ideas and what their next steps would be.

Then after two weeks there came a stranger on foot to the town. All saw him coming, a man in a black cloak, sandals and dirty feet, with a long red beard, but a head shaved so that it shined in the sun. As he came closer his eyes were almost clear, with just a tint of light silver blue. He walked up to the chapel and sat upon the grass looking outwardly towards the path through the hamlet. Galahad went to him and said:

“Good Sir, you look weary from your travels, perhaps we can get you some water and food?”

The man did not turn or look at Galahad but responded thus:

“Sir Galahad, my thanks, that would be most appreciated.”

Galahad was shocked, who was this man, he had never seen him, and how did he know who he was, for he was dressed in but a light over-garment with no knightly garb. Yet he did not respond and just went back to Galahad and Egwyn and relayed what had just happened. They all prepared some food and Gawain and Galahad and Egwyn went together to present it.

Again the man did not turn but this time he said:

“My thanks to you three, Gawain, Galahad and Egwyn, for you three are the best of knights. Come and sit with me for I shall tell you a tale.”

Thus they sat in front of him, along the dusty edge of the road, and they looked upon him. His eyes, those almost clear eyes, as if he could not see with them, but then again they felt them piercing to each soul. They were quiet but they could each hear and sense the fear and uncertainty that this wander brought to each.

He said:

“I understand that you seek the Grail, I have heard from many that it is your sacred Quest. I am here to assist you on your next step. Follow my words and you shall find the Grail, do not follow them and you shall each be destroyed.”

The three quietly and together thought what danger did this stranger bring, what truth were in his words. And who was this stranger. Yet none of the three spoke.

The stranger ate and when finished said:

“Now south shall you go, to the white cliffs on the sea, and below shall there be a boat and a captain. The boat shall take you cross the waters, and from there you shall obtain horses from a priest in a chapel for he shall be awaiting you. From there you shall travel ten days to the south west, until you arrive at the town of Bayeux, there you shall find a stream, and aside the stream is a small castle with a sickly king, and from that king, and you shall find what you seek. But beware, ask carefully and listen well.”

Without further comment, without the slightest thanks, the man arose, placed the cowl upon his bald head, bent his head downward and walked back from whence he came.

The three knights just stood and watched until he was out of sight, not speaking a word.

Then Egwyn was the first to speak:

“Sirs, who this man was and from whence he came I know not, but I believe that this is a direction we must follow, why I know not, but follow we must.”

Gawain replied:

“Indeed, and I agree with Sir Egwyn, we should follow and do so quickly.”

Galahad finally stood up and looked about, the horses were on the ready, they were refreshed, and he said:

“Strange, it is as if he knew all was on the ready, and he knew us, and he knew that we would follow. Perhaps he is good or he is evil, but let us do a Mass and then let us leave this very day. The quest resumes.”

The three did their Mass, got upon their horses and rode the same trail that the unknown man had taken into town, the trail that led to the white cliffs, the sea and the boat, which was to await them.

It was less than a day’s journey, but noon on the second day as they rode above the cliffs, seeing the ocean water break along the narrow sand beach they saw in the distance a ship with a captain and a crew. They rode down. Then Gawain went to the captain and said:

“Good Captain, we have been told by a man with a red beard to seek a captain and his ship to take us across the waters. Is that you good Captain?”

The captain replied:

“You have been sent well good Knight, leave your horses with the young lad over there, he shall care for them well, and come aboard, but leave your armor with your horses, the sea is not kind on a ship so weighted down. Then we shall sail.”

The three did thus and into the ship they went. The winds were with them yet the sailing was rough, and for Gawain and Galahad, it was their first time, and each suffered. For Egwyn, he had grown up on ships and took to the top mast, and watched the views, which reminded him of his early childhood and tales from his father Padric of the time from across the great sea. While Galahad and Gawain were sick and lying upon the wet wooden deck, Egwyn and the Captain spoke of various sea journeys, and as a result the Captain befriended Egwyn and took him into his confidence.

The Captain and Egwyn exchanged tales day and night. It took three days to cross since the wind had shifted. They landed on a sandy beach. There were cliffs here as well, and they were smaller but rougher. As they were unloading Egwyn scampered to the top and looked about. There was a road, and green fields for miles. This land was almost like his home in Ireland. He felt comfortable. Just up the road some 200 yards was a house, made of stone, and two horses waiting. Strange he thought, this red bearded man is just a mystery.

He scampered down and went and told Gawain and Galahad. He then said farewell to the Captain, who strangely said he would return and be there when they did, and off the three went to get the horses.

At the stone cottage there were no people. Just the horses, ready for riding, and attached to each horse was a map, a map to where they were to go. The horses were well fed and strong, thus they jumped upon them and off they rode.

After three days of riding, the days were cool and at times wet with rain, but the green of the fields was amazing, especially when the sun returned, they came upon a rider approaching them. It was Sir Perceval. When he came upon them Gawain said:

“Good Sir Perceval, we are surprised to see you, have you had any success?”

Perceval was his normal disagreeable self, and replied:

“Time wasted, totally wasted. I am heading back. You two, I mean three, why you should also turn back, just a waste of time.”

Galahad turned to me and whispered:

“He is defeated, a defeated man, a pity.”

Egwyn could see, for Perceval was always one who complained, one who felt himself better, yet one who often only half tried. But Gawain said:

“Perceval, come and join us, the fellowship we give each other has strengthened our resolve. We too were weak and ready to return but alas we did get strength. Come and join us.”

Perceval was never one to take other’s encouragement. He remained steadfast and replied:

“I am tired, there is no Grail, and I return to Court. Farewell.”

He drove his horse forward and was soon out of sight. Egwyn thought him a weak man.

After the fullness of the days indicated for the trip, they arrived at the small town of Bayeux. There was a small chapel, and strangely it was the chapel dedicated to Saint Patrick, or Patrice as they said it, and Egwyn felt even more at home. He saw this as a good omen. The three stopped here.

They went and spoke to the priest. Gawain asked:

“Good father, we are from the Court of good King Arthur and we are on a most sacred quest, a quest for the Holy Grail. Have you heard of it?”



And to the surprise of all the priest replied:

“Ah yes, our king has it in his possession.”

We were shocked. Galahad then said:

“And where is this king?”

The priest replied:

“He lives in the small castle down the road from the church on the edge of the large deep stream. He is sickly from a bad wound and he spends his days at the stream fishing, day in and day out. He is now called the Fisher King, for he claims that fishing is the only thing he can do to relieve the lasting pain from his wound.”

The knights rested and the next morning after Mass they went to call upon the King. They approached the small castle, which was astride the stream, which flowed through the town. There was a bridge which they crossed and then into the front gate of the castle. It was not a very big castle and frankly not well defended, as if there was truly no threat. They told the soldiers at the gate who they were and that they sought the king. The soldiers were surprised at Egwyn but they let them through.

They were invited to the palace room a small poorly lit place and there upon a large chair sat the king. He was truly in pain, and one could see the blood still oozing from his leg, both sides, from a through and through lance. The king said:

“Ah, more knights, you follow Perceval, the rude, why are you rude as well.”

Galahad replied:

“No good King, we are sorry if somehow our band first was so poorly towards you, for we are but seekers.”

The King replied:

“And what do you seek, gold, fair maidens, jewels, what is your quest?”

Egwyn stood forth and boldly but with some fear and said:

“Sire, we seek only wisdom, we seek to understand and to learn, we seek to know, and to know about the Holy Grail, its meaning.”

Egwyn saw a young man aside the king who held a lance, and on the tip of the lance was blood, fresh and non-coagulating, dripping down upon the floor. He continued:

“An Sire, we seek wisdom of all in your land, such as the meaning of the lance and its blood, does it tell us wisdom that we may be better knights, better in our lives, and what can we take back of this new knowledge which will help our fellows themselves become better.”

Upon hearing these words, the very questions posed, the King arose as if the pain and suffering had suddenly been lifted, he smiled, and came down to Egwyn and said:

“Good Knight, for you truly are the first and only to come and seek from me the true meaning of the Grail. You seek wisdom to do good and further to spread that wisdom to others.”

Gawain and Galahad now saw as he walked the wound that had been through his thigh was disappearing, the blood dried, and each step the King stood taller and the pain on his face was less. Until he stood before the three of them. Egwyn jumped atop Gawain’s shoulder and the King spoke:

“Come you fine three Knights, let us feast, for I have some wonderful fresh fish, and now that my burden had been relieved I can feel the love of life anew. Come you three.”

The King took the three between his arms and walked to the royal dining hall, it was filled with sunlight so unlike the small throne room. They had a feast and at the end he passed around a large bread dish, a bowl like item from which they each had some sweet fruit filled breads. The food was wonderful. Then the King said:

“I have enjoyed you three knights so well. You must stay for a few days, we shall talk.”

They all agreed. He then said:

“Oh, the dish in front of them, with the fruit filled breads, that my friends if what you seek, it is the Holy Grail, and I have been safeguarding it until this moment. You Sir Egwyn, of all possible knights, alone sought wisdom of and from it, and you and your brother knights may carry it forward to its next home. You have saved me and may the Grail protect you all.”

The three were open mouthed, for they never had even asked to see it, and Gawain saw that Egwyn had been right, to seek meaning rather than goods.

The three knights spent three days with the King as he returned to health and then they set out back to the ship and then on to Camelot.

## **12.9    *Battle and Death of Arthur***

After several weeks they were in sight of Camelot. Slowly they approached and when others saw them they rode out to ride in with them. Arthur was at the gate when they finally arrived. He said:

“Welcome back my friends, we have truly missed you all. Perceval said that you were lost but I had faith.”

Queen Guinevere came forth and Egwyn jumped to her arms and the two chatted like long lost friends. Arthur asked:

“Is all well, how was the quest?”

Galahad, it was agreed would tell the King. He started:

“Good King, we have the Grail, our Quest is done, and here it is.”

Galahad gave the King a well wrapped dish, wrapped in gold and purple silks from the Fisher King. The King opened it and the plate was sparkling in the sun. He smiled and said:

“Come into the great hall, come and tell us of this Grail, from whence it came, of this great Fisher King, come and spread the word.”

They all went to the Hall, and there was Lancelot, Perceval, Bors, and even Merlin had joined in. Egwyn was very pleased to see his old friend Merlin, and before seating themselves he and Merlin spoke. Merlin said:

“Egwyn, I am so happy you returned. But beware, for I sense a great darkness coming. The forest tells of this evil and sadness, and I want you and your fine friends to know. I tried to warn Arthur but to no avail. He is convinced that all will be well. The Queen knows and she fears it as do I. We shall talk after, but be on your guard my friend.”

Egwyn was concerned for he trusted Merlin. Both he and Merlin were of the forest and this was a strong bond. What was this darkness. It would wait.

Arthur asked them all to sit at the table and they did, Egwyn sat between Galahad and Gawain and Perceval across from them. Arthur started by saying:

“Here returns three of the greatest knights, they bring back the Grail from their Quest, let us hear the tale.”

Gawain started and described the journey and their meetings and then he said:

“I shall let Sir Egwyn tell the tale, that of the Fisher King and the Grail.”

Egwyn started but not the way others had expected:

“Fellow Knights, the Grail Quest, the search, was truly a search for wisdom, seeking answers to questions, and that more than anything is what we received. The Fisher King had the Grail, but more importantly he had answers to our questions, and it was in asking those questions that we relieved him of his wounds. And what did he provide us with, answers of fellowship, of respect, of trust, not only for ourselves but for all people. The Grail is a large plate, not a jewel or gem for one person, but a fine complement to our Round Table, it enhances our fellowship as it did for Christ at the last supper. It was the plate upon which they shared the last part of their final meal. Even the evil Judas was asked to partake of the platter that is how Jesus tried to include all. Thus the spreading of this word of friendship is symbolized by this simple plate, and here at Camelot it reaches another level of truth, that we Knights of the Round Table take upon ourselves the obligation to help others as did Jesus in his preaching.”

Galahad stood up and said:

“Sir Egwyn speaks the truth, and I at first was simple and looked for gems and jewels, but alas this simple plate and its simple truth has given meaning and purpose. Good King Arthur, the Grail Quest was a very worthy endeavor, and we bring this new truth back to you and all the people.”

All around the Table cheered except Perceval. Before partaking of the food from the Grail, he quietly slipped out. For he was jealous of the three knights, worse he hated them for what they had done when he had been with the Fisher King first and was told nothing. Alas, he did not ask, he just demanded the Grail. He never saw the light, and even now, his world was darkening.

Perceval rode out from Camelot and north to the camp of Mordred. For Mordred was the enemy of Arthur and had assembled 400 knights all on horse and 1,000 men with spears on the ready to take Arthur. When Perceval arrived he met Mordred. Mordred was short, dark black eyes, with short cropped back hair, and a short black beard. The appearance was that of consummate evil. Perceval told Mordred that the time to attack was now. Thus did Mordred assemble all his men and in a day's march was upon the fields outside of Winchester.

The fields outside of Winchester are called Salisbury Plain and it was a wide clear grassy land, flat and open. Mordred and his men were sighted coming early in the day and a messenger was sent to Arthur. Gawain said:

“Good King, we are all ready for battle. Let us armor up and to our horses.”

Guinevere was truly worried, for Galahad, Gawain and Egwyn had just returned and they were weary. She called to Lancelot:

“Good Lancelot, take care of our young three knights and watch the King, he fears Mordred, and I fear that evil man as well. They will do whatever to kill Arthur.”

Lancelot replied:

“I shall do my very best good Queen. I agree this Mordred is evil and poor Perceval has joined him. Envy was his reason, and I suspect that he shall not see the night. Pray for us good lady.”

He bowed and took to his horse. Lancelot was second to the King. It would fall to him to become king if Arthur fell. Lancelot was a good and pure knight and he had no dreams to be king, for he felt he was not worthy. Perhaps Gawain or Galahad, but not himself.

They went out to Salisbury Plain to meet Mordred. The battle was joined. Arthur had at most 200 knights and less than 400 men with spears, but Arthurs men fought well, the knights engaged and one after another Arthur’s knights slayed those of Mordred, until there were less than 150 knights equally on each side. Mordred had a great loss, and he raged as he tried to close in on Arthur. Arthur saw Mordred coming and engaged him directly. Swords in hand, set upon the great horses then the men charged each other. Mordred swung wide across Arthur’s waist and cut him through the side, a deep wound, with much blood, but Arthur stayed on the charge. They met again, and this time Arthur slashed Mordred on his right arm, a slash that drove him from his horse.

The field was now a field of blood. Arthur dismounted and took at Mordred with his broad sward, despite the ever widening wound on his side. Mordred fought well, slashing his broad sword many times, often making small knicks in Arthur, and Arthur stood his ground. Then Mordred attempted a slice at Arthur’s head, Egwyn who was near saw it coming and shouted to Arthur:

:Duck, Arthur, the sword.”

Arthur responded automatically and as Mordred missed his body rotated and Arthur rose from behind and with one slash removed his head.

At that point Arthur collapsed. Egwyn screamed:

“Lancelot, Lancelot, the King is down!”

Lancelot came immediately and cradled the King. He was now bleeding badly, and Lancelot saw it would not allow him to live. Lancelot suddenly saw Perceval on horse near and screamed to Egwyn:

“Egwyn, stop Perceval!”

Egwyn turned and saw Gawain, who had just subdued one of Mordred’s knights, he jumped over several knights with lightning speed atop Gawain’s horse and screamed:

“Stop Perceval!”

Gawain without even hesitating turned his horse about and charged directly at Perceval. Just before he got there he was attacked by another knight, but Egwyn jumped from the top of Gawain onto the face of Perceval, scratching at his eyes, and tearing at them despite Perceval smashing at Egwyn and breaking a few bones in his ribs. The pain for Egwyn was severe, piercing, but as it got worse he just dug deeper and Perceval screamed out. At this point Gawain and Galahad had finished their attackers and went after Perceval.

Perceval was almost atop Lancelot and Arthur when Galahad with one swing cut off Perceval's head, with Egwyn attached, severing a small bit of Egwyn's tail, and off into the air went the head and Egwyn, landing just a foot from the dying King.

Poor Egwyn was wounded and sore but he ran to Lancelot and the King and said:

"We have persevered good King, the good is righted."

Arthur turned to Egwyn and said, as his last words:

"You have brought back the best in men, my friend, you and your brother knights must go on. Farewell!"

With that Arthur passed. Mordred's troops and knights were destroyed and the few then retreated never to be seen again.

They burned the remains of Mordred's men as well as Mordred and Perceval. Merlin stood by the fire and said to Egwyn:

"Egwyn, this is the fate of all evil. There will always be men who believe that they can conquer, but alas for the good men such as you and your brother knights, goodness will always have a chance."

Egwyn, Gawain, Galahad and Lancelot gathered up the King, and as was the custom Merlin prepared a small barge, filled with wood and flowers, and laid Arthur upon the barge. The priest from the castle came down and said prayers, and then with Guinevere tearfully waving, the barge was lit a fire and sent out across the lake. Arthur was no more.

Lancelot was made king, and he took Guinevere as his wife. Both had loved Arthur so all felt that this was good for the land and the people.

### ***12.10 Return to Ireland***

Antnee showed that he was tired but also that the death of Arthur was a climatic event. But what of Egwyn. I asked:

“Antnee, what of Egwyn?”

He took his little paws and scruffled them aside his mouth, rumped himself back and forth in a sense of foreboding and began:

‘Well Sir, the tale does not end poorly, no Sir, despite what has happened thus far. You see, Egwyn had seen much, and he had learned a great deal, but he too now wanted to return home to Ireland and tell others, tell and record his tale. For he also wanted to see his family and friends.”

“Thus Egwyn sat with Merlin and with the Queen and said to them:

“Good friends, I have become a better Knight from your acquaintance and from our Quest. I must return to Ireland and record my tale and also tell my friends and family of this, for many in time to come will be able to learn from this tale, a tale of friends and war, a tale of goodness and yes evil. A tale of men becoming the best that they can become, a tale of not just crossing a divide, but of building a bridge for others, setting for what I believe will be a legend. The legend must be told properly my friends, not just of the battles and small adventures but of the ability of Knights to raise themselves to become true individuals, and men who when their time came could say that each had done their best. This tale I must record for generations to come.”

Merlin replied:

“Egwyn, you have become one of my closest friends. You are truly one who understands man. Do write this down, and I agree that it is best to do so at Armagh. But do come again if you can, I truly enjoyed your company, we think much the same way. And we can get men to do what we desire.”

The Queen replied:

“Good friend Egwyn, you have been there for me at the darkest hour. I will be ever thankful. Be safe on your journey. I do hope we may meet again.”

Egwyn then jumped up and the Queen did give him a hug, he then jumped down and hugged Merlin’s leg, and they both laughed. He said as he departed:

“The tale of this adventure will live forever and inspire generations to come, farewell my friends.”

And off went Egwyn, following the setting sun, on the road from Winchester to Bath, then across Wales, the hills he crossed, and then down to the shore where he had first landed. Returning after so many adventures was different, this time he knew where he was going, and what he would see. His first task was to get a ship across the sea, but there were many sailors and that would not be a problem.

After a couple of days Egwyn spotted a ship readying for sailing west. He approached the captain, an Irish sailor, and said:

“Sir, I seek transport across to Ireland, I am off to Armagh and the monastery, to see Abbott Aiden and Father Columbanus, would you have some spare room, I would be most grateful.”

The captain, Brendan O’Neil, of the Neial clan, was a friendly captain and he thought it would be good to have some company. But he asked:

“What can you pay me little one.”

Egwyn said:

“I can tell you a great tale of King Arthur and the search for the Holy Grail.”

O’Neil said:

“Ah, another Irish story teller, and a wee little furry one at that. Very well my little man, hop aboard, I am off for Dublin, but you should be able to find your way north from there. Arthur and the Grail you say, this should be a fine tale. Is that the Arthur who himself was just killed, would that be?”

Egwyn look sad but responded:

“Yes indeed Sir, the very same man. A great man.”

O’Neil then asked:

“Now here, do not tell me that you yourself had known of this great king, you a little gray furry creature.”

Egwyn replied:

“Sir, I did indeed, and even more Sir, for I served him at Camelot as a Knight, and I went myself upon the journey for the Grail.”

O’Neil was aghast, for never before did he see a little creature with such verve, not even from the Druid ladies and their forest creatures. He then said:

“Hop aboard my friend, I look forward to your tales.”

Three days they sailed, and Egwyn did mast duty, looking out from time to time, and keeping the watch. When down with the captain and the crew of five other men he told his tale, from the beginning, from Brendan, through Arthur, the Grail and the final battle. When they landed by



good fortune Egwyn had just finished. Ashore the captain and the five crew gathered around and said:

“Egwyn, that was one of the finest tales we have ever heard. You are a master story teller. Wait here and I will get you a trip north, for you can earn your way anywhere in this world with such tales.”

The captain went away a brief time and return with another captain, one Eamon Hagarty, from Lietrim, and he was sailing north to Armagh with goods for the monastery. The captain had told him of the story teller, and he had agreed to take Egwyn north. They bid farewell and off Egwyn went on his next trip, and again he told the tale, but as he noticed each time it became smoother, and with greater intensity, certain parts were made stronger and others faded. He often thought of the story teller, based upon facts but the facts get molded by the audience, time and the teller. Three more days and he arrived at Armagh.

He thanked his new crew, and they him, and off to the monastery he ran, it was a true homecoming. The Abbott saw him as he approached and walked out in the green field and held open his arms and Egwyn jumped through the air onto the Abbott’s arms and they hugged. The Abbott said:

“Well my little friend, tell me all that you saw, tell me it in full.”

And Egwyn told his tale again, and again and again. And the monks recorded it likewise, each monk making his own recording, and those recordings being taken back to Britain, then to Gaul, and the tale had a life which lived well beyond Egwyn, Arthur, Merlin and of course Guinevere.