

JUST STORIES

based on true stories

by John Privett

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By John L. Privett

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Flies

It happened one hot summer day. I don't know which month it was. At that time in my life, things just really blended together. Maybe it was July, August, it really doesn't matter I guess. I originally thought it was Monty's fault. He had been letting his two cats and his dog, Lemmy, have the run of the house, and they were leaving their stinky piles wherever they felt like it. Yes, that kind of bothered me, maybe that's why it was so easy for me to get so mad at Monty at the time. But, looking back on that day, it wasn't his fault, it just happened.

Cluster flies! That's what happened.

I've since been told, by an exterminating expert, that cluster flies lay their eggs outside the house. I'm not sure how long they remain

maggots, but knowing what maggots are and what their purpose on this planet is, it probably isn't very long. Well, the maggots, or maybe even after they have turned into these big black lumbering flies, crawl up the side of the house. This is especially true for houses trimmed with a lot of wood. Who knows, the results are the same, they get into the walls and eventually into the house. Once inside, in a seemingly drunken state, they cluster around windows. Hence the title, "cluster flies." They're almost logy in flight, slowly drifting randomly around the house, bumping into each other, the walls, or whatever they don't happen to be paying attention to at the time. Some times they just let go of what they are hanging onto, especially over your food, and drop wherever gravity takes them. So, you now know how I feel about these germ-ridden things. Actually, it gets worse. Back to

my story now. Let me tell you what happened to me that day.

Like I said, it was a hot summer day. I'm not sure why I had the day off, but I did. For whatever reason, I had to go up into the attic of our house. Monty, my brother Matt, and me had rented a three-story house in downtown Rochester, New York. In our neighborhood, the houses were so close you could reach out the window and hand something to your neighbor without having to stretch very far. Anyway, I had to, for whatever reason, go up to the attic. It was mid day, the sun was shining outside and of course, the attic was twice as hot as the rest of the house. Five minutes up there and you were sweating pretty good. There was a window on either end of the attic, the front and the back. It was open from one end to the other. There were no curtains up there. I

remember once being up there and watching police lights flashing a few blocks over. They were at some guy's house. I guess he'd gotten into a fight at a bar. He got stabbed and crawled a couple blocks home. He died in the garage. I sat up there and imagined the poor bastard at first staggering, and then as he lost blood, on his hands and knees and eventually with his last view of home in sight, dragging himself by his arms until he made it into his garage. So much for "home sweet home", huh? So, the attic should have been pretty bright in the middle of the day. But no, it wasn't. It seemed kind of, well, I don't know how to put it, dingy I guess. It was kind of like when there's an eclipse, but the sun isn't totally blocked out. It's day and you know it, but it seems like evening and it just doesn't feel right. I couldn't figure it out. It felt weird. I looked over at the front window. Maybe some passing cloud dimmed the attic a little. And of

course that wasn't the case. I went over to the window to see why it looked so dirty. Well, it wasn't dirty, it was covered in flies, cluster flies to be exact. They looked like that spray-on snow, except black. They were two or three thick around the edges and crawling all over each other, making the edges of the window look like they were squirming. Eventually they thinned out towards the middle of the window. It seemed like they were afraid of the sun, but desperately wanted to get outside. They were partially blocking out the light. You could call it a "fly-clipse." The back window was the same. I went to the back window and stopped a few feet away. Yep, same thing flies all over it. It didn't creep me out at first. There were a few piles of cat leftovers here and there on the floor. I thought I'd asked Monty to clean them up, but he never was very good at cleaning things up. Once he'd washed the dishes. We

didn't have any dish soap. He just scraped them off, soaked them in water, and put them in the dish rack to dry. Pretty much disgusted me at the time. Matt and I ate off paper plates from then on. So, I figured the flies must have just spontaneously generated from the piles of cat poop on the floor. Therefore, I blamed Monty. Like I said, I wasn't real creeped out at first, I was just plain pissed off. I said a few four-letter words in Monty's honor, and decided I'd have to clean up the mess myself. It took a few minutes of constipating on the fate of our house pets, but eventually I heard it. There was a low buzzing coming from both ends of the attic. At first it was barely noticeable over my fuming anger, but slowly the air filled with their humming. In a matter of minutes, that was all I could hear. That incessant buzzing was just about deafening after five minutes. Maybe not exactly deafening. But at the time, being

outnumbered about a thousand to one, it seemed like it. OK, I'll get rid of them. And then, I'll have to clean up frick and frack's little messes myself. I decided to go down to the hardware store, get a can of that flying insect death spray and then nuke the little bastards into oblivion with a few bug bombs. I took one last look at them. Yep, they were goners for sure.

The steps leading down from the attic were jimmy-rigged by our landlord. There was, at one time, just a pull down folding ladder going up there and he somehow had made stairs. It was more like a ladder built into the wall. It led up there so that it could be used as a bedroom or for storage or for whatever. At this time, the attic it was being used by Monty and his band for practice sessions. They were just stars waiting to be discovered, yeah, right! But now I started getting creeped

out, the more I thought about that sound. I fell down the last four or five steps on the way down, son of bitch! OW! Clutz that I am, my foot hit the edge of one of the steps. I was facing forward and dropped on my back and slid down the bottom few steps. I remember thinking that, too, was Monty's fault. And now I have a nice little rug burn on my back. Which, I'd probably forget about 'til I hopped into the shower the next day. Yes, that's when I'd remember tripping down the stairs. When that hot water hit that skinless spot on my back, that's when I'd remember. I made it downstairs, grabbed a beer, went into the living room and burned one. Yes, like I said, those days seemed to blend together back then.

I walked down to the store to get the tools I needed to destroy what was for that day, the bane of my existence. Ya know, if

those two damn cats and that friggin' dog weren't messing all over the house, I wouldn't be wasting my time, or my cash for that matter. This, I knew, was gonna set me back at least twenty bucks and that in itself was enough to piss me off. I had to spend another twenty, and Monty stilled owed me like two hundred bucks for the power bill he was late on, three months late by the way. Yes, I'll just throw that on his tab, the son of a bitch. Why did I bother?

The store had quite a nice selection of anti bug weaponry on hand. I grabbed a can of flying insect spray. The can that said you could hit them from like thirty feet away. It showed a giant dying wasp with a big x through it on the front. Yes, nice, I chuckled. I'll spray the little bastards, then I'll bomb them into oblivion. I grabbed two bombs. The warning label on them said that they were

hazardous to animals like cats and dogs and little caged pets. The thought of killing a thousand and three birds with one stone didn't really bother me. In fact, it was kind of gratifying at the time. Oh well Monty, I didn't realize the bombs would hurt your precious little friends. Too bad, so sad..He, he, he. Nope, I didn't feel bad at all. Back to the house of flies it was. But first, quick stop off at the grocery store to pick up six cans of instant guts. I was kind of thirsty anyway.

Back at the house my mood changed from impending ecstasy, to an unidentifiable dread. I quickly remembered that droning buzz in the attic. I kind of thought I could hear it from down stairs. Probably not, but the more I thought about what I was gonna do, the louder it seemed I could hear it. I finished off a few beers, burnt another one, and grabbed a can for the road. Yes, that's it, I'm

ready. Bring the little devils on, I thought. I grabbed the spray and the bombs, and headed up stairs. At the bottom of the steps leading up to the attic I stopped. I looked up and chugged the beer I had in my hand. OK, lets go.

I climbed up the stairs, throwing a quick four-letter reference at the bottom steps. Oh yeah, I'll remember you guys tomorrow morning in the shower. That's for sure. Gee, thanks Monty, I owe ya one. I got to the top and looked to the front and then to the back. Yep, they were still there. And yep, that buzzing was still there too. Strange, I thought, I think it got louder when I reached the top step. Maybe, maybe not. Maybe they knew, I thought. Maybe they could smell the spray. Maybe at the factory some of the poison drips down the side of the can when they fill these things. I looked down at the can. Nah, you're

just getting a little paranoid John. I knew it was time to stop smoking things other than cigarettes. It wasn't fun anymore. I guess I just smoked it out of boredom, maybe even habit. Yeah, right, it's not addicting. Any way, at the top of the attic steps I scoped out the situation. I needed to strategically place these bombs. I figured I'd put one about ten feet from either window in the center of the floor. That way, when I hit them with the first wave, the spray, they'd scatter, hitting a cloud of death as they tried to escape. I'll just set off the bombs first, then the cloud of death will be there for the second punch! I'll knock'm down with the old one-two. I'll hit the front window first with the spray, because the exit leading down was closer to the back window. Yes, good plan, I mentally patted myself on the back.

I placed the bombs, pulled the tab on the back one first, then the front one. I took one last deep breath of air and headed over the front bomb to the window. The bombs worked a little better than I expected. I thought I'd have a four or five minutes to finish them all off. Yes, I was wrong. I started spraying the front window. I was, however, not the recommended thirty feet away like the can said I was supposed to be. The flies instantly took flight. The buzzing really was deafening this time. They were everywhere. I stepped back through the cloud of death and turned to the back window. Oh my god! I saw that the flies in the back window had just felt the death cloud coming their way. They were already lifting off, but they had no where to go. I let loose with the spray anyway, what the heck.

I kind of remember them starting to drop all around me. But at the same time, they were forming their own little insane death cloud in the attic. They were everywhere. They started landing on me. They were bouncing off my head, they were stuck in my hair, my ears. I could feel them crawling around on my face, I could hear them buzzing, right up against my eardrums. I started freaking out. I've never been more skeeved in my life. The thought that they were actually coming after me crossed my mind. Were they pissed? Did they realize I was the enemy, and they had me a thousand to one? I half expected to hear a collective, "get out, get out" or a pitiful, "why you do this to me Johnny?" As this horror unfolded on and around me, I realized I couldn't see anymore. My eyes were burning like the time I cut up those jalapeno peppers and accidentally wiped my eyes before washing

my hands. The tears were streaming down my face, and the tearing itself caused my eyes to burn even more. In the mass fly-steria, the cloud of death had grabbed me by the throat too. Snot was flowing from my nose in torrents. It was trapping the flies on my face. It worse than flypaper, they could still crawl around, but they couldn't get away. This stuff is what the military uses on its foes. I was suddenly sure that this was what they made their chemical weapons out of. I couldn't hold my breath any longer, and I was now starting to panic. It had been at least two minutes since I set off the bombs, so I took a deep breath. So what if I took in a fly or too? I needed air, or I was gonna pass out. My throat burned as the poison filled my lungs. Man, I thought, Amityville, it was a true story. I felt my head start to daze over. The flies were dropping like, well, I guess like flies. I felt their little seizing bodies pop under my

sneakers as I staggered over to where I thought the steps were. I had to get out. I was slapping my head, trying to untangle the ones in my hair. Alternately swatting at the ones still bouncing off my face. Unfortunately for me, I hadn't let go of the death spray. And now, in a total panic, I never let off the button. With every other swat, I knew what the flies felt when the spray hit them in the face. I could feel some flies squirming around in my shirt. They must have dropped down my neck or crawled up my back in the confusion. I swatted them too, imagining their guts smearing all over my skin. Then I found the steps, they were there and gone in the same instant. I must have lost my balance on the top step, because I don't remember stepping down. The last thing I do remember was swinging my arms wildly in the air while realizing I wasn't actually going to catch my

balance. I was going down, going down the hard way.

I don't know how long I laid there at the bottom of the stairs. I remember waking up covered in dead flies and realizing there was dead silence. Thank God! That sound was gone. My left arm felt like it was broken, but it wasn't. I could move it just fine, but a large bruise was forming just over my elbow. I knew that would only get worse by tomorrow. My head though, my head was just a pounding, Whether I hit it on the way down, or it was a side effect from the bomb, I'm not sure. My tongue was tingling, but I never ended up with an egg on my noggin. I was dazed for a few days after that. I know that, for sure. But wait, there's more. The can of spray landed under me, or I landed on it. Either way, it landed just right and spent itself on my right side. That spot on my ribs was

numb for a week. I had a few other bruises and some contusions from falling down the stairs, but it wasn't anything I couldn't live with.

I got up with a pain filled groan, and then went back down stairs. I finished off the last two beers and slept on the couch the rest of that afternoon. Later when Monty got home, I told him a thing or two about letting the animals take a dump in the house wherever they felt like it. Monty promised to put out a litter box and let Lemmy practice placing land mines in the back yard. But, that never happened. Although, I gotta admit, I never did find anymore stinky piles around the house, even though I never saw a cat box either. I went up in the attic a few weeks later. The son of a bitch never cleaned up the thousand or so little corpses littering the attic floor. He just left them there. Eventually,

Monty and the stars trampled the dead flies into the carpet when they went up there to practice.

That was the last time I ever went up there. To this day, I can stand neither the sight, nor the sound of any kind of fly. I hate the thought of just picking up a fly swatter, even by the handle. I have a very hard time smooshing them in a paper towel when the swatter isn't handy. That sound, that little pop. Or, the thought that maybe I didn't kill it and it's gonna get on me. I'm getting goose bumps just thinking about it. That's why I don't like flies.

Oh, by the way, later that fall I found out where Lemmy was relieving himself. I often wondered why the kitchen stank so much, remember the dishwashing thing I mentioned? One day I found out why it did, and why Lemmy never scratched at the door

to go outside for a potty break. The basement door was just off the kitchen. I watched him trot down into the cellar one day, then leisurely saunter back up into the kitchen with an air of relief about him. He returned the look of disgust that I gave him, and went out to leave some fresh hairs on the sofa. What the....? I went over to the basement door and peered down the stairs..... But, that's another story.

Red devil

It must have been, oh, I don't know, going on eighteen years ago, but I remember it like it was this morning. It's the kind of thing no one ever forgets. No one ever forgets their first love, or their first car. I'll never forget the red devil. It happened on a Sunday night. I had left for work on a Friday morning. I didn't own a car and couldn't catch a ride with anyone at home, so I started to hitch hike to work. It was probably twenty miles to the mall, and I just knew I was going to have to walk at least halfway, and I'd end up late, as usual. Well, I was about a half-mile from home, and already getting tired, when my buddy Rob went tooling by in his white Cutlass whatever. The break lights came on and he screeched to a halt a few hundred yards up the road. I kind of jogged to him,

while he threw it in reverse and backed up to me. I hopped in and we took off down the road.

“Going to work?” he asked.

“Yep, gotta be there in an hour or so.”

“Sucks to be you,” he said. Yeah, it did. I had to go to work and it was a pretty nice day out, June, not too hot, not too cold. The sun was shining, a few clouds in the sky, all in all a pretty nice day.

“Whuddya say we get some beers?” he asked.

Sure, why not I thought, screw work. I was working at a candy store at the mall. The owner was a hell of a nice guy. He knew I wasn't really focused in life and he gave me a job anyway. It turns out I never went back to work for him after that day. My loss.

“I'm game,” I said to Rob. We went to the plaza, just down the road to get some

beers. The more I thought about it, the more I liked the idea of spending the day drinking beers and maybe tossing the Frisbee around. We went into the grocery store, our plan was to get some beer and then head on over to the back side of the plaza, park the car, and follow this creek down ways and just hang out. Well, once in the store, the plan changed. I'm not sure if it was his idea or mine, but we decided to have a bar-b-que, too. We got some hot dogs, ketchup, mustard, buns, the whole nine yards, including charcoal and lighter fluid to cook with. Oh yeah, and a case of beer to split between us. Outside, Rob decided to call Bovie, a buddy of ours, and invite him along for the party. We headed over to the backside of the plaza and waited for Bovie to show up. He got there about half an hour later. In the meanwhile Rob and I started pounding beers. Bovie showed up after we had just finished

off a six pack. He didn't waste time joining in the fun, and in an hour we needed more beer. We went back to the store and bought two more cases.

This time, we did go down along the creek and pitched a campfire. And so it went. But it turns out that our little bar-b-que got a few people bigger and lasted three days. We called more friends Saturday morning, after passing out Friday night and waking up with a hang over. We always said "the hair of the dog" was the best remedy for that. Our friends came over with their friends, food, and more beer too. It was a good time, but by Sunday I had had enough. The weather had been nice, but it was late, probably going on eight o'clock or so, and I was still pretty hammered after two solid days of drinking. It looked like it was going to rain anyway. We all heard thunder in the distance and were

trying to finish off the last of the beer. Well, we did, and then Rob, Bovie and everyone else took off. Rob asked me if I wanted a ride, but I said no. I figured the fresh air and the walk home would do me some good. Then, I left too.

It was a few miles home, and I got ready for a long walk. The wind picked up a little and the thunder was definitely getting closer now. After nine o'clock, it started getting pretty dark. I had walked out from behind the plaza and headed across the street. There was only one road I had to walk to get home. The same one Rob had picked me up on two days before. I started to think I should have taken Rob up on his offer for a ride home. Oh well, too late now. About a quarter mile into my walk, it started to sprinkle. I was wearing a light jean jacket, so I pulled up my collar. Ya know, I thought to myself. I'm pretty

drunk. I realized I couldn't really walk a straight line. Good thing I wasn't driving. I took to the side of the road, and tried to stay on the yellow line. I don't think I was doing too well. I kept finding myself, either walking in the road itself, or bobbing off into the scrub on the edge of the woods, just off the shoulder. Maybe a mile into my trip it started to rain, rain. It was coming down pretty good. I was getting soaked, and water was rolling down the shoulders of the road and over my feet. Yes, they were already wet, but the runoff was picking up crap off the side of the road, and depositing it in my sneakers. The wind started whipping, and the thunder was now over me. Lightning was flashing across the sky. An Ac-Dc tune came to mind, "white lightning's flashing across the sky, you're only young but you're gonna die." Yes, I thought, maybe I would. I'm not sure how long I'd been walking, but I found myself off in the

scrub more and more often. I was coming up on a stretch of road with out any shoulder, and I knew I was going to have to walk in one lane or the other if I didn't want to fall off into the woods and hurt myself. Well, I tried walking in the on coming lane. Bad idea, just after coming around a bend in front of me, a car just about sideswiped me. It was close, I could just barely feel his side view mirror, lift my jacket away form my now thoroughly soaked body. Whoa, I thought, too close. So, I decided to go and walk the on other side. Bad idea too. I never heard, or saw the cars now passing by from behind me. No, I take that back. Every one of them slammed on their brakes and horn, and just barely missed me as they flew by. Screw it, I was trashed. I said to myself. Dammit, I'm just going to go up the center of the road. I'll follow the dotted yellow line. This way, I'll see the lights of the cars coming up behind me or the lights

coming from ahead and just move over to the other side of the road.

I know what you're thinking, how stupid can you get. Yes, you're right. You can't get much stupider than that. But no, I never got hit by any cars that night. There was a time when two came in opposite directions at the same time and passed me on either side. I held my breath and waited for that fatal blow, but they both saw me, and missed. I have to say now, looking back that I'm disappointed in people. Ya know, no one ever stopped to see if I was OK. It seems like it would pique my curiosity a little, if I saw that today. No one even opened their window to curse me out. But, it was storming pretty bad by then. The wind was raging and lightning was striking close by. I knew that for sure. It was pitch black and leaves were blowing across the road. Some of them had even stuck to my

leg. I plucked them off and sent them on their way. I remember that. That last close call didn't really bother me either. But what was about to happen would change my life.

I came up around the bend in front of me. I could see headlights reflecting off the road from behind. I was now almost staggering in the road. But I moved over into the on coming lane, so the guy wouldn't hit me from behind. I heard the engine of his car in the distance. It sounded kind of nice. Purred like a kitten, but I knew it must have had a lion under the hood. It was getting loud, fast. It figured the guy must have been bustin' the thirty-five mile an hour speed limit by at least that much more. I noticed that his engine never revved down. He just kept on tooling along. Must be nice in a dry, warm car in the middle of this friggin' down pour, I thought. He was getting close. I looked down

to make sure I was far enough over for him to avoid me. Then I noticed two things. First, the reflection of the headlights was still in my lane. Then I noticed that the reflection had a kind of red glow to it. Weird I thought. Well, I'll just go back over into the other side if this guy wants to be a dick and all. Five steps over, I was in the other lane. I looked down again to make sure I was far enough over. I'll be damned if the reflection wasn't still in the same lane I was in. Oh well, it was too late, as fast as he was going, he was right about on me anyway. I hunched my shoulders up around my neck and waited.

His tires never squealed on the road when he slammed on his breaks. They were locked up, probably at seventy m.p.h., or so. I just stood there looking down, his lights never moved in the reflection. He was skidding on the wet road and he never fish tailed or

nothing, He just came right at me, straight on. I felt his front bumper gently push me a bit, as his car came to rest exactly where I was just standing. He just pushed me forward a few steps, then stopped. He never turned off his engine, but I heard the car door open and heard him putting his feet on the ground.

I expected a battering of four-letter words and phrases, and didn't really blame the guy. He must have about pooped his pants when he realized there was some fool standing in the road ahead. That verbal onslaught never came, though. I stood there frozen in the road. I wasn't really scared, the beer must have taken the edge off the fright. I was just kind relieved that I wasn't dead. I heard him step out of the car. He was wearing shoes, or boots. I could hear his heels clicking in the road over the woosh of the wind through the trees. I turned around,

and saw that I was standing in front of the longest red Cadillac I had ever seen. It was spotless, immaculate, cherry condition. I could tell from the reflection of his headlights on my body, as it lit up the front end of his car. His headlights had some kind filter on them, making them appear almost red. I looked down at my legs, mesmerized by the red glow. I looked up at the hood of the car, waist high. I remember thinking the guy would have cut me in half if he'd hit me at seventy. The hood didn't have the usual kind of Cadillac ornament on it. It wasn't an angel with her wings swept back. It was some kind of freaky gargoyle thing with fangs and claws and snot on his face. Maybe not snot, but now days I add that in for effect. This guy was driving some kind of antique red Cadillac, and it was longer than any I'd ever seen. It looked like it was about twenty feet long, and it took up all of the lane it was in.

People definitely had to pull wide right in order to miss this thing. I marvelled at it.

Not really seeing where the driver had gone, I felt a tap on my back. I turned around, and there standing in front of me was a short man, in a red Zoot suit looking outfit. He looked like a miniature colonel Sanders. He had red hair, a red beard, and a red mustache that was twisted on the ends. He was a Leprechaun, only he was wearing red, not green. All red as a matter of fact, red shirt, red tie, red suit, red pants, even his shoes were red over his red socks. He was maybe four feet tall, and me being six-two, he literally had to reach up to poke me in the back.

I didn't say anything. I was a little dazed. It was all, as you can imagine, a little weird for me. Well, he didn't say anything either. He just stood there staring at me for about five

minutes. No cars came through, just him staring up at me, and me staring down at him. It dawned on me, and I swear this is true, that the little man in the little red Zoot suit, with his little red mustache and beard, were not getting wet. I still wasn't frightened. I was, I don't know, dumbfounded I guess. It was pouring rain, the wind was just a howling, lightning and thunder was booming all around us, and still, the little guy never had a drop of water touch him.

I was between him and his car. The red headlights cast an orange glow in his face. It looked like when you put a flashlight under your chin when you're trying to be spooky or something. Not speaking yet, he reached his little hand up to my chest and poked his little finger into it. Oh, no strange sensation, no stinging feeling, no paralyzing zap. Just this little man, poking his little finger in my chest.

He did it probably a dozen or so times before he just left his finger on my chest and finally spoke to me. And no, he didn't say anything awe inspiring, nothing that could shake my inner being. He simply said, in his little short persons voice, "Son, you're gonna die."

And that was it from the little fellow. He stared at me for a minute longer, with his little finger still on my chest. Then he took his finger off me, turned away, and went back to his car. It was still running. I looked at the windshield trying to see the guy, and realized it was tinted black, all the windows were. I couldn't see him for nothing. A minute later he laid on the horn and I must have jumped ten feet back. The sudden blast woke me out of my stupid daze. It scared me more than the little guy did. I took a few steps back, over into the other lane. Then he little man stepped on the gas and his car just stood

there for a second, burning rubber right where it sat. It lurched forward as it started grabbing asphalt, and he kept on the gas 'til he was away and back up to seventy mph again. I stood there and watched his red taillights trail off into the distance.

“Son, you’re gonna die,” was what went through my mind. Yeah, I admitted to myself, that little guy was probably right. I waited a few seconds longer, until I saw headlights off in the distance ahead of me. I went back over to the far shoulder of the road and half expected it to be that giant red caddy, with the little man inside it. It wasn’t though. It was just another schmo, who saw some idiot standing in the poring rain, on the side of the road.

I headed on home after he blew the horn at me. No, the rains didn’t stop, the heavens didn’t open, and no voice came

down in an earth-shattering rumble. I just walked home in the rain thinking that the little guy was right. I was gonna die. I know he couldn't have known what my story was behind being there in the road that night. He probably was just telling a jerk standing in the middle of a storm a fact. But, I think this.

No, it wasn't the devil, despite his crazy red get up. I not only think that it was God telling me to wake up and smell reality, but I know it was. Anything else would have just been a hallucination. Yep, a hallucination. But this, this is a true story.

Talkin' Turkey

It was truly surprising, the first time we saw the turkeys in the back yard. Cool, we thought, wildlife right here in our own yard. We had moved in July. The turkeys were probably coming around here before we got here, because there was no one living here for the last year. You see turkeys all the time around here. There's a lady down the road who feeds them. Sometimes she gets like twenty or thirty of them at a time. It's fun to watch. But having them right in your own back yard is really neat.

We didn't purposely feed them. We have a lot of bird feeders out back for the finches and warblers and what ever flies by and decides to have a snack. But, the turkeys started coming around and eating the spill

over on the ground under the feeders. We'd get seven or eight at a time. There were a few little families stopping by almost every day. It was fun watching the little ones grow up. Even though every once in a while you'd notice that ma turkey had one or two less little ones following along.

Well, let me tell ya about our back yard. It's mostly woods back there, we have a few acres of forest starting right here in the back yard. We put in a little nature trail that goes about a hundred yards down to the creek. It's nice. Going out of the back window of the house, I built a little ramp that goes out to our cat cage. This is so our cats can come and go outside as they please in the summer. We open the window in the living room and they head out to eat grass in the cage. Then, they come back in and puke here and there around the house. But that's OK, as long as I

see it before I step in it, which usually doesn't happen, but anyway. They like it. I had to put a cage out there because both of them are declawed. I know, I know, some people thinks it's cruel, but isn't it less cruel to do that, than takem out back and strangle the piss out of them, because they are sharpening their claws on the brand new sofa? Well, that's how I feel anyway.

We have in fact two cats right now, Newt and Cheney. Cheney is just the cutest, softest, little kitty you could ever want. She's a kind of a puke gray orange color, with stripes on her tail. Pretty kitty, even though her breath smells like she's been munching on nuggets in the cat box. That, I can live with. Newt, on the other hand, well, he's another story. Those signs that warn, "Beware, attack cat on premises!" aren't just funny feline novelties. Some where, there is

some laboratory with a dozen or so bandaged and dismembered lab researchers and a bunch of Newt clones, trying to figure out where their genetic research went wrong. They are asking themselves right this very moment, “ Why can’t we grow a tame cross between a mountain lion and a grizzly?” Yes, that’s what Newt is, only he lived. I’m not sure why, but the little guy just hates the crap outta me. Maybe it was that time seven years ago, when I slammed his tail in the bathroom door, and I couldn’t hear his howling over the shower. I don’t know, could it be that he remembers that he had to wait, like five minutes, before he was freed. Who knows, but I think that’s not the case. I think he just hates me because I’m beautiful, whatever. Any way, Newt at one time weighed about thirty pounds, he was all belly. It dragged on the floor when he walked. He’s mostly black, with white paws and a white belly, which over

time turned a dirty gray from the dust and dirt around the house. But that's OK, we like him anyway. Oh, by the way, his fangs are so long, that they over hang his lower jaw. And take my word for it, when he hisses, its pretty ferocious looking. But after seven years of that on a daily basis, I'm kind getting used to it, oh well.

So, let's talk turkey. The cats were going out every day, that summer. When the turkeys came around, we called the cats in. Newt, never really liked to listen, and I usually had to go out and roust him before they got here. This day, we never saw the turkeys coming.

My woman and I were sitting there in the living room, watching something or other on TV. I don't remember what it was, but whatever. She was sitting there, when she perked up and started listening to something.

She asked, “Did you hear that?” I might as well wear hearing aids, because I never hear half of what she’s saying anyway.

“Hear what?” I replied.

“That, did you hear that, there it is again.” I cocked my head to the side and strained to listen, or at least pretend I was. “No, I don’t hear... wait a second yes I do.” I did. It was a turkey, it was clucking, like they always do when they come around. Only this time it was different. It was louder, a little more forceful than usual. She looked out the window. “Oh no, there here.” Her voice kind of trembled. The cats were still outside. We didn’t realize the turkeys were coming. They didn’t usually come around that time of the day. She started calling the cats in, but it was too late. Ma turkey was coming up the path in the back yard, with a couple of her youngins tagging along right behind her.

Cheney came poppin' in through the window pretty quickly, she was pretty much afraid of the leaves blowing by the cage. But yes, you guessed it, newt, he was a little more stubborn. He just sat there looking at her peeking her head out the window and calling him, but all he heard was, "blah, blah, newt, blah, blah." ma turkeys clucking started to get a little more serious. she was probably ten feet or so away from the cage and not only was she getting fired up over the cat, she sensed the fear in the ladies voice, as she now started calling the cat inside a little more urgently. "come on, come on newt, come inside boy!" No dice, he was staying put. He had that screw you look on his face, and now I could see that I was going to have to get my ass up off the sofa and shoe the little bugger inside, again. She looked at me, "go get him, hurry up, that turkeys coming right for the cage."

“OK, OK, hold on, I’m going.” I got up off the sofa.

Well, I don’t know if you know much about turkeys. People say they are dumb. I now disagree with that popular thought. I think Ben Franklin had something there, when he suggested the wild turkey as the national bird. I never knew it, but turkeys will defend their young. they don’t just leave them to be taken by predators. I know that now, but I didn’t know that then.

I got up off the sofa and went out the side door onto the deck, to get newt inside. I looked over the deck railing into the back yard, and saw that ma turkey was now about five feet from the cage. She was at the head of the path, and was obviously pissed off. She was clucking really hard now, and ruffling her feathers to make herself look about twice as big. Her little ones were kind

of hanging back, and peeking around her. They were probably trying to figure out what was up mom's ass. I'm not afraid of turkeys, they're not that big and, after all, they are only birds. Birds are afraid of people, right? No, they aren't, at least not all of them. I figured I'd just go out back and ma and the little ones would take off running like usual when I went out back and didn't realize they were there. Well, I hopped off the deck and headed around back. Now, I can look back and see why newt waited for me to actually come out back and shove him inside. He saw me, he hissed as usual, and fled inside where he belonged. But I think he waited just long enough for me to get out there and meet the turkey face to face. He's not dumb, not newt, he knew what was going to happen. I never saw him in the window, watching what was about to happen. but I'm sure he sat there,

smiling and saying to himself, “yeah, that’s right, what comes around goes around pal.”

I got out there and he scrambled inside. He was safe. ma turkey, I thought, was about to open a can of whoop ass on him. I figured I just saved his hide. Maybe I did, maybe I didn’t. he would have probably been safe in the cage, I don’t know. What I do know, is that I would have been safer in the cage.

I came around the back of the house and there was ma turkey, a few feet away. I yelled something, thinking shed take off, but man, I was wrong. She wasn’t that big, maybe two feet tall or so, but when she saw me, it was wonder twin powers activated. She started belting out these clucks that sent shivers down my spine. I yelled at her again. She looked at me and I could see that she wasn’t having any of that. She perched her head forward, all three inches of it, and let out

a growl you could hear a half-mile away. I started thinking that maybe it was a mistake coming out here. I shrunk back a little bit and tried the, "its OK approach." I told her, "OK, OK momma, calm down, I'm just going to step back a few feet here, nice and slow, nothing to be scared of." She could smell the fear oozing out of my pores or something, because she ruffled a million more feathers and instantly she was almost my size. Wow! I aint never seen nothing like that before! She took a few steps toward me, and I took a few steps back as she advanced. Then, all of a sudden, she opened her wings out to her sides. She was like, all of a sudden six feet wide. I swear I could see a little smile crack on the corners of her beak. I didn't know what to do. I didn't want to turn my back on her and let her rip my throat out from behind, so I started apologizing to her. "Look, Mrs. Turkey, I'm sorry, I really didn't mean

anything by coming out here, I was only shoeing the cat inside, yeah, I was scaring him inside, that's right, so he wouldn't scare your chicks. I did it for your chick's safety. See, the cats gone" I pointed at the cage. Mistake, she must have thought I was coming after her and the little ones, because she roared at me. All I could see was fangs and claws and spit and snot and feathers flying everywhere. I stumbled back towards the deck with my arms out in front of me to block her blow, as she lunged at me.

I'm not sure what really happened next, its all kind of fuzzy, I remember the turkey, and the deck, and me stumbling backwards, but the rest is up for discussion. I ended up with a black and blue contusion on my calf that lasted for four weeks, I had to wear a cast on my lower left leg to keep the muscle from moving, just in case a clot formed and

traveled to my heart, killing me. It was touch and go for a while.

I guess, I'm not really sure about this part, but I think my woman was coming outside to see what was going on, I threw myself in front of her to take the shot from ma turkey. Ma turkey blindsided me, and was all over me like white on rice. I struggled to keep her six-inch claws from digging into my face. I think she latched onto my hand with her razor sharp beak, because it was cut up pretty good. I had to have seven stitches on my right hand, it was cut down into the tendons. That part of my hand is still numb to this day. Well, ma turkey knocked me down as I threw my woman out of the way. she managed to scramble onto the deck and into the house, just before the turkey decided she was going to kill her too. Well, the turkey and I rolled around on the ground for a few minutes, but

eventually I got the upper hand on her. I grabbed her by the throat and started pounding her head into the ground. I must have stunned her, because I could feel her ease off on her grip on my chest, and I flung her off of me. I got to my feet and took a swing at her, and connected with her chest as she lunged at my throat this time. that sent her flying backwards. She got up, shook her head for a few seconds until her double vision went away. Then she hunched over like she was going to come at me again. I was on my feet now and moving right at her. I guess she could see that I wasn't about to get my ass totally whipped by some dumb bird, so she turned around and jogged off about twenty feet or so. "That's right chicken shit." I said, "C'mon back, you want a piece of this?" I shook my fist at her. ."C'mon, come get some," I yelled at her. She looked around and saw her kids. She called them over and

then looked back at me again. "Yeah, that's right, run away you panzy, you cant take me." She looked at me one last time and headed off into the woods with her little ones. I wiped blood off my lips and told her, "Go on, go on, yeah, and don't come back, your not welcome around here anymore!" Yes, I got the better of her. That's what happened. Don't listen to what my woman says she saw that day. She doesn't know what she's talking about.

She was laughing pretty hard, when I came up the deck, to the back door. She opened the door for me, and gasped for breath. "You think that's funny, huh? Well I guess I just saved your ass. Yeah, your welcome, funny, ha ha!" I told her. Now, she has a pretty wild imagination.

I'll just tell you how wild. She thinks, and I don't know where this is coming from, talk

about ungrateful, she thinks that when I went out back, Newt ran inside as he always does when I go out back. She says, that after Newt ran inside, I froze. She thinks that when I saw how close the turkey was, I just stood there and didn't move. She says I looked like a statue. She thinks, and actually its pretty funny, I don't know where she gets this from, but she thinks that when ma turkey saw me scare the cat inside, she immediately took flight. She says that ma turkey froze for a split second, and then like turkeys do when they are scared, in a flurry of feathers she took flight, crashing her way through the woods with her little ones behind her, running for their lives. She thinks that when ma turkey took off, I threw my arms up and screamed. She says that I stumbled back into the deck and hit my leg. She says, and I know this isn't true, that I tripped on the deck pilings and landed on my chest. For some reason, she

thinks I was rolling around on the ground and screaming, “Help, help, get this thing off of me!” Meanwhile, she thinks, for some strange reason, that the turkey and her little ones were probably a half-mile away when I finally realized that it was gone.

I asked her, “How do you explain this huge bruise on my leg? What about this cast?” She says I’m just a clutz. I “bumped” my leg on the deck when I was trying to get away from what wasn’t there. “And as for the invisible cast, well...” I asked her, “What about these stitches? Do you see these? What do you think did that?” She said, “What? That band-aid you put on your finger when you nicked it the other day peeling potatoes?” I tell ya she’s in denial. I think it was just so traumatic, that she’s blocking out the memories of what happened that day. I don’t blame her. I wouldn’t want her to have

to deal with post traumatic stress disorder or what ever. Well, maybe I didn't have to get stitches, and no, I don't think I really had to wear a cast for four weeks. OK, OK. No, I wasn't in danger of dying from a blood clot. But, I swear, it happened just like I explained it.

Lemmy in the basement

But, that's another story..... Yes it is, and one I truly hate thinking about..

Oh, and later in the fall, I found out where Lemmy was relieving himself. I often wondered why the kitchen stank so much, remember that dishwashing thing I told you about? Well one day I found out why it did, and why Lemmy never scratched at the door to go outside for a potty break. Well, the basement door was right off the kitchen. One day I watched Lemmy trot down into the cellar, then, leisurely saunters back up with an air of relief about him. He returned the look of disgust I gave him, then went out in the living room to leave some fresh hairs on the sofa. What the....? I went over to the door and peered down the steps.

Yep, that's where the smell was coming from. I thought all along, the kitchen was making the whole house stink. I hadn't been down in the cellar in, well, I'm not really sure, it must have been probably since just after we moved in to this place. I looked down at the bottom, I remember that the floor was dirt. The house was near a hundred years old. The foundation was composed of these big chiseled rocks, mortared together, but so old, that there were large cracks zigzagging around the entire house. The steps themselves were most likely original, rough cut lumber, nailed together. They were cracked and split on the edges, and creaked and shifted with every step going down. Where the side rails touched the dirt, they were rotting away. Last time I was down there, I remember I had to swipe away the cobwebs that hung from every floor joist. Oh, yeah, the ceiling height was only about five

feet or so. The cellar was originally just meant for storage, I guess. At my height, the last time I went down there, I was covered in cobwebs when I came back up. And yes, there were spiders. I'm not really afraid of spiders, but... when you have a half dozen on you at once, and the little bastards aren't keen on the idea of being squished into your shirt, well, they try to run and hide under your clothes. I've never been bitten by a spider, but a waitress I once worked with told me about the time she was. Why anyone one would tell you a story like that, and not be lying, I don't know. She said that she developed this lump on her face, it itched really bad, the bigger it got. She told me that she went to a doctor to have it checked out. Well, when he lanced the thing, she told me that these little baby spiders had come out of her skin. Like I said, why would anyone tell you that that had happened to them.

So, I hesitated at the top of the stairs, I really wanted to know why Lemmy went down there. Come to think of it, he must have gone down there quite often. It dawned on me, that he would have cobwebs on his back every once in a while. I never thought twice about it. I just thought that there were cobwebs in Monty's bedroom or something. I looked down the stairs. There was a severely foul odor emanating from below. It was musty, mixed with a tinge of dog piss and a dollop of droppings. I instantly became enraged. That dam dog was going down there to relieve himself. He's been doing it for several months now. Monty never let Lemmy out. He worked days, and now I could see on retrospect, that Lemmy never got excited to go out, like a dog who's been holding it in for eight or nine hours, and Monty never let him out. What did he think? The dog never had to go? No, he knew, he knew that Lemmy was

doing his dooty in the house. He just didn't care. Geez, all this time! I was hoppin' mad. I had to go see for myself, screw the spiders.

I took the first few steps down and felt them shifting, it was worse than I remembered. They must have moved a few inches to the left by the time I'd gotten halfway down. I was slapped in the face by that putrid stench. It made the hair in my nostril hairs curl. I imagined that if you could see the smell, it would be glowing green and so heavy, that it kind of wafted just off the floor, making your feet disappear in it, up to your knees. I checked over my head for cobwebs, there were none. I wasn't very far down, but I thought of the spiders, and the waitress. It was dark down there, the light was in the center of the cellar, just a bulb in a flimsy socket with a string pull for the switch. Last time I'd pulled it, half broke off in my

fingers. I just dropped it on the floor in the dirt. I took the last few steps to the bottom and stopped there for a minute. My eyes started burning. Ammonia, yes, that pungent reek of ammonia. It was burning my eyes. It was worse than I thought. If he'd been peeing down here for a few months, several times a day for three or four months, that added up to not just a few gallons of dog pee. Let alone his nice sized land mines. Lemmy was part lab, part shepherd, he probably weighed eighty pounds or so. I thought it probably didn't smell so bad upstairs because it was getting soaked into the dirt. I could see a few feet into the cellar, and looked over to where I thought the light was. It was about ten feet from where I was standing, but I couldn't exactly see it. I looked down and saw dog prints. He had been down here so often, that he practically had a trail leading diagonally over to the opposite corner of the house, but

no poop or pee spots right here by the stairs. Although, the only light down here was coming from the kitchen light, and the door blocked that out. I could only see about two feet in. That's where the light ended. Then it was just about pitch black. O.K. I'm going in I thought.

I took a deep breath, and wiped the tears now running from my burning eyes. Man, this is gonna suck! I thought. I hunched my shoulders down and ducked my head. Here I come, I thought. All you spiders get ready. I took a deep breath, held it, and then a few steps towards where I thought the light was. Immediately, I felt the cobwebs hitting my face. I wiped them away, hoping I was brushing off the spiders too. I must be getting close, there's no stopping now. The floor felt kind of soft, but then again, it was dirt. Maybe, water was leaking in through the

foundation when it rained. If there was no circulation, and obviously there wasn't, then the floor would have to soak up the moisture. I'll have to tell the landlord. I figured I'd call him and ask him to put a light switch at the top of the stairs anyway. I was groping around in the floor joists overhead, when I jammed my thumb on a cross brace. I felt a stinging sensation in the back of my hand. "Dammit," I said, as I looked up and slammed the back of my head into a two-by-six. Ooooh, that hurt. I rubbed the back of my head, and bent back over. Oh man, I was irritated. My eyes were now burning so bad I closed them. I couldn't see anyway. But, I couldn't hold my breath any longer. I took a breath and instantly I could taste the putrid air, sour and kind of moist. The odor was just awful down here. Where's that freaking light! I reached around when I was where I thought the light was, and hit the socket. The wires

were old and obviously exposed now, because I took a 110 jolt. 110 isn't so bad, but when you're already hunched over and irritated, it might as well be a few thousand volts. I instinctively whipped my hand back and whacked myself in the face. I slapped myself in the cheek, dragging my fingers over my eye, and scratched my left eye pretty good. Good thing they were closed, or I might have blinded myself. God knows what kind of nasty stuff I had on my hands by now. OK, there's the socket, I reached back up, and felt for the string, OK, here it is, but it was only about two inches long now. Hmmm. Some one else has been down here. So, Monty came down here and saw for himself what Lemmy was doing, and figured it must have been OK. After all, Matt and I never complained about the smell.

I grabbed the string and gave a tug. The light came on, instantly blinding me. Duh, I was looking right at it when I pulled the string. A big green spot filled my vision for a minute or two, so I waited for it to go away.

OK, what the hell is going on down here? I looked down and saw for myself just what the hell was going on.

It was a lot worse than I thought. My stomach turned, and that acid taste before puking was filling my mouth. The entire floor was covered in piles of dog shit. It was literally everywhere. The cellar was probably thirty by forty feet square, and just about every foot of it was covered in piles of dog dooty.

It was absolutely disgusting. Some of the piles were already decayed, you could tell what they were by their shape. Half the piles were moldy. And the rest of the piles were

fairly fresh. Six months nothing, that little rat has been going down here from day one, maybe a year and a half now! The stench became too much for me when I put the sight with it. I felt my lunch quickly rising up into my throat. I bent over further so I wouldn't hurl on my feet. Then, as I felt the first wave of chunks coming into my mouth, I saw that I had been walking in dog poop form just a few feet from the steps. The floor wasn't muddy, I was grinding dog stuff into my sneakers with every step. Then, I tossed my cookies. I tried to move my feet out of the way. But, there were too many piles on the floor. I stepped into a fairly large pile, watched it squish out from the sides of my right foot, then promptly put my lunch all over my left leg from the knee down. My God! I dimmed in the head for an instant. I was going down, I could feel it. Every thing I saw started turning neon purple and green, I swayed for a second, put my

arms out in front of me, and dropped to the floor. Both my hands now landed in two other piles. My left knee, already covered in puke, was now mashed into another fresh pile. Wow, I couldn't take it. I'm dead, I thought. If I was lucky, I'd just die right here. No, it wasn't the way I imagined I'd die. But, I must have been a pretty evil person in my last life to deserve something like this. I looked over at my hand, there was blood all over it. Oh yeah, that sting I felt a few minutes ago. There was a fairly large splinter sticking out of the back of my hand. I didn't care anymore. It was too much. I could see dog stuff had smeared all over the spot where it jabbed into me. Great, staph, lock jaw, whatever. I really didn't care anymore. Then it hit me. I really was dead. Yeah, I was dead, and this was hell. I knew it, I knew I was dead. I closed my eyes again, figuring when I opened them, satan would be standing over

and smiling, welcome to my humble abode he'd say to me. No, he wasn't there when I finally opened them again.

I came back to my senses and tried to get to my feet. I couldn't, the stench and the ammonia were so overwhelming by now, that I couldn't get my balance. Screw it, I was already covered in it, so, I just turned around and crawled back over to the steps, right thorough a half dozen more piles of poop.

The rest of the story isn't so exciting, not that the part you've just read is. I went back up stairs. My head came back to me as I sat in kitchen chair thinking. What was I gonna do now? OK, I'll take a shower, call the landlord, have him come over for coffee, and suggest we put a light switch at the top of the stairs. He'll soon find out what's been going on around here. And then, with any luck at all, Monty, Lemmy, and the cats will get the

boot. But, there was one thing I had to do first. Hmm.. Maybe before I take a shower, I'll take a peek in Monty's room. Yeah, I'll do that. I went up stairs and down the hall to his room. The door was slightly open. I looked in and Lemmy was lying on the bed. I smiled and stepped in. "Move over boy, I'm gonna lay down for a while."

Day of the squirrel, yes its weird,
maybe even a little frightening.....but true

She loves animals, all animals. Even when I have to permanently dispose of any snake she runs across in the yard, I know deep down she doesn't really like it. We have always thought of squirrels as harmless little fuzz balls, Sure, they chew up the bird feeders, and yes, they are occasionally known for, violently, getting rid of the competition. Little birds and chipmunks, I mean. But all in all, the general consensus is that squirrels are these harmless, little cute fuzzy things, which we enjoy watching in the summer time. Yeah, right. If you knew the truth, you'd look at them in a different light.

I personally have decided that they are just rats with furry tails. They are destructive, violent rodents, which I'm sure, are responsible for millions of dollars worth of

property damage each year. I think one day they are going to realize what kind of devastating potential they could have, if they all got together in one coordinated strike, to destroy the human way of life. Maybe you'd think the same, if what happened to her that day, had happened to you. This is a tale, no pun intended, of several young squirrels, from their perspective. Enjoy.

She came around every day about the same time, she went into their winter supply, and took what ever she wanted. No, she never thought twice about how they felt. It was cold this winter, twice the average snowfall. February was brutal, three days in a row of minus zero highs. But when she came around, day after day, and just took and took with out ever giving anything back, well, that was the icing on the cake.

I'll give them names, because like the artist formerly known as Prince, their names are just symbols, unpronounceable by the human voice. Mike was their self-imposed leader. I'm not sure, but what happened that day was probably his fault. His brother Pat, Gordy the large one, and Dougy, the slow one, were just not smart enough to realize their actual potential as a terrorist force to be reckoned with.

Mike was the one that found the stash. It was two hundred pounds of whole corn. His eyes just lit up when he stumbled across it. He was traipsing around the yard, dodging blue jays, and hiding from that dam dog, when he ran into the shed. He literally bumped right into it. I mean, it was huge, probably fifteen stories high and a half a block wide. He slipped between the shed doors, when he heard the dog coming.

Slammed his head into whatever it was that was there, that wasn't there three hours ago. He figured he was dying, his neck was killing him, he definitely didn't expect that thing to be there. He went head first, right into it. It knocked him for a loop. He just sat there dazed for about five minutes until the stars went away. When he looked up, there it was. Like I said, his eyes lit up. He'd always heard about guys finding things like this, but never imagined it would happen to him. He climbed up to the top, it was partly open, looked inside, realized what it was, and pigged out for at least half an hour. When he was done, he just rolled over on his back, he could barely move. He looked up at the rafters, and dozed off for a while.

It was the woman again that woke him up. Usually, he heard her coming and went and hid under the tool bench until she was

gone. She would come in occasionally, and grab what ever and leave. She undoubtedly had the dog with her. But, he didn't mind the dog. It never chased them. Still, there were dogs out there did chase them, you just never knew with an animal like that. One day nice and friendly, the next, who knows? But, she would grab whatever, and leave, he'd wait a few minutes, until his heart stopped pounding and continue on with what he was doing. Which was for the last two months, trying to keep warm and finding something to eat. That was getting pretty old. Every freaking day, food, warmth, that was all any of them were looking for these days. This last month especially, lots of snow, and that dam cold snap. Three days below zero, what the hell. Twice he'd packed up and got ready to head south. But, something usually stopped him. Pat would come around and convince him not to go, you know family and all, he talked

about how they all had to work together to get through the winter, blah, blah, blah. Or, Gordy would stumble on some dumb chipmunk's stash, and they'd feast for a day or two. Or Dougy would get into trouble and as usual, Mike would have to bail him out. Mike thought about that time when Dougy got stuck in the cherry tree. He slipped into a hole only a couple inches deep. But he had a habit of going into holes, head first before checking them out, and his ass was hanging out. That pack of blue jays had seen him. They were just pecking away at his rear end, until it was hairless and bleeding. It must have been fifteen minutes before Mike was able to creep over the jays into the branches, and drop on that one. He hung on for dear life, while it flapped and pecked at him. He tore at the jay's feathers, 'til he fell off. He was twenty feet up. He hit the ground hard. His shoulder hurt for a week. But that jay had

lost enough feathers to make flying difficult for a while. And just maybe they'd think twice about going after any of them again, nah, probably not. Dougy never even thanked him. He was so used to being saved by Mike, for something or other, that he just took his sore butt and hid at home 'til he could sit down again.

But this time, he didn't hear her coming. He was in heaven, warm, full, yeah, it doesn't get any better than this he thought. Then he heard the lock opening on the shed door. He thought for a second he was dreaming. No, he wasn't, he barely made it out of the towering bag and scurried head first down and under the tool bench, before she saw him. His heart was pounding in his throat. He was sweating and shaking all over. That was the closest he'd come to being snagged, since last summer. He watched as she went

into the bag with this huge can, and took out can after can of corn, put it into a bucket, and left. He waited 'til he heard the lock being shut, then another two or three minutes just to be sure she was gone.

Well, he just about hit the roof. Instantly, his pounding fear turned to pounding fury. She must have taken two stories off of the bag! That's it, he thought. I'm not taking it any more! That's when he decided he was going to get her. He didn't care, two months of starving and freezing, almost three feet of snow the other day alone, that dam dog, not to mention running from snakes and weasels all summer long last year. No, he wasn't going to take it anymore. He was going to get her if it was the last thing he did.

Over the week, he watched as she came about the same time every day. Just as the sun hit the tops of the cherry trees out

back, she would pull up in that old Subaru of hers. The dog would come outside for a few minutes before she did. Then he'd get under the bench and wait 'til she came in. It was the same thing each day. He'd hear her coming, feet crunching in the ice and snow, the lock would come off, the door would fly open, the big can, and two more stories gone. And every day, he'd plot and he'd try to figure out who'd help. There were a few guys who'd be better than others. But, he settled on Pat, he was loyal, family and all. Gordy, Pat always called him pork chop 'cause he was a bit on the chunky side. All he had to do was show Gordy this huge tower of corn, and he'd be in like Flynn. And Dougy, he was just too stupid to say no. He thought and thought about when and how. That's when the whole idea of their actual potential, had hit him. He actually tried to figure out how he could get the word out worldwide. There were so many of them

around the world, if he could convince a few of their leaders to get in line, they could really cause havoc. Man, the years of repression, it would feel really good. He thought about how they could cut power around the world, a few suicide chewers and a total worldwide black out. Imagine what they could do. They could rule the world! But, alas, back to the problem at hand. How to get rid of the woman who was taking their food.

Mike figured that he'd get Dougy and Gordy to wait on one side of the door, and Pat under the bench, on the other side. Mike, himself, would put on the cute little harmless act, on the shelf in the back. He'd distract her, you know, play scared and all. Then, when she looked away and went for the corn with the big can, the other guys would jump her, scare the piss out of her, and then maybe, just maybe she'd stop coming around

and taking their food. Yeah, he'd have to share it with the others, but at least they'd all be eating. He knew he couldn't eat that much in a month by himself anyway.

He found the other guys and told them what was going on. They all agreed to help. Gordy was just flabbergasted when he first saw the tower. He ate that night 'til he puked up chewed corn. Pat didn't want to help at first. He wasn't keen on the idea of attacking her. In the fall he kind of started liking her. She would come out and throw him peanuts. He'd take the wife and kids over and they'd all make an afternoon of it. And Dougy, well, Mike just told him to be there. He said, "Uh, OK."

Mike figured that as usual she'd get home, let the dog out, then she'd come out and raid their stash. At first, it all happened as planned. They all met an hour or so before

she was due home. Mike went over the plan with them all. Then he went over it again with Dougy two or three more times, although his part was simple. Jump on her when she comes in. Dougy still couldn't figure out what to do. Mike just finally told him, "Stick with Gordy, follow him and do what he does." They waited.

She pulled up, but that's when things went bad. She didn't get home at her usual time that day. She was at least an hour late, and the sun was already setting. Dark was good for them, but then they wouldn't be able to see her so well. They don't have real good vision in the dark. While they were waiting, Gordy started getting pissed off because he was hungry and Mike wouldn't let him eat. He made him stay in the woodpile next to the door with Dougy, across from pat. Dougy was getting pissed off too. Mike asked him what

his problem was. He expected trouble from Gordy, being right next to a huge pile of food and not being able to have even one bite was just gonna kill him. He realized that before hand. But, Dougy, what's up his ass? Dougy told him, he wasn't really mad too, but Mike did tell him to do what Gordy did, so he started bitching too. Pat, he was just kind of fed up with the whole thing, he figured his wife was going to be all over him when he got home late, again. Man, he thought to himself, what's up her ass lately? Well, he decided to just sit back and enjoy some quiet time. He snoozed for a while as they all waited.

She was late. Mikes plan hinged on her usual routine. That was his first mistake, he soon realized that having Gordy and Dougy there, was his second mistake. He told them, just jump on her, scare her, and then get the hell out. No, it didn't quite work out that way.

She didn't go into the house this time. Yes, she did let the dog out, but she came right to the shed. Mike didn't realize it, but Gordy convinced Dougy to wait there for him, while he went into the bag and grabbed some snacks. He couldn't wait any longer. He was still in the bag when the lock came off and the door opened.

Mike looked down at the tower.

Someone was in it. Gordy? What the? I'm going to kill him. But it was too late for that. The door swung open. She didn't go in the house for a few minutes like he expected, she came right to the shed. She looked up and saw Mike. OK, play cute, he thought to himself.

"Hello Mr. Squirrel, what are you doing? Don't be scared, I'm not going to hurt you." she said. Mike acted scared and ran back and forth a few times. He was watching for

Gordy to get out of the bag while he distracted her. Mike didn't realize that Gordy never even heard her come in, he just kept on chomping away on the corn. When it came to food, he was oblivious to everything else. Mike stopped, propped himself up on a piece of two by four on the shelf, and waited for her to find Gordy. It was nice knowing ya Gordy, he thought, as she reached for the can. She bent over, opened the bag, and reached in. Gordy looked up in shock, as the huge can came right at him. "Oh no!" he cried. He saw her face looming over the bag. He realized she was taking his food, then he snapped. No, no one was going to take away his dinner!

Gordy launched himself out of the bag at her and with a Bonzai squeal, he landed on her chest and went into her coat. Dougy watched what Gordy did, and jumped onto

her chest and went into her coat too. Pat was still dozing. He woke up, saw what was going on, and ran at her. He hit his head on her heel, and flipped up onto her foot. He was a bit dazed, and just started climbing, right into her pant leg and up her calf. She started screaming. She threw the can and started slapping at herself. Gordy and Dougy were squirming around in her coat, and Pat was scratching her leg up pretty good. Mike sat back for a second and waited to see what was going to happen next. She was still screaming, swatting, and getting the better of them. Gordy and Dougy were taking some pretty good shots. She was slamming them pretty hard. Mike could see that. She twisted around and hit the tool bench, Dougy dropped to the floor and ran. "You panzy" Mike yelled, as Dougy high tailed it out of there. She was getting at Pat too. He was wedged in at her knee. Mike could see that

he couldn't go any further up, and she was banging away at him with a closed fist. "Ow! That's gotta hurt!" Mike said to himself. Mike decided it was his turn. A little help might be good right now. He hunched over and sprang into the air. He was aiming for her back, but she turned and bent over as he took off, and he landed in her hair. She let out a deafening scream when he landed on the back of her head. He dug in, but at the same time, he got stuck in her hair. She was whacking away at him and screaming at the top of her lungs. He was taking some pretty good shots. But, he couldn't do anything to get at her, or get away from her. His front paws were so tangled, that when pushed forward with his back legs, he went face first into her scalp. He whacked his front teeth into her scalp. That sent a sharp pain up the center of his face and over the top of his head. He saw stars, and his vision faded for a second. Pat had just about had it.

She slammed his head down in a succession of blows. He freed himself, and tried to scramble down to get out. But in one good shot, he went out like a light. He was just coming across her knee, when she landed a blow to his head. He went limp and rolled down and out her pant leg. Meanwhile, Gordy snapped. Mike could hear in the confusion, that Gordy was now laughing to high heaven. He was laughing so hard, that he was no help any more. He just clung to her shirt, screaming “yee ha, ride’m dogie.” Mike heard his muffled yelling and knew all was lost. He got his head free, and saw Pat lying on the floor. He realized that the woman wasn’t scared, she was now pissed off beyond belief. She grabbed hold of Mike, and ripped him out of her hair. She was crushing him. Mike felt all the air instantly squeezed out of his lungs. His ribs were just about to crack, when she launched him at the shed wall.

Mike tumbled through the air for a split second, then slammed into the wall with such force that his left leg broke on impact. He dropped to the floor and limped toward the bench. She took a step back and crushed his tail under her foot. He screamed in pain. When he went to drag himself out of harms way, his tail popped off under her foot. He looked back and saw his tail lying there on the floor, a few feet away from him. Pat was a few feet the other way, next to the shed door, out like a light. She took another step back, and lost her footing at the entrance to the shed, and fell backwards on the ground. She was still screaming and beating at Gordy who was now silent. She ripped her coat off and threw it on the snow bank. Mike saw Gordy lying in her coat, as she ran off towards the house, yelling for the dog.

Pat woke up a few minutes later and asked Mike what happened.

“Where’s yer tail?”

“Over there,” he pointed to it. Pats jaw dropped.

“Hey, I heard of that happening before, but never really believed it was true.”

“Where’s Dougy and Gordy?” he asked. Mike said that Dougy chickened out and bolted just after they had jumped on her. Gordy had gone into her coat, fool that Dougy was, he went in too. First couple shots and he ran off. He pointed over at Gordy.

“And that freak, he was riding her like a bull.” Pat looked over at Gordy. He was coming around. Pat went over to him. Gordy asked,

“Mom? Is that you?” Pat slapped him in the head.

“No you idiot, its me Pat.” Gordy snapped out of his daze and started laughing,

“Wow, man what a ride! Lets do it again, can we huh?”

“No, porkchop, we gotta go before the dog comes out here.” He looked over at Mike.

“Go on,” Mike said, “go on, get lost before the dog gets here.” Pat pulled Gordy to his feet, and they held each other up, as they staggered away.

Mike looked over at his tail. He went to get up and realized his leg was broken.

“Oh, man, what happened? What went wrong.” He hobbled over to his tail, picked it up for a second, and looked at it. Oh well, he thought, it’ll grow back. He looked up, then dropped back on his butt. He was here. Mike looked up in awe, realizing it was too late. The dog was there. The dog was over top of him, panting. A few gallons of drool splattered

on Mike's head. He was almost blown over by the dog's breath. It was looking right at him and sniffing. Mike's last minutes on planet earth were spent with a dog. The dog wasn't mad, he just wanted to play. And as Mike's luck would have it that day, he decided to play with him.

Pat never saw or heard from Dougy again. He was gone, he knew he couldn't show his face around there ever again. And he felt bad about Mike. He and Gordy had heard Mike screaming in agony as the dog picked him up and decided he was a rag doll. Pat and Gordy watched the dog take off into the woods with his new plaything. Better you than me, Pat thought.