

TARR & FEATHERS



By C.Kin

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Dedicated to M.I.S.

You quite literarily blow me away!

With thanks to:

Gilly Hull for her tip-tapturvating secretarial support
and Ma for some prevailing, steely patience.

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Chapter 1

On a Wing and a Prayer

Bolts of rain rush down to earth strengthened by a precocious wind whipping at each and every drop firing them down with angry intent: unyielding our constant energy force pours out it's relief! Many of Tarr's working folk instinctively respond to yet another wicked wet spell by complaining as they flock to shelter; else hold out in their chosen place of employment till the worst moves on. Tarr's Victorian park a few moments before glistening in splendiferous accord with the sun here suddenly besieged by an onslaught of surging rain, lost in its ferocity, refreshed by its vigour. In the park's centre a huge leafless oak holds its ground as an inspired wind lashes into a frenzied attack wielding a fat restless cat to flip over onto its drenched coat soaking up some fresh mud; sliding along a slippery stray.

'KonK!'

The cat's bedraggled head shakes then its body joins in shimmying the worst off. It sits up and licks a gesturing front paw that triggers the opposite hind leg into motion skipping between scattered trees within the pouring rain. From a corner entrance a middle-aged man wades in alone dressed as if on course for Antarctica, his head down moving quickly along a path in the direction of the Arctic Circle skipping hastily to one side so as not to tread on the thirsty cat lapping up a fulfilling pool.

"Bumpfrid? Come on then." Bounding out of the gloom a big dog bellows loud woofs; the cat instantly freaks throwing out every hair on its body while screeching an eerie sounding scream jumping clean off the muddy ground as Bumpfrid, the happy, go lucky St. Bernard curiously rams her nose in; to the cat's swift lash-out of a sharp, swiping paw ripping open the dog's snout scurrying off at speed as Bumpfrid claims revenge, bouncing doggedly after it both blindly dodging the trees through the sheets of rain.

As fat as it is this dirty cat sprints with precision and grace compared to Bumpfrid; lumbering like a drunkard chasing an apparition of meths'. A high fence looms on the closing horizon and without hesitation the cat leaps through the falling rain, eyes closed, front legs poised wearing a knowing smug smile as it hits the fence then vanishes; blindly over to the other side as Bumpfrid slams on her brakes sliding to a halt in front of a lower brick, garden wall.

"Hey! What have I told you about that?" Her owner tugs on his dogs' hardened collar and promptly slides to the drenched grass hard on his backside: she shall not be moved! "AAAHHHHhh!?"

'RRREEEeOOoWWWww?!'

From behind the shield of the fence comes what must be the repercussions of this wildcat's desperate action. The flying puss' with all legs and claws a brazen clasps tightly onto something too soft to be a tree, nor too loud and bewildering to be the ground!

In essence, here's a very large lady minding her own business innocently taking

down her immodest underwear outside now being indignantly mauled by a crazed cat...from behind... and she barks harsher than any slobbering St. Bernhard.

"Shue...shue I tell ya pussy-cat. 'Dis 'ere ground ain't biggy'nough for de both o'er us. Ya hear! Now get gone...!" She hollers hard as her fist thuds down onto the washing-line causing loss of balance and the delirious woman's girth to topple backward knocking the line's pole holding up her knickers out of position crashing against the fence shocking the bedraggled cat into a hurried retreat, while brandishing the large lady's kaks free again to spring consistently up and down as they please!

"What's all de noise about Blossom?" A concerned elderly man does his best to run from the back door to aide this dazed damsel and on reaching the victim's side helps her up; with all his might. "It's not bean m'day Sidney! A flyin' pussy-cat just stuck some real sharp claws in m'back!" Blossom tries to survey behind her searching as far as she can around either side, brushing herself down while Sidney dusts off her outer fringes.

"Is everything alright?"

Both Sidney and Blossom survey across an adjoining garden fence to find their friendly long-term neighbour.

"Yes tank-ya George. Blossom's be'an stabbed in de back by Cecil. Ya knor, dat local stray?"

"Cecil you say?" Blossom hadn't recognised the culprit. "Blossom...how are you feeling?"

"Ya knor Cecil. I'll make sure I gets an apology when 'e comes for some milk!" George listens, briefly checking his wrist watch.

"Will you excuse me? The news is about to start. Well it looks as though you've managed not to dirty your underwear anyway."

"Do ya really tink tat's gonna happen Georgie?" Blossom speaks meaningfully as she scans George's earnest expression.

"Excuse me...? Oh...you mean! Well there's no real way of knowing for sure Blossom, unless of course we directly consult our Prime Minister."

"Shame! I tink we must 'ave misplaced dat particoolar number." Sidney flicks up his bushy eyebrows shrugging with a smile.

"I believe it wise to keep in touch with our country's future, though there is only so much we can know...before the old imagination pours on the colour." "Oooohh...don't start mine off George, dere's nor knowing where it'll all end up." Blossom has saucy plastered all over her meaning.

"I'll probably see you both tomorrow, have a good evening... Be gentle with Sidney now. Goodnight."

"Goodnight George. Beware of dat flying cat." Sidney waves and smiling warmly escorts the washing lines' pole to rest against the house wall as Blossom plucks off her knickers.

George pulls the patio door shut yet leaves it unlocked. Plodding passed a beautiful wooden, hand-carved fireplace he drags a finger across its mantel instantly reminding his guilt he hadn't dusted for more than a year before plunging comfortably back into a wide welcome armchair reaching over flicking on a radio which crackles as if to say 'I'm on' and a woman with a bright, rasping tone continues to speak. '... For those

of you returning from work there's been an updated report regarding the threats made by Faghad of the Abacuss' Nation on Wednesday evening. He spoke earlier this morning in a radio broadcast threatening excessive harm to certain areas of this country. It has been confirmed that Faghad, the Abacuss leader is resolute and will not be bargained with claiming he has been cheated by our Government...' George switches off the radio pondering for a moment contemplating this threats validity. After hearing about Faghad for the past few days and his proposal to attack his country George is feeling scared that this will scupper his life-long ambition if he doesn't act soon and limbers up to his feet, marching outside into a hazy rear garden.

Gazing above him, eyes winking away sporadic splashes of raindrops George finds a much clearer, deeper blue sky; this small part of each day when the light transcends through darkness: twilight's crept in as dusk appears. The glistening star of Venus sparkles distantly, shining high and spying overtly above the flanking Pmendi hills a bulging moon can just be seen respectively closing down another washed out day. A droplet splashes into a glazy eye snubbing out its glow, bringing the dreamy old-timer back to his prime objective focusing to the end of his well kempt yet natural looking garden strolling on, straightening a slanted homemade bird table on his way; so often re-adjusting his own works of art, he slows then stoops to rein attention proudly down on a box full of flickering shadows.

"Hello my lovelies. You can see the rain's almost gone." With a taught right hand he flips a catch playfully off its guard calling to his friends, "come and join me in the dusk!" Although later than their normal routine these words are blessed with quite a to-do, all of his eager homing-pigeons flap, run, push and fly away from their coop free to the wavering winds, though none went further than the view of their keeper; unused to travelling away from home.

On hearing a story many years ago that held him cold for some weeks after George swore he'll never let his festooned lovelies out of his sight. His closest friend and neighbour Potter loves to taunt George about what he calls '*they're unnatural ability to fly*', an appropriate reminder that a homing pigeon is born and bred for the job of navigation and free-flight. This fact has always been quite clear to George's train of thought and regularly riddles him with guilt, though his heart remains adamant: these birds are the only living things he's been truly able to love, even his late wife would remark: '*my husband's a very kind and understanding man...if you don't mind being cooped up for most of the day!*' George notices something out of place and effortlessly scours the sky until his narrow view finds him peering back into his lovelies' home. "Arabella?" There, tucked in beside the water-tray sits Georges' one and only dove preening herself, cagily spying her master from an eye. A warm hand reaches in and gently clasps the small, grey silhouette stroking her chest guiding her outwards. "You know I'll never let any harm come to you. Come and join your family." Carrying her over to the upright bird-table George frees the motionless bird to perch on its edge, gazing upward to enjoy all ten of his pigeons airborne scooping in and out of irregular dives. He perches himself down on a rickety two-seater bench re-aligning it a little musing fondly with his lovelies: familified; cheering and cooing back at his family admiring their

combined spirit, skill and grace, the way George shares his love and respect for his flock.

These particular *home-ins* as he prefers them known were trained in the way they'd become accustomed, George's foresight can now simply sit back and reap its reward. The old man will always be a stickler for routine and although he's not found the heart to watch them fly free anywhere away from home, he can safely point out to any doubter *I kept my bond*. "Until now." He whispers tentatively suppressing any suspicion, deciding to break this unprecedented news once his lovelies are safely cooped up inside their communal home. He checks his watch; fifteen minutes have elapsed so the old-timer is placed into his decaying waistcoat and he claps two firm cracks cheering, "Tally-ho!" One by one in their own good time the pigeon's breeze into land. After a few tantalising minutes and tiring claps they're all patrolling the freshly mowed yet soaking lawn. "When you're all safely inside I have some news to break. Come on Chor...lead their way!" George coaxes the largest of his birds back inside the coop knowing he'll remain quenching a thirst while he ungraciously squats down by the creaking door and quietly coos, attempting to charm his lovelies' home to their cage.

Several more minutes' lapse due to their loyal bird-keeper chasing the last back into the air so was then forced to find some kind of treat which did the trick but was left to share half a tin of his favourite salmon with the rest of his brew while Arabella sips her first drink from the water-bath set inside the square bird-table. "Arabella? You still can't manage to fly all the way over here? Right you are." George pushes the door to, secures it then creaks off to fetch his favourite. "Hey?" As he reaches across she dips her tiny head and flies away higher and further aloft until appearing a mere speck of twilight, before doubling back elegantly gliding into land sedately upon George's shoulder which makes him chuckle; as it usually does. Arabella pecks her masters' earlobe that makes him tremble teasingly. With care he opens the door placing her as if brittle glass next to Chor her protector in George's eyes. With the catch firmly in position a strain of worry breaks out of George's open face, there's important news to come. "Tomorrow my lovelies...you are all going to embark upon...well...a maiden flight. The time has come for you to be allowed to fly from those hills...yes Tinker those over there, to find out once and for all if you'll choose to come back to me and your home here. Now, what do you say to that?" The birds coo and bob about inside their cramped house. "That's settled. Goodnight my lovelies, rest well...until the 'morrow then."

George returns inside locking the sliding doors before retiring to the comforts of his home, easing sedately back into his comfy chair frowning in thought worried of what might happen once his lovelies are left to fend for themselves, deep down, fearing time maybe running out of luck. Although prompted to set his brood free via a profound suspicion of this Faghad character being seriously dubious from what he's heard so far, George almost feels blessed with an excuse to relieve himself of the very worst fear he's ever had to contain; if set free away from home would his lovelies ever return to him? Lonely eyes flicker around the room then slowly close, adrift he rediscovers the sanctuary of sleep.

To look at him one can easily guess George has lived a full life working manually for most of his years on farms in the local area where a blatant love for birds still

surrounds him. Upon the dusty mantel china statuettes of local varieties line up in a tribute to his devotion all perched exactly where they should be. Many hand drawn illustrations by his favourite local artist rest abstractly adorning every wall; each placed haphazardly to exude their sense of natural habitat; not simply by the habit of their design. To cap them all, illuminate above his gas alternative to an open fire evokes George's only inspired commission, '*Where Eagles Dare*', a painting that devours attention. A breathing image depicting all the local birds supremely dominated by a Golden eagle's ghostly head scouring from its centre; with eyes to blind any cowering prey. As Potter says, '*quite a centre point!*' The eyes have it! Nostrils splay then blurt into fluttering motion as George snores, where under this mounting din curls a reticent smile.

This aged duffer's prize for a long life devoted to the rigours of nature is a two up, two down terraced house situated in the north of Tarr set on the edge of a small park or as it's more commonly known as, '*the common*', a place of homage to mainly young folk who often play havoc there amongst other games. Some regularly hang out in small groups jibing each other else joining together on occasion to rival another gang from a couple of miles down the busy main road joining at a main junction leading to and from Tarr's Tudor style centre. Beyond George's garden and this out of town road crops an abundance of fields each plotting their own natural identity. At present most are water-logged due to a bewildering deluge of rain in a once steady autumn to an unusually late summer, this the first year it's become officially obvious to most, including the weather forecasters who even agree with scientists that the seasons are losing their previous order; this autumn month has officially become summers' and its forecast to be a long and arduous warm spell of rapturous winds and heavy rain.

On a clear day from his garden concentrating a tiring mind far out beyond the expanse of flat fields, high across thousands of gathered trees; roots firmly bedded in the wide expanding foundation of the forest, George witnesses a wonder emanating magnificently further off in the indistinct distance, where rising above it all bursts a towering mountain; the only one for a three hundred mile radius. This monumental mound reaches nearly one thousand metres into the open sky, known to some of the locals as *Sacred* attributed to its limited access and pure sense of lawless tranquillity. From the desolate heights of its concealed side springs turn to streams into a cascading river, ultimately descending over an ecstatic waterfall into a glimmering lake beside an ancient ruin bordered by a wide ring of meticulously placed Black Jack oaks. This sacred place is said to have been cultivated some centuries past as a kind of natural retreat in a position out of Tarr's view, almost impossible to reach unless one or more are prepared to travel through dense forest for an hour or so then climb the mountain via precarious winding gravel paths that lead to its sheer, jagged peak unveiling a reckless, jaw dropping descent into a wild ocean battering the cliffs way down below. The only other known alternative is to take a boat along the Mesol River out into the channel and attempt a landing upon steep, fifty-foot high cliffs stretching along a two-mile current churning coastline. Very few people actually know of this mysterious place, known to George and his close friend Potter as '*The Secret Haven*'.

This has become a special place in George's imagination after reading an ancient local manuscript in Tarr's library telling of a brave, glorious guardian who protected all that lived in and around this ancient forest assisted by a golden, magical bird protecting all those who subscribe to the natural laws. This mysterious bird was reared on the mountain and to George's knowledge might still ancestrally roam the surrounding skies today. He himself believes to have clapped eyes on it only once many moons ago yet it was clear and will never be doubted; by George anyway. For years he and Potter have threatened to seek out the remains of a ruined temple situated in the forest near the banks of the Pmendi hills that, according to this old legend was built by the same king as a place of refuge, becoming a shrine for the ones they call Druid and was worshipped in for a long and peaceful period. Up until the moment an enemy descended, thriving in a warrior mass down the adjacent Pmendi Hills rising steeply on a parallel beside the forest's deepening thron, their name a living memory to all that perished there that horrific day, when men from nether shores rode the waves to invade and conquer. According to this legend Tarr's king and the Druids were slaughtered leaving a very different kind to hold the throne, a kind whom it appeared never began to understand the true meaning of the word, a ruler who suffered mad strains of misery, prone to the craving of plunder.

Contained in the last paragraph of this ancient, council-treasured document the learned though anonymous writer is concerned to note, *'The spirit of these times will always remain, cherish the new-day or it all stays the same.'* There it ends but for George it became a turning point in his philosophical career when his trusty bible was placed with dignity into an old book-chest which holds quite a distinguished collection of work and out came the decision; from then on he'll search a little closer to home deciphering the local lay of Tarr's land, earning George an acquired insight into closer events. Potter, who still labours his personal plot of land regularly asks his chum about the condition of Tarr's forth coming weather and regularly finds himself tickled-jolly at George's accuracy.

At 6am prompt every morning without fail Potter, George's dear friend and next door neighbour will be found surveying his treasured plot inherited after an old employer, a Lord Riddell passed on leaving his trusted head-gardener a small though much loved reminder of his roots. Potter's remained loyal to the Lord's land for nigh on fifty years where he met George who worked under him for more than twenty of them. Unbeknown to Potter days before Lord Riddell's final breath, he bequeathed his ashes to be strewn over this very plot believing to feel safer in the deft hands of his most nature-loving colleague. Ironically George inherited the responsibility of sprinkling the Lord's dust and ashes across Potter's legacy without letting on to his friend; fulfilling the Lord's will. Six years later an unsuspecting Potter remains wondrously agog at how well his rhubarb harvest continues to flourish. Wonders will never cease!?

This particular cloudy morning is dedicated to the art of erecting, in this case a scarecrow which possesses a no more alarming air than a lump of jelly and ice-cream but Potter has faith in his work and is simply left with the final task of making it stay

standing upright.

“Come on, firmly does ‘ee.... Bollards! Now I knows how that bloke who built Frankenstein’s monster must’ve felt.” The scarecrow bearing a face-filled grin politely says nothing and patiently smiles on. “Darn thing won’t stay...” A piercing squawk grabs Potter’s fraying concentration and he stumbles dropping the happy go lucky scarecrow turning quickly behind him and observes nothing but the tops of trees skirting the edge of the forest where above them a cluster of clouds steadily make way for the next, so drags up the scarecrow and again attempts to plug it securely in the squelching ground. *‘Squawk!’*

“Get out of it y’pesky varmint!” Perched above him, rocking on the scarecrow’s head muses a crow which on landing immediately jumps off into the bitter air squawking over and over again as if to spew laughter down on the agitated codger circling around and around a few feet away from Potter’s baffled, spinning head. “Be off with ya...y’darn ‘opeless creature!” Potter swipes menacingly at the crow causing it to reach higher into the morning sky and eventually away. Kicking his lifeless apprentice to one side a distraught old man sits down, pulls out a tobacco tin and instantly skins one up. In seconds he single-handedly lobs an excruciatingly slim cigarette in between his lips, plucks a match from a box and strikes it across the smiling scarecrow’s face lighting up his smoke first time, his wary eyes watching the bellowed smoke rise mumbling, “Roll on November 5th.”

George’s alarm clock never fails to go off at 7.30am due to him remembering every morn to reset it once it has rang out the awakening call. Nearly all his working life began at this time and some habits are hard to break, though George often re-assures himself lulling in bed is no different than resting in death. The clock’s bell-basher tweaks at one minute before the half hour and with it George’s head normally flinches to prepare the rest of him for a wicked shock of sharp, bright bells ringing out a new day *‘DINGaLINGaLINGaDING...’*

... And so it rings on and on and on...!

Outside amidst this dawning day an awakening town embarks on its daily duties encapsulated by a foreboding cloudy air of more rain. A post-mistress striding along the pavement stops to check she carries the correct post in her hand before marching down a path. Unbeknown to this postess, new to the area, beyond this approaching front door lives one of the most vicious dogs any of the neighbours have ever encountered. As the posty lifts the squeaking letterbox a barrage of barks greets her, the dog totally incensed rages uncontrollably. The post mistress slightly taken aback by this unwarranted verbal abuse calmly pulls something from her pocket and flicks it through the letter box sending the correct letters in after it, the caged beast now greedily distracted by an intense chewy piece of nougat that so happened to render its tasteless welcome speechless. Crossing the road aiming for three huddled early 20th century terraced houses she gradually notices the ringing of bells, that on arriving outside the middle house it dawns on her; there may be trouble ahead! Her postal bag slumps to the

ground and with genuine concern she raps hard on the door, her mind filling with trepidation knocking harder, calling out through the letterbox.

"Hello there! Is anyone at home?" She swings her spooling head round to see if anybody nearby might be able to help as the door creaks open.

"Good morning. Can I help you?" After wiping some sleep from his eye George gapes at this rather attractive lady dressed smartly in a postal uniform secretly hoping his luck is about to surpass itself.

"Oh... I'm so glad. I thought you may have...well I thought...?"

"I'd popped off perhaps?" George smiles obligingly.

"Well I... I'm so sorry to have disturbed you." The postmistress picks up her sack flinging it over her shoulder.

"It's entirely my fault madam. Living alone for as long as I have one isn't as inspired to venture into bed as much as they were. Forgive me. Now I better go and turn that racket off. Good day and...thank you for your concern."

"Take care then...oh, here's your post."

"Looks ominous...thanks again." He pushes the door closed and plods up to his bedroom, resets his alarm clock before tending to an obvious official looking letter en-route to the bathroom.

'Knock. Knock!'

"Who's that now?" George rams the document into his pocket and trundles downstairs to answer the door.

"Good morning, what's all the excitement about Blossom?"

"Oh... I'm so glad ya're up Georgie." Blossom carries on searching all about her frantic with worry.

"Blossom...explain to me, what's the matter?"

"Well I... I'm so sorry to 'ave disturbed ya. It's simple really... I checked Pfors' cage and it's vanished."

"What...the cage has disappeared?"

"Nor ya fool, me parrot. Ting is George... Pfor can't fly...not since we got'im anyhow."

"Pfor won't be far away, don't fear." George places a reassuring hand on Blossom's shoulder but lost in concern the distracted big mama bounces homeward probing all around. "Take care now. I'll certainly keep an eye out. Please don't worry." George pushes the door closed making his way towards the front-room window.

Curtains fling open filling the room with a dowdy light, enough to see and thus flick on the crackling radio. An old Cole Porter song: *'I get a kick out of you'* comes to an abrupt end as a man with an extremely pompous tone interjects... *'This radio station has just received an important news flash regarding Faghad of the Abacuss Nation who spoke of a plan for mass destruction in a radio broadcast at 4am this morning. He declared parts of this country will be stricken with the power and might of Abacuss, warning our Government to act swiftly in preparation for what he calls the force against injustice. The Prime Minister's reaction is unknown as yet...'*

"Bloody typical." George's self-control wanes. *'... Ministry of Defence have issued a statement which reads as follows: The General Public must not lose faith in their*

Government who are doing all in their power to redeem the situation and if...? George slaps the radio off button.

"If?" He pauses for thought scratching an incurable itch on his head deciding the best thing he can do under these grave circumstances is to prepare for the worst, today's turning out to be one of the most potentially traumatic days George can remember and it hasn't really started yet.

A scattered burst of sunray leaks in so much light through the patio doors George's vision is stolen from him and blindly tugs at the frayed orangey-green curtains to shield his awakening eyes to resume forcing out three cat baskets from the back of his stair-cupboard. He'd reluctantly purchased them in a boot sale held at the local church at the edge of the nearby common nearly four years ago. George wasn't really an ardent religious supporter but does believe; if someone cannot find faith in themselves then why not relieve their beliefs via God? It keeps them off the streets; unless on witnessing a Jehovah! He can only manage two baskets then realises the patio doors need to be unlocked.

"One thing at a time sweet George." A hymn for a him. Another basket rests on the floor as again he unveils the new day.

With an extra spring in his step George dons a brave facade plodding off into the chilly, dew drenched garden to face an unsuspecting family.

"Good morning my lovelies... Isn't it the best day for it!?" He flicks off the catch and the door swings open; instantly via one fell swoop George comes to his senses and quickly shuts it tight. "I'm so sorry! Force of habit I'm afraid. Now come on, one at a time." Easing the door carefully open a steady hand plucks one lovely at a time carefully filling a basket. "I know there's a bit of a squeeze but it's not for long. Come on!" Once eight of the home-ins watch and coo from their safe positions the pigeon fancier fetches the last basket placing his final three lovelies inside, not for a moment forgetting to softly murmur encouragement to each and every lovely.

"George! Can I trouble ya for d'moment?"

"Ah! Are you and Pfor reunited?" George checks all is secure before venturing across his soggy lawn towards Blossom bobbing about on the other side of the fence.

"Ave you or f'dat madder those pigeons seen m'P-for yet?" Her head refuses to stay still as she speaks glancing in as much space in the pure hope of finding her lost parrot. "I'm sorry Blossom, we haven't." The unnaturally sad big mama bursts into torrents of tears.

"There, there Blossom, you mustn't worry...you know what Pfor's like. Nearly every bird I've encountered owns a sense of humour and none more so than P-for parrot, who's probably hiding somewhere. Here, dry your eyes." George passes over his personal well-used rag only for Blossom to politely shake her head calming herself a little. Placing a warm hand on her wet cheek George attempts a bid at consolation sensing soft tears splash over a swollen finger as she blubbers on.

"Ooooh, I'm so sorry George. I loves dat bird ya knor?!" Even before she finishes speaking a despairing Blossom decides to maintain her search back indoors.

Chapter 2

Lost in Space

Pfor, the Rasta's parrot disappeared only moments earlier through no fault of its own. There appears to be a reason for most things and in Pfor's case it's quite simple; Pfor's a dreamer and so used to getting lost. After four years on our earth this particular parrot remains desperately unaware of the reason why it lives; to this day a closet case. From being born locally in a pet shop three miles down the road up until this fateful opportunity Pfor endures being a deliriously captivated victim of circumstance. The name Pfor was given to the parrot after it became blatantly clear the pet-shop owner had no idea what sex it belongs to; if at all? So overcome with joy was he in this his first successful cultivation he promptly stuck Pfor parrot in a cage ready to be bought and sold. Via this increasingly civilised hardship Pfor's only true release is to dream and this imprisoned parrot dreams of nothing but being able to fly: its reoccurring wonder. Sidney bought four month old Pfor for thirty quid on appreciating its black, yellow and green plumage acquiring it as a present for Blossom who at that time missed her homeland and desperately needed something to call her own.

Early most mornings Pfor's accustom to Blossom habitually unleashing its cage door open rain or shine to give her little treasure a chance to stretch its wings but not once has this dense closet case been able to let go of its perch. Pfor simply and sadly drifts out and away into a safe, sublime world; flying from pillar to post in its head. The cage Pfor lives in hangs in the lightest corner of the front room facing the television, below it, out sprawled rests the visitors chair where once and a while a mutual friend of Sidney and Blossom calls in for what usually ends up in a fun packed evening, from Pfor's perspective anyway as without fail their house pet ends up shrieking with glorious glee; Pfor squeaked so incessantly on one visit poor Sidney had to be held down for some time else he would have cooked then eaten his frenzied pet. Though in the last two visits their old friend has respectively neglected to smoke at all since Blossom discreetly mentioned there was a chance Pfor had become affected by their infectious brand of tobacco. She was proved correct when by the end of both subdued sittings her *little rainbow* gently swung slowly back and forth lost in another silent world.

Not more than an hour ago Blossom was doing some vigorous vacuuming, like she does first thing every Thursday without fail unless incapacitated; singing mellifluous gospel songs, push-pulling her vacuous partner to the rhythm of calypso. She purposefully did it this early to annoy Sidney who loves to sleep in as he works the evening shift as a security guard for the council run water authorities. Pfor hadn't been feeling normal; oblivious to itself over the last two weeks becoming agitated and uncomfortable; which may account for why this melancholy parrot escaped - without meaning too! As per usual Pfor hadn't noticed Blossom open the cage door habitually lost somewhere dreaming away amidst a dull cloud, wafting through an aerated

imagination; teasing the breeze with tightly closed wings when, for some reason Blossom decides to resume her cleaning accompanied by her favourite record and proceeded to comply, her only problem arose when it came to working the new stereo-system which has become one of Sidney's better attributes, she simply could not get the record to turn. Without warning Otis Reading accompanied by his full-on band blasted relentlessly at top volume jolting Blossom into animated panic stations; unless it's her very own brand of dance craze? So caught up was she in her vain attempt to quieten down Mr. Reading and his compliment she misses her *little rainbow*, shocked beyond belief fall headlong out of the vibrating cage cruising towards the thread-bare carpet.

Instinctively Pfor's wings reached out. This strange sensation forced Pfor to shake with delight as an unusually warm, humming feeling oozed inside and out. Without sparing a thought or even opening an eye the airborne parrot skimmed on an air of temptation out through a wide open lounge window as if taken over by an occult summoning away into the light of day. Pfor intuitively drifted, eyes firmly closed with a turbulent, spirited rush guiding the propelled parrot into where danger can so easily damn the way. A warm air current lifted Pfor urgently over terraced rooftops causing another electrifying buzz to surge within and still further Pfor glides, higher the lost bird rose directly above the park where a local cub-scout football team were impatiently waiting to practise.

Two fathers managing the side are face to face arguing as to which of them would referee the match when one of the two girl guides in their team took the initiative punching the ball from under her manager's arm kicking it over to her colleagues, stopping at the feet of one of the younger players who innocently picked it up. As he turned then so did his feeling into horror realising all of his team-mates now surge towards him with unnerved conviction. In spasmodic fright the young lad kicked the ball as far away from him as possible then ran off in the opposite direction.

Pfor began to feel odd. This weird feeling developed far too quickly... A crushing wave of air smothers the bewildered parrot rendering it back to reality as the ascending ball misses shooting higher somersaulting away. Pfor uncontrollably flaps ecstatically about before attempting to regain composure and preferably land back in the confines of a safe imagination. Gravity in the meantime found the balls' correct aptitude in altitude and sent it straight back down to earth punching Pfor's wing who instantly squeals at this inconvenience entering into quite a personal pandemonium when...? This parrot's character building stuff stiffened. Another wavering air current sways Pfor's wings back on course in the opposite direction due to an ever-changing wind of fate. Desperately aware of what has become of its present unfounded position Pfor instinctively flaps harder to get away from it all as the road leading out of Tarr fades dim, strewn below all the many differing fields gather to a cusp entering the mighty dense forest, awaiting the parrots ominous fall from grace. The hopelessly marooned parrot flew stiff, higher than ever before, as sober as it would ever likely be again; a confused mind trying to comprehend what was really happening with no way of knowing, simply hanging on to the air for dear life. Up above, flying higher at cruise speed en route to a feeding haunt two crows give each other the eye, in unison they

scan downwards weighing up the next move concentrating their minds on a vulnerable titbit unknowingly about to land in a grazing field. Again the crow's wicked eyes shiftily meet each other's gaze twinkling in anticipation. Pfor instantly sprung aware of that very same feeling encountered only moments before quickly peering below but finds nothing but hedge-rowed pastures. 'Earrrrgg! Earrrrgg!'

Pfor flung its head up in astonishment, like rocketing arrows an out stretched pair of talons plummet towards two closer, darker birds and pluck each one from flight each in turn screeching out their anger no match for this colossal assailant and all this so near violently thrusting so quickly away from Pfor's catatonic state low into the enveloped mass of forest. Pfor lands. It was by any bird's standard a disgraceful attempt and a prize parrot duly paid splodging to a halt in freshly laid cow dung. "I'm going to die." The sodden parrot felt quite sure death beckoned as everything inside it persistently empties out of its beak, the distressed, tropical recluse yelled out as if it were the last falling face down in the smelly dung weeping. Quickly that surging unto familiar feeling wells up inside and as it intensified more and more the wider Pfor's eyes gape until gaining clear visual focus a sudden powerful force causes the defenceless bird to squeal and without hesitation bolt backward; stiff as a...?

Potter had grown despondent of his uncooperative colleague lying across his dewy land gazing up at the sky, his eyes following each and every bird drifting over head: mesmerised.

"What's that then?" He bolts upright. "It can't be?" Over yonder he clearly observes something he's only heard about and being incredulously honest he's found that particular story hard to believe...until this moment. "It's that blessed eagle... I'm sure of it!" Hypnotised he watches this living spectre tip and tilt high up over the edge of the forest circling around probably in search of food quickly diving at speed on a collision course with the earth perhaps a mere ten fields away. "Cor blimey!!" So engrossed in this spectacle of this fabulous birds' sudden action causes Potter to lollop back, though his eyes stay fixed on the eagle's plummeting course; in an instant the eagle drops out of view causing Potter to flip up onto his feet where the scarecrow's twig fingers poke him in his face forcing Potter's attention to change without hesitation punching the scarecrow's head clean off. "You were askin' f'that. Yes you t'were!" He immediately jumps up trying to regain sight of the eagle but it's flown.

Through many a night over many varying years Potter and George have spent a great deal of time together discussing all sorts of intriguing phenomena yet only one mystifies Potter. George relayed a story to him awhile past about a guardian who protected all of this surrounding area apparently surviving somewhere on the sacred mountain, believing this to be symbolic of an ancient, peace loving king who as legend would have some believe reared a golden eagle to keep watch from Elysium above. On experiencing this ancient tale slowly unravelling over the preceding years Potter has done his best to believe his good friend to whom he rigidly trusts but without experiencing any proper proof. Now, from this special day onward his faith can

honourably prevail.

An eagle has landed. With a stern gaze the majestic, golden bird of prey stares down on a cowering victim, struck dumber than Sidney would have ever of thought possible totally over awed by this daunting wild creature. The eagle's impenetrable eyes lucidly soften as it calmly makes an acquaintance.

"My name is Aquila. Who and...eh... What are you?" Pfor's pride refuses to let the side down and attempts to relay a greeting.

"M..m...m...m.y...na..nnname...is...P..p...p...Pfooor." The parrot's body effortlessly trembles all over.

"Good...you speak Mother Tongue. Those are very peculiar markings... Wait! Be still." The eagle rips off into the sky with incredible ease returning swiftly.

"We cannot stay here without attracting more trouble. I know of a place close by...can you fly?" Pfor lies nodding a dung-drenched head.

"But this smell weighs me down a bit." The parrot ruffles its wings and the mess flies everywhere but try as it might the parrot's grasping claws will not budge.

"I'll carry you." The eagle's beak pulls Pfor up by the scruff of the neck resting the parrot securely on his back then leaps into the air bearing the clutch of Pfor's claws gripping tightly. "I feel I have to show you something...if I may?" The frightened parrot crammed rigid with fright has no answer.

This impromptu adventure is more than a horrible nightmare of reality for Pfor, visions of Blossom dusting and singing sometimes out of tune swarm around in its bemused mind, it even starts to sing along with the daydream endeavouring to keep its wobbly grip on the situation as the eagle soars higher wafting his head rhythmically surveying from side to side.

A yellow Austin Morris Minor executes a precise ninety-degree turn swerving right along a relatively barren road towards the Pmendi hills verging up ahead. On the rare occasion George ventures out of town he will never fail to stop at the entrance to Potter's field either to say hello or else simply admire his friends work. An open gate beckons, after checking the way George reverses through the vacant space consciously observing all around; his perception akin to that of an elder blackbird assessing a scene. Once clear of the gate's journey closed George departs the purring car, shuts the gate returning to park up beside a bountiful blackberry bush and a knackered out sign reading, *'No Trespassers on the Lord's Land.'* "I won't be long my lovelies!" Each basket case coos and flutters their apparent approval setting his guilt free to roam.

George knows Potter hates keeping his gate-door open to anyone but him: *'Never leave yourself open to anyone you can't trust'*, words heard by George from Potter's very lubricant cake-hole years ago after experiencing a miraculous revelation which has respectfully stayed with him. Although not yet official George is the only person allowed on Potter's hallowed ground, his open gate remains a personal welcome gesture and on closing it he hikes off to the entrance of his friend's inner-sanctum.

"Potter! Potter where art though?" Hastily making his way between a tall copper beech

tree and a rusty tractor, along a twisting path unevenly cropped through six foot tall, dried grass the old boy stealthily heads for Potter's secret sanctuary. George's skipping stride hesitates as he spots the back of Potter's head poking out from behind an acutely shaven, half-circular hedge shielding an allotted fire place comforted by a highly sprung, leafless hawthorn singled out by an alluring forest a few stone throws away.

"Potter...you wingless buzzard! What you up to aye?" There came only silence. George slows down enough to stop and regain a little lost composure drawing in a much-needed breath.

"Georgie me old matey!!" Jumping out from beneath the tall grass shouting loud and happily bounces Potter, swirling sharply George finds his wild mate waving his arms about pulling warped faces.

"You sod!" George is only just becoming amused.

"That's right...salt o'the earth me." Potter strides over to his visiting friend who appears rather puzzled.

"So who's that?" George points to an ominous head poking out of the hedgerow.

"Oh that's Frank. I thought 'e'd be able t'help scare off them darn crows."

"I assumed you'd be scary enough for that job Pots."

"Until you got 'ere any-road. Aye George... I've seen it! I 'ave y'know, as plain as flour from the corn... I saw it!" Potter guides his bemused friend over to the laid-back scarecrow, sits him down on an iron sun-lounger, pours him a steaming hot cuppa from a flask revealing the vision he's just witnessed.

Time; according to the human perspective approaches 11:30am. In the midst of reality forest life hustles and bustles pursuing its natural powers of persuasion within staunch surroundings, squirrels dart across leafy-laden floors tripping from tree to tree in their search for nutritional stock keeping them healthy through the impending fruitless, winter chills. Scouting the whole area milling high and low fly differing varieties of birds tirelessly seeking out food, twigs and leaves to replenish their nests and sustenance for their young; for each living part of the forest there's a particular purpose, a reason to survive via instinct each continue to act on their individual need to exist: where only the keen enough survive.

Descending at speed above it all the eagle and his pillion passenger swerve below a dense gathering of trees.

"Pfor? Below us, within that ruined building lives the crow's kingdom. It's where I dropped off those two hecklers earlier." Aquila circles around to give Pfor a proper chance at glimpsing the dark, servile ruined temple where underneath them disturbed eyes wretch menacing disdain.

This contemptuous glare belongs to the Crow-king spying from his perch upon the haggard temples' crooked spire. The king of all crows in this general vicinity displeasingly growls from under his stench ridden breathe in a deep, croaky rage.

"Oh great majestic one... I'll be rid of you." His voice suddenly bellows fiercely, "beware of me!!"

"Uh... Crow-king. Uh... Sire? The eagle...it's up there, look!"

“Shut up! I can see he’s spying on us Birdbrain! Fetch the murder, bring them to me!”
The Crow-king shouts distraught with anger. “Now!”

“Uh...yes...right.er.. .sire. Now.”

“Now!!!” The king’s personal slave hastily flings into flight knowing full well where to unearth his comrades.

Pfor grips tighter as Aquila swoops honourably upward on course for the southwest side of the forest.

“I’ll find you safety.” With eyes firmly clenched closed the wavering parrot nods haphazardly as a breeze bursts into a livelier gust crippling Pfor’s sense of trajectory as the eagle soars spiralling faster.

“Another cuppa Georgie boy?” Potter doesn’t wait for an answer and just carries on pouring.

“Wooooe Potty, there’s lovely. So at last you’ve seen the eagle...great news Potty, really.”

“Now what about this ‘ere bloomin’ Hagbag then?” Potter’s voice relays a sombre tone. “It’s a threatening situation at present Pots. Sadly, from my own perspective this is mind I do believe it will come to us getting involved.” George feels a sense of loyalty ease through his tone and pumps up the banner. “Surely our country will not sit back and wait for any old potential enemy to charge in!” His practical mind gently switches gear. “On my way here, pulling out of our road I noticed some proof Tarr might be making preparations?” George’s brow strains under an inner pressure as he faces his earnestly stirred chum.

“OK? What ‘ave ‘r glor-ous council done?” George glares for a moment.

“I happened to notice what reminded me of a siren rigged to our local church steeple.” On hearing this Potter comes over all puzzled.

“This is probubly a daft question and all but...do we ‘ave any air-raid shelters in and around town?”

“No...not that I know of.” George searches Potter’s peculiar expression.

“So y’mean to tell I...a siren’ll go off to let everybody who can ‘ear it know...that a load of bombs are about to drop...and that’s it, run for cover!”

“It appears to be the case, yes.” Potter shakes his head in defiance.

“Well what can we do about it? I dunno...maybe build a shelter or some’ert!?” Potter’s mood wriggles frustratingly irritated.

“That’s a grand thought Potty but...what if we did? Where would everybody else go?”

They both stare in silence at the leafy strewn ground then George clambers up to his feet. “Potty, forgive me but I have to go. I’m setting the home-ins free from the Pmendi today.” Potter perks up with renewed hope. “I felt it could be the last chance I get.” “That Hagbad tyrant’s forced’ee into this ‘ain’t ‘ee? It makes m’blood curdle it does!” Potter quickly rises thinking as deeply as he’s able, wondering what’s for the best.

“I’m not sure I’ll get another chance to prove my lovelies will come back to me.”

“Well it ‘as been mentioned a few times in the past and...well, now you’ve bin forced

into it really. You can always tie cotton to each of 'm...so if they gets lost or what-not we could reel'm in!" Potter's sadly excited by this prospect, "I've always fancied a bit o'fly fishin'." George shakes his head. Although used to his friend's sense of amusement he's feeling the need to get on his way, after all this latest escapade's taken him 37 years of preparation; it's time to fly.

"You could always rig up your new friend and colleague Frank to a fishing line, that'll catch those pesky crows out." George waves to his mate walking back to his car. "Good luck to you and y'lovelies! Oh, and George...?"

"I know Pots, shut the gate on the way out. Hope to see you later?"

"Give me best wishes and love to Arabella and the rest...lead'm homeward Georgie boy. Ta-ra!"

Pfor's stomach sinks lower and lower with eyes still transfixed in complete darkness absurdly unaware of the eagle preparing to land on top of an empty water-tower standing alone in the forest's southwest corner; where the trees cusp at the fields edge. 'Clank!' The eagle's lurching talons grip an iron rung stretching threefold around the top of the towers brim, wings pitched to either side aiding a careful, considerate landing. In total disarray Pfor loses its solid grip jerking from the sturdy eagle's back dive-bombing across the steel plated floor before crashing into the side of an open box like compartment. The amused eagle glides over to the flat-bellied parrot's side forcing it over onto its back with a shove of his rapier beak.

"Looks like you've found the perfect place to rest here." Aquila peers into the small, clammy tool shelter which hums of drudgery.

"I want to go home." Pfor lifts its sprained body upward onto its claws and waddles over to the tower's edge.

"Why not rest here for a while? Then when you're ready, fly homeward." The golden eagle struts over to Pfor's side inwardly acknowledging a blatant concern for the parrot's distress. "What's the problem with that Pfor?" The powerless parrot stares emptily up at the mighty bird pausing for a malingering moment then speaks wearily.

"I've hurt my wings." They attempt a flap but only a harsh, bitter breeze banter a flutter.

"You must rest. Take shelter here and if on my return you've flown home, well fly safely and be aware of all around. Farewell Pfor." Aquila throws up a wavering gesture with both gracious arced wings leaping through the sharp air rising hastily into a vapour-laden sky.

BB's mission for the king lures him away south to the edge of the forest where wild creatures become more vigilant; their sixth sense working overtime, for where they cross beyond the forest into an area of open fields they are vulnerable; exposed to a danger, a threatening power known to them and us as human. BB feels sure his search would end in one of the fields beyond and it isn't long before he sees his comrades pecking eagerly at the ground all separated from each other hopping about their business, until one of his counterparts' spies him letting off an almighty squawk

prompting BB to relay their King's order.

"Our king wants us now!" Every crow within range of this announcement stops whatever they are doing and reaches for the air, in seconds a mass of black darkens the sky; the awakening sun momentarily haunted by the shadow of a murder.

Potter, who's about to leave his field and walk into town stops in his tracks hypnotised once more that day not ever remembering anything quite like this before as the dark spell of a murder surges onward flapping furiously, even the wind for an instant eluding to lose control as the crow army fix a clinical course home to their awaiting leader.

The Crow-king stands poised in the middle of his domain, around him battered walls rise as best they can surrounding an oval arena. He bobs towards the only remaining turret and stops twisting his claws in the ground, turning his body the other way then proceeds to march back again. His head flinches then twists left, after a short pause of silence he hears a familiar sound that within a few seconds rips into a deafening roar as his army of slaves return swarming the temple as if in honour of their master, each of them immediately searching for a perch somewhere in order to see and hear if their Crow-king will converse.

Their king, a bird of few words lifts himself off the ground remaining in the air hovering, occasionally flapping his wings lurking round at his minions who in turn fall silent as he lands back in the most central position of the ruined temple to convey his meaning.

"I have made up my mind." There is silence; his army stare at their king unknowingly. "The eagle will die!" Every crow squawks as loudly as they can, the noise mounting tremendously. The king crow flaps his wings, flies up a few feet then lands causing the crows chants to fall silent. He's not finished. "Tonight... I expect every one of you to feast with me....in readiness for the 'morrow..." He pauses, looking slowly around at his force of strength, "...when we will hunt the eagle down...lay its body to the earth...where we will march daily upon its brittle, rotting bones...eternally!!!!" BB uncontrollably starts to squawk with glee while everyone else silently watches him in his personal celebration prompting BB to abruptly stop, until now obvious to all bar himself the Crow-king has just one more thing to add. "It is nice to know I can still make someone happy. My crows! We are the true rulers of this kingdom, the gods of the sky. The almighty power! Be free...! Indulge yourselves in preparation for the 'morrow!" The Crow-king drained of emotion falls on BB who in turn topples backward, his claws ending up supporting the king's fall; holding him agonisingly upright as the hawed shriek with delight swooping around and around awash in high spirits. Regally musing at his followers their king scoffs at BB. "Move your left claw up a little, will you? It's a mere inconsiderate there." Stretched out on crumpled wings BB dutifully obeys as the Crow-king relaxes back to enjoy this well deserved moral support.

Whenever George arrives in the hills it can't help but bring on a warm smile; he

loves this place, unsure if it's the panoramic view spread out for miles around or the solitary freedom he feels being there, oh how he wishes he could thrust out his arms and take off gliding on warm air currents, drifting higher then lower as free as a bird. He parks the car in a lay-by only a few yards from where his pride and joys will be reluctantly set free to the unknowing elements and on landing respectfully takes out one basket at a time placing each of them gently by a bench facing the horizon. To the left side in the south Tarr looms, its bricks and mortar, roads and accessories carved out of the landscape resemble a dried up scar, where down below spread out as far as the oceans' edge, bursting with the freshness of nature blooms the majestic forest land. George glances over to his right staring at the mountain, captivated, as if trying to work something out in his mind. One of the pigeon's helps the bird tamer regain his reason for being there and reassuringly he pats each basket sitting down on the bench, contemplating the task ahead with all three baskets cooing and flapping down beside his feet.

"Now...listen my lovelies. You all know what's expected of you...from here on I'm afraid it's up to you. Just fly straight home." George points enthusiastically away towards Tarr. "Do you see, just before the church spire there? Good luck my dears, the journey shouldn't take more than a few hours or so." He checks his watch, his arm shaking as he records the present time. "It's 12.17pm." Beginning to feel apprehensive, having no way of being absolutely sure his 10 pigeons and only dove will make it home he lifts each of the catches and faces the baskets towards their open unpredictable future, the wait now truly taking its toll. Cagily George pulls up the doors to the first then the second basket. "Be off with you my lovelies!" In the third basket Arabella waits with the others watching their family circling in the sky above them, realising her trusty friends quivering hand pluck her out before guiding the others free. "Arabella, keep watch over them... Bring them home to me." Throwing up his hands to either side he releases her gazing up at his lofty family in a misplaced trance.

Thankfully all the home-ins congregate harmoniously high up but seem lost circling and looping back and forth in the same space none it appears prepared to take the lead so used to staying in close proximity of their keeper. George carefully sits back down on the bench realising his lovelies are simply doing what they've always done, what he's taught them to do, in his haste to fulfil the destiny of his greatest dread he's forgotten any form of proper preparation. His mind attempts to reassure himself what might be for the best; all he has to do now is a few claps, a couple of 'tally-hos' and he and his lovelies can be safely on the way home...

A dull booming sound resonates from behind amplifying louder with thunderous aggression, '**Whhhhooooosshhh!!**' A fighter plane rushes over George's head causing him to duck initially then fling himself off the bench searching desperately for his family who've gone absolutely berserk twisting and lunging together in obvious shock before instinctively chasing each other's tail-feathers. Fortunately, the one thing George bargained for eventually happens when Chor, the bravest and potential leader of his family seizes the initiative. Once over the sudden scare Chor quickly regains composure beckoning the flock to steer upward and away from the hills aloft the giant expanse of

forest. The tired man's eyes cool as he again catches a glimpse of his flock as their far-flung bodies inescapably blend into low merging clouds breathtakingly out of sight. He stares at his hometown Tarr; a mass of stacked up buildings huddled together in concrete, an unnatural sight compared to the freedom and colours of the adjacent natural land contemplating the dangers that lie in wait within this enigmatic forest; other birds can attack his lovelies, they could lose their way and never be seen again... A starling chasing a sparrow darts across his view both elegantly flowing in unison, his keen eyes lock on to their complex path until he loses sight of them, where in a revelation his mind becomes alive bringing a familiar feeling of hope back to him, the same positive emotion that in the past inspired so much pleasure and joy. He sort of smiles, gets up and returns to his car. His trusty engine starts up after the second try and George pulls away but instead of driving on the road he pulls over, the wheels leading him to a towering edge a few feet from the bench. Pulling up he winds down the window and shouts as loud as he can muster, "Tally-ho my lovelies!!"

The eagle cuts effortlessly through the air, a racing mind in time with each beat of a motion, to simply switch off and indulge in such a fortune of freedom within the wild skies can in a moment meet with untimely death which Aquila knows all too well, his cool, canny determination kept busy in order to sustain this privilege of life. The one thing keeping us creatures busy is the need for food, people are fortunate in this regard, most don't have to kill their prey before consuming it but in the wilds there is little choice, away from civilisation one begs, steals or borrows and the eagle being carnivorous feeds on the flesh of other animals. Imagine the task of being uncivilised like a wild animal unaware from one moment to another where or when the next meal will be served; rarely ever on a plate. Relatively close to his mountainous home Aquila veers away to the left aware that close by lay a clearing where rabbits and hares often frolic, playing earthbound yet ultimately aware they are prey to some who dwell above them. Aquila spies two hares chasing each other in the open meadow completely engrossed in a friendly race instinctively dipping lower to assess the situation and judge the winner who ironically, now bounding nearer the centre of the glade sprinting at speed may become branded a total loser...

'... *BANG!!*'

A single shot from a double-barrelled rifle shrieks out, one hare instantly leaving the earth plunges somersaulting to the ground: dead; the other glimpses its competitor eyes glazed knowingly then darts off at a tangent hopping with all its might towards a clump of bushes. Aquila steers up knowing exactly what's on his mind keeping clear above it all waiting for that special moment noticing an elderly man with a shotgun cocked, tilted under his arm stomp into view from out of a shielding cops, a Golden Labrador chasing close behind trots then races passed; it's tongue out and tail lashing from side to side. Amongst all this commotion Aquila cautiously glides down accelerating as he goes, when just a few feet away from the goal he lets out a piercing *shrill!* The dog stops in its tracks and the confused man panics dropping the gun; he being the one now cheated by surprise, in a flash Aquila claws up the dead victim

lunging close across the human's path before a bold surge upwards gripping the hare so tightly talons touch at their tips hooking up this fresh flesh. The man grasps for his gun but scrapes his hand on some thistles only to suffer defeat left with his faithful dog barking ferociously to watch the jubilant eagle escape upward and outward into the bottomless void.

George drags slowly up to the junction leading either homeward or into town hovering in its mouth, the car engine bobbling in anticipation trying to make up his mind which direction? *Beep...Beep!* A frustrated driver behind helps make him immediately turn left, after passing the entrance to Potter's field where an old rag flies wildly stuck to the gatepost, appreciating this code means his friend has left he drives on in the direction of town hoping to run into him; as it were, with the pending news of a threatening attack apparent George is compelled to investigate the Council's concern and everybody else's for that matter. By the newsagents adjacent to a small café the yellow Morris Minor veers right along Tarr's high street, with a clutter of cars on the road George takes care; people in cars appear to be more erratic driving around built up areas continually baffling George who believes traffic should be banned from the central locations within towns and especially cities simply to ease the congestion of stress. As he waits for traffic lights to glow green at the main crossroads he watches his human allies doing their shopping, etc. out and about, wondering if they actually appear relatively threatened by these strong claims of attack broadcast earlier by the enemy; Faghad of the Abacuss?

He swings left into Alamo Street then a right up Wander Avenue where ahead plodding in a groove of his own a suspicious looking character, presumably making his way home is spotted prompting George to indicate and pull over winding down the window.

"Potty...like a lift?"

"Ah, long time no see George me old matey!" Potter opens the door and clammers in. Checking over his shoulder George signals then manoeuvres back on course.

"I've just driven through town Potty, there's nothing but normality going on."

"I know...it worries me an'all. D'y'know Ethel Glimspot?"

"No." George reliably looks where he's going.

"She's just told me the radio station has released a statement from the Prime Minister." Potter tries to restrain his present mood realising his old mate is trying to dodge the other drivers.

"Potty...fancy a chin-wag over a cuppa?"

"Love too...me throat's barren."

"I'm worried about my pigeons. What time is it now?"

"12.49 precisely. Don't y'worry about them lovelies, they'll be fine. You should of set'm free years ago any-road, I told'ee that!" George didn't need to hear that over-used reminder especially on this particular auspicious occasion, the *lovelies* have been airborne for over half an hour and according to George's predictions should be nearly halfway home.

They're all really enjoying themselves basking in their long awaited liberation. After the initial shock of the fighter plane cutting up their path they've loyally ended up following Chor the eldest and without doubt the bravest which encourages the flock to feel as one; bonding together in the face of adversity. Arabella remains a few yards behind the flock watching the rear trying to keep up with her friends due to spending much of her previous flying time perched on their personal trainer's bird-table. The afternoon warms, the clouds have dispersed even the heavier winds have drifted away to other climes becoming a day of perfection weather wise, surely only bad navigating can stop George's lovelies returning to their spiritual home.

A short distance from their flight-path in one of the taller trees is a nest rigid in construction, not a home but rectified as a place of observation. Inside it scanning the airwaves a roving crow takes off gliding downwards to land on a crumbling dry-stone wall next to Birdbrain.

"Fetch me the Crow-king! I have something of great importance to tell him!"

"He's over there...tell him yourself." The crow stares nastily at BB who smiles back contemptuously. The bossy crow receives this message, with no time for games glides the short distance to land beside the Crow-king who happens to be extremely busy: preening.

"Ahhy! What the...?" The crow's king darts up in shock, in an instant the messenger realises their grave mistake wary of their life.

"I'm sorry sire... Forgive me?!"

"Have you something valuable to report?" The Crow-king glares cruelly at his loyal subject.

"Pigeons sire. They're approaching." The king of the crows can't believe his luck, not only has he decided to kill the eagle on the 'morrow, here's a sumptuous opportunity for his army to practise and as importantly to eat well. He jumps into the air waving his wings squawking with sheer delight evoking any crow within range of this somewhat exclusive war cry to flock around the temple walls in but a flap of a tail-feather squawking rowdily with intent.

"Quiet!!" The Crow-king appeals for silence and gets it. "Pigeon for tea anyone?" The crows squawk a triumphant cheer, their stomachs nearly rumbling as loud. "You'd better take your places, they're closer than your bellies could ever desire!" Every crow in range of these orders rushes to a vantage point and awaits their take away meal to fly by.

At last the *home-ins* are flying together in a sort of rhythm of their own darting and circling together enjoying their most indulgent spell of freedom; as much as they could ever wish for. Chor spots a bird flying towards them and turns his head ready to let the others know someone unfamiliar approaches but before he can another crow's flying beside him who speaks in a polite, jovial manner.

"Good day. How are you?" Chor isn't sure how to take this somewhat cheeky gesture and says nowt, leading on in the direction he believes will coax his follower's home.

"I wonder...can you tell me the way to...?" The crow pauses for affect then carries on menacingly, "...eat pigeon?" Chor stares reluctantly into the crow's eyes and finds

nothing but trouble, his perception convinced there's drama brewing. He knows where ever he flies the flock will follow and here the time's come to test his ability as leader; a responsibility that works best under pressure and Chor feels it about to erupt beneath his tremulous feathers darting upward to the south where reassuringly the flock dutifully follow. Another crow suddenly appears beside Chor now flanked on either side stimulating a gear change automatically speeding up due to a chemical reaction taking place inside his turbulent body invigorating his blood circulation propelling Chor further, faster.

Aware there are two crows flying either side of Chor, realising the flock is threatened Arabella drops back a few yards enough to glimpse down below without causing her friends any concern registering the tops of trees and up ahead what looks to her like a derelict house in a small clearing; the air stream changes, her friends are flying upwards veering left so she moves accordingly glaring back at the odd derelict building below in shocking astonishment shaking her head in disbelief; but it's true and hideously frightening as at least forty crows are taking off from the temple and in a matter of seconds this sight eclipses the land like a gruesome night shadow. Arabella knows she must do something fast and with all her strength rips into the flock screeching her fear. "Split up!! Fly for your lives!!" The flock fears any choice and disperses acknowledging the reality they're disturbingly close to being victims of a murder.

The two crows flanking Chor squawk a loud war cry then strike at the flock's leader, one blocking Chor's way the other taking a bite out of his neck. Chor spins wild, wriggling and twisting clawing at one of the crows fighting bravely though his energy quickly runs low as the two crows easily overpower him; completely exhausted Chor drops out of the sky. The other pigeons are frantically flying away in different directions as the concentrated hunger of crows give chase; one spots Chor falling promptly changing course flying fast towards him, a few feet from the ground it catches the dying bird its beak plunging into his neck killing him outright landing to feast on the blood stained meal causing BB, in his capacity as the king's personal aide (nay, scapegoat) to swarm directly over comprehending his comrade disregarding the crow-law.

"What are you doing? Take it to the Crow-king before I report you." Some say rules are made to be broken but not as far as Birdbrain's concerned; the Crow-king ordered all food will be shared which is a rare event and his second in command believes strongly in this principle...but no, not all.

Outnumbered four to one Georges' lovelies had no chance of victory. The main reason for the crows having the upper hand is due to their basic understanding of natural law; earning valuable experience of the wild. Life seems to offer many differing dimensions to learn all inevitably leading to good or bad: love or hate: win or lose. Although George has done his best to look after his lovelies they are indeed spoilt, sheltered from nasty realities they're now severely being forced to understand with their own lives. Down below the pompous Crow-king keenly observes his army picking off each pigeon laughing in the knowledge his minions have it easy this time when unexpectedly he spies a bird flying lower getting away from the barbaric mass of murderers heading under cover of the forest canopy.

“Over there!! Get it!” He can’t be heard or is flagrantly ignored so takes the initiative flapping off in pursuit; the battle nearly won.

Quickly realising she’s no chance of saving her friends Arabella flees from the dispersing flock for her life heading for a large oak tree standing with dignity above the rest, flying frantically through the tree’s canopy she’s aware of someone tailing her so on approaching the oak tree swoops in a curve right around its thick trunk cruising upward noticing a fat bird flying through the oak’s leafy hood aiming straight for her, unknowingly about to confront the vicious Crow-king. She can clearly see he’s alone and frenziedly rushes towards him and on approaching the descending crow politely smiles cruising over his head bombing this very royal subversive with excreta that lands plum in the king’s face who reels distraught in discomfort spluttering and spitting the foul mess out of his mouth as Arabella rushes away, turning back briefly to witness her assailant landing at the foot of the oak twisting and a shaking. Gliding through the canopy cloak she slows up taking care not to cause alarm searching for danger in the sky but mere emptiness fills the air so cautiously cruises low as fast as her nerves can carry her away from the danger of the crow below scouring all around in search of her lost family.

Chapter 3

Where are you when I need you?

George swivels the key in his front door opening to the sound of a Grandmother clock chiming once.

“Come in Potty.” Potter obliges mooching into the chilly front room. “01.00pm.” George winces at his wristwatch while strutting towards the patio doors, on opening them turns to see Potter admiring the painting on the wall. “Sit yourself down Potty. Make yourself at home... I won’t be a tickle.” Potter bounces into the sturdy armchair by the old radio while George strides into his back garden searching the sky for his flock. At a quick pace he struts to the loft which on arrival lay bare but for a blue-tit landing on top pecking at the latch, flying off when George steps on a snapping twig returning despondently to trek home to his lounge.

“George! Oh sorry, I didn’t think’ee were that close. They won’t be there yet m’friend.” Potter props up out of the chair. “Ere y’are...sit y’self down, I’ve bin keepin’ it well fertilised for ya!” Potter grabs his dejected friend’s arm. “Now don’t y’worry, give’m time.” George raises his head to find a long time friend wearing a rare warm smile.

“Thanks Potty. How would you like your cuppa?”

“Ot, sweet and in a mug as usual ta.” George didn’t wait for an answer perhaps subconsciously remembering Potter and his flask earlier that morning.

“Aye, wait there!” Potter has an idea. “How’s about me cookin’ you some nosh, aye?” George grabs Potter’s arm and squeezes gently. “Look at us grabbing each other, people’ll be talkin’.”

“Balls to’um I say.”

George can only think about his pigeons at this precise moment appearing lost in his own kitchen jangling his keys prompting Potter to make his way to the front door, only having to traipse next door.

“George? I’ve got some tasty, tender chicken.” Potter laughs with intent.

“You have a sick sense of humour Pots!”

“What do you mean? You’ve eaten chucken before, I’ve seen’ee at it.”

“I know but chomping on a dead bird today of all days under these circumstances doesn’t appeal to my taste buds, thanks!”

“That’s all right... I’got some rabbit pie in the larder. Will that be alright boy?” Potter leads George up his garden path.

“Letting the old dog see the rabbit aye? I’m sorry. Thanks Pots.”

A crow lunges out of the sun gliding between two decaying walls surrounding the temple’s arena dropping a dead pigeon from its claws onto a bloody pile clumped in the centre. The Crow-king, bathing in a puddle produced by the heavy rain over the last few days carries on washing and cleansing as best he can not having much practise at this past-time trying to rid his sense of smell from the pain, it’s the first bath he’s experienced in over a year; not counting the showers. He steps out shaking his tail-feathers making a beeline for the inanimate body mound convening in the middle of the arena.

“How many do we have for lunch BB?” BB bobs over to the pile and starts to slowly count.

“What comes after eight sire? That’s how many we have!” BB feels rather proud of himself, he’s only been able to count up to seven before now.

“One, two, three, four, five, six, seven...eight...anybody? Are you ready for this BB?” Birdbrain nods. “... Nine! I must consider you for a counter attack. Now help me!” With his army impatiently lurking on from the walls and trees they drag the pigeon pairs into four piles, the extra one remaining at the Crow-king’s claws who smoulders at his army triumphantly.

“Right! North wall this pile. South wall this pile. East wall that one. West? Well, I’ll let you guess yours.” The king of them all picks up his portion, bobs to one side and drops it to the ground stretching out his battered wings. “Commence the feast!!” The crows swarm down onto their respective piles and feast on what to them is quite a delicacy: home-spun pigeon. “BB? You may join me.” BB can’t believe it; this being the first time his master has ever given him the honour of eating by his side and the ravenous slave eagerly bobs towards the inviting succulent meal. “After I have finished, of course.” The Crow-king splurges out a mouthful of pigeon that flies with precision past BB’s eyes.

“Of...of course sire!” Dribbling in anticipation BB nibbles on his talon.

After flying as close to her home as fast as she’s able Arabella now rests on a lone Cedar tree slightly off centre in a poppy laden meadow where glowing rays of sun splash through the heavy branches down onto long, wavering rustic grass enriching the poppies red. With all the stress burdening her this day the lonesome dove feels drained and lost with no way of knowing the fate of her family, fixing her body against one of the sturdier branches feeling relatively comfortable her eyelids drop like heavy loft-doors helplessly succumbing to the universal spell of sleep.

The restless wind picks up causing a twig to bounce across the muddy floor of the forest splashing to rest in a puddle that upsets a shimmering balance but as the water settles a rippling reflection can be seen within it. Peering in amazed a squirrel muses at its own image stopping on the way in search of food, with a rapid motion of its head it scurries across brownie, fallen leaves throwing itself at the trunk of a red oak gripping it feverishly with short pumping legs shimmies, spiralling upwards to pluck at its favourite fruit; that after time and nurture are ripe and ready to eat. The squirrel appears fearless running about the tree jumping between different branches whilst gathering then carrying its newly acquired food stock as if in a hurry it collects three acorns precariously balancing them as best it can. Here is obviously a compulsive-eating squirrel because three hardly seems enough, tightly grasping an awkward load the squirrel accelerates down a fairly weak branch and takes off in a hopeful attempt of a safe landing in a towering beech tree close by; a jump taking place at least 20ft up, the squirrel’s back legs grip a branch that breaks on impact sending the squirrel plunging down to earth with all three acorns catapulting down around it.

Thud...! Thud...! Thud! The squirrel lands luckily on a pile of decaying leaves against a large moss woven boulder instantly jumping up on its legs shaking itself, thrusting disturbed leaves into the wafting face of our natural life-force. The little harvester plucks up two fallen acorns and runs from a filtering breeze swirling in from behind disturbing a solitary magpie on the way to its nest resting on a fallen tree close by now completely covered, the manky leaves sticking firmly to its clutched feathers. It leaps into the air irritably shaking, briefly losing their sense of direction and thankfully most of the leaves promptly landing on top of a

young, swaying beech to preen clearing the mess away, teasing its black, white and blue plumage back to former glory. Another magpie glides close by stirring from its vantage point taking off to join their companion; both departing east toward the Pmendi hills ramped up ahead and as they fly higher out of the thronging trees the two for joy become aware of a gaggle flying higher above them spread out in a sort of 'V' formation passing in a southerly direction as they do about this time every year, preferring to migrate to other warmer lands; a natural cycle that's been spinning for thousands of years.

Aquila's clear wide eyes flicker from side to side then set fixed in a lost stare entranced. Pictures pour flooding inside his head, the eagle's memory reminding him of the past, his stern face expressed in stone as the concentration wells up colourful inner images inside trying to work out what his mind's eye relays. He can see a man with a long gun that looks as if it has two barrels, the man aims then presses on the trigger and Aquila actually hears bullets exploding from this gun echo loudly around his brain but doesn't flinch concentrating on thoughts and feelings colliding inwardly watching an eagle in the sky, it's body suddenly changing wildly from aloft and in control to what's become savage; witnessing the image writhing in agony then plunge deathly fast to the jagged rocks below. The next vision in Aquila's mind-eye sends pain crippling through his body pierced by the hurt within. Stepping back a few paces leaning down over the side of his spacious, weather-beaten nest re-adjusting some loose branches his wing nudges the lifeless, smelly body of a hare nearly off the edge which he grabs, lifting the soulless shell placing it away in a corner.

His nest faces the forest and on a clear day away in the distance he can see the town of Tarr though rarely bothers to stretch his sight that far; Aquila hates humans and doesn't much like being reminded of them. A familiar shrill spills from the sky prompting an obliging glance up towards the sound where his eyes catch Manita and tuts, knowing full well why she approaches closing his eyes waiting for her to land.

"Pfor!" This strange word uncontrollably blurts out of Aquila's mouth who locks upright.

"What's a *fee for*?" Manita just can't resist asking, in fact she finds it quite impossible to resist anything. Well anything...bar one!

"It doesn't have anything to do with you Manita...don't worry yourself." He displeasingly scans this feminine version of himself up and down then glares back into her twinkling eyes.

"What? Good!" She sounds a little confused and upset. Aquila feels sure he's obviously said the right thing, his off-hand manner seems to give Manita time to appreciate she's communicating with someone she needs...in more ways than none and her manner softly lightens.

"Did the hare lose its way?"

"How are you and your brood surviving Manita?"

"Oh, we're happyish...and please forgive my curiosity. Perhaps it's wrong of me to show you too much concern Aquila?" She smiles at him as her eyelids flutter. "What is a fee for then?"

"I think that's probably why some birds call you irresistible Manita." Aquila straightens his head gazing back over the forest.

"What do you mean by that?" Manita manages to reply calmly with a hint of allure. "They call you irresistible because you find absolutely everything irresistible!" He resumes staring outward his sights following what he reckons to be two robin redbreasts about a mile away.

"What's wrong with that?"

Manita openly falls deeply into the distracting trap of caring, for when it comes to affairs of the heart feels sure she's in love with Aquila, who sternly stares back at her tense;

feeling moody.

"I'm tempted to start calling you by a new name... 'What!' It's starting to grow on you... so maybe it will on me?" He stands up tall and proud. "Goodbye...*what*." Wings reach out wide as he pushes away from the nest floor flying urgently away.

"Goodbye...?" Manita's curiosity refuses to contain itself. "What are you up to now..?" Her voice shortly drains silent as if being gradually turned off by the spirit of peace.

Aquila loves basking in and out of the vibrant air currents that push and pull at everything in his path, an outstretched body bantering to and fro within the elements as the golden eagle again push/pulls spanning wings in order to propel onward, learning from an early age how important it is to respect the natural order always attempting at least to be in accord with it, knowing like himself nature's unpredictable and can change attitude at any moment. Normally when Aquila flies he would deliberately concentrate on where he's going throughout the entire flight but on this occasion, for a few moments anyway something's really bugging him...?

"... I'll rip out her last feather if she...!?"

Manita meanwhile can't resist pecking at the uneaten hare while sensing something dishonourably familiar deep inside. '*He's so tasty!*' She squeals in fright as out of nowhere the eagle thumps down onto the hare's hind.

"One thing I forgot to ask you Manita?"

"What? Did you have to do that? You fri..." Aquila cuts her off adding casually.

"Do you know the difference between lunch and dinner?" He stares at her bemused expression.

"What? I think so."

"Well, we're both inviting you and your kin to join us for dinner. Will you attend?" The eagle's feathers dislodge as the wind blows powerfully awakening Aquila to responsibilities he should be attending to while a dim Manita tries to make sense of the eagle's last comment.

"You mean eat later? But I'm hungry now." The eagle's manner becomes playful.

"So what!? Kill your own meal if the hunger's that bad?" On hearing this Manita sulks.

"Manita go!" The eagle watches Manita immediately adhere to his word taking to the wing circling around once no doubt casting a spell on him then veering off down to a lower level of the mountain. "Yeah...keep a lower profile." Aquila tuts leaping from the highest point around to resume his *fee-for* mission.

Potter and George enjoyed their lunch and sit comfortably awaiting the afternoon news via Potter's do-it-yourself radio, Potter describes it thus because after fixing this radio so often feels quite adamant he rebuilt the thing from scratch; after numerous consultations with its ancient instruction manual he's convinced. Both men fidget silently facing each other listening to a jazz outro dynamically end allowing an announcer to speak. '*... That was Dickey Rathbone and his immortal thrusting band with their old classic hit 'Don't they, didn't they just'. The time is 1:30pm and here is the news.'* The introduction music sounding dramatic; its soul apparent objective to prepare listeners out there in radio-land ready for the world's grave news and Potter sings along with each major chord waving his hand about as if to conduct the invisible musicians while George smiles back at his friend pulling the odd contorted expression.

'Here is the news.' The attuned codgers respectively pause to listen. '*The Prime*

Minister has spoken out against comments made earlier today by Faghad the Abacuss leader who at this moment is allegedly preparing an attack on our nation. Faghad remained unnervingly frank in a broadcast earlier this morning when...'

"What did the Prime Minister say Pots?" George realises he's missed out on something that's become very important.

"Sssh!!" Potter pulls a finger away from his puckered lips pointing at the radio. *'...and is almost positive that all will be done in their power to thwart any kind of terror attack, although it has not been confirmed exactly how...'* George nervously scratches the incurable itch on his head. *'...so we are very fortunate to have with us in the studio the Right Honourable Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Good afternoon Sir, thank you for spending some of your valuable time with us.'*

'It's my pleasure Jonathan.'

'Would you please tell our listeners and I exactly what the Government are doing and I must stress the word doing about this threat of attack by a foreign leader, we seem to know very little about.'

'Well Jonathan this is indeed a serious situation and I have been made aware that its common knowledge this man Faghad has deadly weapons at his disposal. This of course is...'

'Sorry, may I interject for one moment, I mean there's surely no need as yet to distress the public unnecessarily?'

'It is imperative the public realises now before it's too late, the diplomatic way will not work with this tyrant. I'm convinced, since a mutual deal broke down ...'

'... I'm sorry Sir...'

'... Could I just please say, I really urge the public to make ready provisions and if and where possible seek out secure shelter. It is vital they're prep...'

'... I'm truly sorry Sir we have no more time on air. Thank You. We'll now go over to Martin for the Horse racing res...!'

Potter switches off his radio, peels out of his chair and muses, nosing out of his dirty front-room window remaining quite still.

"It appears you're right Potty." George tips out of his chair and stands by his friend.

"It's freakin' typical! Did y'notice that interviewer, what's his name?"

"I'm sorry Pots I can't remember." George looks through the window wondering what Potter's finding so interesting out there.

"What y'looking at George? I can't find a thing." George shakes his head and shrugs. "Do you reckon that interviewer was forced to stop Sir Whatnot Potty...so as not t'worry us poor, sensitive listeners?"

"Oh're, that Secret'ry bloke was struck off, defo! The interviewer didn't seem t'give'im anytime at'!!" Potter pounces into then promptly throws himself back out of the comfy chair spluttering a little. "According to that there public servant...an attack's impotent!"

George tries to relax back into the warmth and cosiness of his armchair while Potter ponders on this topic of serious conversation. "D'y'reckon that idiot Slaghad will use new-clear weapons George?"

"Not to begin with I don't think...but I do believe he might bomb our country. Why does it always have to be left till the last minute?" George bangs his fist hard down onto the arm of the chair then shakes it in the air attempting to alleviate the pain.

"Y'decided t'go t'war on y'self then?"

"It's better now. It's just this whole situation. We're always left out in the lurch. That Faghad

could be dropping bombs and blowing us all to kingdom come in the next second! This shouldn't happen... It really makes me angry...thinking back to how it was before!!" George raises his fist once more.

"Old on m'booty...!" Potter throws out a sturdy hand in George's direction. "Where's Kingdom come?" George carefully thinks as far as his heart can fear to pace. "At a guess...from here? We're more than halfway there."

"George? 'Ave you noticed nobody's mentioned 'ow Fagsag will attack...as'ee said?" Leaning over his lap Potter speaks as calmly as he's able believing he knows how his good friend feels, appreciating its seriousness, all things considered anxiety pulls at George enough to force him out of his comfy skin.

"I need to check on my lovelies." He's up and at'm!

"Y'only checked five minutes ago? What can we do about this 'ere attack boy?"

George wrestles with the catch until the French doors slide open freeing him to intensely survey the overcast sky intently listening to Potters' rant slowly dissipate. "An air-raid shelter would do us nicely..." Potter balances on the edge of his seat, "...and I know where there is one. Would y'like t'know where that is George?" Potter pulls up standing proud at the mouth of his chair resting a shaky hand in an empty space on the mantle. "Re those booties about George? George!?" The dejected owner and trainer mopes in making it clear there, as yet bodes no joy. "Right, come on!" Without hesitation Potter insistently guides George towards the front door, out of the house walking the short distance along a path that leads to George's drive who marches well in the lead by this time. On reaching his brown gate he opens it and Potter marches straight past George who's ambling with his head back scanning the cloudy sky for his belovedlies on course for the bottom of the garden, arriving united together on a patch of lawn gaping at a bleak, empty loft. "Perhaps they saw y'weren't in and went off to find ya?" Potter nudges George playfully with his elbow.

"They should be back by now. Oh where are you?" George is feeling really anxious.

"I've an ideal George, how's about we does a double *Tally-'O*?" Potter smiles as if to shine some hope on his dispirited companion and prepares them.

"OK after 3." They count as one.

"1,2,3..." The two wise elders shout at the tops of their voices. "Tally-ho!!"

On hearing this commotion from her kitchen Blossom runs out into her garden to see what all the fuss is about.

"Ah Blossom? Have you seen my pigeons?"

"Nor George, I've not, sorry. Ummm? 'Ave ider of y'gentlemen found m'Pfor?" Blossom joins the two men searching every corner of the patchy blue and grey sky frantically trying to spot a lovely and Blossoms' escaped parrot.

"Has Pfor not returned? Oh excuse my manners Blossom, I'm sure you've met Potter and...vice versa." Potter smiles.

"Hello, pleased t'meet y'again." He bows his head; a lot to do with working for a Lord provoking a blushed Blossom to shyly smile awkwardly.

"Hi dare again ah, Mr. Potter. How ya doin'?" George's nerves fray making him feel rather excited but not that kind he prefers to find in fun, this the frustrated variety. "Have you heard the latest news Blossom? I believe we're on the brink of being bombed." Blossom's great respect for George's judgement springs horrified.

“Ya really tink it’s gonna happen den?”

“Yes I do! Potter and I are going off in search of an air-raid shelter.” Potter’s well chuffed on hearing this inspired remark. “Would you like to join us?”

“Ah...no tanks George. I ‘ave too much clearin’ up t’do...and besides, I’m gonna wait for m’parrot t’come home, ya knor.” George stares at her in unusual disbelief causing Potter to fear his friend is about to say something to Blossom he shouldn’t, who appears to him frantic enough with worry.

“George! We can let Blossom know where t’is, after we’ve found it.”

“I thought you kne...” Potter gestures a finger to his lips then itches them; to cover up any possible suspicion.

“Keep’n eye out for m’Pfor will ya both?”

“Of course my dear. It’s good t’ave met you again Blossom. Bye-Bye.”

“Goodbye Mr. Potter. Will y’be alright George?”

“Would you keep any eye out for the pigeons please Blossom. I’ll knock when we return?”

“Of course.” For a big lady she quickly vanishes no doubt back to her pending chores. The two intrepid men inspired beyond belief prepare to jump into George’s car and set off to investigate the whereabouts of a shelter from the impending bombs; for the love of birds and human kind: alike.

Spirited on transparent ether Aquila prepares to land pushing his legs forward releasing his talons ready to grip the metal rail surrounding the top of the water tower leaning into his body forcing back long, taut wings acting as a shield warding off the wind’s pressure enabling the eagle to slow down with control. On landing Aquila’s microscopic sight reveals nothing of Pfor’s whereabouts, the cold iron bar freezing between his claws as he grips tighter wings flapping to obtain sufficient balance feeling a curious buzz sensation vibrate throughout his body. He ponders on the source of this feeling for a moment realising this sound reverberates through the iron rail. The eagle reaches back into flight flying steadily lower peering in through the many iron poles that have kept this monumental structure securely erect for decades. About half way down he recognises something not normally seen in these parts, a small figure with oversized feet and swollen beak clambering about, a body covered in bold colours is retreating on a precarious descent goading Aquila to glide around to the other side for a word.

“Hello Pfor. Can I assist in anyway?” Aquila hovers beside the descender, where the parrot in question refuses to budge mainly because it’s stuck as all the supporting columns lead to four very tall, wide supports where Pfor holds on wondering how to climb or more likely slide down one of them.

“Perhaps I could give you a lift?” Pfor nods encouraging the eagle to slowly sway around the column under the iron poles to hover there patiently. Pfor has to jump, it isn’t far, about five claw lengths or so but Pfor’s sensations duly panic grabbing a rusty bolt with its beak trying to swing in the hope Aquila will catch hold but the bolt it picks is unfortunately far too wet and rusty to grip causing Pfor’s beak to slowly slide down sparking rust particles that fire in its face; free falling through the air; very stiffly. Aquila meanwhile correctly assesses the situation plucking Pfor with a talon flipping the twisted parrot on his back pumping assuredly, pulsating up to the top of the tower.

On feeling that brittle chill of a cold iron rail once more they instantly sense a loud penetrating boom fill the air as a fighter plane hurtles a few hundred feet above them.

Aquila and the parrot tremble uncontrollably not so much in fright but because this sound rings so resonant they have no choice in the matter while the plane swiftly passes on course for Tarr. The two birds struck dumb for a moment instinctively attempt to regain consciousness.

“What was that?!?” Aquila tuts as Pfor at last opens up to his hero.

“Eh...thanks.” The parrot sits down to rest on the eagles’ broad back.

“I’m sorry...thanks for what?” Aquila sounds a little confused.

“Thanks for rescuing me...that’s all.”

“Oh? Eh...why did you climb down the tower?” Aquila’s regal aura is being persistently cajoled by the heaving wind.

“I was bored.”

“But...why didn’t you fly down?” Pfor’s embarrassed and slowly drops its head to hide it. A muted muffle eventually whispers cautiously from beneath a wing.

“I can’t fly.” Aquila’s head tilts to one side then promptly straightens to relax spotting the small enclosure sheltered from the blowing wind he guides Pfor still perched on board towards it, kindly dropping Pfor by the entrance both pondering there in silence for a while until Pfor pipes up.

“It’s a fighter plane.” “I’m sorry, what is?”

“The thing that passed over us, I’ve seen one similar on TV.” Aquila isn’t sure at first what Pfor means but thinks about it.

“What else do you know about it?” Pfor muses into the eagle’s eyes then carries on.

“It drops exploding devices.” Pfor’s descriptions leave a lot to be desired being not that dissimilar to Aquila: birds of few words.

Up to this point in its imprisoned life Pfor has only ever talked to one other being; often behind Blossom’s back. She would usually start the conversation complaining about the smell in her lounge or the state of Pfor’s cage then usually the state of this country and Pfor used to quietly have a go back. Blossom never heard as far as it knows; just a little way of relieving that mundane feeling.

“Let’s go in.” Aquila doffs his windswept crown struggling into the cramped shelter urging Pfor to waddle in and nestle up beside to warm up.

“Are you hungry Pfor?” Pfor lazily waggles its head from one side to the other then back to the middle peering up. “Are you sure?” Pfor nods. “Then try and sleep... I will return later.”

Aquila wriggles out of the shelter, on taking a long, deep breath volts off the tower first descending then looping curvaceously upward while Pfor loiters in the open door way admiring the view.