

She counted. One. She could hear the steps coming closer. Two. Puffs of breath could be seen coming from his mouth. Three. He stopped beside her. Four. She pulled the trigger of the gun.

I recollect that my first exploit in squirrel-shooting was in a grove of tall walnut-trees that shades one side of the valley. I had wandered into it at noontime, when all nature is peculiarly quiet, and was startled by the roar of my own gun, as it broke the Sabbath stillness around and was prolonged and reverberated by the angry echoes.

The light blinded him. It was dark and he thought he was the only one in the area, but the light shining in his eyes proved him wrong. It came from about 100 feet away and was shining so directly into his eyes he couldn't make out anything about the person holding the light. There was only one thing to do in this situation. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a flashlight of his own that was much stronger than the one currently blinding him. He turned it on and pointed it into the stranger's eyes.

She tried to explain that love wasn't like pie. There wasn't a set number of slices to be given out. There wasn't less to be given to one person if you wanted to give more to another. That after a set amount was given out it would all disappear. She tried to explain this, but it fell on deaf ears.

There had to be a better way. That's all Nancy could think as she sat at her desk staring at her computer screen. She'd already spent five years of her life in this little cubicle staring at her computer doing "work" that didn't seem to matter to anyone including her own boss. There had to be more to her life than this and there had to be a better way to make a living. That's what she was thinking when the earthquake struck.

Green vines attached to the trunk of the tree had wound themselves toward the top of the canopy. Ants used the vine as their private highway, avoiding all the creases and crags of the bark, to freely move at top speed from top to bottom or bottom to top depending on their current chore. At least this was the way it was supposed to be. Something had damaged the vine overnight halfway up the tree leaving a gap in the once pristine ant highway.

The young man wanted a role model. He looked long and hard in his youth, but that role model never materialized. His only choice was to embrace all the people in his life he didn't want to be like.

There was only one way to do things in the Statton house. That one way was to do exactly what the father, Charlie, demanded. He made the decisions and everyone else followed without question. That was until today.

He wondered if he should disclose the truth to his friends. It would be a risky move. Yes, the truth would make things a lot easier if they all stayed on the same page, but the truth might fracture the group leaving everything in even more of a mess than it was not telling the truth. It was time to decide which way to go.

It was a simple tip of the hat. Grace didn't think that anyone else besides her had even noticed it. It wasn't anything that the average person would notice, let alone remember at the end of the day. That's why it seemed so unbelievable that this little gesture would ultimately change the course of the world.

What have you noticed today? I noticed that if you outline the eyes, nose, and mouth on your face with your finger, you make an "I" which makes perfect sense, but is something I never noticed before. What have you noticed today?

The tree missed the days the kids used to come by and play. It still wore the tire swing the kids had put up in its branches years ago although both the tire and the rope had seen better days. The tree had watched all the kids in the neighborhood grow up and leave, and it wondered if there would ever be a time when another child played and laughed again under its branches. That was the hope that the tree wished every day as the swing gently swung empty in the wind.

She looked at her student wondering if she could ever get through. "You need to learn to think for yourself," she wanted to tell him. "Your friends are holding you back and bringing you down." But she didn't because she knew his friends were all that he had and even if that meant a life of misery, he would never give them up.

Twenty-five years Dana had been waiting. She tried to be patient during that time but she hadn't always managed to be as patient as she'd like. But today the opportunity had finally come. The thing she always imagined would make her the happiest person in the world was about to happen. She didn't know why at this specific time she all of a sudden felt sick inside.

My pincher collar is snapped on. Then comes the electric zapper collar. Finally, my purple at-home collar is taken off and I know I'm going for a walk to the dog park. I'm so excited to see my friends. I hope Spike or Thunder are there already. They're the most fun to chase and tumble with. My human is pretty strict with me. I'm only allowed on the grass and not on the sidewalks. I think she's afraid I'm going to jump on the other humans. I don't understand why everyone else gets to jump on the benches and run wild on the sidewalks. They don't listen to their humans. I know I could ignore mine but if I do she may zap me and it's just not worth it. She probably wouldn't let me back at the dog park if I didn't listen to her. I just love the dog park.

She had been told time and time again that the most important steps were the first and the last. It was something that she carried within her in everything she did, but then he showed up and disrupted everything. He told her that she had it wrong. The first step wasn't the most important. The last step wasn't the most important. It was the next step that was the most important.

What if dogs were racist? Would they care about fur color..... "son, only play with other tan dogs"? Or maybe it would depend on breed, "honey, only play with other German Shepards, never poodles". Better yet it could depend on occupation. "I'm a sled dog while you're only a running companion, leave me alone". Maybe the neighborhood they live in could be the way they choose which dogs to associate with and which to shun? Size could be the determining factor, "see how tall that dog is, they are probably dumb". Luckily dogs don't discriminate. Just watch at a dog park. Big black and white dogs wag their tails and play with tiny tan dogs. A service dog chases after the same ball as the off-duty police dog. So if dogs don't discriminate then why do we?

To the two friends, the treehouse was much more than a treehouse. It was a sanctuary away from the other kids where they could be themselves without being teased or bullied. It was their secret fortress hidden high in the branches of a huge oak that only they knew existed. At least that is what they thought. They were

more than a little annoyed when their two younger sisters decided to turn the treehouse into a princess castle by painting the inside pink and putting glitter everywhere.

There was nothing to indicate Nancy was going to change the world. She looked like an average girl going to an average high school. It was the fact that everything about her seemed average that would end up becoming her superpower.

They argue. While the argument seems to be different the truth is it's always the same. Yes, the topic may be different or the circumstances, but when all said and done, it all came back to the same thing. They both knew it, but neither has the courage or strength to address the underlying issue. So they continue to argue.

