

WADBOROUGH FOREST

WADBOROUGH
FOREST

John-John Markstedt

This novel is entirely a work of fiction. The names, characters and incidents portrayed in it are the product of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or events or localities is entirely coincidental.

Paperback Edition November 5, 2021

ISBN 0-000-00000-2

© John-John Markstedt. All rights reserved.

John-John Markstedt asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of this work. All rights reserved in all media. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author and/or the publisher.

PREFACE

Vivamus vehicula leo a justo. Quisque nec augue. Morbi mauris wisi, aliquet vitae, dignissim eget, sollicitudin molestie, ligula. In dictum enim sit amet risus. Curabitur vitae velit eu diam rhoncus hendrerit. Vivamus ut elit. Praesent mattis ipsum quis turpis. Curabitur rhoncus neque eu dui. Etiam vitae magna. Nam ullamcorper. Praesent interdum bibendum magna. Quisque auctor aliquam dolor. Morbi eu lorem et est porttitor fermentum. Nunc egestas arcu at tortor varius viverra. Fusce eu nulla ut nulla interdum consectetur. Vestibulum gravida. Morbi mattis libero sed est.

Nam quis enim. Quisque ornare dui a tortor. Fusce consequat lacus pellentesque metus. Duis euismod. Duis non quam. Maecenas vitae dolor in ipsum auctor vehicula. Vivamus nec nibh eget wisi varius pulvinar. Cras a lacus. Etiam et massa. Donec in nisl sit amet dui imperdiet vestibulum. Duis porttitor nibh id eros.

Mauris consectetur, wisi eu lobortis scelerisque, urna nibh feugiat quam, id congue eros justo eget orci. Ut tellus. Maecenas mattis sapien sed eros. Aliquam quis lectus. Donec nec massa ac turpis semper cursus. Etiam consectetur ante vel odio. Aliquam tincidunt felis non dolor. Cras id augue ut nisl pretium placerat. Phasellus sapien sapien, pharetra sed, aliquam nec, suscipit a, nibh. Suspendisse risus. Nulla ut mi eget tellus sollicitudin euismod. Vestibulum malesuada male-

suada dui. Ut at est ac dui aliquam sagittis. Aliquam erat volutpat.

Curabitur ullamcorper est in mauris. Praesent ac massa. Quisque enim odio, lobortis nec, mattis ut, luctus et, mauris. Mauris eu risus. Cum sociis natoque penatibus et magnis dis parturient montes, nascetur ridiculus mus. Duis eu ligula. Nulla vehicula leo tincidunt erat. Maecenas et nunc. Sed ut sapien. Vestibulum in est. Vestibulum rhoncus.

Donec metus metus, condimentum eu, accumsan nec, vulputate non, purus. Vestibulum ullamcorper vehicula sapien. Mauris risus odio, hendrerit ac, congue ac, ullamcorper at, odio. Aenean leo justo, commodo vitae, placerat blandit, malesuada vel, sem. Donec sit amet ante eget mauris adipiscing sollicitudin. Curabitur posuere sem et leo. Nulla ultricies mauris. Vestibulum ante ipsum primis in faucibus orci luctus et ultrices posuere cubilia Curae; Fusce sollicitudin augue vel tellus. Vivamus mauris eros, pharetra vel, lacinia pretium, egestas a, nibh. Morbi a ligula.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Ut purus elit, vestibulum ut, placerat ac, adipiscing vitae, felis. Curabitur dictum gravida mauris. Nam arcu libero, nonummy eget, consectetur id, vulputate a, magna. Donec vehicula augue eu neque. Pellentesque habitant morbi tristique senectus et netus et malesuada fames ac turpis egestas. Mauris ut leo. Cras viverra metus rhoncus sem. Nulla et lectus vestibulum urna fringilla ultrices. Phasellus eu tellus sit amet tortor gravida placerat. Integer sapien est, iaculis in, pretium quis, viverra ac, nunc. Praesent eget sem vel leo ultrices bibendum. Aenean faucibus. Morbi dolor nulla, malesuada eu, pulvinar at, mollis ac, nulla. Curabitur auctor semper nulla. Donec varius orci eget risus. Duis nibh mi, congue eu, accumsan eleifend, sagittis quis, diam. Duis eget orci sit amet orci dignissim rutrum.

Nam dui ligula, fringilla a, euismod sodales, sollicitudin vel, wisi. Morbi auctor lorem non justo. Nam lacus libero, pretium at, lobortis vitae, ultricies et, tellus. Donec aliquet, tortor sed accumsan bibendum, erat ligula aliquet magna, vitae ornare odio metus a mi. Morbi ac orci et nisl hendrerit mollis. Suspendisse ut massa. Cras nec ante. Pellentesque a nulla. Cum sociis natoque penatibus et magnis dis parturient montes, nascetur ridiculus mus. Aliquam tincidunt urna. Nulla ullamcorper vestibulum turpis. Pellentesque cursus luc-

tus mauris.

CONTENTS

┘ Wadborough forest	I
┘ Diligence	5
┘ Dread	II
┘ Deputation	17
┘ Delight	23
┘ Diversion	31
┘ Discrepancy	37
┘ Consolidation	43
┘ Dilution	45
┘ Duplicity	47
┘ Deceit	51
┘ Denial	53

CONTENTS

In memory of Richard Adams

“My heart has joined the Thousand, for my friend
stopped running today.”

1920 – 2016

“Some people talk to animals. Not many listen though.
That’s the problem.”

- A.A Milne



WADBOROUGH FOREST

"Man selects only for his own good; Nature only for that of the being which she tends."

- Charles Darwin



The Wadborough forest is a peculiar piece of land. It's the only forest for miles and stands out in the messy patchwork of farms and meadows surrounding the village of Wadborough. When the population boomed with the industrial revolution; the forests were cut and the lakes were drained to feed the increased mouths. But not Wadborough forest; the Duke of Worcestershire, to be popular with his peers, began importing pheasants and kept the forest as a hunting grounds for his subjects.

Pheasants are clumsy birds, used to roam the Asian steps undisturbed from predators, and found it difficult to survive in the forest of Wadborough. To protect their precious game; the villagers drove, over the years, all major predators out of the region. The red fox was first to go, as they seemed to hunt the pheasants out of sport - killing more than they could eat.

The weasle family: the stoats, the wolverines, and the mink; followed shortly thereafter. The badgers quickly learned to avoid the clumsy bird and were left alone after reaching low numbers. Birds of prey were also kept as they mostly ate rodents which consequently were booming with the removal of their natural predators. The area even became famous among ornithologists for the many prosperous goshawks and species of owls.

Times changed; people moved to cities and soon the rural arts were lost to a majority of citizens. Hunting, especially when performed for sport as with pheasants, became viewed as cruel and barbaric. Activist groups formed and rallied - the bill of wildlife preservation act was past in the county of Worcestershire which holds the legislative power in Wadborough. It contained many paragraphs, one of which dealt a devastating blow to Wadborough forest.

'A person shall not hunt game birds including but not limited to the Common Pheasant, Grouse, Goose, Turkey, Duck or Pigeon by means of firearm, or any form of projectile, unless bread in captivity under permission from a state licensed breeder. A person guilty of offense under this Act shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding 5,000 pound sterling.'

- §68, Bill of Wildlife Preservation Act

"What does city folk know of hunting?" was heard in many a pub, market, and home after the bills passing; the villagers did not abide by the new law. After a change in mayor and tens of hefty fines, they eventually followed suit.

And so it came to be that the forest of Wadborough was free of both man and predator — undisturbed by the natural checks and balances that keeps the order of things. Even the locks of gold couldn't compare to the beautiful era that would follow.



DILIGENCE

“I have never made but one prayer to God, a very short one: Oh Lord, make my enemies ridiculous. And God granted it.”

- Voltaire

”Today is the day”, Kraerion whispered to himself as his eyes opened. The chipmunk had woke, like he did all mornings, to a loud noise down the run outside the comforts of his burrow. The sound signaled a new day for the chipmunks and that they ought to be in the great hall presently. The frowst air this deep underground usually made him rise as soon as he woke - to get fresh air, but today he lingered in thought. ”Today is the day”, he repeated, as he knew that tomorrow and never were but the same day. He had longed for this day as long as he could remember, so he didn’t know why he needed to convince himself.

Chipmunks may be poised for a life underground, but not Kraerion. Even as a little kitten, he had disliked the damp and dark runs and burrows. Instead, he had taken to the sun, wind, and all the elements above earth. He yearned to run the branches of trees and not the runs dug in the forest soil. His

father even japed that he was born more squurriel than chipmunk. When he said that he was going to live in the trees one day, he'd been laught at and told that silly dreams perish with the years. His dream had persisted though, and now he had means to persue it. The chipmunk eventually rose from his bed made of moss. He went over to the corner of his burrow and began scratching away dirt from the ground. "Good, still here", he confirmed anxiously, as he looked down on the three gleeming screw-nuts laying before him. Kraerion covered them up again and left his burrow into the run, he followed its twists, took the right turns and soon the run widened into a great hall. The Great Hall. It was dug under a great willow with its massiv network of roots, intertwined with walls and ceiling, bearing the weight of the hollow space.

Since the time of Man, the forest had steadily increased its economic efficiency. And with it, the increased speciallization of its inhabitants. Whilst many an animal gather their feed, none is as great a carrier than the chipmunk. In their elastic cheeks they are able to carry feed, and other goods for that matter, efficiently around the forest. When other animals began to hire them for their service, their networks of runs and tunnels were redrawn to connect all important hubs of the forest. Soon chipmunks were the only specie transporting goods around the forest. And therefor, every morning, the chipmunks gathered in the Great Hall to share news and plan the day ahead. Most chipmunks were already present when Kraerion entered the hall. He placed himself in the back, instead of his usual place in the front. "This is my last day", he whispert to himself, as to be reassured its truth, "If I stand in the front, it would be as if nothing changed."

The murmur of conversation dissappeard in an instance

when a chipmunk entered the hall. His grey spots of fur spoke of his age, yet his features were easy on the eye and he bore them proudly. Aequitas was the name he bore and he had done much and more for the welfare of the chipmunks. When he was but a boy, he'd renegotiated all major contracts in their favor and, without hesitation, passed them on to the chipmunks with their weekly pay. Together with the rabbit Zefrafa and a few crows, he had started the winter fund. A collective fund that functions similar to that of an insurance: its members contributes food during the spring, summer, and autumn as a fee, which then pays the members short of food during winter. Aequitas, being a founder, had secured the contract to manage the logistics of the fund: to collect the food, store it safely underground where the was grainy and air arid to prevent pest and rot, investigate claims, and fairly adjust payouts. Since the beginning all chipmunks had been covered, their fee being deducted from their pay. The fund was a great success, the winter deaths had decreased almost from the start; the chipmunks got a steady stream of work and means for a better life. For all contributions Aequitas had made, none could match the feeling he instilled in every chipmunk: a intangible sense of value. The status he'd brought them in the forest, and the care he had for his own — treating them all as equals.

When he got to the front of the hall, he turned around, facing the crowd. "I bring both good and bad tidings.", he began. "And, as you may not be able to appreciate good in anticipation of the bad, I'll begin with the bad." "The eastbound tunnel collapsed late last evening; a pheasant went chasing a maggot above it, and well..."

"A pheasant", Pietas, who stood to the right of Aequitas, repeated, "Again, really? Did they not promise that the last

time would be the last?"

"They did indeed. The issue may be brought to the Council, but what, other than petty, would be gained?", Aequitas paused for a moment, "I want you, Pietas, to go to the moles and ask them to dig the eastbound tunnel deeper this time. That atleast we can affect. You'll have the funds required."

"What about our current operations in the east?", Vertias asked with a squeaky voice. "The rabbit shipment is due today."

"I'll deal with the rabbits personally, they're usually understanding with these matters.", Aequitas answered, "The personnel will be divided amongst our other projects until the eastbound tunnel is operational again."

"As to the good news", he continued, "The rumors are true: we'll follow the crows advice and institute 2% tax on all our shipments. All of which will go directly to the Winter Fund."

"How is that good news?", Veritas asked, the squeak in her voice gone.

"We're using our services for free, we'll effectively be exempt from this tax."

"No, that's not how this works", She said angrily, "This will only hurt our margins; to only tax our industry — It's.. It's unfair."

"Enough.", Aequitas grumbled, "That's enough, we may discuss that later. Vertias, I need you to oversee our storage facilities and expand them to consider this tax. Bring as many chipmunks you see fit for the task."

Aequitas gave out a few more routinely commands before he dismissed his workforce; however, his eyes were fixed on Kraerion — the dismissal did not apply to him. When the last

chipmunk left the hall, he began to speak.

"Kraerion", he said.

"Father" Kraerion answered dutifully.

"It's true then, you're really leaving what we've worked so hard to create?"

"What you created, you mean? You all pretend that this is news; I've always been different, even you said that I was born more squirrel than chipmunk. There's no secret of my extra shifts these last months either. If you didn't see, you refused to look."

"We all dream dreams, but that's where it ends. They are exercises in growing up: things to smother to learn responsibility. What about your sister? You expect Pietas and I to go on forever?"

"Veritas is smarter than us three combined, she could take over tomorrow if you let her."

"And what about Cinnamon?"

"Don't", he said flustered, "I've already bought the birch, Redrill will make it ready today. It's done, it's already done."

Before he knew it, he was running. Running from the hall. Running, running, running.



DREAD

”Emergencies’ have always been the pretext on which the safeguards of individual liberty have eroded.”

- Friedrich von Hayek

Redrill, the woodpecker he’d hired to build his home, was already waiting when Kraerion peeked his head out from the southern exit. The three screw-nuts, wrapped around his arm, caught by the sun and glimmered.

After the meeting, Kraerion had returned to his burrow one last time to fetch his screw-nuts and say goodbye. He had stood there for a very long time. ”It’s already done, the decision is taken.”, he had said to himself, yet his legs had refused to move. Life underground was all he had known; and whilst moving his legs wasn’t exactly novel, everything else was going to be. ”This is no time to fo nostalgia. it’s already done, the decision is taken.”

”You really sure about this?”, a voice said. Redrill had snuck up on him, interrupting his thoughts.

”Yes”, Kraerion answered quickly, too quickly. He nodded his head in a silly attempt of a greeting, ”I — I’ve never been more sure.”

Redrill chuckled amused, "Don't worry, I won't argue with the hands that feed me", he said, "I see you brought payment."

"Yes, only the one is for you though. Better get going."

The woodpecker smiled, nodded, and set off south — wings unfolded.

The Wadborough villagers, in a time before environmental concerns, dumped their undesirables in the forest. Everyone denied it, yet batteries, plastics, electronics, and everything inbetween found themselves in every nook and cranny of the forest floor — even a car or two occasionally joined the detritus and duff. Most animals, after a good sniff, would not bother with these alien contraptions. But in a crow a curiosity grew; and soon, he conjectured: these objects of Men might teach a thing or two. The crow began to take them apart; to study their innate structures and learn of the screw-nut and its uses. Death may be the mother of beauty, yet these imperishable hexagons of cast steel were of different kind. The rays bouncing of the plain silver surface caught the crow in awe; the beauty consumed him and he took to hoarding. The desire for these little things spread like wildfire amongst crow and animal; a treasured commodity was born. But it wasn't like any other commodity: it endured where blueberries rot, it was portable where trees stood firm, but most significant was its limited supply — a thing of Man; it couldn't be produced like the spines of a hedgehog's back, nor grown like the acorns of an oak. Naturally the young economy yearned to keep score — an informational instrument to keep track of favors; a fair system of time allocation. And, for the first time in the kingdom of animal, go beyond reciprocal altruism and let a money be born.

To Kraerion the screw-nuts were just a means to an end:

to pursue life anew. The day was a beautiful one; the sun shone bright on the blue canvas sky with only a few dots of white. He followed the flying woodpecker as best he could from the ground below. The anxious feeling he'd felt in his burrow was eased by the fine weather. "I could live a whole life underground without experience such a day like this.", he thought, "It's done, it's already done." The sun told of high noon, yet the forest was unusually quiet. Noon was a time of activity, when the animals left their burrows, nests, lairs, or vocational duties to gather for trade. To buy and sell food; and, offer and acquire services. Everything were available: a nightingale could be hired to sing, a joyride could be had on the back of a magpie, blueberries from meadows beyond the eastern horizon could be bought, amongst other things. So on any other day a distant voice would not have sparked an interest as they reached a clearing in the trees. Kraerion leaned back on his hindlegs and saw, past the overgrowth, a hedgehog and a robin arguing. He knew the hedgehog, Spinestack he was named, and closed the distance.

"You can't be serious, I'm only asking for two spines..", said the robin.

"Sir, you see, we only drop a few spines a week", the hedgehog responded calmly, "and you see, there is a great demand. I could just go ask any of your neighbors whom surely would agree."

Supram took the remaining few hops separating the two odd pairs,

"Why do you need spines, anyway", Supram said.

"Haven't you heard? The nightingales in the tree next to mine got their screw-nuts stolen from their nest yesterday. I'm making some improvement to ours so we don't become the

next target.”, said the robin.

”Hfm”, Redrill uttered as he caught up to the group, ”I heard Zrefrafal and a few others of the rabbits complain earlier this morning, apperantly their burrows have been raided as well.”

”Sirs, this crime wave has certainly been good for business, but strained my time. You’ll have to excuse me. Either you make a purchase or you move along.”

Redrill muttered some indistingeable plesentries best unherd, untucked his wings and took of. Supram followed as best he could, bound the the ground, whilst the robin gave away and finalized the deal.

The woodpecker soon landed and they continued southwards.

As they reached the clearing, they herd a loud screech from a surrounding birch tree. The sound was coming from a pigeon nest in the lower part of the canopy. Redrill hesitated for a moment and spoke, ”Wait here”, he again raised his wings and took off towards the sound.

The wide silver birch tree, which Supram were to call home, was only two trees away from where the sound had emerged.

Supram didn’t wait. He sprung up the side of the birch following a branch running past the nest so as he could look down into the nest. Redrill was standing on a branch opposite the nest. A few other pigeons had heard the sound as well and joined all around the nest. They all had their eyes fixated on the nest and they saw a terrified mother standing over three newborn fledglings.

"They're all gone", she said at last, "all gone."

They all understood, another theft and another victim. This time a mother of three.

"I was only gone for a moment", she continued sulkily. "How will we survive the winter?"

"We should give her some room", another pigeon suddenly said, "especially non-relatives". As he articulated the last word his sight was hovering over Redrill. The woodpecker signaled to Supram, and the two left the tree in silence.

They regrouped under the wide silver birch when a pigeon who had followed them appeared. Supram had not recognized him in the crowd but now he did. It was Greyhead, the landlord of these birches who Supram had bought part of the birch from.

"Excuse our rude welcome", Greyhead said, "These are strange times."

"Indeed, no need to apologize.", Supram said. "It is just for us to start chipping away then?"

"Of course, the meter above the first branch is all yours", Greyhead said, "I should probably attend the mother. You're very welcome here, if anything - you need only ask". He disappeared as swiftly as he had appeared.

"Should I begin then?", Redrill said.

"Yes, You only need to make the entrance. My teeth should be strong enough to carve out the rest of the hollow. Have it facing south, ", Kraerion said.

"Sure enough", Redrill said as he flew up to the spot slightly above the first branches and began to peck. At once Kraerion realized how Redrill had gotten his name. His red crest was incessantly moving back and forth in what appeared only as a red blur to the naked eye. Woodpeckers have not gained their ability to build shelters, but to force larvae and other arboreal out from their comfy homes. The woodpecker of Wadborough forest had quickly learned how to apply their unusual ability for commercial interests. Many of the well-of-song bird had gotten peckers nests carved for them. They may be best compared to the wooden bird-houses that have become popular for people to build and hang in their gardens, but instead of hanging on the trunk; they're built directly into the trunk itself.

Redrill worked quickly but thorough. When he was finished, Kraerion payed him the screw-nut that was promised. When the woodpecker disappeared beyond the birches, Kraerion continued to carve out the hollow with his strong teeth until the sun disappeared behind the trees. Just before he fell asleep in his new hollow, Greyhead appeared in the entrance.

"The crows have called in an emergency meeting tomorrow an noon at the old Oak. Though you ought to know.", He said before disappearing as quickly as he came.

(how is the mother, share spoils)

The hollow was still rough, he had neither had the time to smoothen the wood, nor carry up moss to make a bed. It did not matter. He had finally done what he had been scared would only remain a dream. He slept deep, the sort of sleep you can only achieve with great satisfaction.



DEPUTATION

“the only thing we have to fear is fear itself. [...] I shall ask the Congress for the one remaining instrument to meet the crisis — broad Executive power to wage a war against the emergency, as great as the power that would be given to me if we were in fact invaded by a foreign foe.”

- Franklin D. Roosevelt

A murder of crows sat eerily hunched along the wast network of branches in the ever reaching crown of the old Oak Tree. The animals had gathered in the glade directly in front of the tree. Not all animals could fit in the glade but all had some one representing them there with a few exceptions. Some of the smaller rodents and moles who barely spoke the common language. The pheasants were not there either, as they barely could comprehend the ground in front of them any conclusion would pass over their heads anyway. The song birds had found comfortable twigs in some elms surrounding the glade. Kraerion clung among the birds and he had noticed Ripell standing with a hare near the rabbits. They were the only two chipmunks present. A few laggards arrived one after another and with the arrival of a large buck, known to speak

on behalf of the deers, the meeting could start.

One of the crows took a few deliberate steps far out on an oak branch, so as he became visible for all in the meadow. The crow was named Eaglewing, for he had a discoloured right wing flashing of light brown like that of a white-tailed eagle. Seldom had the forest seen eagles, but stories of the mighty creature had been past down through generations.

"Craax", Eaglewing began to remark his intention to begin, "We're all aware of whats transpired, prompting this vital gathering. A few of us, good and decent animals, have gotten their hard earned screw-nuts stolen from otherwise secure dens and burrows. Theft at this level, if I may remark, is unprecedented in our history since the time of man, the founding of this council and the proclamation of our laws." He spoke with a deep solemn tone, pacing himself to give weight to his words.

"Nonetheless, these recent events will require us to act, and to act swiftly we must insure our continued safety which we have had to privilege off for so very long. We have a suggested recourse which we, if no one objects, are willing to implement. The geniality of this plan however, I cannot take any credit for, so its best to leave the branch to our dear Vlahir." He unfolded his wings, showing his strong and wide wingspan of black and brown. Thrusting his wings he flew off to a neighboring branch slightly high in the Oak. Vladhir, a smaller and young crow, made his way out on the branch where Eaglewing previously stood.

"See, the problem stems from the screw-nuts themselves",

Vladhir said, he spoke hastily with a twitchy, irregular pitch very unlike that of Eaglewing. If one did not know of his incredible ingenuity, which had come to be expected in the forest, one could get the impression that he was nervous. "The screw-nuts is terribly fungible, there is no way to tell them apart..." He paused, as if he had said something significant.

"What do you mean?" Zrefrafal, one of the rabbits, asked at last. Some of the other animals nodded in agreement with the question.

"Don't you see? We can't tell them all apart. We have no recourse against the thief..." Vladir abruptly paused again.

"So..." asked the Buck, growing weary of this indirect explanation.

"If we were to mark the and trace the ownership of each screw-nut" He continued, "and if anyone were to be stolen we simply tell everyone and if someone then tries to trade with stolen nut we know of his guilt" As Vladhir paused for the third time, Eaglewing had enough and flew down to the ground and standing in the middle of the glade and continued

"There is no way to mark the screw-nuts themselves, we've tried. But we have experimented with leaves and we're certain we can mark them distinguishably. Its just a matter of replacing the screw-nuts with these new marked leaves."

"I don't believe I need to remind you all that leaves rot", a voice from the far end of the glade uttered. It belonged to Aesop, the lone badger. He was a recluse that smelled of rot

and disease and naturally all the others avoided him. Most badgers had been killed by men long ago, but Aesop's lineage had survived on paranoia alone.

"No, you don't.", Eaglewing responded slightly irritated, "We've conducted some experiments since the outbreak. It turns out that silk worms can add a thin transparent hue around the leaf making it robust against both wear and rot."

"And we all should just trust you crows to handle this nuisance for us then?", Aesop said amused. He had moved to the center of the glade. "The screw-nuts have a proven track record. They have certain unique irreplaceable qualities and are already fairly distributed. It's the medium that drives our economy

"Well, it's only temporary, when the crimes are over we'll return to the screw-nuts.", Eaglewing said, "Besides, the leaves will be redeemed one-to-one so distribution and function will remain exactly the same."

"Where shall the screw-nuts be held? Gathering all the our wealth in one place is a sure road to disaster. To whom shall the burden of guard fall?"

"It's actually good that you brought that up. A few of the crows and I flew over the neighboring meadows just yesterday. We were curious to discover a litter of stoats, abandon by their mother. They are only blind kittens now, so we'll be able to raise them properly."

"Stoats?!", Zafrafal cried, his voice carrying a slight tremble, "I must be mistaken, did you say stoats?"

"Yes, you heard correct and like I said we'll raise them properly.", Eaglewing repeated, "I assure you, no rabbit or any other animal for that matter will be hurt by the stoats we raise"

"You all gone mad!", Aesop said as he stormed off, "I will

have no part in this.”

”Any other objections?” Eaglewing said with a smug smile,
”Any with actual merit?”

The glade was silent, most did not know what to believe and fewer what to do. The rabbits and other smaller prey, born with an innate dread of stoats similar to how human children are afraid of snakes, could not help but express fear in their faces.

”I don’t like this” Zrafrfal thought to himself ”the crows have been trustworthy, I have no ground to stand on. No reason with which to object.”

The glade remained silent and whilst Zrafrfal grasped for a reasonable objection; the moment passed.

”Good” Eaglewing concluded, ”Let’s meet here in a week and make the exchange.”



DELIGHT

“If a man does not keep pace with his companions,
perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer.
Let him step to the music he hears, however measured
or far away.”

- Henry David Thoreau

The sun slowly rose in the eastern sky and innocent rays of morning light trickled through the dense forest canopy. The sparse beams reaching for the undergrowth, fighting off the morning mist like a potent antidote. The daily struggle between dew and vapor began anew. Supram sat awake in his hollow, hunched on his forepaws, gazing contently out through the morning air. He had woke, like most mornings to the varied orchestra of nightingales and blackbirds tirelessly competing for the vibration of the humid air. The beautiful song was now and again broken by the distinct cooing of a neighboring wood pigeon. Gone were the days of rising before the sun; he enjoyed his morning routine.

Supram had managed well without the reliable pay from transporting goods and although it took longer for him to

gather all the necessary feed himself; he found himself enjoying the process. Efficiency had not been his reason for moving.

The swap over to leaves had happened as planned one week after the meeting. The whole forest had gathered in a long line, and all things considered, it had gone well with only a couple scraps. Pray animals are usually very risk averse and tend to be quite unpredictable in numbers. Supram had waited in a nearby tree to avoid the tumult and only entered the line when most animals had left. He kept his stack of fresh leaves in the back of his hollow. The theft had stopped immediately after the switch had taken place and the crows had received nothing but praise for their ingenuity.

A sound of scratched bark broke his thoughts, he leaned his head out through the hollow. He saw a familiar shape standing at the foot of the birch. He ran down the trunk and stopped a rough meter from the ground with his head facing the ground similar to a nuthatch.

"You never said goodbye", she said. Her words sparked a deep feeling of guilt in Kraerion. They were born the same spring and had grown up together. They had been inseparable.

"I didn't know what to say", he replied. She was not entirely pleased with his answer, but stayed silent.

"I'm sorry, I really wanted to say something. I could barely convince myself to leave, seeing you would have made it so much harder", he continued, grasping for anything to change the subject. "Do you want to take a wander?"

There is a great difference between walking and wandering. To walk, is to have a purpose in mind. A destination to reach, a route to be taken. To wander however, is the purpose itself. For the simple pure joy of just wandering about. It may be said that there are two kinds of animals in this world; those who walk and those who wander. Kraerion belongs to the latter group, which separated him fundamentally from his chipmunk origins. A commune raised on logistics - to move goods under the forest, to do it on schedule and with efficiency.

Kraerion expected to be reproached, as Cinnamon was clever and would take notice of his choice of words. Instead, to his surprise, she answered him with a short "Okey, sure!". He jumped the last meter down to the ground and they set off at a leisurely pace.

"You smell different", Cinnamon said after a short while.

"I do?", Kraerion said, "Must be those damn pigeons, passing droppings like its art.". He said it jokingly, as if they hadn't been apart.

"You are never coming back, are you?", she said as she stopped, with her black chipmunk eyes glaring right through him.

"No", he said staunchly after some thought, "I don't think I ever will."

They continued in silence, seemingly exhausted by their

situation. They were wandering past the old oak. Kraerion did not recognize it at first as he had only seen the glade when it was full with animals. The oak was under heavy construction, it swarmed with woodpeckers, rabbits and seemingly every carpenter up for hire. Even a roebuck was there dragging in materials. A few crows were spread out, directing the whole spectacle. A few paces from behind the oak stood Vlahir. The crows were standing in the middle of a semi-circle, consumed in deep thought. Next to him, in the exact middle, stood a straight stick perpendicular to the ground. The stick casted a long shadow in the morning sun. He looked up as the chipmunks approached him.

"Good morning", Vlahir said lightly. He was clearly in a good mood.

"Morning", Kraerion responded, "What are the stones for?"

"The sun runs in its eternal circuit the Lord has given her. She does so alone, never able to befriend the moon half a day away. Her pace is beyond our world, too distant for us to comprehend; yet she passes the trees with a precision no mortal can ever rival. She is the measure of our days."

He stopped to catch his breath before he continued.

"But the trees she lapses are firmly caught in place, animals raised in different glades, may not share their names. Just as she is, she treats them true - so the shadows they cast are thusly the same."

"Wait, you mean the stones tell the suns position?", said

Cinnamon.

"Yes, the sun rise in the east and the shadow will fall over the westernmost stone here", Vlahir said as he pointed at the first stone. "The shadow will then walk across the stones. If we align the semi-circle after the stars, we may be able to build multiple constructions at the same angel. It's not bounded to a singular position."

"So we could have duplicate structures all over the forest! It would be easier to coordinate, it would even be possible among strangers.", Cinnamon said to show she understood.

"Coordination is important, as I'm sure you chipmunks understand", Vlahir said, hinting at their vocation,

"But time heeds another purpose. When you and I go earn and spend our screw-nuts, we do so in a limited scope, it is to us no truble to balance the two. But all our actions viewed in aggregate becomes impalpable, and with time we may quantify actions in its aggregate. Velocity. With this device we may finally grasp the true velocity of our forest, and what you find is truly remarkable The rules by which the collective is governed is not the same as for us as individuals.

Velocity. Labor is only a function of time, and velocity its quantifier. "

"But not what we crows are interested in. The fruits of labor are really a function of time, if we cannot measure time - we cannot know where to spend it. Sure, you may counter, for each and every one of us, there is no difficulty in allocating or spending, we know what we can and cannot afford. But there lies the mistake, our forest does not consist of mere individuals, and if you consider the economy in it's aggregate you'll

surely see the misconception. Since the recipient is also an animal in the forest, he thus have more to spend and you more to earn. So if we account precisely, letting everyone spend more, all would also receive more. The money supply remains the same, but the velocity increase. To conclude, only by raising the aggregate willingness to spend, one would also raise the aggregate standard of living. Now when we've found how to measure velocity, we only need to find how to increase spending. ”

Vlahir pointed his wing at the rocks, ”The time for the shadow to travel between the first and second takes as long time to travel from the second to the third. We may say that harvesting a stones worth of blueberries takes two rocks and three pebbles worth of time, but during two rocks and three pebbles you could harvest as much as two stones of cranberries. When you see labor as a cost function of time, only then will you know what to prefer.”

A great discovery may seem imperishable once discovered, spreading and kept in the collective mind, yet they are not. The English count time in base 60, as that was how the Babylonians had their numeric systems. When realized that fingers made a better tool for the task of numbers, time remained in base 60. Intentions and reason long forgotten, yet here it remains inert. Now is but the cumulative residue of legacy Vlahir had placed five stones and three pebbles between each. Not due to any particular reason or conviction, it had to be denoted in something. Generations past would be burden by his conjectures, to learn the meaning of shadows and stones. When the intended impact of Vlahir's ideas and monetary paradigm ultimately subsides and perish, what will remain are five stones.

A random thread of indeliberate noise woven together with other equally random threads which forms the beautiful and ever complex carpet of an ever changing society.

Kraerion had stopped listening, he did neither understand nor share their excitement. He instead watched the Oak intently, grasping the massive ongoing construction. In that moment he truly admired the crows, "what a disciplined bunch" he thought, "able to save for so long as to afford such a vast project."

Cinnamon and Vlahir had finally exhausted their conversation and Cinnamon urged Kraerion to continue their wander. They began heading back, but not the way they came. Instead they went in a circle; catching different glades on their retinas. They did not talk, but there was comfort in the silence. Both of them knew that the feeling was mutual.

"Kraerion, I'm worried", she said suddenly, "It seem to me like we've worked more this year than we ever have before, but Shrub is very worried. He says again and again that food is short. I think he's having a nervous breakdown."

"You know how shrub is, or you ought to by now. He's always concerned, even with his own shadow."

"It's not only him though. Even I have less food saved for this winter, and you know how I am, or you ought to. I've always been frugal, always been more scared of winter than drawn to immediate pleasure. I don't know. I've earned more this season than any other, yet somehow it buys me less food. We haven't had any drought or any good reason for diminishing supply. Am I making any sense?"

"To be honest, I've never thought about much since I moved

out. What does Ripell say?"

"He just parrots the crows, Eaglewing told him personally not to worry and that everything is fine. He seems to believe them, but I'm not so sure."

"The crows have been right before?", Kraerion said a bit reluctant, "haven't they?"

"I know", Cinnamon said quietly, "But I can't shake the feeling that something is terribly wrong. I just don't know what."

They reached the birch Kraerion had made his home, they said farewell. As Cinnamon disappeared among the trees so too did the sun. He thought with a smile, "The sun is bound for eternal returns, so too will Cinnamon - whatever glade or burrow, she would return.". He looked forward to their next meeting and wondered if 'eternal' existed in their world.



DIVERSION

“The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting.”

- Milan Kundera

There had long been a custom for the animals to hold an annual meeting the day after the first frost. A moment to finalize the winter preparations, before activity contracted to survival speeds. The autumn colours of fire had fallen from the trees and only rotten leaves remained, like ash, to tell of its tales. The nights grew longer and colder; eventually frost was inevitable. The forest had prospered since the time of men, but winter was still winter - the unprepared would not live to see the spring.

”Craax”, Eaglewing cried tiredly, ”You’re next Snowball”

”Hrm”, Snowball uttered as he took a step forward. He looked anything like a snowball, still wearing his brown coat. His beauty was concealed and dormant, but in the next few weeks his fur would transform into a magnificent white coat, the sort of white whom even the snow were jealous of. ”Our burrows are filled to the brim with hay. But you all know us, we’ll manage to scavenge for food even in the thickest of snow.

Our warren will be safe this winter.”

Eaglewing seemed content with his answered and continued by calling up the next speaker.

Unlike the emergency meeting regarding theft the meeting of the first frost followed a dull routine.

Ultimately the animals were individuals against the winter, but their sovereignty ranged over a broad spectrum. On one extreme stood the rabbits who slept in the same hill, pooled digging labor and grazed in large numbers. So only Zefrafal was called upon to speak on the warrens behalf. On the other end were the roebucks who would almost beat each other to death if met during the wrong during the wrong season. Every single buck were thus called upon to speak. A task both time consuming and pointless as bucks were more concerned with boasting their zeal than reveal any concern about any shortages. The rest of species fell in between the two.

The sun was about to set when only one speaker remained, save for the crows themselves of course. Most animals had stopped listening long ago. The remaining and last to speak was Aequitas of the chipmunks, as was custom since no one knew better than him how much had been transported and stored underground.

”Tell me dear Aequitas”, Eaglewing said, ”Is it true that the burrows and nests are filled to the brim, or no?”

”Yes.”, Aequitas answered after an unusual long silence, ”It is indeed true.”

”And, in your expert oppinion, have we anything to worry about come winter?”

””

”Craax”, Eaglewing concluded, ”Another prosperous yield.

Before we part ways I would like to make a final remark regarding the –”

”I think you’re forgetting something”, Aseop cried as he slowly moved from the outskirts of the glade to its very center. His smell of rot and death made the stomachs of those whom he passed turn.

”Oh no, I don’t think I do.”, Eaglewing said giving of a sly smile, ”Please enlighten us.”

”Quit the theater Eaglewing, you god damn know what I’m referring to.”

”I do?!”, Eaglewing said amused. He owned the air and he knew it, so he let tension build before he answer, ”I’m sorry to disappoint you, but you’ll have to be more specific.”

”So it’s theater then, huh, I’ll give theater if that’s what you want.”, Aesop cried loudly. He crawled up on large rock next to the oak as to be in height with Eaglewing, but instead of facing Eaglewing he turned and faced Zefrafal. ”I hold Zefrafal to be an honest and trusted animal, if you agree say aye.”

A low murmur of ayes filled the glade, it appeared to be unanimous.

”Thank you”, Aesop continued, ”Zefrafal, is it not true that the leaves given to us in exchange for our screw-nuts were only a temporary measure to combat crime?”

”Yes”, Zefrafal said puzzled, ”I mean no... It is as you say.”

"And is it not also true that there has been no crime in since our last meting?"

"That is indeed also true."

"Is it not then in order for us to once retrieve our screw-nuts that was to us promised? Should we not be expected to demand what is rightfully ours?"

"Seize him!", Eaglewing cried and before Aesop had a moment to blink he was surrounded by stoats. The stoats were still only mere adolescents, but their specie's fierce reputation made them appear taller than they actually were.

"So this is your little trick, Aesop?", Eaglewing continued, "I must say I'm very disappointed. You expect us to just return back to the screw-nuts, so you continue stealing without repercussions. This, my fellow animals, is all evidence I need. Aesop is the thief we've been searching for. why else would he so deeply care for the reinstation of the screw-nuts?"

"Because I DO NOT TRUST IN DAMN CROWS, that's why!", Aesop cried whilst spinning around in a circle, flashing his claws, as to not let any stoat close to his back.

Then everything happened very quickly. One of the stoats leaped forward, reaching with his left paw for Aesop's head. The blow caught him clean in his right chin, the extended claws cut him deep and blood flew. Aesop did not flinch, instead he leaned in towards the blow swirling his head around, catching the young stoat by the neck with his teeth. A loud snap filled the glade as the neck gave way. Before the stoat had fallen to the ground, the others were on him from all angles.

Aesop kicked them off as best he could and ran in full throttle away from the glade, the stoats in full pursuit leaving their dead brother behind.

"Craax", Eaglewing crowed and calmly snatched a feather on his brown wing with his beak, "Let this be a lesson to you all. This is what happens to criminals."

"Further, this situation calls for immediate action, I have no other choice. All trade in screw-nuts shall be illegal and all private hoarding of screw-nuts, including those used for decoration, shall be forbidden. All screw-nuts must be delivered to this oak tree on or before tomorrow at midnight. Any violation shall be regarded an accomplice and an enemy of the forest."



DISCREPENCY

“In man’s struggle against the world, bet on the world.”

- Franz Kafka

The winter came early and hard. Most of the song birds had long migrated south, but the pigeons made up for it with their incessant cooing. The forest bed was covered in about five inches of snow and most animals were in their burrows and nests trying to preserve their body heat. Kraerion had insulated his hollow, the inner walls meticulously covered with moss and lichen. Redrill had carved a rounded wooden piece, which could be rolled in front of the entrance to keep the warmth from escaping.

In the mornings though, he pushed the piece aside. He preferred the view of the glade over warmth. He had watched the morning dew slowly been turned to frost. The years before he had been underground and not fully realized that they were but two sides of the same metal, denominated by temperature. His mind wandered back to the events in the glade. The seizure of Aesop, the death of the brave stoat and the forbidding of screw-nuts. No one had seen Aesop since he fled, yet everyone seemed to carry their own rumor where he was

or what he was doing. The hedgehog Spinestack had sworn he'd seen the stoats catch him, and that he most likely was already buried as to away trial. The pigeon Greyhead conjectured that Aesop had escaped the forest and sought rebels in the surrounding meadows and marshes. No one knew for certain, yet it didn't keep anyone from talking about it. Kraerion didn't know what to make of it. Aesop was peculiar, no one denied that, but a thief? No, he could not believe it.

He's thoughts were abruptly disturbed by Cinnamon who suddenly appeared in the glade, as she had done that late summer morning. This time she didn't stop at the foot of the birch, rather she raced up trunk with a fury not to her character. When she reached the hollow she was completely out of breath, grasping for air - Kraerion did not need to hear her speak, he saw in her pearl black eyes that she bore grave news. She knew there was no point in delaying the inevitable, so when she caught breath she uttered solemnly

"Shrub is dead", with a slight shiver in her voice. Her face carried grief, but turned empathic in an instance once she saw Kraerions reaction, "I think you better come."

They ran side by side back to the tunnels and into Shrubs burrow. They ran in a, to them, new sort of silence. A heavy silence. A Silence which could not bear the weight of words. Nothing carry intent as silence does, the implicit understanding of words not uttered.

They entered the Shrub's burrow and joined the small crowd of chipmunks surrounding his body. Aequitas was leaning over him with his forepaw pushing lightly on his chest, not hiding his grief. Next to his father stood his uncle, Pietas, who bore a refrained expression over his face. Around them stood a mixture of kin and friends. Veritas had been a difficult fel-

low to enfriend, but no one denied his ability to keep accounts and his integral part in their shared vocation. When Kraerion saw his brothers, his mind ignited, filling him with memories. Their quarrels, their laughter and the childhood they had shared. Memories that now had grown heavy with grief.

Kraerion and Cinnamon pushed their way forward through the crowd to join Aequitas and Pietas next to the corpse. Aequitas, still with his paw on the chest, turned to face the two arrivals. His face was full of grief.

"What.., what happened?" Kraerion managed to say, breaking the long silence. "I.., He..", Aequitas began, but his voice gave way. He took a deep breath, "I.. I think he starved himself to death.. He had a strong conviction that we'd not collected enough food to survive the winter. That we ought to ration. I.. I know he was eating less.., but to so far as to..", He struggled to finish the sentence, as if stating the fact would remove all hope that this was just a bad dream. Instead he said, "He's not wrong you know.., the food supply is running short. Veritas is not the only one who'll starve to death before this winter is over."

"What!?", Kraerion said, "What do you mean? Didn't you tell the whole forest that our cellars are filled to the brim?"

"Gnath", Aequitas scoffed, "Eaglewing came to us the day before and told us not to tell about the deficit. 'Panic would ensue', he claimed and I.. I believed him. But Veritas didn't, he simply would not have it. Eaglewind and myself agreed that it was for the best to leave Vertias out of the meeting. I.. I was naive, I thought we ought to have had enough time to quietly fix the problem before chaos ever surfaced. But it doesn't seem like it anymore..."

Kraerion was stupefied and when he didn't respond, Cinnamon took the tone. "But how? How could this be kept a secret?", she asked, "Don't we all keep track of how much food we've stored?"

"You would think that was the case", Aequitas snarled, "But most animals doesn't run in our tunnels, nor visit the our cellars. They simply put away bits and pieces throughout the year and hope it will be enough. And this year it's simply not enough."

Cinnamon paused for a moment before responding. "If what you're saying is true", she said, "We must inform everyone."

"It's no use", Aequitas cried verily with a deep and troubled voice, "The forest is cover in a thick layer of snow. It's no use."

The cry ended the conversation. The four chipmunks and their fallen friend remained silent for a very long while, each grasping the dire consequences and fighting their immediate grief. The days passed but Aequitas never left Veritas bedside. Any will to work or deal with the chipmunks daily business were gone with Veritas. Next to him remained, broken by grief, until eventually he fell dead himself.

A great man once claimed that a society that put equality before freedom will get neither. If truth is a prerequisite to freedom, what would that imply for equality? What happens to agency when the Great Truths aren't allowed to propagate? Equality is ever so important, yet it's not a factor - it's a product. It's not the reason, it's the result. The end result of a well governed

Like a great eastern power has taouth ous with their devotion to Orwell. Take away the thruth and you take away op-

tions, without option we behave predictable to a tee, droning on the only way we know how. Truth is a pre-requisit to freedom and freedom is a pre-requisit to equality,

A 'free' choice is not free when choices are censored and can't explored. A limited agency, where all the given options are controlled and managed. Although no explicit law or rule forbids your freedom of choice, the implicit imprisonment of truths denied.



CONSOLIDATION

"Civilization is a hopeless race to discover remedies
for the evils it produces."

- Jean-Jacques Rousseau

The death of Aequitas left the chipmunks in disarray. With neither food nor leader the situation looked more dire the more the days passed. Pietas had earged Kraerion to fill his fathers place, and Kraerion, for the first time in his life, actually considered to do so. He did so, not because he particularly heeded Pietas advice, but because he didn't see any other way. He had grown up recieving the same education as his brother. He had learned every trick in the industry from his father, he knew he was the only chipmunk whom could hope to contain the disaster.

()

Three days after Aequitas death, the chipmunks held a ceremony for their fallen industrious leader. They gathered in the Aeortha, made some remarks about his life and listened to a nightingale's song whom they hired for the occasion. The song echoed unfortunate in the narrow tunnles and sounded as out of place as the nightingale himself looked underground.

Kraerion had sold his hollow in the birch tree. A crow had offered him trice what he had spent to acquire it, yet the amount, which he promptly donated to the hungry, had been but a drop in the bucket in a vast sea of hungry wavs. His hollow in the tree had been everything, his identity and way of life. It had been invaluable. In that value is subjective, to each his own, but in the end it had a face value. A face value that a crow, without much of a care, were willing to spend. "A nice place to spend summer weekends", he had said to Kraerion, "those were the sun only hides for an hour or two". Valued differently and equally, a paradox only a shift in denomination may cause where the past discounted and posterity borrowed. Where the frugal is punished at the hand of the lavish. Where spending is the only alternative left, save for spending some more.

He'd returned home, but not like the heros in the stories: who returns to arrive where he started and know the place for the first time. Because this is not one of those stories. This story is not about heros.

One may be apt to "to arrive where we started And know the place for the first time.". This is not one of those stories.

Value is subjective, but value itself fulfill a remarkable function in trade. For most value is but



DILUTION

“The long run is a misleading guide to current affairs.
In the long run we are all dead.”

- John Maynard Keynes

”Is water water?”, Vlahir crowed, peering out over the crowd that once again had gathered beneath the old oak. ”Ask the doe whose fawn drank from a puddle grown stale, and not from the healthy brook as taught. Water is not water - as life is not death. It’s naught but a plain canvas; a ”

”We’re standing deep in a puddle ”

”Our forest is but a puddle; still and unproductive”, Vlahir began, ”It’s known that puddles and otherwise still water carries disease. We shan’t drink it. We shall however drink from the brooks, where the current has brought life and fortune. Our forest is but a puddle; if it remains a puddle - we all be dead come winter.”

Vlahir looked around the glade, his curious eyes wandering. Vlahir truly loved an audience in dispense.

”Each of us are the droplets that makes the puddle. Our

actions, its current. There is natural ebbs and flows of course, but sometimes it gets stuck still in ebb. Low demand for goods leads to fewer trades and subsequently fewer jobs. Fewer jobs in turn leads to fewer leaves to spend, further damaging demand. A maelstrom of disease if you will.”

The glade was in complete silence now, only a few could grasp the true meaning of his words. Even fewer had any wits to contest it.

”Riddles are these precious little things, tender and digestible with reality abstracted, to afford even the dullest of minds some amount of comprehension. Solve this riddle and our economy is saved.”

”It’s the current that is the answer. A great stimulus. A great spending to ignite, to create demand and need jobs. We will give you that.” said Vlahir as he ended his speech. He left the branch and made room for Eaglewing.

Eaglewing stepped forward again. ”Craax”, he cried, ”Through diligent consideration, we’ve decided to implement a set of policies to stimulate our economy. To increase demand and subsequently create jobs.”



DUPPLICITY

Concentrated power is not rendered harmless by the good intentions of those who create it.

The old oak tree stood eerily grey in the otherwise lush green glade, its stiff leafless branches swayed naked in the soft cold wind. The trunk, now full of crow apartments, had been too damaged to support the high branches with nutrients and water. Rot had started to show, as larvae of all kinds feasted on its roots. The glade was still if not for three roebucks who dragged a huge rectangular piece of limestone slowly towards the oak.

"Where do you want this?", one of them said as they caught their breath.

"In the opposite end of the glade", Eaglewing answered from a bare oak branch, "and raise it on its short side."

"And how do you expect us to do that?", the roebuck responded irritably, but instead of waiting for a reply he buried his head and the roebucks continued to slowly drag the limestone across, whilst Eaglewing watched amused with a sly grin covering his face.

Eaglewing had not always been Eaglewing. He had been

named Hyleon after his father's great grandfather. Even as a hatchling his brown left wing stuck out like a sore thumb and he had earned the name Mudwing by some older fletchling bullies. The nickname stuck, as ill intended names tend to do, and when Eaglewing had grown past his third winter he had had enough. He complained to his father about his petty nickname. His father, then the chief crow, had answered, "Nicknames, especially those dispensed with malice, are quicksand — the more you squirm, the deeper it sinks. The solution, I reckon, is no different from that of getting any policy approved, it is only an affair of shaping public opinion. You mustn't directly oppose your peers, you must appear to agree; float along, like a log in a river, and once you find yourself in the front, slowly lean and bend the river until the current is yours. Once you steer rivers, there's no landscape you can't mold and no opposition you can't erode"

Eaglewing, eager to gain his fathers approval and rid his foul name, began to hatch a plan. The first week he only stopped taking offence when someone used it. The second week he even pretendet to enjoy it. By the time the third week came, he preached to anyone who cared to listened about how wonderful the maroon colour of mud was and how it shone in limelight. He acted deliberately pretentious, as a madman high on himself, setting bait, giving everyone reason to knock him down a notch. Gradually moving the needle at a speed below perception as his father had tauth him

He made no one expect close friend, Brightbeak, aware of his plan as he needed his help in his scheme. When the day he had been waiting for finally came, when his plans would yield dividend, he and Brightbeak walking along with the other fletchlings including the once who had given him his name.

"Eagles are the rats of heaven", said Mudwing unprovoked.

"No, they are not", snapped -, the largest of them. "They are majestic, I've seen one myself"

"I doubt that", answered Mudwing, "If you had, you've would know how ugly they are with their brown wings."

"But Mudwing", said Brightbeak, "Your wing is brown."

"No, my wing is maroon",

"No it does, it's the same colour as the eagle's I saw", said – slyly, "You have an eagle's wing."

"How dare you compare me with one of those flying rats", cried Mudwing

"I think we all know what this calls for", said another of the larger crows which made them all laught. – was the first to catch his breath so he said,

"Surely we do, do you Eaglewing?"



DECEIT

“For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.”

- Gospel of Matthew 13:12



DENIAL

“We’ve tied happiness to guilt. And we’ve got mankind by the throat.”

- Ayn Rand

The beautiful long days of summer had past without Kraerion spending more than a few moments above ground. He spent most of his awaken hours working, carrying goods in his cheeks whilst orchestrating his instrument of chipmunks on what and which should go where and when. When he for a moment peeked out of one of the entrences one October morning, he was suprised to see the trees already flaming bright, the canopies covered in the orange colours of autum. ”Where did the summer go?” he wondered solemnly as he realized he hadn’t had the time to reflect on times passing. His thoughts quickly turned to anguish as he realized how close it was to winter and how much work was due by then. Although he felt like he pushed himself to the edge of sanity, he was kept humble be his uncle. Pietas worked close to 18 hour long days, sleeping in the Aorta as to always be on call if he was needed. He never complained, nor did he uttered any negative comment at all. Kraerion was very greatful for that, all chipmunks respected and when they

eventually needed to increase the working hours most had gone along with it since Pietas stood fully behind the decision.

The sun had long gone down when Kraerion finally made it home. Their narrow living space was more gutter than burrow. The damp earthen walls leaning close, swallowing the burrow as the black saharan night swallows the glimmer of a lone dragonfly. Cinnamon had birthed three kittens earlier that spring, and as Kraerion entered, he paused for a moment at the entrance looking in. Their room was worse than his former birch apartment in every measureable way, yet it had a warmth only a family could bring, their shared memories wearing the walls, filling them with life and giving them a heavy invaluable quality and making it a home. As Kraerion stood there, watching his kittens, he noticed how much they grown. "Trees are not the only thing I miss grow", he reflected solemnly.

"Are you not coming in?", Cinnamon asked, interrupting his thoughts.

A silence to build a home and be called lucky for it.

A sort of silence in which to build a house, move in, and call a home.



DEPARTURE

“Hell is truth seen too late.”

- Thomas Hobbes(not really)

The winter was mild, yet the animals died like fly larvae in dried puddles. One could believe the forest was interlocked in a civil war with many causalities on both sides. The war however, was one against nutrition and cold.

Starvation is worse than war. In war it is the able, the strong and the fierce, that die. They oft do so in a noble cause - if the cause is just and victorious history may even smile at them, etching their names into vast stone memorials.

Starvation is another beast entirely, it's the weak that fall first - the kittens, fawns and the newly hatched and spawned - the elders and wise, the crooked and hurt. The loving old wise doe after a long fulfilled life; dies but in agony without so much as dignity left in her soul. The starved follow Dylan Thomas's advice, they truly 'Do not go gentle into that good night'. They go in extravagant desperation, searching, raging, for the light. Howling in pain for all the burrow to hear. In the beginning they may receive empathy for their pains, but

when they die they've long drained their kin dry and only spite remains.

Kraerion, at last his fathers son, had taken his responsibilities to heart. He had lead the chipmunks daily work for almost a year. They had worked hard he thought to himself. "Not hard enough", his own thoughts hurt him more than any conceivable torture ever could.

(Initiative)

He narrow run widened under the support of the roots of the old oak. He stopped, he heard laughter in the distance - but that was not why he stopped. The hollows between the roots were filled with large heaps of food. Piles of mushrooms, berries and nuts. There was even dried berries, conserved and safe from rot - which he had never seen before. He moved between the heaps, still grasping the extravagant wealth - fighting the dissonance in his mind. "Surely my men must have passed here many times", the thought to himself not . He passed the heap with the screw-nuts. It looked like a mountain next the Chipmunks now meager body. Next to the heap stood a stack of fresh green leaves, preserved from the autums fire.

He heard laughter again. He moved passed into what may only be described as a room. The damp walls and floor were covered with beautiful flat stones, laid meticulously. Large wooden beams held up the ceiling and through a few holes; light slipped into the room. In the middle of the room a large wooden table full of carved details. All around the table sat crows feasting and laughing. Along the wall hang, what a human might call art - but to Kraerion it didn't look like anything. At the edge of the table, Eaglewing sat. He looked up

and saw Kraerion standing in the entrance.

"Craax", he cried pointing his brown wing in the air. "I wondered when you would join us.", when Kraerion did not reply he continued, ""

"Did you really believe we wouldn't wield the power given to us,"

Kraerion finally understood. The hunger he had suppressed for so long roared at him from within. He stumbled, as if he was intoxicated, and the crows roared with laughter. The realization utterly broken him. He sought the path away from the room, but he could barely manage to stand on his feet.

He had remained strong when his brother died. He had remained strong when his litter starved to death. When Cinnamon lost her laughter, he had carried on. He had sacrificed his dreams for duty and honor. It had all been for naught. The long suppressed grief came to him at once, carving him to the bones.

Sunlight appeared before him, the end of the run. He tumbled outside into snow, into the cold white landscape. He weakened and laid down. As he stared up at the sun for the last time he thought solemnly.

"What is strength? I don't know anymore. I did my duty, I lived what was right and I worked harder than anyone. Yet all I love is dead."

He knew that he was a fool, but he did not understand why or how. He also knew that no chipmunk, no rabbit nor any roe could grasp the depths of the scheme of the murderous crows nor have the ability to halt it.

He understood now. He understood that he did not understand. He knew he was a fool; although he did not grasp

the depths of the scheme the crows had created; he knew that he had swallowed it whole. He knew that his, and his fathers, diligent character and the trust in it had been the facade the crows had hid behind.

"What ought to be right and true could not have been. I thought working was right, when making right was there all along."

The cold caught his heart still. He had had his last thought.

He had remained oblivious during the discourse, knowing he didn't understand and accepted it. He had not made it his duty to understand, to fend for his interests. He had believed their intentions, yet been blind to their cause. He had naively toiled, sacrificed himself for all he held dear, for all animal kind.

Duty is but a reflection of power. It's both war and peace; neither virtue, nor vice. It's simply moral apathy. A decision prescribed, stamped and approved by some proclaimed vassal of God. Duty is the moral equivalence to serfdom. And that is the road Kraerion had traveled, heeding the advice of Pietas, down the road to serfdom.

The last captain dead, the ship weather'd true enough but only sought in vain. The bleeding drops of red are redder still with no objective won. What is bravely spilled may just be spilled, it seldom carry purpose. For you the shores, the crowded shores, are born into serfdom. The decree of equity only but a paper - a shadow tax is still a tax unrepresented.

The stark ways he had lead his life - had been nothing but folly. He had been proud for what he represented, he had worked hard and done what ought to be right.

DEPARTURE

THE END

Hill introduction Man left land

Chipmunk bought birth real estate

Tink

Meets woodpecker start work on the vila Sleep in non silk

interior

Meeting Chief crow Eaglewing murder of crows

Wadborough heights little forest

Chipmunk

Woodpecker red crest

Crow Eaglewing Vlahir Zrefrafal

Ujelnach Prephix Kraerion

Supram