

TARR & FEATHERS

by

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Dedicated to V5.

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TARR & FEATHERS

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1: On a Wing and a Prayer.

The Abacuss army have been threatening to attack this homeland for 3 weeks; a once securely based agreement has been phantamised into an abused business deal, compelling the victim to avenge. Usually, when serving their ownership an incessant media air their brain waves, fashioning out any proposed threat; especially those threatening to impinge on their propaganda, but these particular reports have been suppressed up to now from the public, who will suffer, dutifully bearing this daily strife, blissfully ignorant of any severe, personal repercussions; due to media corporations subverting another creatively obtuse business venture; told to keep it under their conscience' hats, until this day; all corporate media defiantly unleash an improper candour of fear; reversing their previous angle here, publically declaring this country's about to be attacked by a foreign aggressor.

Bolts of rain rush harder down to earth strengthened by a precocious wind, whipping at each and every drop, firing down with angry intent unyielding, our constant energy force pours out it’s relief! Many of Tarr town'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 an omnipresent geo-burst runs dry. Etched out of the nearby forest, adjacent to the main road leading in to town, Tarr's Victorian park, a few moments before glistened splendiferous in 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 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, dodging the hammer-swing water slaughter. From a corner entrance a middle-aged man wades in alone dressed as if on course for Antarctica, his head down moving quickly through a streaming path in the direction of the Arctic Circle twisting 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 causing the cat to instantly freak; punching out every hair on its body screeching an eerie scream, jumping clean off the muddy ground as Bumpfrid, the happy, go lucky St. Bernard curiously rams her nose in; to the cats' swift lash-out of a sharp, swiping paw ripping open the dogs' snout, then scurrying off at speed and Bumpfrid claims revenge; bouncing doggedly after it both blindly chasing through trees, their dignity jeopardised by an ominous, deepening thud of mud.

As fat as it is this dirty cat sprints gracefully with precision compared to Bumpfrid; lumbering like a drunkard chasing an apparition of meth's. A high fence looms on the closing horizon without hesitation the cat leaps through the falling rain, eyes closed, front legs

poised, wearing a knowing smug-smile as it clips the fence then vanishes; blindly over to the other side, leaving Bumpfrid to slam on her brakes, sliding to a halt against a low brick-fenced garden wall.

“Hey! What have I told you about that?" Her owner tugs on his dog's hardened collar promptly skidding to the drenched grass hard on his splattered backside: she shall not be moved!

“AAAHHHHhhh!?"

'RRREEEeOOOoWWWw?!'

From behind the shielding fence comes what must be the howling repercussions of this wildcats' desperate action, the flying puss' with all legs and claws a brazen clasps tightly onto something too soft to be a tree, too loudly 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 fur de boat o’ff us. Ya hear! Now get gone...!" She hollers hard as her fist thuds adamantly onto the washing-line, causing loss of balance the delirious woman's girth topples over knocking the line’s pole, holding up her knickers out of position, crashing against the fence shocking the bedraggled cat into a hurried retreat, brandishing the large lady's kaks free again to spring consistently up and down as they please!

“What’z or de noise a-bout Blossom?"

A concerned elderly gent does his best to run from the back door to aide his dazed damsel, when reaching the victim's side helps her up; with all his might.

"It's not bean m'day, Sidney! A flyan' puss-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 passionately dusts off her outer fringes.

"Is everything alright?" Sidney and Blossom unite 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 y'say?" Blossom hadn't recognised the culprit.

"Blossom...how are you?"

"Ya knor Cecil. I'll make sure I gets an apology when 'e comez fur 'is-milk!" George listens briefly checking his wind-up, wrist watch.

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

"D'y'really tink tat's gonna happen Georgie?" Blossom speaks meaningfully scanning Georges' 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'a misplaced dat particoolar number." Sidneys' bushy eyebrows flick up, shrugging with a smile.

“I believe we're wise to keep in touch with our government’s future manoeuvres. There's only so much we're told...before the old imagination has to pour on some colour."
“Oooohh...don’t start mine off Georgie, dere’s nor knowin’ where't’ll end up." Blossom has saucy plastered all over her meaning.
“I hope to see you both tomorrow, have a good evening... Goodnight."
“Goodnight George. Beware of dat flyun' cat." Sidney waves, smiling warmly escorting the washing line's pole to rest against the house wall, while Blossom plucks off her knickers.

George tugs the patio door shut yet leaves it unlocked plodding passed a beautiful wooden, hand-carved fireplace, dragging a finger across its mantel instantly reminding his guilt he hadn’t dusted for more than a year, plunging comfortably into a plume of fleeing dust from a wide, welcome armchair flicking on a radio which crackles as if to say, '*I’m on.'...* Revealing a bright, raspy tone that continues to speak.
‘*... For those returning from work there’s been an updated report regarding the threats made by Faghad of the Abacus' Nation on Wednesday evening. He spoke earlier this morning in a radio broadcast threatening excessive retribution 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 already been cheated by our Government…’*

George switches the radio off pondering for a moment contemplating this threats validity, it being the

first time he's experienced the news network committing to a proposed attack on his country since the second World War, convincing George to feel fearful that this serious imposition will scupper his life-long ambition if he doesn't act soon, limbering up to his feet marching outside into a hazy rear garden. Gazing above, eyes wink away sporadic splashes of descending water beads helping George to discern a much clearer, deeper blue sky; this small part of each day when true-light transcends through darkness: twilight; creeping in on a dusky shadow. The radiant star of Venus sparkles distantly shining high and spying overtly above the flanking Pmendi hills Jupiter springs, our moon mustering it's powers of luminescence burgeoning across a reckless sea, respectively dimming down another washed out, soggy day.

Arrays of airborne droplets tumble 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; often re-adjusting his own works of art he slows then stoops to rein heartfelt love proudly over a box full of flickering shadows.

"Hello my lovelies... Can you 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 revolving winds; though none went

further than the view of their keeper, unused to travelling away from home.

After hearing a story many years ago that held him gripped 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 which includes free-flight. This fact has always been quite clear to Georges' train of thought suffering regular riddles of guilt, though his heart remains assured: these birds are the only living souls 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 somewhere else for most of the day!*'

George notices something out of place and effortlessly scours the sky until his narrow field of view peers accordingly into his lovelies' home.

"Arabella?" There, tucked in beside the water-tray preens George's one and only dove cagily spying her master from a reticent eye. A warm hand reaches in gently clasping the small, grey silhouette, stroking her chest guiding her outwards. "You know I'll never let any harm come to you. Come and join our family." Carrying her over to an upright bird-table George frees the motionless bird to perch on its edge, gazing upward, enjoying all ten of his pigeons scoop 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 along with his love-ones

admiring their combined spirit, skill and grace, the way George has always shared his love and respect for one genuinely beloved flock. These particular *home-ins* as he prefers them known are trained in the way they'd become accustom, Georges' foresight can simply sit back reaping its reward. The old man will always be a stickler for routine, 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 clocked position; fifteen minutes have elapsed so the old-timer is placed into his decaying waistcoat and he *whacks* two firm cracks clapping while he cheers, "Tally-ho!"

One by one; in their own good time the family breeze into land. After a few tantalising minutes and tiring claps they're all patrolling the freshly mowed 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, ungraciously squatting down by the creaky door quietly cooing to charm his lovelies home to their cage. Several more minute's lapse due to their loyal bird-keeper chasing the last into the air so was inextricably forced to find some kind of treat, which did the trick but was left to share half a tin of his favourite salmon with all who so desired, 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 y'are." George pushes the coop's door to, secures it then creaks off to fetch his favourite. “Hey?" As he reaches across she dips her tiny head pulling away higher, further aloft until appearing a mere speck of twilight before vectoring back elegantly to land sedately upon Georges' 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 Georges' eyes.

With the catch firmly secure a strain of worry forges out of an open face, with important news to break. “Tomorrow...my lovelies…you're all going to embark upon...well... A maiden flight. The moment has come, for you 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 this?" The birds coo and bob about inside their cramped house vying for space. “That’s settled. Goodnight my lovelies, rest well…until the ‘morrow." George returns inside locking the sliding doors before retiring to the not so comforts of his worn out home, easing sedately into a personally moulded armchair 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 the little 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 this shady room then slowly close adrift, rediscovering sanctuary in a blind dream of faith.

To look at him one can easily guess George has lived a full life, working manually for 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 placed 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 many 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 becomes a snoring machine 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 south of Tarr, set on the edge of a small Victorian park or, as it's more commonly known as, *the common*; a place of homage to mainly young folk who often play havoc here amongst other games. Some regularly hang out in small groups jibing each other else

joining together on occasion to rival another gang from a few miles along the busy main road, 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 bombs 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 tend to agree with scientists that seasons are losing their previous order; this autumn month officially belonging to summer which is forecast to be a long, arduous, warm spell of rapturous winds, lashing 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 this wide expanding foundation of ancient forest, George witnesses a wonder emanating magnificently further off in the indistinct distance. Rising above it all a towering mountain, the only one for a three hundred mile radius, a monumental mound climbing over a thousand metres into the open sky, known to some locals as *Sacred*, attributed to its limited access purveying a pure sense of lawless tranquillity. From the desolate heights of its concealed side springs roll into streams that fuel a cascading river, ultimately flooding over an ecstatic waterfall to purify a glimmering lake; aiding previous occupants of an ancient ruin, bordered by a wide ring of meticulously placed Black-Jack oaks.

This sacred place cultivated through centuries past evolved into a kind of natural retreat positioned out

of Tarr’s view, almost impossible to reach unless one or more are prepared to trample dense forest for an hour or so, climbing an obstinate mountain via precarious winding, gravel paths that grind to its sheer, jagged peak unveiling a reckless, jaw dropping descent into a wild ocean perpetually battering the cliffs way below. The only other known alternative is to take a boat along the Mesol River out into the channel then attempt a landing upon steep, sharp cliffs stretching along a two-mile current churning coastline. Very few people actually know of this mysterious place locked in Sacred's heart, known to George and Potter as their *Secret Haven*.

This has become a special place in Georges' imagination after reading an ancient, local manuscript in Tarr’s library telling of a brave, glorious guardian who protected all that lived within this ancient forest, assisted by a golden, magical bird reared on the mountain, protecting all those who subscribe to the laws of nature. As to George's knowledge they might still ancestrally roam the surrounding skies today, believing he’s 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 this adjacent forest near the banks of the Pmendi hills that, according to an old legend was built by the same king as a place of refuge, becoming a shrine for the ones they call Druid, who worshipped here for a long, peaceful period; up until the moment an enemy crashed by; thriving in a warrior mass down the adjacent Pmendi Hills rising steeply on a parallel beside the forest’s deepening throng, their name

a living memory to all who perished there, when men from nether shores vehemently rode the waves to invade and conquer. According to this legend Tarr's king and the Druid tribe 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, 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 became a turning point in his philosophical career when a trusty bible was placed with dignity into an old book-chest, which holds quite a distinguished collection, when out came this 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 conditions of Tarr's forth coming weather, often being tickled-jolly at George's accuracy; geo-engineering being one of a few new hobbies he's learning at present.

At 6am prompt every morning without fail; unless he can't be arsed 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 Lords' land for nigh on fifty years

where he met George, who pedalled under him for more than twenty of those. 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 Lords' dirty ashes across Potter's legacy without letting on to his friend; fulfilling the Lords' 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 with ice-cream but Potter has faith in his work, simply left with the final task of making it stay standing upright.

“Cum on, firmly du'see… Bollards! Now I knows 'ow that bloke oo'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 Potters' fraying concentration stumbling, he drops the happy go lucky scarecrow turning quickly behind to observe nothing but the tops of trees skirting the edge of the forest, where further above a cluster of clouds steadily make way for the next. He drags up the scarecrow and again, attempts to plug it securely in the squelching ground.

'*Squawk*!'

“Get out ov'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 a few feet away from a kerfuffled, spinning head. “Be off with ya...y’darn ‘opeless creature!" Potter swipes menacingly at the crow causing it to waft higher into the morning sky eventually darting away. Potter's lifeless apprentice is kicked to one side as a distraught old man slumps down, pulling out a tobacco tin instantly skinning one up. In seconds he single-handedly lobs an excruciatingly slim cigarette in between his loopy-lips, plucks a match from a box strikes it across the smiling scarecrows' face lighting up his smoke first time, his wary eyes examining the wispy smoke whirl, mumbling... “Roll on November 5th."

George's alarm clock never fails to go off at 7.00am due to him remembering every morn to reset it once it's rang out the awakening call. Nearly all his working life began at this time and some habits are harder 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 hour and with it Georges' 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..!

Amidst this grey dawning day an awakening town embarks on its daily duties encapsulated by a foreboding cloudy air of dampness. A post-mistress striding along the pools of 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. The posty lets go of the squeaky letterbox initially startled by a barrage of abusive barks, totally incensed it rages uncontrollably. The post mistress slightly taken aback by this unwarranted verbal maltreatment calmly pulls something from her pocket, flicking it through the letter box sending the correct letters in after it. The caged beast is silenced greedily distracted by an intense, chewy piece of nougat that so happened to render its tasteless welcome speechless.

Crossing the main road aiming for three huddled early 20th century, terraced houses she gradually hones in on 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, beyond the remit of her job with genuine concern she raps hard on the door, her mind filling with trepidation knocking harder calling out through the letterbox; alarm bells ringing...

“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 slowly creaks open.

“Good morning. Can I help you?" After wiping gritty sleep from his eye George gapes at this rather attractive lady dressed smartly in a postal uniform secretly hoping his rutted 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 a 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 plodding up to his bedroom resetting 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 trundling downstairs to confront the mysterious door knocker.

“Good morning, what’s all the excitement about Blossom?"
“I’m s'glad ya’re up Georgie." Blossom carries on searching all about her frantic with worry.
“Blossom...what’s the matter?"
“Well I... I’m so sorry t‘ave disturbed ya. It’s simple really… I checked Pfor's cage, an’it’s vanished."
“What…the cage has disappeared?"
“Nor ya fool, me parrot. Ting is Georgie… Pfor can’t fly…not since we got’im anyhow."
“Pfor won’t be far away from you, don’t fear." George places a reassuring hand on Blossoms' 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 mooching over to the front-room window.

Curtains fling open filling the room with a dowdy light, enough to find a flick to turn on the radio which crackles before releasing an old Cole Porter song: '*I get a kick out of you'* coming 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 by 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!" Pausing for thought scratching an incurable itch on his head decides the best thing to do under these grave circumstances is to prepare for the worst, today turning out to be potentially the most distressing day George can remember and it shouldn't have really got started yet.

A scattered crest of sunray leaks in so much light through the patio doors George's vision is stolen from him blindly tugging at the frayed, orangey-green curtains to shield his awakening eyes, forcing out three cat baskets from the back of his stair-cupboard he'd reluctantly purchased in a boot sale at the local church,

by 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 realising the patio doors need to be unlocked.

"One thing at a time sweet Georgie." A hymn for a him. A third basket rests on the floor as a new day's unveiled. With an extra springy step George dons a brave facade striding off into the chilly, dew drenched garden to face an unsuspecting family.

"Good morning my lovelies… It's not the best day for it!?" He flicks off the catch and a door swings open; instantly via one fell swoop George comes to his senses quickly shutting 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 out 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 low slung fence.

“’Ave you or f‘dat madder dose 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." This unnaturally sad big mama purges a lonesome tear. “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 a soft tear splash over a swollen finger as she blubbers on.

“Ooooh, I’m sooo sorry Georgie. I lovez dat bird y'knor?!" Even before she finishes speaking a despairing Blossom decides to maintain her grievance back indoors hoping her spoilt bird's pulling a prank.

2: Lost in Space.

P-for, the Rastas' parrot disappeared only moments earlier through no fault of its own. There appears to be a reason for most things, in Pfor's case it's quite simple; this parrot's a dreamer, so used to getting lost. After four years on our earth this particular bird 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 this 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 promptly stuck P-for 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 fifty quid on appreciating its black, yellow and green plumage acquiring it as a present for Blossom who at that time truly missed her homeland, desperately needing someting 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 away into a

safe, sublime world; flying from pillar to post in its head. The cosy 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 frequently on one visit poor Sidney had to be held down for sometime else he would've 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 smoke. 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 of wonder.

Not more than an hour ago Blossom, vigorously 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 does it this early to annoy Sidney who loves to sleep in, as he works the late shift as a security guard for the council run water authorities. Pfor hadn't been feeling its weird kind of 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 customarily 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 so 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 revolve. Without warning Otis Reading, accompanied by his full-on compliment blasts at top volume jolting Blossom into animated panic stations; unless it's her own brand of dance craze? So caught up was she in a vain attempt to quieten down Mr. Reading 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 splayed out. This strange sensation forced Pfor to shake with delight as an unusually warm, humming feeling oozed invitingly. Without sparking a thought or even opening an eye the airborne parrot skimmed on a breath of temptation out through a wide open, lounge window as if taken over by an occult summoning away into the light of day, intuitively drifting, 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 urgently lifted Pfor over terraced rooftops causing another electrifying buzz to surge within, still further Pfor glides, higher the lost bird rose directly above the Victorian park where a local cub-scout, football team were impatiently waiting to practise.

Two fathers managing the side rut 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, controlled with deft feet by one of the younger players who innocently picked it up. When he turned to face them his feelings cramp into horror realising all of his team-mates surge towards him with unnerved conviction, in spasmodic fright the young lad kicks the ball as far away from him as possible sprinting 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 then preferably land back in the confines of a safe imagination. Air-density in the meantime found the ball's correct aptitude in altitude thrusting it straight back down to earth punching Pfor's wing, who instantly squeals at this inconvenience entering into quite a personal pandemonium when...? This parrots' character building stuff stiffened.

Another wavering air current sways clutching wings on course in the opposite direction due to ever-changing winds of fate, desperately aware of what's become of its present unfounded position, instinctively flapping harder to get away from it all watches the road leading out of Tarr, east towards the ocean fade dim. Strewn below, all the differing fields gather to a cusp

entering the mighty dense forest air-space, epitomising this parrot's 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; instinctively 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 crows' 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 there's nothing but hedge-rowed pastures.

'*Earrrrgg! Earrrrrgg*!' Pfor flung its head up in astonishment like rocketing arrows an out stretched pair of talons plummet towards two closer, darker birds plucking each one from flight both screeching out their anger, no match for this colossal assailant, all this so near accelerating turbulently away from Pfor's catatonic state low into the enveloped mass of trees.

Pfor lands. It was by any bird's standard a disgraceful attempt and a prize parrot duly paid splurging 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 first in the

smelly dung weeping. Quickly that surging unto familiar feeling wells up inside and as it intensified, more the wider Pfor's eyes gape open until gaining clear, visual focus a sudden powerful force causes the defenceless bird to squeal then automatically bolt backward; stiff as a…

Potter had grown despondent of his uncooperative colleague lying across his dewy land gazing up at the merky sky, misty eyes following every bird drifting over head: mesmerised.
“What’s that then?" He bolts upright. “It canny be?" Over yonder he clearly observes something merely 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 o’it!" Hypnotised he witnesses this living spectre tip’n tilt high up over the forest edge circling around probably in search of food urgently dive, at speed on a collision course with the earth perhaps a mere ten fields away. “Cor blimey!" So engrossed in such a spectacle adjoining a fabulous bird's sudden action causing Potter to lollop back, though his eyes stay fixed on the eagle’s plummeting course in an instant drops out of view causing Potter to flip up onto his feet where the scarecrow's twig fingers poke in his face, forcing Potter's attention to change punching the scarecrow’s head clean off. “You t’were askin’ f’that... Yeah you t’were!" He immediately scans up trying to regain sight of the eagle but it’s flown.

Through many a stormy night over 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 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. Here, from this day onward his faith can honourably prevail.

An eagle has landed. With a stern gaze the majestic, golden beast of prey stares down on a cowering victim struck dumber than Sidney would've ever of thought possible, 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...my...nnname...is... 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 insatiable 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 scattering mess 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 its neck resting the parrot securely on his back then leaps into the air bearing the clutch of Pfor's hooked claws, gripping tightly.
“I feel I have to show you something...if I may?" The frightened parrot crammed rigid, naturally answers this call by simply emoting pure fear. 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 faster wafting his head rhythmically surveying from side to side.

A yellow Austin, Morris Minor executes a precise ninety-degree turn swerving left along a relatively barren road towards the Pmendi hills verging up ahead. On the rare occasion George ventures out of town he’ll never fail to stop at the entrance to Potter's field, either to say hello or else admire his friend's 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 adorning a

knackered out sign reading: '*No Trespassers on the Lord's Land...or you'll be taken...*'
“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 y’self open t’anyone y’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 hikes off to the entrance of his friend’s inner-sanctum.
“Potter. Potter, where art though?" Hastily clawing his way between a regal copper beech tree and a rusty tractor along a twisting path unevenly cropped through six foot tall grass, the old boy stealthily heads for Potter's secret sanctuary. George's skipping stride hesitates spotting the back of Potters' 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 a wary 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, regaining a little lost composure drawing in a much-needed breath.
“Georgie...me old matey!"

Jumping out from within the tall grass shouting 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 I…salt o’the earth me." Potter strides over to his visiting friend who's rather puzzled.
“So who’s that?" George points to an ominous head poking out of the hedgerow.
“Oh, that’s Frank. I thought ‘ee’d b'able t’elp scare off ‘em darn crows."
“I assumed you’d be scary enough for that job Pots."
“’Til 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 a rusty iron sun-lounger, pours a steaming hot cuppa from a flask revealing the phantasmagorical vision he’s just encountered.

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 meadows 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 providing sustenance for their young: for each living part of the forest there’s a particular purpose, a reason to survive via instinct, each

continuing to act on their individual need to exist: where only the keen enough survive.

Gear-shifting at speed above it all the eagle and pillion passenger swerve below a dense gathering of trees giving way to a hideout.

“Pfor? Below us, within that ruined building breathes the crow’s kingdom. It’s where I dropped off those two hecklers earlier." Aquila circles around to give Pfor a proper glimpse at the dark, servile ruined temple, where beneath them disturbed, blood vesseled eyes wretch menacing disdain, spying from his perch upon the haggard temple's crooked spire, the king of all crows in this general vicinity displeasingly growls under a stench ridden breath decreeing 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 kings' personal slave hastily flings into flight knowing full well where to unearth their comrades.

Pfor's grip tightens as Aquila hauls honourably upward on course for the central east side of the forest.

“I know of safety." With eyes firmly clenched closed the wavering parrot nods haphazardly as a breeze explodes into a

livelier gust crippling Pfor's sense of trajectory as the eagle soars for space.

“Another cuppa Georgie boy?" Potter doesn’t wait for an answer just carries on pouring.
“Wooooe Potty, there’s lovely. So you’ve seen the eagle. Inspirational news Pots, really."
“Now wot abouts this ‘ere bloomin’ Hagbag then?" Potters' voice relays a sombre tone.
“It’s a threatening situation at present. Sadly, from my own perspective this is mind, I do believe it'll come to us getting
involved." George feels a sense of loyalty ease through his tone pumping up the banner. “Surely our country won’t sit back waiting for any 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?"

Georges' brow strains under an inner pressure as he faces his earnestly stirred chum.
“OK? Whot ‘ave ‘r glor-ous cancel uv'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 an’all but...do we ‘ave any air-raid shelters in ‘r town?"
“No…not that I know of." George searches Potters' peculiar expression.
“So y’mean t’tell I...a siren’ll go off...to let everybody who can ‘ear it know...a load o’bomb's 'r bouts t’drop...an’that’s it, run fur cover!"

“It appears to be the case, yes." Potter shakes his head in defiance.
“Well...what cun we do bouts it? I dunno...maybe build a shelter or some’ert!?" Potters' 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 prompting George to clamber up on 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 inta’this ‘ain’t ‘ee? It makes m’blood gurgle 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 bin mentioned a foo times in the past an’…well, now you’ve bin forced inta’it really. Y'cun always tie cotton t’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 Frank to a fishing line, that’ll catch those pesky crows out." George

waves to his mate walking back to his car. “Good luck t'you an’ y’lovelies! Oh, an’ George...?"
."... I know Pots, shut the gate on the way out. Hope to see you later?"
“Give m’best wishes n’love t’Arabella an’the rest… Lead’m ‘omeward Georgie boy. T'ra!"

Pfors' stomach sinks lower, eyes transfixed in darkness absurdly unaware of the eagle preparing to land on top of an empty water-tower, standing alone in the forest’s central east area where the trees cusp around this field's edge. *Clank*! The eagles' lurching talons grip an iron rung stretching threefold around atop 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 eagles' back dive-bombing across the steel plated floor crashing into the side of an open box like compartment. The amused eagle glides over to the flat-bellied parrots' side, forcing it over onto its back with the shove of a rapier beak.
“Looks like you’ve found the perfect place to rest here." Aquila peers into the small, clammy tool shelter humming of drudgery.
“I want to go home." Pfor lifts its sprained body upward onto its claws waddling 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 Pfors' side inwardly acknowledging a blatant concern for the parrots' distress.

“What’s the problem with that... Pfor?" The powerless parrot stares emptily up at such a mighty bird pausing for a malingering moment, then utters wearily.
“I’ve hurt my wings." They attempt a flap but only a harsh, bitter breeze banters a flutter.
“You must rest. Take shelter here... 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.

BBs' mission for the king lures him away north to a long meadow blemishing the forest where wild creatures vigilance keeps them alive; their sixth sense working overtime for where they cross beyond the forest into an area of open fields their livelihoods grow vulnerable; exposed to a danger, a threatening power known to them and us, as human; albeit a specific type of human... BB feels sure his search will end in one of the fields beyond and isn’t long before comrades are spied pecking eagerly at the throbbing earth all separated from each other hopping about their business, until one of his counterpart's spies him letting off an almighty squawk, prompting BB to swoop across relaying their King's order.
“Our king wants us now!" Every crow within range of this announcement stops to reach for the sky, in seconds a mass of black darkens it; the awakening sun momentarily haunted by the shadow of a murder.

Potter, who’s ready to leave his field for a 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 stronger flapping furiously, even the wind for an instant eluding to lose control as the crow army fix a clinical course home to their expectant leader.

Surrounded by battered walls, rising as best they can around an oval arena the Crow-king, pause-poised in the middle of his domain bobs towards the only remaining turret, twisting claws in the ground, swivelling the opposite way proceeding to march back again, head flinching askance. After a short pause of silence a familiar sound ripples in, that within a few seconds rips into a deafening roar as his army of slaves return swarming the temple in honour of their master, each of them immediately searching for a perch somewhere in order to uphold their Crow-king's omnipotent wish.

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

“I have made up my mind." There’s silence; his army stare at their king unknowingly. “The eagle will die!" Every crow squawks a loud cry of honour, their noise mounting tremendously. The king crow flaps his wings, flies up a few feet then drifts to land causing the crows chants to fade silent. He’s not finished. “Tonight... I expect every one of you to feast with me....in readiness for tomorrow..." He pauses, looking slowly around at his force of strength, "... When we will hunt the enemy

down…lay its body to the earth…where we will march daily upon its brittle, rotting bones...for eternity!"

BB uncontrollably squawks with glee while everyone else strenuously scrutinises 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’s ‘ice to know I can still make someone happy. My crows! We are the true rulers of this kingdom, the gods of this sky. The almighty power! Be free…! Indulge yourselves in preparation for our new tomorrow!" The Crow-king drained of emotion falls on BB who in turn topples over, his claws ending up supporting the king’s fall; holding him agonisingly upright as the hawed shriek their ignorant delight swooping 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 on crumpled wings BB dutifully obeys as the Crow-king relaxes back to enjoy this well-deserved moral support.

Whenever George lands up in these sea facing hills their sense of beauty tending to ease out a warm smile; he loves this place, unsure if it’s the panoramic view spread out for miles around or the solitary freedom felt being there, how he wishes he could thrust out his arms, take off, gliding on warm air currents higher than a kite, as free as a bird. He gently 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, so once perching the car respectfully takes out one basket at a

time placing each of them gently by a bench facing the eastern horizon.

To the left in the north Tarr looms, its bland bricks and sloppy mortar, weary roads collide with modern abodes carved out of the landscape resembles a dried up scar, where spread out as far as an ocean's edge the freshness of nature blooms encapsulated by the majestic forest canopy. George glances 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 some reason for being there, reassuringly patting each basket sitting down on the bench to contemplate the task ahead, sensing all three baskets cooing and flapping down beside his feet; surprised and energised.

"Now...listen my lovelies. You all know what's expected of you…from here on in 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 24 hour marker. "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, facing 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 a trusty friends' quivering hand pluck her out before guiding the

others free. “Arabella, keep watch over them… Bring them home to me." Throwing hands up either side he releases her following his favourite’s course joining her lofty family; cornered in a misplaced trance.

Thankfully all the home-ins congregate harmoniously high up but seem lost, circling or 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; forgetting any form of proper preparation. His mind attempts to reassure himself to what might be for the best; all he has to do now is a few claps, a couple of *tally-ho's* and they can be safely on their way home…

... A dull boom resonates from behind amplifying louder with thunderous aggression: *Whhhhooooossssshhh!*' A fighter plane blasts over Georges' head forcing him to duck initially then fling himself off the bench scouring desperately for his family who’ve gone absolutely berserk, twisting and lunging together in obvious shock instinctively chasing each other’s tail-feathers. Fortunately, the one thing George bargained for in some dreams eventually happens when Chor, the bravest potential leader of his family seizes the initiative.

Once over the sudden scare Chor quickly regains composure beckoning the flock to steer upward away from the hills aloft the giant expanse of forest. The tired man’s eyes cool catching 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 glorious colourful freedom exuding from an adjacent natural land, contemplating unpredictable dangers waiting in 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 elegantly flowing in unison, his keen eyes lock on to their complex path until losing sight of them, in a revelation his mind becomes alive bringing a familiar feeling of hope home to him, the same positive emotion that in the past inspired so much pleasurable 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 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 indulging such a fortune of freedom within the wild skies can in a moment meet with untimely death, this Aquila knows all too well, a cool, canny determination kept busy in order to sustain this blatant 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's 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.

Sailing relatively close to his mountainous home Aquila veers away 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 dipping lower to assess the situation; judging the winner who, ironically now bounding nearer the centre of the glade sprinting at speed may become branded a total loser...

... *BANG!*' A single, double-barrelled rifle shot shrieks out causing one hare to instantly leave the earth somersaulting to the ground: dead; the other glimpses its competitor eyes glazed knowingly, darting 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 closer accelerating as he goes, when

just a few feet away from the goal lets out a piercing *shrill*!

The dog stops in its tracks, the confused man panics dropping the gun; he being the one 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 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 witness the jubilant eagle escape upward, outward clawing for the bottomless void.

George drags slowly up to the junction leading either, homeward or into town, hovering in its mouth, the car engine bobbling with anticipation trying to decide which direction? *'Beep…Beep!'* A frustrated driver behind helps him turn a corner. After passing the entrance to Potters' field where an old rag flies wildly stuck to the gatepost, aware this code means his friend's gone, drives on in the direction of town in hope of running 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.

Waiting for traffic lights to glow green at the main crossroads observing human allies doing their shopping, etc. out and about George wonders if they genuinely 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 he spies up ahead plodding in a groove of his own a suspicious looking character, presumably making his way home prompting him to indicate, pull over and wind down the window.

“Potty...like a lift?"

“Ah, long time no see George, me old matey!" Potter opens the door and clambers 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...t’worries me an’all. D’y’know Et’el Glimspot?"

“No." George reliably looks where he’s going.

“She’s just told me the radio station has released a statement from our Prime Minister." Potter tries to restrain his present up-beat 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 almost precisely. Don’t y’worry ‘bout’m lovelies, they’ll be fine. You should ov set’m free years ago any-

road, I told‘ee that!" George didn’t need to hear this over-used reminder, especially on this particular auspicious occasion, the *lovelies* have been airborne for over half an hour so according to Georges' predictions should be nearly halfway home.

Those lovelies are 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 guarding the rear trying to keep up with her friends due to spending much of her previous flying time perched on their personal trainers' 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 Georges' 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 location a roving crow takes off gliding 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.

“Aye! What the...?" The crows king darts up in shock, in an instant the messenger realises their grave mistake wary of their life urgently shortening.
“I’m sorry sire… Forgive me?!"
“Have you something valuable to report?" The Crow-king glares cruelly at his loyal subject.
“Pigeons sire. Approaching from the west."
The king of the crows can’t believe his luck, not only has he declared death to the eagle enemy, here’s a sumptuous opportunity for his army to practise and as importantly to enjoy a hearty meal. He bounces into the air waving wings, squawking 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, hollering 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 rush to a vantage point well versed in the story of survival awaiting their take- away meal to fly graciously by.

At last the home-ins are flying together in a sort of rhythm of their own darting then circling together enjoying their most indulgent spell of freedom; as much as they can ever wish for. Chor spots a bird flying at them and turns his head to let the others know someone unfamiliar approaches but before he can speak another crow’s flying beside, 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 crows' eyes sensing nothing but trouble, his perception convinced there’s drama brewing. He's learnt where ever he flies the flock will follow, here’s the time to test his ability as leader, a responsibility that works best under pressure; Chor feels it about to erupt beneath his tremulous feathers and darts knowingly upward to the north where reassuringly the flock dutifully follow.

Another crow springs 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 astonishment shakes her head in disbelief; a monstrous cloud of at least forty crows take off from the temple in a matter of seconds eclipsing the land like a gruesome night shadow. Arabella knows she must act fast stimulating all her strength and 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 flocks' leader, one blocking Chor's way the other taking a bite out of his neck. Chor spins wild wriggling, twisting, clawing at one of the crows fighting bravely though his energy quickly drains low as the two crows easily overpower him; completely exhausted Chor drops out of the sky. The other pigeons frantically fly away in different directions as the concentrated hunger of crows give chase; one spots Chor falling promptly changing course charging 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 kings' personal aide (nay, scapegoat) to swarm directly over condemning 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, so his supposed second in command believes strongly in this principle…but no, not all.

Outnumbered four to one Georges' lovelies have no chance of victory succumbing to nature’s reason for the crows dictating the upper hand, 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.

Rooted to the ground a pompous Crow-king keenly observes his army picking off each pigeon laughing in the knowledge his minions have it easy this time when, unexpectedly 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 their king embraces 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, on approaching the oak trunk swoops in a curve right around its thick girth 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. Seeing clearly he's alone she frenziedly rushes at him politely smiling then cruises overhead bombing this very royal subversive with gut churning excreta, that lands plum in the kings' face, who reels distraught in discomfort spluttering and spitting the foul mess out of his mouth as Arabella scurries away, swaying briefly to witness her assailant landing at the foot of the oak twisting and a shaking with only crap on his mind.

Gliding out through the canopy cloak she slows up taking care not to cause alarm, alerted to danger in the sky but mere emptiness fills the air, cautiously cruising low as fast as her nerves can carry her, clears away from the danger of the crow below scouring all around for her lost family.

3: Where are you when I need you?

George swivels a key in his front door opening to the frequential tuning of a Grandmother clock's chime.
“Come in Potty." Potter obliges mooching into the chilly front room. “01.00pm." George winces at his wristwatch while strutting towards the patio doors noticing Potter admiring the picture on the wall. “Sit yourself down Potty. Make yourself at home... I won’t be a tickle." Potter bounces into the once sturdy armchair by the old radio while George strides into the garden hunting the sky for his flock at a quick pace strutting to the loft when, on arrival appears bare but for a blue-tit landing on top pecking at the latch, flying off when George steps on a snapping twig trekking despondently home to his lounge.

“George! O’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 fur ya!" Potter grabs his dejected friends' 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, in a mug as usual, ta." George didn’t wait for an answer perhaps subconsciously remembering Potters' lack of flask control earlier that morning.
“Aye, wait there!" Potter has an idea. “How’s about me cookin’ you some nosh, aye?" George grabs Potters' arm squeezing gently. “Look at us grabbing each other, people’ll be talkin’."
“Balls to’um I say."

Only pigeons whirled about Georges' mind at this precise moment appearing lost in his own kitchen jangling 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 d'ya 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 alright... I’got sum rabbit pie in 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... Bunny heaven."

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. Bathing in a puddle produced by the heavy rain over the last few days the Crow-king carries on his wash cleansing diligently; not having much practise at

this past-time trying to rid his sense of smell from the pain; the first bathing experience in over a year; not counting the showers. He bops out shaking his tail-feathers making a beeline for the inanimate body count convening in the middle of their arena.

“How many do we have for lunch BB?" BB bobs over to the pile slowly starting to 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, an extra one remaining at the Crow-kings' claws who smoulders at his army jubilantly.

“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 tossing it to the ground stretching out his battered wings. “Commence the feast!!" The crows swarm down onto their respective piles feasting 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 given him the honour of eating by his side, the ravenous slave eagerly bobs to the inviting succulent meal. “After I've finished, of course." The Crow-king splurges out a mouthful of pigeon spurting with precision past BB's eyes.

“Of...of course sire!" Dribbling in anticipation BB nibbles on a talon.

After flying as close to her home as fast as she’s able Arabella, lost in another world of pain and confusion felt obliged to seek rest on a lone Cedar tree, slightly off centre in a poppy laden meadow, where glowing rays of sun splash through the heavy branches arcing between long, rustic grass enriching the poppies red. With all the stress burdening her tumultuous frame a lonesome dove flails drained, lost with no way of knowing the fate of her family, fixing her body tight against one of the sturdier branches feeling suitably bedraggled her eyelids drop like heavy loft-doors helplessly submitting to the universal spell of sleep.

A restless wind whips up an aerated frenzy causing a twig to bounce across the muddy forest floor splashing to rest in a puddle that upsets its shimmering balance. As the water settles a rippling reflection's seen within it, peering in amazed a squirrel muses at its own magical image tempted from its mission for food. Its head shakes before scurrying across brownie, fallen leaves throwing itself at a red oak's trunk with a feverish grip. Short pumping legs shimmy spiralling upwards to pluck at its favourite fruit that after nurturing time 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 accelerating down a fairly weak branch,

taking off in a hopeful attempt of a safe foundation in a towering beech tree close by; a jump taking place at least 20ft up. Its hind legs grasp a branch that breaks on impact sending the squirrel plunging down to earth all three acorns catapulting around it. *Thud*…! *Thud*...! *Thud*! The squirrel lands luckily on a pile of decaying leaves strewn against a large, moss woven boulder instantly jumping up on its legs shaking itself, propelling 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 behind disturbing a solitary magpie on the way to its nest, resting on a fallen tree close by now completely covered by the manky leaves sticking 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 to prime former glory. Another magpie glides close by stirring from its vantage point taking off to join their companion; both departing west for the Pmendi hills ramped up ahead. Flying higher, out of the thronging trees the two for joy become aware of a gaggle cruising stratospherically spread out in a ‘V’ formation, passing in a southerly direction as they do about this time every year, preferring to migrate to other warmer climes; a natural cycle that’s been spinning to and fro for thousands of years.

Aquilas' clear, wide eyes flicker side to side then set fixed in a lost stare entranced. Pictures pour flooding

inside his head, the eagles' memory reminding him of the past, a stern face expressed in stone as the concentration wells up colourful inner images trying to work out what his mind's eye relays. Inwardly a man with a long gun; looks as if it has two barrels, the man aims then presses the trigger, Aquila actually hears bullets exploding from this gun echo loudly around his brain but doesn't flinch, concentrating on thoughts and feelings colliding deeply, watching a familiar eagle in the sky, it's body suddenly changing wildly from aloft 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 sends pain crippling through his body pierced by the hurt for his kin.

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 lunging he drops the soulless shell into a safe corner shifting to face a virulent forest. On a clear day away in the not so distant the town of Tarr reflects an unnatural, polluted air, though he 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 to the sound where his eyes catch Manitas' and tuts, knowing full well why she approaches, closing his eyes anticipating her approach.

"*Pfor*!" This strange word uncontrollably blurts out of Aquilas' mouth, who locks to a tension.

“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 glaring into her twinkling eyes.
“What? Good!" She seems 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 adjusting her manner to lighten softly.
“Did this hare lose its way?"
“How are you and your brood surviving Manita?"
“Oh, we’re happyish…and please forgive my caring nature. 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 over the sprawling forest.
“What do you mean by that?" Manita manages to reply calmly with a hint of allure.
“They call you irresistible...because you're addicted to 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 rarely 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 at her tensely; oozing moody.
"I'm tempted to start calling you by a new name... *What*! It's starting to grow on you…maybe it will on me?" He stands up tall and proud. "Goodbye…*what*." Wings whip out wide as he pushes off from the nest lashing urgently away.
"Goodbye...?" Manita's curiosity refuses to contain itself. ".. What are you up to now..?"

Her voice 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-pull at everything in his path. The golden eagle with an outstretched body bantering within the elements spanning wings propel it onward, learning from an early age it's important to respect the natural order always attempting at least to be in accord with it, knowing like himself nature's unpredictable, prone to a change of 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 creating madness…?!
"… I'll rip out her last feather if she…!?"

Manita meanwhile can't resist pecking at the uneaten hare sensing something dishonourably familiar deep in her gut. *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 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 eagles' feathers dislodge as the wind blows powerfully awakening Aquila to responsibilities he should be attending to, while a dim Manita tries to decipher the eagles' last comment.
“You mean eat later? But I’m hungry now." The eagles' manner comes over all playful.
“So...what!? Kill your own meal, if the hunger’s that deep?" On deciphering this Manita sulks. “Manita go!" The eagle wills Manita to immediately adhere his word taking to the wing circling around once, no doubt casting a spell on him before veering off discretely to a lower level of the mountain. “Yeah…keep a lower profile." Aquila tuts, leaping from the highest point around to resume his *free-for* Pfor mission.

Potter and George enjoyed their lunch comfortably awaiting the afternoon news via Potters' 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 pounding dramatically

pulsates its soul apparent objective, to prepare listeners out there in radio-land, ready for the world's grave news; Potter sings along with each major chord waving his hand about as if to conduct invisible musicians; George smiling 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 this 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 appears very important.

"Ssshh!" 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. I've been made aware that it's 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 seriously 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 whacks off his radio, peels out of the chair and muses, nosing out of a dirty front-room window remaining quite still.
"It appears you're right Potty." George tips out of his chair standing by his friend.
"It's freakin' typical! Did y'notice that inteeviewer, what's 'is name?"
"I'm sorry Pots... I can't remember." George glares through the window wondering what Potter's finding so interesting out there.
"What y'lookin' at George? I can't find nothin'." George shrugs shaking his head.
"Do you reckon that interviewer was forced to stop Sir Whatnot Potty, so as not to worry us poor, sensitive listeners?"

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

George tries to relax into the warm cosiness of his armchair allowing Potter to ponder on this topic of sobering conversation. “D’y’reckon that idiot Slaghag 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 lurchers. That Faghad could be dropping bombs...blowing us all to kingdom come in the next second! This shouldn’t happen… It fuels my anger…thinking back to how it was before!" George raises his fist once more.

“’Old on m’booty…!" Potter throws out a sturdy hand in Georges' 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 y’noticed nobody’s mentioned ‘ow Fagsag’ll attack…a'see said?" Leaning over his lap Potter speaks as calmly as he’s able believing 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'bout 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 out of range.
“An air-raid shelter would do us nicely…” Potter balances on the edge of his seat, “…an’I knows where t’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-trainer mopes in making it clear there as yet bodes no joy. “Right, cum 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 Georges' drive who's marching well in the lead by this time.

On reaching his brown gate he opens it and Potter marches straight past George who’s ambling, head at full tilt 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.
“P'haps they saw y’weren’t in an’went off to find ya?" Potter nudges George playfully with his elbow.

“They should be back by now. Oh...where are you?" George feels anxiety fix its nerve directly to the point of pain.
“I’ve n’ideal George, ‘ow’s bout 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 such 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 nut, sorry. Ummm? ‘Ave ider of y’gentlemen found m’Pfor?" Blossom joins the two men searching every corner of the patchy blue-grey haze frantically trying to spot a lovely and Blossoms' escaped parrot.
“Has Pfor not returned? Oh excuse my manners Blossom, I’m sure you remember 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. Podder. 'Ow ya doin’?"
Georges' nerves begin to fray making him feel excited but not that kind he prefers to find in fun, this the frustrating variety.
“Have you heard the latest news Blossom? I believe we‘re on the brink of being bombed." Blossoms' great respect for Georges' 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 fur m’parrot t’come ‘ome, ya knor." George stares at her in unusual disbelief causing Potter to fear his friend is about to say something he shouldn’t, who appears to him frantic enough with worry.
“George! We cun let Bloss 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 fur m’Pfor will ya both?"
“Of course my dear. It’s good t’ave met y’again Blossom. Bye-Bye."
“Goodbye Mr. Podder. Will y’be alright Georgie?"
“Would you keep any eye out for my pigeons please Blossom. I’ll knock when we return?"
“Of course." As fit as a fiddle the lovin' lady hastily vanishes to her pending chores leaving the two intrepid men inspired beyond belief to jump into George’s car, setting off to investigate the whereabouts of a shelter from the impending bombs; for the love of birds and all other animal kind: alike.

Spirited on transparent ether the golden eagle prepares to swoop in on the water-tower, Aquila’s microscopic sight unaware of Pfor’s whereabouts, the cold iron bar freezes between his claws flapping to

obtain sufficient balance, feeling a curious buzz sensation vibrate throughout his body pondering on its source for a moment, realising this sound reverberates through the iron rail. The eagle reaches back into flight dipping steadily lower peering in through the many iron poles keeping this monumental structure secured 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 in a body covered in bold colours brandishing a swollen beak, 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 where the parrot in question refuses to budge 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.

“I could give you a lift?" Pfor nods encouraging the eagle to slowly sway around the column under the iron poles to hover safely there, patiently.

Pfor needs to jump, it isn’t far about five claw lengths or so but Pfors' sensations duly panic grabbing a rusty bolt with its beak, trying to swing in the hope Aquila will catch hold but the bolt is far too wet and rusty, causing Pfors' beak to slowly slide down sparking rust particles that fire in its face; as it free falls 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 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, the plane swiftly passing 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 a potential 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?" Aquilas' regal aura's persistently cajoled by the heaving wind.

“I was bored."

“But…why didn’t you fly down?" Pfor's embarrassed, slowly drooping its head to hide it. A muted muffle eventually whispers cautiously from beneath a wing.

“I can’t fly."

Aquilas' head tilts to one side then promptly straightens to relax spotting the small enclosure sheltered from the blowing wind and guides P for passenger, 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 eagles' eyes then carries on.
“It drops exploding devices." Pfors' 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 Blossoms' back. She would usually start the conversation complaining about the smell in her lounge or the state of Pfors' 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; 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 drawing a long, deep breath vaulting off the tower, first descending then looping curvaceously upward as Pfor loiters in the open door way to admire the distancing view.