

A Putrefying Catharsis

# *Squirrel Killer*<sup>1</sup>



---

New! Read [The Thing From the Shower](#), a horrible story brought to you by the Squirrel Killer.

---

*It is much easier to go into battle with a company of infantry than it is to suppress an obstructive population of low cultural level or to carry out executions or to haul away people or to evict crying and hysterical women.*

- Heinrich Himmler

---

---

## Chapter the First

*I am a sick man. I am a disgusting man. I think my liver is diseased.*

- Fyodor Dostoevsky

**W**ith the exception of a few people suffering from *REM Without Atonia*, a rare neurological disorder, when a sleeping human dreams his or her muscles are essentially paralyzed. The areas of the brain associated with visual and auditory sensations and movements become active and brain waves are very similar to those produced by a waking brain. However, movement commands sent by the motor cortex to the muscles are switched off by inhibitory neurons in the brain stem. No command to move reaches the muscles. Paralysis. If this did not occur, as is the case in *Rem Without Atonia*, we would physically act out our dreams, which is very dangerous. It should not be confused with *somnambulism* (sleepwalking) which is a stage 4 sleep disturbance and is less understood by psychologists.

The brain structures responsible for this paralysis do not always function properly. Medical conditions include *narcolepsy* and *cataplexy*, as well as "lucid dreams." More frequent, but less dangerous, is the experience many people have in which they awaken from their dreaming state to discover they cannot move! They can think but cannot move a muscle and often report difficulty breathing. It usually lasts only a few seconds but can be very terrifying. The cause is a temporary lack of synchrony in the brain systems responsible for waking us up and shutting down REM sleep. Most of our brain wakes up, but those inhibitory neurons responsible for shutting down the muscles are a little bit late finishing their job.<sup>2</sup>

This morning "sleep paralysis" has been plaguing me with increasing frequency and severity. I do believe, however, the cause to be outside my brain, something vengeful and sinister. It is learning when I am weak, wearing me down and fine tuning its ability to control my actions, or lack of. I have this fear that some dark night it will permanently switch off the connections between my motor cortex and my body. Then, while I am laying there, a horde of squirrels will descend upon me to eat my privates and my eyes.

---

# The Story of the Squirrel Killer

I do believe people who read this will probably have little pity for me. They will do exactly what I have done for two years now. They will tell me I am a psychopath, a butcher, a man without conscience or dignity. And there is the possibility I will not benefit from writing this; that I will merely continue on in my downward spiral until I embrace the devil. Some have suggested I should immediately terminate my life and serve my eternal punishment, while at least one has offered to perform this deed for me, and one threatened to do so. When the ends are the same regardless of the means, should it all matter?

Why do I go on? Why do I continue dragging myself out of bed, plodding to work, plodding back home, and falling back into bed again? Will this continue into old age, when the dragging becomes pulling and the plodding becomes the feeblest of ambling and I am confined to eating porridge for lack of teeth? This tug-of-war between struggle and surrender intensifies daily. Although I am accustomed to this, I never would have dreamed it would consume me to such an extent. I have listened to all the experts. "Get out and get some sunshine." "Exercise." "Think of all the things you like about yourself and remind yourself of them from time to time." "Do as Stuart Smalley says." What they don't realize, what they can't understand, is that as my mood and self-esteem spiral deteriorate, my motivation plummets also. I know what I am supposed to do about my plight. But whereas I agonize over it, my will to fight back has disappeared also. It is like watching myself become mentally helpless and unable, and unwilling, to do stop it. How much worse will it get?

If there is an answer to be found, perhaps I can discover it in the lines I type. I beg the reader to consider me as a man, a man driven by circumstances to butcher and torture an animal perhaps 1/100<sup>th</sup> my weight and millions of years behind me on the evolutionary timeline. I am Squirrel Killer. I have come to realize this identity to be a part of me and I therefore should address it. Perhaps I will recover from my torment. Perhaps not. Or perhaps the spirits of the rodents that follow me around, plaguing my thoughts and dreams, convincing me my food is the ground up, rotting corpses of so many road kill victims, will drive me into insanity and death, only to torment me into eternity. I can hear them laughing at me, smiling at me, mocking me:

*Whatever happens we have got  
the Maxim gun and they have not.*

---

## Chapter the Second

*When they [the American People] hear my story, they will believe I am innocent.*

- O.J. Simpson

**I** peacefully coexisted with the Rodentia of my home for almost three years. They stayed within the walls and above the ceiling. I stayed within the spacious rooms. Occasionally two or more of them would be unable to settle a dispute, degenerating into a squealing, growling, tooth-gnashing battle thumping against the wall. I didn't complain about them. They didn't complain about me. I even learned to appreciate them. The rats, at least, are predatorial and probably kept the roach population from exploding. Periodically the roach population would, however, explode out of control. I believe this resulted from the filthy, unhygienic lifestyle of the neighbors. Their food droppings, kicked and swept

into so many room corners rather than disposed of fed the plethora of insects that descended and ascended from the wall and floor cracks during the night when the humans slept. When their population would begin to exceed the space limitations of the neighbor's apartment, they would spill over into my apartment. Occasionally I would purchase so many of the roach killing "bombs" and detonate them. The effect of this was that the roaches, trying to evade the deadly gas, poured forth into the neighbor's apartment like a mob. The neighbors would respond by detonating their own bombs, sending the survivors fleeing into my apartment. And back and forth it went until a few hardy roaches, probably the genetic mutations able to withstand the toxins, remained to slowly repopulate the walls and start the cycle over again.

I was fortunate never to have had a really bad experience with a roach. I'd read in the newspaper a story about a toddler killed by a roach that crawled down her mouth and blocked her windpipe. And one of the neighbors, Jeff, had awoken one night to discover that a roach had decided to nest in his ear. Screaming, he woke all of us up and ran to the bathroom for some tweezers which he used to extract the roach. I thought to myself, "how disgusting does a person have to be, how gross, how unclean must a person become for a roach to nest in his ear?" After extracting the roach, he responded as if it were nothing unusual and went back to bed. The next day the neighbors bombed the apartment, sending hordes of fleeing roaches into my apartment. Having no bombs at that time and no money to purchase some with, I spent hours hunting and killing them, one by one. I battled them on the walls, under the couches, across the floors. It was exhausting. I suffered from what I now know to be "post-traumatic stress disorder." Any little sensation on any part of my skin in the middle of the night aroused me and required an investigation of the pillow, covers, and couch. I simply could not stand the idea of a roach nesting in my ear, nose, or mouth. Pushed to the limit, I awoke one afternoon to see a very large one idling in the middle of my floor and, in a fit of mindless haste that foreshadowed my later behavior, I jumped up and stomped it with my bare heel.

For the most part, in those days I lived a simple life. I worked. I ate. I lived alone. I was physically healthy; before all of this happened, my hair was dark and thick and my blood pressure was 120/80. The house was about a hundred years old. It sagged. It leaked. It smelled of age. Walls cracked, paint peeled, and faucets dripped. Here and there the ceiling was stained a dark yellow. I later learned these spots to be indicative of a rodent's preferred place of urination.

The house was divided into three apartments: two downstairs and one upstairs. I lived in one of the downstairs apartments. Above my apartment, adjacent to the upstairs apartment, sat the dark, damp, dusty, cavernous attic. The rodents lived in the attic. There, in the darkness, they hunted their prey, built their homes, found mates and produced children, loved and fought, lived their lives and died. I slept on a couch in the living room. The ceilings were very high, about 12 feet, and the room itself was huge. A deep, dark, doorless closet partially covered by a hanging afghan opened from another wall. Another doorless opening in another wall led to the kitchen. The kitchen was small and cramped. It was all I needed and, while decrepit, very cheap. It was peaceful. Nobody bothered me. I bothered nobody. Other than two burglaries, I received no visitors. I visited nobody.

The outside of the house was unsightly. Layers and layers of paint peeled. Boards rotted. Windows were covered with dark plastic. It was surrounded by tall, bushy hedges, and a giant, ancient tree that had never been trimmed shaded the entire limb-strewn yard and house. The neighbors dubbed it "Cannabis Manor."

---

## Chapter the Third

*Death solves all problems. No man. No problem.*

- Josef Stalin

All of this peaceful monotony was destroyed one cold February night. The sound of dripping water awoke me from my couch. I lay there for several minutes, wondering what it could be. There was no rain outside so I turned on the light to investigate. The sight was ominous. A huge section of ceiling, perhaps roughly two feet by 10 feet, was damp. Drops of yellow water were falling from two or three places. I stared at this sight for what must have been a half an hour. Gradually, thin pieces of some kind of outer coating, probably decades old, began to peel away and fall. After the outer layer peeled away, chunks of old, rotting wood intermixed with some kind of ancient, hardened white substance also began to fall. As there was nothing I could do, I tried to go back to sleep. This effort failed as the dripping increased and began falling from several places, and large pieces of the outer coating fell every ten minutes or so. At seven in the morning I called and informed the landlady. She reassured me. A plumber would arrive in the afternoon to take care of things. It may take two weeks to fix the ceiling however. But in the long run, everything would be all right. Relieved, I went to work.

I returned around six. In the floor of my living room, against the wall, lay a giant pile of rubble. Above it was a two-by-five-foot hole exposing the floor of the attic. Two-by-six boards jutted down from the now exposed upstairs floor and rested against my wall. Directly above the wall, between the two-by-six boards were several openings leading into the depths of the upstairs floor. Bits and pieces of the ceiling hung from all places, occasionally falling to the floor. Even in that decrepit house it was an unsightly scene.

I received an explanation via a phone call from the plumber. Apparently he had to begin tearing away the ceiling in the middle of the dampened area in order to determine the direction the water was coming from. After determining the direction, he proceeded to tear away ceiling until he found the leak. It happened to be at the far end of the dampened area. This explained why almost exactly half of the dampened area of the ceiling had been torn out.

He further informed me that a pvc pipe running to my upstairs neighbor's bathtub had leaked because some rodent chewed into it. "They knows there's water in there and they will just chew into it again. You'd better exterminate them things. Carry germs too. Bye."

*You'd better exterminate them things.*

So I purchased a large rat trap. The days of peaceful coexistence were over. The rodent who destroyed my living room would be killed. And that was that. The trap was of the spring action coil driven type. Bait would be placed on a small, unstable metal stand which, when touched, would unleash a thick metal wire to descend upon the rodent at a tremendous speed and amount of pressure. Even a rodent, quick as they are, could not escape this. In human terms, being caught by the trap would be the equivalent of having a metal bar, about 4 inches thick, strike the body at 60 miles per hour, pinning one against a piece of wood. Bones would be broken, internal organs crushed, limbs mangled. If one were unlucky enough not to receive a broken neck and instead survived this event, one would die a slow, crushing death in the trap.

I had to stand on a chair on a table to reach the ledge. After tying the trap to the wall with a string, I placed it in one of the cave like holes above the ceiling. The bait was a mixture of grain bread, ham, peanut butter, and grape jelly. The string was to prevent some partially trapped rodent from dragging the

trap away with it. I didn't have long to wait. Shortly after going to bed the trap sprung. After turning on the light I discovered a gray rat, about 10 inches from head to tail, writhing on the ground. The now bloody trap had fallen from the ledge and dangled by the string. A few splotches of blood had hit the wall and the rat began mindlessly half-crawling, half-writhing, leaving a trail of blood in its path. It reminded me of a grub that might be found under a layer of sod or rotten bark. (See Appendix A)

I jumped up and threw on some pants. What to do? What to do? The stunned and bleeding rat didn't present an immediate threat so I took my time. After finding a pair of pliers in a drawer, I picked the rat up by the tail and examined it. It appeared dead, eyes closed, mouth bleeding. It had long, sharp teeth and the look of a wild animal accustomed to fighting for territory, food, and mates.

Carrying it with the pliers I walked onto the front porch. It was dark outside, about eleven o'clock. My neighbors, two men aged about 20, were sitting there, talking. Their names were Ryan and Brian. They played in a not-so-famous rock band.

Ryan - What ya got there? Holy [explicative], it's a rat. Brian, look at this.

Brian - Oh man. I don't like rats man. I've had bad experiences with them.

Ryan - Where did you get THAT?

SK - I set a trap in there. Didn't take long. We have lots of them, you know.

Brian - You aren't kidding man. You know, we had some kind of thing, you know, eating our pizza. I mean, you know, the pizza we had left in the living room, you know. So I bought a trap, you know, and put some pepperoni on it. Sure enough, you know, when I got back home the trap was gone, you know. Looked and looked, you know, and finally found it under the couch. It had caught a mouse but after catching the mouse, something dragged the trap and the mouse under the couch and ate the mouse's head off.

*...something dragged the trap and the mouse under the couch and ate the mouse's head off.*

Ryan took the rat, laid it on the steps, petting it.

Ryan - he's still warm.

Brian - I hope that thing bites you man. You're sick.

After chatting for a bit I placed my foot on the head of the rat and slowly allowed my weight to settle on it. I figured the rat was already dead and this would be the coup de grace. Not quiet. The rat twitched and emitted a high pitched but guttural squeal and was then silent. My weight had smashed its skull and sent beige brains onto the apartment steps.

Ryan - Damn man, it was still alive.

Brian - that is totally gross man. What if somebody slips and falls on that?

Ryan - some cat is going to eat good tonight. Mmmmm Mmmmm.

I bade my neighbors farewell and returned to bed. I reset the trap and the rest of the night was peaceful.

---

## Chapter the Fourth

*I'm goin straight to hell. Just like my momma said. I'm goin straight to hell.*

- Drivin and Cryin

**T**he next night I heard a new noise coming from the direction of the trap: growling. It was not unlike the growling of a dog, but it obviously emanated from a creature much smaller. Picture to yourself the sound of a chain saw, heard from a hundred yards away, ending the life of some tree. Hesitantly, I climbed the table and chair and tried to look behind the trap. Only straw and dirt could be seen. Did something have a nest in there? What was it growling at? Could it be that a relative or friend of the deceased rat was threatening this trap or me? The growling occurred several times over the next few days and I would bang loudly on the wall to silence it. But it always returned.

Whatever it was, it did not fear me. It became bolder. Another night I was awoken by something in the closet. I rushed to it just in time to catch a glimpse of something escape through a crack between the closet wall and ceiling. On further inspection I discovered, to my horror, that the closet did not have a ceiling. Only a piece of wall paneling, sitting on nails, covered my clothes and possessions. It wasn't even secured; pushing on it revealed a giant opening straight into the darkness of the ceiling and the scurrying of so many dangerous creatures that had now discovered the warmth and space of my apartment. I was under siege. Knowing I was defenseless against them while I slept, I began sleeping with a pillow tightly pulled against my privates.

Over the next few days I had to bang on the walls and rush to the closet more frequently. I began to hear digging in my garbage cans and cabinets. Outnumbered by a quick and elusive enemy, my only weapon was the trap and, I believed, the rodents had learned by example to avoid it. But the trap would snare one more victim.

After returning home from work I discovered the trap to be sprung but still resting on the ledge. A few fresh drops of blood had been added to its wooden surface. Something had been caught, but only for a moment. Whatever it was, it was nowhere to be found. It had escaped into the blackness of the upstairs floor and attic.

I had wounded it and this provided some consolation for recent events. But this raised the possibility of additional problems. What if it died somewhere nearby but where I could not reach it? This had happened before when an investigation of a powerful rotting stench revealed a small foot projecting from the crack between a wall and ceiling. A mouse had apparently gotten its foot stuck and, unable to extract itself, died. There was little I could do but wait. (See Appendix B)

---

## Chapter the Fifth

*Kill them all. God will know His own.*

- The Abbott of Citeaux

**A** week had passed since I killed the rat. I still heard noises from time to time but the trap remained

coiled. The time when the ceiling would be fixed approached. I gave up hope for bringing any more rodent interlopers to justice. If the wounded rodent had died, then he had died. He certainly would not return to the trap. So I thought. And as usual, I thought too soon. On the eve of the ceiling repair, I was again awoken by a strange noise. I turned on the light and there, hanging from the ceiling a foot or so from the hole, was the wounded rodent. But this time, it was a squirrel. It didn't move for a moment, appearing stunned; obviously it was the earlier victim of the rat trap. What was it doing? Why was it hanging there? I lay there, frozen for a moment, watching it until it lost its grip and fell to the floor. I sat up to see it hop, clumsily, a couple of times toward the opening leading to the kitchen. Unlike the rat, this one, though wounded, was alive and alert. And mobile. (See Appendix C)

A storm of thoughts ran through my mind at light speed. I can not have a wounded animal running rampant through my house. I cannot have a wounded animal that might even have some disease running through my house! I can't believe this is happening. These bastards have put me through so much misery, but this one is now in my clutches and I will exact my revenge for a second time. I will eliminate these tormenters.

I jumped off the couch and threw on some blue jeans. The squirrel hopped twice more toward the kitchen so that it was now a few feet away. Then it stopped and just sat there. I think it was in pain and exhausted from its ordeal. While I never learned, or tried to learn, the extent of its injuries, I believe one of its legs was broken; this would explain the clumsy, short hops it took. I had to kill it quickly, very quickly. I will say that while I felt pangs of vengeful anger, I never felt cruelty. I do not consider myself a cruel person, a sadistic person. I never was, and not at that moment either. Suffering sickens me, especially when I am the sufferer or I have to directly witness the suffering of another, even a rodent. This would be a quick, surgical procedure, like putting a bullet in the back of a death camp inmate's head, or shooting a dog that is suffering badly from being struck by a truck. It would be a mercy killing and I could feel better afterward, thinking that I had ended the misery of some poor animal. So I thought.

But I had to find something to kill it with, quickly. I had a .22 pistol and even had some "rat shot" but for some reason I had never thought I would need it, even as recent events had unfolded. Consequently I was, for the moment, unarmed. Quick searching visual scans of the room alternated with glances at the squirrel. I needed something long to strike it with. A club or baseball bat would have been perfect but no such object lay nearby. I despaired, as I realized no object even mildly close to a striking weapon was nearby. The squirrel hopped again toward the kitchen, putting it two feet away. Think quickly! Think quickly! Of the countless thoughts flying through my mind I seemed unable to find the one I needed. As the squirrel approached the kitchen, time for thinking expired and I ceased to think. Instinct and reactions took over and I acted rather than thought. I responded rather than reasoned. I became an animal and grabbed the nearest object I could find to strike quickly at my enemy.

The object my hand grasped was a coarse leather belt.

Moving quickly so that I was about five feet from the squirrel I struck it with the belt using all my might. The belt connected across the squirrel's back with a dull thud, similar to the sound a rock makes when it falls to the ground. Flashes of memories crossed my mind; memories of whippings at the hands of my parents when I was a little boy. The sound of a leather belt striking against my legs or behind. The sharp, high crack that leaves the red stripes across the smooth skin, stinging for several minutes and, in the worse cases, leaving a slight bruise.

Unlike the child, who will wail when being beaten with a belt, the squirrel didn't make a sound. It remained there, unmoving, staring at me with its black eyes. I stared back for about a minute. Looking into the eyes of the wounded squirrel was like looking into a couple of shiny black marbles. No pupils, irises, or sclera. They didn't move or reveal a hint of emotion. Only the deep blackness and the shining

glare on the surface. In retrospect I am certain I was looking into something beyond ancient, perhaps the collective unconscious, if you will, predating even the earliest life. I paused and, for a moment regained my cognitive faculties. What was I looking into? What was this primal darkness I detected staring into me? For a moment I was certain the squirrel was going to hypnotize me, control my actions, and force me to lie down so he could, with one quick bite, sever my jugular. Fortunately, or unfortunately, my animal instinct regained control and I struck the squirrel again with the belt, this time connecting with the top of his head.

Again the squirrel remained silent, but began clumsily hopping toward the kitchen. If he made it to the kitchen, I'd be at a disadvantage in the fight as my movements would be restricted by the narrow walkway. I'd have to get closer and the squirrel would be able to use his quickness to strike at me, most probably at my unprotected toes. I swung the belt, over and over, missing for the most part, connecting occasionally. As we entered the kitchen, the squirrel hopping and I dogging him<sup>3</sup> every hop of the way, the sharp crack of the belt striking the kitchen tile occasionally alternated with the dull thud of leather striking flesh.

Seeing the opening between the stove and a cabinet, the squirrel evaded me and disappeared underneath the electric stove. Now I was at a profound disadvantage. The only way to be certain of his whereabouts was to lie down on the floor and look for him. But my eyes, nose, mouth, and neck would be exposed and undefended against his sharp teeth. The possible outcomes in this situation were countless and disturbing. There was the danger that I would not find him. That he would refuse to leave this place. He could die under there. He could move, undetected, to some other place and wait. Or worse, he could wait until I went to sleep and strike his then defenseless tormenter. My cognitive faculties returned and I sat down nearby, close enough to keep track of any movements, and tried to think.

Changing events dictated my strategy. The squirrel crawled into a deep metal pocket in the bottom of the stove. I could hear him down there, against the front wall, waiting. Animals are patient and I had no doubt that unless I forced his hand he could, and would, wait me out. Banging on the stove had no effect on him. Opening the stove door proved to no avail. The only way to the squirrel was through the bottom of the stove. Taking assessment of the forthcoming struggle I armed myself further with a broom handle and unplugged the stove. Shaking as I utilized all my strength, which wasn't much to begin with, I tilted the stove and laid it to rest on the kitchen floor.

From two feet away I peered into the hole. I could barely see the squirrel, crouched down at the far end of the stove. Once again it looked at me but I carefully avoided its marble eyes for fear of being hypnotized. I took the broom handle and stuck it into the hole until it reached the far end. Thrusting it around, I tried to spear the squirrel. The squirrel, however, crouched so that the broom thrusts sailed above it, thumping against the far end of the stove. In frustration, my animal instincts kicked into gear and I shook the broom handle, rattling it against the walls of the hole, and producing a loud clanking noise. While this method would not molest the squirrel, the squirrel apparently didn't realize it, and the racket touched a nerve I had hitherto failed to reach. Fear.

The squirrel began screaming.

Until this moment I didn't know squirrels screamed. I had heard bear cubs scream. I knew panthers would scream. Squirrels scream too. The scream was one of despondent terror. It was as if the squirrel realized it was going to die that night. There was little it could do, trapped in the stove with a vengeful human being wielding a broom handle and blocking the exit. At first I was taken aback by the sound. If the squirrel had taken advantage of this moment, it probably could have escaped. If it had lunged for the exit, I might have ran out the door to a pay phone and called the police. The squirrel became silent and I

stood there and once again I looked into it's eyes. My cognitive faculties briefly returned again and I knew I had now won the battle, although I never would have dreamed how much longer it would take. I knew the squirrel now feared me and I could use this fear to keep him off balance, force him to make a mistake, and eventually kill him.

My animal instincts kicked back in. I rattled the broom against the metal walls of the hole, over and over. The squirrel was scared and I was going to milk this advantage as much as possible. The more fear, the better. For five full minutes the rattle of the broom and the piercing screams filled the kitchen. On and on it went. I grasped the broom handle with both hands for maximum effect. The screams were not dissimilar to those of a terrified woman or a wretched child and, though unnerving, ceased to affect my determination.

Finally the squirrel caved in and moved toward the exit, toward me. Was it giving itself up and coming out to die underneath the crushing swings of the wide end of the broom? Not quite. When it exited I stepped back to switch broom ends, but the squirrel made a couple of hops back toward the living room. The battle was far from over. Before it reached the living room I struck it with two swings of the broom. This proved to be equal in futility to the belt and the squirrel continued its clumsy hopping, into the living room. In exchanging the belt for the broom I had sacrificed firepower for accuracy, gaining nothing.

I paused, exhausted. My cognitive faculties returned and I stopped wailing on the squirrel with the broom. How long would this go on? What on earth must I do to kill this thing? I stood there for a few moments and looked at it. It looked back at me, equally exhausted. Anyone who has beaten a squirrel with a leather belt will tell you there is a certain feeling of surreal ridiculousness, of stupidity and exasperation, when the magnitude of those actions are contemplated. For a moment this realization came to me and I braced myself against the wall and wondered if it all was just a very bad and vivid dream that I would soon awake from. "This is not happening. This is not happening," I repeated to myself. Why me? I looked up at the ceiling, at the massive hole and the yellow stains, with bits and pieces of wood and paint hanging down. The sound of a siren wailed in the distance. I became dizzy and for a moment my mind traveled back several years to the time I ate a grasshopper in a small town near Orlando, Florida. I was vacating with some friends, one of whom had a son about 10 years old. He was particularly interested in the slow-moving, yellow and black grasshoppers that covered the palmetto trees. I took little notice of them until, in a fit of boredom, I ingested one to their amusement. No chewing. Just a glass of water, pop the thing in my mouth, and swallow. The excitement died down and, reflecting on what I had done, I began thinking about their colors and why they didn't jump or make any effort to escape when approached. Yellow and black. Could they be...poisonous?

I knew poisonous creatures, particularly those that didn't attempt to run or defend themselves against predators, were often bedecked in bright, noticeable colors. This is to warn predators. Fragments of an old saying, helpful for distinguishing between coral snakes and their imposters came to me. *Black and yellow kills a fellow. Was that how it went?*

2 + 2 = 4

*Are these grasshoppers poisonous?*

*Well, I don't know. (laugh)*

*Well, they made no attempt to escape. They are brightly colored. Oh God.*

*They probably aren't. (laugh)*

*I have to know. I must know. This is a tropical area and who knows what the creatures have in them.*

*How stupid. How stupid. O God.*

*Well, we can call the poison control. (laugh)*

*I think I'm getting dizzy.*

*I am sure they are fine but if you have to know, we can call the poison control. (laugh)*

*Call them, call them.*

I frantically dug through the phone book.

*Here! Call this number.*

I was getting dizzy, my friend, stifling her amusement and lack of concern, dialed one poison agency after another.

*Yes, the yellow and black ones.*

*You don't know?*

*Yes, he ate one.*

*I know.*

*He says he is feeling a little bit sick.*

*Only one I think.*

*I know.*

*Did you eat more?*

*No, he only ate one.*

*You don't know.*

*OK, I'll call them.*

I wallowed in shame, confusion, and the fear of dying. Nobody knew. It never occurred to me to try vomiting.

*You don't know either? OK, I'll call them then.*

*Hey, just thought you would like to know that they didn't know either. (giggle)*

The time passed so slowly and I felt dizzier and dizzier with each second. What on earth would they tell my parents?

*We are very sorry to tell you this but your son is dead. He ingested a poisonous grasshopper. But hey, he will probably be featured in News of the Weird along with all the other idiots who help cleanse the Homo Sapiens gene pool.*

*Yes, the slow-moving, yellow and black ones.*

*Yeah, those.*

*They're not.*

*OK, I'll tell him!*

Upon learning they were not poisonous I lay on the couch for an hour or so contemplating my stupidity. While relieved I was not going to die, I had no choice but to endure several days of ridicule. My friends rolled on the floor until they were covered with lint.

*Wanna eat another one?*

The squirrel jumped twice in the direction of the closet and I snapped to my senses. The closet was deep and dark and filled with all sorts of junk. And there was no door to bar the squirrel from entering it, only

the afghan and it didn't reach the floor. Once inside, it would again have me at a disadvantage and, I thought, I would never be able to find it if it did indeed manage to get in there. It must have sensed this possibility and moved in that direction. I moved to intercept it.

The squirrel almost beat me to the punch. It hopped onto the wicker bookstand, a mere two feet from the closet opening. From its elevated vantage point the squirrel could jump directly into the junk and proceed into the depths until it found a hiding place. Any attempt by me to remove it from this pile of debris would be foolish as the squirrel would once again have a number of fleshly targets, my hands, face, feet, to choose from.

I blocked its escape by interposing myself between the wicker stand and the closet opening. Once again we faced each other, this time from the distance of three feet. With the intention of knocking it off the stand I slowly moved toward it with the broom. Unknowingly, I had effectively cornered it. With its back to the wicker and me in front of it, the squirrel radically changed its fight strategy from one of passive flight to aggressive charge. When I recounted this event to a trusted friend some time later I received my explanation: never underestimate a wounded animal. The squirrel took the offensive.

One moment the squirrel was on the wicker stand. The next moment it had leapt onto my right thigh. I seem to vaguely remember the sensation as being similar to someone with long fingernails gently grasping my thigh. Not that that has ever happened; just what it reminded me of later. Fortunately I was wearing blue jeans. I rapidly threw my arms into the air and twisted to my left, trying to shake the thing off. I didn't realize it at the time, but it managed to climb halfway up my back. I later discovered scratch marks from my waist to my shoulders, the first time that had ever happened. I knew it was now somewhere behind me but I was not sure where. I must have twisted and jerked further because it finally fell off whereupon I leaped away from it. It is all so hazy. Once again, those slow, old memories flashed through my mind and took me to a distant place, far, far away.

I was no longer in my living room, but rather in the forest near where I grew up. I was seven years old and the occasion was the funeral of my brother. The procession of mourners walked up the dirt road to the top of the hill where the grave was waiting. Mother and father were in one of those dazed states, so I was left to roam about unmolested. I was sad, it is true. But my distractible age combined with the fact that my brother died during childbirth, so that I never knew him, left me with but the grief that a seven-year-old might hold about such an event. The woods were my play ground, I knew every tree and ditch. My favorite pastime then was to pretend I was a bear and that I had treed some kind of prey. I would use my strength to push the tree over, taking away the safety the prey had presumed and depended on. Then I would have dinner. I'd gotten this idea from *Mutual of Omaha Wild Kingdom* whose host, Marlin Perkins, was my childhood hero. I could not, of course, push over a living tree. I had to find dead, rotting ones. There were few left as I had pushed them all over.

The funeral procession made it to the top of the hill and we all stood while the Preacher gave his graveside sermon. He was boring enough for adults, but to a seven year old he was less exciting than watching cows graze. My mind wandered to the prey I would tree and vanquish and eat. And as I looked to my right trying to find anything to occupy my attention, I saw a thin, dead, tall, rotting tree trunk. It was merely two feet away. How had I failed to notice it for so long? I looked up toward the top of it and it seemed to extend to the clouds. In retrospect, I'd estimate it was perhaps fifteen feet. No branches. No bark. Just wet, crumbly, rotting, dirty cellulose.

Prey was at the top of that tree. I could not, of course, kill the prey right then and there. I'd have to wait until after the funeral; even in my ignorance I knew that was not the time or place. I'd return, as soon as things were finished, to do the job. In the meantime the Preacher droned on and on. The prey waited. I looked around. My cousins were there. People from the church were there. Others. They all seemed to

be paying attention to what the Preacher was saying. His words to me were as meaningful as the static on a signalless television and I turned my attention back to the rotting tree. I could, I thought, test the tree's strength. I could learn how much of a struggle would be required in order to crush the cowering animal that, I was now sure, cowered at the top of it. I reached out and touched it. Barely I later argued. Shook it a little. It was very weak. The prey at the top didn't stand a chance. I would return.

Or would I? The tree continued to wobble, particularly the top. It was already top heavy, with the trunk being thicker toward the top and thinner toward the bottom. As the top wobbled, the middle, connecting section began to weaken. The weakening allowed it to wobble further and further until it was swinging wildly. I watched it in silence, unable to stop it as four feet of the top broke off and came crashing down. Somewhere in the distance a crow squawked, perhaps disturbed at the loss of a perch. The log sailed down toward the mourners, landing on the shoulder of an elderly church lady. Fortunately she was not hurt. However, the wood, weak, wet, dirty, and brittle from years and years of decay seemed to explode into so many thousands of pieces of soggy splinters and dirt. The elderly lady was covered with the debris. She stumbled to one knee, more from the surprise than from any real physical force. Several nearby mourners were also showered with debris. To make matters worse, small insects had bored into the decayed wood, making so many nests filled with dirt, eggs, and larva. These now dazed insects found themselves on the mourners' clothes and in their hair. Two mourners rushed to the rescue of the old lady and brushed away as much of it as they could while helping her up.

I watched with dumbfound until somebody I don't remember took me by the hand. The Preacher droned on. My parents, in shock, didn't seem to notice. My older cousin, a habitual troublemaker, looked at me with astonished admiration. But I would not, on this particular day, get into trouble or receive any discipline. I might as well have thrown a water balloon at somebody. The old lady glared at me, but there was little she could do. It was my brother's funeral.

---

*Do you wanna die? Do you wanna die? Well I promise you, I will treat you well, my sweet angel, so help me Jesus.*

- The Toadies

---

The squirrel hopped twice toward the couch and then hopped on the couch arm. It looked at me. Trembling, I lost all of my human faculties. Something evil seemed to possess me at the moment as I involuntarily picked up the pliers from the wicker stand. In a sense I was an animal again, but in another sense I wasn't. Animals do not slowly torture their prey, nor do they feel enjoyment at the slow death of another. They kill and eat and if, via the kill, the prey dies slowly, they don't seem to notice.

For a moment, a brief moment, I was the combination of those animal instincts and the sadistic cruelty only humans are capable of. The pliers were solid silver steel. I would get the squirrel in them and never let go. I would squeeze until the pliers crushed whatever part of the squirrel they held and repeatedly slam the squirrel into the wall until it was reduced to so much bloody mush. I was beyond anger.

Fortunately, somehow the sadistic, insane thoughts lasted only a moment and my cognitive faculties returned. I approached the squirrel slowly, holding the pliers back the way I might have held a club. The pliers, solid metal, would serve as a striking, rather than a pinching weapon. The key was to get as close as possible without allowing the squirrel to jump on me again and to swing the pliers quickly and accurately. I moved closer. It continued to look at me but the deep, shiny darkness in its eyes was gone and had been replaced by a desperate, almost pleading look, the look of a child's stuffed animal. It sat there and made no effort to move or escape, as if resigned to accept its fate without further resistance.

I took a deep breath, crossed myself, focused on the squirrel's head, and swung. It was a feeble swing, the swing of one who is afraid of missing and being hit in return. If I had been striking a human I doubt the pliers would have left so much as a bruise. But the squirrel was small and I was large and the pliers, themselves weighting more than the squirrel, were solid steel.

The next second lasted forever as I seemed to be swinging in slow motion. Somewhere in the distance a homeless man rummaged through a garbage can, seeking aluminum cans. An almost imperceptible thud sounded as the pliers struck the squirrel squarely in the left eye. It slumped to the couch arm and fell to the floor where it lay, motionless.

---

*And the candle, by whose light she had been reading a book full of pain, deceit, sorrow and evil, flared up more brightly than ever before, throwing light on all that had hitherto been in darkness; then it flickered and waned and went out forever.*

- Tolstoy

---

I thought I had merely knocked it unconscious and, using the pliers, picked it up by the tail. Blood flowed freely from its nose onto the couch and floor. Its left eye had bore the brunt of the strike and already, seconds after I hit it, was swollen to twice its usual size. The glare was gone, replaced by a film of blood and vitreous fluid.

---

## Chapter the Sixth and Last

*If I had another chance I would peacefully advance. But as I'm fated to be here, resigned and ridden by my fear. I should love myself but vanity loves someone else. I just can't hide my monster side, my monster side.*

- Addict

I walked onto the porch, carrying the squirrel in the pliers. I sat down, laid the squirrel on the floor and looked at it for a long time. I was in a state of shock. Was *this* what it was the whole time? Was *this* my tormenter? A few moments ago it was alive, although in pain. A few days previous it was alive and alert. Perhaps it had relatives and friends. I left it on the porch steps for one of the stray cats.

Some time later I told the story to a trusted friend I knew would not behave judgmental toward me. He did not believe it. So we moved on to discussing life and death and what those things mean. He said to me:

*You know something Squirrel Killer. Some day. Some day. Some day you will cease to exist.*

I thought of the squirrel. It had ceased to exist. Some cat's digestive system had slowly transformed it into a turd and then the cat had buried it. I had done the same to the grasshopper, replacing burial with a flushing. Was this what would happen to me someday? Obviously, unless I am eaten by a shark or an alligator or something I will not be transformed into a turd. But, if so many maggots consume me after I die, transforming me into maggot turds and buzzing flies, does that mean I will cease to exist? Or would I live on? Would I continue to exist in the form of the flies the maggots would grow into? Flies pester people and love manure, two characteristics so unlike me.

I don't have an answer to these questions.

My friend and I continued discussing the matter. "I look at it this way," he said, "after I die I will be consumed by the ecosystem in the ground. I will then become a part of the grass and the animals that eat the grass and I will, in that sense, exist forever." I disagreed with him and pointed out that nowadays people are buried in metal and plastic caskets that prevent the intermingling of the corpse and the multitude of organisms that would consume it. Since that is the case we cannot continue to exist as a part of nature. My friend looked like someone who has just had a cherished theory debunked and changed the subject. But I could not stop thinking about it. And the squirrel.

The next day my friend and I were walking down a street near where we worked. At an intersection we spotted a small, young squirrel terrified and unsure what to do in the middle of the road. Approaching was one of those large trucks, jacked up and riding on tires the size of a house. For a moment I froze. Fortunately it was going slowly and the driver steered around the squirrel. I managed to make a meek smile at him, a young man wearing a baseball hat. He paused, spat some tobacco juice onto the road, and snarled at us, "I should have nailed him." Having restored his masculinity, he drove on. Should I take this attitude and simply forget it? Or do the truck driver and I share the same evil instincts, only manifested differently?

A week later I was working at night and, during a break, I walked outside the building. A large leafy tree stood outside, and on this particular night a number of birds were roosting in it. Several were chirping quietly. I estimated their number to be about 25 but was unsure. And wanted to know. I picked up a thick, short stick and cast it into the depths of the tree. The sight was amazing. Hundreds and hundreds of birds sailed out of it in all directions landing on the building and the other surrounding trees. They returned in a moment but this time they made an enormous racket, chirping and squawking as they moved around and exchanged places with one another. Feathers flapped. Beaks flew. Bodies jumped from perch to perch knocking one another off. They were reestablishing their pecking order so that no bird would have to worry about an inferior member of the flock sending a load of poop falling down upon him.

This continued for along time. What had I done again? The birds had established a pecking order, a bird civilization if you will. It had probably been a laborious task and, after establishing it, some man had destroyed it with a single swing of the arm. I sat down on a bench and watched them continue fighting. They were now completely disorganized. The event would not provoke the scholarly debate as, say, the rise and fall of the Roman Empire. But from the birds' perspective, it was equally catastrophic. And I was responsible. How many more atrocities would I commit?

*My God, what have I done? What have I done? What kind of man am I?*

I have tried to lead an exemplary life since but it has been hard. I leave bits of bread for the birds when snow covers the ground. I have hung a seed box for the local squirrels. Instead of leaving a carcass on the steps for the local cats I leave some tender vittles. And I have gotten this story off my shoulders. Writing it has already helped me. I experience sleep paralysis less and less frequently. But even if this doesn't help, perhaps someone else will stumble upon it and vicariously learn a very valuable lesson, whatever that might be. If this occurs, if even one person does this and then conveys the lesson to today's youth, tomorrow's adults and leaders, then my tragedy is not in vain. And I will, indeed, continue to exist forever.

## Appendix B: The Common House Mouse

## [Appendix C: The Gray-Bellied Squirrel](#)

---

Contact: [SleepParalysis@hotmail.com](mailto:SleepParalysis@hotmail.com)

---

Classic Reading by Squirrel Killer/Sleep Paralysis:

[A Putrefying Catharsis: Squirrel Killer](#)  
[The Thing From the Shower](#)  
[The Disgraceful Saturday Afternoon](#)  
[The Love Song of J. Billy Pendergraft](#)  
[Concrete Operations: An Impossible Reality](#)

---

### About Squirrel Killer

Squirrel Killer lives alone, in the continental United States, with his four plants.

---

Producer - J.K. Palmer

Directors - William "Just Billy" Samson and *The Nile-Crocodile of Memphis*, Tennessee

Editors - Bill Collins and Misty Mitchell (The Goddess)

Music - Karen Diamond and *The Flying Frogs of Destiny*

Screenwriters - Adam Barton, Jeff Harper, and Doug Quartetti

Director of Photography - Sprucey

Costume Designer - Arizona Princessa Vanna

Security - The loving and lovable "Sheriff Ape"

---

Special thanks to Cindy and Bert, Holly and Tom, "Yellow Ribbons," Leanne "Carpet Muncher," Lorie in Los Angeles, Crazy Jennifer M. from Slidell, Louisiana :) (Evil) Kevin and (Good) Kimmy, Monique M. from New Orleans, James and Kate now in Knoxville, Tiffany from Baton Rouge, Rebecca Snyder now in Chengdu China, Snow Z, "Ballistic Heart" Spriggs, Debbie and Art in Atlanta, Lauri and Chad in Atlanta, Jim Smithson of Laramie, Wyoming, Bart R. of Atlanta.

---

### Accolades, Acknowledgements, and Reviews

- Big Weenie's "Wurst of the Web"
  - About the Human Internet Dot Com's "Worst Web Sites" (Animals Category)
  - Ammo Searches Listing of "The Web's Worst Sites." (Personal Home Pages Category)
  - Twice featured by "Tigbitty's Lifestyles Newsletter"
  - The Indiana Procrastination Station
  - The Grand Poo-Bah's SodomGomorah Dot Com
- 

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Text translated from the original gibberish by Bill Collins, Ph.D.

<sup>2</sup>An alternative theory holds that the brain, with the exception of the frontal lobe, is awake during

dreaming and the inexplicable activation of the frontal lobe in REM sleep produces the sensation of being awake, though paralyzed. Still others have attributed this experience to demonic influences.

<sup>3</sup> Squirrel Killer never actually ascertained the gender of the dead squirrel. It may have been male or female.

---

© Copyright 1999 by Sleep Paralysis/Squirrel Killer

---