



~ The Author ~

Joel was born in central Texas, and grew up on a small farm and ranch.

After college, he found a home and settled in San Antonio.

With a natural thirst for adventure, it was inevitable that his creative talents would lend themselves so well to these adventure stories.

After moving back to the farm, Joel began to write these wonderful stories.

~ Enjoy ~

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

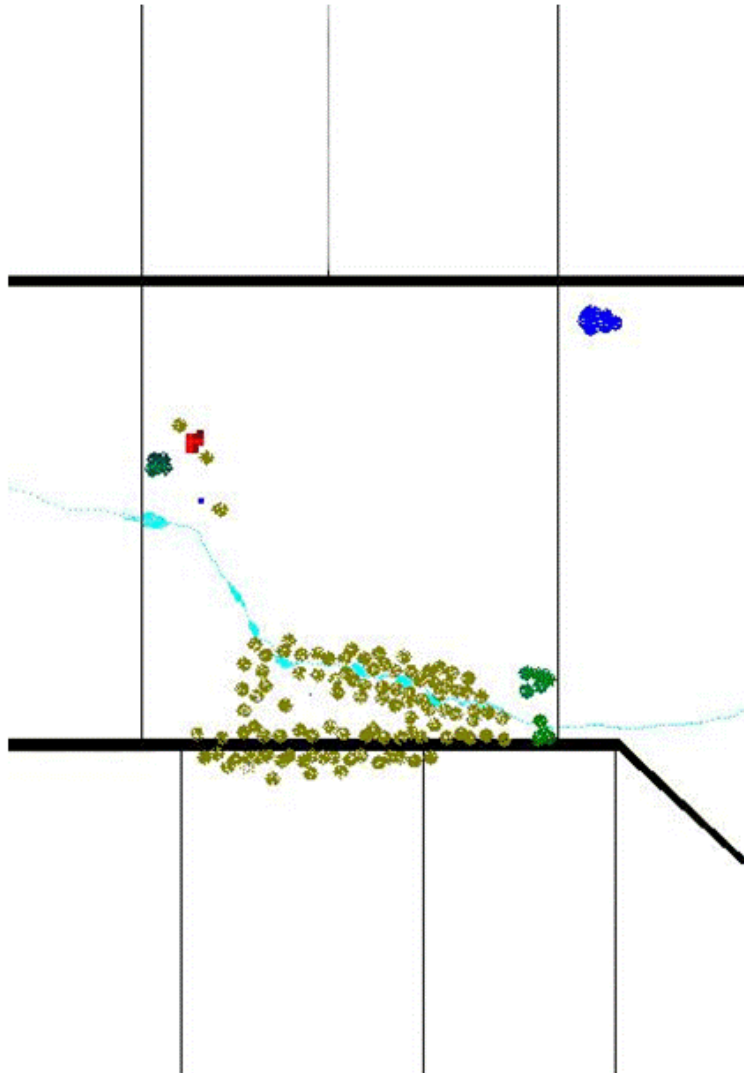
J. B. Kirkpatrick

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

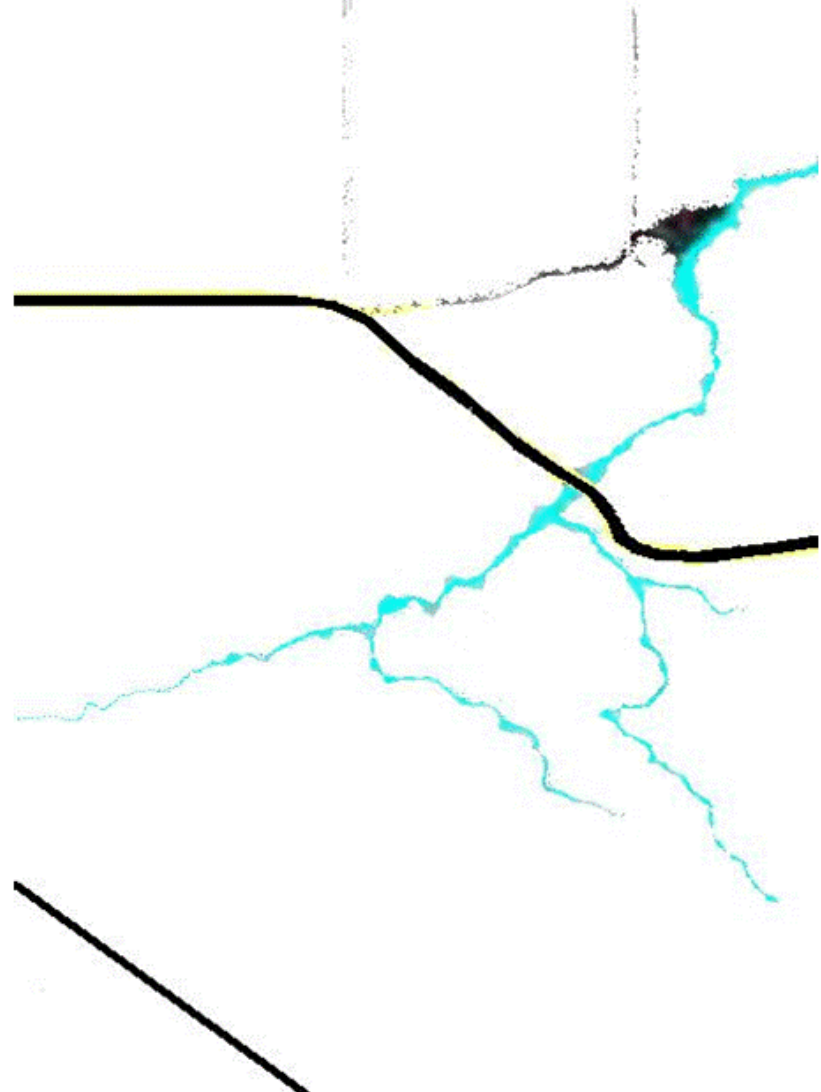


J. B. Kirkpatrick

Map of the Farm



Up the Creek



**The Adventures
of
Sidney Squirrel**

by

Joel B. Kirkpatrick

for
Mom

© 2009
Joel B. Kirkpatrick III

Contents

ONE

Jump Start
(the leap of faith)
8

TWO

Shadow from the Sky
(make every day count)
21

THREE

Horacio Hummingbird
(being sad is ok, but move on)
35

FOUR

The Big Yellow Monster
(don't judge a book by its cover)
47

FIVE

The Golden Bo
(the world is full of friends not yet met)
61

SIX

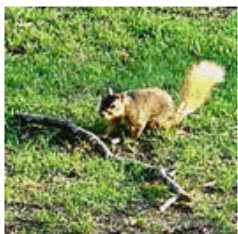
Up a Creek
(pursue your dreams in life)
77

SEVEN

The Big Question
(ask for what you want, you just might get it)
97

xx

xox



One

Jump Start

I was born in the springtime, I think.

I remember it was windy, and sometimes I had to hold tight to keep from falling out of our nest. It was a strong tree, and it grew along a fence by a gravel lane on the edge of the small farm that we lived on.

Every now and then, I would hear a loud roar down in the lane. Once, I was brave enough to look over the edge of the nest into the lane below. I saw something moving. It was HUGE! I hid my face back in the nest under some leaves. The roar began to fade, and I heard a scratching noise coming up the tree. I wondered what to do? My mother was gone, and I was alone. I pushed my nose under some leaves and curled into a tight ball.

"You're not hiding very well. I can see your tail sticking out from under the leaves."

It was my mom.

"Mom...! I saw this huge thing down on the road, and it made a loud noise, and it smelled, and..."

"Yes, yes, I saw it too. So I came home to tell you all about it."

"You know what it is?" I asked.

"Yes dear, it's called a truck."

"A truck...?"

"It's not as scary as you might think," she said.

"But will it..." I began but was cut off.

"Shhhhhush...! Just be quiet a minute, and I'll tell you all about it."

She had a cross look on her face, and I knew it was time for me to be quiet. I prepared for another lesson.

"Well, like I said..." she began, "it isn't as scary as you might think. They stay on the roads most of the time. However, I have seen them come through the pasture where there are no roads. You must always be careful when you cross a road Sidney, because sometimes they go very fast. If you stop and look at them, they might run over you. And I would never get to see you again."

The wind had stopped blowing and her words echoed in the silence. I had been scared before, but now I was terrified. Never see my mom again? I shook my head at the thought.

"As long as you don't stop in the road, you'll be alright," she said, the tenderness coming back into her voice.

"The best thing to do is..." she waited for my reply.

"Climb a tree." I said, "I know..."

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

"Yes," she said, "as I have told you over and over. Climb a tree, because you are safer in a tree than any where else."

"Come on," she whispered, "let's go play."

"All right...!" I shouted.

I followed her out of our nest and down the limb to the trunk of our tree. Clinging to the bark of the tree, I followed her down toward the ground. She was already jumping over grass and weeds along the fence when I finally hit the ground.

For a moment, I stood up and looked around. Then I chased after her as fast as I could. I caught up with her just as she started down into the little dry creek.

She told me that sometimes a lot of water roared down the little creek. I stood up on my hind legs and looked to my left down the little dry creek. I wondered what was down there. What would happen to me if the water came rushing down and swept me away?

The creek was dry now, except for a small water hole close to our tree. But it too, would soon be dry. Then we would have to cross the creek and walk a long way across the pasture to a pond where the cows drank.



One - Jump Start



She told me that the pond where the cows drank had water in it all year long.

Suddenly my mother was gone. I stood on my back legs and looked around. I heard one loud 'BARK', and looked around and saw her half way up the big pecan tree that stood by the fence next to the lane.

I ran as fast as I could toward the big tree. Just before I got to the tree, I felt a surge of energy.

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

I jumped as hard as I could. I was flying through the air!

The tree was coming at me pretty fast. I put my hands out in front of me, and THONK! My claws sunk into the bark automatically as I hit the huge trunk.

"Wow mom! Did you see that? Pretty good jump huh?" I looked up at her smiling face.

"Yes dear, pretty good jump. Come on, race ya to the top." and she was off.

I scampered up after her as fast as I could, never looking back. She stopped on a branch almost at the top of the big pecan tree. I scurried up and sat down beside her.

"Wow mom! I can see a long, long way!" I said as I looked over the farm.

For the first time, I was at the top of the big pecan tree. I had never been this high before. I could see the whole farm that we lived on.

To my right, the little creek wound its way through the green trees and vines, and up into the sandy hills on the far side of the farm. The creek was almost completely covered with these trees and vines.

Some of the vines had wild grapes on them. In front of me, the cows were lazily eating grass in the pasture where the pond was.

To my left and across the creek, more trees and vines.

One - Jump Start

And past these, a gentle pasture stretched all the way to a house with a red roof near a large dark green oak tree. There were some horses near the house, standing under a tree by a water trough.

I started to ask about the house with the red roof, and the horses, when my mother spoke.

"Look down at all the limbs below us Sidney. We can jump from here onto one of those limbs below us, just like this..."

And before I could ask 'what if I miss?' she jumped.

I watched as if in slow motion, as she sailed gracefully through the air. Her arms and legs were stretched out wide as she floated down toward the ground. And then, as if a miracle had happened, she caught one of the limbs and swung around underneath. And quick as a flash, she was back on top of the limb looking up at me.

"See," she said, "it's easy. Now, you try it."

"I - I can't." I said as I scampered back to the trunk and down to the limb she was on.

"It's really not that hard Sidney." she said, "Look at your hands and feet. They were made just perfectly for catching tree limbs and hanging on, and walking on tree limbs, and hanging upside down on tree limbs..."

She stopped and waited for the words to sink in.

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

I looked down at my hands, and the tiny claws on the end of each finger.

They wrapped around the limb, and sunk into the soft bark. She was right! They were perfect! They were made just for me, so I could climb trees and jump from limb to limb. Yes jump!

And before I could think or stop myself, I jumped. It was not very far, but it was a jump! I landed on top of a large limb that was near us. My claws gripped the bark just like they did when I jumped from the ground. As I looked back, I saw her smiling.

"Very good." she said, "Come on..." she jumped again, "I want to show you something else."

She jumped from limb to limb down to the lowest limb on the big pecan tree.

It took me several short jumps to reach the limb she was on. It was still a little scary, but I finally made it. We were on the lowest limb of the big pecan tree.

"See that small pecan tree across the creek?" she asked, "Its' limbs are almost touching this limb we are sitting on. We can jump from this limb, across the creek, to the limbs of the little tree on the other side."

"Uh... I don't know mom... What if I miss?"

"You won't..." she said, "Remember how you felt when you jumped from the ground onto this tree?"

She smiled with a reassuring look.

One - Jump Start

"You'll do fine Sidney."

Then she turned, and ran out the limb we were on and jumped. She grabbed the end of a limb on the little tree, and I saw it go down toward the ground. I thought it would break, or hit the ground, but it didn't. It slowly sprang up and down until she began to climb up through the leaves and twigs toward the trunk of the little tree.

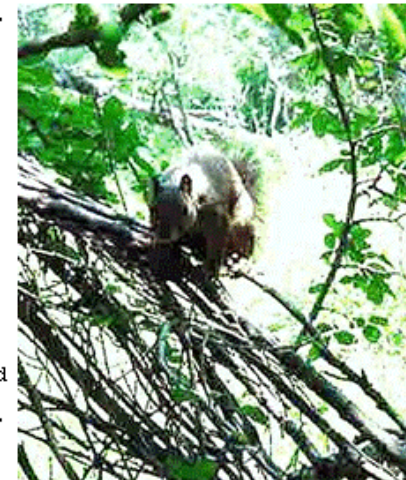
"Ok, it's your turn." she smiled, beckoning me on.

'Ok!' I thought to myself, 'Well, here goes!' and I ran as fast as I could to the end of the limb I was on.

I jumped and closed my eyes at the same time.

I thought, 'I need to open my eyes!' and as I did, I saw leaves and tiny branches rushing toward me.

I grabbed wildly and caught something in my hands. It seemed so tiny, and yet, I held on. I was falling toward the ground. But I couldn't let go even if I wanted to. I felt the rush of wind as it pulling me back toward the sky. I began grabbing hand over hand, and soon the little branch became thicker and steady under my grip.



The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

"Wow! That was great! Wow! Mom...! That was great! Mom, did you see me...? This is great. Did you see me...?! I closed my eyes, but then I opened them! This is GREAT!! Mom, did you see me...? I closed my eyes, but then I opened them and..." I took a breath.



She was looking at me strangely, a soft smile on her face. It was a look I had never seen before, and would never forget.

"Mom, are you ok...?"

"Yes..." she said, "This is one of the 'Great Lessons' you must learn Sidney. You are growing up, and you have learned to go from tree to tree. You will be safer that way."

"Mom...! Did you see me? I closed my eyes...?"

I was still very excited by what I had just done.

"I closed my eyes... and I jumped! But then, I thought that I better open them... and then I did... and then I saw the leaves and branches coming at me! And I just grabbed them! Did you see me grab them...?"

I took a deep breath.

"Yes dear, I did. You did a great job." she said, "I am very proud of you."

One - Jump Start

Then she gently touched her nose to mine.

"Are you ready for some tree hopping fun?" she smiled.

She turned and ran down the trunk of the little tree without looking back.

"Oh, YES!" I said, and scampered down the tree after her.

The small pecan tree, on the other side of the creek from the big tree, stood alone. There were no other trees near it, except for the big tree. So we had to run along the ground for a short distance to reach the other trees down the creek.

The trees along this section of the creek were thick and full of vines. Some of the trees had thorns. These were called mesquite trees. Some of the trees had wild grape vines in them. These were a lot of fun, because the vines would swing back and forth. Most of the time, they hung between the trees. And some of them arched all the way to the ground, and then back up again.

As we began to race through the trees, I stopped and looked back. I looked back at the big pecan tree, and the little one. I wondered why the little tree had grown up across the creek from the big tree. Then I wondered where the big pecan tree came from, and why it stood all alone on the other side of the creek.

Suddenly, I realized that my mother was gone. I looked through the trees and spotted her.

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

She was jumping from limb to limb, far down the creek. I began to run and jump through the limbs and branches as fast as I could to catch up with her. I was a little shaky at first, but soon I began to run and jump as if I had been doing it for a long time. Soon, I caught up with my mother, and we played chase for the rest of the afternoon. I had barely noticed, but my mother had led us back to the trees near our nest.

"Let's go home dear." she said at last as the big yellow ball began to sink low and turn the pale blue sky to orange.

I followed her down to the ground and across the opening to the tree on the fence where our nest was.

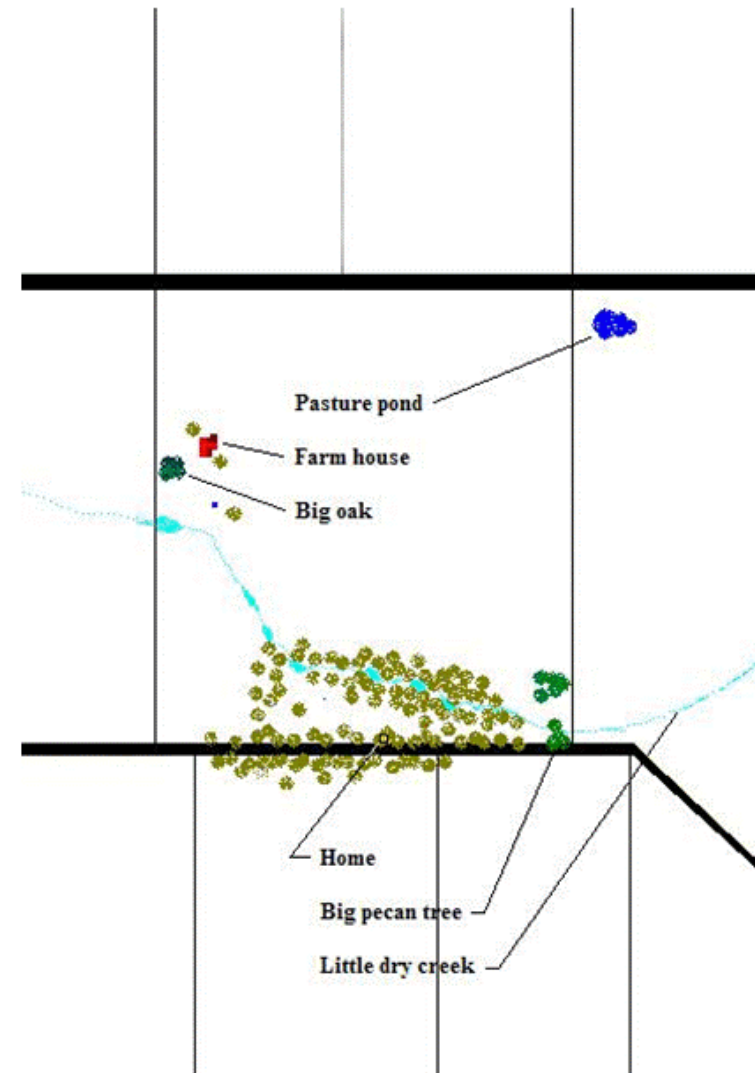
As I followed my mother up the trunk of our tree, I hesitated and looked around at the trees along the creek. I looked at the big pecan tree, and the little pecan tree across the creek. They seemed to be the anchor point of my little world.

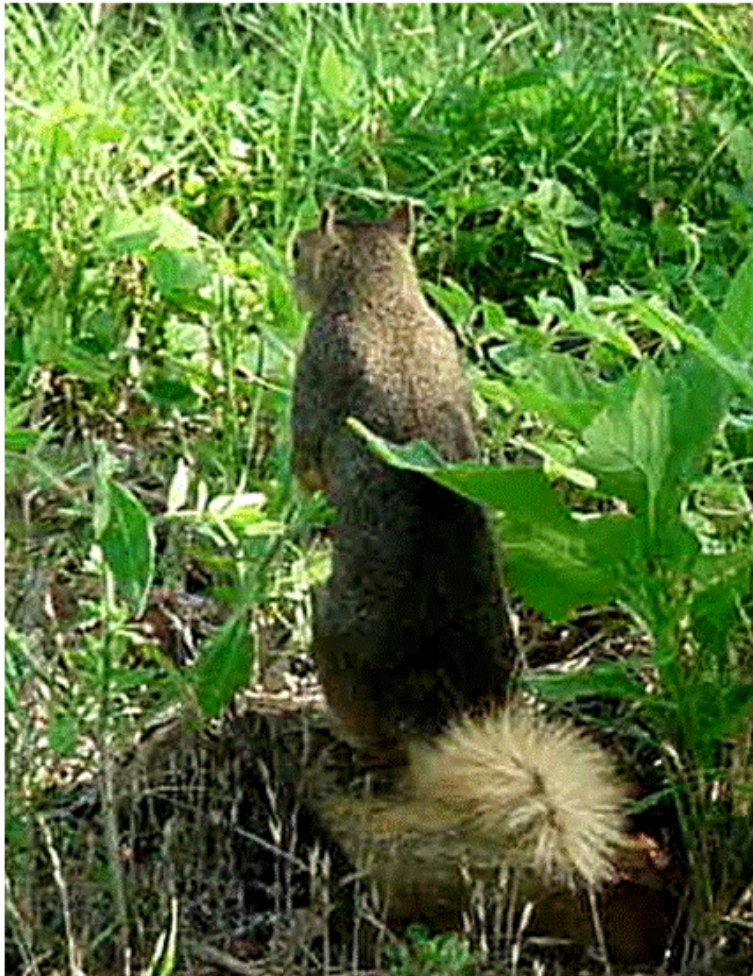
I turned and scurried up to our nest. My mother had already snuggled in. I crawled over the edge and lay down in front of her. She placed her hand over my shoulder, and wrapped her tail around me.

I closed my eyes and thought, how great it was to be alive and be a squirrel.

One - Jump Start

Map of the Farm





Two

Shadow from the Sky

I woke up to the gentle rustling of leaves above the nest in the elm tree that we called home.

I looked over the edge of the nest down into the gravel lane that passed along the fence beneath our tree. The birds were chirping and flying from limb to limb. Sometimes they would play and fight, and tumble through the air. Then, at the last possible moment, they would separate and fly off in different directions.

I climbed over the edge of our nest, and started down toward the ground. I wondered where my mother was. As I neared the ground, I jumped. I loved to jump. I was good at jumping. I hit the ground, stood up, and looked all around. I felt uneasy standing there all alone.

Was there something lurking there? Was I really all alone? Where was my mother...?! I looked down the fence and began walking toward the big pecan tree. It felt strange walking there alone, but as long as I stayed close to the fence, I could always jump up into a tree.

'Wait a minute,' I thought to myself! Why was I walking on the ground? I could be running and jumping through the trees along the fence.

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

I turned and began running toward the closest tree. Two good jumps and I would be there. At last, I was flying through the air. THONK!

I grabbed the bark and scurried up into the limbs.

"This is more like it!" I said out loud.

I crawled out onto the flat part of a limb and looked around. Nobody saw me. I knew however, that my mother would have been proud of me.

I turned and hurried along through the limbs and branches toward the big pecan tree. I could not make it all the way to the big pecan tree, because the trees along the fence stopped short. I crawled half way down the last tree along the fence and looked up and down the clearing along the fence. There was no danger that I could see, so I

jumped to the ground and continued toward the big pecan tree.

I began to run fast, and I jumped... THONK!



Two - Shadow from the Sky

Again, my tiny claws gripped the bark and I scurried up into the big pecan tree and out on the first big limb that hung out over the little dry creek. I lay flat on my stomach, out of breath. I stretched my arms and legs wide over the big fat limb. My tail twitched once, and then it twitched again.

I began to catch my breath and my heart felt like it would actually stay in my chest. My tail twitched again, as I thought of my little journey from our home to the big pecan tree. I had done it all by myself! My mom would be so proud of me, I thought. If only she had seen me.

Then, from high up in the tree, a single bark echoed down through the filtering leaves and limbs. It was my mom! I recognized her voice. I whirled around and scampered up the big tree as fast as I could. At last, I saw her. She was sprawled over a limb and looking down at me.

"Did you see me mom...?" I shouted as I climbed toward her, still out of breath.

"Yes dear, I've been watching you since before you left the nest." she said with the unmistakable tone of pride in her voice.

"I was watching you sleeping and thinking what lucky mother I am."

"Did you see me go back to the trees along the fence and come all the way down here...?!" I asked as I moved close to her.

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

I was still breathing hard, and couldn't believe I had done it all by myself!

"Yes dear, you did very well indeed."

We both lay there high up in that big tree, each lost in our own thoughts, looking out on this wonderful world we lived in.

"You know..." she began, "we're almost out of pecans back at the nest. The other places I have hidden them are running low too. Let me show you another little secret. It can be dangerous though, so you must do exactly like I tell you. Ok...?"

"Ok." I said, not knowing exactly what to expect next.



Two - Shadow from the Sky

If there was one thing that I knew in my heart though, it was that everything that my mother told me was for my own good. It was to teach me how to survive, and how to be safe.

I followed her down to the big limb at the bottom of the big pecan tree, the one that stretched across the creek toward the little pecan tree, and I watched as she ran the length of the limb and jumped. I followed. I ran very hard, and when I reached the end of the limb, I leaped as hard as I could..!

I loved the feeling of flying through the air. I caught the small branches of the little pecan tree, and climbed up to where my mother was waiting.

"In the fall," she began, "when the pecans get ripe and the hulls pop open, we gather all that we can and take them back to our nest. We store them and hide them in other trees. And then there is a special secret place that we hide them. Do you know where that might be?" she asked cocking her head, waiting for my reply.

"Um... nope." I said.

I couldn't think of any place that they might be hidden, other than in another tree.

"Well I'll tell you. Now Sidney, we squirrels do something that to some, would seem very silly and dangerous. But it is one of the most important jobs that we do every year. We take the pecan down to the ground and we find a nice spot, and we dig a hole and burry it."

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

"But mom..." I started, "why would you bury a pecan in the ground when you could take it back home, or hide it in another tree? Isn't that dangerous, standing and digging in the ground..."

I took a breath.

"Yes dear, it is dangerous, but you will see that it is a very important thing that we do."

She stopped to let me think about it for a minute. Some times she would say things that I just didn't understand. Then she would give me some time to think, and let it sink in. She was a good teacher.

"It does two things actually, it gives us another place to hide our food, and second, and more importantly, some of them grow into big beautiful pecan trees. You can never have too many big beautiful pecan trees." she smiled.

"Oh..." I said in amazement.

I was still not sure that it was worth the danger involved.

"Look..." she began, "Some things are more important than others. Some times we have to take risks for ourselves and for others, or in this case, for everyone. Every day is important. The things we do each day are important as well. It is important that you make every day special Sidney. You see when we plant a tree, it grows and lives for a very long time. It is beneficial not only to us, but to others."

Two - Shadow from the Sky

"Can you imagine if we only took pecans to eat every year, and never planted any for the future? There would only be one big pecan tree! And all the squirrels would have to eat from just that one tree!"

I thought for a while and agreed that she must be right.

"I was wondering, mom..." I began, "Did this little pecan tree come from that big pecan tree? Did you plant the pecan for this little tree?"

"Well dear, it probably did come from the big tree, but I didn't plant it. It was growing here long before I was born. It takes a very long time to grow a tree Sidney, and most likely someone long ago buried a pecan right down there where the tree grows out of the ground."

"Wow..." I said, "Do you think it was my grandfather, or maybe my great, great grandfather?"

"Well dear, I don't really know who planted it. But I'm sure that someone did." she said with a twinkle in her eye.

"Now, let's go down and I'll show you how to find buried treasure."

And so, we were off. We went down the trunk of the little tree that my great, great grandfather might have planted, and out onto the ground. I smiled. I jumped from the trunk, and followed my mother across the ground. She stopped... stood up... and looked all around. I did the same.

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

"You can never be too careful when you're on the ground dear," she said as she looked around.

"You must always watch out for foxes and coyotes, and other animals that would love to catch you and eat you."

"Argh..." I said.

"I don't tell you this to scare you Sidney. I tell you this to warn you, so that you will always be aware of what is around you. NEVER take anything for granted! Remember, each day is special."

She smiled at me as I listened.

"Now, let's see if we can find some of those tender buried pecans."

She began walking slowly along the ground sniffing, head swinging from side to side. So I mimicked her, and followed in her footsteps. I sniffed and sniffed, but all I could smell was ground. I wondered if I was doing something wrong. Then she stopped in front of me and said...

"Come here and smell the ground right here."



Two - Shadow from the Sky

I obeyed. I sniffed and sniffed, and then I detected a faint slightly bittersweet smell.

"Dig..." she said.

So I began to dig around in the ground. Soon I felt something hard and very slippery. I began to dig around it and to my surprise, it was a pecan! I finished digging it up and I showed it to her.

"Eat," she said, "it is yours to enjoy."

I cracked open the shell and bit into the moist nutty pecan. It was delicious! It was possibly the best tasting pecan I ever had.

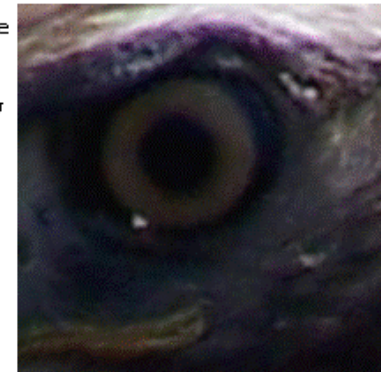
"Bom, vis wis gweat." I mumbled with a full mouth, and looked into her smiling face.

"See if you can find another one while I stand watch."

I put my head back to the ground, swinging back and forth, searching for that same bittersweet smell. I had now burned this smell into my memory. Soon I found another one and dug it up and showed it to her.

"Yes, I'm very proud of you dear! Now find some more."

She smiled, and I knew that she was very proud of what I had learned from her.



The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

I continued searching for that now familiar aroma, swinging my head from side to side, sniffing the ground.

As I walked on, a shadow appeared on the ground in front of me. I cocked my head as I looked at the strange shadow. I turned to ask my mother what it was. As I turned and looked up into my mothers face, she recognized the shadow. She stood tall on her hind legs and threw her arms wide and yelled..

"RUN...!"

As she stood there, I saw movement coming from out of the sky behind her. With wings wide, feet outstretched and terrible sharp claws, a hawk was coming directly at us. My mother stood up directly in the hawks' path to protect me. I watched in horror as those sharp talons closed around my mothers' neck and pierced her chest.

"Run Sidney! Run...!"

She sighed as the hawk struggled to carry her up into the air and over the trees.

I ran as fast as I could toward the trees in the direction the hawk had flown. If I could just get to the top of one of the trees, I could see where he was taking her and I would go and rescue her.

But by the time I reached the top of the first tree, the hawk and my mother, had vanished. I looked all around. I listened to the silence. It had happened so quickly.

Two - Shadow from the Sky



I looked around again. I was alone. I looked to my left and saw our tree, our nest, our home.

What was I going to do?

'What was I going to do?' I asked myself again silently.

I would go to our tree and our nest, and maybe I would wake up. That's it...! I would wake up from this horrible dream.

Somehow I made it to our nest, and buried my head under the leaves... OUR leaves...! But I didn't wake up from the dream. I lay there replaying that horrible sight of the hawk carrying my mother away.

It had been a terrible day. It had happened so quickly. I wondered what I was going to do. I closed my eyes. I tried to make the vision in my head go away. But it replayed, over and over, again and again.

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

'What was I going to do?' Somehow I had to find her. 'Will I be alright...?' My mother taught me many things. 'I will be alright.'

'Tomorrow, I will find her and bring her home. Yes, that's what I will do. Tomorrow, I will go and find my mother...'

I needed to sleep... I needed to dream... I needed to dream of running and jumping and flying through the trees. I needed to dream of something... anything to get that vision out of my head.

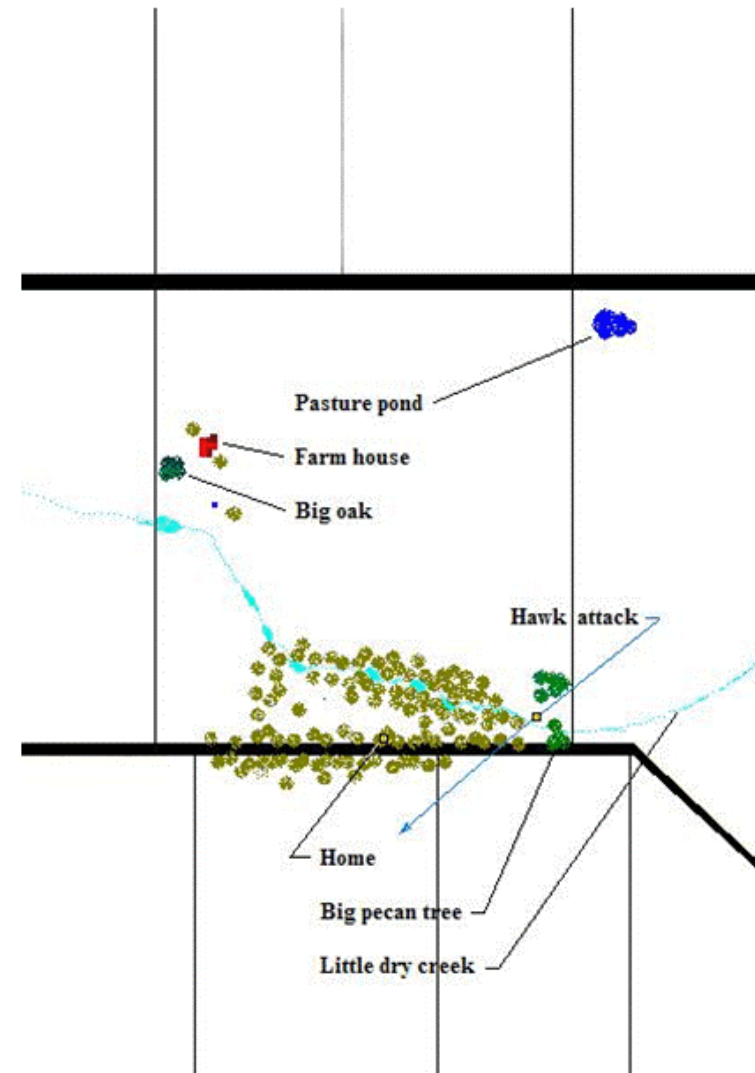
As I closed my eyes, I reminded myself...

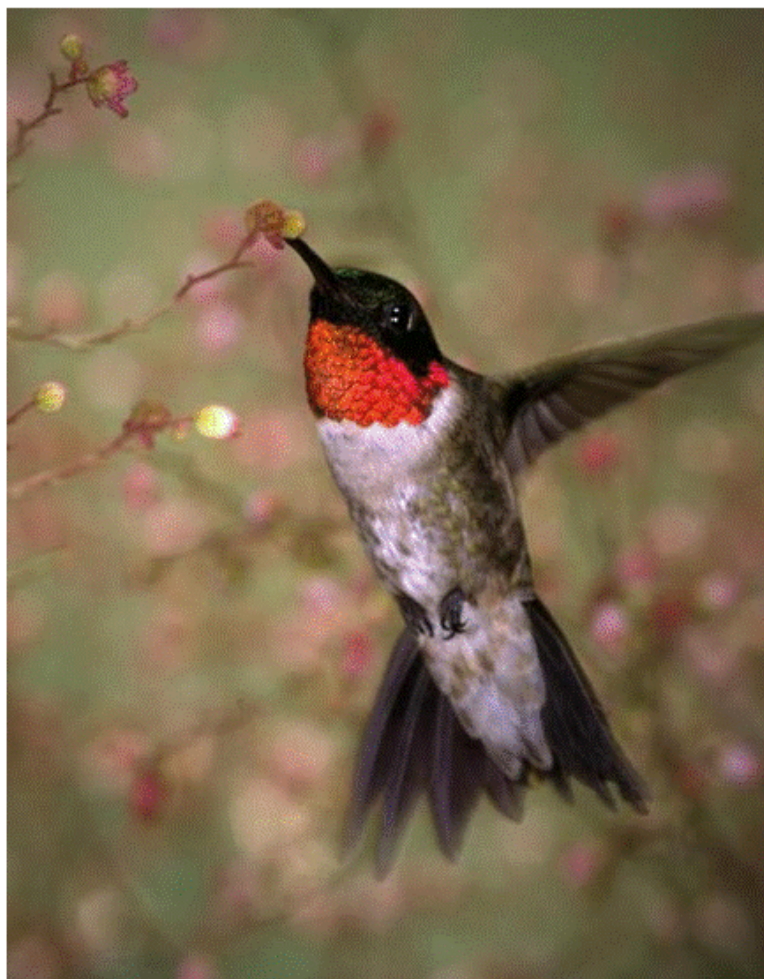
Tomorrow will be a new day.

Yes... tomorrow... a new day...

Two - Shadow from the Sky

Map of the Farm





Three

Horacio Hummingbird

After the hawk carried my mother away, I spent a lot of time in my nest.

The depression over losing my mother was consuming me. I was also upset that I had not gone to look for her. Afraid of what was out there... Afraid that I might get lost... Afraid something worse might happen. I missed my mother terribly, but the fear of venturing out into the unknown was equally powerful. I chose to hide in my nest, and hope that it would all go away. I didn't care about anything that was going on around me. Even with my stomach growling, I chose to lie in my nest looking up through the canopy of leaves above me. But it didn't go away. I began to think that it might have been better if the hawk had taken me in stead of my mother. The sky was clear and blue... and I was depressed and afraid.

I still couldn't believe that it had happened. My mother was gone. Why? I was so happy. Why did something like this have to happen to me? And why was I so afraid of trying to find her and save her? At this point I didn't like myself very much. I didn't want to think about it.

I would find peace in sleep, I thought, and hope that there were no dreams.

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

I rolled over and pulled some leaves over my head. 'I'll just go back to sleep.' I forced my eyes shut, 'I won't have to think about anything, if I just go back to sleep.'

Bzzzzzzzz Bzzzzz
Bzzzzzzzzzzzz.

I opened one eye under the dried leaves. I listened. Except for the few birds chirping in the distance, it was quiet. I listen to the soft wind moved through the leaves above my nest. I closed my eye and took in a deep breath and let it out again. I tried to sleep...

'Bzzzzzzzz Bzzzzz Bzzzzzzzzzzzzttt!'

"All right...! That's it! What IS that...?" I knock the leaves from my face and sat upright in my nest. There in front of me, was the tiniest bird I have ever seen.

"It's kind of late to be waking up! Isn't it?" the creature said.

I cocked my head at the sight of this strange creature. Its beak was almost as long as it's body. It was beautiful. It had iridescent green and olive feathers, with a ruby red throat patch. It had the tiniest black eyes I had ever seen.



Three - Horacio Hummingbird

"What are you?" I asked, amazed at the tiny creature sitting on the edge of my nest.

"I'm a hummingbird!" it said, cocking its head slightly and looking at me with one tiny shiny black eye.

"My name is Horacio Hummingbird, but you can call me Horice. And you are?" he waited for my reply.

"Uh... I'm Sidney, Sidney Squirrel." I was still lost in the beauty of his colorful iridescent plumage.

"Shouldn't you be up running and jumping through the trees and enjoying the day?" he looked away as if he was deep in thought. Then he looked back and asked...

"Why are you still in bed? You didn't answer me."

"Well, I haven't been feeling very well... lately."

For some reason, I found it easy to talk to Horice. He was so tiny and non-threatening. I began to explain what had happened to my mother. He listened and never said a word until I had finished. Then he looked away.

"Terrible story... terrible loss." he said, "I remember flying back to my home after a glorious day sipping nectar in the forest, and I found a bright green snake coiled around our nest."

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

"Well, I stopped in mid air... Did I tell you that I can hover in mid air? Watch..."

And I watched.

"Oh, did I tell you that I can fly backwards? Look..."

It was truly amazing how he could fly.

"Any way, I watched that snake for a long time and then I lit on a branch and waited for my mother." he took a breath, "But she never came home. So naturally I can only assume that the retched snake got my mother."

He looked down and shook his head. I suddenly felt that I was not alone in the world. Someone else had shared a similar experience. For the first time in weeks I felt a little better.

"I'm sorry Horice." I said.

I began to feel like I wasn't alone.

"Thank you Sidney." he sighed, "OK, I'm off... so many flowers... and so little time!"

With a loud buzz, he was gone.

I shouted 'Bye!', as he disappeared into the distance.

The leaves rustled slightly above me and I heard my stomach growl. I was hungry! I looked out on my little part of the world, and I remembered the look of pride in my mothers face when I dug my first pecan out of the ground. She wouldn't have been too proud if she could have seen me. I took a deep breath, and over the side I went.

Three - Horacio Hummingbird

She taught me many things. Maybe the most important lesson that I learned, was that I could learn things on my own.

I headed down the trunk of my tree to find some nourishment.

I hit the ground running! Half way

across the clearing toward the dry creek, I stopped abruptly. I stood up and looked down the fence line. Then I looked up into the sky. There was no threatening movement, so I walked on toward the trees by the creek.

As I reached the first tree, I leaped effortlessly and caught the trunk with my claws. I looked back across the clearing to my tree. It was a good tree. It was my mothers' tree, and now it was mine.

I scampered up to the top of the tree and began to run through the limbs and branches. I ran, I jumped, and I hopped! I went from tree to tree.

First I was on one side of the creek, and then I was on the other. I ran and ran, wondering how far I could go. It had been weeks since I felt such energy, and now I was letting it fill every part of my body.



The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

I went down the little creek. Where I would end up, I didn't know. I didn't care. I was running again!

As I ran and jumped through the trees, the memory of what happened began to fade. I began to wonder how far I could go. The creek made a sharp bend to the right, and as I scampered along I heard a familiar 'Buzzing'. I stopped and looked around.

"Hi Horice."

"Hello Sidney. Feeling a bit better are you?" he hovered in front of me.

"Yes I am!" I said, "And thanks for talking to me about your mom. I was pretty upset, and listening to you helped. I'm not sure my mom told me everything that I need to know."

"Well," he began, "I wouldn't worry too much about it. I am sure that when the time comes, you will know what to do."

The soft buzzing filled in between his words.

"I sure hope so Horice." I said.

"Well, I'm off again... I'll see you later!" and in an instant, he was gone.

"Bye!" I said into the trees where he vanished.

'Maybe he was right.' I thought to myself.

Maybe I would know what to do when the time came. I hadn't realized how far I had gone, until I looked across the creek through the trees and saw the house and the big oak tree.

Three - Horacio Hummingbird

I saw the farmers' tractor and the water trough. I had seen the water trough from the top of the big pecan tree with my mother. But now, I could see the water in the trough more clearly.

This is where I had seen the horses drinking. And close to the trough, was the mesquite tree that I had seen the horses standing under.

I looked back at the water trough. The water looked clear and cool, and I suddenly was very thirsty. I looked around. There was a large space of open ground between the tree I was in, and the trough. But I could run very fast and jump up into the mesquite tree if I had to. I was getting thirsty.

So, I crossed the creek and jumped into the last tree on the side near the trough, and started down. The water was looking better the closer I got. My mouth was getting dryer with each step I took. I stood up and looked for danger. I looked up into the sky. There was no danger, so I continued toward the cool clear water.

I was just a few yards from the water trough, and was about to run and jump up on the edge,



The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

when I saw something rushing toward me. I looked, and saw another squirrel! I was happy to see someone like me, but as I looked at his face, it was not the face of friendship or greeting that I saw. He was mad and charging at me!

I turned and began to run toward the nearest tree. His feet were pounding the ground in fast pursuit! As I looked back, he was on me! He grabbed me and rolled over the top of me! We both tumbled.

As I came over the top of him, my feet hit the ground and I broke free of his grasp. I jumped with all of my mite, and grabbed the trunk of the nearest tree. I was up among the limbs before he recovered and started up the tree after me. He began to chase me through the limbs and branches.

"What do you think you're doing coming to MY trees and MY water trough?!" he shouted as he chased me around the tree.

"I'm sorry," I said, "I didn't know they belonged to you."

He stopped chasing me. We were both out of breath and needed to rest for a minute or two. Finally, we caught our breath and he spoke.

"Well, you'd better watch out, coming into someone else's territory, you could get hurt real bad!" His words were not as harsh this time when he spoke.

"Say! Where are you from anyway?!" he asked.

"I'm from up the creek, near the big pecan tree." I said.

Three - Horacio Hummingbird

I was hoping that somehow he would no longer be mad at me and let me have some of his cool clear water. He was quiet, for a minute, and looked me up and down.

"Say, you wouldn't know a squirrel that lives near that big pecan tree named Shirley, would you?"

"That's my mom! That was my mom..." I said, correcting myself.

The dryness in my throat eased a little as I watched his reaction.

"Was your mom? WAS your mom?" he said.

"What do you mean, 'WAS' your mom?" he looked intently at me.

All the anger had left his voice. I began to tell him the tale of my mom and the hawk. When I had finished, I looked up into his face. No longer filled with rage and anger, his face was sad and full of compassion.

"I'm your uncle Argyle." he said in a soft and consoling tone. He moved toward me.

"Could I have a drink of your water?" I asked timidly as my mouth started to dry out again.

"OH! Sure you can! I'm sorry, that's where you were heading when we met, wasn't it?" he said and started down the tree. He chuckled.

"It's not really MY water," he said with a twinkle in his eye, "but I like to think it is."

He smiled as we ran across the ground to the water trough. We both jumped at the same time.

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

The water was as cool and clear, and as sweet as I had hoped for that day. It was turning into a good day. I had an uncle, and his name was Argyle.

We sat on the edge of the trough and talked for a long time. He told me many things about the farm and the other animals that lived there. He told me about the golden horse that the farmer rode. And he told me about the deer, and how the farmer fed them golden nuggets of corn.

He shared some pecans he had hidden in the ground. We dug and ate, and drank cool clear water the rest of the afternoon. Soon however, it was time for me to head back to my tree and my home. But now, I had family, an uncle named Argyle.

He told me that I was welcome to come back any time. He even offered to let me stay with him in the big oak tree. I thanked him, but felt the need to sleep in my own bed.

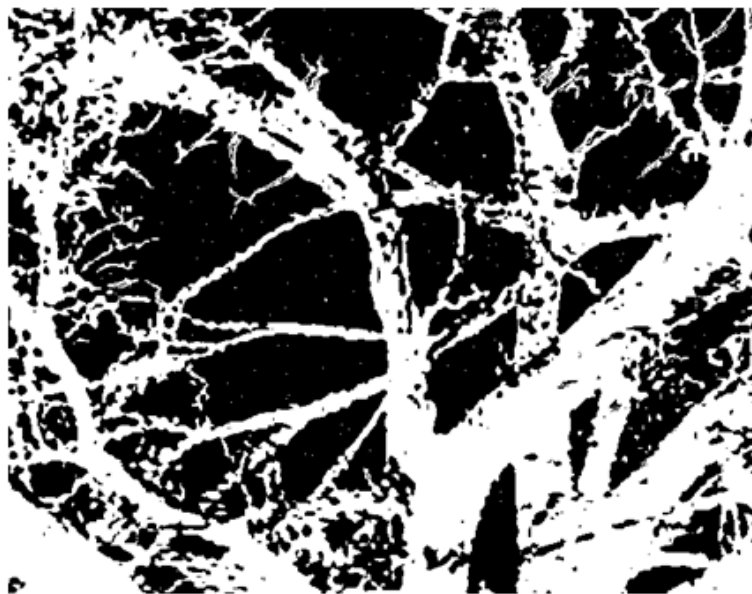
"Any time you want to visit Sid, you just come on back." he smiled and patted me on the shoulder.

This was the first of many visits to the farm house, my uncle, and the cool clear water in the trough. He would tell me many stories, and teach me many things.

Finally, I climbed up my elm tree and into my nest. The big orange ball was slipping out of sight, and the first of the stars began to glow.

I heard a familiar buzz and looked up to see Horice light on a limb above my nest.

Three - Horacio Hummingbird



"I had a good day Horice."

"Me too." he said softly and closed his eyes.

As I twisted and arranged the leaves around me, I looked up. Up beyond my friend... Up through the leaves and limbs... Up into the deep purple twilight.

There, in the velvet sky, was a particularly bright star.

And that star seemed
to smile down
at me.



Four

The Big Yellow Monster

It was terribly hot that summer.

My mother had been carried away by a hawk. It was hot. It was dry. I was miserable. I held my head over the edge of my nest, panting, as I looked down at the pattern of cracks in the black dirt beneath my tree.

Most of the grass had turned yellow and died away. The leaves of the few weeds drooped in the sweltering heat. Even the cactus began to pale as the blistering heat continued through the summer.

Thankfully, the good farmer kept the water trough by the house full of cool, clear water.

I laughed to myself as I remembered how my uncle Argyle claimed that it was 'HIS' water, only later to recant and admit that it was for everyone who was thirsty.

The farmer was a kind man, a good man. I saw it in his face, and I heard it in his voice. Though I did not understand his words, they were soft and non-threatening.

Sometimes when I would go for water in the late afternoon, I would sit in the tree near the trough and watch as he threw golden nuggets of corn on the ground and talked to the deer.

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

They made a big show, raising their tails and darting away. But they didn't run very far. And soon they would turn around and walk back to snatch a nibble of corn that had been scattered across the ground.

Sometimes he would walk out from his house, and if he didn't see the deer, he would shake the can that he carried the corn in. Somehow, the deer would just appear out of nowhere almost every time.

One day, I was lying in the tree near the water trough, and the farmer saw me. He shook the can at me and spoke softly. He then threw some corn close to the tree I was in. He watched me for a moment. I watched him. Then he began scattering the corn out across the ground for the deer.

I was not sure what to do. But soon I saw my uncle Argyle walking around the water trough toward the tree I was in. He walked right by the farmer and began to pick up the golden nuggets, and eat. I cautiously walked down the tree. After the farmer began to walk away, I joined my uncle.



Four - The Big Yellow Monster

It was good to have something to eat and drink during that hot dry summer.

Sometimes I would arrive and find only the deer nibbling at the ground, and I would walk over and try to sneak one of the nuggets of gold scattered on the ground around them. They would chase me and stomp on the ground at me.

I would zigzag and run away! Then I would leap up into the nearest tree and bark at them. This was great fun! Soon, the deer learned that they couldn't catch me. They just made a single stomp in my direction, and would continue eating.

After a while, they even accepted me and let me sit on the ground near them and munch on the delicious golden nuggets. Life was good. Even in the heat of the long dry summer, life was good.

Early one morning, as I was dreaming of chasing deer away from the golden corn scattered on the ground, I heard the sound of a truck coming down the lane. I opened one eye and looked up through the leaves at a dark and twinkling sky. What could they be doing coming down the lane this early in the morning? I wondered.

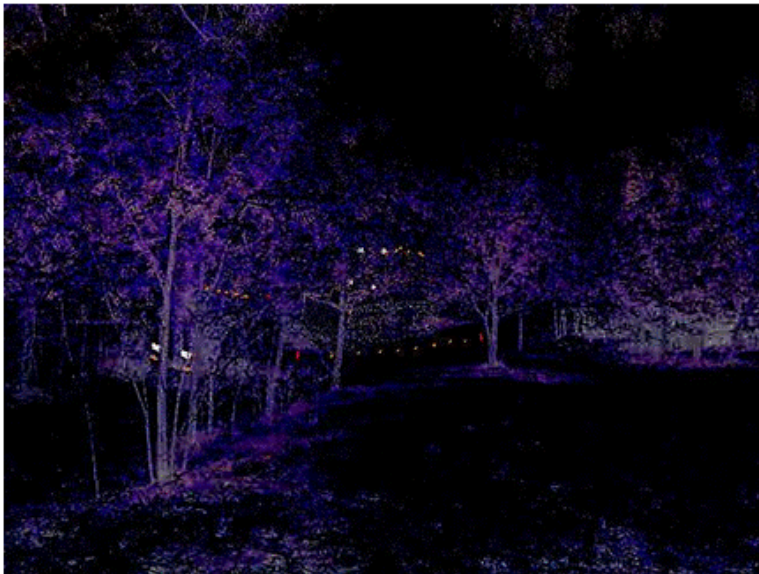
I closed my eye and tried to find the deer I had been chasing. I was master of the corn gift, and the deer ran from me! But it was no good. The rumbling did not fade as it usually did, and I heard more strange noises. Noises I had not heard before.

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

I heard creaks and clanking and a strange groaning. Then, they stopped. All I heard was the sound of the truck with its motor, rumbling in the dark.

I rolled over and pulled some leaves over my head and squeezed my eyes tightly shut. I wanted to chase deer, and eat ALL the corn on the ground! But it was no good. The truck continued its rumbling down in the lane, and then I heard a new rumble. This new rumbling was louder, and it made my tree vibrate with its sound. Finally the frustration was too much. I jumped up to the edge of my nest and looked down into the lane.

To my horror, there were hundreds of bright lights all along the lane.



Four - The Big Yellow Monster

White lights, red lights, yellow lights, all stretching far down the lane. I could just make out a man walking behind the truck around something huge. It was lit up with its own lights. I had never seen anything that big before. Even in the darkness, I could see how big it was.

The man walked around this monster, pulling and pushing, and banging on things that seem to be holding it down. I watched as he crawled up into the monster, and it groaned and made a much louder noise than before. I could smell it! It smelled horrible. I could feel the vibrations as it backed away from the truck.

As I watched, the man and the huge monster began to move farther back from the truck. The sky behind me began to pail, and I knew it was the start of another long hot day. The man continued riding the big monster, and I watched as it backed away from the truck. It squeaked and groaned and clanked as it backed away.

I climbed down from my nest and jumped through the trees to get a closer look at this yellow monster as it backed down the lane. I saw the farmer walking along the cross fence that came from his house. He walked up to the gate by the lane, and leaned over it.

The man in the great yellow monster crawled down and walked to the gate where the farmer was.

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

They stood there for a while, and then the farmer opened the gate and the man and the big yellow monster came into the farm. They began to clank and groan along the fence as I sat and watched.

I turned and ran back to my nest. I wondered what on earth was the farmer doing? What was this huge yellow monster going to do?

Back in my nest, I turned and watched as the farmer and the monster man began to walk toward me.

They stopped at a little ravine that twisted and turned as it wound its way down to the creek. They stood there pointing with their hands and walked around through the trees down toward the creek.

What did they see in the ravine?

Was there something down there that I had not seen? It was way too early for all these questions. Then I heard a familiar sound.

'Bzzzzz BzzZZ BZZZIT!'

"Good morning Horice." I said to my friend.

"And a lovely morning to you too Sidney!"



Four - The Big Yellow Monster

He settled on the edge of my nest, looking down at the small clearing beside the fence where the big yellow monster sat puffing black smoke.

"What is that Horice?" I asked as we looked at the monster.

"It is a terrible machine that men use to destroy trees. It's called a bulldozer. I saw one come through the forest where I was born. It pushed my home down and left nothing but bare ground in its path." he took a breath and shook his head,

"They make the ground tremble. And when they pass, nothing is left standing, not a living thing. Nothing can stand against a bulldozer."

"A bulldozer?!" I repeated, "Why would the farmer bring one here?"

"I don't know, but it knocks down trees that have stood a lifetime, in just a matter of minutes." He shook his head again.

"Do you think that it will knock down my tree?" I asked.

"I don't know Sidney, but I don't want to watch. I'll see you later." and with a loud buzz he was gone.

I watched as the two men walked back from the creek through the trees and stopped near the big yellow monster. They stood there for a few minutes, and then the farmer turned and walked back toward the cross fence.

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

The other man crawled back up into the big yellow monster bulldozer, and it roared and spewed black smoke into the clear morning sky. The monster began to push and shove brush and trees down the little ravine that led to the creek.

My mother told me that when it rained, the water came from the field on the other side of the lane and ran down into the creek. I wished that it would rain now, and wash that big yellow monster down the creek.

The ground shook and trembled as the bulldozer pushed and shoved against the dirt. The little ravine grew with every growl of the monster, and with every crash of a falling tree. I hoped the rain would come and wash it away. But the rain didn't come. I looked up, hoping to see a big mean rain cloud or two. But there were no clouds to be seen, just clear blue sky.

The monster chewed at the earth and dropped trees for the rest of the morning. I grew tired of the trembling and dust that was everywhere, so I went to the big pecan tree to get as far away from it as I could.

As I reached the top of the big old pecan tree, I looked back at where the little ravine had been. I could see no trace of it. I could still feel the trembling vibrations, and see the monster through the dust.

There was a big bare spot where trees and grass grew. Nothing stood in the monster's wake.

Four - The Big Yellow Monster



Trees that stood in the same spot for years, and trees just beginning to grow, all went down in front of the huge yellow monster. This was just not right! I couldn't understand why the farmer let such a terrible thing like this happen.

The bulldozer man had pushed all the trees to a spot far from where the little ravine had been, and was now digging deep into the barren soil. All day he worked, pushing dirt to one side and then the other. Then he began to push the dirt into a big pile along the creek.

I thought it curious that he left a few trees near the creek, and then pushed big piles of dirt right up next to them.

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel



He dug and pushed, until there was a big hole in the ground where the little ravine had been.

The big yellow ball was beginning to change into its orange coat of evening. The bulldozer monster began to move up the fence toward the gate that led into the lane. He was leaving! I saw the farmer again. He and the bulldozer man walked to the big hole and walked around it. Then they both left. The farmer back to his house, and the monster man rode the big yellow monster to his truck. And he took the monster away.

I came down out of the big pecan tree and made my way over to the big hole in the ground.

Four - The Big Yellow Monster

It looked terrible. No trees, no grass, and no weeds. Nothing but bare ground remained. I just didn't understand. So I went home.

The days dragged on and on, and still the hole was there. I had to make frequent trips to the farm house and the water trough. All the little water holes in the creek had dried up.

The trough was my only source of water. Each time I made my way through the trees and down the creek past the big mound of dirt and the big hole in the ground, I wondered why the farmer had done it. I couldn't stay mad at the farmer for long though, because he kept the trough full of cool, clear, water.

One day, while I was coming back from the farm house and the cool clear water in the trough, I noticed a cool breeze blowing through the trees. Then something hit me on the nose. It was water! It was about to rain. I looked up at the darkening sky.

I hurried through the trees along the creek as fast as I could. It began to rain harder. I was soaked when I finally reached my nest. I pushed my nose under some leaves and tried to get out of the rain. It rained for the rest of that day, and it rained off and on for the next three days.

I stayed in my nest under my leaves, occasionally coming out to look around when the rain had stopped. It was on one of these peeps out from under my leaves, that I noticed that the big hole had water in the bottom of it. Then, more water filled up the big barren hole.

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel



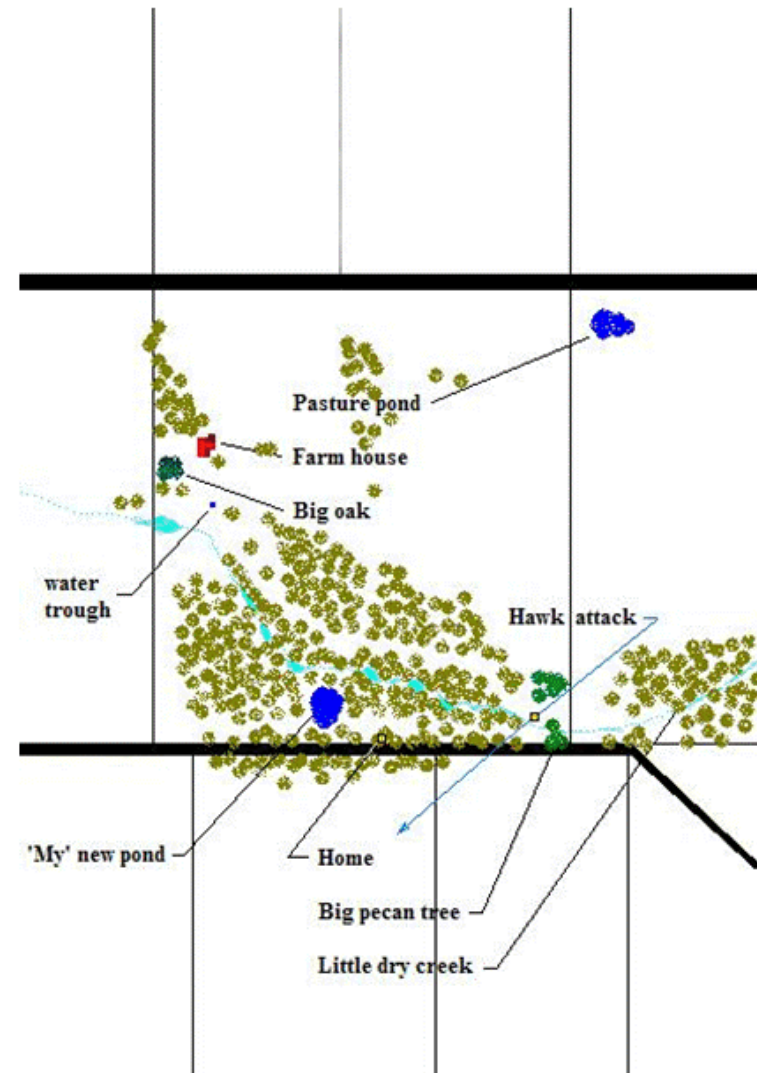
It finally dawned on me what the farmer had done. He had used the big yellow monster to make a pond. And what a beautiful pond it was! It was a pond right in my own back yard! My pond!

I stuck my nose back under the leaves as the gentle rain began again. I smiled and began to dream.

I dreamed of deer... and corn... and beautiful ponds of cool clear water.

Four - The Big Yellow Monster

Map of the Farm





Five

The Golden Bo

I woke up to the smell of fresh cut grass.

The farmer across the lane was cutting the grass in his field to make hay. I saw him do this once before. He would drive his tractor up and down the pasture, and cut all the grass. Then he would leave for a few days while the grass dried. After several days passed, he would come back with something behind his tractor and drive over the dry grass and make big bales of it. Then, other men would come and take the grass bales away.

I didn't understand why they worked so hard at cutting grass and hauling it away. But I guessed that they might wonder why we squirrels bury pecans in the ground. I laughed out loud.



The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

I thought about my mother. I remember that she said it was an important job we did, burying pecans. Maybe the men in the field were doing an important job too.

I looked over at the pond that was now full of water. My pond! I knew that it wasn't 'MY' pond, but it was just behind my tree, so I felt like it was mine. I looked at it and marveled.

I looked up at the big pecan tree, and the little one across the creek. I looked down the creek. I could see the red top of the farm house and the big green oak tree. My uncle Argyle lived down there, and the farmer threw corn out for the deer. He threw corn for me too sometimes, when he knew I was there. I had everything that I needed. I was a happy squirrel.

I decided to go down to MY pond for an early morning drink. The barren ground that had been left by the yellow bulldozer monster was now covered in small green grasses and weeds. After the rains, the grass began to grow. Soon, the ground was covered.

It was a very nice looking pond, I thought. I walked up to the big mound of dirt between the pond and the creek and I jumped up into a tree. It was this mound of dirt that held the water and kept it from running down the creek.

I decided to go down the creek and visit my uncle. I jumped and scurried along the limbs and branches.

Five - The Golden Bo

I hurried down the little creek toward the farm house, the water trough, and the big green oak tree. I thought I might even sneak some corn from the deer, if there was any left.

As I reached the clearing near the water trough, I looked around. No deer, no farmer, no uncle, and no horses. I climbed down the tree and walked across the ground toward the water trough. I stopped. I stood up and looked around. Nothing!

It was very quiet. I ran and jumped up on the edge of the water trough. This was always a tricky maneuver. If I didn't do it just right, I would end up IN the water. It was just a little excitement, but I had fun doing it.



I looked around again, and saw nothing. I wondered where everyone was? I jumped down and began to walk toward the big oak tree where my uncle lived. It was a beautiful tree. It was big and round, and its limbs went all the way to the ground.

I jumped from the ground and caught one of the limbs. I climbed through the thick leaves that protected the underside of the tree. The trunk of this huge tree was even bigger than the big pecan tree near my nest.

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

The tree looked like it had been in a fight with a big yellow bulldozer monster. It leaned at an angle low to the ground, and then split into two limbs that were bigger around than the trunk of my tree. I looked around at the mass of huge gnarled limbs for my uncle. But he wasn't there.

"Hello?" I said softly, "Is anybody there?"

This was a strange feeling, and I felt like leaving. I turned and ran back down the limb and jumped to the ground and ran all the way across the yard to the water trough.

I ran around behind it and jumped up on the edge again. I looked around, and still there was no one around.

Then I felt something. It was a tiny vibration under my feet. It felt like the bulldozer was tearing up the ground again. I looked at the water and it began to vibrate. The image of my reflection in the water began to quiver. And then, I saw the golden horse coming around from behind the farm house. He was running.

Then I saw another horse, and then all the horses.



Five - The Golden Bo

They were running and jumping and kicking up in the air, and heading my way. I jumped backwards and hit the ground and ran to the mesquite tree. It was the closest tree to the trough. I could hear the thundering as they came closer, and I jumped as hard as I could. THONK!

I was up the tree and out on a limb before they stopped running. I thought that they were going to run over the water trough, but they stopped very, very quickly!

As they all gathered around the trough, it seemed that they all put their heads into the water at once. I could hear them slurping the water as their sides heaved. I thought they were going to drink all the water in no time, but something on the edge of the trough started spewing water and refilling it with beautiful clear, cool water, as fast as they drank it.

The largest horse was a beautiful golden color, like corn, and he had a white tail and white hair on his neck. He also had a white stripe between his eyes down to his nose.

He finished drinking first, and walked over to the mesquite tree where I was hiding. I had seen the farmer riding on his back. He rode along the fences and through the pasture all around the farm. He had a presence about him like he was not afraid of anything, and I knew he must be the leader of all the horses.

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

He stopped just beneath where I was hiding and shook his head and neck. Then he shook all over! The ground shook too, and I could feel the vibrations come up the tree to the limb I was on. Then, he snorted, not once but twice. He looked up into the tree where I hid and spoke.

"Hello," he said.

I peeped over the edge of the limb and looked down at him.

"Uh, hello..." I said back to him.

"I'm Bo," he said calmly, "Who are you?"

"Uh, I'm Sidney, sir," I said respectfully.

"Well, hello Sidney. Are you enjoying this great day?" he asked.

"Uh, yes sir, I just came down to visit my uncle Argyle." I said politely.

"Ah, Argyle...! He's down on the far side of the pasture, where the farmer is fixing the fence."

One of the other horses had finished drinking and walked over next to Bo. She had a stripe on her face like Bo, but she was darker and had a black tail and black hair on her neck.



Five - The Golden Bo

She had black feet and the hair on her legs was also black. She was very pretty.

"Oh, Sidney this is Charlie, she's my sister. Charlie, this is Sidney." Bo said politely.

"Hello Sidney, nice to meet you. Listen Bo, I'm going back down to the bottom of the pasture, in case the farmer needs me for anything."

"Ok. I'll be along in a bit," he told her, and she turned and walked away.

Then she stopped and looked back.

"Oh, it was nice to meet you Sidney," she turned and walked on.

The other horses joined her in single file. When they were all gone, Bo looked back up at me.

"Well Sidney, I guess I'd better go too. I need to make sure nobody gets into trouble," he smiled and shook his head again.

"Oh, ok. It was nice to meet you sir," I said.

"It was certainly nice to meet you too Sidney. I'm sure I'll see you again." with thundering hooves, he ran to catch the others.

I thought that was interesting. I climbed down and walked over to the trees along the creek, and began my long trek home.

As I scurried through the now familiar trees along the creek, I thought how wonderful it was to meet new friends. I wasn't so alone after all.

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

I reached the tree that I cross going back to my nest, and stopped. I looked through the trees at the new pond. What a nice pond it was indeed.

For a moment I sat there thinking about the big yellow monster. I thought it was going to destroy my world. I had been wrong. I was wrong about it, wrong about the farmer, and I was wrong about a lot of things.

What a wonderful thing he had done by making the pond so everyone could have water. I looked over at my tree and nest, and for some reason decided to go up to the big pecan tree and look over the farm.



Five - The Golden Bo

I continued through the trees along the little creek, and finally reached the end where I had to walk along the ground to the little pecan tree.

I climbed down and walked out into the tall grass, and stopped. I stood up. I looked around, but saw nothing but grass and weeds and trees. It was hear, that the hawk had taken my mother away. I looked up into the sky and didn't see any danger.

I began to walk on through the tall grass, and just before I reached the little pecan tree, I jumped. I loved to jump. As I walked out on the limb toward the big pecan tree, I saw movement above.

I froze! I looked up into the big pecan tree and around the limbs and leaves. But all was still. I began to walk along the small limb, and again I saw something move. I looked up, and at the very top of the big tree, I saw her!

It was my mom! I ran out the little limb and jumped with all my might. I caught a branch and heard a crack. I fell, tumbling toward the ground.

There were no other branches to grab, so I prepared to hit the ground. THUD! Lucky for me, it wasn't very far to fall. I got up and shook the dust off. I looked up.

"Mom!" I shouted up into the tree. But there was no answer.

I ran as fast as I could to the trunk of the big pecan tree and jumped. I began the long climb to the top where she was.

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel



"Mom!" I shouted again as I scraped and clawed my way to the top.

'Why won't she answer?' I wondered.

I raced past limb after limb on my way to the top. Finally I saw her! I had so much to tell her. I ran out the limb that she was on, and looked again. It wasn't her! She stood up and faced me as if she was ready to fight!

"You're not my mom!" I said as I tried to catch my breath.

"No! I'm not!" she said with a quizzical look.

"You're not a very good jumper, are you?" she quipped.

Five - The Golden Bo

"Yes I am! I just missed because I was looking up at you!"

"Well, I think that you would be better off paying more attention to what you're doing, than looking at me." She had a coy look in her eye and a smirk on her face.

I sat there for a moment, trying to regain my composure and my breath. Then I stated what to me, was obvious.

"What are you doing in MY tree?" I asked, still out of breath.

"YOUR tree?" she laughed, "I don't see your name on it."

I tried to think of a good answer, but I couldn't think of one at that moment.

"What IS your name by the way, or should I just call you 'He-who-falls-from-tree-and-hits-ground-with-thud.'?"

I was getting mad and frustrated, because she was so quick with her tongue, and so right with her words.

"I'm Sally, by the way, and you are..." she smirked again. She shook her head up and down and waited for my reply.

"Oh uh, I'm Sidney." I finally said.

"Well Sidney," she began, "thanks for letting me climb up YOUR tree."

She stopped smirking, and was now looking at me rather oddly.

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

She had the faintest twinkle in her eye. She had a very nice face, and her coat was the color of honey. Nice dark golden honey.

"It's not really MY tree..." I began, but she did not let me finish.

"Really?" she said, "But didn't you just say that it was YOUR tree?" she had that twinkle in her eye again.



I conceded that no, it really wasn't my tree, and we began to talk. We talked for what seemed like hours.

She told me that she lived in a big elm tree by a large pond, far up the creek.

Five - The Golden Bo

She lived with her mother, father and brother. She usually didn't travel this far, but was curious.

When she saw the big pecan tree, she just had to climb it. It had a beautiful view, and she wished that she didn't have to go home. But the big yellow ball was starting to turn to orange.

"Well Sidney, I've had fun talking to you, but I have a long way to go, and it's getting very late."

"I wish you could stay."

Why did I say that! What a stupid thing to say! 'Just SHUT UP Sidney!' I said to myself.

"Thanks," she smiled, "but I really must go. Maybe I'll come back sometime. Or maybe you could come and visit me."

She had such a lovely smile.

"It's really not that hard to find, but I have to go."

I followed her down to the ground and stood on my hind feet and watched as she walked away.

She walked across the open ground along the little creek and jumped into a tree. She turned around and I could see her smile.

I yelled "Be careful!"

"Thanks, I will, and you be careful too!"

She turned, and was gone.

She disappeared into the thick trees and vines that lined the little creek. I turned and walked along the fence all the way back to my tree. When I got to my tree, I didn't even jump.

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

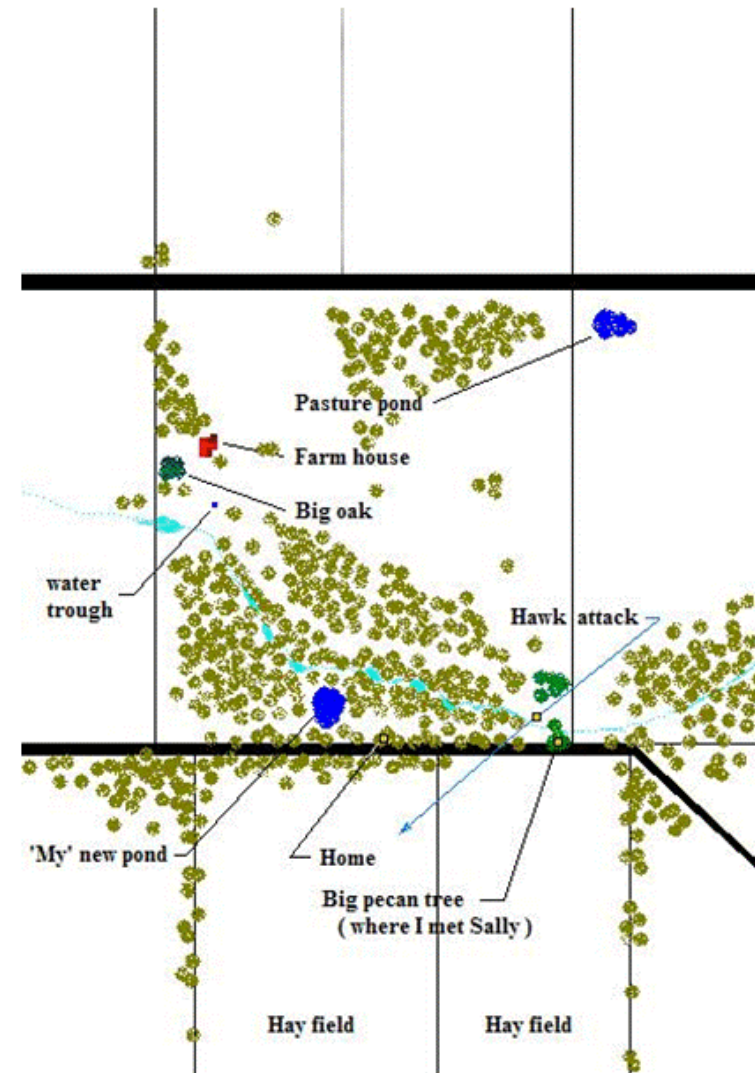


The big orange ball had just dipped below the trees when I reached my nest. I crawled over the edge to lie down. Looking up through the canopy of limbs and leaves above me, I saw that familiar star that smiled at me. It was smiling brighter than ever it seemed.

I laid down, smiled and closed my eyes.
I dreamed of corn... and deer... and golden horses.
I dreamed of cool clear water.
And I dreamed of Sally.

Five - The Golden Bo

Map of the Farm





Six

Up a Creek

Finally, I made up my mind.

I was on my way across the ground, and up the little creek. From the big pecan tree, there was a short distance of open ground that I had to cross to reach the trees along the creek. This big pecan tree seemed to be the anchor in my little world, but I was leaving it behind.

I was heading into the unknown world up the creek. I was heading toward trees that I had never been in before. The trees that lined the creek above the big pecan tree were thick with vines. Many had wild grape vines that draped across the creek between the trees.

I was going up the creek into the land where Sally lived. It was a little scary, but I had made up my mind to go and find her.

The little creek wound its way up into the sandy hills that bordered the little farm that I lived on. From the top of the big pecan tree, I could see the dark vine covered trees as they hugged the little creek up into the hills. Now, I was going to be in them.

It had been great fun, scampering through the limbs and vines down to the farm house.

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

I could drink from the water trough that the farmer kept near the house. I could find a few golden nuggets of corn left by the deer.

But now, I was heading into the unknown. I was looking for someone that I only met once.



As I reached the first tree across the clearing, I wondered what I was getting myself into. I had been down the creek all the way to the farm house many times, but that seemed a very short distance now. But up here, I knew no one except Sally. And I didn't even know where she lived.

She told me that she lived in a big elm tree by a pond. But how many ponds were up here?

Six - Up a Creek

I was a little scared at the thought of getting lost, but I reasoned that if I stayed near the creek, I could always find my way back home.

'Yes, that's it!' I said out loud, 'I'll stay close to the little creek, and hope that it doesn't rain.'



A cool breeze blew across the leaves overhead as I wound my way through the trees and vines. My heart pounded in my chest as I thought about what I was doing. But I hadn't seen Sally in days, weeks it seemed! I didn't know how long it had been. I just knew that I had to find her!

The wind was getting stronger and whipped the trees overhead. The sky grew dark with clouds. I knew those clouds. They brought rain.

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

Great, just what I needed. I wondered if I would get stuck up here. If it rained hard, the creek would flow and if I fell in, I might get washed all the way down past the farm house to who knows where.

I wondered if I should turn back.

And then, I remembered Sally's soft dark eyes glowing from the light of the big golden ball in the late afternoon. I remembered telling her to 'Be careful!' and wondered if something had happened to her. I had to know! I had to find her!

I felt a drop on my head. The rain was starting. It was soft at first. I could hear it falling through the trees. It had a rhythm. I began to run through the trees and vines to the rhythm of the rain. But then it grew harder.

I tried to get out of the pouring rain by holding on upside down under a big limb. But it was no good. My arms began to ache and I knew that I couldn't hold on like this much longer.

Then, I saw it.

It was a large tree, heavily covered with grapevines. It had a large broken limb that had partially split off the tree and was touching the ground.



Six - Up a Creek

Where it was still attached, I could see a hollow.

The rain slowed to a soft sprinkle.

Now was my chance! I jumped down to the limb below me, and then to the ground and ran as fast as I could to the broken limb that led up to the hollow.

The leaves were gone from this limb, washed away by time. It looked well worn on top too. I scampered up the limb and into the hollow entrance. I turned around and looked back at the little creek.

Water was now starting to trickle down its winding path, a path that would take it by the big pecan tree near my home. I shook the water off of my back and head as I stood in the entrance of the little hollow.

"EXCUSE ME!" A voice came from the dark behind me. I froze...

"AHEM!" it said.

I was too scared to turn around, too scared to do anything.

"Are you hard of hearing?" the voice asked.

I was scared, and dripping, and cold!

"Hello?" the voice echoed again.

"Uh, no, I'm not hard of hearing. I didn't know anyone lived here."

I began to shiver slightly.

"Do you think for one minute, that anyone would pass up the opportunity to live in a perfectly good hollow like this?" the voice asked.

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

I turned slightly and looked back over my shoulder into the darkness. It moved toward me, and I braced myself, ready to run back out into the rain.

Out of the darkness I saw a glint of light in its eyes.

Then, I saw a black nose with white whiskers. And then... a black mask around pitch black eyes.

"Are you gonna say something, or just stand there and drip in my doorway?"

"Oh!" I said, "I'm sorry, uh, I... you scared me. I didn't know anyone was here."

"Yeah, you already said that... haven't you got anything new to say...? like 'Where you're from? What's your name? Why you're here?' you know... stuff like that."

I could see her whole head now. She was a raccoon.

"Oh, and you might say... 'Hello, is anybody home? May I come in? 'cause it's raining out here.' you know... something like that."

I detected less danger and more sarcasm in her voice now.

"Well, are you gonna just keep drippin', or are you comin' in?"

"Oh! yes... err... no... I mean, please... May I come in?"



Six - Up a Creek

"Yeah sure, come on in... just don't do any more shaking. I was nice and dry before you got here!"

Oh, I'm Rocketta, and who did you say you were?"

"I'm Sidney..." I began but was interrupted...

"Well, my momma named me Rocketta, but I don't like it. Everybody just calls me Rockiee. You're not from around here are you?"

"Uh... no, I'm from just the other side of the big pecan tree, down the creek."

"Yeah, I know that old tree. Great old tree! It's been there for a hundred years. Stands all alone... by a fence doesn't it?"

"Yes, it does." I said.

My eyes began to grow accustomed to the dim light in the hollow, and I could see Rockiee curling up far in the back, at the end of the surprisingly large open space inside the tree.

"Look," she said, "I'm sorry to be so snippy, but I'm a day sleeper, and you woke me up from a really good nap."

"I'm sorry!" I said, "I just didn't think about anyone living here, I was just trying to get in out of the rain."

I explained to her that I was looking for a friend that lived up here. I told her she lived in a big elm tree by a pond.

"And you don't know which one either?" she asked,

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

“‘cause I know of at least three ponds near here, and there are probably more. And just how many big elm trees do ya think are up here?”

“No... I’m sorry... I don’t know which one she lives in.”

“Ok Sid, may I call you Sid?” she cocked her head slightly.

“Yeah, sure...”

“Ok, here’s the thing Sid, it’s raining, I’m grumpy, and you don’t wanna get wet. So, how ‘bout we both take a short little nap and wait for the rain to stop. And then, I’ll show you the three ponds that I know about and you can find your little friend. Deal?”



Six - Up a Creek

But before I could answer, she had already curled up and was well on her way to dreamland.

“Yeah, deal.” I said quietly.

I turned and looked back out the entrance of Rockiees’ hollow and wondered if Sally was safe and dry. I looked down at the little creek that ran a winding path through the woods and vines. The water was moving swiftly down its little path now.

I sat there and watched and listened to the steady splatter of the rain bouncing from leaf to limb to ground. It rushed to join the now swollen creek. I grew tired of sitting and lay down and looked out on this new world. The sound of the rain was soothing and soon my eyes grew heavy.

I had just closed my eyes for a moment when...

WHACK! I felt a sharp slap just above my tail.

“Hey Sid! You gonna sleep all day or what?! You’re crowding up my doorway! Commin through... I’m a commin through.”

Somehow she squeezed past me onto the limb and started down to the ground below. I watched as she waddled down the limb. She turned around and looked back at me.

“Well?” she said as she looked back at me.

“Ok, I’m coming!” and I began to climb down after her.

The rain had stopped, except for the few remaining drops clinging tightly to the leaves and vines.

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

And when they could hold on no longer, they plunged toward the earth... or the top of my head! I was more than half way down the limb when I stopped.

Rockiee was already at the edge of the rushing water. Her hands were splashing in it as it swirled along down the creek.

"I can't go through that!" I said as I sat there and looked at the rushing water.

"What? Sure you can. Can't you swim? Watch me, it's easy."

She waded into the swirling water and took a big step, and went under. Her head bobbed back up as the swift water carried her down the little creek. All I could see was her head and tail! Her front hands were splashing in the water, and her tail floated along behind.

She was almost all the way across when she stopped suddenly in the rushing water. It swirled up and splashed around her as she pulled herself up on some tree roots that had been hidden just below the surface of the rushing water.

She climbed out on the opposite bank and shook all over. Water flung into the air and made a nice round shape over her, then fell to the ground and trickled back toward the rushing creek. She walked back up the creek toward me.

"See, that wasn't so hard. Now you try it!" She sat waiting.

Six - Up a Creek

And she could continue to wait! Because there was no way that I was going to do THAT!

"Uh, no thank you. I'll... I'll just go across on the limbs. Up here... where it's not so wet. But thanks." I climbed back toward the dripping limbs.

"Ok... suit your self! But I'm a fast walker. And I'm already heading up the gullies toward that first pond where your little friend is... and I ain't waitin' on ya!" she turned and waddled off.

She looked back over her shoulder and grinned, and I knew she was teasing me. I ran back up the limb that had fallen from her home and jumped through the trees and was soon right on her tail. I was just a little higher off the ground than she was.

Soon the land began to flatten out and we came upon an old forgotten road, winding its way through the woods.



The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

Rockiee turned and walked down this old overgrown road, and I followed along through the trees.

"Is it very far?" I shouted down at her.

"No, it's just over this next ridge."

As we got closer, I could see through the trees a tiny little pond surrounded by thick brush and trees. This couldn't be it, I thought.

"Ok, Sid, this is it. Well, it's not IT, it's just the first it. And maybe it is IT! And maybe it's NOT IT." she laughed. "I just crack myself up sometimes! Ya know, that water really made me feel a lot better... have you noticed, I'm not as grumpy?!"



"Uh, yeah... Right... Um... I don't think this is what Sally was describing."

"Sally? Sally?! Are you looking for Sally?!" she asked.

"Yes I am." I said.

Six - Up a Creek

"Well, why didn't you say so?! Come on, I know where she lives!"

She was scurrying along the old road once more. I followed, but soon ran out of trees as we approached a gravel road crossing the woods in front of us. Rockiee stopped just short of the road, and sat down.

"Well, there ya go! Just across the road. See that tall tree on the other side of the pond? Well, that's her tree!"

She turned around as I walked up beside her and sat down.

"Wow!" I said.

"Yeah, I know. Way back here in the woods... big pond in the front yard... quick access to the creek... lots of trees. Yepper, it's a nice place alright."



The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

"Sure is!" I said.

"Listen Sid, I'm gonna head back to the creek, if that's ok. I don't get to play in the water that often, so..." she smiled. "Oh, by the way, if you need a place to stay, you're welcome at my place. You know I'm out most of the night anyway. Just follow the road down to the creek and hang a left."

I thanked her and began to walk across the road toward Sally's home.

When I got across the road, I stopped and looked back at Rockiee walking down toward the creek. What a nice thing to do, I thought. I walked up the dam that held the water in the pond. It was big and flat on top, and had lots of grass. I looked over across the pond, up into the large elm tree, and saw the nest.



Six - Up a Creek

That must be where Sally lives, I thought. I walked around the dam and up to the tree and jumped. I loved to jump. I called out for Sally, but got no answer. Maybe she was out gathering nuts or something. So I found a limb and stretched out to wait.

I saw a squirrel coming through the trees, but it wasn't Sally. I watched as he came jumping through the limbs. Then, he saw me. He froze where he stood. He stared at me. Then, he jumped into the tree that I was in, and came rushing at me!

"What are you doing in my tree?!" he yelled.

I stood up and prepared for his attack. But he stopped short. I stood my ground, not knowing whether I was in the wrong tree or not.

"I said... what are you doing in MY tree?"

"Oh, be quiet Bobby!" It was her.

It was Sally!

I turned and saw her jump from a limb near by and onto the limb that I was on. She climbed up beside me.

"And besides Bobby, it's not 'YOUR' tree!" Sally said stepping around in front of me.

"I told you I don't like it when you call me Bobby! My name is ROBERT!" he said.

"Look, 'ROBERT'! It is not 'YOUR' tree! It's 'OUR' tree. It may be 'YOUR' tree some day, but not today! So why don't you just run along and play with your acorns or something?"

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

Robert turned and climbed up through the limbs to the family nest without a word.

"Sidney, that's my brother Robert. Oh, and there are my parents!"

She looked around at the two squirrels coming through the trees.

"Mom, Dad, this is Sidney! Sidney these are my parents, Robert Sr. and Sarah."

"Just call me 'Bob', Sidney. It's nice to meet you. Sally told us about you." he said.

"It's nice to meet you too, sir." I said respectfully.

"Oh, Sidney, I'm so glad that you could finally make it up here!" her mother said.

"Sally has been pining every day..." she smiled and looked at her daughter.

Sally cut her mother off quickly.

"Mom...!"

I could see that she had blushed under her golden coat.

They had been scouting for food supplies for the coming winter. They were very nice, except for Robert Jr. who was fairly grumpy. Even Rockiee could have taken lessons from him. Soon, it began to get late, and I felt strangely like I needed to leave. So I said my good byes and began my slow climb down the tree. Sally followed me to the ground.

"You're not going to go all the way home, are you?"

Six - Up a Creek

"I know my dad won't let you stay here, but I know a couple of places where you could spend the night."

I could see the worried look on her face in the late evening glow.

"Rockiee told me that I could stay at her place." I said.

"You met Rockiee?! Great! She's wonderful, isn't she?!"

I could see relief in her soft eyes, and knew that I should go.

"Well, I guess I better get going."

As I began to walk away, she touched me softly.

"Do you know how to get to Rockiee's place from here?" she asked and looked tenderly at me.

"Yeah, I'll be ok." I said.

"Ok, well... Will I see you tomorrow?"

"Yeah, I'll see ya tomorrow." I smiled from ear to ear.

As I turned to walk to the road and down the creek to Rockiee's hollow, Sally grabbed my arm again. She touched her nose softly to mine and said...

"Be careful." she smiled softly.

"I will." I said, and I turned and walked away.

It was all I could do to keep from running and jumping up into the air. I felt like kicking and screaming at the top of my voice!

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

But, I quietly and cautiously walked to the gravel road and down toward the creek where Rockiee lived. It was a short walk to the creek that gurgled through a large hollow pipe under the gravel road.

I found a tree near the creek, and was up and across as the big orange ball dipped below the trees.

As I crawled up the broken limb to the hollow, I looked up into the darkening sky. There, in the twilight, was my star smiling down at me.

I watched it as the sky turned from indigo to black. And then I crawled inside and curled up in a nice dry corner.

I closed my eyes. I began to dream... of deer... and corn.

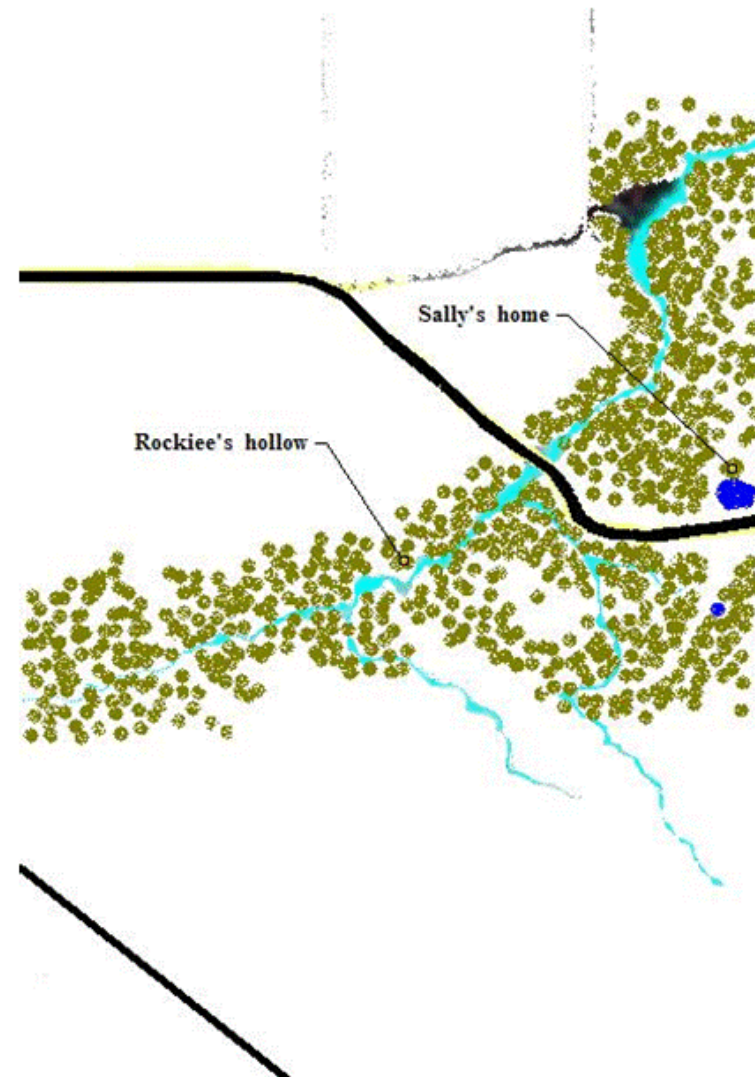
I dreamed of golden horses, and clear rushing water.

And I dreamed of Sally.

My Sally!

Six - Up a Creek

Map of the Farm





Seven

The Big Question

We spent a lot of time running up and down the creek and through the trees. I helped gather nuts for Sally and her family. It wasn't like work at all. It was fun.

Sally was the perfect companion and friend. Each night she went home to her nest, and I went back to Rockiees hollow. Rockiee had given me my own little corner and I hardly noticed any more when she came in during the wee hours of the morning.

One morning however, I woke without the familiar warmth of Rockiees fur coat next to me. She was sitting just outside, on the broken limb that led from the ground up to the hollow. The big yellow ball was rising through the trees and cast a golden silhouette on her brown and gray coat.

"What's up Rockiee?" I said as I raised my head from the warm spot in my little corner. She didn't turn around. I got up and began to walk toward her.

"Are you ok?" I asked as I reached the doorway.

"I am going to start a family Sidney," she said, but didn't look at me.

"Great!" I said as I sat down next to her.

"I'm gonna start a family, and I don't think there will be room enough for you here."

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

Silence filled the air.

She turned and looked at me, and I could see the sadness in her eyes. I knew she had grown fond of me, and I really liked her too. We had become really good friends.

"Hey Rockiee, that's great news! And don't you worry about me. I need to get back to my home anyway. It's been so long since I've been home, I'll bet somebody else is living there. I'll just have to be all 'grumpy' like Bobby and run them off."

We both laughed. I had never seen anyone stay grumpy all the time. But Bobby was notoriously grumpy ALL-THE-TIME.

"Are you sure? You've been a great friend, and I really like coming home to a warm bed after a long night. But now, I have to start thinking about making plans for a family."

She looked at me to make sure she had not hurt my feelings.

"Of course I'm sure!" I looked straight into her eyes and tried to convince her.

"Ya know Rockiee, I just came up here looking for Sally. And with your help, I found her. I would have never found her if you hadn't helped." I looked away and tried to hide my worry.

It was going to be strange. I had grown use to playing with Sally in the daytime and sleeping in the hollow every night.

Seven - The Big Question

I hadn't given any thought to going home to an empty rundown nest with no nuts for the winter.

"Ya know," Rockiee began, "speaking of Sally... Well, you two get along so well, why don't you ask her to go home with you?" she cut her eyes toward mine.

"What...?!" I was in shock.

I hadn't given that the slightest thought. I had been so busy playing with Sally and helping her family gather food, that I had forgotten about going home. Asking Sally to come with me had not crossed my mind either. And what was I going to eat all winter?

"I... I couldn't ask her to do that." I said, hoping that Rockiee was only teasing me. "You don't seriously think that I should ask Sally to come home with me. Do you?"

"Sure you could. All ya gotta do is ask her! I'll bet she'll say yes."

She looked at me and smiled in a coy sort of way. I looked back at the creek and the little puddles left behind after the rushing water left. I really didn't want to be alone.

"Go on... all ya gotta do is ask!" she leaned around and looked up into my eyes.

"But... How? I don't know what to say. I don't know how..."

"You'll figure it out! I got faith in ya kid."

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

"Now, it's a little past my bed time and I feel a 'real' serious nap comin' on. So if you'll excuse me, I can see you need a little time to yourself."

She got up, turned around, and walked to the back of the dark hollow. I sat there looking at a little puddle below the tree. How was I going to ask Sally to come home with me? It was a little scary. She really was perfect though. I really had a lot of fun with her. And I really couldn't imagine not having her around. But how was I going to ask her? How do I do it?

I had to figure out just the right time to ask her. I had to figure out just the right place to ask her. I had to figure out just the right words to say when I ask her. I got up and began to walk toward the ground. A plan started to form in my tiny brain.

I would ask her to come and help me gather pecans from the big pecan tree. After all, I had helped her family gather all those acorns they would be eating all winter. And then we would work all day, until the big ball began to turn orange. And then I would tell her that it was such a long way to go for her to get home. And then I would offer her my nest, just for the night. And then the next morning, I would do it all over again! I knew that there were lots and lots of pecans that needed gathering. And then, we would do it again. And then, she would feel right at home and never want to go back up the creek! I sighed.

Seven - The Big Question

I thought to myself 'she probably won't even want to come and help me.' Did I say that out loud... I wondered?

"Help you with what?" echoed a voice from above.

It was Sally. I had to look up. I couldn't ignore her. Not now!

"Oh hi Sally...!"

I could feel my ears getting very hot with fresh blood. I looked back at the creek.

"Come help you with what?" she repeated.

I knew one thing for sure about Sally. Once she set her mind on something, that was it! I knew I had to answer her. But how could I say what I really wanted to say. I tried desperately to think of another way to explain what I had said out loud.

"Oh nothing..." I said, turning as red as a cardinal.

Think, THINK! I told myself. This was not the right time. I hadn't finished my plan. This was not the way I was going to ask her to come live with me.

"Just ask me you silly squirrel..." she cocked her head at me as I turned to face her.

"Just ask... I might say yes... I might say no... But you will never, never find out unless you ask!"

She was looking me straight in the eye. She had a stern look on her face. I knew there was no getting out of this one. I wasn't ready! I just sat there.

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

"Well... are you just going to sit there turning red, or are you going to ask me?"

I couldn't believe she could see that I had turned red. I must have turned purple then!

"I, uh..."

"Yes?" she cocked her head the other way and looked down her nose at me.

"I, uh... I..."

"Come on, you can do it. I know you can." I saw a slight twinkle in her eye as she spoke.

"I just hope you can do it before dark." she smirked as she looked around.

I knew the words were there. I just couldn't get them past my teeth and out of my mouth. I thought my head was going to explode. And then... they stumbled out.

"I, uh... will... will you come and stay with me?"

OH NO!!! I shouted to myself in silence! That was horrible! That wasn't what I wanted to say. That wasn't how I wanted to ask her. I wanted to reach out and grab the words like a branch at the end of a jump and pull them back toward me. But I couldn't. She didn't flinch or move a muscle except for the smirk that vanished like a raindrop hitting the ground. Her eyes never left mine... searching... penetrating. She sat there looking at me for what seemed like several days. And then, she spoke.

"Are you asking me to come and live with you and be your mate for as long as we live?"

Seven - The Big Question

These were the exact words that I wanted to say! Well, maybe not the exact words, they were better. And, they came out of her mouth!

"Yes!" was all I could say. I was lucky to get that one word out correctly!

It seemed like I waited forever for her to speak. I held on to my breath until I was ready to explode! Then, she spoke.

"Then the answer to your question is..." her eyes began to soften, "Yes!"

I felt like I could jump all the way over the big pecan tree with one single leap!

"Yes, I would love to come and live my life with you Sidney."

The trees and leaves became a blur as I flipped over backwards! I landed on my feet, my head still spinning. I was about to burst just standing there, sending eyes and ears and fingers and toes and hair, flying in all directions! I was so excited that I did another flip over backwards. Then, like the rock that holds the dirt to the earth, she said...

"Don't you think you'd better go tell Rockiee bye? We have a long way to go."

"Yes!" I shouted.

I whirled around and scampered back up the limb to Rockiee's hollow. I ran through the door and over to where Rockiee was curled up and slapped her on the rump. WHACK!

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

"What the...?!" Rockiee mumbled, still half asleep.

"She said YES! Rockiee! She said YES!" I was so excited!

"Umm... Huh? Oh yeah, right... I knew she would." she closed her eyes and wiggled a little trying to go back to sleep.

"I gotta go Rockiee! Thanks for everything!"

"Huh... oh yeah, no problem. Come back and see me sometime."

"I will Rockiee! I will! Bye!"

All I heard was the sound of heavy breathing from the back of the hollow. I ran back outside and looked around for Sally, but she was gone. I looked to my right and saw her far down the creek, running through the trees. I began to grab limb after limb and vine after vine, as I sped through the trees on my way to Sally.

When I finally caught her I said...

"You've made me one happy squirrel!"

"Yes, and you've made me a happy squirrel too, dear." she said. And for a moment I heard my mothers' voice when she used to call me 'dear'.

I sat there for a moment just watching her, as she ran through the trees ahead of me. Then I charged after her! She stopped and waited for me to catch up.

"Did I tell you what a lucky squirrel I was?!" I asked as I reached the limb she was on.

Seven - The Big Question

"Well, you won't be so lucky if you have to spend the night sleeping in a tree over this creek with no nest!" she smirked.

"If you don't hurry up, we won't make it back to your nest before dark. And I am NOT running through the trees after dark!"

"OUR nest!" I corrected her, "It's 'OUR' nest now, dear."

"Well, it won't be 'OUR' nest tonight if you don't hurry up. The big ball in the sky is already turning orange, and it will be dark soon. And I am NOT walking on the ground after dark either!"

"Ok," I said, "Race ya!"

And I jumped in front of her and raced through the trees.

"Oh, no you don't!" she said and began to catch me.

She could run and jump as fast as I could. It was great fun racing with Sally through the trees down the little creek.

Finally, I saw it! The top of the big pecan tree, stood majestically in front of the great orange ball as it began to slide down into the distant trees.

We jumped from the last tree, and both hit the ground running, side by side and neck in neck. We ran past the big pecan tree, down into the creek as it wound along beside it, and up through the clearing that rolled along the fence.

The Adventures of Sidney Squirrel

Finally we reached the tree that I had called mine.

She jumped, and was already heading for the nest, as I stopped and watched the big orange ball slip silently behind the trees. Sally was already at the nest when I jumped and began to climb our tree. I sat down beside her on the edge of our nest.

"Well, it's not as bad as I thought it might be," she said as she looked at the neglected nest, "Still, it needs some work. But that can wait until tomorrow."

She crawled in and lay down on the soft dry leaves. I joined her and lay down in front of her. She put her arm over my shoulder and wrapped her tail around me.

I opened one eye and looked up... up through the canopy of leaves and limbs and into the indigo sky.

And there it was... my shining star... smiling down at me.

I closed my eye. I smiled and drifted off into a dream.

I dreamed of deer... and corn... and golden horses.

I dreamed of cool clear water.

And I dreamed of Sally... MY Sally.

How great it was

to be alive,

and

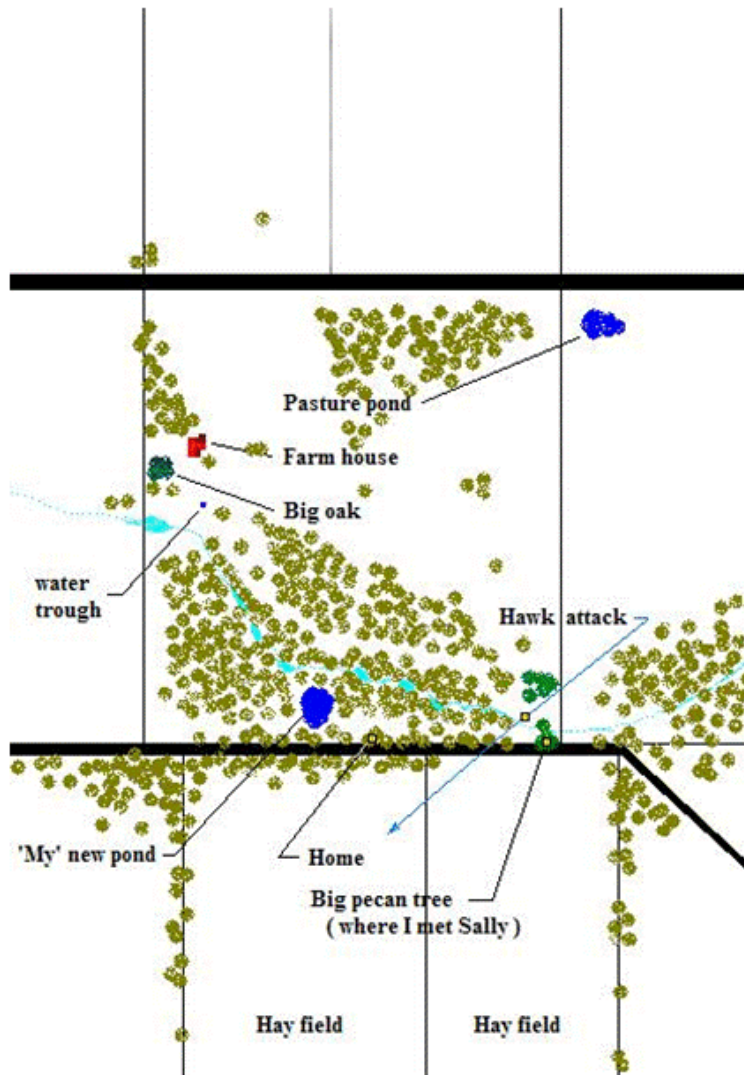
be

a squirrel!

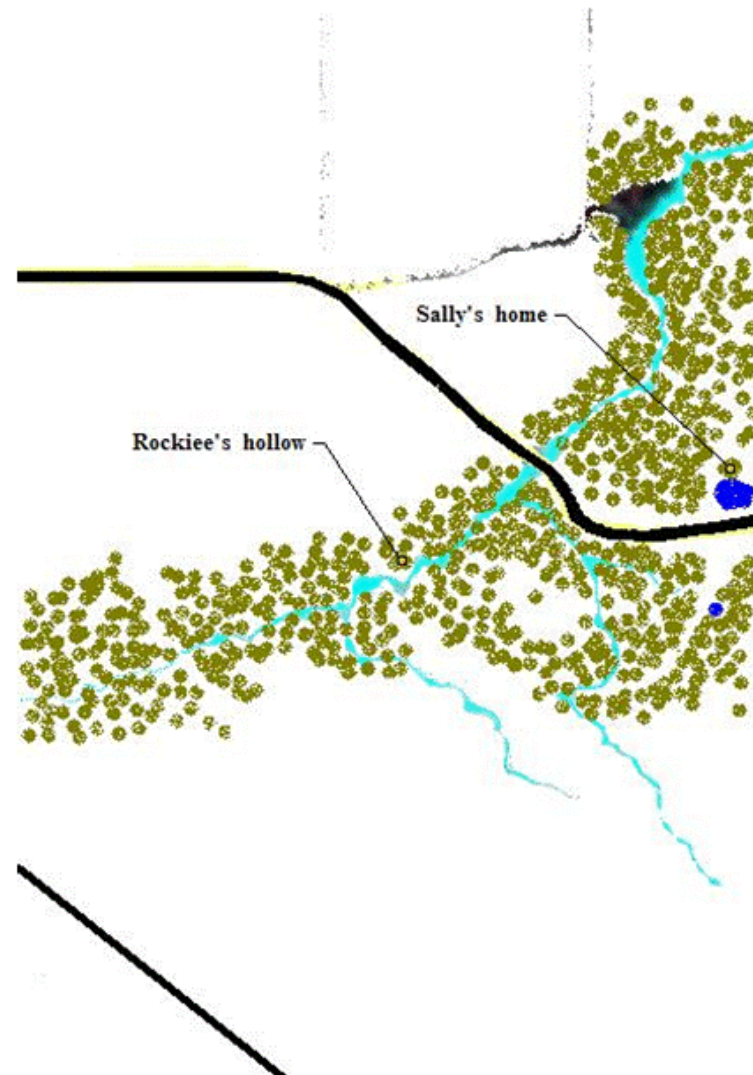
Seven - The Big Question



Map of the Farm



Up the Creek



Credits and Acknowledgments

Page 29	'Hawk Eye'	cropped from the digital photo "Redtailedhawkshertztz.jpg" Date: 28 Mar 09 Author: Redlegicks Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution ShareAlike 3.0 License.
Page 31	"Lucy"	from www.flickr.com/photos/1889527904_9b46ff9dba.jpg Date: Uploaded on November 6, 2007 Author: John Harrison (jayhawk6) Used with permission .
Page 34, 36	"Hummingbird"	cropped from the digital photo Rubythroathummer65.jpg Date 11 February 2003 Author Steve Maslowski This is a file from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: Public Domain.
Page 46	"Monster Dozer"	cropped from the digital photo CAT-D10N-pic001.jpg Date: 24 May 2008 Author: MathKnight Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution ShareAlike 3.0 License.
Page 82	"Raccoon"	cropped from the digital photo 711px-Raccoon_(Procyon_lotor)_2.jpg Date: 5 August 2005 Author: Darkone Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution ShareAlike 3.0 License.

All rights reserved .

No part of this book or document may be reproduced
by any means available,
with exception of
(images listed as 'Public Domain' or 'Creative Commons')
without the expressed written consent
of

the author or his assigns.
The image of "Lucy" is the copy written property of John Harrison,
and used with permission.

All
remaining photographs, maps, graphics and text,
are
the copy written property
of
Joel B. Kirkpatrick III
© 2009