

THE LIFE OF NORMAN NUSS



TYLER BEAUMAN

The Human

Norman **Nuss** had not always led a life controlled by fear. As a boy, Norman loved to splash around in mud puddles and play “space ranger” in his tree house and if he saw a grasshopper on the lawn, he’d capture it and put it in a jar, watching it for hours before letting it go. His mother worked as a school nurse and frowned upon his activities. “You’re going to get dirty! You’re going to fall! You’re going to catch a virus!”, she’d always say while his father would just laugh it off and encourage him to explore. Norman looked up to his father. The man was always traveling around the world, but always brought home a little trinket for Norman. “Someday I’m going to show you the world, Norman. But for now I need you to be the man of the house and look after your momma.”

The night his father was suppose to get back from India, Norman sat in his treehouse, working on a trinket for his dad. Using a nut he’d found, some twine, and scraps from his mother’s old blouse, he made his father a space ranger of his own to play with. When car headlights turned into his driveway, Norman plan



hopped out of the tree and ran for his father.

But the man who stepped out of the car wasn't his dad, it was the father of his friend, Michael Perkins, the sheriff of the town. The sheriff sat Norman and his mom down in the kitchen. It had been stormy out to sea that night, and no one had heard from the plane in hours.

Norman stood at his father's grave. The funeral had been a month earlier, but the boy still couldn't believe it. He rode his bike over everyday after school, hoping to find his father waiting for him.

On this occasion, a pile of leaves had gathered in front of the tombstone, blocking the scripture. As Norman bent to scoop them away, he noticed movement, a steady up and down of the leaves. He had heard of ghost stories, about people being buried alive and trying to dig their way out of the ground. With excitement and fear, Norman slowly moved the leaves away, half expecting to see the tips of his father's fingers wiggling out of the ground. Suddenly, a creature burst from the leaves, going several meters before stopping to look back. It hadn't been his father under the leaves, just a sleeping squirrel. Norman sat down and cried.

Norman stood at his father's grave. Twenty-six years had passed since he last saw the man. He visited every few years, taking a detour on the way home from work. A passerby would never realize this was the deceased son as he showed no emotion, just standing there in the cold.

By the time, Norman was adult, he had become a completely different person. To many, he seemed like a hard worker and great co-worker, but really he was just cautious. He got up at 4am, showered, shaved, ate breakfast alone, went to the gym to swim for an hour, showered again, went to work, got home at 6, ate dinner alone, showered, and went to bed. Day after day, 364 days a year, Christmases off. When asked to travel for business, he would always decline, volunteering someone else 'better suited' for the trip. And if anyone needed extra work done, Norman would always accept.

This was his life, no children, no wife, no adventure, no dreams. Work, work, work, work, work, until one day, death. His casket sat there on the table for hours. No one came. No one cried. The Norman Nuss that the world knew was gone, at least, that was the plan anyway.

The Owl

Norman awoke to the music of the night, the harmonic chirping of the crickets, a gentle breeze blowing through the leaves of the trees, and most boisterous, the squeaking of some small mammals. He pawed around above him, feeling for a window. The chatter of the animals grew louder, cutting into his “beauty” sleep. His search for the window became more frantic and the noise rose in sync. Admitting defeat, he opened his eyes ruining any chance of getting back to sleep within the half hour.

Towering over him were several shadows with bright eyes reflecting the moon light. Moon light? He was outside. But things were different. Was this a nightmare? A kidnapping? ALIEN ABDUCTION? He let out a scream, but even his voice had off, more of a high pitched squeak.

As his eyes adjusted, Norman noticed his captors’ features. They had gigantic heads ill proportioned to their bodies. Some sort of material dangled between their arms and legs. Perhaps capes? And then there was



the hair, oh the hair... Every square inch of their bodies had hair, right up to their bushy...tails? They were squirrels! Giant squirrels. A quick look around with his new sight confirmed that the squirrels weren't the only giants. Trees, grass, insects, all monstrous. The squirrels just stood there, staring at him, making quick movements all the while conversing in their quick squeaks.

A flicker of the light, caught his attention. A shadow moving in front of the moon. The squirrels had apparently seen it too, now dead silent. The entire forrest was silent. Norman slowly inched his way away from the squirrels, crawling to avoid attention, but ready to get up and run in a flash. He eyed them closely, but they seemed to be very distracted by the shadow they had seen. Then a snap as Norman accidentally crunched a dry leaf under his hand.

Instantly a great flying figure loomed out of the darkness, an owl of some sort. It soared straight for Norman and the squirrels. Hysteria broke out with the squirrels going every which way trying to get to a tree. The bird singled out the remaining motionless Norman and let out a screech. *Move! Move! MOVE!* He sprung up and bolted for his own tree. The owl was closing in as Norman found it difficult to run. He continuously felt top heavy, like he was going to trip and fall over. Luckily, he managed to make it to the tree and scurry behind it. The owl had to fly by, not able to make the tight turn, but it quickly turned itself around and headed back.

A stream of squeaks came from above. Norman looked up to see a few of the squirrels looking down at him. He knew he had to get out of there before the owl landed next to his tree, but he felt like he needed to listen to the squirrels, he felt like they were trying to tell him something.

Squeak squeak squeak squeak Squeak squeak squeak Squeak squeak squeak squeak squeak SQUEAK squeak squeak squeak!

Gibberish. And then something happened. A mental flash of sorts. Images of the animals and the forrest flew by in his mind's eye. The gibberish became a jumble of recognizable words and nonsense.

“Chipper squeak up here! He squeak squeak squeak you! Climb squeak squeak! Get to squeak fence!”

Putting the crazy idea that he could now kind of speak Squirrel. He looked for the fence. It stood what seemed like a half-mile away in the forrest and the owl was approaching very fast. He took off for it, once again feeling the odd top heaviness and feeling the intense gaze of the bird.

But then yet another flash occurred. More random images of the forrest and its critters, maybe even a human or two. A brief movie also played. It seemed to be a third person view of someone watching a squirrel run away from a raccoon. The squirrel ran on all fours, using its increased stability to greatly increase its speed. Norman dropped down on all fours and flew. It felt so natural, much easier than when he had run like this as a kid.

He zigzagged and rounded a tree every so often to throw off his follower, making it to the fence with a generous gap between him and the owl. But this only presented him with another problem, the fence was much too tall to get over. To a normal sized person it would probably be 6 feet, but to him it was a mini skyscraper.

The other squirrels called down to him from above. “Climb squeak tree, Chipper! Climb squeak tree and glide over!”

Climb a tree? He looked at the monstrosity above him. The tree absolutely dwarfed the fence. He hadn't climbed normal size tree since he was a boy and this was no normal size tree. He stood there staring at it. The owl let out another screech. It was right on top of him, he had no choice but to run again.

He followed the fence, hoping for another way over, maybe a very convenient staircase. After a couple minutes of running with owl talons swiping at the hair on his head, salvation finally came in the form of a hole. Formed by two of the fence's boards askew to one another, he would just barely be able to make it through. With a last burst of energy, Norman evaded the predator and dove into a new unknown territory.

The Dog

The fence shook as the owl pecked and scratched at the hole its dinner had just gone through.



The Mouse

A far off bell rang six times as the two finally found themselves at the studio.



The Squirrel

Norman wandered the streets aimlessly. While Chipper's memories had made him one with nature, he had no idea how to navigate, let alone survive the human world as a flying squirrel. The sun had just about gone over the horizon and he was tired and defenseless.



NUSS

German for “nut”.

Throughout the story, you’ll find bits of animal symbolism to serve as a bit of foreshadowing and references to the past.

Related Glossary Terms

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Chapter 1 - The Human

THE DOG

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Chapter 3 - The Dog

THE HUMAN

Since the dawn of man, people have always wondered, “What happens to things when they die?”. We’ve come up with many possible theories ranging from heavenly peace to hellish nightmares to absolutely nothing. The most interesting I’ve ever come across is the idea of reincarnation. I remember thinking it up when I was younger before I had ever heard about it outside of my thoughts. Whether this supports or eliminates its existence remains to be seen, but it’s always stuck with me.

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Chapter 1 - The Human

THE MOUSE

It's said that those possessing the mouse totem are more aware of world than others allowing them to tiptoe around the danger to give and take what they want.

Spiritually the mouse represents both fear and stealth.

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Chapter 4 - The Mouse

THE OWL

Predators of the flying squirrel include barred, great horned, northern spotted, and screech owls. While they are more dangerous than ground dwelling predators, one of the reasons flying squirrels are nocturnal is because they are better suited for dealing with nocturnal flying predators rather than day time birds of prey.

Spiritually the owl often associated with wisdom, guidance, and observation.

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Chapter 2 - The Owl

THE SQUIRREL

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