

SQUIRREL  
by Dave Biscella

“He’s not out there today,” Keith said out loud to no one in particular as he stared out his living room window.

“Who isn’t out there today? What are you talking about?” his roommate Todd asked from the other room.

Shocked by Todd’s response, either not realizing he asked the question loud enough to be heard, Keith tried to shake it off. “Nobody, don’t worry about it,” he shouted.

But Keith was worried.

Every morning, Keith would sit in his chair in the living room and stare out the window. And every morning, a big, black squirrel would come up to the window sill and sit there for a few moments. Keith would stare at the squirrel without making a noise, and the squirrel would stare into the window right back at him, before scurrying off when one of Keith’s roommates would enter the room.

“His cover must have been blown,” Keith said softly to himself, not wanting to be heard again.

Keith approached the window, looking out it and looking at the area surrounding it. Did he almost make it? Was he nearby? Or was he nowhere close? Keith saw no evidence of foul play in the immediate area. He looked out into the trees beyond their yard, wondering if there were family somewhere that was also concerned that he wasn’t there this morning.

Keith knew his worrying was silly. He knew the whole situation was silly. It was just a random squirrel. But, in some odd way, it was the highlight of Keith’s day everyday.

The first few days he saw the squirrel, he didn't appreciate it. Then, as they stared at each other, Keith would start pretending they were communicating. They would have full conversations, telepathically of course, so the roommates wouldn't hear. The squirrel would fill Keith in on his previous day's mission, and Keith would give him his mission for the next day.

Over the months, the missions became more and more dangerous, but the squirrel still returned every day. The squirrel was proving himself to be quite the operative. There was no mission Keith could come up with that he wasn't confident the squirrel would complete in heroic fashion.

Each day, Keith would daydream about what the squirrel is doing, trying to imagine what the current mission is like. Then he'd get filled in on all the details the next morning. Sometimes they weren't as exciting as he imagined, and sometimes they were far more exciting. The squirrel had managed to get himself into some pretty interesting situations, but always managed to get himself out of them.

Until today.

Keith couldn't help but feel sad. The second the squirrel wasn't there at their regular meeting time, he assumed the worst. He assumed that this latest mission was too much. That the squirrel was finally put in a situation he couldn't get himself out of.

Keith continued staring out the window, fearing the worst. He couldn't take it anymore. He needed to go outside and take a more thorough look around. There had to be something nearby, some sort of clue, anything.

Keith slid his shoes on and headed to the front door, opening it and stepping onto the porch.

"Psssst..." he heard from his left. He looked over, and there was the black squirrel, poking his head out briefly from a box he was hiding under. "They're onto me, I need your help."