

The Monkeys and the Gun

by Daniel Curzon

(a beast fable)

In Monkeytown at the zoo the big males were 1) chasing and biting the smaller males and keeping them in their place, 2) humping the females, and 3) — every now and again — sitting still to be groomed. Their large faces had whiskery recesses that attracted various vermin, which, not incidentally, made tasty snacks. In other words, everything was normal in Monkeytown.

One day a young male enticed a young female off to the side near the moat, and they enjoyed each other's company, shall we say. When he heard about it, the large male monkey in whose territory the young female lived grew outraged and bared his fangs and scolded her until she skulked off into a small cave that served as one of the colony's sleeping quarters. To the offending young male he gave six nasty bites, raising welts, and even ripping out several patches of fur. The young male sat off by himself and nursed his wounds and a grudge. After a time he picked up a stick and swiped at an even younger monkey that happened to be passing by.

And that was the end of that — more or less.

One night, just before closing time, a visitor to the zoo thought it would be a good idea to throw a loaded gun and a box of bullets into the moat. Only the thrower knew the reason — to get rid of evidence, to balance the odds for the younger monkeys against the older — or supply your own reason. The fact of the matter is that the gun and bullets were thrown.

And that gun was found, too.

The monkey who found it was the young male monkey who had been punished. He picked the gun from the moat, not quite sure what it was. But it looked hard and might make a good object to hit the older male monkey with. And sure enough, he took the gun up to where the older monkey was being groomed and shook the gun at him. The older monkey merely closed his eyes and let the grooming continue.

The younger male monkey was just about to put the gun down, his pride somewhat assuaged, and wait to grow up and have his turn chasing, humping, and being groomed. But his finger caught on the trigger, and the gun suddenly discharged, sending a bullet through the heart of the older monkey. He fell over dead, much to the dismay of the grooming monkeys, to say nothing of the vermin living in his whiskers, who departed immediately.

The tale should have ended there, no doubt. The younger monkey should now have paired off with the young female, right? But it wasn't to be. You see, the young female caught the young male cavorting with several other young females in a *menage*.

She got the gun and shot them all dead. This was much better, she felt, than shrieking and baring her teeth.

Eventually another resident of Monkeytown shot the young female to death as well. The explanations varied — she'd stolen some fruit, she'd given or gotten bad grooming, she'd . . . whatever. She was dead.

The story should have ended there, if only because the gun had run out of bullets. Yet it didn't end there, either.

One day a baby monkey discovered the box of bullets in the moat. Though the bullets were wet, they still worked. And let's just say there were enough to go around. Monkey #3 shot Monkey

#6, and then #6 (as he was dying) shot #12.

There was much chattering of teeth and lamentation. Yet no one seemed to be able to figure out that this kind of thing had not happened before they had found the gun and the bullets in the moat.

"To stop this violence, we need to teach our young the value of monkey life!" said some.

"I have a God-given right to target practice, and I'm not giving it up no matter who dies!" said others.

"A leopard could sneak in here at Monkeytown and then where would we be without a gun?" still others said.

"A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms shall not be infringed," said the rest.

Pretty soon there were no more monkeys in Monkeytown, and the zoo shut down the exhibit.

MORAL: Guns don't kill monkeys. Monkeys do.

