

Gloria the Chipmunk

By Richard Tornello

Gloria, the youngest of a family of chipmunks was old enough and finally tasked to go to the market for some selected items for her Mother. Her mother gave her the correct amount of money she would need for the transaction. Gloria was thrilled to now have the responsibility. Up until today all her brothers and sisters did their chores, made the purchases and assigned duties typical of all good chipmunk families. Everybody had a job or jobs to do, even Granpa. "Granpa is a stubborn old coot," at least that's what Dad always said. He refused to wear bifocals and his close-in eyesight was less than stellar. However with his regular glasses he had keen 20/10 vision. So he was the family Watcher. A Watcher was the lookout for hawks and other nasty beasts. Gloria thought being a lookout was a way for Granpa to escape all the chatter in the house. The air was full of noise all the time. "Everyone had to fight for airtime," her Mother would say as she attempted to teach them polite manners. Manners were reinforced by the brush.

"The path is clear of danger. You may go now. Be careful," Granpa said. He had been in communication with the other Watchers along her assigned route.

"Yes sir, I will. Oh boy this is going to be great!" A huge smile broke out across Gloria's cute little chipmunk face. So off she went, happily hopping, skipping and pin wheeling around. In what should have been a relatively short trip, Gloria managed in just ten minutes to go no further than the meadow in front of her home.

Gloria was oblivious to the fat gray squirrel sitting on a rock sunning itself. He was munching on something watching her dance.

"Hey you, hey kid!" he hollered out.

Gloria looked up, slightly startled, "Yes?"

"What are you doing? This is not the Bolshoi out here. You should be a bit more careful"

"I'm going to the market for my mother. Thank you for the warning and why do you ask?"

"I was wondering. You seem to be more interested in the plants and flowers than your duties." The gray squirrel was a bit serious on these points.

Gloria was a bit taken back. "I Am going doing my tasks, and... oh well, this is my first time out alone. It's just nice to be here."

“Yes but dangerous too,” the squirrel added. “Maybe I can assist you.”

“That might be nice,” said Gloria. Thinking to herself, what did mom always say about squirrels? She tried to remember. But it was just so nice out. There was nothing much out that she could see to worry her. Her mind was everywhere else.

To the rest of the family, Gloria was not too bright. “She’s one beer short of a six-pack”, her dad would say before her mom bopped him with a hairbrush to shut him up. “NOT NICE”, she would remonstrate. Gloria wondered why anyone would purchase a 5 drink six pack when everybody knew a six-pack was six. “Dad, what’s wrong with you. Why would you buy 5 when you are paying for six?” She asked him that just one or two times before one of her brothers explained the joke to her. When she got it, Gloria gave her dad such a nasty look that it made him feel sorry for her future boyfriends, and sorry he said it. “Sweetie I just assumed...”

“You assume too little on my part.” and stomped, as any chipmunk can stomp, out of the room.

“Ahem, hello little chipmunk,” the squirrel interrupted Gloria’s train of thought.

“Oh sorry, excuse me,” she said. Mom had always told her to be polite. “I was just thinking about something my father would say.”

“That’s ok. The squirrel continued, “So you’re going to the market for your mother and, you never finished your story other than this is your first solo trip.”

“Yes, I am supposed to go to the market. Do you need anything? Maybe I can bring it back for you, or, we could go together.”

“The squirrel was thinking, this one is naïve, dumb or both.

“No little chipmunk. I think I will pass on your invitation. Thank you.”

“My name is Gloria, not little chipmunk, just in case you want to address me by my name.’

Naïve, he thought. “OK. Gloria, and my name is Sam.”

“Hello Sam, how nice to meet you.’

“Hello Gloria, how nice to meet you too.”

They both bowed a polite bow to each other acknowledging each other properly.

“Now I must be going or mother will be angry. You may accompany me or I will see you on my return,” Gloria said straightening herself out and beginning to walk away.

“Maybe I can make the trip shorter. I have an excess of seeds. So instead of that big trip you’re going to make, and all that travel to the market, I could simply sell you *My seeds*.”

“How nice of you to offer that,” Gloria said with real enthusiasm thinking this was a nice friend. “However I Must do what I’m supposed to do in the manner I was instructed to do it. If you want to make an exchange you may go see my mother and work out a deal with her. I’m sure there will be an equitable exchange.”

The squirrel was a bit take back by this young chipmunk’s vocabulary and forthrightness. He only said, “Are you sure? I could save you lots of time. See these seeds.” A huge amount of something Gloria had never seen before was presented. “I’ll even put them in a pouch for you to carry home.”

“That won’t be necessary,” she stated emphatically and stepped to the side in an effort to move around this gray obstruction as she was beginning to consider him. “Sam, thank you very much. I will see you around.”

Sam was a bit miffed at not being able to convince such a simple and little chipmunk. He figured he would make one more attempt to unload his almost useless goods and make his way. He reached out and grabbed her shoulder. The next thing he knew he was on his face, his paw was twisted in a very painful manner, and a sharp set of teeth were attached his ear.

Gloria whispered in Sam’s ear, “First, I read ‘Jack and The Bean Stalk’, nice try. Second, I have a black belt in Shaolin Boxing. I may seem simple and yes I am tiny. Have nothing to say, so I don’t. Because of that I’m mistaken for simple. To conclude, if you ever touch me again you will loose your ear and your paws will be useless until they heal, leaving you in a precarious position vis a vis the rest of the creatures out here. It’s your choice.”

With a slightly muffled voice, Sam apologized. “I will never do that or anything like that again.” He meant it too. “May I come along with you? I never met a creature like you. Gloria, you have a lot of wisdom.”

Gloria thought for a second or two. “OK but no funny business or you’re hawk meat.”

“All Right.” Hawk meat? How does she know about that? She’s so young he thought.

Gloria could read his eyes and said, “I know a lot more than I let on Sam, trust me.”

Sam nodded and off the two of them went.

As Sam got to know her in a short time he came to a new conclusion. This was one very different little chipmunk. He was impressed. He was so impressed he wanted to become her friend and meet her family. He would be her companion. Sam bowed low and said. “It is an honor to be your friend. I will stay with you as long as you wish. I wish to be

your companion through life. I have never met a creature such as you. I would like to meet your family and ask them permission to escort you. Please consider it.”

Gloria smiled and said, “I will think about it later. Come along. We have a distance to go and I have been slow, playing about. I’ve wasted too much time though I will admit you are nice once you were shown a thing or two.”

Sam nodded.

As they both left the big field and were about to enter the dark forest, the two of them spied a hawk flying overhead. Sam exclaimed to Gloria, “Do you see that hawk, run for cover in the forest, quickly before it sees us!”

“Yes I do and there are more dangerous animals than that old hawk,” she said to him. He was shocked again as Gloria’s calmness in the face of the deadly aerial threat. All animals like them knew hawks were not to be taken lightly. Gloria took out a small mirror from her pouch and caught the sun’s reflection. She shined it onto the bird of prey making some sort of movement on it. The hawk spiraled around and began a straight dive for the two of them. Just as it was about to pounce on the standing Gloria, it flared and landed with a plop just behind them.

“Hello Gloria, how are you today?” The hawk bowed low.

Gloria did the same and said. Oh, I’m fine. I’d like you to meet my new friend Sam the Squirrel.” Sam was nowhere to be found. “SAM, Sam, where are you? Sam!”

Sam emerged from behind a tree stump, visibly shaking; he cautiously approached the two of them. “You know this bird?”

Gloria was smiling, “Yes his name is Otto. Sam meet Otto. Otto meet Sam.” Otto gave a deep bow. I observed you talking to Gloria back some... I wondered what was going on so I just circled. Nice to meet you.”

Sam was now totally confused. Here she was talking to one of the more dangerous animals in both their worlds and here she was, Gloria, going on as if nothing was amiss with this picture. Again he thought this is no ordinary chipmunk.

Gloria continued, “Otto and I have been friends ever since my grandfather rescued him from a trap and mended his broken wing. Otto’s family and ours have a long history together.”

Otto inquired, “How is Granpa. Did he teach you anything new? I saw your moves earlier,” looking at Sam. “They were pretty good. I was standing by if necessary.”

“Thanks Otto, I did notice you. Sam obviously didn’t. But I was OK. Granpa is fine. He did teach me some new moves, which I finally got a chance to use. There is good and

bad there. I am confident; more so now. Granpa is the only one in the family that has faith in me. The others think I'm as dumb as rocks because I don't talk. I have nothing to chatter about. Why talk?"

Otto said, "I do understand."

Sam just took it all in. Never in his wildest dreams would he have ever believed this could happen. No one at home would believe him, ever!

Otto asked, "So where are you off to today my dear?"

"To the market for Mother and family. They assume this is my first forage. I never let on. They gave me such a light load to carry. One of these days I will let them know. Otherwise, as of today, I will keep my own council."

Sam figured to himself, well I guess I won't be talking to her family. How would I explain all this? I will work something out. I do like her.

Otto smiled his hawk smile to Gloria. "You keep up the good work. Granpa and I and some of the others know who you are. The path is clear ahead to the market. I will keep a lookout just to make sure and check on you by and by."

OTHERS. The only word Sam heard and reverberated in Sam's head. *There are Others like this? I must be dreaming. None of this can be real.*

"See you Gloria. Nice meeting you Sam." And off Otto flew.

Sam just nodded still in shock and some awe at this whole occurrence. He had a new respect for Gloria. In his newfound experiences he had more question than answers. His head was swimming. His friends would have run away. This was too interesting. He had to pursue it and Gloria, The Chipmunk.

He and Gloria went to the market. Everyone there thought they made an odd pair. Some one had better inform her mother that Gloria was with a Squirrel. It didn't matter to Gloria. Sam was her friend and would be her companion. She needs no protector.

The End