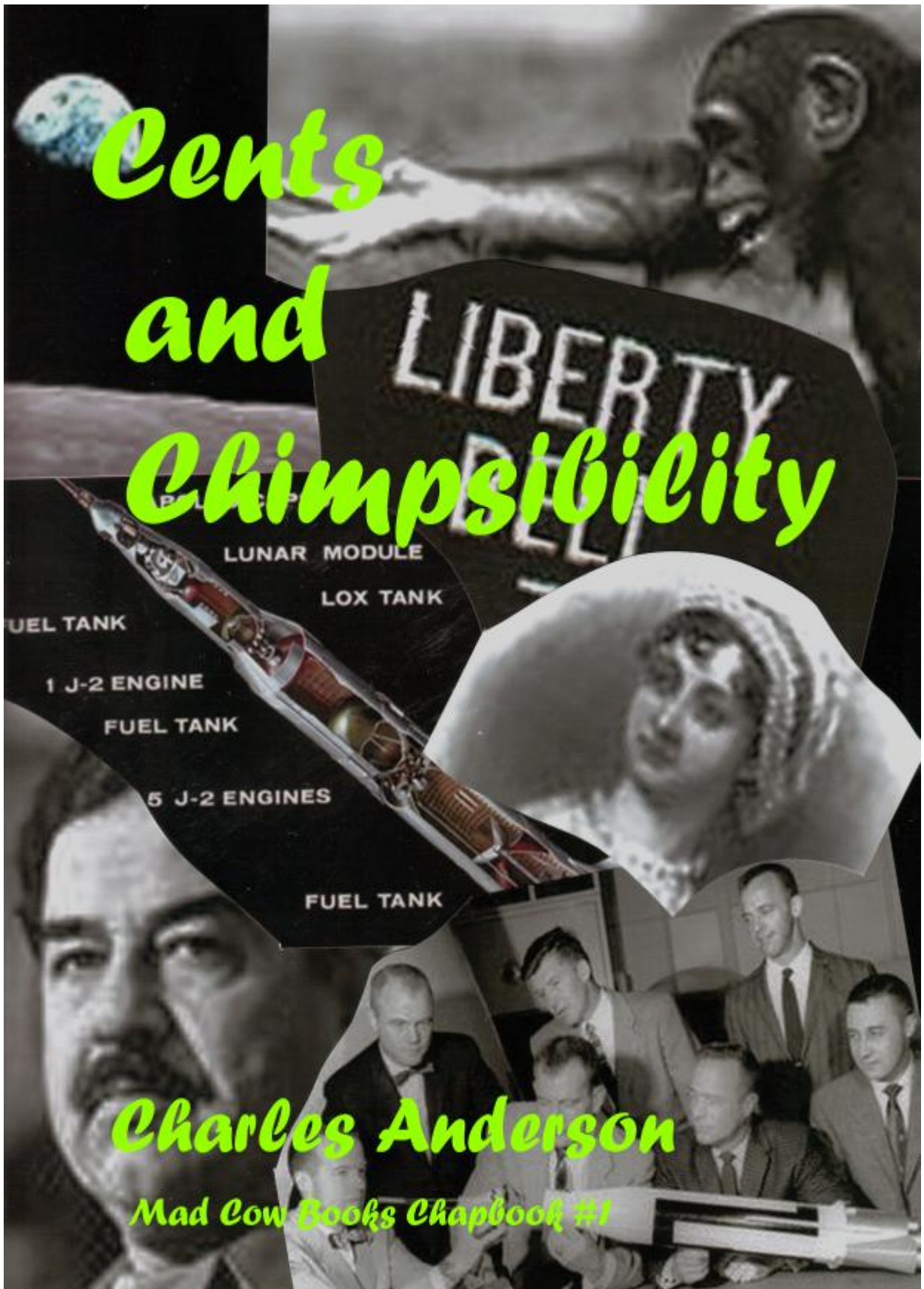


Cents and Chimpability



Charles Anderson

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Cents and Chimpsibility

By

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For Sherry and Kaily

Thanks for all the Love and Happiness

Introduction to Cents and Chimpsibility

No one who is alive today knew Jane Austen. She lived her whole life in a time before any of us were born, and yet we think we know her as if she were a sister, an aunt, or even a good friend. Her books still inhabit our daily modern lives.

Jane Austen was born a year before the American Revolution in the time when England was ruled by George III. She was a gentle woman from the lower rungs of her nation's gentry. Jane came from a large family of six brothers and a sister. She lived her whole life in her parent's home. We know she attended church regularly, and she also enjoyed reading novels. Somewhere along the way she first started to write plays and later novels of her own. Her first published novel was ***Sense and Sensibility*** in 1811.

Even less is known about America's first space chimp, Ham. He made his historic flight in 1961; his fifteen minute journey happened before Alan Shepard's own first suborbital mission in a Mercury capsule. There was another chimp in NASA's program, but she never made it into space. As Ham's backup, Minnie, was the only female space chimp. Minnie lived a long life until 1998, and she had nine offspring of her own. Minnie also helped many of the female chimps in her colony raise their young.

So what do Jane Austen and the American space chimps have to do with each other? I doubt if any connection exists. After they were no longer needed by NASA, the chimps had to have a home to raise their young and have a home they thought as their own, and that's a good starting point for my story and Jane's.

Charles Anderson

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The ape clan of Dash had long been settled in their home at Sussex Sanctuary. Their range was large and comfortable, and their residence was on the North Section of the Park Wing. In the center of the animal sanctuary, Dash's family lived in a respectable manner and to the general good opinion of their neighbors. In the company of his two daughters and their mother, the old gentleman's days were comfortably spent. Dash's constant attention to his daughters, Elinor and Marianne, was from the goodness of his heart. It gave Dash every degree of solid joyfulness which his age could receive, and the cheerfulness of his daughters added a relish to his existence.

But the old gentleman lay dying. His son was sent for as soon as his danger was known, and to him Dash recommended, with all the strength and urgency which his illness could command, the interests of his first mate and his only son's two half-sisters.

Dash's son, Gentle John, had returned to the area of the park where much of his formative childhood had been spent in that section of the sanctuary. When his mother had been placed into a different clan, Gentle John had been taken with his mother and removed from the attention of his father.

Gentle John had always been a chimp of very even temper. He wasn't excitable like so many of his peers. Yet it was Gentle John's mate who made all the decisions for the two of them.

The Dash's family nest had swung lazily in a Cyprus tree above a stream. It would soon become John's even though the nest and range they currently occupied had been in the neck of the land further to the north. When Gentle John's mate saw the Cyprus tree and the river she knew that Dash's current mate and her daughters would soon have to find

someplace else to live because she would not allow them to continue to live there.

Dash's current family knew there would be no fighting over the lost nest, but they knew their time in the North Section of the Sussex Sanctuary in the middle of the Park Wing had come to an end. A new residence would have to be secured for the three females who had loved and stayed with Dash until the old chimp had no more breaths to take.

It was before his last breath that Gentle John took the penny that Dash had held waiting to give him for many years. John's mate, Fanny, looked satisfied when he took the coin, and there was nothing else that had to be communicated with the three banished females because her mate now had the old penny and controlled this part of the sanctuary.

Edward had arrived after Dash's death. He was a young chimp with a coin of his own but without any mate. This seemed very unfortunate indeed, but as it shall be seen in the later part of this story that it would become very fortunate indeed for him and Dash's two daughters.

Edward took no residence with any of the Sussex clans. He was the younger brother of Fanny, but he had never felt comfortable spending too much time with any of the clans. The other males had never found Edward to be much of a threat so he was tolerated by all of them and left alone.

Edward knew the Dash females needed a residence with a nest that they could call their own. While sitting with the eldest of Dash's daughters in the tall grass, Edward could see the lovely tree where Fanny and John had now taken over habitation. The females had taken their temporary residence on the ground next to the kudzu vines which was fine during the dry season, but when the rains came a better shelter would be a must for the three of them.

Once when Edward was alone with Elinor, the eldest daughter, he communicated to her about his life. He let her know about Fanny and how his mother had always felt that he should gain control of a clan of his own, but he never had a desire to claim the responsibility of a clan. He always knew he would never find any peace in such a conquest.

They spent one pleasant afternoon together before Fanny took notice of the two of them, and she escorted her brother away from the unwanted Elinor. Elinor was left alone with her sister and mother in their new home of prickly vines.

Marianne expressed to Elinor that she would rather sit in a patch of thorns than sit next to someone like him. She thought Edward hadn't enough spirit, and so she told her sister that he was a bad match for her. Yet someplace deep down Marianne knew that Edward was the right type of mate for Elinor because she knew her sister needed a mate with her own temperament.

During the dawn, after the next day, Edward had departed them, but he departed them with the purpose of finding the Dash females a new home to live, and home they could call their very own.

“The Sandman’s party would resume in the bath.”

“The sad dam was the bath party.”

“Saddam Hussein is the Ba’t’h party.”

Her instructions were to civilize this country. She had been educated at Mills College in California, and the school of International Affairs at Johns Hopkins. April Gaspie was considered to be the expert on Iraq by the United States Government and her President.

Civilize this country, and civilize this government were the instructions giving to her by George Herbert Walker Bush, but there was nothing more in the packet the State Department had drawn up for her. Beyond that there were no other instructions for her and her staff.

What she hoped for was that this country would broaden its contacts with her government. On the surface there were so many things they told her. Look at the culture, and look at the commercial aspects of our relationship, but she knew what that all meant. It meant oil, and there was nothing else her government was interested in, despite what they might say publicly.

April's hands were always dry when she was in this country, and she wanted lotion, something oily to put on them. Usually when she met with the President of Iraq her hands were cold and clammy, but not today. Today they were dry, and she wanted to rub them together to get some of the dry skin off them.

President Saddam Hussein had always been friendly to her. She couldn't see him behind the large carved wooden double doors that separated them. What he was doing in there only *Allah* knew for sure. Nothing more made the President of Iraq happier than to keep the Ambassador from the United States waiting for him except...

Which palace was this? And had she been in this one before? She couldn't remember. They all looked the same to her, and the same giant painting of Saddam seemed to stare at her no matter which palace. The gold fabric on the sofa seemed to be the same also. She knew she had met the man at different palaces, but they all seemed to be decorated the same. The

decorations and the politics of Iraq all seem to be the same, but she wasn't sent here to decorate. She had been sent here to civilize them, but maybe a few New York designers would be better for the task of humanizing the man and his country than she could ever accomplish.

"The little bugger," shouted a man's voice she knew to be the voice of his most trusted aide. "I can't believe what that little blighter did?"

When he came into the room and he saw her, he had to stop and compose himself. He seemed to be embarrassed that he had said such things in English instead of Arabic.

"Who is the offender, Deputy Prime Minister?" asked April, glad to have an excuse to get to her feet and off the ugly gold sofa that seemed too resided at each of the presidential palaces.

"The Prince of Sin," said Tariq Aziz. One of the few men who didn't look down upon her because she was a woman and April always felt much more comfortable in his company than any of the other members of the *Ba'th* Party. "Madame Ambassador, it is always a pleasure," said the man with thick black glasses that never seem to go out of style, but always held up well on the noses of those like him.

April had first met this man in Washington, and knew if he had been born in her country instead of his own he would have rose to the same level in her government. She knew some men were born into their jobs, and Tariq was one of those men. "The Prince of Sin?"

"Well, that is what I called him, but our most honorable President calls him, Edward the Failed. It seems Edward is a temporary gift from our American friends at NASA, but he's a failed astronaut chimp from your own space program, and now it seems he has failed our president as well. So, I shall call him Edward the Failed also," said Aziz offering April back the sofa with a motion of his hand.

April declined to go back to the confinement of the gilded sofa and the two of them ended up standing for the rest of their conversation together.

She always knew that Aziz in Arabic translated into 'Dear One' or 'Darling'. She had read the State Department briefing reports on him many times and there were even rumors that this man family might have a bit of Kurdish blood in him because of the names commonality in the northern area of his country. The Ambassador knew that this man also studied at Baghdad College of Fine Arts, and later worked as a journalist, before joining the Ba'ath Party. In 1980, just a decade before, he had survived the assassination attempt by the Iranians and its failed *Dawa Party*. Yet, in front of her stood this frail little man and with his voice he was the mouthpiece for President Saddam Hussein, the dictator of this oil superpower.

Aziz stood closer to the ambassador and said, "He took a silver dinar right from the President's hand. The devil reached through his cage and took a rare coin as quick as any marketplace thief. Can you believe the gall of such a creature?"

"Are we talking about a monkey of some kind?"

"No forgive me, a chimpanzee. The President has no interest in monkeys. He is interested in creatures that are more like men, and your government's National Space Agency has kindly loaned him to us. **Allah** forgive him...ah, here is the pickpocket now." Two of the chimp's escorts took the heavy cage and made their way from the President's room and to some other part of the palace.

"Was the President angry?"

"No, that is the amazing thing," said Aziz with a frankness that surprised her in this sometimes most medieval of Muslim countries. "He seems to

be so much more patient with animals than he has ever been with those of us around him.”

“I would think the president would want his coin back.”

“Of course he did, and he tried to reach into the cage to take it back, but the chimp, Edward, would have nothing of it, and I think the devil still has it. I thought...never mind what I thought. But the chimp has left now, and the President is one dinar poorer I am afraid.” Aziz pushed the bridge of his glasses closer up on his nose.

“There are many things I would like to speak to the President about in our meeting this afternoon,” said Glaspie ready for the meeting she had been waiting for to begin.

“There are many things the President would like to discuss with you also. I am sure that you know about the debts we have burdened ourselves with in our war with the Iranians, and I think we have found a solution that will be agreeable to all.”

April didn't want to wait any longer for this meeting to take place and she was relieved when another attendant announced that everything was ready and the President would see her now. She liked to think about what she said and after a moment she paused, “Mr. Aziz, you know the people of the United States have always been friends with the great nation of Iraq, and I hope that we will remain so in the future.”

Aziz showed more concern than the usual warm smile that he mostly displayed for the camera, and for some strange unknown reason she knew that after this meeting this nation would be less civilized than it had been before her arrival.

* * *

Elinor, Marianne, and their mother didn't know how civil their new home would be to them. They had never been to this part of the sanctuary before, and hadn't even heard any news about those who were to take them in so willingly. While they were grateful to have a new home, they were still apprehensive about what awaited them in their new habitat.

Invitation came in the form of two, and the females were surprised when an older chimp and his mate showed up by the Cyprus tree and exclaimed that they were old companions of Dash, Middleton and Lady. While Middleton said that he regretted not being a more active part of Dash's later life, he was still his comrade. He wanted to make amends for the lack of attention he should have given Dash's females over the years. Lady and he were alone and would be honored if the females would join him in the Barton Park section of the sanctuary. Middleton himself had been surrounded his whole life by females, and since it was only him and his mate now at Barton Park, adding three more to their habitat seemed to him to be the sensible thing to do.

Upon their arrival at their new home, they found Barton Park to be smaller than they were used to, but here there would be new places to explore and new views of the clouds which delighted them more than they thought possible. For *Elinor*, she decided to remain calm about their new home in front of the other chimps, but the new surroundings of this part of the sanctuary almost made her act as impulsive as her younger sister.

While she knew she could live here, she wasn't sure about her sister, Marianne, because she was more prone to emotional outbursts. Once when her favorite meal stick had broke, she remained sad for several days and swore she would never be able to find the tastier morsels that hid underneath the rocks without it. Their father had chewed an even

finer stick and gave it to his daughter, but even that hadn't improved her mood in the slightest.

It wasn't the general opinion that Marianne was a spoiled child, but she was someone who over idealized everything around her. She had the idea of the perfect stick in her mind, and it always took her awhile to dislodge notions and change her views. With her father's recent death, Elinor was truly surprised that she and her mother had been able to get their younger sister to join them at Barton Park, but even the idea of staying near Gentle John and Fanny was too intolerable in Marianne's mind for her to endure alone.

Elinor had to prevail on her sister that they should go and explore the surrounding areas of their new home. It didn't take long for them to discover an area of long grasses and open fields, and when the first rays of the afternoon sun hit them, Elinor and Marianne decided to lie in the grass and do nothing of consequence instead.

Lying there, Marianne knew what her sister was thinking about, and she knew she was thinking about Edward and how her life would have been different if she hadn't have left him behind at the North Section of the sanctuary. While Middleton and his Lady were accommodating to the two sisters and their mother, they did have a tendency to peer too closely into ones personal lives. Lady asked them too many questions. Most important of all to Lady were the questions about romance. These questions would never have been asked to the young females while they lived in the North Section, but they seemed to be all too common here at Barton Park. Once, Lady had almost guessed the name of Elinor's beau once, and Marianne would have been even more horrified and embarrassed if Elinor had found out that it had been her who had been the one who almost accidentally divulged Elinor's deepest secret to Lady.

Even though Lady liked to dig into Elinor's life, and she tried to find out about her romantic interests. She wasn't above going after Marianne

either and trying to see if there was someone passionately linked to the younger sister as well. When they first moved in with Middleton and his mate, the sisters thought the two older chimps were harmless about their affairs, but the longer they lived with them they soon were to discover that there would be no peace with the Middletons until all of their secrets had been uncovered. Worst of all was the day Lady finally determined that she should be the one to find a mate for Marianne. She made everyone miserable for days making a detailed analysis of every male that lived at Barton Park. When Lady was satisfied that she had seen and given enough consideration to all of the eligible bachelors, her facts and statistics in her brain led to only one possible mate for Marianne, and her solution, Marianne should meet the Colonel.

One day, Lady excitedly told her about her decision, but instead of being full of joy, Marianne became emotionally upset as she was known to do, and she wouldn't eat or groom with the other chimps for the rest of the day. Marianne couldn't bear the thought of the Colonel whom she soon met. She found him too wearisome for her personality and even quiet Elinor thought the two would be a poor match for each other.

The Colonel and Marianne how those two should never get along, expressed Elinor to her mother one night after her mother had just re-sewn their nest, but despite her objections to Lady, there was nothing that could be conveyed to the older female to change her mind. The Colonel was the next oldest male at Barton Park after Middleton, and Elinor didn't see any possibility of the old chimp making her sister happy.

He is too old, thought Marianne. In her sadness, she slept in Elinor's arms for many nights because a chimp like the Colonel had never been in her mind the right type of mate.

Unmentioned to Marianne was the fact that the Colonel had many qualities that many of the younger males didn't and never would grasp:

such as a gentle heart, and a kindness that were not always visible from his rough exterior. There was one more quality that the Colonel had that no other could claim, and that was the fact that he had more coins in his possession than any other chimp in the colony. His coins were special because they had flown with him in space far above the colony. That was an accomplishment that only he could claim. Lady and Middleton knew their friend was a hero, but in their wisdom they refuse to divulge those details to Marianne and would let her find that out on her own.

“Spam in a can.”

“Get me a can opener.”

“The Colonel is the best we have, Sir. I would hate to think of him being broiled and baked alive in that tin can.”

A space capsule was only a small cage, and the Colonel didn't seem to mind his new surroundings. For two years he had been spun, poked, and prodded in every imaginable way in which the NASA scientist could think of to test their primate astronauts. The Colonel didn't know the same tests that were being performed on him were also being performed on his distant cousins, the human ones. He had been trained well and had been taught to throw all the switches in his new cage and make the lights turn off and on when necessary. While he might be the youngest of the three in his group, the scientist had studied all the data collected and had determined that he would be the best candidate to make the first flight of the three chimps. Dash and Middleton would have to wait and might not even get their own chance at space.

The Colonel's young attendant, Willoughby, wasn't the only one there to make sure everything was right with the young chimp. There was another who was there to tightly pack the Colonel into the capsule for his trip into space. "I don't know if we can put those in there, Sir with him," said Willoughby to the Mercury Astronaut standing next to him. "You know how the German scientists get when any changes are made to their controlled environment."

"I know I can trust you. You won't say anything to them, partner," said the human Astronaut Gus, with an Oklahoman accent that they all had seemed to acquire once they got to NASA. Only two of the seven, Astronaut John and Astronaut Scott, seemed to be outsiders from the rest of their peers, and were never widely accepted by the rest of the astronaut clan. "What is the harm in a roll of pennies? I've decided when it is my turn I'm going to take rolls of dimes instead. I think the girls will like a shiny dime that had been up in space," said the Astronaut Gus. He was not worried by the attendants concerns as he took his roll of pennies and place them in what he thought might be the securest place inside the capsule. "See, there's plenty of room for the old boy and a few extra things."

The Colonel always liked it when he was in the company of his human peers. He liked the way they distinguished themselves apart from the rest of the other humans. They seemed to do what they wanted, and they also had the respect and admiration of all of their kind. As far as the Colonel was concerned, he wanted that respect they all seem to gather from the others, and the young chimp started to imitate them as best as he could. After awhile, his attendant and those at NASA started to call him the Colonel.

"Thirty minutes left in the countdown, Sir", said the boss of the capsule's crew over the headsets the men wore. "It is time for you two to leave the Colonel by himself."

“Good luck little guy,” said Astronaut Gus to the chimp, and the Colonel could see his attendant giving him the same proud smile and the respect that he gave the other astronauts.

With that, the hatch was closed and the Colonel was by himself in the spacecraft. Astronaut Gus’s capsule would be called Liberty-Bell 7, but the Colonel didn’t have a name for his own craft. The name of it wasn’t important to the chimp, but what was important was the mission that he soon would have to perform. The chimp was distracted by the coins that were alongside him in the capsule. In his harness, it was difficult for him to reach that far, and it took longer than he thought to get them all in his outstretched hand. It took awhile for him to reach, but with a final strain of his fingers, the chimp had his coins, and with the first blasts from the rocket below into the capsule he was atop of, the Colonel was ready to perform the task they had taught him to do before the craft would reach the edges of earth’s own cage and the beginnings of space and freedom.

* * *

Elinor and *Marianne* soon found out that *Barton Park* didn’t have the same amount of acreage as their former home. The two females found the edge of the refuge and that was something that never happened at their former residence. There they saw a distant river and they wondered if that was the same stream that ran next to their old home as well.

They wondered if they should return. *Marianne* communicated that she would rather the two of them stay away from the continuing harassments of *Middleton* and his *Lady*. The Colonel was the entirety of *Lady’s* conversation with either one of the girls. She had been obsessing on about him since they had moved to *Barton Park*, and she was

determined in pairing off one of Dash's daughters with the elder bachelor male of the colony.

When she first met the old male chimp, Marianne almost flew into a rage. She saw that the Colonel was almost as old as Middleton, and he didn't fit into any of Marianne's idea of what her mate should be, and he never found an ally with Elinor either whose only thoughts of her absent Edward.

Elinor had been taught by her father to be an observer of the weather for the majority of her life. Most of the time, she could predict when a storm would come over the horizon. If she had to, Elinor was even known to climb a tree to make her weather predictions. She wanted to climb the highest tree there, but she couldn't climb high enough in it to see anything worthwhile at Barton Park. She had meant to confer about the weather with the Colonel on one of his earlier visits with the Middleton's, but when he made one of his appearances, Lady would take all the energies away from any question she might have been saving for him. Despite that, Elinor kept an eye on the weather, and she knew that the storms that were the most dangerous were the ones she couldn't see or predict.

The most dangerous storm struck once when Marianne and Elinor were on one of their many outings. Luckily for them, Colonel had just reached the two females in time. He had left and went to search for them, and he hoped that their handler would be along shortly to help take them all back to safety.

Some threats are seen, but those that are truly dangerous turn up at the last moment like a predator finding its unsuspecting victim. That's how it was how it was with the storm that struck the Sussex Colony on that day. Attendant Willoughby took care to find as many of the chimps as he could and brought them back to the safety of the thick concrete walls of his research office.

“Do you think we’ll see the Colonel again?” asked the Junior Attendant who was trying to sooth the chimps in his care that they had brought inside for their safety.

“The Colonel is smarter than any storm that tries to square off with him,” said the Senior Attendant Willoughby. Willoughby had been the caretaker for the Colonel since the old chimp had been shot into space, “We once thought his capsule sank, but the navy divers found him off Bermuda, and he was no worse for the wear. The Colonel is made of sterner stuff than most men I know.”

“Sir, the two young Dash females are not in any of the cages,” said another Junior Attendant just coming inside from the storm whose many arms of rain were just beginning to reach them.

“Then I hope to God they have found their way to the Colonel.”

All storms gain strength above the warm waters of the Caribbean and Hurricane Lucy was no different. She had been born off the Ivory Coast of Africa. She made her way across the Atlantic Ocean, and when she found the Caribbean Sea she went straight through Puerto Rica, on though to the Dominican Republic's shores and at long last smashing into Cuba. The Storm had taken a bite out of the Communist nation like the United States Government had never been able to do so before, and when it was Florida’s turn she would feel the power of Lucy’s winds and rain as well.

Attendant Willoughby had moved to Florida when he was a young man to work in the space program and with their apes. Now that he had found his sixty-fifth year, Willoughby sometimes wondered if his primate friends would outlive him. Dash had been the frailest of those in his charge, and he knew that Middleton had been enjoying the later stages of his own life, but the Colonel was the one he thought would outlive him for sure. Dash and Middleton had found mates over the years and their offspring had thrived in the gentle conditions of the colony, but the

Colonel had been reluctant to find a mate. Willoughby had come to the resignation that the original pioneer of space might die without an heir. The two Dash females had been the final hope for the seasoned chimp, and now all three had been lost in the winds of Lucy's wrath. Attendant Willoughby knew that the old military base that was now Sussex Sanctuary held many secret but safe locations. Hopefully, the best chimp of his colony would find one of those places to hide with the Dash sisters.

The Colonel had the strength of three men, but against the winds of this storm he knew his strength would be no match. The storm blew him and the Dash sisters at will, and he knew they needed to find shelter and to wait this one out.

He saw that Elinor almost seemed like she was in a state of shock, and she couldn't believe the winds of nature that she admired could have such power and force.

Poor Marianne got even angrier at their situation, but when she finally realized that her anger wasn't doing the three of them any good. She quieted down. Marianne, with a quick observation, realized that the Colonel had discovered an abandoned building, and he was trying to dislodge the bar that persuaded the door to remain closed. Marianne saw the Colonel's efforts, despite all of his strength he couldn't get the rusty bar to budge, and she knew she must do something to help him. She worked with the older chimp and together they had enough strength to move the bar together.

"The hatch has blown."

"The Colonel has blown the hatch."

"Roger that Houston, the hatch has blown. The capsule is taking on water, but we can still make a recovery. I'm applying maximum power to the main rotor."

* * *

Attendant Willoughby knew he now could finally retire from the sanctuary with a grace that his mind hadn't possessed the month before.

"I knew the old boy still had it in him," he kept saying to himself. The Colonel had found a new mate in Marianne. The two seemed to always be in each other's company. Marianne and the Colonel even hoped that someday they would have an offspring of their own, and that made the old caretaker happy when he thought about it. He had seen the Colonel survive his space flight all those years before and his ship's blown hatch when his capsule had returned to earth. The capsule that the Colonel had been in had taken water, but somehow the Colonel had kept his head above until the Navy's Sikorsky helicopter could delay it from sinking with the full power of its engine. Navy divers had rescued the Colonel from his flooded capsule. Nothing conclusive had ever been reached about the cause of the exploding hatch, but some at NASA had thought maybe something inside had contributed.

Time had made small changes at Sussex Sanctuary, but when those changes came they always seem to remain permanent. There the kudzu grew with abundance and without fear, the water always remained brown with the tannins from the numerous plants, and Elinor and Marianne had found new mates which they happily would remain with for the rest of their lives.

The attendant believed the Colonel had saved the Dash sisters, and knew he had also found himself a new mate after the storm. With it Elinor, had found herself a companion in Edward, the shy younger male from the North Park. The two had been brought into the same holding area after the storm, and Willoughby had given new orders that the two should

never be separated again. The male chimps had presented their new mates with the coins they held in their possession for so many years: the rare silver dinar, and one of the weightless pennies. All seemed right at the Sussex Sanctuary in the mind of the Senior Attendant Willoughby, and all seemed like it would continue splendidly there, even after he had left them behind.



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