

CHASING IGUANAS

by
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Title

Hook/
Setting

The house I lived in when I was nine years old had a walled-in, creepy back yard. On one end of the yard, a half-dead tree tilted precariously. It was tall and lanky - the kind no good for climbing, but great at shedding leaves. As a result, the ground was always covered with the dusty remains of dead leaves that shifted, murmured, and complained in the wind. On the other end of the yard loomed a rickety, rusty swing set - more a booby trap than a toy. And in the center of the yard stood a narrow, open shed: the remains of an old shelter for garden tools. The floor of the shed was a door, handle and all, which, in my childhood imagination, led to an underworld full of ravenous monsters.

Characters

In warm afternoons, a dozen or so iridescent, hunter-green iguanas - some up to two feet long - visited the yard. They resembled little prehistoric dragons and seemed to appear out of nowhere, scuttling through the litter with bellies close to the ground, their legs and claws splayed out as they ambled about the yard. They swayed their bodies from side to side like snakes, their elongated heads shifting left and right.

The iguanas were always silent and alert, their gaze firm and penetrating, their countenance serious and proud. For some reason, they liked our yard. I imagined they came from the underworld, though to be fair, I never saw them

sneak out or in from under the mysterious door in the floor of the shed. (I saw a crab do that once, though. But that's another story.)

Situation

Truth is, I was in love with those iguanas. Totally and unabashedly smitten. In fact, I think I wanted to become an iguana myself. And, of course, what better way to demonstrate my love, than by acting like an annoying - but harmless - troll? What better way to express my feelings, than to chase them around the yard and watch them first scatter in frenzy and then disappear like magic into the cracks of the surrounding brick wall? Such bliss! Such fun!

Sequence

of

Events

Every day I would rush home from school and perform my love-sick sacred ritual: I would drop my school books on the front porch and silently sneak out around the side of the house, my back against the toasty-warm cement, slowly, slowly, until I reached the corner that led into the yard. There I would stop and stay put, glued to the wall, observing the objects of my affection bask in the warmth of the afternoon sun. Finally, once I had had my fill of watching them (which probably lasted all of one minute), I would pounce. Swift and silent, like the iguanas themselves, I would chase them all around the yard, here and there, like a wild, mad animal, preying on their startled reflexes, feeding on the adrenaline of the hunt.

And for a few exhilarating seconds, I became one of them.

The first few times I chased them, they scattered, hid, and didn't return to the yard. At least not while I was still around. But then, they either became used to my bouts of insanity or realized I did not pose any real danger. After

the chase, they would re-emerge and continue their business as usual, except that they kept a wary eye on me (literally, just one eye).

There was one iguana in particular that I loved to chase, because it was the biggest and most serious-looking of them all. The dominant male, I suppose, though back then I had no clue what that meant. After the hunt, still panting from the exertion of the chase, I would sit cross-legged on the leafy litter and stare at King Kong (the name I had given him). He would slowly rotate his head, remain still as a garden statue, and stare back. Never once did he bring down his guard, never once did he trust me or approach me, and never once did he let me approach him. But none of that mattered, for I would convince myself that he did. In my imagination, he would climb up my leg and my arm, and, perched on my shoulder, he would whisper secret stories of the dark underworld.

Conflict

My chasing ritual would have continued day after day. But one afternoon, King Kong decided to teach me a lesson.

Climax

The day was particularly hot, perfect for sun bathing if you are an iguana. The beautiful creatures were spread out all across the yard, glowing like jewels among the mottled leaves. And I - with unbridled passion and joy - proceeded to carry out my daily ritual. But, unbeknownst to me, there had been a change in the plan. The instant I started chasing King Kong, SWISH! he whipped around like lightning and began chasing *me!* Needless to say, I whipped around myself (a monster was after me!) and sped away as fast as I could. "Aaahhh!" I screamed like an ambulance as dashed into the house, heart

pounding and too scared to look back, urged on by the scuffle of leaf and claw right behind my feet.

Resolution

I must say in all humility, that I learned my lesson.

Reflection

I continued to visit the iguanas, but I never ever chased them again.

Instead, I learned to sit quietly on the rickety swing set and enjoy their placid company. And every once in a while, one of the smaller ones would approach me and eye me with what I surmised to be interest - or perhaps even friendship.

Significant

King Kong, however, always kept his distance. Perched on the brick wall, he watched over his little flock, me included.

Statement

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