CITY GIRL'S BEASTLY HILL

Our heavenly Sunday afternoon morphed into the battlefield of Armageddon. Pine cones pelted us like bombs from an air-raid. As we fought off the incoming missiles our hammock rocked and tilted and my boyfriend belly-flopped onto the grass. Like a soldier, he scrambled to the house for cover.

COWARD!

Enemy fire ceased. I looked up, and beheld a troop of pine cone grenade wielding squirrels. Before the second volley of enemy fire began, I dived off that hammock and rolled underneath it for cover as gun fire echoed down the canyon. I couldn't believe it. It was the man I adore crouched behind flower pots. He spit out a whisper, "Coyote chewing a rhinestone dog collar, like a strip of beef jerky."

Ooooooooooh, not good, that's Fluffy, Billy Bob's Chihuahua. I looked down the canyon to see…oh, no! Hundreds of beady eyes glinted with evil intent; Rattus Norvegicus, Atrax, Latrodectus, Mephitis-mephitis, Loxosceles, and Phoneutria. Translation? Voldemort's army of dirty rats and the most poisonous arachnoids known to mankind were on the march as skunks engulfed our paradise with a fog of noxious gas that burned our eyes and lungs.

Where in the universe are *Professor Dumbledore* and *Gandalf the White* when you need them?

Critter, Insect, and Beast strategically exacted their revenge. It was us against them! After all, what did we expect? Recent fires and new developments made by the hand of man wreaked havoc on their natural habitats. We made these creatures homeless, and foodless, by concreting their hunting grounds and abodes with our freeways, skyscrapers, and homes. In the case of Homo sapiens against wildlife I will prove that the battle will never end.

First, I will submit examples of incompatibility between us and them. Then, I will expose the evil deeds of both sides. And, only because I feel guilty for being part of the problem, will I hunt for doable solutions that will enable us to live at peace with the furry and feathered FIENDS that shred our pets into Chow-Mein.

Incompatibility comes in all shapes and sizes. On October 13, 2010, KXLF, a radio station in Butte, Montana, reported that a Moose was spotted near the first hole of the local golf course. This is between you and me; but, I don't think we'll see Tiger Woods putting his balls around Butte any time soon. On January 5, 2011, the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks officials found a young bull

moose tangled up in a volley ball net. Was it yours? No worries. Your tax dollars were used to rescue him.

On January 5, 2011, *The Utah Division of Wildlife* made it clear that other species don't have annual physical check-ups, nor, do they belong to an HMO. Billboards don't remind them to get checked for rabies or to use safe sex. And, just because wildlife, domestic animals and humans share a large number of infectious diseases, it doesn't mean we're compatible. If we were compatible, one of you might be in love with the Big Bad Wolfe which would give new meaning to bestiality and marriage equality. If you're the kind of person who is attracted to the big bad wolf 'type' …don't be silly, put a condom on his big willy!

Now that you've got the picture, we'll move on and expose the evil deeds of us and them. We'll begin with Argentine Ants. They can build a single colony housing a million of their species. And, at the command of their queen they invade our homes undulating in a mad thrumming frenzy over our cookie jars and sugar bowls. We rage against the evil doers with our nuclear powered cans of insecticide polluting and poisoning everything in sight. How in the world did *Aunt Jemima* protect her vats of syrup?

We can also blame Gophers because they devour plants and flowers as if they were aphrodisiacs. They begin at the roots biting, licking and sucking upward until the last leaf sends them into orgasmic ecstasy. It's a shame these little beasties don't like *Bazooka Bubble Gum.* Unfortunately for us, CritterGetterOnLine.com describes their erratic behavior of chewing through irrigation lines and utility cables as if they had a severe case of marijuana munchies. And, like dwarves living in the *Mines of Moria*, gophers undermine and weaken the foundation of our homes by digging dens deep into the earth to bury their treasures. But, we don't punish Gophers with a Time-Out for their bad behavior. Oh, no, we terrorize them with traps and poison. Well, not everyone does this …

Matthew Jaffe and photographer Tom Gamanche produced a book celebrating the wildlife located in California's Santa Monica Mountains. But, what these two guys don't describe in detail is dear leaping in front of headlights which frazzles fragile humanoids injecting them with a shot of fear that causes them to shriek, slam on their brakes, skid into a spin and twist their necks into a painful whiplash. None of us want to hurt *Bambi*, but really!

Oh, and to put a juicy red cherry on top of Los Angeles; did you know that squirrels carrying the plague in Griffith Park raised a few eyebrows sans the goofy joy of Groucho Marx? Go on, I dare you to search the internet and prove me wrong. And while you're at it, look up the fact that hunters in the remote crevices of the U.S. Rockies have died from the Black Death which leads me to---My fellow Americans will never forgive the Big Bad Wolves that harm their Little Red Riding Hoods. In fact, they will hunt them down until they hit the endangered species list, such as posted on August 20, 2010 @ EpochTimes.com; *"Gray Wolves Still on Endangered Species List in Rockies."*

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When everything we do affects wildlife, how is it possible to create harmony between us and them? Will we ever have a Shrek and Fiona 'Happy Ever After'? What positive action, if any, is doable? Well, in 2006 Eric Leach, the staff writer for the Daily news, wrote many articles about Simi Valley. He explained; *"wildlife authorities from more than 15 agencies pooled their knowledge of wild creatures into a plan designed to protect the animals threatened by Southern California Development."*

To enjoy our coexistence with those we once called *enemy,* we have stopped poisoning our gophers even though they continue to devour our Gazanias along the driveway. And, as each flower disappears, we follow the advice of California Native Plant Society by replacing them with chrysanthemums, flowering garlic and onion plants. Apparently, gophers avoid these delicacies as much as I avoid all forms of horseradish.

We have even joined an anger management group and it is helping. We no longer use our slingshot to fire pebbles at the squirrels scarfing up the bird seed intended only for Blue Jays. Also, we read the warnings issued by the United States Forest Service such as: *feeding wild animals on purpose or by accident, such as leaving pet food outdoors, not sealing garbage cans and bins, or, leaving small pets outside at night removes an animal's natural fear of humans, and teaches them to associate people with food.* On January 21, 2010, Dallas Morning News restated this warning a little bit clearer…

"DON'T FEED THE ANIMALS!"

The mantras of MarineBio.org. remind us to keep nature clean and the world of insects, animals and birds healthy. The Sierra Club is always in need of volunteers to help prevent future '*Us Against Them'* confrontations. And, charitable donations help the specific preserves and wildlife areas provide homes for, and reduce the unnatural deaths of, the species we have conquered.

Well, maybe I was wrong after all. Is there hope for harmony between us and them? If so, why do I still want to buy a can of insecticide each time a mosquito sucks my blood, or, a spider injects its poison under my skin. Well, at least, our yard no longer resembles the forbidden forest of *Hogwarts*. We have even signed a peace treaty and we, actually, find the bizarre life styles of the wildlife very entertaining. By the way, the next time you are assaulted by the scent of a skunk think of them as HEROES because they eat those dirty RATS! We--Homo sapiens, critters and beast--wish you a *Happy Ever After.*

Sophia Ann Montoya