

Animal Park (Part II)

by Henry Pelifian

“Why have you not voted Mindeo”, Tidi squeaked.

“Because there is a third way. If we stay only here, we will eventually be driven out. To attack the *erect worms* to extend our domain is folly. We must have a strategy. That is we maintain our park while making raids on the *erect worms* in order to confuse them and keep them busy. The focus must not be on the park, for if it is we are all lost. From time to time, we have to exert ourselves against them on their home ground. We disorient them by keeping them preoccupied with our sporadic strikes. If we constantly keep them off guard we will have a chance to keep the park”, Mindeo hooted.

The nodding of heads and beaks signaled agreement with Mindeo. Mindeo's plan was to wreck havoc by clandestine means. Disrupt and sabotage were his watchwords. Silently stealthy was his motto. The first target was the highway garage where all the machinery was stored. Tidi, Didi, Bon and Don all surreptitiously entered through a gap in the garage door at night. Each carried a mouthful of unshelled peanuts. They searched where to place them. Tidi climbed a metal railing that the garage doors glided up and down on. Tidi placed his nuts in the grooves that the rollers of the doors passed through. He signaled to the others to place the peanuts through the entire lengths of the tracks to the four garage doors. In the morning when the highway maintenance crews pushed the button to open the garage doors they remained in place, stuck. Tidi had stayed behind and departed as soon as she saw the upright worms unable to open their garage doors.

Tidi reported to Molly that morning. Molly was trying to gain the support of the red-wing-black birds to join in preserving the park as it was in the unfettered past.

Molly asked Winton the leader of the redwing black birds to join her in confirming Tidi's report. They flew to the highway garage and saw that the garage doors were shut tight while the erect

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worms were scurrying in and out of the building through the door. Molly landed on the outside mirror of a pick-up truck and requested Winton to join her. Molly hopped in the crevice of the window to stare at herself in the mirror on the door. Winton did the same.

"What do you see?" Molly chirped.

"Is it I?" I see myself. It's me!" Winton sang.

"You are beholding yourself. You are unique in the world. We are equals to the upright worms, no longer beneath them, no longer subject to their whims and crassness", Molly chirped.

Winton gaped at himself and turned from side to side examining himself. Winton's mind had been ignited, stimulating and activating his mind and memory like those before him, evolution snapping and bursting after crawling along for so long.

"I am a creature with wings. I can soar and dive and fly above the trees and look down on the smallness of the *upright worms*", Winton germinated in his chirping.

"We must keep the park unblemished by the *erect worms* who despoil everything around them, their dwellings and roads carving up the land like claws across the ground. We must make a stand for ourselves!" Molly chirped.

It was time for liberty and freedom from encroachment from the *erect worms* who never knew when or how to stop their advance in every sphere and place. The shiny stone reflected oneself so perfectly that there was no mistaking one's distinctness. The time had now come for the creatures to make a stand, deter trespass and intrusions by those rapacious and insatiable *erect worms*. Molly marveled at seeing herself in the shiny stone, for she now knew the world was for her also and not just for the *upright worms*. All now knew the truth.

Molly flew throughout the park from tree to tree and finally to the ground to hop and amble along among the lush vegetation, something that she enjoyed and no longer took for granted. More had to be done to keep the park. More had to be undertaken. Uniting the inhabitants of the park had prevailed. Out of many, one. Unity was everything Molly considered as she took to flight. She

flew to a car parked outside the park on a street and gazed at herself in the shiny stone again. The world became clearer and in greater focus to her. The park was where she lived, it was her home and she had to fight for her abode. There was no turning back; it was only going forward that mattered.

Molly returned to the park knowing what she had to do. The facility of flight was now a tool to maintain the park as well as her life.

The creatures needed organization to keep them free and a leader had to be chosen, a single leader to make prompt decisions on a moment's notice when an attack came, Molly announced in the gazebo. Molly, who had discovered the power of the shiny stone and explained its meaning to all, was chosen leader by acclamation. Mindeo did not hoot a word, but was offended that he was not even considered, since he believed it was his strategy that had made victory possible that night of light and thunder in the park.

"We need a name for us all, especially since we've had our revolution", Jesse the blue jay chattered.

"What shall we call ourselves?" Tidi squealed.

"I say warrior troopers", Ronolo belched out.

"Long ago my grandfather said all the creatures had called themselves *molanchoe*", Bon chortled.

"*Molanchoe*. That is a worthy name", Jesse squawked.

They agreed to call themselves *molanchoe* that had been passed down for generations until it had been forgotten, forgotten also that the first *erect worms* had uttered it. The raids upon the *erect worms* seemed to be successful because the park had not been attacked. Molly informed the *molanchoe* in the gazebo that a government needed to be formed to insure their freedom. From each species, one was chosen to represent them and this elected group met daily to plan for the security of the park.

"Why do we need this elected government", Mindeo hooted loudly.

"Because to overcome the erect worms we must act like they do. We have flown over them marching like soldiers. We have flown

over their structures. They have buildings for everything. If we continued as we have in the past we would be weak and disunited. How can we prevail against them divided? No, we must establish a coordinated defense. We have been split up for ages and look what has happened to us. At one time we had an area 1000 times larger than the park for ourselves. No, 10,000 times larger than the park. We had a vast area to gather what we needed to live and prosper. Once we lose the park the end will be near for all of us", Molly cried out in song.

The *molanchoe* all nodded in ascent except Mindeo.

Training began in defense techniques, such as dropping stones and pebbles, coordinating dive-bombing by scores of flying *molanchoe*. The four-legged molanchoe practiced gnawing on tires.

As soon as the *molanchoe* government was formed by selecting leaders complaints were coming in that some were working harder than others but getting the same amount of free time off. Just as soon as the government was formed, problems loomed up at every turn. How much food should be distributed and what quotas were needed by each recipient of food? How many nuts and berries should each species of *molanchoe* gather? Were ten nuts equal to ten berries? Some *molanchoe* argued that ten large nuts were more than ten small berries. It was all a nightmare for Molly to sort all this out and it was becoming increasingly clear that it was impossible to set a given criteria that was satisfactory on a daily basis. The grumbling, groaning and moaning reached such a crescendo that another meeting in the gazebo was necessary to sort it all out. It seemed to Molly the more organization that there was constantly required more rules and guidelines to support the organization. As Molly flew into the gazebo, she felt the burden of holding onto the park, keeping it free for the *molanchoe*. Molly knew that she had come far, very far indeed. From being a visitor to the park, she had become an owner responsible for the park and she had convinced all who used the park to join her in proclaiming sovereignty over the park.

"Our idea of government is too cumbersome and unwieldy. Some of you have complained that many of the changes in your way of life have actually made your lives more onerous. The function we need to do together is security", Molly chirped.

"You are absolutely right that we have too much government. Before we had no government and we were content", Ronolo croaked.

"That's true, but we need organization to prevent the *erect worms* from taking the park away from us, despoiling it with their house-bred brute whose dung littered our residence. Let's never forget that and each of us should teach that to our posterity", Mindeo hooted as he spread his wings to fly away.

The molanchoe continued their way of life in the park, eating insects and wild berries from the surrounding forest. Wild flowers were in bloom- the purple cone plant, yellow daisies, wood lilies that were orange and blanket flowers with their orange and yellow petals dazzling in the sun. Ronolo was large as he hopped heavily through the park in the early morning, always avoiding the mid-day sun. Ronolo reveled in hiding in the tall grass enmeshed in the dampness. His mate Sonolo had her own favorite places in the park near the pond among the pampas grasses. Ronolo in the dark of night croaked and croaked to Sonolo that the park needed *rules* to make life workable. He croaked it over with Sonolo and at the next meeting in the gazebo he would present his rules.

At their next weekly meeting Ronolo croaked permission to speak. He hopped to the center of the gazebo.

"We have come a long way to preserve and protect this park from the erect worms. Now comes a time when we should have rules and I propose the following to be considered as absolute decrees forever:

1. Animal Park is our domain forever for succeeding generations and ourselves.

2. No *molanchoe* is better than any other *molanchoe*; we only have different aptitudes.

3. Never trust the upright worms because duplicity is part of their make-up.

4. Constant vigilance is required to secure and preserve our freedom.

5. Only through cooperation can we defeat the erect worms.

6. Dishonesty is the worst transgression to be punished with banishment.

Mindeo fluttered to the top of a beam in the center of the gazebo and turned his head around looking at all the *molanchoe*.

"These decrees mean very little, for the truth is obsolete now. The only thing that matters is power, which is something, the *erect worms* have. I say that the most important decree is, "Power is the ultimate truth and all other truths flow from power", Mindeo hooted confidently.

"This power of the *erect worms* is kept in huge buildings. I have never seen it, but they secretly carry it to their buildings. This power is their truth and if we can find what it is we will have the secret of their power", Jesse the blue jay cried out excitedly.

"But what about my decrees?" Ronolo croaked. He was ignored.

"But there are many buildings. How do we know what building the secret of their power is in?" Swoots hissed.

"We must watch them carefully and one day we will see what they hide in their buildings", Jeneen squawked.

"I will find the source of this power", Ronolo the frog croaked. He faced only derision as most cackled in laughter as he hopped away followed by Sonolo.

The *molanchoe* had all seen the *erect worms* go into the buildings. The huge buildings were mysterious, for no *molanchoe* knew what was occurring in them. The smaller buildings were places the erect worms lived in, all the *molanchoe* knew this, but those larger buildings were something different. Life became tranquil in the park for a time, for all the *molanchoe* roamed freely without interference of the *erect worms* and their messes. Mindeo kept hooting all the time to prepare a defensive strategy against the *upright worms* and their mission to try to return to the park. At night Mindeo flew over the domain of the buildings of the *erect worms* which were vast and almost unending. The *upright worms* were constantly building and building and there was no end to it according to Mindeo.

One morning Molly flew over a building in the town of the *erect worms*. She flew in front of a glass door and hovered to see what was going on inside, for there were no windows in the building except one in which the hard machines pulled up along side and a drawer opened up and a piece of paper was put in and moments later greenish paper was the product of the exchange. Inside Molly saw the *erect worms* waiting in line to give a piece of paper in order to receive the green paper in return. Molly flew over the building every morning until one day an erect worm approached the building and stumbled on an acorn dropping the briefcase he was holding which opened when it hit the ground spilling green paper all over. Wind carried the green paper over the ground as the *erect worm* ran to retrieve it all. Molly dove to the ground with determination and in her beak she scooped one piece of green paper flying away to the park holding the green paper tightly.

Molly called a special meeting in the gazebo in the evening speaking from her usual position on the railing. All the *molanchoe* were present. In the center of the floor was the green piece of paper with an acorn on it to hold it down.

"Before you lies the source of the *erect worm's* power", Molly chirped to a packed gazebo of *molanchoe* who chattered, warbled, twittered, trilled, swished and bellowed. The *molanchoe* slowly

made their way to the center of the gazebo gazing reverentially at the green paper.

"How does it give power?" Jesse cackled.

"The green paper is kept in big buildings with no windows except a window for the hard machines", Molly chirped.

"What is the scratching on the green paper?" Jeneen squawked.

"There are lines and pictures and something in each corner", Fran the woodpecker piped.

They all wanted to touch it and one by one they did until everyone had handled it. Ronolo hopped around the green paper as everyone watched.

"If this green paper is the source of their power we do not know how it is so. What does it do? What does it mean?" Ronolo croaked.

"Maybe you can find out and tell us", Harold the crow cackled.

"I will do just that", Ronolo bellowed as Sonolo held her breathe in dismay.

"Yes, Ronolo will tell us its secret", Tidi squeaked.

There was general disbelief that Ronolo would discover how the green paper was powerful and potent. As the green paper lay in the gazebo the wind curled its edges as the *molanchoe* departed to their sporadic defensive training sessions with Mindeo.

Ronolo against the wishes of Sonolo hopped his way to the large building where the green paper was kept. He sat next to the front doors of the brown brick building housing the green paper as upright worms hastily opened the door letting Ronolo hop into the building. Ronolo hugged the wall and moved slowly observing how different colors of paper were exchanged for the green paper. A young *erect worm* departed the building stuffing the green paper in his pocket with Ronolo following him outside. The young *upright worm* entered a nearby building, which had displays of clothing and recreational gear in the window. The large glass windows permitted Ronolo to observe the young *upright worm* put on a colorful jacket.

He then gave another upright worm the green paper in trade for the colorful jacket.

At the next meeting in the gazebo Ronolo told his story of the young *upright worm* obtaining a jacket with the green paper. Ronolo was proud that he had found the purpose of the green paper, but how it got this power was still unknown. But some were skeptical of Ronolo's story, for Harold the crow said, "How do we know he is telling the truth and not a lie."

"I'm not lying. It is all true. The green paper is used to trade for things. They use the green paper to get what they want", Ronolo croaked loudly.

Molly needed to soothe the situation and provide leadership.

"This power of the green paper cannot be defeated. The upright worms have devised it to save themselves from themselves. If they did not have the green paper with its fateful eye, their way of life would collapse. They would kill one another more than they do now", Molly chirped.

"What we must do is to make it difficult for the *erect worms* to get their green paper. This will cause confusion and chaos for them", Mindeo hooted confidently.

"How do we cause them trouble in getting their green paper?" Jesse squealed and squawked.

"The green paper is kept in a certain building. All the buildings have chimneys. I have studied the buildings. Smoke comes from the chimneys. It is an easy matter to fill the chimneys with grass and leaves. If we do these things the *erect worms* will be preoccupied with saving their green paper. They will have less time to invade our park and we will be safe from them for a long time", Mindeo hooted declaratively.

There was stunned silence. Was this the key to the upright worms? Was the battle with the upright worms continuous and unending? These were the brooding ruminations of the *molanchoe*.

"Do we have a choice?" Molly chirped.

The silence of the molanchoe gave way to an eruption of sounds. Swoots and Twoots sighed. Jesse and Jeneen shrieked.

Harold and Cynthia squawked. Fran and Fram clattered and clittered. Don and Bon screeched and squealed. Tidi and Didi squeaked and chipped. Ronolo and Sonolo croaked and bellowed. Shrill chirping enveloped the gazebo.

Molly walked around the green paper and asked that they vote on whether or not to begin the battle against the buildings of the *upright worms* holding the green paper. There was a long lull as all the molanchoe gazed at the green paper. Finally, Tidi clicked and yipped her ascent raising her small paw in the air. Then, there was a raucous yawp and whoop by all assembled who in agreement lifted their wings and appendages signaling their unwavering firmness and determination.

The *molanchoes* worked around the clock to fill the chimneys with grass and leaves and small branches. The *upright worms* were disoriented by this maneuver, for this tactic had succeeded in postponing a proposed attack.

"Constant vigilance is required to secure and preserve our freedom", Ronolo croaked loudly at the next meeting in the gazebo where rejoicing was echoed in clangoring and clattering and baying and braying and even crowing. Not since the molanchoes had taken possession of the park, had there been such celebrating and reveling. The warbling, caroling, tweeting and trilling were a caterwaul of happiness.

The cackles and gaggles were subsumed by the hoots and coos all culminating in a yowling and howling that those in the park valued and esteemed. After the commotion subsided, Ronolo requested a vote on his decrees.

"What are your decrees?" Molly chirped.

Ronolo announced his decrees in his most clear croaking.

Number One: Animal Park is our domain forever for succeeding generations and ourselves.

Number Two: No *molanchoe* is better than any other *molanchoe*; we only have different aptitudes.

Number Three: Never trust the upright worms because duplicity is part of their nature.

Number Four: Constant vigilance is required to secure and preserve our freedom.

Number Five: Only through cooperation can we defeat the upright worms.

Number Six: Dishonesty and half-truths are to be punished with banishment.

“We must vote on these decrees”, Molly chirped.

“These decrees will not give us the power we need to battle the *upright worms*”, Mindeo hooted.

“We must have core beliefs to sustain us”, Ronolo croaked.

“That is all well and good but strength and strategy will carry victory for us, not your decrees”, Mindeo hooted.

The green paper fluttered in the breeze, almost signaling its presence, caught in the crack between the floor boards of the gazebo.

“These decrees may well remind us what we are up against, the difficulty of our task, our mission”, Molly uttered.

The vote was taken and it was an even split. It was Molly's decision to cast the deciding vote.

“These decrees are useful only if we adhere to them. Let them be guideposts as long as we can keep them alive in our minds”, Molly chirped.

The assembled *molanchoe* were eager to roam the park freely. Dashing away they all ignored and discarded the green paper as it blew off the gazebo sporadically fluttering across the green grass of the park which camouflaged it when it

