

# I

## The Tales of One Stripe the Badger

### The Causes



*Illustration 1: This badger didn't know he was about to become a household name.*

Once upon a time a wind from the north west blew cold as it always does across the bleak north east landscape; rustling green leaves on the sacred Rowan trees so the scarlet berries fell, also shaking the buds on the wild rose bushes and bending the stems on the rhododendron plants, that in a few months time would bring color to the bleak landscape in a mad frenzy of dark purple flowers; all introduced from the mountainous Himalayas.

And the land was bare because greedy neap farmers had cut all the trees down to keep their fires burning at night. Nights they crawled back from the local seeing triple and were not afraid of the wife so fell heavily into bed so the wife bounced out.

## One Stripe

A wife who would remember this unkindness for the nights were cold.

And because the no good neap farmers were all full of XXX the neaps went green and the air soon became a swarm of flies and the smell was something else too.

“Here these Farmer Jacks really don't expect us sheep to eat this rubbish?” A sheep called Fred asked.

“Ba,” the stoic reply from his friend a sheep called Fred.

And across the yellow black tartan landscape all the wild flowers of the meadow and hedge row would compete with each other to pollinate first; before the freezing north winds blew again and carried their seeds out to sea as cod food.

Either that or it caused much hay fever amongst the neap farmers who had another excuse to stay in bed; and not with the wife who these Farmer Jacks sent out to force the sheep to eat green neaps.

“Eat you daft buggers or starve,” the burly wives would threaten the sheep.

“Ba,” the sheep called Fred went which translates as, “Not blooming likely girl.”

“Ba,” the sheep's friend called Fred added which translates as, “Ba.”

“My mummy told me not to marry the sod,” the wives would reply as they carried many green neaps so was covered in flies..

And the desolation of the land was mirrored above as white thick giant clouds raced across the blue expanse that was sky and were carried out to sea by the freezing winds up there, and this was spring and the clouds huffed and puffed to be first over the shale beeches.

Beeches that cut your feet to shreds for the rocks were sharp and hoodies had danced here all night smashing bottles of XXX, empty ones of course.

And when one looks at the clouds one asks, “Are they really moving,” and thinks

## One Stripe

time has stopped; but time that Alpha and Omega stops for no one and not for all living creatures that have the ability to walk or ears to hear as sea birds chatter amongst themselves. But they aren't, they are looking at you and laughing at your stumpy legs and double chin and want to mess you good for they don't like you so never throw them bread crumbs in winter again.

“We will not fish in the sea,” the little gray herring gulls squawked but must for these birds are the spirits of the drowned human fishermen so are called back to the foamy sea. “Howl,” the birds for effect and IF a bird can howl then pigs fly?

And the great North Sea was whipped into madness by the winds so it crashed on the rocks that looked like a giant's building blocks.

And a jolly little fishing boat with green fishermen at the railings; green because the boat was going up and down in the choppy sea artists like to paint as idyllic scenes with yachts. But just ask the green fishermen what they think of the paintings that is IF they could leave the railings to speak.

“Breakfast Fred?” A passing gull.

“English breakfast Fred, better not squawk too loud,” Fred's friend Fred but Fred was dim and had squawked too loud for now a million Fred's was circling breakfast.

Now the gulls apart from adding scary atmosphere by howling called, “We are wise and strong so are off to Farmer Jack's field were the soil is ploughed and the worms fat and juicy and no foamy sea,” the big gulls sang to each other. And who was Farmer Jack, the gulls called all farmers hereabout Jack for they were gulls and liked to be heard so apart from big beaks and bigger mouths are what is called dim.

“But we are gulls,” the gulls screeched proudly for they knew how to drift with the wind and be lazy and steal the labour of those who toiled.

### One Stripe

The lazy no good neap farmers in bed warm and cozy with Willamina and who is she when the wife is out in the cold wind ploughing the fields?

“Gee up horsie,” the wife for neap farmers are a selfish breed and spend their cash on Willamina the barmaid and not a tractor.

And the wicked horse did wind something and do something else so the wife shouted, “I want a divorce,” and she would not forget for the horse was strong for it was fed green neaps or could starve.

And below the gulls giant rocks and a wreck of a human fishing boat; thrown against the unmoving rocks like a piece of driftwood and that was what it was when the wind blew, jetsam, flotsam.

“ORCA,” was written on a piece of wood; “THUMP THUMP THUMP,” was heard under the waves too.

“Here where's the lifeboat?” A green fisherman splashing in the water.

“Here Jamie did your school not teach your how to swim like mine did?” The mean captain who had not invested in a life boat for he had his own Willamina who liked to spend his cash on mink coats.

“I take that means you went to a private school?” Jamie offended as “THUMP THUMP THJUMP” music surrounded him.

“Splash splash,” was heard much as the mean captain swam to shore leaving his crew to hear the horrid music.

And the gulls were joined by starlings that in flocks seemed to have one mind as thousands turned at once; but in reality if you were quite you did hear one, “I turn where I want,” and another “You have made me go left,” and “Hey watch it mate,”

## One Stripe

and turned right and another and another and another so the great flocks of starlings were not as one mind but a thousand individuals doing their own thing, “To get out of my neighbours way,” they want you to know and love to show off their green speckled diner jackets for they know not another starling has the same jacket!

And a human child trudging up a muddy road to Farmer Jack’s stopped and looked at the birds. And he had seen Hitch cock's 'BIRDS' so was afraid and sucked his beetroot lolly harder.

“Slurp,” and other unsavory sounds he made and added wanting to make you jealous, “I have been to a Saturday matinée for 6 pennies to see 'The Invasion of the Green Martian Men,' with Mel Gibson as leading actor.

And his name is not important! “Silly birds,” he said for to him the starlings seemed not to know where they wanted to go.

“But we do know where we are going, the midges we eat turn left and right up and down and we gobble them up and you should be grateful man things for midges like to bite and make you scratch till you run across the fields to get away from them,” all the starlings boasted for they felt intelligent telling you this.

And the wind coming in from the sea does not stop for any bird and lifted the flocks this way and that and puffed and blew them fast across many Farmer Jack fields where neaps lay green..

“Weeeee,” some of the younger birds.

## One Stripe

“Never did that in our day,” the older birds trying to keep their feathers on in the speeding wind.

And below where trees now stumps, mighty oaks and sacred rowans had been cut down by Farmer Jacks and the wind now blew unopposed across the land, lifting the soil high in the air and then into the face of the young boy trudging home; for their were no trees to act as walls.

Anyway, “Oh my eyes,” the boy cried rubbing them red and making them worse so ran home screaming.

And worse green fishermen had scrambled up the thousand foot rock cliffs looking for a captain who had run off with their pay for he was born mean.

“Green Martians,” the boy and ran much faster all the way home terrified so he did something in his pants so would get a good beating from his mummy when she finished ploughing; for her meaner husband did not buy a washing machine so she washed by hand.

“Blame Farmer Jack,” an owl hooted from an abandoned croft and other owls repeated adding, “Farmer Jack thinks he is the great mother goddess who nourishes all, but Farmer Jack is the cousin of The Grim Reaper. Where are the great oaks with hollows in them for us to nest?” So where mightily peeved somewhat.

And the gulls noticed but not the starling’s two small animals appearing out of a corpse of mixed Fir and Rowan. And the two did beastly things like lifting their legs and scratching and leaving messes on the trail for you to stand in.

## One Stripe

“We notice the smallest herring and tastiest scrap thrown from fishing boats so see them,” the gulls boasted and collided with the starlings who were just stuffing their beaks with midges so never saw anything.

And once upon a time the sky above the yellow and black tartan landscape of the north-east was an explosion of angry bird chatter.

“Mummy mummy,” the boy ran covering his ears at the same time he was rubbing his eyes and because he was wearing hand me down Wellingtons that flopped and rubbed against his ankles, being so big they stuck in the churned muddy plough marks.

And the boots stayed in the mud and his feet came out and the boy fell on a cow pat put there in the right place at the right time.

And this time he really did run faster all the way home to Farmer Jack’s.

“Have we missed something?” A gull.

And the gulls being inquisitive hoping for the boy’s black treacle and jam roll followed him for gulls eat anything; and pretty soon the boy was all white.

So he dropped his piece and the thousand gulls appeared from nowhere to battle over it. And one gull took it all in her beak and it stuck in her throat as she flew chased by a thousand gulls.

“I am choking,” the gull named Sheila.

“Then spit out the lovely treacle jam piece,” the rest of the Sheila's and Fred's flying behind her for second hand treacle buns have had time to marinate so are yummy.

## One Stripe

And the two small animals were badgers sniffing the air that time uses to send messages to animals.

“Man thing,” the largest badger snapping his jaws several times and it was easy to imagine what he was biting? And at the mention of that dreaded name the younger badger moved closer opening big cute black eyes wide in effort to spot MAN.

“Do not worry little cub,” the older badger gently looking down at his young cousin. “The wind says the scent is old, not too old, and MAN has been and gone.”

”Gone,” it was said by the younger with relief and followed by a big sigh.

And the young one now braver sniffed the ground and growled loudly.

“It will be a bad summer,” the older badger remembering a girl badger called Floozy Loo behind your bicycle shed and better times.

“Why?” The younger one taking a break sniffing and pretending to be brave and added, “Why are you drooling?”.

“Man,” the big badger blaming humans for his condition.

“Man,” and the little cousin thrust himself under the big one’s belly.

“Away you go,” the big badger trying to get all his paws back on the ground, “come out of there.”

And the little one looking sheepish came out from under his big cousin.

“Man is everywhere, the great destroyer. Man who used to be an animal like you.”

“Like me?” The young one amazed.



## One Stripe

“Yes listen to One Stripe your cousin,” a chorus from nosy moles who knew they could speedily escape the badger back down their holes, “we have been here since the start of time and know One Stripe is correct. Man was like us and only took what he wanted and put back what he didn’t. He wasn’t the destroyer then.”

“Anyway, thank you,” One Stripe, “trying to remember his history lessons but was distracted as his young cousin chased the moles back into their black holes. And One Stripe did not want to show he was distracted for he was wanting to show his cousin he was a statue of responsibility, unmoving in the wind, dependable, knowledgeable, so did not scratch and the fleas was hungry like they had not eaten in a week, “The eagle will know,” he blurted out rescuing the situation gracefully and he scratched.

“Eagle,” the young one running back under One Stripe’s belly so all the fleas were scratched onto him. And some fell onto the grass and my there was lion tamers, acrobats and clowns.

“What now lad?” One Stripe meaning the cub should remember he was a badger or might as well join the screaming human boy nearby covered in gulls so had not made it all the way home. For in his pockets chips and chewed bubble gum that the gulls wanted so were shredding his Saturday matinée clothes he wore to church on Sunday so his mummy would lock him in the coal shed as punishment. The coal shed with one piece of coal for her husband was the meanest and in the coal shed chains rattled and floor boards squeaked.

## One Stripe

“Look there is no eagle here so come out,” One Stripe looking under his legs, “and one day when you are bigger you can speak to the eagle because the eagle sees all up there amongst the clouds,” and the youngster crawled out to get a better look at the clouds.

But saw a mass of dark starlings and gulls blocking it instead.

“They say you won’t last this season as the traps will get you?” The young one changing the subject the way young do to disorientate you.

“Who says?”

“The crows and ravens.”

“Well if you speak to carrion eaters I am not surprised they told you that.”

“Eye the Buzzard is a great bird and eats live game,” the cousin defending his contacts not wanting to admit he suspected by One Stripe’s tone they were bad company; but he wasn’t admitting it he was a bad judge of company; he knew everything One Stripe did and more and pigs flew for Eye told him they could.

“He is the greatest carrion eater known, know the truth by what shines in the eyes boy,” One Stripe wondering where his cousin was meeting these types?

“What is a trap?” Again trying to disorientate One Stripe but the old badger was concentrating or was he? Floozy Loo was on his mind and floozy Sue and floozy Jane for this badger knew how to sing so crooned girl badgers behind bicycle sheds and on canoes in duck ponds when you where at church on Sunday.

## One Stripe

And in his right heap pocket a small jar of Hair Gel and a comb.

Anyway: “Traps are man things made of steel teeth that bites you good so you are stuck in them till the man thing comes, and he comes for your fur,” and One Stripe emphasized FUR, and if Eye the Buzzard kept back stabbing him all the flesh eaters would be looking out for a free meal and he was the meal.

“Once there was no traps for badgers so I am told but Scurry the rats tell me that he sees badger pelts drying in barns belonging to man so you don’t believe everything that no good buzzard tells you understand,” and One Stripe let his one stripe down his back stand up showing he was annoyed.

“Eye gives me mice to eat,” Shining Sun still not admitting his new friends were no goods.

“Mice, well it is better to feed yourself than be indebted to the likes of Eye then you are your own badger,” and One Stripe saddened at what the world was coming to, it wasn’t like that this when he was a youngster. Man was too blame, his poisoned bait was for all and his spirit sighed for even Eye and his kind that were poisoned by man.

He had heard seven eagles were poisoned yesterday for eating sheep when they in fact they dined on rabbits and rats in the corn fields

“Not his fault Eye’s disturbed.”

“Who?” Asked Shining Sun wanting to show his uncle he was alert and keen to learn.

## One Stripe

“Man, disturbed, he cuts rock away to leave deep holes that the rain fills up supermarket trolleys, car wheels, plastic yellow ducks and sea gulls.”

And Shining Sun tried to listen, he really did but knew when One Stripe mused over current affairs it was time to yawn, silently shift sideways and move away to that bush that needed exploring.

“The wind,” One Stripe suddenly barked and grunted, “beware the message on the wind.”

At once Shining Stripe bolted for his set but they were a long way from their burrow. It was the way One Stripe braked, so melancholic, a prophesy of doom.

“Man’s scent is on the wind, listen all, man is on the wind,” One Stripe standing and grunting to the wind so the

black birds on a meadow struggling with worms  
listened.

The blue tit stuffing grubs into its young mouths listened.

A red fox sneaking up on a mallard duck stopped and thought he better clear off; man was on the wind; and the duck sailed into reeds and was hidden.

And only the milking cows were happy man was about as their udders were full and needed milking and was a myth thirsty rats milked them.

“What do we do?” Shining Sun coming to a stop.

“Do, we are badgers, pull your shoulders back and puff out your chest that is what we do,” the reply.

## One Stripe

Shining Sun thought One Stripe crazy because he now looked silly, his rib cage expanded, cheeks purple holding in his breathe, his fur standing up making the chest bigger; and Shining Sun was anything but silly and he was remembering floozy Sarah in your bed when you where doing the washing downstairs, by hand of course.

And high above in the wind that stops for no one a black crow went ka crow ka crow so its scratchy voice went right down the spine of Shining Sun who shivered.

“Oh look one of your friends,” and One Stripe was being sarcastic for the black bird was eying them up for dropped morsels.

But the bird also saw something else and so began to push its luck.

“To the badgers belong the night.

The night when the grass is frosted silver.

Then the badger across such grass on little stumps slithers.

To find the worm that gives no fight.

Badger vicious little fighter you are.

Why the glossy fox gives you the right of path.

Badger only gentle when your young you night bath.

To you belongs the night and travel far.”

“You must learn such songs if you are to be a real badger,” One Stripe and Shining Sun knew he could if he could listen to it all; “all the animals have songs except man.” And One Stripe said it so deeply he was trying to paint a picture of the darkest

## One Stripe

hole of man in the youngster's mind. "Forgotten their roots, in denial they are beasts like us, who does man think he is?"

"The boss?" Shining Sun.

Then it happened.

The bird dropped from the sky, of course after the bang.

"Oh no oh no, it cannot be so?" Shining Stripe frozen to the spot.

"What a badger you are, why in my day I did bark at man and show him whose boss in the woods," One Stripe to be brave for the youngster's moral had collapsed; and so had his so he was not telling the truth so his nose would grow longer.

And Shining Sun knew One Stripe was definitely past it with that remark for he could hear man talking and the wood telling them with snapping twigs man was heading their way. Just why wasn't One Stripe wanting to run for home?

He was One Stripe the badger that is why, a badger with a comb in his back pocket..

"Look," he whispered pointing at the brown dry pile of grass, "the growing grass is green; a trap."

And Shining Sun wished he wasn't a badger but something bigger like the eagle and somewhere else where the grass was greener.

And One Stripe with a dead branch stuffed it in the trap that shut violently so much so Shining Sun jumped and so did his fleas that fell on the grass.

## One Stripe

“This is what makes a badger a badger and mouse a rodent,” One Stripe standing lifting the trap with the branch and Shining Sun bit it. Why he did such a silly thing only he knows, perhaps it was an act of bravado.

“To the air that no one can see,  
This is your domain,  
To the ground you fall no longer warm but cold.  
But in the wind still I hear four wings.  
For the Great Spirit took you home.”

Thus saying the death chant of all birds for the black crow One Stripe contemptuously threw the trap in the direction of the approaching men.

What IF he hadn't?

Then he wouldn't have looked ridiculous would he?

The trap didn't go far because it was attached by a chain to a stake in the ground.

And heavily it fell an inch from his hind paws.

“What you looking at?” And Shining Sun said nothing as he was being polite for he knew adults were passed it at twenty one.

“Didn't I say we were going home to ask your mother if you could visit the sea with me? Well?” And One Stripe knew when it was time to leave in a hurry and he took the cub by the scruff of the neck and dragged him along.

## One Stripe

That's when the men let loose their shot guns at the moving branches hoping a deer was about; but they missed and should have been aiming lower. *Just as well for our badgers.*

But did manage to destroy a raspberry bush, a Wren nest in it, three cabbage white butterflies, one orange Admiral Butterfly, sixty midges and the pellets ended up sunk in an old Silver Birch tree that complained to the Great Spirit in the form of the Mother Goddess who felt all, knew all, even when a sparrow dies can you believe! So listen grunts above as a flock of pigs head south.

And as One Stripe retreated none too gracefully carrying his cousin he knew what he must do? Summon a Great Council and why?

He remembered his great grandfather doing the same thing and for the same reason, MAN.

And knew he had the right to do so, the Great Spirit had given animals this council as protection against man who owned everything, so man thought' But man only owned what he could see, the towns full of cars and people and big gray stone houses with unfriendly cats and dogs in the gardens; *and was great when the dogs was on a lead and the dog food was in a bowl unattended; well it was just asking for trouble leaving valuables about and a bone was an added attraction for a relaxing gnaw after a meal.*

'Woof,' Rover starving hoping his neap farmer master would give him seconds.



## One Stripe

“Greedy dog, here is my boot instead,” the mean neap farmer and put the boot places so Rover jumped and growled these thoughts, 'When you are sleeping with Willamina full of XXX I will chew your leopard print undies to shreds,' so was booted more.

“Wife,” the alcoholic farmer that a Rover wanted to gnaw and did safely in its dreams.

And there was no reply just screaming from a boy running so fast he left the garden gate open and went into the pig sty and left that open as he was rubbing his red eyes so was blinded; worse he had treacle on his fingers so had smeared it across his face and a gull was on his head pecking him poohing as well.

“Squeal,” the escaped pigs that went into the garden and ate of the beetroot up so did the kid a favour as his lollies would be iced water from now on.

“Mummy,” the kid in the kitchen leaving all the doors open and managed to open one jammy eye and saw daddies wallet left carelessly on the kitchen table so helped himself to it.

“I can buy expensive chocolate éclairs from the bakers now,” and brightened but how to get rid of the gulls. “Eureka,” and smeared pickled neap juice on his clothes for gulls hate the stink of it.

So do bakers but better not tell him that and ruin his day.

“Tra la la, I am off to the bakers to stuff my face, tra la la,” the kid went.

## One Stripe

And whoever told the kid gulls hate the stink of pickled neaps was lying. Run quick kid, the bakers is only ten miles down the road.

“Wife,” the neap farmer called Farmer Jack in bed wanting her to throw a boot at the squealing pigs. “Must still be ploughing, hey wait a minute I can hear her squealing with laughter with the milkman Fred,” he said and still full of XXX threw his boot through the window thinking it was the wife the meanie so the cold air rushed in.

“Cur my bottom has gone blue,” the lazy drunk but was forced to get out of bed and close the closed shattered window and stood on long shreds of glass a boot had made.

“Judas Priest and Jimmy Hendrix I am standing on mice traps that beast of a wife has put under the window,” for he was drunk and didn't know the difference between traps and glass the alcoholic neap farmer.

“Squeal,” under his feet as twenty pigs and one piglets got under his feet for a kid had left the doors open.

“By Gad pink elephants,” he swore and stumbled out the bedroom door where more elephants waited.

The sister of the muddy piglet jumping up and down on his bed.

“Melons,” he swore as he tripped over the sister piggy and tumbled down four flights of stairs for neap framers own grand farm houses for they are poor.

“Squeal,” from the poor frightened little cuddly piggies that went with him.

## One Stripe

“Ouch,” the drunk for an angry pig with a drunk on it bites.

And they rolled and somersaulted into the kitchen and he landed face down on the table.

So his eyes blurred and red from XXX he could not fail to read the note pinned on the table with a big kitchen knife.

“Gone to the Antipodes with Fred the milkman,” and was signed 'WIFE.' For she had not forgotten being bounced out of bed on a cold night and forced to milk the cows before the rats did and suffer the horsie's wind.

And taken his cheque book but he would find that out when he slobbered up and his credit card and piggy bank under the kitchen floor board.

But that was memory and right now the youngster Shining Sun was getting heavy so One Stripe dropped him.

“You got four legs so use them,” as he didn’t want to admit he was feeling his age, but Shining Sun read his double meaning and was too polite to comment.

And in a nearby wood pigs now reverted back to their state, boars for pigs apart from being smelly are boring grunting and rut all day long when they isn't eating acorns.