

Fear and Greed in Omaha

" Be fearful when others are greedy. Be greedy when others are fearful." –Warren Buffett

It had been a wonderful fall in Omaha. On a beautiful, crisp day in the middle of November, Warren the squirrel was sitting at home. While all of the other animals hurriedly searched for the biggest and best acorns, Warren sat quietly organizing his own pile, just big enough to make it through the winter. Outside, squirrels scurried about, carrying acorns from tree to tree. Each had his own large pile sitting in front of his home. The squirrels show off their majestic acorns to the world, hoping to make a favorable trade and end up with the best acorns around. But one tree doesn't have a pile – Warren's tree. While other squirrels trade and seek the best and most exotic acorns, Warren avoids the rush and contentedly saves his small stash to get him through the coming winter.

Suddenly, another squirrel burst through the opening in the bark. "Warren, Warren!" the young squirrel cried with glee, "I just traded my three bronze acorns for this huge two-inch gold." He thrust the large acorn towards Warren, losing his balance as he let go of the nut that was nearly the size of his head.

"Oh, Sam, I don't know if that golden acorn will stay for that long. Will you be able to eat it all winter?" Warren asked, helping the younger squirrel up.

"Don't be silly, golden acorns will always be more valuable. I can always trade back, maybe even for four bronzes," Sam replied. "You're such a boring older brother." He left the hollow to go show someone else his great find.

Warren sighed and shook his head. He stepped out of his home and viewed the actions of the others in the area. He could see the massive piles accumulating in front of each tree. Suddenly, he heard a rumbling, crunching sound in the distance. A giant monster appeared, holding a fork-like instrument with teeth twice as tall as Warren. The squirrels all scurried

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around, trying to save a few acorns before heading for safety in the trees. As Warren quickly went back inside, he could see the piles of acorns toppling over.

It was all over within an hour. "I think it's clear," Warren mumbled as he stepped outside. The land was a scene of destruction. The brown and dead grass was now visible where the fallen leaves had been. The carefully amassed piles of prized acorns were no more. Most of the other squirrels' months of work had disappeared in just a few minutes. The remaining acorns were strewn about the lawn.

"Warren, Warren!" Sam cried as he ran up to his brother.

"Oh, thank God you're alive," Warren sighed in relief.

"I may not be for long. I've lost all of my acorns. All I have is this gold, but it won't do me any good now. I can't eat it and nobody has anything to give me for it."

"Well, Sam, I have a lot of food still. I can probably share some. Let's try and see what's left out there now. There may be some nice acorns available."

"No, Warren. There is no way I am going out there now. I am not risking it and there's no point – they aren't worth anything anymore."

"Suit yourself," Warren said as he ventured away from home. As he ran around, he saw the ruins of the acorn stockpiles. Most of the goods seemed to have disappeared, but every so often he would find a few stray pieces available. The land was deserted; nobody wanted to go outside for fear of meeting the monster once again. Warren collected the remains of the acorns and amassed his own nice pile. As he entered his home again, arms laden with acorns, Sam exclaimed, "Where did you get these?"

"Nobody else wanted them," Warren replied. "I'll have food for winter and, soon enough, people will start wanting these acorns again and I'm the one that has them."

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Sam scoffed at his brother's words, but Warren was right. Soon enough, order returned to the world of squirrels and acorns, and everywhere squirrels once again ran around collecting and trading their bounty. But, this time, Warren was on top. As he saw his fortune grow, Warren lived frugally, yet comfortably, and always supported giving to those less fortunate.