

# The Clever Foursome

An Advent Story  
Second Sunday of Advent

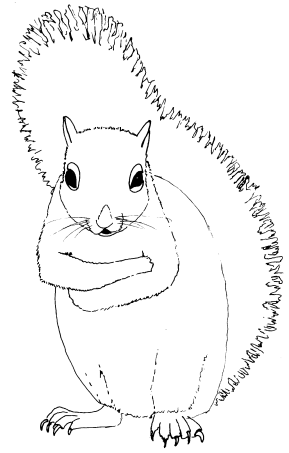
M. Manenti and A.G. Forgiarini



# The Clever Four

## Second Sunday of Advent

How long had they been sitting on this branch, staring at that closed window? At least the sturdy wooden shutters were not closed. The squirrel's stomach grumbled.



"What did you say? It's always open, huh! And it's easy to reach!" Her voice rose with every word as she vented her frustration. "The branch ends way before the window! Do you know how many times I will have to jump if we ever get in at all? I don't have wings, you know!"

"And you do not have any gratitude for me not letting you starve either," the crow replied. "If you had been smart enough to mark your stashes, you would not be here. So do not complain about not having wings and just wait."

She took a deep breath. "You ..." The soft clapping of hooves stopped her.

"Just as I told you! Here comes the bounty!" The crow gloated over his vindication.

"I only see an old man and a donkey," she grumbled. "But maybe he is hiding the nuts under his long white beard."

The crow rolled his eyes. "What do you think is in those packs that poor donkey is lugging?"

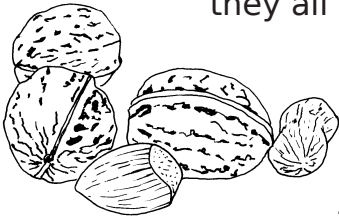
"Exaggerating as always, aren't you? That's plain impossible! How could one man find so many nuts?"

„Just wait and see!"

A loud creaking brought their eyes back to the hut. The door opened and an old woman with red cheeks stepped outside. She wiped her hands on her apron "Wait, Niklaus. I'll help you carry them inside."

A ginger tomcat shot out from under her long skirts and rushed towards the old man.

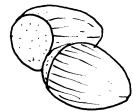
Niklaus smiled at her over his shoulder. "Greetings from the Ruperts." He heaved the first pack on his back. As he turned, the cat bumped his head into the man's legs and he lost his balance. His free hand grasped for the donkey's mane and with a step forward he saved himself from falling. But he lost grip of the pack and it slid down his back. With a thump, it hit the ground and burst open. Peanuts, walnuts, hazelnuts, they all rolled out in every which way.



The squirrel's jaw dropped. She was mesmerized by the moving nuts. The crow's triumphant shout, "What did I tell you! I was right!" was lost on

her.

"Heavens, Mouser. You will be the death of me one day." Groaning, the old man stooped and started to collect the nuts within his reach.



"Let it be and come inside to warm up." The woman lifted her skirt and carefully picked her way through the mess. "I'll help you with the other pack and we'll come back for the rest later."

"Look at this abundance," breathed the squirrel. She lost sight of everything else and her mouth watered. She flitted down the tree trunk and pelted

toward the ripped pack.

"Wait, the cat is still outside!" She was blind and deaf to the crow's warning.

Enthralled she grabbed one nut after another and pushed them into her cheeks.

Just one more she thought and reached out. But instead of a hard and smooth shell, she touched something soft and furry. She pulled her paw back and looked up into a pair of green eyes that flashed with anger.

"That's it you thief," growled the cat.

The squirrel froze and the cat's stare held her in place.

"Run!" The crow's shout broke the spell. The squirrel turned as the crow swooped down onto the ginger tiger clacking up a storm. She raced to the safety of the tree.

