



Barnabus needs an Albatross

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Barnabus drawing courtesy of Jacki Charsley

Barnabus, the church mouse, was reading the church notice-board, well he was really looking to find out when the next church social was, for church socials meant biscuit crumbs!. He'd got to a notice that said 'Don't worry, God will have a solution; Crisis meeting next Wednesday in the Church Centre' and was trying to figure out what it meant when his friend Angeleen, a Patagonian tree mouse who had recently moved into the roof came along.

"Barnabus" she said, "I think there is something wrong"

"Something wrong" replied Barnabus, "what do you mean something wrong?"

"Well" said Angeleen, "the vicar has stopped singing"

"No he hasn't" Barnabus said, "I heard him singing hymns in church this morning, he sounded as loud as usual and was getting the right notes most of the time"

"No I don't mean during church services" explained Angeleen, "I mean when he walks around the building. You know how we can usually hear him coming because he is always singing to himself, well today he nearly caught me cleaning the biscuit crumbs off of the vestry floor he was so quiet. He also looks worried; he's not smiling like he normally does"

"Must be something to do with this", said Barnabus pointing to a notice.

"What does it say", Asked Angeleen, "I can't read English, only Patagonian"

"It says that there is a crisis meeting tomorrow, for the whole church"

"Well" she said, "we'd better see if we can find out what's going on"

The next day Barnabus and Angeleen hid in the roof beams and watched the crisis meeting, all the humans were there, and they all seemed miserable. The meeting went on for a long time, and finally they all left with very glum faces.

"Well that's that," said Barnabus. "The tower is in urgent need of repair and they haven't got the money to do it."

Angeleen nodded. "And if the tower get's too dangerous they've got to shut the church."

Time for a council of war" Barnabus announced. "It's our church too."

So that night Barnabus, Angeleen, Shirley the Seagull, Beatrice the bat, Johnny the Frog and Sammy the squirrel met on the church roof.

"I've found out something", said Barnabus, "They are having another meeting in six weeks time, there's another notice on the notice board, this one says that there is another crisis meeting, but that's all".

"Well we need to do something before then," Croaked Johnny. "We just can't leave it to them, you know how useless humans are."

"Right," said Barnabus firmly. "Any ideas?"

"Sensible ideas," Angeleen said looking at Sammy. "Something that will get people here and get them to give money."

They sat in silence for some time, then Shirley puffed out her already round chest.

"I've got an idea. We just need a rare and exotic bird to perch on the tower for a while."

"And how will that help?" croaked Johnny.

"There's these humans who like finding rare birds, I think they call themselves twitchers. A red breasted sparrow hawk once told me that humans travelled for miles and miles just to see her when she escaped from the zoo. It's funny really as nobody seemed bothered about her when she was there."

"So the plan is?" Asked Barnabus.

"Simple, we find a rare and exotic bird and invite them over for a holiday." Shirley replied.

"Any other ideas?" Asked Barnabus, not too sure that Shirley's plan would work.

There was a deafening silence.

"Well then," said Angeleen. "Can you find us a rare bird?"

Shirley puffed out her chest again.

"I'll have a tweet about."

"Make it something big," said Beatrice. "So it can be seen from below."

Three weeks later Barnabus was eating some thistle seeds in the church garden when he noticed something odd in the sky. It looked like a small aeroplane gliding over the river, then he realised it wasn't a plane, but it was a bird. A very big bird. A very very big bird. A huge bird, an enormous bird, and it was coming towards the church. The bird circled the church three or four times, then Shirley guided him down onto the church tower.

Barnabus rushed up the roof to meet Shirley dancing for joy.

"We've got an Albatross! We've got an Albatross!"

Barnabus sidled up to Shirley, carefully keeping near the parapet.

“If you don’t mind me asking, what does he eat?”

Shirley giggled. “It’s a she and she only eats fish, so you are safe.”

Reassured Barnabus approached the Albatross.

“Thank you for coming” said Barnabus “we do need your help”

Barnabus then explained to the albatross, who was called Sharon and had been born in a bird sanctuary in Essex, why they all needed her help, but that the next meeting was still four weeks away.

“That’s all right” said Sharon, “My wings need a rest”

“Can we get you anything to eat” said Angeleen who had now arrived, but wondered how they would feed such a large bird.

“No thanks” said Sharon, “I came across a shoal of herring on my way here, that will keep me happy for at least a couple of weeks. She gave a contented fishy burp. “But I would like a drink, say a bottle of lemonade a night”

So every night Barnabus and Angeleen brought a bottle of lemonade up to Sharon, and she told them tales of the far seas, and how she had learnt to drink lemonade from some singing Romanian rats; she liked it because it made her beak tickle.

The funny thing was that Shirley had been absolutely right. Sharon’s arrival caused quite a stir in the human world. Hundreds of people started to come and stand just outside the church to just see Sharon. They lined both sides of the road and half-filled the field to the side of the church. They apparently came from all over the country to see Sharon because it was apparently quite unusual to see an albatross sitting on a church roof (if only they knew she drank lemonade Barnabus thought, now that would give them a surprise!) Once a day Sharon would leap off the church tower and fly around for a hour or so, it caused quite a stir with the twitchers as some tried to follow her and some rapidly took photographs while the others looked for some food to eat while they waited for her to return. The church below was busy too; the church members had started giving lunches and teas to the twitchers, and giving guided tours of the church and, for a small fee, show them the tower that Sharon was sitting on.

Finally the night of the second crisis meeting arrived and Barnabus managed to sneak inside and listen from the roof beams. All the others waited patiently outside. Sharon and the others waited quietly. The meeting lasted a long time until, in the end, happy singing could be

heard from the room below. Barnabus went back out onto the roof grinning from ear to ear.

"Come on" said Shirley. "Do tell us"

"Well" said Barnabus before leaping up and punching the air. "We did it. They've now got loads of money from providing lunches to the twitchers, as well as that the church has received money from the TV crews, the radio interviewers, the newspapers, and from selling albatross manure. So now they have enough money to pay for the tower repairs and enough left over to mend the bells.

"Why are they singing" said Beatrice

"Because they are sure that God has provided the money because who ever heard of an albatross going to church!"

He looked at Shirley. "Good one Shirley, it worked first time." He gave a slight bow. "But without Sharon it never would have worked."

"Enjoyed it," burped Sharon. "Might come again, who knows?"

Early next morning they all thanked Sharon for coming, and she left to fly south to see her old home, and to go on towards the Southern Oceans, where she had heard that there was going to be some really good fishing. All the twitchers packed up and left, and the church returned to normal.

As Barnabus settled down to his morning drink and biscuit he thought about it all, and was glad the plan had worked because the church was important to the humans and to the animals that lived around it. He settled down to read the morning paper and suddenly his ears twitched. Hey up, thought Barnabus, I know that noise – it's the Vicar singing, looks like the problems really are all over; time to make myself scarce.

From the same author on Feedbacks

Felburgh (2010)

Felburgh is the story of a vicar (Peter) and his life in a new parish; one that he has not chosen and that has not chosen him. The parish is set in seemingly idyllic Suffolk seaside town of Felburgh somewhere between Felixstowe and Aldeburgh. The parish, like most parishes, is only normal on the surface and has underlying tensions and vast social differences. The church itself has a third of a million pounds in the bank, some of the congregation are downright antagonistic and quite a few have interesting pasts. The church has previously seen a rapid succession of vicars, who have been driven out, escaped or just disappeared, this has left a legacy of distrust and discontent. Finally, like the Parish, the vicarage itself also has an interesting history, one which soon impinges on Peter's life and not necessarily for the better. All in all it's a mixture most vicars would run from, but Peter has no choice but to stay as he has nowhere else to go, so can he make a success of it or will history repeat itself once again?

Barnabus Makes Someone Smile (2010)

Barnabus notices a small child who does not seem to smile, ever. However, with a little lesson from a peculiar cat Barnabus learns how to make him smile.

Vignette (2010)

Brian is a vicar on the edge, the edge of suicide that is. He has a number of rural parishes and they all contain farmers who are on the edge, or over the edge, of bankruptcy. It is all out of his control and try as he might he cannot deal with all the pain and angst and it has finally got to him. But he is not allowed to find relief in the comfort of a cold bullet via circumstances that are again out of control. However, as his life spirals downwards there is one chink of light, perhaps, just perhaps it will provide him with a way out.

Barnabus Prepares for Bonfire Night (2010)

Fireworks can be pretty and bonfires can be warming, but to hedgehogs they can be deadly. Barnabus works out a plan to keep the hedgehogs safe, but it is not that simple.

Barnabus and the Lost Spider (2010)

Barnabus, the church mouse, believes that everything in his church is in exactly the right place. Then he opens the boiler room door and finds...

Barnabus and Loadza Mice (2010)

Barnabus is bored, in fact Barnabus is very bored. So he decides to invite a few friends over for a video party, unfortunately ...

Barnabus Trusts a Cat (2010)

Barnabus, the church mouse, doesn't like cats very much and certainly wouldn't normally trust one with his life, but one Christmas...

Barnabus and the Inheritance (2010)

A Barnabus Church Mouse Story.

Barnabus gets a surprise letter telling him he's got an inheritance. What can it be? His mind runs wild, is it money? A Mansion? Perhaps it's a ...

Barnabus and the New Year (2010)

It's New Year's Eve and Barnabus is all alone in his church basement home. Have all his friends gone out and left him? he feels really miserable, and then...

Barnabus and the Winter Supply (2010)

Barnabus has been a diligent Church Mouse, he has stored enough food to feed all the mice in his church for the whole of the winter, but then it starts to rain up North and other mice are in trouble, what should he do?

Alien Gel (2010)

Henry is a perfectly normal person in a perfectly normal world, then he is forced by circumstances to buy a weird hair gel. From then on his life begins to change as the hair gel starts to interfere in its own peculiar way. The question is: can Henry keep it under control?

Barnabus Meets Ratatooee (2010)

It's Christmas Eve and all is well in Barbabus' church, that is until there is a scratch on the door and the appearance of a very hungry Romanian rat. Should they say there is no room, or let him and his companions in?

Wilfred's Heavely Journey (2010)

Wilfred, the churchyard rat, is feeling off-colour and down-hearted, so he decides to go on holiday. He chooses a cruse, but it turns out to be not quite what he expected.

Spike and Mother's Day (2010)

Spike the hedgehog has a problem, a real problem. It's two days before Mother's day and he hasn't got her a present, and even worse has no idea what to get. Can his friends help him or not?

Spike Learns to say Sorry (2010)

Spike the hedgehog absolutely loves cycling, but his father has given him two basic rules to obey and one day Spike forgets them, it leads him into all sorts of trouble.

Spike Plays Hedgehog Rugby (2010)

Spike the hedgehog has been made captain of the local hedgehog rugby team, but will his first decision at his first match be a big mistake?

Boris the Dancing Beaver (2010)

Boris is a beaver like no other. Forget swimming, forget chopping down trees; Boris loves to dance. But, just what future is there for a dancing beaver? His brothers think he's a nuisance, but Boris is sure dancing, somehow, is his future.

Barnabus and Hank the Armadillo (2010)

Barnabus, the church mouse, is looking after his church as normal and has an American guest, Hank the armadillo. However, they do not get on very well until the church boiler begins to throw a fit.

Barnabus and Risk Management (2010)

Barnabus, the church mouse, has to entertain his friend's Aunt. She is a bit of a snob and loves to find fault with the state of

Barnabus' church. She discovers a box of soft toys in the wrong place and has a good moan, but Barnabus has an unusual answer; one involving sky-diving!

Sarah has a problem (2010)

Sarah the skunk has a couple of problems; one being her temper. She just can't keep it and when she gets angry those around her get squirted with her special smell liquid. It's not a recipe for keeping friends, so she hasn't any. Then one day...

Arboreal Love (2010)

Can trees feel for human beings as human beings feel for trees? Not everybody thinks so, but one old lady holds a secret: a secret of a love and passion for a tree that knew no bounds. But could this love be infectious?

The Last Assignment (2010)

They are highly trained operatives. They have been specially prepared for any mission. They are kept under tight reign. But there is this special assignment, could it be their last?

Cold (2010)

Jim Tarrent is an ex-army sergeant turned private investigator following his untimely departure from the army. On solving his first case he gains a partner and together they look like they will make a go of his business. However, Jim has a traumatic past that he cannot seem to leave behind and his partner is probably no better off. Then two cases hit them that could change their lives, and their detective agency, for ever.

The Rectory (2010)

Stephen Holmes is the type of person for whom every silver cloud has a black lining. Up to now he has led a fairly uneventful life. Uneventful that is if you forget that everything he touches has a knack of turning to dust or biting back. So much so that after nearly a decade as a bank clerk he has not progressed more than one tiny step up the promotion ladder; so much so that he's really given up on living and thinks of himself as just existing; so much so that you'd hardly call him a good catch or for that matter any sort of catch. However, a surprise letter offers him the chance to

change all that and to begin a new life, nay a new wealthy life. But he knows that every time someone fills up his glass with beer it has a habit of leaking out through unnoticed cracks, so can it all be true, and are there really new horizons ahead?

Lumen in Let Your Little Light Shine (2010)

Lumen is a glow worm with attitude. Currently he's fed up with being a glow worm and lurned his lights off. But there is a problem, if his light doesn't shine, just where does his energy go?

Book Woman (2010)

Mary is the Manager of a private lending library in the sleepy Suffolk coastal town of Eastburgh. She originally wanted to be a journalist, but following a dreadful accident that she was forced to realign her career aspirations. Mary has a reputation of being rather short with people and fending off chances of friendship, not that she has much chance of friendships as she works full time and cares for her elderly mother.

However, Mary's nicely ordered world of books and home is slowly turned round thanks to an unexpected discovery, a young girl and Mary's changing inner needs.

The Soulmate Agency (2010)

The Soulmate Agency is a dating agency with a difference. Instead of pairing people up they invite groups of people away for a week and run them through a series of exercises to help them get to know one another. However, that is not to say the owner doesn't have a hidden plan of possible matings. But one assorted group, as soon as it arrives, starts to defy the odds...

Trembine Halt (2010)

Trembine Halt is a tiny Cambridgeshire village. Like most small villages the dozen inhabitants have their various foibles, but they have learnt to live together and support one another when necessary, even coping with the odd transitory interloper. However, lurking underneath are emotional hang-ups, hidden relationships, suicides and selfishness. All would remain as it was, except on one snowy day a freight train gets stuck in the village and the addition of the extra person starts off a train of events that will have long term repercussions.

Nocturnus (2010)

John Smith and Jane Doe (yes that's their real names) are ordinary people living separate lives. He as a peripatetic lecturer and she as a night-time cleaning manager. In the normal course of events their paths would probably never cross. However, some events are far from normal and the two get thrown together to dispose of a corpse.

The question is can they get away with it? Especially as it's not just the police after them.

But the story is more than just a simple tale of misdeed and misdemeanor. Jane leads her nocturnal life for very good reasons (well good to her) and John prefers to travel rather than stay at home for equally valid reasons (well valid to him.) So as their lives are forcibly intertwined are their reasons still valid or are they redundant?

The Face (2010)

Brian is the type of guy who likes to have everything cut and dried and his life on a well-ordered track. He's been in the same teaching job since leaving university and spends every summer holiday house-sitting for his cousin George. However, this summer, after seeing a woman's face in a supermarket, his life starts to change in ways he would never have contemplated. However, there is more to come and his well ordered life starts to spiral way out of control, the problem is that he rather begins to like it that way.

Botanago (2010)

Botanago refers to a mathematical formula, which is invented within a robotics company by an eccentric and irascible middle aged research engineer called Albert, who is not all he seems. All would be well if they left him alone to think his mathematical thoughts, but in Jeddle Robotics lie people with ambition and downright managerial ruthlessness that Albert detests. So while he strives to perfect his cherished formula, he must also deal with the rest of his life, and that is nowhere near as easy.

Ruth (2010)

Ruth is a runner with a unique sexual chemistry that combines in almost near perfection with the story-teller; but she says little and wants nothing else. However, as far as he is concerned this is enough, then the unexpected happens and life gets turned on it's head...

Bitter (2010)

Jim Tarrent and Jenn Tarrent are settling down to a new routine in their detective agency following their marriage.

They have the usual mix of cases, but also pick up a case for military intelligence involving two dead service personnel discovered in unusual circumstances while Jim (who still dreams of his army past) plugs away at solving a child hit and run mystery no matter what it costs.

However, both cases lead them into murky territory where simple objectives have morphed into potential scandals that no-one on high wants revealed.

Jims unusual evidence gathering skills and Jenn's organisation lead them further on than anyone else, but perhaps the outcome is not worth the trouble involved.

(Bitter is a sequel to 'Cold')

Sydney takes a stand (2011)

Sydney the frog only has a small muddy puddle as a home and now the council want to take it away - there comes a time when every frog has to make a stand. Unfortunately this time the stand is against a giant digger; can he survive?

Barnabus can Fly! (2011)

Barnabus the church mouse has got himself into a pickle again! He's been teaching the mouslets all about bats, but now he can't find one and his class are beginning to disbelieve him - can there be a solution?

Barnabus and the 'Swerve' (2011)

Barnabus has a lot on his mind; the church want to sell off their ancient pipe organ and he needs to find a way to beat the Red

Rodents at Mouse Volley ball. The answer could lie in something very different...



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