Harmony

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Abstract

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THE creatures of the forest had always justifiably boasted of their musical abilities. They were especially proud of the exciting close harmony produced by their quartet, the “Forest Four.” Weasel, the top tenor, could sing as high as almost any girl. The mellow, penetrating voice of Badger was just what was needed to assume the role of lead tenor. Fox had a soft, clear voice that blended well; he was a good baritone. The booming resonance of Raccoon’s voice fit the bass part nicely. When they sang they were one voice.

Now Fox, being a fellow with ideas of his own, decided one day he didn’t like Raccoon. He approached Badger and said, “Badger, my friend. I’ve come to the realization that our fine quartet would be better off without the services of old Raccoon.”

Badger, being taken back a bit, replied, “And why say you this, Fox? Do you object to Raccoon’s voice?”

“Oh, I suppose his voice is good enough. But, my dear Badger, haven’t you noticed? He’s different from us.”

“Different you say?”
"Oh, yes. For instance, to look at him gives the impression that one is looking at a common criminal. What a sneaky face he has! And his habits! I have heard... and from a reliable source, mind you... that he washes all his food before he eats it. What a ridiculous custom!"

"And is that all?"

"Oh, no. There are many other things, though I can't think of them now. But I'm sure the quartet would be better off without him. Perhaps I'll do something about it."

The very next day, Fox's opportunity came walking into the forest, singing to itself. There, for all to see and hear, was Lynx, with the most beautiful voice imaginable. His voice was so vibrant and alive that all the creatures merely sat in hiding and listened.

Fox, lurking behind a bush on the trail, said to himself, "Ah, ha! Mr. Lynx goes at least two notes lower than Raccoon, and I believe much higher. A fine replacement for Raccoon... yes, an excellent replacement."

Now at this very moment, Raccoon came hurrying by on his way to the stream. "Oh, Raccoon! You there! Raccoon!" cried Fox.

"Yes, Sir Fox?"

"Tell me, my good Raccoon, have you yet heard the newcomer to our forest, Mr. Lynx?"

"Oh, yes sir. He has a very good voice."

"Better even than yours, wouldn't you say, Raccoon?"

Raccoon gulped. "Yes, I... I believe so."

"A fine replacement for you, wouldn't you say, Raccoon?"

"Oh, but sir... you know how I enjoy singing in our quartet!"

"But the quartet comes first, wouldn't you say, Raccoon?"

"Oh, but... yes. Yes, the quartet comes first."

"That's better. I'll let you know when tryouts are to be held. I'll see if Robin and his wife will conduct them."

Raccoon walked slowly on toward the stream with head bowed and tail tucked between his legs. Raccoon rea-
lized why he was being dropped from the quartet, and Fox knew it. With a sly grin, Fox whirled around and dashed to the home of Robin and his wife.

A day later, the seven best singers in the forest were gathered together for the "Forest Four" auditions. Mr. Robin and his wife were well known for their honesty and fair play. They would make good judges.

"Now, gentlemen," said Robin, "my wife and I will switch you five around until we find the best blend. If one of you must give up your position, there'll be no hard feelings. Agreed?"

"Agreed," shouted three voices. Perhaps the baritone part stood out a bit too much. Raccoon hung his head; Fox smiled.

Tryouts went on through the afternoon, and by night the creatures of the forest were anxiously awaiting the appearance of the perhaps new "Forest Four." Excitement ran high as word spread that the quartet was ready to sing for the public in the common meeting place.

All the chattering creatures became suddenly quiet as Mr. Robin walked in front of the row of bushes that served as curtain. He cleared his throat and spoke.

"Good friends, my wife and I have tried to be as fair as we could in selecting this quartet. The four we have selected will now sing before you."

The first to come out was Weasel, then Badger. Everyone knew they would still be in. Then appeared the newcomer, Mr. Lynx. A murmur ran through the crowd.

Then, coming from behind the bushes to take his own place in the quartet, was Raccoon with a broad smile on his face. The audience gasped, stared, then applauded and cheered wildly. Mr. Robin raised his wing and the crowd was hushed.

"I'd like to congratulate Mr. Lynx on becoming a member of the 'Forest Four.' He'll make a fine baritone."

From the north a soft cool breeze came swishing through the pines carrying a sound quite similar to the angry barking of a fox.