

# Nunc and Geo

## 1.

He's spent his entire life deep in the walls of AT&T Park, roaming the miles of passageways where wires or pipes were laid and where fissures were created when the massive stadium settled.

He's the ultimate insider. He's never been outside.

He's always lived in darkness, a total depthless black comfortable to him because he cannot close his eyes. He relies on his unerring and extended sense of touch. He can tell if he is near other creatures by the vibrations they make and by their scents, which he takes in through his incessantly flicking tongue, his all-purpose taster-smeller-info filter.

He's a crevice creature, narrow as the tight tunnels he inhabits -- in both body and mind. He's thinks small thoughts, familiar thoughts over and over. Stay away. Stay the same. Do not disturb.

He spends his days stretched in silence, mostly asleep. Jealous of his privacy, he doesn't like others of any kind. He doesn't like much, except his own company.

Until he gets hungry,

Then he begins to move. No hurry, no worry, something will show up. It always does. He skims the slender passages, tongue slipping, tongue slicking, hunting for his next meal.

He catches a whiff of warm meat and slides toward it and sees a change in the encompassing blackness, a gradual brightening.

That slows him. He's a careful animal, not eager for adventure. He's never seen this before, this diffuse glow. He doesn't care for anything new, anything at all. He's not sure he should go on.

But the food smell ... unmistakable now.

He creeps closer, tonguing the air, closer ...

Then lunges out of the crack into a radiance unlike anything he's ever experienced. It's blinding, bewildering, but he's in it and he doesn't have any arms to grab and he doesn't have any teeth to bite, so he giga-gulps and swallows his victim whole.

He pulls back into the muted interior, still intensely bright by his standards. He flexes and pushes his prize deeper down his ropy body.

It's warm, all right. Way warm.

Odd. He thought it was alive. At least not dead. He doesn't do dead. But there's no head. No arms or legs either.

It's just a tube of meat.

It's hot. Getting hotter. He can feel the awful heat all along his long, long body.

What has he eaten?

He draws further back into the crack. The heartburn spreads the whole length of him. He's too full to flee, too full to turn in this too-tight space, but he manages to tuck his head under a coil.

His first Giants dog. Geo feels ill.

## 2.

Nunc advances slowly, paying close attention to where he walks. He goes over every inch of turf. He does it every day, sometimes twice. He's a groundskeeper for the San Francisco Giants.

A Native American, he has long black hair tied in a ponytail and a nose like a hawk. He's the ultimate outsider.

He needs to be outdoors, where he can connect with growing things. Not always easy in the city. He's not comfortable indoors, especially in the cramped tract house he shares with his boozy, blaming brother. He doesn't feel like he belongs there.

He doesn't feel like he belongs anywhere, but the baseball field comes closest.

It's not exactly the Great Plains, where he was raised and where he hopes to return. The grains and grasses in the sacred lands extend as far as you can see. Here at AT&T Park he's got about three acres to tend.

He cares for it like a child.

He examines the infield. Everything seems to be in order. No uneven areas that could deflect a batted ball, no lips between the dirt basepaths and the grass.

He inspects the outfield, running his hand over rough patches where new sod was planted. He finds a spot not doing well.

He pulls out the pouch he wears around his neck, his medicine bag. He reaches inside and takes a pinch of the contents, a mixture of herbs and other organics, and sprinkles it over the patch of grass.

He notices a small hole. A player could catch his cleat on a tear like that and could trip. Some animal must have made it. That's why Nunc, who respects all creatures, doesn't like any of them on his turf.

He fills in the depression, using a golf tool he keeps in the kit on his belt. He's on his knees, frowning, bird nose an inch from the earth, when his friend walks up.

"Still at it?" asks Chad, tonight's starting pitcher.

"I need more time," Nunc complains.

Chad Whipple is the only Giant who notices that Nunc exists. The sharp-nosed maintenance man is invisible to the others. Earlier in the season, the young star asked the groundskeeper for some blades of grass to suck because "I grew up with the taste in my mouth and it helps me to concentrate."

Nunc understood that request. He set aside a small plot next to the bullpen, where he let the grass grow longer.

He moves off the field when the players come out, all jokey and serious at the same time. They spread out and start limbering up, bending and running short sprints. Chad throws in the bullpen along the left field line.

The fans are watching their heroes, preening and grinning. The coaches are looking for small signs that could affect the game – a sore knee, a stiff back, a wide yawn.

Nunc sits near the sideline and stares at the players' feet. He watches like a hawk. Stumbles, slides and skids are all normal, everyday incidents, but they leave their marks on the yard.

Nunc is never happy, not with the field or with his life. He's a sullen man, but he's learned to handle the minor damage, at least on the field. It's the major events he despises – marching bands, concerts, football. Twice a year they host that other sport. It takes weeks for the turf to recover.

When the cameras are on the players and the fans have their hands over their hearts and their mouths full of *The Star Spangled Banner*, Nunc scoots onto right field. He hunches over a scrape no one else would notice. He puts his hands on it and heals the green surface of the game.

As the players take the field for the first inning, he disappears through a door in the outfield wall.

### 3.

Geo wakes with a mega-burb that sends shivers down his longitude and ends with a little tail shake.

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