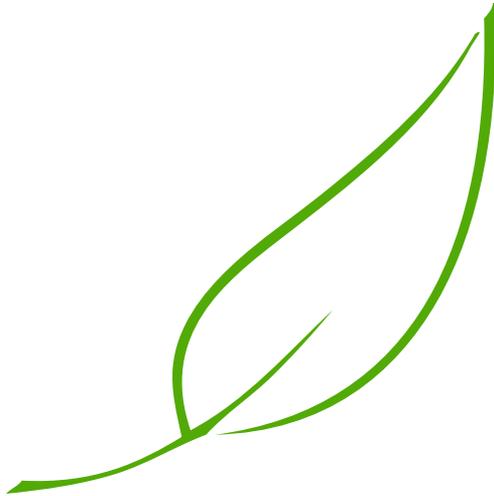


THE SQUIRREL OBITUARY

by Ken Bradbury



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Obituaries are just no fun at all if you're dead and can't read 'em. I just went to my third funeral ... not really mine, actually ... where the eulogy was given by a well-meanin' minister who really didn't know beans about the dearly departed but stumbled on the best he could from whatever hearsay information he could gather on two days' notice. I don't know why in cases like that the family don't just have a good friend get up and talk.

Every time we get a new preacher I get this awful fear of dyin' and lyin' in wake at the hands of a fella who's not sure what my name was. That's why I thought I'd write Della Dosier's eulogy while she's still around to hear it. If her hammer gets tripped and the minister is new, he can always refer back to this speech.

Della is a cleaner. Long as I've known her, that's all she does. Cleans. She works for one of those firms who clean for hire and every evenin' you'll find her in some bank or business or governmental office, vacuumin' carpets and shakin' the rugs. She enjoys her work and folks enjoy havin' her around although most of 'em are gone by the time she gets there.

But the joy of her life could also be her downfall if she don't watch it. Della feeds the squirrels. Brown squirrels, gray squirrels, the occasional albino ... big, small, toothy and toothless, they all know that Della is good for a handful of peanuts, the half-eaten Twinkies she'll pull out of the trash, bread crumbs, biscuits and



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