

THE INDIGNITY OF LOSING TO A SQUIRREL

By J B Leftwich

If I had a hit list, this guy would head it.

Indeed, his would be the only name on it.

I would rejoice if a small meteor took him out of my life.

To say I dislike him would be putting it mildly. I despise him, just as I did his father and his grandfather who also tormented me.

Only the possibility of legal consequences prevents me from acting as a terminator.

My antipathy stems from one fact: He continues to outsmart me. After doing battle with three generations of this character, I admit the current version is smarter than I. As were the previous two generations.

This assualts my self esteem.

How can I with some degree of human intelligence continue to be outwitted by this miserable creature?

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The squirrel is in the bird-feeder again, She said as I came in the door.

I felt the color drain from my face and my pulse quicken. I looked out the window. There perched on the squirrel-proof feeder was my public enemy number one, placidly eating the birdseed.

I'll fix him, I said.

She said nothing, but a slight grin conveyed her message.

I went outside. Unalarmed, the squirrel eyed me. Did I detect a slight smile? I know the corners of his mouth were upturned.

You blanketyblank, I yelled as I rushed him. The squirrel took flight, landing gracefully on the ground some distance from the feeder then scampering up the nearby tree where he eyed me in amusement. He knew my rage would simmer down, I would go inside, and he would resume his meal.

Not this time.

I went to the garage, found a plastic gallon bucket, slit it vertically along the side and half way in the bottom, and fitted it upturned around the iron rod that supports the feeder.

I think I have him this time, I said, trying to suppress my glee.

Next day, when I came home, She greeted me.

The squirrel is on the birdfeeder.

How? How did he bypass the obstacle?

After exercising my routine of scaring the squirrel, we sat by the window to watch. In due course, the squirrel returned, ran up the iron support, tried unsuccessfully to tilt the bucket, gave up, returned to the ground and surveyed the feeder.

Then he leapt onto the birdbath, took a four-foot leap to the feeder and resumed his meal.

I'll fix that, I told Her. Ill elevate the bucket.

Fast forward to next day. I arrive home, she greets me with her patented statement.

The squirrel is on the birdfeeder again, She said.

I went outside. The squirrel scampered up the tree and watched me go back inside.

This time he made a leap from the birdbath to the top of the upturned bucket around the iron rod. Now the birdfeeder was close enough for him to reach with a slight jump.

He's outsmarted you again, She said.

I'm not through, I said. I'll get him yet.

I tied the obstacle higher and farther away from the birdbath. I knew the squirrel could not get enough leverage to make a leap this distance.

When I arrived home next day, I decided to bypass Her and her message. I went around the corner to view the feeder. The squirrel was not there, but the feeder was swaying in still air. I eyed the tree. There, perched high on a limb, sat the squirrel still chewing on birdseed.

I felt like Elmer Fudd in the Bugs Bunny cartoon. I fumed. How could this dumb squirrel continue to outwit me?

I went inside. She looked at me and said nothing.

I know, I said. But I am going to move the feeder farther away from the birdbath. I'm going to outsmart that [exploitative deleted] squirrel yet.

I watched. The squirrel returned, raced up the iron rod, by

passed the bucket and landed on the birdfeeder. I saw him accomplish this feat three times and still never quite figured how he was bypassing the bucket. His agility is amazing. Michael Jordan would be envious.

Maybe if I placed the feeder on the opposite side of the street he would become roadkill.

Another idea. I took a lid to a popcorn container and placed it above the bucket but the squirrel has called it a day and disappeared into the fence row.

At last, maybe I have outsmarted him.

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The squirrel is back on the bird feeder, She said as I walked in the door.

I'll get him, I said. I have an idea.

I got the three-gallon popcorn can, bored a hole in the bottom, pushed it up the bird-feeder support rod, locked it into a rigid position, then placed the plastic bucket on top.

That's really clever, She said. When she thought she was beyond my hearing range, She added:

But my money is on the squirrel.

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