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## The Squirrels' Spring Work

Mary Graham Bonner

Gwen had built a squirrel house in the pear tree by her window, and over time the squirrels had grown comfortable enough to come right to her windowsill for nuts. When the days warmed up she hung a little hammock just outside the sill, to see if they'd dare.

At first they eyed it suspiciously. Then one brave squirrel leaped in and swung. Gwen watched from behind the curtain, barely breathing.

Soon the others tried it.

Then the old squirrel — the leader, the one who managed things — spotted them at their leisure and began to scold in earnest.

The others stopped and listened, entirely attentive. And this, in squirrel language, was what he was saying:



*"What do you think you're doing? This is the season for tapping the maple trees — we get the sap now or we miss it entirely — and here you are, swinging in a hammock. It's all very well to play, but the work comes first. Or do you not actually want the maple syrup?"*

They were off in a moment, scampering toward the nearest maple. Gwen put on her coat and followed.

She watched them work — collecting sap, smacking their lips, clearly delighted. They enjoyed it, really, now that they were doing it. They were glad the old squirrel had told them in time.

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