

Home Country

A squirrel of a tale

When Steve and Dud got up to go get a paper, it left just Doc and Bert sitting at the philosophy counter of the Mule Barn truck stop. Bert turned his head and smirked a little, being careful not to let Doc see him. Doc also didn't see Dud outside, punching in a number on his cell phone while Steve stood by as a cheerleader.

"Doc," said Loretta, filling the coffee cups, "phone call for you, Hon."

"Here? Okay..." Doc walked over to the cash register and picked up the phone.

"This here Doc?" said the caller. "The Doc what lost his squirrel?"

"Uh ..." Doc looked around for help. There was none. "Yes. Yes it is."

"Found your dang squirrel here, Doc. That reward thing still good?"

"Well ... yes."

"Five dollars and a quarter, right? Now is that cash or check? I

don't take no checks."

Doc is looking all around and looks wilderness-type lost. "Cash I guess."

"Only thing is, Doc. Need to be sure this is your squirrel, right? So can you describe him for me?"

"He's ... gray."

"All gray squirrels are gray, now, ain't that right? How about any distinguishing marks? Tattoos?"

"No tattoos."

"So far so good. Now you said in the ad his name is Chipper. Well,

I called him Chipper and the son of a gun bit me."

"He did?"

"What I mean to ask here, Doc, is did you and your squirrel get along? No squirrel problems? He looks like he needs a square meal to me. You feed him good?"

"What?"

"You know ... like Squirrel Chow free choice, or did you put him on a nut ration? I mean, he ate like there was no tomorrow. Dang near ate up the whole



Slim Randles

five dollars and a quarter reward money in squirrel food."

Steve and Dud walked back into the café, then, with the cell phone still at Dud's ear, and the laughing began.

"You were right all along, Doc," said Bert.

"In winter, everyone can use a good hoax."

Doc bought the coffee.

Brought to you by the soon-to-be-announced syndicated radio program, "Home Country." We thought you should be warned.

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