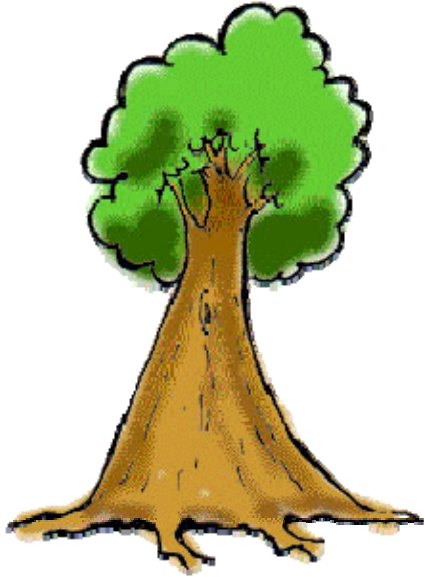


A Cubbacius B. Bear Story
Written by: Larry Dark

Cubbacius had rarely seen such a perfect afternoon. It was warm and clear, with a gentle breeze rustling the leaves in the treetops. He had spent the entire morning wandering through the forest, looking for food, and playing the little stream that ran close to his favorite tree. It was that very tree, with its comfortable branch, that Cubbacius headed for now.



Every day about this time, Cubbacius would take a break from his exploring and return to his tree for some branch time. There was a spot in that tree that fit Cubbacius perfectly. He would nap and while away the afternoon, watching the clouds and activities of the birds that shared his tree. Little did he know that an event was about to happen that would change his life forever?

The little bear had just settled down on his branch when a piece of paper, blown by the wind, smacked him squarely in the face. Angrily, he grabs the paper and throws it away only to watch the wind take it and deposit it higher in the tree, creating not only an ugly scene but one that blocks his view as well. Grumbling to himself, he climbs further up to the tree, grabs the offending paper and this time carefully throws it away so that the wind can carry it far from his sight.

Cubbacius begins to climb back down to his branch, satisfied that the ugly piece of paper is taken care of and gone forever. Unfortunately, it only goes a tree or two away and smack into the beak of Athena Eagle, who is sitting quietly on her nest. As he reaches his branch and turns around, ready to resume his nap, he comes face to face with Athena Eagle standing there

and wearing the piece of paper like a poncho. Needless to say, she is hopping mad and proceeds to give Cubbacius a piece of her mind.

"I'm sorry!" Cubbacius cries as he takes the paper from around her neck. "I'll take care of this, it won't happen again!" he promises as he wads the paper up and stuffs it in his back pocket. With a stern warning that Cubbacius should be more considerate of his neighbors, the Eagle finally flies away.

Cubbacius returns to his place in the branches, only to find that his piece of paper now creates an uncomfortable bulge in his back pocket and he cannot get very comfy on the branch. Keeping a close eye on Athena Eagle, Cubbacius carefully drops the paper to the ground, once again convinced that he is rid of this annoying problem.

A mere second later angry screeching from below tells him that this method of disposal will not work either. Cubbacius climbs down the tree mumbling, "this stupid piece of paper isn't mine to begin with and why is it causing me so much trouble anyway."

He decides to bury it only to dig right into someone's burrow and have the paper tossed back in his face. Sitting down next to his beloved tree he fusses the fumes over his plight. It is as if he has become a magnet for this discarded piece of paper.

Suddenly he remembers a large can he saw in one of the people-park areas. He remembers watching the people put their pieces of paper in it and then a huge truck would come and take the contents of the can "somewhere else."

That's it!" he cried, as a light went on in his little bear brain, "I'll take it there!"

Racing down the path that leads to the can, Cubbacius begins to notice the



forest in a new light.

"There are pieces of paper everywhere!" he exclaims. "I never noticed it before." "I guess I'll pick these up, too." He says to himself and begins to pick up other pieces of trash as he heads toward the People Park.

Soon his pockets were full he had to stuff the trash down the front and up the pant legs of his coveralls. Cubbacius was barely visible, and he looked like a walking trash dump, finally running head on into a tree.

"This won't work," he said.

"He began carrying as many pieces of trash as he could to the can in the people park, returning many times before the pile he had collected were deposited safely in the container. All the rest of the afternoon Cubbacius ran back and forth from the forest to the trash can. Each time, he saw more and more trash trapped in the bushes and blowing along the trails.

"Has it always been like this?" he wondered. "Have I just never seen it before?"

Tired and discouraged, Cubbacius drops the last piece of paper left in his coveralls and wanders back to his tree in the gathering darkness.

"At least at night I can't see all the mess," he says to himself, and is soon fast asleep on his branch, dreaming troubled dreams of his once beautiful forest.

Cubbacius felt the warmth of the sun on his face and slowly began to come awake. "You must have worked yourself out young man," he heard a voice say somewhere above him. Cubbacius sat up and squinted his eyes against the morning sun.

"Who's there?" he cried. Then he saw the outline of Athena Eagle a branch or two above him.

"I watched you yesterday, Cubbacius," Athena said, "you were doing a pretty good job, why did you quit?"



"It doesn't matter what I do" Cubbacius said as a little tear trickled down his furry face, "It's all just a big mess, it's ruined!" and with that he buried his face in his arms and started crying.

Athena watched him for a moment or two and then hopped down next to the little bear. Putting a wing around Cubbacius' shoulders Athena tried to comfort the little fellow.

"Don't be so sure Cubbacius. I think you did a good job. Just look at the path you cleaned up last night."

Cubbacius slowly raised his head and looked toward the path. As the morning sun filtered through the trees and bushes along the trail, he saw that it was beautiful again and this perked him up considerably.

"Not only that Cubbacius," Athena continued, "look, you even got some of the other animals helping you."

Sure enough, as Cubbacius and Athena watched, here and there a bird or chipmunk could be seen headed for the people park with discarded scraps of paper.

"You've made a big difference, Cubbacius" Athena said. "Not only did you do something about the problem, but you encouraged others to do the same thing. You should be very proud of what you did."