

The Day Before the Snowstorm
By Bonnie MacFarlane

The sky is its usual clear azure blue, the air is crisp and cold, and I'm in a happy mood as I plod along the Highline Canal. My golden doodle is straining my left arm as she tugs me excitedly on her long red leash.

Squirrels are everywhere – loudly chattering and chasing each other. I count ten in a small area, many more than is normal. Several magpies are screeching out their loud cries as I catch a glimpse of their white tipped wings as they flutter by. I hear the "fee-bee" song of the chickadees and the chirping of the small, indistinguishable sparrows. The only other sound is that of my foot steps as they crunch in the crusty snow. I wish I had sunflower seeds for the chickadees. Sometimes they are so tame that they will alight on an outstretched hand filled with seeds.

As I walk West near the Fairmount cemetery, the brown prairie grasses are glistening from frost as the sunshine filters through them. They seem to be sentinels forewarning of the storm to come. Oak leaves are clinging to the trees like dried up bits of brown paper bags while many of the deciduous trees are wrapped in grayish-brown dead vines. I'm surprised by a flicker sitting quietly at the bottom of a tree trunk.

I'd like to be one of the birds or squirrels for a day as I'm curious as to how they survive storms. Do they hide in an old nest? Do they build a fortress with some kindling? Do they hide in some underground burrow? How do these small creatures weather the cold, wind, and snow? Maybe they could teach us something about survival and fortitude.