

High on the Chain

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Leaving a piece of gum on the ground
while we're hiking, mother said, is
an invitation for some animal to choke

to death. You'd think a chipmunk would
be smart enough not to put unflavored gum
in its mouth, but animals don't have

stay-at-home mothers to instruct them
on proper etiquette. That's why critters—
the ones on four feet—are way down

on the evolutionary chain, because
their life is mostly trial and error.
I help you forgo the errors by telling

you my trials. Just like if you drop a dish
it will break, the forest is a fragile environment.
One false step and you might have stepped

on the entrance to an ant hole, closing it.
That means hundreds of ants are forced
to use the exit as an entrance. Why make

a creature's life more difficult than it has to be?
In evolution begets responsibilities. If you don't
watch out for baby raccoons, who will? Not

the parent raccoons. They're on the wrong end
of the evolutionary ladder. Thank God we humans
are at the top rung. You should care about everyone

in the forest, including Smokey the Bear, even though
he only exists on television. But he's to the forest
as Santa Claus is to Christmas.

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