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The Woodsy Cleaning Lady

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THE WOOSY CLEANING LADY

You'd be surprised at the accountability necessary for a Forest Cleaning Crew. Janitorial Services swears that there are sneak observations via woodpeckers and such, but she's not sure. Each spring, she wraps the previous year up for review: hours assessed, her notes compared to reports from the rabbits and wolves. She clutches this year, covered in soft leather she tanned from the hide of a fox, the foxes who learned to offer one of their own to her: the usual, the sickly or dying or one of the elderly ready to go. They wanted to feed her and keep her alive, she—the Burrow-Tender, the Acorn Washer, the Tree-Bark Polisher and Spit-Shine Queen. One of the wiser ones watched her press playdough to her lips in the morning, freshly made, and inhale its scent, nibble gently at the salty mound. Meanwhile, said fox shook his head in wonder at the stupid girl—she'll chap her skin that way. The foxes got together and began to leave a bloody corpse on the log out front her tidy hovel a few times a year, bodies with badly lettered signs

For Yu To Ete or Plz no moor plaidou

and she did eat and was extra careful cleaning the fox holes after that. She used only water and vinegar since bleach stained their coats and sometimes she sang to the kits—
Don't Stop Believing or If You Love Someone.

She started mixing her own Hound-Away and sprayed the trees within a ten yard radius. Now the Fox King is thinking of some kind of Population Upkeep award. But today she boarded the inter-forest subway, last year all wrapped up, pulsing in her bag and she'll present it to the company hoping her work in the wood's been enough.