

The Retirees

by Winston Roberts

and Ferd Verdner

“Not there!” He opened the front door and burst onto the front porch. “I just planted seed there!”

The neighbor to the east was walking his dog, and the canine had decided the best place to deposit his morning poo was Del Pfilbern’s front lawn. It shouldn’t have been a surprise to Del, but he had been trying to grow grass in that area for years now and any disturbance in the soil might injure the tender shoots the seed was just now giving forth.

“He’s scratching it all up!” The dog was trying to hide his shame by kicking dirt on top of it. “Bah!” Del’s words were useless, the damage was already done.

Del returned to the inside of his two-story three-bedroom one and a half bath and returned with a steaming cup of coffee to go along with his steaming attitude. He asked so little of life now. He should be allowed to grow grass without every hound in the vicinity using it as a toilet. He tried to calm himself a bit as he drank his brew.

Del normally spent his mornings sitting on the porch, watching the goings on in the neighborhood and today would be no different. Del especially liked the frantic machinations of the workers as they hurried to their jobs. Every day produced at least one late riser. He loved to watch the comedies unfold. The frantic rush to get

to the job that took so much of their lives. Del didn't regret leaving the workforce. Not a single bit.

Del had just finished his first cup when an aging man, limping from a life of physical exertion and using a cane, approached. The man proudly presented a rather impressive plume of long white hair combed in the front to hide what one could only assume was a bald spot there. Del rubbed the top of his fully bald head, lamenting what used to have been.

The man used the cane more as an affectation than an assistant to balance. Of course, it never hurt to be safe, in case one needed a cane to bop any impertinent youngster on the head, or to shake at uncaring motorists.

"You got a cup for me?" Bo Hanson climbed the two granite stairs and gained access to the porch.

"Carp?" Del's hearing wasn't what it once had been.

"Cup! Turn your hearing aid on!"

"Oh ..." Del entered his castle and returned with two fresh hot steaming cups of the delicious brown liquid that heightened the mood and started the heart.

The men sat, side by side, not talking but not needing to talk. The guys had known each other for decades. It was Bo who spoke first.

"You hear about Maggie Carlson? She got the sugar."

"Sugar Diabetes?" Del sipped his coffee.

"Yep." Bo sipped his coffee.

"Yep." Del sat back in his chair.

The men fell back into the silence. A father was trying to get his kids into the minivan two houses over and the drama was irresistible. His kids were whining. The father was agitated to distraction. The men marveled at the father's restraint. Not even one curse word had been evident.

"He's got a runner!" Bo pointed as a little one had escaped the minivan and was running into the house. The father was oblivious to the young one's gambit, being involved with tying another one down in their car seat. When the father looked up from his chore, he panicked a little at not seeing his other child.

"What in the heck is he doin' now?" Bo lowered his eyebrows ostensibly to see better.

"I think he's lookin' for Becky?" Becky was the father's little girl that had run back into the house.

The father ran up and down the street calling for his child. Del and Bo watched incredulous that the father was oblivious to what had transpired.

"Can't he tell his daughter is inside?" Bo scrunched his face further in disbelief.

"Can he really be that clueless?"

Del couldn't watch the terror of the father any longer. Del stood. "She ran inside! While you was wranglin' the other'n..." Del yelled the helpful news.

"Arrrggghhh!" The already disheveled father waved his hand in gratitude.

"He may need some rope for that one." Bo laughed.

"Yep." Del laughed.

"Yep."

The neighborhood traffic slowed as more and more of their neighbors left for work. All was quiet. Nothing could be seen or heard, except the birds that had returned from wintering down south. All was quiet ... then the garbage truck entered their environs.

"There's one of those recycling trucks."

"Yep." Del had seen them every Wednesday for a decade at least.

"You hear they want to start charging for recycling?" Bo had read it on his phone.

"Charging?" Del wasn't sure if his hearing aid was working.

"Yep. Three dollars a month!"

"Let me get this straight. They want to charge people three dollars for what they will sell to someone else?"

"Yep."

"Why, I can take my beer cans to the recycling center and get paid cash money for it!" Del hadn't been to the recycling center in decades.

"That's right. Now you gotta pay for the privilege of giving them that money." Bo shook his head.

"That ain't right."

"That ain't."

The boys drank the last of their coffees and sat in wonder of a world that would charge someone for something that they could sell themselves.

"It sure is a crazy world." Del still couldn't quite get his mind around it.

"Yep."

"Where in the world would anyone find such puddin' headed mouth breathin' son of an idiot that would pay that?" Del wouldn't let it go.

"There's all kinds. Just look at all the yellow trash cans lined up." Bo pointed down the street where several yellow recycling trash cans were displayed. The garbage truck was stopping by each one and retrieving their contents to take them back to the money-grubbing recyclers.

"Inconceivable." Del loved the Princess Bride movie.

A dark grey Mercedes cruised by the porch that housed the pair of septuagenarians. A young lady with a tumbler fully pressed to her lips and a cell phone pressed to her ear coasted by.

"Lookie there." Del was first to spot her.

"What kind of flat-footed, bare-breasted, drooling imbecile do you gotta be to do that!?" Bo shook his head.

"The worst kind I 'm thinking."

"What the hell is this world coming to, Del?"

"Dunno." Del shook his head. "Dunno ..."

"Yep." Bo drained his cup. "Any more coffee?" Bo needed another dose.

Del returned from his kitchen inside the house with the pot from the coffee maker. He poured the last of the brew into Bo's cup and then his own. He gingerly placed the fragile glass pot on the ground beside his chair.

"I guess I'm worried if this here world is agonna survive, with all of them millennials havin' babies and no daddies and wearin' their nose rings and listening to music that ain't got no melody." Bo didn't like rap music.

"Yep. Sure gives one a moment to think."

"Well Mowery's got him a plan to help anyway."

"What's that? Take all of my retirement money and then cut my Medicare?" Del was not a Mowery fan.

"Well jus' how else is you agonna balance that there budget? You cain't make a pie without any blueberries!"

Del had heard that one before. "Well you cain't make a pie at all if they have repossessed your house!"

"Well I'd have to be some kind of idiot if I was to think that I could bake a pie without a house, wouldn't I?"

"You said it not me."

The boys fell into silence again. They had reached an impasse in that argument.

"You hear what Johnson done now?" Bo wasn't quite done.

"Colby Johnson, our next President?" Del just assumed he would be.

"The very one. But not my President." Bo sipped his coffee, but just the very top of the liquid, it was still quite hot. "Well they got him now. He got \$100,000 for speaking to a group of bankers in New York the very month before he started his campaign." Bo pointed a finger at Del. He had just made the crowning victory blow on what had been a running discussion between them for a while now.

“What about the \$150,000 that your man Mowery got from the Japanese for his speaking engagement?” Del pointed his finger back to Bo. “I guess that don’t count, huh?”

“No, it don’t. Mowery was just making him some money.”

“And what do you think Johnson was doin’?” Del sat bolt upright, the volume in his voice was now noticeably louder.

“He was rubbin’ shoulders with that there moneyed elite!” Bo was getting louder now as well.

“I guesst Japanese money don’t count?”

“No, it don’t!” Bo thought that a sufficient argument given the time he had had to prepare it.

Del was standing now. “It don’t count ‘less you think that that there Japanese currency has got anything to say for itself except some kind of winky, wanky, raw fish, sooochi, game show, Pearl Harbor, kammerkazi linen seamstress, count!” Del puffed his chest at the withering bon mot he had delivered.

“Well I ain’t gotta take this!” Bo stood and placed his cup in his seat. Bo picked up his cane and left. “Up yours!”

“You first!” Del picked up the coffee pot and cups and went inside his house.

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The next day, Del was up early as usual and sitting on the porch with his coffee. An aging man with voluminous white hair and a cane approached. The man, named Bo (by the way), ascended the two granite steps and plopped into his seat on the porch.

“You got a cup for me?” Bo addressed his host.

"Huh? A cup of meat?" Del hadn't donned his hearing aids yet.

"Turn up your hearing aids!"

Del returned from the house with his aids installed and a fresh cup of coffee for his visitor.

"You hear about Maggie Carlson? She got the Sugar Diabetes." Bo sipped his coffee.

"Maggie Carlson? She's got Sugar Diabetes." Del wanted his friend to know the latest news about Maggie.

"I already done told you that!" Bo shook his head in disbelief.

"Oh." Del sipped his coffee. "Well, she got it then."

"We got any late runners today?" Bo scanned the street.

"Not yet."

"Yep."

"Yep."