

For Want of a Nail

by H. W. Moss

“Never smarten up a chump. And I don’t know how you were raised, but revenge is good. The object is to level the playing field until it tilts completely over into your lap.” Welcome Linden Fraley III

Evening and a slight chill was in the air. Ed lounged on his front porch cadging a smoke because Maxine wouldn’t allow him to stink up the air inside their home. In his opinion, she took an overly zealous stance on the issue now that the renovation of their Victorian was complete. On the other hand, Ed enjoyed standing at the front entry way admiring all he had accomplished, gazing out at his neighborhood which had turned into a gentrified destination that had been written up by every upscale magazine on the West Coast and a number in the East.

He patted himself on the back. *Boy, did I buy at the right time.*

Ed surveyed his property down to the sidewalk where his eyes landed on the acacia tree, his black acacia, planted at the foot of the drive. *One thing about Victorians*, he thought, *they didn’t provide much of a front yard.* He was proud of that acacia, a tangible expression of his ability to take charge and direct events toward the outcome he wanted. *A take charge kind of guy, that’s what I am.* Several years ago he submitted plans to the city and paid a contractor to install a garage and run a driveway, because that’s another thing Victorians lacked: off street parking.

The plans called for the acacia to remain. But when he saw the work in progress, Ed decided he did not like the angle of approach to the driveway, so he slipped the city building inspector a hundred dollar bill to offset the curb cut by five feet. Ed got his way.

Absently, without giving it much consideration at all, Ed pulled out his cell phone and punched the memory speed dial. It rang twice before it was answered. "Department of Parking and Traffic, officer Jones."

"Yes, I have a vehicle blocking my driveway. I wonder if you would send someone to ticket and have it towed?"

"Certainly sir. What is the exact address?" Ed gave his name and phone number in case they needed to contact him.

Although his SUV was not hemmed in and he could easily have driven around the sedan, nor did he have to go anywhere, the offending vehicle was three feet inside Ed's curb cut. He had to teach the sedan driver a lesson, even if the car was not actually blocking his driveway.

The acacia was 70 feet tall and its circumference so large that Ed could not wrap his arms around the trunk. The tree epitomized his strength and he did not want it cut down even if its roots upraised several squares of sidewalk in addition to making a direct approach to the driveway impossible.

After Ed moved the curb cut, he painted the sloping cement wings red on either side where curb and pavement joined. For good measure, he stenciled the words "Driveway Entrance" on the pavement in the street with white letters on a red background and saw to it that anyone who parked there was immediately removed.

Satisfied with himself and the cigarette finished, Ed decided to go inside rather than wait for the traffic cop to arrive. It often took them nearly an hour to get there and frequently the scofflaw was able to get away. It irritated Ed when that happened. He had made similar calls many times over the years and considered himself a one-man

community activist, a philanthropist earning money in fines and violations for the city's all too empty coffers.

Little more than an hour later someone rang his doorbell.

Ed flipped the light switch and peered through the front window. He saw a slightly built, middle aged man in blue jeans and green polo shirt standing on his porch. Ed's brilliantly red Irish setter named Honey wagged her tail and leaped out to lap at the hand of the stranger when the front door opened.

"Can I help you?"

"Well, yeah. I parked out front a couple hours ago. Went to a movie. Did you have a car towed from out front tonight by chance?"

"A black car? Yah. You were half way in my driveway."

"Well, no, I, uh, well, do you have a number for me to call? I mean, I don't know who to call to get my car back."

"Hell no, I don't have a number. The police. Call the police. They'll tell you where your car is."

The man pulled a piece of paper, a receipt it looked like, from one pocket and a silver Cross pen from the other. He glanced up at the address on the transom, began to write. "And what's your name?"

Ed was dumbfounded by this brazen behavior. But, in the face of this bold inquiry, *he parked in my goddam driveway fer crissakes*, Ed smirked and laughed as he responded, so it came out slurred, sounded like he said, "Head."

"How do you spell that? H - E?"

"E - D. Ed. Just Ed."

“Last name?”

Ed could not believe this guy’s gall, but he answered and the man spelled it out as well. It didn’t matter anyway, Ed had already given his name to the police dispatcher. “Look,” he said, “I don’t have time to fuck around with you,” and he pulled Honey back by the collar and slammed the door. The stranger left.

* * *

The letter was sent certified mail with a return receipt and arrived the following Tuesday. Maxine signed for it but did not otherwise pay much attention. Ed was always getting documents in the mail. She did not recognize the return address, but it was local and had Ed’s full name as the recipient. She placed it unopened on the dining room table anticipating giving it to her husband when he arrived around six.

“What’s this?” Ed found it on his own and began prying open the top edge. He read the first line, began to guffaw.

“Listen to this,” he shouted into the kitchen. “This idiot thinks I’m going to pay for his tow truck charges. That’s a laugh!”

It was standard letterhead format with the name, address, telephone number and email address of the sender. Centered in the middle of the page in bold letters :

SETTLEMENT OFFER.

The sender identified himself as the person whose car Ed had towed the other day and there followed an itemized list: \$171 for towing charges, \$75 for the parking ticket that was issued, \$20 for film and photo processing plus an additional dollar and twenty-five cents for bus fare plus fifty cents for a phone call. “You may send a check made out

to me in the amount of \$267.75 and the matter shall go no further. This offer expires four days after posting in the U. S. mail.”

“Photographs!” Ed shouted as he ambled into the room where Maxine was cooking. “He wants to take photographs? Of what? I’m not paying him shit to take fucking photographs.” Ed crumpled the sheet of paper and tossed it into the waste bin under the sink. He looked at Maxine and said, “So, what’s for dinner, Max?”

* * *

A week later Maxine told Ed she had seen someone outside the house that afternoon with a measuring tape and clip board. The man wore no particular uniform, was dressed in casual attire. She said the man spent about half an hour making notes and calculating frontage.

“Is that someone you hired, Ed? Was he one of the contractors who’s supposed to replace the windows in our bedroom? Because if he was, he sure didn’t have a clue what or where the job is.”

Ed did not know what to make of this news. He had completely forgotten that his wife wanted the upstairs bedroom windows replaced with insulated sound reduction glass, so he never even bothered calling someone for a bid.

“What’d he look like?”

“Just a guy, nothing special. I didn’t talk to him because I thought you arranged for him to be there. When I got finished with the laundry, I looked out and he was gone.”

“Yah, well next time you see something suspicious, lemme know, ok? I mean, go out and get an I. D. or something. Ok?”

Maxine shrugged and lifted a glass of white wine to her lips. She no longer even said, “Yes, dear,” in response to his commands.

The following morning as Maxine retrieved the paper, she saw another person holding a clip board and examining the front of the building. She approached and asked, “What are you doing?”

“I’m with building permits, ma’am,” the man said as he handed her a business card which identified him as working for the City and County of San Francisco. “You got a offset driveway here. Elevation ain’t right either. Tree roots have broken the sidewalk, y’see there? And the wings are painted red. Can’t find any markings identifying them as city painted. Taking notes cuz we got a complaint.”

He stepped back into the street and put a camera to his eye, snapped off a couple frames.

Maxine became moderately alarmed. “Yes, but what’s wrong with an offset? And who would have said anything? I mean, they complained about what?”

The man from planning scratched his head and said, “Well, you are supposed to have a straight shot down a driveway, not allowed to come at it from an angle. And who complained? Dunno exactly. Ain’t mah business to ask. But I got assigned to come out and take a look-see and I think you have a problem here.”

“What sort of problem, exactly?” she asked tentatively.

“That driveway mouth, what we call a curb cut, is in the wrong place. Seems to me it was moved because of the tree being in the way. You wouldn’t know anything about that now, would you, Mrs., uhm.” He lifted the top sheet on his clipboard as if it might

tell him and apparently the information was right there because he called her by her married name.

Maxine shook her head no, and went back inside. At dinner, she put the business card in the middle of Ed's plate before he sat down. He picked it up and his eyebrows rose, then fell.

"Yah. So?"

"Did you ever get a permit to move the driveway mouth over toward Fillmore Street? You did that, what, the year after we bought the place in '99, right?"

Ed never discussed business, real estate, politics, religion, philosophy, mathematics or what he did for a living with his wife. Their conversations were typically limited to what book she was reading, what sit-com he wanted to watch that evening and would one or the other please pass the salt. Her question took him by surprise.

"Didn't need one," he said defensively. "Just did it. It's my property, y'know."

Actually, that was not precisely correct. It was half his. The other half was in the name of a family trust, Maxine's family trust, which contributed almost all the original down payment toward the purchase price because Ed had not much money when they made the offer. To get the down payment, the trust made an unusual demand which Ed agreed to somewhat against his better judgment. Even though they were husband and wife, the property would be held as a tenancy in common, not community property, and as such either owner had the right to will or devise their share. However, in the event one died intestate, their portion of the estate would go to their heirs, not the surviving spouse. Ed and Maxine married late, had no children and none by a previous marriage. Neither

had made out a will which meant the property would go to siblings since their parents had already passed.

Maxine did not respond to his statement, nor did she contradict or correct Ed. She merely nodded her head as she listened to Ed's justification for what he had done.

“Didn't want to cut down the damn tree, hadda get at the driveway. You kept hitting the tree trunk, remember? Couldn't aim. So I moved the driveway mouth. What's this all about?”

“Honestly, Ed, I don't know. But I bet we'll find out soon.”

* * *

A few days later Ed left work early and pulled up in front of his house. He began the familiar angled approach to his driveway when he noticed something amiss. He set the emergency brake, got out of the large vehicle and bent down to take a closer look. He touched a finger to the wings of the curb cut and felt a taffy pull. He smelled the finger tip: yep, fresh gray paint that might be mistaken for real curb surface after it got dirty.

“Well of all the goll darn things,” Ed muttered as he drove half way up and parked. He never actually placed the SUV in his garage which was too full of miscellaneous items to make that possible. He went around the building and entered the garage by a side door, found what he was looking for and carried it over to a work bench. Hanging on a nail next to the bench was a pair of coveralls which he quickly donned. He walked back down the drive to the sidewalk carrying his bucket and knelt beside one edge of the curb cut.

He donned a pair of gloves, once more touched the new paint to determine its texture and decided it was dry enough to proceed. From the bucket he produced a

cardboard stencil already cut to fit which he placed over the curb conform and held in place with several pieces of masking tape. Then he picked up a can of red spray paint which he shook vigorously until the marble inside moved freely. He began to spray.

After completing one side, he moved over to the other where he once again taped the stencil in place. But this time, before he finished his minor touch up project, he found himself staring at a pair of shiny black boots. Ed looked up to see the blue uniform covered leg of a police officer with a pad in his hand.

“Please stand up, sir,” the officer said.

“Yes, officer. Of course.” Ed clambered to his feet with cardboard cut out and paint still in his hands. “What seems to be the problem officer?”

“I’m afraid I have to cite you for this. It’s a misdemeanor to paint your own curb. There is a fine.”

Ed was astounded by this assertion. “You’re joking, right?”

The policeman had no smile on his face as he asked Ed to produce identification. With the driver’s license in hand, he began transferring information. Ed had a deep respect for the law and was careful not to interrupt during this process. When at last his I. D. was handed back, the officer began to explain in greater detail.

“You are being cited for violating Section 38 (i) of the Traffic Code. The Department of Parking and Traffic has sole authority to paint a curb. This is a notice to appear and I need your signature right here.” Ed took the pen and, wide eyed, signed. “Bail is set at \$75 and the hearing is mandatory.” When Ed seemed not to fully comprehend this comment, the officer said, “You must appear. You cannot simply pay the fine and forget about it. Do you understand?”

Ed finally regained his speech. “Officer, how in the world is it you were standing right here?”

The policeman became somewhat less aloof. He must have been former military because he placed his hands behind his back at ease as he explained.

“Now that really is an odd one. Seems our division was tipped off someone might try this. The law is so obscure neither my partner nor I,” he motioned with his head over his shoulder and for the first time Ed spotted the police car parked opposite a few spaces down the block, another officer occupying the driver’s seat, “remembered the citation number when dispatch sent us out here on a 38 (i). Had to look it up. We were sitting there five minutes, didn’t really expect anyone to show up and start painting, though. Real co-inky-dink that.”

Ed was stunned by the news he had been singled out for the ticket, but had absolutely nothing else to say as the officer tipped his hat, said “Have a nice day,” and ambled over to the patrol car.

Ed put the paint bucket away and changed out of the coveralls. He sat at the dining room table surrounded by the renovated splendor of his 125-year-old home unable to get his mind around the fact that he had just been given a citation. And for what? For painting his own curb!

Honey came up and licked his hand as a pleasant aroma filled the air from where Maxine pattered in the kitchen preparing their evening meal. But none of this did anything to console Ed who was quite astonished at the turn of events. It occurred to him that maybe, just maybe, moving the driveway to accommodate the tree was not such a good idea after all. *Shoulda cut down the damn tree*, he thought

The house phone began to ring but Ed wanted to listen to whoever might be calling, so he didn't pick it up. The ringing stopped before the machine came on and at first Ed thought the caller might simply have quit the line.

"Ed," Maxine shouted from the kitchen. "It's for you." He had quite forgotten there was an extension on the kitchen wall.

"Tell them I'm not here. Take a message."

"I already said I'd get you."

He became frighteningly insistent: "Take a goddamn message, will you!?"

He heard her mutter a resigned, "Oh, all right." A few moments later she entered the living room and handed him a sheet of paper. "Says it's important you speak with her as soon as possible and you should either call her cell phone tonight or the office number in the morning. She's from the Bureau of Street Use and Mapping, says it's about the angle of the driveway. You sure you didn't need a permit?"

Ed sunk lower in his chair at this news.

* * *

Stella's voice remained calm as she patiently tried once more to make the man understand. Ed sat in the chair opposite. He had been on time for his early morning appointment, but what the woman was telling him just did not compute.

"Let me explain it once again: there is no variance for an offset automobile runway. We will not issue a permit for you to legally move the mouth of your driveway five feet in any direction. And we are bringing an action to have the driveway brought into conformity with existing building codes. That means, put it back the way it was. Got it?"

All the fight was gone from Ed who could barely hold his head high enough to look into this bureaucrat's eyes. He despised city government even though he was employed in the Tax Assessor's office as a licensed and certified appraiser. He did not like how everyone in his office conformed, how his boss seemed able to bend rules in his own favor but never in Ed's, nor did Ed appreciate the current situation in which he found himself: at the beck and call of the Department of Public Works Bureau of Street Use and Mapping being told, in effect, to cut down the acacia, *my beloved acacia fer crissakes*, and move the driveway west five feet or face stiff penalties.

The woman continued: "Let me say it another way. A driveway mouth may not be angled or shifted; it must be a straight run down and across the sidewalk into the street and must meet specific plans for an 'Automobile Runway' as identified by the Department of Public Works and covered by ordinance number 6446 of the Board of Supervisors. Now do you get it?"

Ed was well aware of the police powers this woman held over him and had many times witnessed the lien process in action as he investigated property values for the city and county, that incestuous and almost unique pairing of otherwise divided loyalties that were separated in every other population center in the country. *Denver*, he said to himself, *Denver is also a city and a county all in one.*

"Are you paying attention to me?" The woman's voice brought Ed back to reality.

"Yes, ma'am. Of course I am. And I shall do whatever is in my power to rectify the problem." He rose and began heading toward the door.

"If you intend to remove the tree that's blocking your driveway, you have to get a permit."

That stopped him in his tracks. “I need a permit? I have to get approval to remove my own tree?” he asked incredulously.

“That is correct, sir. Approval. Down the hall, you pick up a removal application at the Bureau of Urban Forestry. They’ll tell you how to proceed from there.”

Ed checked his watch. He was already late for work, so he might as well take the woman’s advice and get a permit. He asked several people for directions before he located the proper office. No one else was in the room but the door was open to the public. He marched up to the counter and rang a silver bell. In seconds a face appeared from a back room where a young man tilted his head out and said, “Be right wittcha.”

It took another few minutes before the fellow actually stood on the other side of the counter and said, “What can I do you for?”

Ed’s features were firm and he looked as if he was about to walk the gallows as he said, “I need to remove a tree from my land and I’m told I can pick up a permit to do that from you.”

This guy’s much too young to work here, Ed thought as a multi layered piece of half normal size paper was placed in his hands. “That is correct and this is it.” Then the man retreated to a computer terminal where he began punching the keyboard. “What is the address of the property?” Ed told him. “Hmmm,” the young man said after several seconds. “Fellow owns the property requested we plant that tree, would that be you?” Ed nodded solemnly. “That means it’s a city owned tree. I don’t think they’ll give you permission to chop it down.”

Ed jumped at this news. In fact, the comment was made in so off-hand a manner it startled him when he realized that, if true, such a denial would very probably dramatically

affect his life. Could he possibly lose access to his driveway? His knees buckled and his face must have drained of blood, because the young civil servant became overly solicitous.

“Are you okay, there, buddy?”

Ed regained some of his sense of balance and shot back: “What do you mean they won’t give me permission to cut it down? I *have* to cut it down, don’t you see? I don’t *want* to, I *have* to.”

“That may well be, sir, but after a notice is posted on the tree, it takes only one objection to force a public hearing.”

“How long does that process take?”

“Well, you post for 30 days. Then you can remove if no one protests.”

“That sounds easy enough”

“Maybe and maybe not. It takes six more months to get on the agenda for a public hearing if someone does protest.”

“I can talk to my neighbors, explain, they’ll understand,” Ed said dazed.

“That’s always a great idea,” the young man replied with way too much enthusiasm as far as Ed was concerned. “We love it when neighbors talk to neighbors. Trees do that, y’know. It’s like we helped bring the community together or something.”

Ed gave the application a cursory read, decided it was simple and straightforward enough he did not need help filling it out. “So. I guess that’s about it. I’ll get back to you. Should be able to have it chopped down some time next month.”

That’s when the young man said, “Not likely. Our office will probably protest this one. You see, trees are either privately owned or city owned, and we have to look after

the city's interests. Generally speaking, we don't let anyone cut down a city owned tree unless it's a hazard, like it fell over in a windstorm, or is unhealthy. Neither of those are the case here, are they?"

The stomach bile Ed had been able to control throughout the early part of the morning managed to billow up in his esophagus and began burning the back of his throat. He was about to vomit and only managed to keep from coughing all over the counterman by turning abruptly and racing out into the hall where the pulmonary fit finally overwhelmed him.

* * *

Ed surreptitiously painted the driveway wing tips red again. He did this in the dark of early morning when no pedestrians were out and he was sure no police cars were lurking, waiting to pounce. He felt like a criminal hiding his actions and worked quickly to avoid detection.

The color remained a satisfying red, but it had been weeks since Ed had called to have anyone towed from his special spot opposite the side entrance to the movie theater. He followed directions and posted the tree and filed an application to have it removed. His neighbors did not complain, but the same agency where he made the application denied it. He was warned not to tamper with the tree except for normal trimming and maintenance.

It had been a long time since he felt the power course through his body as he watched a tow truck lift the stern of a miscreant's auto and begin wafting it away toward the impound yard. In fact, he feared that because of the calamities surrounding his driveway -- the ticket and the cease and desist order from Street Use and Mapping as well

as the denial of his request to remove the tree -- all added up to a strength sapping, manhood draining, skin emptying, enervating fatigue that manifested itself as a vague sense of loss the way he wistfully recalled his youth.

To regain his sense of power he stood once more on the porch and smelled the evening air and pulled the cell phone from his pocket and, once again, punched the speed dial for DPT. He reported the black car and snapped the clamshell phone shut. He was secure in the knowledge he had demonstrated his old prowess once again. In the back of his mind, though, was the nagging suspicion that the vehicle looked all too familiar. He could not quite place it and stopped trying as he stood waiting for the coming retribution that was about to fall on this driver.

After half an hour, a Cushman drove up and an official looking person wearing a tapered at the top DPT helmet, *those are the silliest looking safety helmets I've ever seen*, Ed thought to himself, parked and got out to approach the black sedan. A head popped up on the driver's side and apparently a conversation ensued between the driver and the ticket dispenser. In a moment, the driver was out of the vehicle pointing at the edge of Ed's property, then the bumper of his car saying something Ed could not hear to the uniformed officer and handing over a piece of paper.

Whatever he said caused the officer to reach for a lapel microphone and talk to base. In a few minutes both the driver and the ticket writer stood at the edge of Ed's yard looking up at him.

"Can I help you?" Ed inquired innocently.

The uniformed man asked Ed to identify himself and then asked if he was the complainant for the citation and tow request. Ed answered in the affirmative.

The officer began to fill out his ticket book saying, "In that case, I need you to come down here and accept this citation. It is your agreement to appear."

Ed had slowly walked the twenty feet from his front door to the sidewalk during this exchange and now stood dumbfounded by the request. Now he recognized the driver as the same who had rung his doorbell weeks back and then sent the settlement offer.

"What's this all about, officer?"

"Seems this gentleman had his vehicle towed from this spot. Typically, we're trained to determine a legal driveway for tow or citation by being sure no portion of the vehicle falls into the dropped portion of the cut curb. Just now, he pointed out that the nose of his vehicle is not in front of your driveway at all. In fact, the curb cut is offset from the driveway by several feet and while it's true this guy's parked in one of the conforms, no vehicle is blocked. Furthermore, a hearing officer -- he showed me the dismissal -- recently ruled in his favor. I checked with dispatch. Apparently a survey was made and this is considered a legal parking space. Therefore, I have been asked to issue you a ticket for making a false police report. That's a violation of the California Penal Code section 148.5 according to dispatch."

There was no further conversation as Ed signed and accepted the citation. Now he knew who his tormentor was, but had no way to identify him since he had long ago thrown away the name, return address and telephone number.

In the hallway on the salver that held the daily mail there was a build up of unopened envelopes from various city and county agencies. The new ticket landed on top of the pile as Ed went to search out a bottle from the liquor cabinet.

* * *

The intercom on his office phone brought Ed back from his drifting thoughts, all of which these days tended to be on the subject of his driveway and how to reclaim it.

To make matters worse, another piece of certified mail had arrived, this time with Maxine's name on it as well as his, so she immediately opened it. The federal government informed them that, as the property owners, they were no longer in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The sidewalk was a hazard to the public in general, to people in wheelchairs and the blind in particular. Property owners were responsible for maintaining the sidewalk which needed to be rebuilt to the correct four foot width with no more than a two percent cross slope.

Ed dutifully measured and arrived at what he knew was a fore drawn conclusion. It would be impossible to comply with the ADA request because the tree was in the way. If he could not enter at an angle, he would have to move the driveway five feet which was also impossible because of zoning requirements for lot offsets.

Although he could apply for a variance, it would probably take months before it was approved and more time, not to mention expense, to have a contractor rebuild the driveway. Last week the city sent a crew to fill in his illegal curb offset. He no longer had access to his own garage and had been reduced to parking on the street. Between them, Ed and Maxine had accumulated dozens of parking tickets.

"Get yer ass in here, we gotta talk." It was Tom Hurley, Ed's boss, and he sounded none too happy. Ed knocked, was told to enter. Without preamble, Hurley said, "Seems you got a police record. Something about a misdemeanor for painting a curb. That true?"

Among the pile of mail Ed no longer bothered to open was a bench warrant which had been issued when he failed to show up for the painting citation. It had gone from a

\$75 penalty to \$1,000 with a year of county jail time if he did not appear in his own defense. That was for a first offense. If he continued and was again caught painting the curb, he could face felony charges which included a potential \$10,000 fine and five years in state prison.

Ed had no words except, "I'm sorry."

"You don't deny it? Well, it's against office policy," Hurley continued, "under the ethical conduct clause, for employees to have an outstanding bench warrant or be convicted of a crime. It's grounds for dismissal. At the very least I'm going to have to suspend you without pay until the matter is cleared up. Do not go back to your desk, do not attempt to clear it out, merely pick up your coat as you leave and we will send your personal items to you. May I have your keys to the office and the cell phone we pay for?"

Ed slunk home with the knowledge his job was no longer his. Unable to use his driveway, he parked on the street. The wall of the building next door had a poster with an urban gardening headline. Below the headline his photo appeared with a circle and a slash through the features. A little old lady walked up to him while he examined this. She wagged a finger at him and called him a name. Tree Killer, he thought she said.

At least he had a wife to talk to and the house in which to hide.

Maxine met him at the door. She was as abrupt as Hurley had been.

"I spoke with the attorney who handles my family's trust, Pat Guilard. You remember Pat? Well, he remembers you well enough. Anyway, Pat heard me out and he is under the impression, if I was correct in laying out the liability, you have irreparably damaged the estate. Thus, the trust can sue you for any loss. However, in order to arrive at the actual damages, the property should be sold. You, of course, have no interest in

selling the property. I, on the other hand, do. Therefore, I must bring a partition action which will ultimately result in a sale. The last appraisal was in July when we considered a home equity loan, you recall? And the value then was around a million five. Without off street parking, who knows how much value was lost? Anything less than that appraisal will probably be assigned to a deficiency, I think Pat called it. You will have to pay my share of any deficiency from the proceeds, according to Pat.”

Maxine looked him square in the eye and said, “I’m leaving you, Ed, not just because you are an ass, but also because I have always hated being called ‘Max.’”

She turned on her heels, lifted a suitcase from the hallway carpet and departed.

Honey came up and put her head in his lap. He rubbed behind the setter’s ears, fondled the fur and pinched the fold of skin on the back of her neck saying to himself *at least the dog is my friend*. Indeed, his only friend.

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April 15, 2004 -- Revised April 5, 2005

(Proverb -- No Name)

by George Herbert

Welsh poet (1593 - 1633) author of “Jacula Prudentum”

For want of a nail the shoe was lost.

For want of a shoe the horse was lost.

For want of a horse the rider was lost.

For want of a rider the battle was lost.

For want of a battle the kingdom was lost.

And all for the want of a horseshoe nail.

