



Road Kill

Two very nicely dressed elderly men walked out of the Shady Palms Assisted Living Center in Northern California near the Big Sur coast. They walk to a 1974 Cadillac Eldorado convertible. At over five thousand pounds it is one of the biggest cars ever made. This beauty is bright red with white leather interior. It has a white convertible top and little white pinstripes that accentuate the length of the carrier deck length hood.

It is their free night out. Joe Cannon is a retired Chief of Detectives and his best friend is Bill Friday who is a retired judge. They have known each other since grade school where they lived across the street. Now they live across the hall from each other at Shady Palms. Shady Palms sounds very pleasant. It isn't. It's a place where people go for the next to last chapter of their life. Across the street is the Shady Palms Nursing Home. That's the last chapter .

The phrase "assisted living" also means "minimal amount of freedom". That really grates on these two men. They are in their mid-seventies and in good health. Neither of them wants to be here. Joe wants to live with his only child Andrew who he worked his ass off to get an Ivy League education. The result is that Andrew works for the CIA and while he says he is an

embassy employee in Paris Joe knows that is a front. He knows because it takes over a month to get a letter or an email to his son. He knows despite never admitted taking any language courses his son speaks two languages fluently. The languages are Chinese and Arabic. Not exactly the kissing cousins of languages. Great, his son has this perfect education and no family or grandkids. Not any prospects of that in the future either. He can't even tell his Father what he does for a living.

Bill on the other hand would like to live with one of his two daughters. However they are both constantly moving and always in lousy relationships. He can't stand the losers these two beautiful and brilliant girls fall in love with. Bill is unable to restrain himself from telling them and their boyfriends what he thinks which eliminates the possibility of him living with either of them.

The manager of the retirement center is Nancy Whitehead. She is a witch by any definition. Her specialty in life is kissing up to the person with the power and the money. In the life of a retired person that is often one in the same, the adult child. The children they sacrificed so much to raise now have returned to "manage" the lives of their elderly parents. "Miss Nan" as she asked to be called plays this like an Oscar winning actress.

She fakes care and concern about all the residents. Then when the adult children are gone she treats the residents like crap. One of her favorite put downs is to totally ignore them. That really hurts because the one thing the elderly often need so very badly is to have someone listen to them.

These two men have been friends for over fifty years. Often they were on opposite sides of the law. However they maintained their friendship and respect for each other. They are both bitter and disillusioned with life. One of the things they are disillusioned with is their lifelong

service of the law. Still they are trying to make the best of it. With little else to do but visit it has come out in their conversations the many injustices that each has observed in life despite dedicating their work life to the implementation of justice.

“Miss Nan” likes to be called that despite the fact she’s been married three times. Two of her husbands ran away and the third one tried but didn’t make it. Nan made life miserable enough him that suicide was preferable to life with “Miss Nan”.

Here’s a typical example of the exchange that has led Joe and Bill to a different level of understanding regarding the criminal justice system.

“Do you remember the Palmer case Joe?”

“I sure do. You know I thought you planted that evidence. That’s part of the reason that I went easy on the guy’s sentence.”

“I know Frank. You’re right I did plant that evidence. However it was only after we found that finger with a bad search warrant that I thought I had to.”

“What finger?”

“It was his dead fiancée’s left ring finger. Remember it was missing. It turned out that they had a big fight and he asked for his engagement ring back. When she couldn’t get it off her finger he thought she was lying to him. That’s what pushed him over the edge and he killed her. But he couldn’t get the ring off her finger. He wanted that ring back. He cut her finger off. He was finally able to get the ring off but we never found it. He might have thrown it in the river. Anyway, for spite I guess he kept her ring finger in a baggie in his safety deposit box. A new detective was working the case with me and he made a mistake on the warrant. He specified only the engagement ring so we couldn’t put her finger into evidence. I knew he had killed her

with a hammer so I bought one like his. I put a little of her blood on it and planted it when we did have a warrant. We never did find the real hammer.”

“Gee I wish I’d know.”

“It’s that damn system. You know that’s the way it works.”

“Where are we going for dinner tonight?”

“I’ve got a great new place. It’s a restaurant on a cliff overlooking the Pacific. If the food is as good as I think it’s going to be our new favorite. Also, there’s a particular spot along the way that’s perfect for our little project”

“Really……”

Not long later they were driving down the highway in the beautiful red Cadillac Eldorado convertible with the top down. About twenty minutes down the coast road Bill turned off to an observation turnout.

“Bill it’s a beautiful view! Are you sure this is a good place?”

“I’ll show you what I mean in a little while.”

They opened the trunk and Bill went around and let most of the air out of the back left rear tire. Then they waited. About forty minutes later a beat up car pulled in behind them and a young man got out. He had on filthy clothes and had all the signs of drug abuse.

“What’s the matter?” he asked.

“We’ve got a flat and I’m afraid we are too old to change it.” said Bill.

“Could you give us some help?” asked Frank.

The kid walked over to their side of the car. That put him a foot or two away from the railing. “Yeah” he said as he looked back down the road to verify that no one else was coming.”

As he pulled a knife he said, “you two fork over your money, your cell phones, your watches and rings or I’m gonna kill you two”

“Really?” asked Bill as he pulled the sawed off double barrel shotgun from the side of his coat.”

Frank actually fired first getting a shot off from his Colt 45 1911 model service pistol. Then the shotgun Bill was holding erupted as both barrels fired number one buckshot sending the equivalent of (44) twenty- two caliber bullets into the young man. The force of the shotgun blast almost lifted young man’s body up in the air as it threw him over the railing. There was a fall of over one hundred feet before his body hit the rocks. The pounding surf came trashing down on the rocks as it had done for centuries.

As they looked over the guardrail to the surf below Frank said “See Bill, the sea pounds the body into pieces and the sharks clean up what’s left. Anything else washes out to sea. It’s a perfect place! “

“You know Frank I think you have found the perfect place! That’s such a handy arrangement. Remember that time a few months ago when it rained we got all muddy disposing of that one body?”

“I sure do and when I saw this I knew we had the perfect place”

“What about his car?”

“I am going to get rid of it like we always do.”

“I’m starving. Let’s get some air in that flat tire and see what the new restaurant is like”

They took the air tank out of trunk of the Cadillac where it had been hidden by a blanket. Soon they were on their way to a delightful dinner.

As they ordered Bill asked Frank, “Did you get the usual done on his car?”

“Yep. The minute we got here when you went to the men’s room I used the restaurant’s computer to log on to Craig’s list and listed like we always do “I am pissed at my girlfriend and have left her car with the keys in it, 22.4 miles south of the I77 intersection on the ocean front road. Whoever gets there first gets a free car. Drive it until the bitch finds you, if she ever does.”

“The swordfish is delicious. How are your clams?” Bill asked.

“They couldn’t be better. I think this place is our new Saturday night regular place.

“By the way Joe, where did you go after the men’s room. I lost you there for a bit.”

Pulling a small envelope out of his pocket he smiled and said, “I bought a hundred dollar gift certificate and thought we would mail it anonymously to Miss Nan.”

“What a marvelous idea Bill! Did you put a time and date on it?”

“It is next Saturday night about this time”.

“Fantastic! You don’t think she would pass by a couple of her “dear ones” with a flat tire do you?”

“Of course not. Not dear Miss Nan.”

“ I love this place!”

“Me too!”

As they walked out of the restaurant to the valet station Bill spoke, “No shit.... That guy cut his fiancé’s finger off and kept it in his safety deposit box?”

“Yea. He sure did.”

“There is so damn little justice in the world! You know it?”

“You’re right Frank. You’re right”.

The valet asked which car was theirs.

“The red Cadillac” replied Bill.

The valet said, "I've got a parking lot full of Cadillac's. We tag the keys by the tag number. What's that?"

"It says RD KILL" replied Frank.