

## We Really Respect Your People

Hung over, Mavis Beans woke up. He looked around the room for some explanation of the pain in his head. The empty bottles of Black Dog ale? The bottle of Jim Beam almost empty by his bedside? No, Beans concluded, the pain occurs because I look. Were I to lay my fragile head on the pillow for only ten more minutes, I would find a new day when I awoke, a day covered with what do you call them? Yes, roses, those bright red flowers that smell real good and cost a whole lot. Amid recollections of a long-lost girlfriend, Beans' head sunk deeply into the pillow.

Beans awoke with a dry mouth. He recognized what for him was a common predicament: either rouse yourself for a long pull of water from the blue 5-gallon jug, spilling ecstatic quantities onto your sweated chest, your grungy blue jeans, your favorite pair of socks that is presently your favorite only because you cannot find another grouping of two that matches in the whole cabin, or sit in bed--by all means a comfortable place--wondering when the energy will arise for a trip to the 5-gallon jug. Until then, there would be no more dreams like the last one about an enormous crow with an attitude or, on the brighter side, the devilish stewardess. Instead, you will have the nightmare of having so little strength on account of your thirst that you see the oasis, but altogether fail to approach it, as if hope is a last form of torture exercised by your captors, who in this case happen to be a sleeping bag and mattress.

Mavis could not return to sleep. He climbed from bed, planting his stockinged feet not quite firmly on the ground. Standing, Mavis extended one

groping hand to part the curtain of retrograde love beads that divided his bedroom from the rest of the cabin. Beyond the beads, he saw still more empty bottles, over which a gentle breeze blew a low testimony to the music of last night. Could such a celebration be referred to as music? Beans did not give a shit. He hobbled to the open door and shut it. Yet the determination of the action filled him with a contradictory longing to gaze into the great outdoors. Why else did he live in Alaska if not, during these sober moments, to look outdoors once in a while? Mavis shuffled to the window and stared.

The sun had rise, it seemed, long before he had. In the pockmarked dirt driveway, reflecting sunbeams, a yellow Nissan pick-up truck blocked Mavis' Toyota Landcruiser. To whom, wondered Mavis, did this pick-up belong? He remembered a sweepstakes that arrived with the last batch of mail at his post office box, but he never sent it in. In fact, it sat obnoxiously on the nearby table, reminding Mr./Mrs. Beans/Resident of P.O. Box 81818 that the deadline of last month was very rapidly approaching and that here was an offer no intelligent consumer would neglect. No, the yellow pick-up was not a delivered prize. Nor for that matter was it in any way a new addition to the Beans bachelor household. Probably, it belonged to the unrecognizable man behind the glare of the windshield; the one who slid out the door as Mavis picked his teeth.

But even the man's movement from behind the blinding windshield into the illuminating morning sun did not clarify for Mavis who exactly he beheld. Having skipped last month's rent, he fixated on the possibility that before him stood his landlord, and if the man was not in fact a physical match for his landlord, then he probably represented his landlord in the way a beefy henchman represents a

major figure in organized crime, there to carry out orders of invigorating violence and reproach. Mavis' Beans made his first rapid movement of the day: he scurried to his bedroom, rattling the curtain of love beads, seeking to get dressed before the man knocked on the door, which Mavis congratulated himself in retrospect for closing.

Still, our actions do not always please us or agree, as we had foreseen incorrectly, with the situation at hand. That's a lot of fancy words for stating the obvious that Mavis Beans was already dressed. Luckily, his original intention of guzzling from the 5-gallon jug had yet to transpire, so he was not also wet. No, Mavis was as dry as the Sahara, and he felt that way. In his laboring mind, the stranger mounted the three wooden steps of the cabin while Mavis wondered to himself what the hell right this thug might boast for arriving at some ungodly or even godly hour in a noiseless yellow pick-up to demand money that settle in neither his pocket nor Mavis', but rather the overstuffed pocket of some fattened goose of a kingpin whose last unchoreographed encounter with the world encouraged a premature session at the manicurist and a week of vacation in Rio Di Janiero. Perhaps Mavis could bring his visitor around to a deal of some kind. He dug the last of his cash from the groove between the mattress and the wall and threw down the pair of pants he did not need after all.

A hard knocking rattled the door. Immediately, Mavis' dog Willie Beans broke into a howl reminiscent of a teapot at full boil. Mavis waited in the bedroom for a moment, hoping the howl would discourage the visitor or at least inspire him to return momentarily to the truck for a bat or blunt object. But the knocking continued. The howling continued. The morning continued. There was

no solace available for Mavis in a quick reunion with the sheets, where the whole living nightmare began. Beans was irreversibly awake in that same shitty way that so often parted his pouting lips for another numbing suck on a bottle of whiskey or full beer. He would have to answer to the powerful knocking and thereafter explain why his legs should not be broken for the mild trespass of a month without rent. "Let me explain," Mavis Beans said, opening the door to a stocky, hairy visitor in a black suit, a greasy ridge of perspiration dripping from a slick, receding hairline. The stranger thumped on a book in his moist hands.

"I'm from the Mormon church," he said.

"Too many pull-tabs!" Beans confessed frantically, blind.

"God understands," said the Mormon. He seemed nervous and shifted his eyes in many directions without resting them anywhere. Mavis invited him in and stepped back into the cabin.

"I was just taking a drink of water," he said. "Give me a minute to find my suit and we'll head back to that neighborhood we started canvassing yesterday."