

## **Main Drag**

**875 words**

**ted.gross@comcast.net**

The town was laid out logically, numbered streets east-west, named ones north-south, and I was looking for a car in a driveway, and a guy.

I got in a cab and told the driver--Jeez, very large masculine woman with aviator glasses and a buzz cut around the sides and wearing a camouflage vest--to please bear with me, I want to cruise around looking at real estate opportunities, and it could take a while.

“Best kind of fare,” she said. I asked if there was an hourly rate, and she said there wasn’t but how’s \$60 sound.

I told the driver--who’d introduced herself as Dolly--that someone recommended the Ivy and Sand sections, so those would be good for starters.

“The first one, you talking about Harvard and all that shit?” Dolly said.

I’m thinking she’s colorful, not a problem as long as we get there smooth. When the light changed Dolly didn’t fool around, she put her foot down hard, and I

had to hang on, especially around a turn.

When we got to the Ivy section Dolly explained they built the neighborhood in stages and I pretended to be interested. No car, and I said I wouldn't mind the other one, to have something to compare.

Dolly said you bet and peeled out of there and cranked up the radio. You'd expect country or right wing talk, or maybe religious, but no, she blasts heavy metal, and so loud I needed to pay to get out of the thing if we didn't find the asshole's car in the driveway soon.

The Sand section was bigger and more modest than the Ivy and the houses were identical tracts, and a lot of garage doors were open full of junk. I asked Dolly what specifically do they accumulate?

"I'm the same way," she said, "Me and my hubby we love yard sales and the flea market--ya ever been? Sunday mornings?"

I said I hadn't and Dolly continued, "Our deal, and we can't help it, we over-pick shit up--and then we have to keep having yard sales."

Wow a husband, and a mistake bringing up the garages.

"Your TV programs," she was saying, "your *Pawn Stars*, your *American Pickers* . . . those get us fired up,

seeing the items folks pull out of their attics and bring in, and they're shocked to find out what they're worth."

"Or not, sometimes too," I said.

"You're darn-tootin'," she said. "Me and him love it when they bring on those experts, that's the best part."

"Well, sounds like a nice hobby," I said, hoping to not lose focus on the people's driveways we were passing.

"We have some other hobbies too," she said, "on the kinkier side."

And she laughed a big deep bellow and took her hands off the wheel and made a loud clap, that for a second outdid even the heavy metal. I opened the window even though it was chilly out, and told Dolly if she didn't mind to please systematically cover the neighborhood so I wouldn't miss any houses for sale.

This seemed to get her re-focused and she knew the streets and was doing a good job, except I hadn't seen any light blue Toyota Corollas yet . . . until Dolly finished off Jackson and doubled-back on Ferguson, and there one was, the fifth house on the left. Same BK part of the license plate.

It was crazy but I asked Dolly if she was hungry and she blurted out a racy expression, the equivalent of Is the Pope Catholic, and I said how about *Jake's House*.

“Well now you got your finger on the pulse,” she said, “that’s one of our Top-5 favorites.”

I was tempted to ask the other 4, figuring that’d be solid information, but some other time.

We both got the prime rib and the whole experience wasn’t bad, Dolly talking steady but still managing to eat much faster than me, and she had plenty of good stories. She was from Arkansas and was on the rodeo circuit as a barrel racer and in Alaska working a sardine fishing operation, and then the shocker . . . an opportunity at a bordello in Nevada.

At that point she abruptly shifted gears and asked what about me . . . and I said whatever I invent’ll be tame after that.

Dolly got a toothpick going and then leaned back in the booth and I thought Jeez she’s going to fall asleep, but just as quick she snapped out of it and said she needed to get back to work, and good luck with the home search--and when I’m settled she wanted to reciprocate. I got up, we said goodbye, and I was pretty sure she’d be good for her word if it happened, which it wouldn’t.

I had dessert and the waitress working the other section refilled my coffee. She said she knew Dolly, I

said you didn't say hello? She said they had a history in play.

I understood, I hated histories. Going all-in on the light blue Toyota was a version of one. What I wanted was a second slice of that lingonberry pie, a third cup of coffee, stick around and shoot the breeze with whoever, but a man sleeps better the opposite.