



Dandelions

My neighbor, Jameson, is at it again. Out there with his little plastic bucket snatching up dandelions. *In April. Without a shirt.* If he comes over here to screw with me about my own dandelions, I'm going to rattle him to the ground and tie dandelions around his nipples.

"A word with you, sir?" That's how he'll start in on me. Then, like a hundred times before, he'll say, 'A word to the wise. I've mentioned your refusal to deal with the noxious weeds in your lawn to the Architectural Committee. You'll probably be hearing from them this week.'"

As if. Ah, crap. Here he comes. I'll cut this short.

"Jimmy," I say, after he's had his word with me, "I think dandelions have as much right to live and reproduce as those potheads at the end of the block. I know you think they're role-models, because they follow a regular lawn aeration protocol and use an edger up next to the sidewalk, but *they smoke pot*, Jimmy."

I have no idea whether the harmless couple at the end of the block do herb, but I know this fib will stump the hell out of Jimmy. How could responsible yard care co-exist in the same moral universe as *pot smoking*? He'll spend all afternoon trying to unravel it.

"Now, get off my property, Jimmy," I say. There he goes, brow knitted.

* * * * *

When I was a kid, my Sunday School teacher gave me a little plastic glow-in-the-dark cross for memorizing scripture verses. I still remember part of my favorite:

"And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times?" Numbers 22:32

I have ordered fifty of those glow-in-the-dark crosses. Every last one of them is going in Jimmy's lawn tonight.

* * * * *

"What's the haps, Jimmy?" I ask, as neighborly as can be.

"Sir, I owe you an apology," Jimmy says. He's staring at my bare feet. Now I wish I'd trimmed my toenails a couple weeks ago when I thought about it.

"Why, Jimmy?" I ask. "Your dog take a dump in my compost pile again? It's okay, Jimmy. I just stir it in. No worries."

"No. I had a vision, sir," Jimmy says. "Could I call you *Bob*?"

"I prefer *Roberto*, Jimmy," I say.

"Well, *Roberto*," he says, a *tremolo* creeping into his delivery, "after I pulled the weeds out of my lawn I had a dream where there were little glowing crosses everywhere I pulled up a dandelion." He's going to start blubbering.

"Jimmy, Jimmy, Jimmy." I say, touching his arm. "Please don't cry. Did you smoke some bad shit you got from the potheads?"

"NO!" he says. "It's about the dandelions. Please could I call you *Bob*?"

"Actually, my name's *Melvin*, Jimmy," I say. "I have no idea where you got *Bob*." I could do this all day.

"*Mel*?"

"No, Jimmy. *Roberto* or *Melvin*. You have to choose."

"*Melvin*, I owe you a debt of gratitude," Jimmy says. "Not only am I never, ever, ever going to kill another dandelion, I've become a vegan."

Now he's beaming. I wonder if he knows that vegans don't do dairy. Plus there's the no-eggs policy. Jimmy is too old to launch this kind of lifestyle initiative.

"Well, shit, Jimmy, that's just awesome," I say, and smack his shoulder a good one. "C'mere and give me a hug, you big *schnookie*."

I hug him and give him a little peck on the cheek. He barely flinches. I just love it when I can make a difference in someone's life.