

"Bruce, this is Barbara—Barbara Baker, from you English class." He was so stunned that there was a long pause before he could find his voice. "Oh—yeh—Hi."

"I'm calling you because—well, you see, I belong to this club called Sub-debs and we're having a party next weekend and, well, I was wondering if you would like to go with me."

He managed to answer somehow, "I'd like that—I mean—I'd like to—a lot."

"Good," she said. "I'll tell you more about it at school tomorrow."

"O.K. Say, Barbara, I hope you don't mind if I ask, but I thought you were dating Curt."

"Oh, that—that's all over. All he ever talked about was that car of his. Frankly, I got tired of playing second-fiddle to a silly old car."

AN OLDY MOLDY

Karen Greene

The old woman wrinkled her brow as she gazed at the overflowing fruit bin. Deep lines resembling the muddy river's tributaries crisscrossed her face and added many years to the already grey visage. The lower jaw moved up and down in a spastic biting motion. This displayed an extreme overbite. There was no telling what would happen if she did bite into one of the red beauties before her in the bin.

She raised a bonelike hand to her hair, making an attempt to beautify herself before asking the clerk, "Excuse me, young man, is the sign correct?"

The young blond clerk merely gazed at her batting eyelashes for several seconds. He couldn't help but notice her crooked smile which displayed two rows of crooked white teeth that resembled a white picket fence that had missed several spring paintings.

Standing away from the black shawled figure, the boy answered, "Yes, Ma'am. That's what the sign says. One pound will cost you fifty-nine cents." He turned away.

She ran her fingers through her stringy black hair and wagged a finger at the boy saying, "It's not right. George always says you can't trust no one. He's right. All you grocers are a-like. All you care about is money, money, and more money. In my day," her breath was now touching his face, "they gave away apples and ya can bet they never had no bruises either!"

The young clerk watched her as she nervously fumbled through the bin touching every piece of fruit with her twisted white hands. Each apple was picked up gently, but thrown with disconcert back into the bin. Occasionally she would sigh heavily and wipe unseen perspiration from her forehead with the fringe on her shawl.

She bent low over the fruit bin and placed one hand on the counter to support herself. Her other hand was on her hip as if she were in pain. "Son," her voice cracked, "you're young and spirited, and you can get around. Not me. I've only got a few months left. It's all a matter of time. It's just a matter of time."

"A-ha," the boy nodded and looked at the other customers.

She abruptly reached her stiff arms out and clung to the clerk's sleeve. In a low tone she said, "Couldn't you this one time give me a discount? I've got grandchildren coming to see me and no food to eat."

By now tears had formed in the old lady's eyes. She started to wrinkle her face as if she were about to cry. Soft whimpers left her lips, but the clerk said nothing to comfort her. The woman suddenly straightened her bent "S" shaped posture and eyed the clerk with sharp shining eyes. She ran her fingers through her hair again and squinted as in deep thought.

Finally she spoke, "Listen, you, I think this is absolutely insane! You've got a job, but what about us old folks?? George was right! George was so right!" Her voice seemed to rise in pitch; "I'll just take my business elsewhere!"

The old woman concluded her statement with her nose in the air. After several seconds, she shifted her eyes over to the clerk to get a look at his expression. He was kneeling over a closed banana carton. There was no expression on his face. She stamped her foot against the ground.

"Listen, lady, I have hundreds of you Golden Agers come in here everyday. You and I both know that Mr. George was a rich ol' man, so quit complaining! The sign says fifty-nine cents a pound and that's what they are. Now if you don't like it—"

"Rude, rude, rude!!! Would you say that to your grandma? No, sir!
Snicker, snicker, snicker, you're a dreadful young thing!"

"Listen, life's rough!"

The old lady chuckled as he turned away. She looked up at the lights, raised her hand to her lips, and whispered, "This is for you, George." She quietly tiptoed over to the bin and reached in. Before the clerk even knew it, one of the red beauties was hidden under her shawl.

UNTITLED

Anita B. Olin

Sitting wearily on a cracked step,
Experience shows on the old man's face.
His leathered skin tells.
Oh, how well he knows of life.