

Think I'm gonna puke, thought Clete from behind his newspaper.

"Now go give Daddy a kiss-kiss," said Juanita.

Clete rustled his paper, "That dog just had a morning snack out of the cat box. She ain't kissin' me."

"Ginger does not snack out of the cat box," said Juanita indignant.

"What a low-life dog you've got, Juanita.'

Ginger pranced expectantly in front of Clete's paper.

"She's better than that stupid cat of yours. Old What's-His-Name."

"Dave," said Clete.

Just then Ginger yelped. She had pranced one of her front legs into Clete's hot, black coffee. She jumped off the table and ran yipping, three-legged out of the kitchen. Clete watched her go, suppressing a giggle.

Dave watched from the window sill and smiled.

Juanita looked across the table and said, "Why didn't you just kiss her and get it over with?"

Clete wished he had. Juanita'd be in an ugly mood all day now.

SUMO

It was Sunday morning and Ellis was mad. The next door neighbors' dog (Ginger) had 'gone' on his lawn again. "I'm sick of that crap," he said to Ruth, on his way through the house to get the square-nosed shovel. "I'm gonna throw the whole load back up on their lawn. To hell with them." Ruth put down her T.V. Guide, "That is rude. I don't blame you honey."

Ellis walked back through the house, square-nosed shovel over his shoulder. Ruth followed behind for moral support. Ellis scooped and flung.

Ruth said, "Jeez, you'd think it was a Great Dane instead of a Chihuahua."

Clete (their neighbor) came walking out of his garage and had to do a little side step to keep from getting splattered. He threw his weed whip down and said, "What the hell do you thing you're doing, Ellis?"

"Next time that mutt of yours lays a load on my lawn, I'm going to make you eat it, Clete old boy." said Ellis.

Juanita heard the word 'mutt' come through the screen door to the dining room where she was ironing and came charging out onto the front lawn. She flung Clete aside like he was a rag doll. She stood in front of Ellis, shaking with rage, "What'd you call my Ginger?"

Ellis got the shovel up in front of himself for protection and started to back slowly away.

Ruth got in front of him and said to Juanita, "Why don't you pick on someone your own size, fatso?"

"Fatso, is it?" said Juanita.

"Like two sumo wrestlers in muu muus meeting at a full charge." That's how Jeffrey would describe it to his mother later that night. He threw the newspapers on their lawns and peddled off, in no mood to witness carnage that day.

There was a thunderclap of flesh colliding.

Clete sidled up to Ellis, taking his wallet out of his pants. "I got twenty bucks says Juanita mops the place up with her." The women were at a standstill, chest to chest, grunting, digging, tearing up the lawn.

Ellis said, "Make it forty."

"Done."

Ginger watched through the venetian blinds, licked her chops, scratched her belly with a hind leg. She'd just finished a two-pound T-bone and couldn't wait for tomorrow morning.

SCUFFLING UNDER THE BOUGAINVILLEA

Dave, the neighbors' cat, has got his head buried in Ellis' trash can, ass sticking up in the sair. Ellis comes out with a big cup of steaming black coffee, on his way to work. He sees Dave and screams, "Get out of