

The Penurious Scorned

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“Zounds!”, she exclaimed, “They gave your motorcar a ticket!”.

In the grim, bitter morning, as the wind tussled my cobalt pea coat, I looked across the avenue towards Lilith to see what she was referring to. The front window of my automobile was lightly touched by the winterly embrace of snow, which laid over the grim hands of death of fallen leaves. Nestled in between one of the extension arms was a blue and white document with a concomitant envelope.

“Surely there must be a mistake.”, I remarked.

But alas, as I removed the ticket and examined it carefully, I came to understand that my automobile was reported as obstructing the driveway from whence it was situated in front of. It stated in bold, sans-serif lettering that the citation number was Q2193586.

The constable that issued the proclamation on behalf of the city council was nowhere to be found.

Lilith walked towards the rear of the carriage. In her salad days she was able to move more gingerly; now she moved with almost a weak shuffle with her disproportionately sized medicinal footwear. The saturnine weather and her years of bacchanalian pursuits left her knees stiff and difficult to bend, not unlike a young cedar sapling. And yet despite her failing health, she was still adamant about accompanying me on my errands this morning.

I reminded myself to be especially kind to my senscent betrothed today.

Like a blacksmith looking to see whether his metal craft is oblique, Lilith squatted down to determine whether the carriage was situated nonparallel to the curb. She exhaled slowly: the light steam emanating from her aquiline nose trailed up and away as it cooled in the November air.

After a minute or so of unspoken rumination, Lilith broke the silence: “I am afraid, my lord, that I do not see what might be the problem with thy motorcar.”

My mind raced and grasped unsuccessfully for an explanation. My ambulatory motions disturbed the white canvas that laid in the street. I examined my automobile in relation to the carriage-way that it was adjacent to. I had positioned it there on the previous day returning from a unplanned early evening social gathering at Mister Charles X. Darnay's parlor. There was another automobile, most likely belonging to a young meretricious university student of no particular consequence, parked in front of mine.

The length of the carriageway measured 100 inches, while my motorcar measures 96 inches. According to the citation, the rear of the carriage obstructed 36 inches of the carriageway. This is a preposterous notion to think that over one-third of my motorcar would be situated immediately within the boundaries of the cement!

But if my motorcar was truly not an infraction on any local ordinance, what could have been the constable's reason for the citation? May I be so bold to make the conjecture that there were more sinister, ulterior motives? This brings to mind many questions that are expounded in the classic work the Euthyphro: What could drive one human being to inflict needless suffering on another?

Lilith broke my thought: "Surely we are not going to be able to afford to pay the hefty charges that they have levied upon my lord?"

"Well, I do not think we have a choice, Lilith."

I said this even though I knew that she was indeed correct. It was a lean year: the harvest on the family farm did not yield what we thought it would and we sold our furniture which we had originally received from the Bradbury widow in order to pay for Lilith's cold water treatment for her consumption. We were a humble people with an even more humble remuneration. The fees that the local magistrate requested from us in the citation would amount to a week's worth of meals.

And thus, what I am left with is the facts of the matter and plea for resolute justice. The former clearly show that my motorcar was not obstructing the carriageway as was declared in the citation. As for the latter, would it be too much to be treated leniency representative of Janus Geminus, or should we suffer at the hands of barbarity with the sobriquet of justice and the will of the people?

Lilith coughed. She wiped the small globs of blood that ringed her mouth from her convulsions with a pearl-white muslin. We walked away in horror, into the harsh November wind.