

## Antiques

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“Are you sure you two can afford this?”

Angela and Dave looked at each other.

“I mean, it’s quite a handsome price,” the appraiser said. “For such an historically-rich kettle.”

“No, we’ve decided on it,” Angela replied. She nodded and forced a smile.

The appraiser scratched the bridge of his nose. “This is a relic from the Civil War. We just want to make sure- with the economy and all-”

“We’re doing deceptively well,” Dave said, cracking a grin. “We’re more wealthy than I look.”

“Very good,” the appraiser said. “I’ll have it wrapped.”

The blue-and-white kettle was layered with cushy tissue, placed gently into an elegant mahogany box, and finally garnished with a brown paper bag. It went into the backseat of their car.

The two left the store and drove west. They lived fifteen miles outside of the city in a Victorian-styled country home, and to get there they would have to take the interstate. To take the interstate they would have to pass through downtown.

They had their doors locked and their windows rolled up. There were dirty alleys, littered sidewalks, 4-dollar pizza shacks, cheap auteur theatres. There was a bum sitting against the side of a building.

“You know who that reminds me of?” Angela smiled. “It reminds me of you, when you were growing your beard last winter.”

David scratched the bridge of his nose and tightened his hand over the wheel.

The bum was drinking from a brown paper bag. He took a heavy swallow and wiped the side of his mouth with the back of his hand.

When they got home, Angela gently unwrapped the Civil War kettle and Dave placed it on the cleared spot in their dining room cabinet. It was a part of their home now. They brewed a pot of their own tea and served it from a regular porcelain pitcher. Someone had chipped the Civil War relic, which had slightly lowered the value, but showed that it had once lived.

“You’re going to mow today, aren’t you?” Angela was eating a tart. She took a bite and wiped the corner of her mouth with the back of her hand.

“I don’t know,” Dave said. He looked at their kettle, and then

through the white lace windows at the pine trees and their green lawn. “It’s such a nice day.”

“Yes. It’s a perfect day to mow.” Angela looked at him. “Don’t you think?”

“Sure,” said Dave. “Sure.” He turned around.

Angela was saying something else about the kettle when Dave slapped the porcelain pitcher off the table’s edge. It went something like, “I think it’ll be a nice addition to these otherwise dank shelves. There’s a touch of class here.” She was going to add, “They really knew how to live back then,” but was interrupted by the crash and shatter of heavy porcelain.

She shrieked and jumped out of her chair. Little pieces of the pitcher were everywhere. Both of them had only socks on over their feet.

Angela looked up from the mess and stared at her husband, her heart beating in her throat. Dave stood indignant, his chest swelled. He was taking deep and heavy breaths.

“What in the hell is wrong with you?” Angela shouted. There was a pause as the tension settled in the room. The relic kettle from the Civil War sat on the shelf in the cabinet. It was safe.

At once, they bent over and began collecting the larger porcelain pieces. Black oolong tea seeped over the tile.