

Story of the vine sows sour seeds for policeman

Pop, bang, ping! Who was shooting BB's at my feet?

Lily, my little poodle, and I were taking our late-evening stroll around the parking lot of the funeral home where I worked. Being all alone except for Lily, I was getting nervous.

Our building is in an upscale neighborhood with a huge, block-size Methodist Church complex occupying the block across the street and our building and lot taking the block where I was.

This area is bordered by another borough that is having trouble with teenage vandalism. I know because we keep getting our security lights shot out.

I grabbed Lily and ran for the front side door, much too afraid to go to the back door I had exited. Glancing back, I noticed a light in the second-story window of the house behind our parking lot retaining wall. This placed the window parallel to where I had been walking.

Were the teens getting bolder and taking potshots at me? I rushed inside and phoned the police. Within minutes a policeman arrived in his patrol car.

I explained what was happening and told him there was a flight of back stairs that went up to my third-floor apartment balcony. He told me to stay inside while he looked around, and he would ring the bell if he needed me.

It was now well past 11 p.m. and the policeman had been outside for several minutes. I slipped out my door and peeked over the balcony rail just as there was a burst of pings ... some landing near the policeman and some hitting the wall of my balcony.

I heard the policeman yell, "Stop shooting, this is the police," as he ducked down into a crouch.

Afraid to go down the elevator since it came out near the back door, I hurried down the stairs and to the front door praying that the policeman was OK. There he stood with his right hand reaching for the doorbell.

I snatched the door open and he held out his left hand, which was holding some

Silver Threads

Margaret
Wilson
Brunk



seeds about the size of my thumbnail and a long, skinny pod that was split in half.

I stared ... what the heck was he doing? He started laughing and I swear he was blushing. Not knowing what to do, I just stood there.

He tried desperately to keep a professional look on his face while he explained that just as he was about to jump over the retaining wall, he was pelted by these seeds coming from the trees he was crouching under.

I was so embarrassed and apologized for calling the police. He said that he was just doing his job and would have done the same thing in my position.

The next evening the policeman came to the funeral home stating that he could not just walk away from that strange experience of the night before. He said that he had gone to Pittsburgh's famous Phipps Conservatory and asked if it knew of any plant that could

throw seed a half-block and up three flights.

To his surprise, he was told there was a Japanese vine similar to our Wisteria that could do just that IF ... and it was a big IF ... all the conditions were exactly right with the moon, the atmosphere, the humidity, and maybe if some more of nature's quirks were all working at the same time, these pods could explode throwing seeds for hundreds of feet.

He told me his wife wanted to plant some seed and wait and see. I doubted that she believed him. I apologized again for causing so much trouble.

He gave me his biggest smile and said, "Not to worry," because he would never tell anyone that he was screaming, "Don't shoot," and ducking seeds, because if he did, he would be the laughing stock of the whole precinct and would never live it down.

I thanked him again and wished his wife luck growing her vines. I was not about to tell him that all the funeral directors for miles around had been told his story by my boss, who, being Irish, thought it was a "hoot."