

WISE OLD MAN

A WISE OLD GENTLEMAN RETIRED AND PURCHASED A MODEST HOME NEAR A JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL. HE SPENT THE FIRST FEW WEEKS OF HIS RETIREMENT IN PEACE AND CONTENTMENT. THEN A NEW SCHOOL YEAR BEGAN. THE VERY NEXT AFTERNOON THREE YOUNG BOYS, FULL OF YOUTHFUL, AFTER-SCHOOL ENTHUSIASM, CAME DOWN HIS STREET, BEATING MERRILY ON EVERY TRASH CAN THEY ENCOUNTERED. THE CRASHING PERCUSSION CONTINUED DAY AFTER DAY, UNTIL FINALLY THE WISE OLD MAN DECIDED IT WAS TIME TO TAKE SOME ACTION.

THE NEXT AFTERNOON, HE WALKED OUT TO MEET THE YOUNG PERCUSSIONISTS AS THEY BANGED THEIR WAY DOWN THE STREET. STOPPING THEM, HE SAID, "YOU KIDS ARE A LOT OF FUN. I LIKE TO SEE YOU EXPRESS YOUR EXUBERANCE LIKE THAT. IN FACT, I USED TO DO THE SAME THING WHEN I WAS YOUR AGE. WILL YOU DO ME A FAVOR? I'LL GIVE YOU EACH A DOLLAR IF YOU'LL PROMISE TO COME AROUND EVERY DAY AND DO YOUR THING."

THE KIDS WERE ELATED AND CONTINUED TO DO A BANG-UP JOB ON THE TRASHCANS. AFTER A FEW DAYS, THE OLD-TIMER GREETED THE KIDS AGAIN, BUT THIS TIME HE HAD A SAD SMILE ON HIS FACE. "THIS RECESSION'S REALLY PUTTING A BIG DENT IN MY INCOME," HE TOLD THEM. "FROM NOW ON, I'LL ONLY BE ABLE TO PAY YOU 50 CENTS TO BEAT ON THE CANS."

THE NOISEMAKERS WERE OBVIOUSLY DISPLEASED, BUT THEY ACCEPTED HIS OFFER AND CONTINUED THEIR AFTERNOON RUCKUS. A FEW DAYS LATER, THE WILY RETIREE APPROACHED THEM AGAIN AS THEY DRUMMED THEIR WAY DOWN THE STREET.

"LOOK," HE SAID, "I HAVEN'T RECEIVED MY SOCIAL SECURITY CHECK YET, SO I'M NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO GIVE YOU MORE THAN 25 CENTS. WILL THAT BE OKAY?"

"A QUARTER?!" THE DRUM LEADER EXCLAIMED. "IF YOU THINK WE'RE GOING TO WASTE OUR TIME, BEATING THESE CANS AROUND FOR A QUARTER, YOU'RE NUTS! NO WAY, DUDE. WE QUIT!" AND THE OLD MAN ENJOYED PEACE AND SERENITY FOR THE REST OF HIS DAYS.

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