

GARY SNODGRASS'S JUNKYARD

Gary Snodgrass ran a thriving business now. He was really making it big in the world. Yessirree, he had come a long way. He had himself a great big junkyard, all to himself. All he had to do was make sure all the people put their junk in the right place and collect fees from them for the right to use his junkyard.

Gary Snodgrass had a nice little booth in the middle of the junkyard where he could watch all the people coming and going in their cars to get rid of their junk. Gary didn't care; he just put a little dope in his pipe and puffed away. Those were his two most useful instruments on the job, his pipe and a small bag of dope. It was the best way to get through the day. It was nice to get stoned and watch what kind of junk people would bring to his junkyard.

It was really neat in a way. People brought along all their garbage and funny little odds and ends all packed in boxes. The larger junk was more interesting. People discarded old television sets and radios, broken-down typewriters, tables with only three legs, chairs with the stuffing coming out, and even old iceboxes and refrigerators, all the junk he could ask for. One time, he saw someone bring a giant stuffed alligator to be thrown away. It was wrapped in brown paper and the person throwing it away acted very secretive about it. Gary didn't care what kind of junk it was as long as he got paid for it. He needed all the junk he could get.

"WANT TO GET RID OF YOUR JUNK?

JUST BRING IT ON DOWN...

BRING IT ON DOWN...

BRING IT ON DOWN TO GARY SNODGRASS'S JUNKYARD."

Sometimes he'd fall asleep on the job. He'd have his portable transistor radio on blaring out tinny music from the local radio sta-

tion, and the midday sun would be so hot, and he'd be feeling so spaced-out, he just couldn't resist a little snooze. He'd sleep away, dreaming about fishing on the Mississippi River or building sand castles by the Atlantic Ocean. He'd be picking up a shell on an isolated stretch of beach and listening to the ocean roar in it.

Two garbagemen, both of dark skin, would be driving their truck past the booth, Gary fast asleep in it. They were on their own circuit, taking a break from the garbage collecting routine.

"Lawdy da, junkman's asleep again," one of them would remark.

"Yahsah, junkman shore do sleep a lot," his companion would reply.

Yessirree, Gary Snodgrass had come a long way from the days when he dropped out of school. That was just a bunch of bullshit, playing that academic game. Then he played the straight job game, trying to make good money so all the girls would be impressed. That was all back in the big city. He tried out all kinds of things, went crazy over it all, then got sick and tired of the whole thing and just split. Now he was living the simple life, getting stoned in his junkyard.

Of course, he had to collect from the customers for using his junkyard. After all, everything costs something (and they'll be taxing the air before very long). If they didn't have money, he'd accept dope and canned food instead. He liked to bug rich people; they were his favorite victims. They were always dumping their junk in the wrong places and Gary wasn't about to let them get away with it. He would pick a fancy Cadillac, for example, and stop him (by placing himself bodily before the car, if necessary). He would yell:

"Hey, mister!"

An irritated, red, sweltering face would roll down the window and say: "Now what?" The driver thought Gary was a real asshole.

"Mister, you didn't dump your junk in the right place." Gary

would stand over him, his arms crossed, in a very intimidating manner.

"That's great. Now what am I supposed to do about that?" The driver would be fingering his necktie; he wished Gary would hurry up and finish his business with him so he could roll up the window and enjoy the air conditioning again.

"You were supposed to dump your junk in the "A" section," Gary pointed out to him triumphantly. "You dumped your junk in the "B" section."

"Listen, I don't have all day. Just tell me what to do."

"I'm going to have to charge you \$25.00 for that. You realize, of course, that this is a grave inconvenience for all concerned."

"Yeah, yeah, sure. Here, take this and get off my back." The driver rolls up his window and drives off, leaving a cloud of dust. Gary Snodgrass has \$50.00 in his hands. The rich don't count their money very carefully. Nosirree, he wasn't doing bad at all.

And the best part was at night. He had all that junk he could rummage through. He could see people's lives flash by in that junk. He had a profound relationship with his junk, all the junk from the four corners of the world. It was beautiful. It was... well, it's hard to describe. It was... so junky.

And there were times when Gary Snodgrass would sit on the top of the bank on a night when the moon was out, and he would get stoned there. It was such a perfect place to get stoned. He could watch the trees from there and listen to the insects making their summer chorus. The moon would shine on the vast piles of rubble and it would seem... almost alive. And at times like these, Gary would feel in perfect communion with all the junk lying there. And whispering softly, Gary would lean over and speak to the junk.

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