

Joe

WR 13100

Professor Clauss

April 30, 2012

Mrs. Baker

I have lived on Bulian Lane in Austin, Texas for eighteen years. For five years, I mowed lawns for three of my neighbors. Then, during eleventh grade, I decided to expand my business. While driving around scouting for new clients, I noticed a house with long, un-cut grass. After parking, I walked to the front door, knocked on it, and waited. Soon after, an old lady cracked open her front door and scowled at me through the screen door, saying, "I don't want any of your services." As I began to walk away, the woman noticed my lawn mower, and quickly exclaimed, "Wait! Were you going to offer to mow my lawn?" I immediately whispered "Yes Ma'am." With no response, I began to leave when the lady yelled, "Come here!" I shuddered and returned. "Tell me about yourself," she demanded. All I could say was, "My name is Joe Finley, I mow your neighbor's yard, and I'm an Eagle Scout." "You're a what?" asked the woman. "An Eagle Scout," I said. Mrs. Baker then repeated the words "Eagle Scout" as if in awe - and instantly hired me. In general, I have found that dealing with odd, elderly people can be challenging and sometimes frustrating. However, I was seventeen, broke, and figured I could deal with this lady. Although I initially thought that Mrs. Baker was just extremely odd and difficult to understand, over time spent working for her, I concluded that behind this behavior was an endearing and successful woman.

The next day, while mowing Mrs. Baker's lawn, I had the odd feeling that I was being watched. Nevertheless, I continued to concentrate on the long, weed-filled grass in order to

make sure that I did not leave a single blade uncut – I was determined to maintain the high quality of work that I was known for. However, after a few minutes of working, I still felt like I was being watched so I decided to stop for a moment to look around. As soon as I cut the engine and looked up, there was old, gray-haired Mrs. Baker standing at her small, bedroom window watching me work. It seemed that Mrs. Baker had been standing there for quite a while and was not just quickly checking to make sure I was working. When I looked at her, Mrs. Baker noticed I was startled so she smiled at me and nodded her head, signaling me to continue my work. As I yanked on the pull-start of my mower engine and got back to work, I thought about what had just occurred. Not only was I shocked that I had just caught Mrs. Baker watching me work, I was also incredibly creeped out. I would have understood if she was just checking to make sure that I was actually working; I did not understand why I was seemingly under constant observation. I knew that there was nothing special or different about the way I was cutting her grass. Nevertheless, as the summer progressed and there were more occurrences such as these, I came to realize that Mrs. Baker was just an old woman with a very odd behavior.

“Joe, have I ever told you that you look a lot like Brad Pittman?” Mrs. Baker randomly exclaimed as we pulled weeds in her yard together one afternoon. “Like who?” I quickly asked. “Brad Pittman, the actor,” she repeated. I then caught on to the fact that she meant Brad Pitt, but I did not tell her that she had his name wrong. All I said to her was, “Thank you very much, but how so?” I had begun to question the things that Mrs. Baker said to me, partly because her statements often had funny explanations. Mrs. Baker went on to clarify her statement by claiming that Brad Pitt and I had similar face structures, and that we were both “incredibly handsome.” I knew that Brad Pitt and I do not really look alike; perhaps he was the only famous actor that she could think of at the moment. I was still perplexed as to why she had randomly

said this to me as we were working, and after pondering this statement for a long time all I could conclude was that Mrs. Baker is simply extremely difficult to understand at times.

“You move so gracefully,” Mrs. Baker called from her front porch swing as I walked from my lawn mower over to my truck to get some water. Yet again, Mrs. Baker had been watching my every move as I was cutting her grass. As I continued to walk to my truck, I realized that I had never been called graceful before, and did not know what to say; in fact, I was not even sure if I had heard her right. She then repeated herself from her front porch swing, “Joe, you move so gracefully.” At seventeen years old and over six feet tall, I was the furthest thing from being graceful. However, I was curious about why she had said this, so I asked her, “What do you mean I move so gracefully?” Mrs. Baker immediately laughed at my uneasy tone of voice, and told me that when I work, I do not waste any steps. She said that when I have finished cutting her lawn, she can tell from the lines in her yard that I took the quickest paths to get the job done. Yet again, this was an odd thing to notice. But by this point in our relationship, I was growing fond of Mrs. Baker’s keen eye and unique expressions. Through this comment and others similar to it, I came to conclude that Mrs. Baker was an endearing old lady. Although it was a strange form of affection, it nevertheless was affection, and that was all that mattered.

A little later that afternoon, as we continued to pull weeds in her front yard, Mrs. Baker began telling me stories about growing up in Oklahoma, her childhood, and the troubles she and her family had gone through because they were Native Americans. She said that her family members were poor farmers and that none of her elder relatives had received anything more than a high school degree. She then proudly stated that she attended the University of Oklahoma, graduated with honors, and did so in three years so that she could save money by avoiding tuition

expenses for another year. Mrs. Baker went on to tell me about her life after college. She mentioned the fact that she had married an extremely successful man - “the love of her life,” as she stated - and had raised foster children with him. I then immediately knew her husband’s success enabled her to afford a nice house, raise foster children, and pay me twenty dollars an hour. The stories Mrs. Baker told me that day about her family, the troubles that she had gone through growing up, and what her life was like after she married affected me in a unique way. Via her stories, I concluded that Mrs. Baker was not only an incredibly hard worker, but also recognized that she had climbed a long, rickety ladder to success and had made it to the top – in life terms and in financial terms.

The next morning, I went back to Mrs. Baker’s house in order to bag all of the weeds that we had pulled the day before. After ringing her doorbell twice and with no response, I figured she was not home so I began to walk to my truck. Then, as I was about to drive away, Mrs. Baker opened her front door all the way, waved me down, and told me to come back another day. I asked her if I had done something wrong and she immediately said no, but that she was sore and was not feeling well. Later that day when I was boating on Lake Austin, I was thinking about Mrs. Baker – and was worried about her. I then remembered that she is eighty-seven years old and was probably worn-out from working in her yard with me the day before. As I hopped into the lake, I thought to myself, “what would Mrs. Baker have done if I had invited her to come on the lake with me?” Before I even hit the water, I realized I could not believe I would even consider seeing Mrs. Baker outside of her house! From that point forward, I realized that my opinion of Mrs. Baker had changed. Rather than just being an odd and confusing old woman, in my heart Mrs. Baker was also an endearing and successful friend. Nonetheless, I concluded that

Mrs. Baker and I would not be going water skiing any time soon. After all, Brad Pittman deserves a younger girlfriend.