

Amos Branson-Part 3-Amos

With our hair standing up we slowly turn to face the direction from which the voice came. Standing just outside the out building behind us is a youngish man of about 30-35 years. Evidently, he had egressed from that outbuilding which is why, we realize, there was no answer to our knocks on the front door. In his hands is a shotgun. We see that it is a double-barrel shotgun and we are looking into the maw of its two barrels. The shotgun is pointed generally at our faces and the young man is standing roughly ten yards from us, grimacing.

He is wearing a grey and yellow horizontal stripe T-shirt and cut off khaki shorts. On his feet are ankle high, partially unlaced work boots. He is soaked in sweat with stains in the arm pits of the T-shirt and his cut off khakis have one leg about two inches longer than the other. Those too are stained. His demeanor and style makes us glad that the wind is at our backs. If he smells at all the way he looks his odor would probably be gagging.

On his nose rest a pair of gold rimmed spectacles. The left lens is missing leaving a hole into his eye which is disconcerting as it creates the look of dementia. His pot belly only adds to the general state of disrepair he represents, Not what we were expecting to say the least. We realize that we are in what some term, "A pickle."

"What do you think you're doing on my property?" His voice comes to us with a growl. "I oughta drop you right where you stand! I have the right to you know." We see that he is quite angry and don't doubt that he just might discharge the weapon; ruining our day. Actually, his question is the one question we were afraid he would ask us. We both know that, in truth, we haven't have a good answer between us. In fact, we were just asking ourselves that same question.

We start to blurt out some thing like: we were just riding around and saw your place and were wondering if it might be for sale. We don't get the chance though. Amos cocks back both hammers of his shotgun. The sound is like a death knell. Clear and acid-like.

"I think you just better get off my property right now." His voice bodes no discussion of his principle of our ceasing our trespass.

I finally gain a modicum of control and, trying to keep from stuttering, carefully state, "We were told that your property might be for sale in town. We knocked on your door several times and thought you weren't home. We drove quite a while to get here so we thought we would just take a look-see to see if we're interested in your property. Is it for sale?" You sigh with at my lack of originality. The look on your face says that we are now going to die.

For just a second we see look of hesitation on Amos' face. He blinks, then, lowers the shotgun. When the barrels are pointing toward the ground he shifts his weight from one foot to the other. "Who told you that?" There is suspicion in his voice but it feels to us like the worst might be over.

You chime in quickly, "A waitress at the Godfrey Diner said that she had heard this parcel might be on the market." My gratitude for your quick thinking is palpable when you continue, "She said she knows you and that you mentioned to her that you were considering selling a few weeks ago. She also said she wasn't sure but she said it might be worth our time to take a run out here. So, here we are. Sorry if we seemed up to no good. Our fault, completely."

With that, a smile appeared on Amos' face. "Shirley?" he asked.

"Pardon?" I blurt out, half expecting him to finish with "Surely, you jest?"

"Shirley, the girl at the diner."

I come back, "I didn't ask her name. Blond, short hair, if I remember correctly?"

"That's her. Well, pretty dark hair for a blond but...I kind of like her, you know? She doesn't care much for me I think but she's a nice lady. She knew my mother and father when she was a kid."

The unpronounced sigh when one realizes they aren't going to die suddenly ran through my body. I felt like collapsing and barely not peeing my pants. How close was that? In truth, I didn't know but it seemed for a few slow minutes that blackness was inevitable.

"Well," you interject with suaveness, "perhaps you can show us around?" Amos thinks about that, screwing his face into an almost comical expression. The manner in which he pursed his lips almost sends me into a chuckling fit until I feel your elbow dig painfully into my ribs. You're right though. It probably wouldn't do to laugh at Amos now.

As we wait for his answer his expression changes as he raises the shotgun again. "Her names not Shirley." Anger is seeping back into his face as unease and panic start to sink into ours. *Aw, shit! We blew this big-time.* I feel the loosening of my bowels as he points the gun straight into my face; cocking the triggers again. Taking two steps forward he hisses, "You have two minutes to get off my property."

With that we both say, "No problem, we're going. So sorry to have bothered you." The sound of our voices must have sounded like someone rubbing a balloon; only, acapella. We both turned and started running toward the car. The feeling we had as our backs were turned to him was ghastly. Would he let us go or just shoot us in the back and bury our corpses out in the back forty.

Fairly leaping into the car we hear from behind, "And don't ever come back!" Then, a gale of laughter. We look to where he threatened us and see him sitting on his butt laughing and holding his stomach; the shotgun laying in the dirt beside him. "It wasn't even loaded!" He managed to croak. Evidently he thought we were the funniest thing he'd ever seen. In truth, I guess we probably were.