

## Rude Awakening

I was driving late one night, alone. This was not easy, as two feet of snow lay on the road. The heck with what lane I was in; I was just trying to keep my car pointed forward. A guy behind me in a four-wheel-drive vehicle began flashing his headlights. I figured there must be some danger ahead or that something was wrong with my car. So I slowed down. He pulled up beside me and gestured as though he had something important to say. I stopped and rolled down the window on the passenger side.

"What are you, stupid?" he said, spitting his words into the crisp winter air. "Don't you know how to use a turn signal<sup>1)</sup>?" Then he used a lot of curse<sup>2)</sup> words to characterize my driving, my heritage and my sexual history. He was still yelling when I rolled up my window and drove off. Rude people are taking over. You run into them more and more often, in more and more places.

Recently my friend Michele went on her first shopping expedition after breaking her ankle. There she was, balanced on crutches, looking through a rack of dresses. She felt so me pressure, then a push. A woman at the same rack<sup>3)</sup> was trying to nudge her out of the way. "Um," Michele said, "I think there's room for both of us here." The woman glared at her and said, "Get out of my way unless you want your other leg broken." Michele reported the incident to the store manager, pointing out that the store was about to lose a good customer on account of this bully. The manager said there was nothing she could do— not unless there was actual physical contact and a store employee witnessed<sup>4)</sup> it. "Rude people like that are just the type to sue," she told Michele.

Rude people seize all the power. Normal, courteous<sup>5)</sup> people get none. This is what Michele and I concluded as we tried to think of a way to combat the bullies. We imagined laws against rudeness. We considered mandatory<sup>6)</sup> tranquilizer<sup>7)</sup> prescriptions for rude people. We envisioned support groups for the victims of rudeness.

Later I went to another friend's house where a lot of neighborhood kids were playing. One was different— a rude person in training. For no apparent reason this nine-year-old kid kicked my friend's dog and made an obscene gesture at it. Then Katie, my three-year-old niece, gleefully<sup>8)</sup> plopped down in a seat. She didn't know it was the rude kid's seat. "Get up," the boy said, "before I kick you too." I wanted to scoop up Katie and carry her away. I wanted to shield her forever from the generations of bullies her future held. But Katie straightened her back, folded her arms and looked the boy squarely in the eye. "You are rude," she said.

The room went quiet. The boy retreated.

It's a start. All together now: "You are rude."

□by Jeanne Marie Laskas

## 唤醒粗鲁的人

一天深夜，我独自驱车行驶。路上积雪足有2英尺厚，十分难行。我只得努力使车向前

行驶，也顾不得是哪个车道了。忽然，后面一辆车里的人开始向我闪前车灯。我猜想前面可能有危险，或是我的车出了什么毛病，所以就放慢车速。那人将车开到我旁边，并向我打手势，似乎有什么重要的事情要说。我停下车，摇下客座旁的车窗。

“你怎么啦，蠢货？”那人的叫骂声回荡在冬天冰冷的空气里。“你难道不会用尾灯吗？”紧接而来的又是一连串的污言秽语，骂我的驾车技术，骂我的祖宗八代，还把骂女人的脏话全都喷了出来。直到我摇上车窗，开车离开时他仍骂个不停。粗鲁之风在盛行。在越来越多的地方你会越来越经常地碰到粗鲁的人。

前些天我的朋友米歇尔在她脚踝骨折后第一次去商店购物。她拄着拐杖，在衣架前挑选衣服，她感觉被人挤了一下，紧接着又被推了一下。一个与她站在同一衣架边的女人正想把她推开。“嗯，”米歇尔说道，“我想这儿足够我们两个人走的。”那女人瞪着她，说道，“别挡着道，要不小心你另一条腿。”米歇尔把这事告诉了商店经理，并说明为了这个粗鲁女人，商店可能会失去一位好顾客。而商店经理说，她也无能为力--除非有某个商店雇员亲眼看到她们之间真有身体接触。“对付像她这样粗鲁的人只有去投诉，”她对米歇尔说道。粗鲁的人总是霸道欺人，而谦逊有礼的人却无能为力。这就是我和米歇尔在思索如何对付这些粗鲁的人之后得出的结论。我们设想惩治鲁莽之徒的法律条款。我们琢磨应给他们开些强制性的镇静药方。我们甚至还设想有团体声援那些受到粗鲁伤害的人们。

后来有一次我去另一位朋友家，这个社区的许多孩子正在那儿玩耍。其中一个却与众不同，正是个粗鲁的人。这个9岁的小孩无缘无故地朝我朋友的狗踢了一脚，而且还对着它做了个下流动作。我3岁的侄女凯蒂正玩得高兴，噗通一声跌坐在一个座位上。她不知道这正是那粗鲁孩子的座位。“快滚开，要不我也要踢你了。”男孩说。我当时想立刻抱起凯蒂，带她离开。我真想保护她永远避开将来代会有有的粗鲁的人。但凯蒂却挺直胸，双手交叉，眼睛直瞪瞪逼视着那个男孩。“你真粗鲁。”她这样说道。

整个房间都静了下来，男孩退缩了。

这是个开端。现在就是这句话：“你真粗鲁。”

### NOTE 注释：

1. signal ['signl] n. 信号灯
2. curse [kə:s] n. 诅咒，恶骂
3. rack [ræk] n. 架
4. witness ['witnis] vt. 目击，为...作证
5. courteous ['kə:tjəs] adj. 有礼貌的，谦恭的
6. mandatory ['mændətəri] adj. 命令的，强制的
7. tranquilizer ['træŋkwilaizə] n. 镇定剂，使镇定的人或物
8. gleeful ['gli:fuli] adv. 愉快地