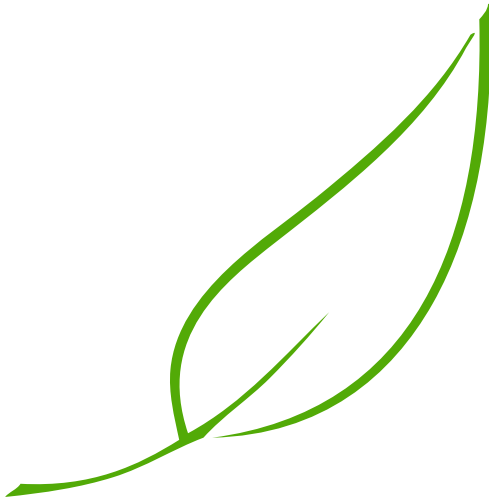


THE GRANDEST LARCENY

by Ken Bradbury



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[characters can be either male or female. At open, Con enters, stealthily. She (or he) looks around this “house” ... squinting in the darkness. An imaginary table is UC with chairs place UR and UL. After some searching in this “darkness,” bumps into the table and emits a small squeal of pain.]

CON: Agh! (to herself) Stupid. (looks around carefully, then backs into a chair and falls spraddle-legged on the floor)

ED: (turning to face the audiences as if entering the room and peering into the darkness) Who’s there? (a pause ... nothing) I know there’s someone here! (another pause) I might as well tell you that I’m scared to death but I get very violent when I’m scared! (nothing. Con lies motionless trying to see Ed in the darkness) All right. Stay where you are. I’m turning on the lights! (neither moves) I said “I’m turning on the lights!”

CON: You said that once.

ED: What?

CON: Never mind.

ED: (gropes for the light and “flicks” the imaginary switch. Both squint as the light comes on) (adjusting eyes and seeing Con on the floor) Who’re you?

CON: Uh ... power company?

ED: At two in the morning?

CON: Milkman?

ED: I don’t have a milkman.

CON: Good. I don’t have a cow. (begins to exit)

ED: Don’t move! (Con stops) I’m calling the police! (moves to phone DS)

CON: (screaming) Don’t touch that phone!

ED: (stops) Why not?

CON: I don’t know. I heard it in a movie once.

ED: I’m calling the police.

CON: No! ... It's got my fingerprints all over it. You wanna destroy the evidence?

ED: (*looks at phone*) Oh.

CON: Look ... let's just forget this ever happened, OK? You go back to bed, I'll go rob somebody else's house and ...

ED: So you're a robber!

CON: (*grimacing, realizing that he's given it away*) Oh ...

ED: (*moving to the phone again*) Stay right there!

CON: Why?

ED: Whatta you mean, "Why?"

CON: Why should I stay right here? You're going to have me arrested!

ED: (*desperately thinking a quick moment*) I could have a knife.

CON: (*hand in pocket*) I could have a gun.

ED: (*false bravado, xing slightly to Ed*) My knife has a poison tip!

CON: I'll bet that makes you fun at the supper table. Look! Why would I want to rob this place anyway. (*xing up to the "furniture"*) Where'd you get this stuff, a yard sale?

ED: That chair you're leaning against is a genuine Louis-The-Sixteenth!

CON: (*looks at the table, then*) You been took! This ain't even a Mickey Mouse.

ED: I've never been so insulted!

CON: Oh, surely. Just think a minute.

ED: Out! Out of my house!

CON: (*ignoring*) You know, this is probably the tackiest place I've been in all night.

ED: Tacky!

CON: Wait 'til I tell the guys. A whole house and nothin' worth takin'.

ED: How dare you!

CON: Easy. (*beginning to exit*) Now, how'd I get in here?

ED: (*xing quickly to block the exit*) You cannot leave this house without taking something!

CON: What?

ED: You want to make me the laughing stock of the neighborhood? A thief breaks into my house and doesn't take a thing?

CON: Hey ... you bought this junk, not me!

ED: (*getting desperate, moving to an imaginary lamp on the table*) Look ... this lamp. Genuine Tiffany. Please take it.

CON: (*inspecting it*) Sears.

ED: What?

CON: It came from Sears. 1987 half price Christmas catalog. Page 237.

ED: (*flabbergasted*) How did you ...

CON: I know my junk. You don't just walk into this business. It takes an education. I got my Ph.D.

ED: You're a Doctor of Philosophy?

CON: Ph.D. Prowling Houses After Dark.

ED: But isn't there ... I mean, isn't there anything here you want to take?

CON: (*looking around*) Well ... I hate to be pressured. Let me look. (*picking up imaginary objects*) Nope. Nope. Huh-uh. Nada. (*looking under something*) Geesh. I didn't know they made Bibles in Taiwan. (*beginning to leave*) Sorry.

ED: But ... but you can't leave!

CON: Listen. I got several more stops to make tonight.

ED: (*anger about to boil over*) You ... you ... You wake me up in the middle of the night. You threaten me with a gun ...

CON: (*showing his finger*) Look ... no bullets.

ED: (*backing Con around room*) You call my furniture cheap! You insult me! You insult my house! You make snide comments about every thing I own! You are a vile, reprehensible (*Con falls backward trying to retreat for this crazy person*) insulting ... little ... (*searching for a properly insulting word but notices Con starting to sniffle*) little ... what's the matter?

CON: (*begins to cry*) Do you have to call me names?

ED: I ...

CON: Do you have to yell at me?

ED: I was just ...

CON: Snide? You call me snide?

ED: Well ... maybe uh ... semi-snide?

CON: That hurts.

ED: But ...

CON: That really hurts, lady [*buddy*]. I got my pride. It ain't easy you know. It ain't easy bein' in this business.

ED: Look, I'm sorry but you were ...

CON: Oh, sure. Call me names. Insult me. Like I don't have enough troubles. You know what it's like tryin' to get a credit card?



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