



- Cover and Picture of Author by Ethel England -



**WINNER: READER VIEWS REVIEWERS CHOICE
AWARD, 2010—CATEGORY--HUMOR**

“You’ll laugh until you cry....”
“Watch your back, Carl Hiaasen and Dave Barry—Mielke’s
gaining on you!”

REVIEWS:

- author has done a tremendous job in describing each character**
- fast-paced book with numerous seedy and loving characters**
- action is never-ending; blends well from one character or event to the other**

CAROL HOYER, PhD, REVIEWER, *READER VIEWS*

- original adventures**
- Central Florida setting has authentic feel**
- extremely likeable characters**
- use of humor successfully balances darker aspects of the plot**

CHRISTINE DEZELAR TIEDMAN, EDITOR, *THE LIBRARY JOURNAL*

- strong, well written**
- wonderfully hilarious and fast-paced, exciting story**
- comical, zany, off-the-wall characters**

TYLER TICHELAAR, EDITOR, *READER VIEWS*

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A DISH BEST SERVED

GOLD



DAVID CARL MIELKE

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A DISH BEST SERVED COLD

A STORY OF CREATIVE REVENGE

LENA MILLS AND ANNE HENDERSON
Mess With Them, They'll Mess With You More

--THINK: THELMA AND LOUISE MEET BILL CLINTON--

Hold onto your sides as you wind your way through three decades of small town Central Florida, replete with quarreling townsfolk, a no-nonsense sheriff with a legendary ancestor, Cubano hit men, exotic dancers, a haunted house and a former Ziegfeld Follies girl who still high kicks at age 80. Stir in Dracula, a well-hung skunk and one nasty alligator named "Ol' Clyde" and you've got a recipe for laugh-out-loud mayhem.

Revenge prepared hot is indeed *A DISH BEST SERVED COLD.*

PREFACE



SOMETIME DURING YOUR LIFE you have been swindled, robbed, cheated, slandered, stalked, suffered mental or physical abuse from another person. I'm talking sticks and stones here, not petty slights and name-calling. These are life-altering things. Admit it. You've had the urge to maim—or worse, haven't you?

The question is: What did you do about it?

Did you wring your hands in frustration and curse? Did you scream: "God will get you for that!" or wish "What goes around comes around?" For most of us in this politically correct world, the answer is yes. Fear of being sued inhibits retribution like a cloud inhibits sunshine. We would rather get an ulcer than take care of business. How many times have you thought, *I wish I would have...*, or *I wish I had the guts to...*?

Why do you think Clint Eastwood movies remain so popular? "*Go ahead, make my day!*" He brings out the closet vigilante in most of us.

This is a story of two Dirty Harriets who refuse to turn the other cheek. It's a story of clandestine revenge, hilarious consequences, friendship, loyalty and a pinch of mysticism thrown in for good measure. In these pages I hope you find amusement, possibly catharsis.

In Matthew 5:9, the Bible says: "Blessed are the peacemakers...."

"At what cost?" I ask. Deep down, don't most of us want an eye for an eye?

I say, "Blessed are those who see a wrong and make it right."

Feels better, doesn't it?

THE AUTHOR

THE SENTINEL

JANUARY 2007



Starry, starry night, paint your palette blue and gray...

LIKE A GUEST overstaying its welcome, the Don McLean song persisted, haunting her with melancholy thoughts of a life past prime. Alone, sitting in her \$4.99 Walmart deck chair under a three a.m. starry, starry sky, the Sentinel waited in motionless silence with a twelve gauge Mossberg across her lap, ever mindful of the mission at hand.

The vegetable garden was her crowning glory. At various times of the year she grew five kinds of lettuce, radishes, carrots, cucumbers, squash, beans, sweet corn, cantaloupe, tomatoes, and a separate elevated section of herbs. Many weeks of planning, money and sweat were sacrificed to this labor of love. A fancy, timed irrigation system had set her back nearly a grand. Rolls of finely latticed wire surrounding the garden kept the land varmints at bay. A high screened canopy deterred the bird population and biodegradable dusts discouraged the crawling feeders. Even the moles and groundhogs avoided her edible sanctuary, thanks to sonic spikes buried around the garden perimeter. Most burrowing animals reacted to the high-pitched blasts like classical music geeks cringing at heavy metal, opting to hunt for less challenging rewards elsewhere.

She had bought a battery-powered owl, which emitted muffled hoots every ten seconds. She perched it on a live oak overhanging the garden. Unfortunately its real cousin either mistook it as a competitive threat or wanted to mate and tore it to pieces the first night. After the vicious

attack, the fake owl was an unrecognizable pile of plastic shards but the voice pack survived, continuing its ghostly call.

The puzzled predator flew off to seek therapy.

Until recently the Sentinel had outsmarted all comers. Three days ago she discovered two large burrowing holes entering and exiting the garden. An animal had violated her territory, most likely rooting for insects. She tried filling the holes with mothballs, hoping to deter the varmint, only to see a new set the following day. Enraged, she tried a new tactic, sinking the perimeter fence a foot into the ground. Next morning revealed new, deeper subterranean subterfuge and additional crop damage.

Armadillo. She was sure.

Starry, starry night...

She knew the song well. The ghostly Van Gogh replica hung in her hallway. She'd vowed to toss it more than once, but like lint in a hard-to-reach corner, it remained.

The Sentinel basked in the light of a three-quarter moon and soothing pulse of nocturnal conversations, reflecting moments of her past. Unseasonably warm for a central Florida January evening, the temperature hovered in the high-fifties. This was Life, she mused—not the everyday comings and goings and doings of humanity, or all the milestones of the past sixty years.

Not her childhood as the only offspring of well-meaning, single-minded parents who lived for their business, both lives cut short before enjoying the fruits of their labor. Not the adolescent high school years, when her only goal was to escape small town suffocation.

She had coasted with average grades at a large mid-western university, earning a bachelor's degree. But she had majored in sex, drugs and rock and roll. 1960's America was a decade of change and collective guilt. She vigorously embraced the tidal wave of counterculture

revolution and fell in love with a rich, randy, New England-born law student, Winthrop Rockledge Stedman III.

Now he was Governor “Win-at-all-costs” Stedman. Studley, she called him. What great memories she had with the unapologetic satyr. He possessed two exceptional talents: one was bullshitting, the other screwing. Tiring of individuals, he now honed both skills on the State of Florida. *How things change and how they stay the same*, she sighed.

No, Life was not her thirty-year marriage to darling Ed, who made an occasional return appearance but lived in a Miami Beach apartment near his thriving Art Deco restoration business. Life was not her home—a large four bedroom sterile box of cement block, stucco, metal and glass in rural Waterford County, two-hundred fifty miles north of Miami.

Nor was Life her hobby as a dog trainer, giving group and occasional private sessions in obedience, tracking and show prep for the pure breeds. Known to her clients as a “dog whisperer”, she could get most four-legged creatures to do anything by teaching their two-legged masters canine logic. Word of her ability to “civilize” dogs got around and she had a waiting list for her classes.

Nor was it her two children who rarely came to visit, always unannounced. Tracy, her eldest, was single. A hotshot Rambo with the DEA, since early childhood their relationship had been a standoff. Eddie the insurance agent and his wife hauled three thundering offspring, each time leaving a colossal mess in their wake. Truth be known, she was proud of what both had become—successful and independent. But she was close to neither and was happier to see them leave than arrive. Raised with money and benign neglect, both children were selfish and inconsiderate—her own damned fault. She was reaping what she sowed.

Yet she could still outlast them and whup ass on her grandkids when they got out of line. The older two knew better than to piss off Nan-Nan and delighted when the youngest learned the hard way. Just the sight of the wicked witch holding her fat sorority paddle—dubbed the “child whisperer”—made the most precocious miscreant tremble in fear. Fear was an effective babysitter.

Life used to be glorious walks in the forest, communicating with the animals, patrolling for careless hikers, littering the trails without regard for the fragility of nature. Those were memories now, her walks more infrequent with time. The careless had won and the forest was all the worse from neglect and abuse. Still there was reason for optimism—the upcoming National Geographic special on her life—her chance to rail against all the “progress.”

Time is rarely an ally to a sixty-year-old body. She was no exception. Single chin had doubled; svelte waist was now swollen; slim thighs and legs rippled with cellulite—“cottage cheese” the operative term. Dull headaches had come and gone as long as she could remember. Wrinkles had replaced dimples on what used to be an attractive countenance. Vanity had become an unpleasant religious experience: looking in the mirror, praying it wouldn’t shatter; standing on her scale, imploring the God of Gravity to keep the needle from bypassing hefty to super-sized.

Her dog—Shots the vizsla, her hobby, the garden and close friendship with Crazy Lena were reasons to exist. Everything else was an annoyance.

The truth? Life was about Now. Dogs knew it instinctively, living in the present—not the past or the future—just Now.

Life enveloped her this night in sultry semi-darkness with insect intercourse and moonlit memories. The Sentinel was at peace with her world, sitting in the \$4.99 Walmart chair.

She detested the thought of killing. Indeed she had spent much of her life and fortune caring for sick and wounded animals. But coexistence with an armadillo in her yard was impossible. Lena called them “rats in Hummers”. *One of us has to go, she thought, and I have the gun.*

The Sentinel had studied these beady-eyed pests and wished she could communicate telepathically as she could with other species. Armadillos were related to anteaters and sloths, possessing a keen sense of smell but bad eyesight. Many types in the world were hunted and endangered, but American armadillos thrived. Gringos were loath to touch something so ugly and scaly, let alone eat it.

The moon had drifted, cloaking her in the live oak shadow. There was a wisp of southerly breeze. She was downwind of the probable approach. *Maybe it knows I'm here and won't come tonight.* The armadillo had left a trail of small footprints from previous visits.

The Sentinel had to pee. Nothing like pressure on the bladder to ruin a mood. *Give it a few more minutes and I'll call it a night.*

Movement at ten o'clock!

Lumbering out of the shadows, nose upturned and stabbing at the air like a windsock, the small creature warily approached, bent on more destruction.

Easy now. She mouthed the words without sound. Praying her chair wouldn't creak, she lifted the shotgun, previously cocked and loaded with double aught shells. Bringing the stock inch by inch firmly to cheek and shoulder, she silently slid off the safety and sighted carefully.

Fifty feet...forty... thirty...twenty—the animal slowly waddled toward her on a slant, oblivious to its fate.

A scene from a World War II rerun crossed the Sentinel's mind. She was a sub commander on a night mission to destroy an enemy tanker. *Up periscope. Target sighted. Ready number 1. Range 500 yards. Steady....*

May God bless and keep your soul, little one, she prayed.

Holding her breath, she squeezed the trigger.

BAM.

Blood, guts and bony scales exploded in a three-foot-wide sea of carnage.

“Shit!” she cried, the shotgun's kick knocking her ass-over-teakettle on top of the collapsed chair. Her bladder had released, soaking the crotch of her jeans. Standing up, she peed some more. The price of success—what a mess!

I'll clean this up tomorrow. Collecting the shotgun, she headed for the house, thinking, *Should have bought the \$6.99 chair.* Shots wailed in his kennel, terrified by the blast.

Throwing her soiled clothes in the wash tub to soak, she showered away the night. The Sentinel whispered sweet nothings to her dog, who happily dove under the covers as Alpha-Mom settled in for a well-earned rest.

Hated to do it. At least the little guy never knew what hit him. Fading slowly into semi-consciousness, the dull headache she had suffered earlier was history. *Bam! That's how I'd like to go,* she thought.

They would not listen, they're not listening still...

Perhaps they never will....

The song haunted her—melancholy words that held so much meaning, or none at all. Were they words from the other side?

As the Sentinel sank into light REM, she barely noticed three flashes of light outside her bedroom window.

Anne Henderson slept.



David Carl Mielke, lives just outside of Mount Dora, Florida at *One Mielke Way**, home of One Diabetic Grandpa, One Sweet Grandma, One Candy-assed Dog and One Sour Puss. In addition to visits from family and friends who come for snickers and snacks and such, he whiles away the remaining years with hobbies and frequent naps. Strapping on a suicide word processor, he commits jihad on the English language, hoping to earn his seventy-two virgins—not that he would know what to do with seventy-two virgins. He is simply curious....

* The address *One Mielke Way* is a confection of the author's mind.