

Mrs. Yates and the Handyman

by Roland Foster

Mrs. Yates opened the screen door and stuck her head out. "John Frawley, you get down off'n that ladder!"

John stopped halfway up the ladder. "Well, for Pete's sake, Miz Yates, you want me to fix that TV antenna or not?"

"Well, a course I do." She came out onto the stoop. "That's why you're here, ain't it?"

"Well, I thought so. That's why I'm climbin' up this here ladder."

"Well, you git down from there right now!"

"Well, why?"

"'Cause you're breakin' down my azalea bushes, that's why."

"Aw, it ain't doin' no real damage, just a little branch broke here and there. Hell's bells, I gotta stand the ladder somewhere, don't I?" He started to climb again.

"Don't you start cussin', John Frawley. I can't abide cussin'."

"Well, sometimes that's all a man can do," John muttered. "Logic sure don't seem to work." He stepped up onto the roof.

"What's that you're sayin'?"

"I said it's not easy tryin' to work when somebody's standin' there fussin' at you. Oh, dammit!" A screwdriver skittered off the roof and fell into the bushes.

"Now what? Can't you say anything without cussin'?"

"I just dropped my dadblame screwdriver! Did you see where it went?"

"Yes, I see it."

"Well, would you pick it up and throw it up here, please?"

Mrs. Yates retrieved the screwdriver. "You want me to throw it up there to you?"

"Yes'm, if you don't mind."

She backed out into the yard and took a few practice windups, like an arthritic softball pitcher. "I don't know if I c'n get it up there," she said.

"Never mind!" said John quickly, stepping onto the ladder. "Don't throw it. I'll come down ..."

Mrs. Yates let fly with the screwdriver, which went straight through her bedroom window. "Woops," she said. "Broke the winder."

John missed his step and fell halfway down the ladder before he caught himself. "Eeeaaggghhhhhh! Shit!" he announced.

Mrs. Yates stood with one hand pressed to her mouth and the other to her bosom as John painfully righted himself and descended the rest of the way. "Are you all right, John?"

"I think so. Wrenched m' back, I reckon. Be all right in a year or two." He rubbed his back. "Sorry about that word — uh — cuss word."

"I've heard worse'n that. You come on in the house and set and have a glass of tea and catch your breath. You can fix the TV antenna later."

"Have to fix the dadblame winder, too," he grumbled. "Simple ten minute job, an' I'll be here all day."

"You're not t' charge me for that window, John. It was you that said throw the screwdriver."

"It was you went ahead and done it when I said don't."

"You never shoulda said throw it. Well, forget about that for right now. How about a couple a oatmeal cookies with your tea?"

John sighed. "That'll be fine, Miz Yates. Whatever you say."