

"GO FIGURE"
by Joan Prebilich

As soon as the battle-ready senior citizen was seated in front of his desk, Officer Fletcher asked her, with a long sigh, "How can I help you, Mrs. Guthrie?" The woman had insisted in seeing an officer about a crime and he was in a race against the clock. In just half an hour he was supposed to be at the town hall and he was already running late.

"It's about that man who lets his dog poop in my yard," she complained. "He never cleans up the mess and when I yell at him he pretends not to hear me. I want him arrested!"

Fletcher sighed again. "Do you know where the man lives?"

"You bet I do! Yesterday I followed him to his house but I was too afraid to go up to the door. With that big head of frizzy hair he looks as violent as that huge black dog he has. And I have proof." She paused to fumble in the shopping bag she was carrying to pull out a cell phone and a plastic bag that looked like it had a dog leaving in it. She turned the phone around so he could view the video. Fletcher could see clearly that the man in the video wasn't paying attention to his Labrador who was in the process of doing his business on Mrs. Guthrie's lawn.

"See what I mean?" she said peevishly. "That old fool goes off as if nothing has happened." Then she pointed to the plastic bag on the desk. "That's the nail in his coffin, Officer." She gave him a penetrating collegial look, then added, "You know, DNA."

With a start, Fletcher suddenly remembered the morning newspaper and his assignment at the Town Hall. He recognized the man in the video as the man whom the mayor was honoring that afternoon. "Do you know *who* that man is?"

"Yes, an irresponsible person, that's who!" she said testily. "He belongs behind bars!"

"No, that's Professor Winters, the famous mathematician at the University. He's in line for a big prize for solving the Pizzoli Conundrum. He's in the news. Don't you get the paper?"

"Well, that's fine and good for *him*. But what about *my* lawn?"

Fletcher glanced at his watch. He had to be at his post in five minutes. "Look, I think we can compromise about this without necessarily embarrassing you or the professor. And if that doesn't work, I promise that I will personally write him up."

Two days later, after Professor Winters received his prestigious award from the Mathematical Society for his work in solving the Pizzoli Conundrum, he also received an anonymous gift of a plastic pooper scooper and a box of doggie waste bags. An enclosed note said, "Congratulations on solving the Pizzoli Conundrum, Professor. Now, go figure *this* one out."