

Over the Back Fence
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Right, but wrong
By Alva Wood

Sometimes Moose Green can't win for trying too hard.

Last week, he and Rosie got into a childish argument. Since they don't actually have any children, they have to get into that kind of argument with each other.

Moose was sounding off about bad drivers. "They're incorrigible," he insisted. "We should take their cars away and ban them from the roads for life!"

Rosie took a more compassionate view. "But maybe they need a car for work," she suggested. "And what if they have an emergency, and have to get to a hospital?"

"They're no more going to reform their bad driving habits than a habitual criminal will," Moose persists.

"Moose," says Rosie, "even if you're right, you're wrong!"

Moose's staff-sergeant said much the same thing a few days later. Moose was just starting out on his police shift in River City. As he eased his cruiser onto the street from the RCMP parking lot, he almost got T-boned by an oncoming driver. She screeched to a stop just before moving his right rear door into his left rear door.

Moose walked over to the car and leaned his bulk in through the driver's window.

He could easily see why the driver might have been distracted. She had been touching up her nails. The bottle of nail polish was still clamped between her knees. One hand still held the brush. The other held both a lit cigarette and a coffee mug. With her wrists and elbows, she pinned a map against the steering wheel. She had a cell phone clamped between her shoulder and her ear. The car's navigation system was giving her instructions. And a laptop computer hummed away in the passenger's seat.

"I'll have to call you back," she says to the cell phone. "Something's come up."

Moose points out that it must be very difficult for her to pay attention to all those gadgets and still keep an eye on the road.

"Nothing illegal about any of my actions," she retorts. "I should know. I'm a lawyer."

Moose's frustrations boil over. "Lady," he says, "you're just as dangerous as any drunk driver. There's more than one way for a driver to be impaired."

"I don't drink," snaps Lady Lawyer.

"I've a good mind to arrest you on suspicion of intent to commit criminal negligence," Moose threatens.

"There's no such crime," says Lady Lawyer.

"Criminal negligence is a crime," replies Moose. "And intent to commit a crime is considered as serious as actually doing it. So there!"

"Ridiculous!" snorts Lady Lawyer. "Let me talk to your superior officer!"

Moose instructs her to park in the police lot. "And don't try to drive away," he warns. "If you do, you'll be committing a crime, not just intending to."

He parks his own cruiser in a vacant spot on the street, near the detachment's front door.

Five minutes later, he's explaining all this to Staff-Sergeant Oscar Zawatski.

Staff Zawatski rolls his eyes toward heaven. "One can't *intend* to be negligent," he lectures Moose. "Negligence can only be determined *after* the fact. Let her go."

"Ha!" says Lady Lawyer triumphantly.

"But Staff," Moose protests, "she's an accident looking for a place to happen."

"That may be true," Zawatski rules. "But you can't charge someone for not having had an accident yet."

Lady Lawyer flounces out.

A dispirited Moose returns to his car. He flips on his two-way radio. He checks in with the dispatcher. He clamps his cooling coffee mug between his knees. As he eases away from the curb, he glances over to make sure the laptop computer mounted on his dashboard is ready for action, if necessary.

And that's when he T-bones Lady Lawyer as she pulls out of the police parking lot in front of him.