

The Two Rose Bushes

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Picture a homeowner in a nice suburban neighborhood. He has a long and sprawling front yard extending from his wide open wrap-around front porch all the way to the road. The entire yard is precisely cut in two by a long stone pathway from the steps of his front porch to the road.

One day, he decides he wants to plant a rose bush in the center of each half of the front yard. Off he goes to Home Depot to purchase his favorite type of pink roses. He picks out the two bushes already slightly blooming in their pots. Then he picks up a bag of the most expensive fertilizer money can buy, filled with every new-fangled chemical and nutritional agent the industry has come up with.

On his drive home he is thinking about his dog situation in his backyard. He has two huge Golden Retrievers. Unfortunately, as they have grown to immense size, the

problem of picking up their endless piles of shit has become a huge annoyance to the man. Where to place the daily piles of shit is now becoming the problem. He has started digging huge holes at the end of the backyard every week to place the shit inside. At the end of the week, as the hole is filled up, he then covers it back up with dirt. And then another hole is dug for the next week.

Bingo! He lands upon a great idea. Why not use the shit as fertilizer for his rose bushes...better yet, why not, just for the hell of it, place the shit only on the bush on the right side of the front lawn...and use the expensive fertilizer for the bush on the left side. He has his hunch, but really wonders if there would be any difference in brilliance and quality for the bush smothered in dog shit.

The two rose bushes have gotten to know each other a bit while on the shelves of Home Depot...and they are beside themselves with joy while sitting in their pots in the back of their new Master's truck. Nate tells George, "Man, look where we're headin', George!" "I know man, straight for Brentwood...we made it man...we made it to the good life!" screams George in immense adulation. They high-five each other as the truck pulls into the Master's driveway. George whispers to Nate quickly as the man opens his door to get out, "I wonder where we're gonna live...man!...look at the size of that front yard, Nate!" "Shhh, he's coming", Nate gestures to George with one of his branches.

The man reaches in the back of the truck and grabs one of the bushes, weighing about ten pounds or so. It's George. He looks back at Nate and wonders if he'll ever see him again. But that's okay, because they have both landed in the rose's paradise, where every rose bush dreams of going, Brentwood Township. Suddenly, the man stops and places the rose bush right smack in the middle of the left side of the huge front yard, into a hole that he had dug earlier. George is beside himself...how cool can this be...a front lawn ornament...it don't get any better than that! He looks back at Nate with a wide grin...Nate responds with a high flying thumbs up!

As the man is walking back to the truck to fetch the other bush, Nate watches and anxiously wonders to himself..."Man...if George was placed there, then he's JUST GOTTA balance the yard with me on the other half...that would be so awesome"!! They would be friends forever doing their job day to day providing the Master's home with welcoming statues of beauty. Sure enough, the man grabs the

bush and heads to the other half of the front yard and places it into another hole in direct measurement with the other hole. It is clear the Master has done his homework to insure proper visual balance to the exact inch. George and Nate are ecstatic with their brand new gorgeous surroundings. The man carefully makes sure each bush is balanced perfectly and not leaning towards the right or left, but straight up and level. No doubt, he is a perfectionist. Then he walks back to the truck and grabs his 40 lb bag of super-nutrient fertilizer. He lands it right next to George and begins to fill the entire base of the bush with four to five inches of sweet smelling and warm fertilizer. Nate notices George's huge smile and big breath of relief...and hears him sigh, "Ahhhhhhhhhh." Nate is so happy for him. This is a dream come true for both of them...it's the beginning of a new day, a bright future, and glorious success in life.

Then the Master takes the bag, and instead of heading towards the other bush, he walks towards the side of his home and swings open a backyard gate. He then disappears into a small shed attached to the gate. Nate watches with puzzlement as he hears the barks of dogs in the backyard area. George looks over to Nate in total curiosity as well. Why would the man spread fertilizer over one bush and not the other...something wasn't right with the picture. Nate motions to George and shrugs his branches stretched out with an "I don't know, man" look on his face. But Nate is confident that the man will return with fertilizer for him...perhaps he went back to mix the fertilizer with some left-overs he had stored in his shed. No worries....enjoy life!

Suddenly, the backyard gate flings wide open...and out comes the Master. But he's not carrying a typical bag of fertilizer...the kind that Nate and George sat next to by the rows and rows at Home Depot. Instead it is an old beat up Home Depot orange work bucket. The man is leaning slightly towards his right as he seems to be laboring from the bucket's weight...the bottom of the bucket just skimming the tops of the grass below. He's huffing and puffing as he nears Nate. Nate looks to George...George is worried for his friend...something is not normal with this whole thing. Then suddenly Nate smells something horrible. It must be a shift in the wind. The Master stops in front of the bush and almost slams the bucket into the ground from its own weight.

Now the smell is overwhelming...and even George can now smell it. George gets it right away. During his early days at the sprouting farm, he had heard rumors of what they call

in the rose-bush-world, "The Shit Bush". It's a rarity, it but does happen. Nate has never heard of it, but he is about to find out very quick. For the first time in his young life, he is about to get shit-on Big Time. The Master grabs his big scooper spoon and begins gingerly scooping globs of shit all around the base of Nate. Nate is now beside himself in agony and shock. He can't do a thing as he screams and pleads to his Master to please stop and spare him the trial, agony, and pain. George who was always kind of a shallow individual suddenly thinks the scene is humorous, and begins to crack up laughing. Nate sees this and is hurt and angered that his friend would mock his horrible circumstance. The wretched odor of a weeks worth of dog shit piled high around his little trunk is just too overwhelming for Nate...he limps and falls faint...he succumbs to the onslaught.

The morning sun is warm and refreshing...for George. He yawns and stretches wide his limbs, already showing the effects of the super nutritious fertilizer applied the afternoon before. He looks over to Nate...but Nate is motionless. George calls out for his friend, but Nate is still unconscious. Suddenly, out from the front door come running two kids in a joyous shuffle down the front steps. A lady appears at the door in an anxious and brisk walk...followed right behind by the Master. George quickly ascertains that these people must be the family of the Master. The noise and screams jolt Nate to consciousness. With eyes a blur, Nate first catches the gleam of the sun, then the sting of the smell of shit all around him below. It's not only all around him, but he feels a strange sense that it is in him now...running through his veins. The damp nite softened the shit allowing it to draw into Nate's fumbling roots below. He can barely stand, much less see. But he quickly notices two little kids running towards him. Suddenly, they stop just feet away from Nate. The father yells, "Kids, don' get too close to that on...its got Pifer's and Snicker's doo-doo all around it!" The kids immediately smell the stench and shove their hands over their mouths and noses. They immediately let out a "UUUUUU...yuuuuuuck!" and quickly clamor away towards the other bush where their mother and father are approaching.

The Master gently gets to his knees on the cool green grass surrounding George and begins to display the little pink buds to his two children just reaching the bush. The mother gets to her knees and gently sits comfortably upon the grass. One child jumps into her lap and the other stands to the shoulder of her father...all admiring the look of George's sprouting bulbs to be ready in just a few days.

All will enjoy the heavenly fragrance. It's a Kodak picture moment. Nate barely sees this through his foggy mind...a tear drops to the ground. George looks over to Nate with a "sorry guy...can't help it if I'm better looking than you" kind of look. Nate turns away and looks down to the horrible sight below...even the bugs are making their way far from his trunk. He is weak and depressed. It is indeed too much shit for one person to handle. But it is soon going to get worse...yes...Shit Happens.

For days, the kids and the Mother scramble to George to see if his bulbs have bloomed yet. There is much excitement in the air...it is the talk of conversation around the dining room table.

George by now is full of himself, cocky, and arrogant. The day before, Nate tried to get some feedback, some advice, or perhaps just a drop of sympathy and understanding from George concerning his situation, but George just could not relate to Nate's problems. Nate began to realize that he alone was going to have to endure this trial...no one would be able to help him, except for perhaps those who were going through the same shit, or who had gone through it before. He comes to a series of revelations. One, the realization that he will be spending much time alone in his life, filled with deep self-analysis just to figure out the hows and whys of life, and how to survive and get through each and every obstacle to come. He has resigned to the fact that he is different from the rest, a maverick of sorts, not following to the same drummer as the mass. By choosing on his own to be a Maverick, he resigns to the fact that life will not be easy...it will not be the same as others. And to top it off, by fate's mysterious hand, he has been designated the Shit Bush. He must now become the ultimate warrior...a warrior fighting up against the enemy of life. Above it all, he must maintain humility, care and sensitivity to help others on the road of life who have been shit upon. Can he rise above the shit, he wonders. Does he have the fortitude and will to do so. He makes a promise to himself and begins his fight ever so slowly.

To make matters worse, the stench around Nate has spread throughout the neighborhood, bringing by curious dogs to check things out, as dogs always like to do. Pretty soon, Nate becomes a regular stop for about a half a dozen neighborhood dogs, from chuwawas to dobermans. At least twenty times a day, Nate is pissed on and shit on by insensitive and ruthless selfish dogs. George is now falling over laughing at the sight of Nate getting dumped on. Nate is desperately trying not to fall apart

emotionally...it's been a week of nothing but shit on shit, from morning to night. And then as the sun goes down, the cats join in the fun by visiting him and dropping their horrendously smelly refuse at Nate's front door. For him it seems like it's been years and years of nothing but tragedy, anguish, and heartache. At bad moments he loses his grip and entertains thoughts of suicide...just slash his branches and end it all...but somehow he is still prevailing.

Days of loneliness drag by...the smell and stench really don't bother Nate any longer...he has learned to deal with the Master's now daily visits of fresh shit from the backyard. It seems he's just numb to it all now...challenges, shocks, and ordeals are a regular part of his life now...he is now used to the pressure and stress. He never looks at George anymore...he just minds his own business and tends to his own problems and life.

Just yesterday, George bestowed his first bloom. It was a celebration for the family. The mother came outside with her two kids, holding a beautiful and shiny glass vase. The Master had the honor of cutting the very first rose off of George's happy limbs. The Master gently handed the rose and stem to his oldest daughter and motioned to her to breathe in deep for a surge of aromatic sweetness. The child opened her eyes wide and smiled gleefully. As each smelled the beautiful rose, they got up from the grass and eagerly headed towards the house, up the steps and onto the large antique oak table sitting boldly on the front porch. Not one look from any of them went toward Nate during the whole time. George was a proud father for the very first time...and he let Nate know it too. To get your blooms onto the Master's porch, and better yet onto his sprawling oak table was the ultimate prize of pride.

The next day a few strange events occurred which made Nate begin to wonder about a few things. About 9 in the morning, as each of the neighborhood dogs paid their visit to Nate for a dump and a short piss, one of the dogs decided to go and take a visit to George. It was the tiny little chuwawa, barely five inches tall. George yelled and screamed obscenities to the little mutt, flailing his branches every which way to try and ward off the intruder. But the mutt kept on coming and walked right up to George's feet and proceeded to piss all over them, leaving a dripping wet staulk and a pool of yellow smelly piss at the base. George starts screaming for help, but he's stuck..he can't go anywhere. He panicks and nearly falls over himself to the ground below trying to shake off the piss running down his legs. Then the big doberman, nearly three feet tall, sees

what the mutt did and playfully runs over to George and whips out his thing and proceeds to literally spray George all over his face. And as if that wasn't bad enough it turns around and proceeds to dump almost two pounds of shit onto George's feet. Nate watches in stunned silence, as George literally falls limp, white with fear and shock. It's too much for him to handle...the stress is too much to bear...he cannot handle the agonizing pain and the total humiliation, knowing all the bushes in the neighborhood are all watching and laughing at the sight of George getting shit on. With one final jerk, he falls limp. Nate cannot believe what he has just witnessed. He's not happy about seeing George getting dumped on, but what puzzles him is how quickly George gave up and went limp...like a weak little wussy. It's been almost two weeks of non-stop shit-parade for Nate, and he could not believe that George snapped and went under from just one cloud burst of bull shit.

But for George, it is not over...his little string of bad luck has just begun. The weatherman is calling for severe winds to hit late this evening. George is in deep shit. If he does not get his act together, the shit is about to hit the fan. At about midnight, Nate begins to feel the winds through his hair...He looks over and George is still knocked out cold. He desperately calls out his name trying to wake him up. He needs to prepare for the coming onslaught. But George was out.

The sun peeks out of the morning clouds...Nate shakes off his drenched self and looks over to George. He is stunned. George has fallen to the ground...his trunk bent to submission by the heavy winds the night before. His leaves and bulbs are scattered across that side of the lawn...it is a sad sight. Nate knows George is alive, because he can see him move his branches, but he is too weak to get up himself. Then Nate notices something so strange. He looks at George's trunk and notices a pale and weak color to it...so skinny and so very timid...so unsure...so full of doubt, so insecure. He looks down at his own and notices a thick brownish green color...it seems so much more sturdy, confident, curiously solid, and so much wiser. As his curiosity pricks even more, he begins to scan across his own arms and legs. He feels a bit strange, as he has never done this before...is this the process of the transformation of self he had thought about the day prior? As he looks, he realizes that they have not flinched at all from the cold hard wind of adversities and challenges from the night before. In fact, his bulbs are over twice the size of George's! Nate's eyes open wide with realization and self confidence as he slowly becomes aware that for some good and

very definite reason, he was able to withstand and endure the huge storm that just hit...and George couldn't. AND in fact he looks even better in spite of it!!! Why? How can this be?

George has been lying there pretty much all day, when the Master returns home from work. He studies the situation and heads back to the shed. He comes back out with a five foot long 1x3 post. He sticks it deep into the ground right next to George's bent and broken feet. Then he proceeds to lift George gingerly off the ground and ties him every which way to the pole. George looks like an old limp beat up boxer who has just got knocked out and is being helped to his corner for the physician to pronounce the fight over. No, Nate is not happy for George. He can easily do the same and laugh up in vengence. In fact, he feels sorry for him. A sense of pity for George overwhelms him, especially knowing that George must feel awfully bad being in this state after all the days of taunting and laughing he threw towards Nate. Nate just sits there hoping for George to get better.

Then after an hour or so of deep contemplation, it hits Nate. There is a reason for all this. He and George were from the very same seed stock...raised and fed by the very same rose farm... taken cared of by the same Home Depot outlet...bought by the very same Master...planted by the very same Master...and in the very same yard. There was only one thing different. THE SHIT. Nate just could not believe it...he brushed it off as some kind of weird coincidence. But he was to soon see the truth...the very next morning.

A quickly passing early morning rain shower had drenched everything in sight. George by now was at least standing pretty much on his own again...still holding the hand of his friend and supporter, the post. Nate begins to stretch his left arm when he notices a sight that blows his mind...a rose bloom even he has never seen the likes of before...even bigger than those Big-Daddys he used to envy at the rose farm. It is a glorious pink...deep dark pink infused with streaks of dainty heavenly light pink-red lines...it's the size of a huge grapefruit...sparkling with the rain droplets still clinging to its velvet skin. Stunned, that this could come from his shitty life, Nate gingerly begins to touch it with his other hand. He chokes up a bit, from pure emotion and excitement. A smile slowly squeezes out of his lips.

Suddenly, the two kids open the screen door of the front porch and begin screaming, "Daddy! Daddy!..look at the doo-doo bush!...it has a flower!" The Master peeks his head out