

Both Ken and Rollin understand enough about computers to know that if you want to get rid of something you've written, you put it into the Trash and press Empty Trash. It's gone forever, then. Right?

Trashback

Alden R. Carter

“... and the other nerd says, ‘Hey, if you can guess how many chickens I’ve got in this bag, you can have *both* of ‘em.’ ” I waited for the laughter. There wasn’t much.

Mrs. Carruthers gave a tired sigh. “Exactly why, Kenneth, have you interrupted class with yet another of your tasteless nerd jokes?”

“Well, it’s a grammar joke, Mrs. C. Kind of appropriate for English, I thought.”

“You thought wrong. Sarah, would you pick from the jar this time?”

Sarah shrugged and got up to select a slip of paper from the tall jar on the window ledge. I started to protest but swallowed it, as my beloved classmates—who I’d worked so hard to entertain—started hooting and laughing. Up at the front, Rolf Egglehart, the nerd’s nerd, turned to give me what I suppose he thought was a sneer. It made him look more than ever like he needed to wipe his nose. I smiled evilly at him and made a gesture like I was wringing the neck of a chicken. He flushed and turned away.

Sarah took the top slip in the jar and read: “ ‘You’re the elf in charge of answering Santa’s mail. Write a letter that will get you fired, drive Santa to drink, and cause a police investigation of Santa’s workshop.’ ”

“I can’t do that one!” I yelped. “I mean, that’s one I made up.”

Almost everyone laughed. Sarah rolled her blue eyes up to gaze at the ceiling. Mrs. Carruthers, who I could tell wanted to give a hoot or two of her own, said, “Settle down, class. It is ironic, Kenneth, that Sarah happened to select your suggestion. But hoist upon your own petard or not, that is your assignment. Five hundred words should do it. By Monday, please.”

Sarah looked at me and shook her head. I could interpret: “Don’t even ask me; I will not bail you out of this one.”
