

Possum

by Larry Strattnr

A possum sits on a fence. The fence is downtown in a not-very-big town.

Hard to say about possums and fences; this is not the first possum to sit on a fence.

Once, during a suburban backyard party a possum sat on a fence and observed. Before long he could walk more properly than any of the guests. But he chose to sit. In later evening several party goers had lengthy conversations with the possum. For his part, the possum was noncommittal. He was gone when the sun came up.

The downtown possum, probably not the same possum as the party possum, was still on the fence when the sun rose. People going to work saw him and called him in to the police. The desk sergeant on duty sent two officers over to keep an eye on the possum while Animal Control located their possum net.

The two police officers; one young, one older with a visible belly, were armed, as police officers generally are.

Watching the possum was boring. The two policemen made policeman small talk.

“Shift over for you too?”

“Yep. Right after this possum.”

“Busy night?”

“Nah. Last call was a guy took a swing at his wife. Missed her and a porch step same time. Broke an arm and a leg. Justice was served. Brought him over to Memorial Emergency.”

“Qualify on the range this month?”

“Yeah. Barely. I don't like this new Glock.”

“Me neither. I bring my own.”

“Yeah? What's that?”

“Heckler and Koch P7. Squeeze-cocker. Squeeze the handle and pull the trigger it shoots. Very good safety system. Pressure tightens you up. Squeeze cocker helps you shoot under pressure.”

“Ever shoot anybody?”

“Nah.”

“Get any pressure on the job?”

“I will if this possum charges.”

“Charges? Do possums charge?”

“Could. Might bare his teeth. Run at us. Decide he doesn't want to be on the fence. Get to not like us staring at him. Make a run for it.”

“What will you do if he charges?”

“Don't know. Let him by? Go home and get some sleep? I'm too tired to squeeze the P7.”

The possum, black eyes unblinking, watching the policemen, for his part remained noncommittal.

