



The View from Right Field

by Rick Ohler

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“Shower The People”

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I asked my normally accommodating editor, Adam Zaremski, for a favor, knowing it was a long shot. Since it was Labor Day weekend, I wondered if I could condense my normal thousand words from Right Field into a dozen or so and say, simply, “Wow, men and women are quite different from each other, aren’t they?” It would save me a lot of effort, and it would save him a whole lot of editing. The copyeditor would be thrilled, too, since I could probably manage that many words without two many errors in spelling punctuation or used syntax improper. And readers could fill in the blanks with their own notions of the differences between the fairer sex and the brutish, boorish other half of the population.

The boss saw right through my indolence and said it might be better to flesh out my ideas a bit, so to speak. “We’d have to call it ‘The Sentence from Right Field,’” he said, and sent me back to my quill and inkpot. What a way to spend Labor Day.

The reason I had requested this dispensation from my regular duties was precisely because of the difference between the genders. It all began when we agreed to have one of those cultural phenomena called the baby shower at Right Field World Headquarters on the western fringe of the village for Kateri’s wonderful daughter, Anna, who is expecting her first child in October.

As a typical, uninformed member of the XY fraternity, and, of course, as a member of that large segment of the population who has never attended a baby shower, I envisioned a simple affair. Like a picnic. You know, no big deal, flip flops and t-shirts, set up a grill, get some salads and some drinks. Since girls were involved, maybe throw a few Bartles & James wine coolers in the mix. Everybody brings a gift, you have some laughs and make an afternoon of it. What could be easier?

Ha. Apparently I missed the freight train that had gone right by me when it came to showers. The preparation for the September 2 event began a month before. First we had to clean and organize the inside of the house. For an outside party. Does anyone

but me see a disconnect in that logic? Some of the ladies will come in to use the powder room, she said. The bathroom is by the back door, I countered, fairly confident in my familiarity with the layout of our house.

Of course, she was right. Someone might have wandered errantly—or surreptitiously (RIP Snake), I suppose—farther into our dominion and discovered the secret of our untidiness. So we cleaned; we threw out bedraggled carpets and obsolete electronic gadgets from the Pleistocene Age, and cat-scratched and saggy-springed furniture that had overstayed their welcome by a decade or two. We dusted and organized the 20 gazillion books we own between us into approximate categories on the mile of bookshelf space we have and designated 10 boxes of books for assignment to Judy Weidemann's AAUW annual book sales. We repositioned the cat herd's depository box and cleared kitchen cabinets of accumulated flotsam and jetsam (although it was hard to discriminate between flotsam and jetsam). I think we spent 25 bucks on those orange stickers you put on garbage bags when your offering to Waste Management is excessive.

I have to admit to my sweetheart that there is nothing quite as a humiliating (at first) and invigoratingly satisfying (in the end) for the soul as putting the inside of your house in order and in the meantime discovering how far you had let things slide when full-time employment turned everything into a one-of-these-days projects.

So the inside of the house was ready for the outside party.

The shower itself gave me another insight into the difference between us and them. Wow. It went a little beyond anyone's notion of a picnic. For starters, Anna, Kateri and I started setting up for the party about 6:30 on Sunday morning for a two o'clock show and just barely finished. The inside of the rented tent, with white tablecloths over tables, place settings, party favors, gifts of succulent plants to take home, flowers everywhere in big vases and small, a festooned chair, a macramé photo backdrop, balloon garlands, crepe paper roses was more reminiscent of Salvatore's than any picnic. The food, by Karen Mayhew of Daily's Catering, was so exquisite that there wasn't much left over for me when I returned from my afternoon exile. The ladies, dressed in casual elegance, played games and sipped wine or cucumber water and communed in the way that mothers, grandmothers and sisters know so well. The gifts were generous and thoughtful—everything a first-time mother might need. (Except for sleep, that is. We all remember how that goes.) The whole thing was magnificent. I can see why they didn't want me, or any guys, there.

Contrast this with the male version of a baby shower. It's called the diaper party. I stumbled onto of those once at the Right Field Satellite Office. The back room at Wally's was decorated in, in, well, actually it wasn't decorated. There was an empty table onto which the guests, in the prescribed uniform of backward ball caps, put packages of diapers. Packages and packages and packages. So many, that stacked up

properly they could have reached the ceiling. There was food: two kinds of pizza, with pepperoni and without; wings, hot and medium. And beer: Bud Light, Blue Light, Coors Light. And games—beer pong. Winner and losers, it's hard to tell them apart, drink.

It won't take much cajoling to persuade me to extrapolate this difference from the specific to the general, from the 14052 to the world as a whole where the men run the show, badly for the most part, while it's the women who really understand what's important.