

THE TRAFFIC TICKET

It was a warm afternoon in early May, spring flowers brightening the lawns and curbs, trees already thick with new leaves. Driving her customary route home through Overbrook, Josy approached the corner of Sherwood Road and Sixty-sixth Street. Preparing to make her usual left turn, up ahead she noticed a stopped car already turned onto Sherwood Road. A policeman stood by writing a ticket.

As she made her turn, he blew his whistle, signaling for her to pull over. Finishing the ticket, he approached her car and began writing out another one.

“What’s that for, Officer?” she asked, puzzled. She had done nothing different from her usual routine, and had made sure to go especially slowly as she passed him.

“You made a left turn in a no-turn zone,” he admonished.

“A no-turn zone?” Josy replied. “But I’ve come home from work here every day for the last ten years. I always make a left turn here. Why is it illegal?”

“Because the sign says you can’t,” he responded, continuing to write.

“What sign?” she asked. “I don’t see any sign.”

Walking over to a nearby tree, the officer lifted a low-hanging branch and there, previously covered entirely by the newly blossomed leaves, appeared a sign reading “No Left Turn”.

“I don’t remember seeing that before,” Josy told him. “When did that go up?”

“This morning,” he replied smiling.

After a moment of silence, Josy said, “Well, then, I guess I’ll just have to pay the ticket,” and she sighed.

“You don’t really have to,” he answered. “Just go to traffic court and fight it when your turn comes up.”

“I can’t do that,” she told him. “I’m a school teacher. I work during the day. I can’t get out to court. I’ll just pay the ticket, that’s all.”

“No, don’t do that,” he said. “Take a day off and go to court.”

“I can’t,” she repeated. “There’s no one to cover my classes.”

“Can’t they get a substitute?” he insisted. “Don’t go paying that ticket. Just go fight it.”

“That’s not possible,” she explained. “Subs are almost impossible to come by this late in the year. I’ll just go ahead and pay the ticket, that’s all.”

“That’s a shame,” he mused. “You’re such a nice lady. You shouldn’t have to pay. It’s too bad I already started writing this ticket, otherwise I’d let you off.”

“Don’t worry about it,” Josy told him. “It’s not your fault. I’ll just go ahead and pay it.”

“You know what,” he told her. “You go ahead now and don’t worry about anything. I’ll just give this ticket to the next person who comes along!”