

# Bert, One Year Later

Dave Carley





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## BERT, ONE YEAR LATER

by

Dave Carley

### CAST

BERT: In his 70s and recently widowed

### Place:

A grief support group meeting.

### Time:

The present.

### Production Notes:

Bert has a few health problems, particularly his knees, but is vigorous and forceful. His grief support group is not working for him. But an encounter with a teenager outside his condo has at least convinces him that life--even without his wife--is worth the pain.

*Setting: The center chair of a semi-circle of three or four chairs; the other chairs are unoccupied.*

*At Rise: BERT is attending a meeting of his grief support group.*

BERT: People ask what kind of ducks they are. How would I know? They've got feathers. They swim. They're goddamn ducks. The big ones are geese. I've only been feeding them this past year but already they're multiplying. And yes, they crap all over the lawn and yes, they make a hell of a racket when they spot me in the morning. They come right up to my patio doors for their breakfast, honking and quacking and crapping.

The condo board shoved a note under my door last week. I never go to their meetings but apparently Bert and the Duck Problem was top of the agenda. They've got a point about the poop--it's covering the lawn, right to the river. But the noise--you can hardly hear it over the water, the condo's only a hundred

yards from the dam. And birds are a natural noise, it's not like the gardener's leaf blower or those g-d buggies the kids ride up and down the trail.

I like it on my patio. What with the birds honking and the water roaring, I can't hear a thing. If my daughter phones: "Sorry, must've been outside." Or if Marion was calling for me...That time you said you were coming over to inspect--I know, I know, you didn't say 'inspect'--I sat out there all afternoon so I couldn't hear the doorbell. Except you outsmarted me, you walked all the way around, said you wanted to make sure I was locking my patio door. The condo board's terrified about youth crime, they probably told you I was leaving it open, or--selling the kids drugs out my condo...

Which I could do. There's always a few kids by the water, over at the dam. They don't come up the lawn--too much bird crap, so maybe there is a method to my madness, maybe the board should be thanking me. Sometimes the kids horse around, other times they're looking at the river, just like I do, watching all that water get by me as fast as it can. They smoke. When they first starting coming around, smoking, I used to think, "Wow, kids today are OK. They're really into sharing. They always pass their cigarettes around." That's how big of an idiot I am.

I noticed the one lad because he was coming later, after the others'd shuffled off to class. I'm sure it was always the same lad; it's hard to tell--they all wear exactly the same thing, this lad even more so, his pants were lower, the crotch down to his knees, he actually can't walk, he waddles, like my ducks. I could probably outrun him, even with my knees. He'd lean against the rail, just above the dam, looking down the spillway.

Sometimes I watch them from inside my place with binoculars. It's not illegal. And that's how I noticed the lad was crying. This went on a couple of weeks. He'd waddle over to the railing, smoke--or smoke up--and cry. Sometimes he'd just look miserable but most days--crying. And I know how you think, why didn't I go out and talk to him, have an intergenerational bonding experience, like a movie, but what I did was stand further back from the window, to make sure he couldn't see me seeing him. That's called 'respecting people's privacy' which is something you don't understand. You, and condo boards, and my daughter.

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