

***The Bag Lady War: A Novel***

Carol Leonard SeCoy

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Reviewed by Olivera Baumgartner-Jackson for Reader Views (9/08)

Imagine working hard your entire life, and upon retiring you find yourself alone, a tiny step from financial ruin and scared out of your wits. Your husband has been shot to death by a burglar, your neighborhood is being terrorized by a gang of hoodlums, the apartment you are renting feels like a prison and your social security is in jeopardy, since the local political bigwigs clearly believe that the money would be better spent on more jails and other “corrective measures” for criminals. What in the world is a senior citizen in such a dire situation supposed to do?

Well, if your name is Josie, Mabel or Mil, you might come up with a truly ingenious plan: spending the rest of your life in a safe and secure place, with free meals, clothes and medical services for the rest of your life, and surrounded with lots of other women, most of them young. The catch? Well, the only such place for them is the prison. With government spending forty-thousand-dollars a year per prisoner, the three elderly widows come up with a fantastic plan – they will remove enough criminals from the street to save the government an appropriate amount of money, which would cover their care until they die. So they get guns and get to work, very efficiently dispatching an impressive number of thugs and covering their dead faces with grocery bags. The detectives in charge are utterly stumped by this latest crime wave, until the ladies give themselves up and explain their motives.

Carol Leonard SeCoy’s “The Bag Lady War” touches many a raw nerve. The three heroines might possess a peculiarly twisted logic, but the reader has to ask him or herself what is wrong with our society if the criminals are treated better than the honest senior citizens; and the amounts spent on them are so much higher than the available funds for seniors. Josie, Mabel and Mil also touch on many other problems of today’s society, from lack of parental involvement, the question of euthanasia and better use for abandoned military bases to low self-esteem bringing certain people into serious trouble. They do not mince their words and they have something to say on just about every topic. Lovable, wacky and incredibly real, those three are some of the most endearing heroines I’ve encountered in a long time.

Crazily funny and written in an engaging, fluid style, “The Bag Lady War” by Carol Leonard SeCoy forces the reader to stop and reexamine the world we are living in. Although labeled as a satire, this is a book that hits close to home, and it packs a punch.