



[#14 Glorietta and Red Bob Come to Terms by Laura L Mays Hoopes](#)

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“Glorietta Mendenhall, what a mouthful, huh?” I said.

“Come with me,” she said. “I’m Amanda Flores.” She extended her hand.

I shook. “Nice to meet you,” I said. Yuck, how bourgeois.

“Since you’re sixty seven, you can begin to receive [Social Security](#) any time,” Ms. Flores said.

“How much will it be?”

A printer on her side table began to clatter. She handed me several sheets. One line of earnings for each year I’d worked. The years at the [Haight commune](#) weren’t listed. Barter was invisible to the government. Red Bob and I did okay in our diner, but we had some terrible times when we first bought it in the early ‘90’s.

“Do you want me to process your retirement papers?”

Even though I’d come here to do this, I felt unsure. What does it mean to retire from a business that you own and have worked in every day for twenty years? Would I sit out back in the trailer with my feet up? Who would cook? Could I make more than \$1130 per month working? Finally, I said, “Yes, go ahead.” She printed out forms and handed them to me.

I signed. She carefully went over all. Then she said I’d get an announcement in the mail when the processing was complete.

I bet myself that I’d hear from the bank before I heard from the government. I thought anarchy was best back in the ‘60’s and nothing the government has done since then had changed my mind. Yes, I had just signed up to receive a government pension, but I thought of the pension as my money they’d stolen from years of my paychecks. If I went through their stupid red tape, I could it get back.

I wondered about Red Bob. He resisted when I said we were employees of our place, the Cleghorn [Diner](#). But he went along. He was two years older than me and he wouldn’t take Social Security. I hoped that my checks would finally convince him. I thought I could get Riann Moore to manage the diner for us, but I couldn’t afford to pay her unless he’d retire too.

I worried about our daughter Mimi. Red Bob thought she’d manage the diner when we stopped. She had agreed to waitress for us six years earlier after she graduated from high school, and she was still there. I thought it wouldn’t be long before she’d leave. I mentioned about it to Red Bob once, but he brushed it off. “Why should she, what else does she need? Got it all right here,” he said. But I saw her eyes that time after Ronnie took her down to [The Ice House](#) in Pasadena. Mimi had big ideas; she wanted to see her name in lights.

I also remembered running away from home to the commune on Haight Street in 1967. Mimi did what she should, but thought what she shouldn't. She hoped Ronnie would marry her and take her down from the high desert so she could break into showbiz. She starred in [Evita](#) and led the [Comedy Sportz Team](#) in high school. But Ronnie wouldn't do it. He moved here in mid-high school, but he was from the same stuck-in-the-mud mold as all the other guys she had dated.

When I got back from the Social Security office, I walked into our [house trailer](#) out behind the diner and went into Mimi's room. Her closet was open and her red dress and that low cut black one were gone. Her suitcase was gone. And her two best pairs of heels. Uh oh. It was five o'clock. I rushed into my uniform and over to work.

Edith said, "Whew, glad you're here. That table ordered burgers, and I had to tell them we don't start cooking until five. They growled a bit but said they'd wait."

I quickly started cooking. More orders poured in. Red Bob circulated around, telling his stories to all the guys. I couldn't tell him about Mimi here. When it got to seven thirty, the crowd was pretty much over. I leaned on my kitchen stool. It was hard to stand up and cook fast three times a day for two or three hours. We closed up at eight. Red Bob and I walked out to the trailer. It was still light, that mellow kind of light you get in late summer evenings. I said, "She's gone, Red Bob."

He said, "'I didn't want to tell you; she went with Joe. I saw them pull out at four, on the Vegas road.'" He gave me a sickly smile and said, "What should we do?"

I said, "We've got each other, Red Bob. She needed to find something for herself."

His eyes were wet. "She was my baby. It won't be the same."

I patted his hand. "Of course it won't, but we'll be okay and so will she." We sat at the kitchen table. I heated a can of chili and sliced some fresh bread. We picked at our food. Red Bob looked miserable. He cleared his throat often, but had nothing to say.

My mind was full of the time in my life when I left home and arrived in The Haight. Chaka and Melanie took me in at the commune. We wouldn't cooperate with the government, but we didn't blow things up. We wouldn't work for money or pay taxes. We demonstrated against the war. I put a flower behind a soldier's ear once.

Red Bob said, "C'mon, Glor, let's go out. It's been years since we've been anywhere on Saturday night." I looked up at him in amazement. He was smiling at me in that special way I'd almost forgotten, the smile that made my heart turn over back in The Haight.

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[#36 Red Bob Gets an Offer](#)

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Red Bob Gets an Offer

by Laura L Mays Hoopes

"Hey, Hank. Want some coffee?" Hank nodded, so Red Bob poured coffee into the cup without losing a drop, then sat across from Hank in the booth.

"Did I hear right, Glorietta's getting government money now?" Hank mopped up the last syrup from his plate with a piece of pancake.

"Ah, yes. Glorietta's a spunky one. I wouldn't go into that den of government thieves down at [Social Security](#), but she did, so now we get a check every month. She's right, it's really her money that they stole out of her paycheck all these years."

Red Bob got up to meander around the Cleghorn Diner with the coffee. After a while, he slid back in across from Hank.

"You get Social Security too?" Hank asked.

Red Bob scratched behind his left ear. "She wants me to. I dunno, going to that place gives me the willies. We could use the money. If I never ask for it, the politicians will keep it and be all pleased with themselves."

"I don't vote, myself. Don't want to take responsibility for their tom-fool behavior," Hank said. "Got more coffee?"

Red Bob topped up his cup neatly, then said, "They always spend more than they got. 'Borrow and spend' say the [Republicans](#), 'tax and spend' say the [Democrats](#). It's all our money."

Hank said, "What're you going to do with the Cleghorn Diner when you two retire? Do you want to sell it?"

Red Bob's eyes popped open. "Maybe. Or get a manager. Why, you interested in buying?"

"Yes, but I didn't talk with Susan yet. I'm just 53. I'm bored sitting around the house all day. Too much TV. Don't think I mentioned it before, but I retired three years ago from being a custodian down below, at [John Muir High School](#) in Pasadena. Sue retired from teaching there at the same time. We love it up here in the High Desert. The air is so clean, and it's got weather. I can see spending some years doing what you do."

"Wow. Never knew you were interested. I'd have to talk to Glorietta."

"Might make you an offer later this week, buddy." Hank wadded up his napkin, threw it into the empty plate, swung his legs into the aisle.

Red Bob said, "See you soon." He sauntered towards the kitchen, his mind racing. Would Glorietta go for it? She had talked about getting a manager if Red Bob retired. Did she need to own the place? Back in the Haight commune, she used to make fun of property owners. He mopped his forehead with the bandanna from his shirt pocket. Calm down, now, she might like the idea.

Glorietta hovered over six pancakes and two fried eggs on the griddle. She looked up and smiled. Red Bob patted his wife on the butt and she giggled. He winked, then said, "Glor, can you take a break soon? Got something we need to talk about."

"Sure, Nicole can tell people it'll be a while." Glorietta slipped the eggs over gently and stacked the pancakes on two plates. She added the eggs to one plate, set the orders on the shelf outside the window, then rang a bell to get Nicole's attention. Nicole was a fortyish, well-groomed blond, a little plump, with a ready smile. She hurried from the back of the café. "Hey y'all. Good, Buzzy and Dave were gettin' antsy for these 'cakes!"

"Nicole, we're going out for a break for about ten minutes, okay?"

"No problem. See y'all." Nicole picked up the plates and walked back towards the booths. Glorietta and Red Bob went outside.

"Whassup, hon?" Glorietta said.

Red Bob said, "Glor, Hank surprised me. If Sue agrees, he wants make an offer to buy the Cleghorn Diner. I told him I needed to check with you."

Glorietta sank down onto a big rock beside the parking area. After she said, "Oh," she was quiet for a while.

Red Bob took a deep breath. He put his hands in his pockets, then took them out again. "Do you think we need to keep it? You talked about getting a manager."

Glorietta looked at the ground. "I don't know. I never thought about selling. I suppose we'd have to move; our trailer is on the café property."

Red Bob looked at their old house trailer. "Well, I don't know. Hank and Sue have a house. Of course, maybe they'd have to sell that to get the down payment." Red Bob pulled up his jeans and cleared his throat. "We could travel, maybe."

Glorietta frowned, then her face relaxed. "We could visit Mimi."

Red Bob felt his throat tighten at the name of their twenty-four year old daughter, who had gone off to Las Vegas three months before. "Yeah, it'd be a good way to keep in touch. An' we could go lots of other places. Like back up to San Fran, to the Grand Canyon, which I never saw before, whatever. We might decide just to live in an [Airstream](#). Or we could get a small place here in [Victor Valley](#), and use it as a base."

"That sounds good. Need somewhere to send my Social Security checks. I used to think roots sucked, but we got friends here. We shouldn't disconnect, right?"

"Yeah. Are you thinking yes, then?"

"You talked me into it. Traveling would be fun. We've been nowhere to speak of."

Glorietta looked out over the flat desert with a few [Joshua trees](#) sticking up and a distant rim of blue mountains.

Red Bob said, "Okay. Don't know if Sue'll want to. Just wanted you to think it over."

Glorietta got up, shook out her skirt. "Now I think I'll be disappointed if they decide no."

Red Bob put his arm around her and they walked slowly across the blacktop and went inside their diner.

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