

## Can You Spell Can-tank-er-ous?

By Marilyn Reeves

It wasn't that long ago that you harbored little tolerance for those annoying curmudgeons you used to refer to as "Old People." But just a few years go by and then suddenly – out of the blue – some young whippersnapper hollers at you: "Watch where you're going, old woman!"

"Old woman? Who, me? Why did he call me 'old'? What on earth did I do?" You're simply too stunned to respond as he revs his engine and screeches on by. Then, once you've recovered from the shock, you carefully check the rearview mirror before bumping back down off the curb and proceeding on with your journey.

But the next time it happens, you've come prepared. "Watch where you're going, you old bat!" "Old bat, is it? Well, take that!" And you roll down the window and threaten him with your hefty, pocket-sized umbrella. "Hmm," you say to yourself, "perhaps I should invest in a good, sturdy cane."

One day a while back, while snoozing away in my easy chair taking my afternoon siesta, I was rudely awakened by a couple of workmen banging and crashing around and hollering back and forth to each other out in the hall. Without a thought, I yelled at the top of my lungs, "BE QUIET!!!" Dead silence. Then whispers. Oops, what have I done? Oh dear, now the neighbors will be mad at me. I just wish people wouldn't stand out in the hall yacking – it sounds like they're right here in my living room. Plus, they've ruined my nap. Dagnabit!

Another time I was at the self-check counter at King Soopers. I really prefer to have the clerk check me out, but I only had a few items so I decided to do it myself. The thing I hate most about the self-check is that stupid robot voice that keeps repeating after every item I scan: "Place the item on the check-out counter. Place the item on the check-out counter" ... over and over until it drives me berserk! Finally I'd had it and told that dumb machine to SHUT UP!!! But then I realized there was a lady standing in line behind me who heard me talking to the machine, and gave me a concerned look. I smiled sheepishly, and said something clever like, "Silly machine ... it's so annoying!" The lady moved to another aisle ...

If there's one thing I hate, it's robot-voices. "If you wish to do this, press one. If you wish to do that, press two." After about the fifth option, I sometimes find myself shouting: "I wish to speak to a person! I wish to speak to a *human*! Customer service representative? I NEED HELP, YOU STUPID ROBOT!" And then slam down the phone in frustration.

Excuse me? How dare you call me that? I'm a perfectly reasonable, rational senior citizen. Can you believe it? That young whippersnapper had the effrontery to call me cantankerous!