



Who's Secure



By Eleanor Rodgerson, MD

I HEARD THE FRONT DOOR BANG. Michael, my dog, and I raised our heads, questioning. Michael barked. "Who is it?" By the time we had reached the front of the house, there was no one. Strange. No, the door had not been locked.

I thought about it for awhile. Wasn't this neighborhood safe? Could there be inquisitive strangers? Robbers? Someone who was unfamiliar with Michael's presence? I vowed to start locking the door.

It was time for a morning walk and I slipped Michael's collar around his neck and gave him his leash to carry. We'd stroll along and try to feel secure.

All was calm. There were other dog-walkers who smiled and passed the time of day, interested in our mixed breed.

Then an old-time neighbor stopped us. "Are you OK?" she asked.

I was surprised because I felt especially energetic that day. "Of course. We're a little slow. Michael has arthritis in one paw. That's all."

"Well..." She was full of talk and there was big news!

The previous night our street had been filled with police cars, a fire engine, someone screaming!

Impossible! In our neighborhood? On our street? I recalled I had heard Michael bark, but I had blamed the newspaper's early morning delivery. I had turned over and gone back to sleep.

We ended our walk, happy to be back home. Michael was given his biscuit and I slumped into a chair, put my feet up, and reflected on what I had been told and what assurance I had of security for my home and property. "My home is my castle?"

I began to think seriously of what was already happening in my life.

I wasn't unique. Another woman had my name!

A growing population made duplication expected. How awful to think of cloning! My parents were from other countries and names were carried down through generations and yet there were similar identities.

I was amazed, then horrified, to find this patient's Medicare account billed to my account and, a year later, a drug prescription in my name from a doctor I did not know - same drug, same dose, same pharmacy.

I raised a question. Yes, there are two of us. For now, for me, the answer is to add my

maiden name.

In another incident, someone in an office sent a medical lab report of mine to another strange doctor. There seemed no sense to that, but my privacy was invaded.

What is security? So, far, in my case, impossible. I wonder how secret is my Social Security number?

To divert my thinking, I read. I buy several books and stack them on my desk. In between other chores, I consider the titles and dream of what they may contain in the way of entertainment. Then I choose one.

The problem of security is not among them.

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