



DEL & ESTELLE

SERIALIZED

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A BAGEL

The traffic light on College Avenue turned red. A blue compact stopped at the crosswalk, and people stepped into the street between the wide white lines. A tall teenager carrying a laptop computer entered Café Roma. A gray-haired woman using a walker went into College Avenue Bookstore on the far corner.

From his streetlight perch, Del watched a large man wearing a blue and gold baseball cap exit the café. He held a bagel in one hand and a paper coffee cup in the other. Shortly after stepping into the crosswalk, he tripped and spilled coffee on his white shirt. His arms went up, and he dropped the bagel.

“Man, oh, man!” the man said. He blotted the coffee stain with a napkin and continued to cross the street. The bagel remained behind.

Del’s orange eyes, two glassy beads, fixed on the bread in the crosswalk. “Coo!” he said. “Time for some daring dooo! When the bluuue car starts tooo mooove, I’ll swooop down, scoop up the bread, and swooop to the far curb. Woohoo! Won’t Estelle be impressed?”

As Del made his plan, Estelle stood on her streetlight watching the cars flow through the intersection on Ashby Avenue. When she spotted the bagel in the crosswalk, her gaze ran up to Del on the opposite corner.

“Foolish coot,” she said. “I’ll bet a tail feather Del will try to impress me. He’ll dive for that bagel in front of the traffic. Safety first, Del, I keep telling him. But he never listens.”

Meanwhile, Del stepped to the edge of his streetlight. He checked the black

box on the far end of the crosswalk.

"Coooo! The green man had changed to the red hand!" he noted. "Almost time to mooove. My swoosh angle must be perfect. My landing must be smoooth. I'll swooop like a seagull and scoop like a hawk! Woohoo! Estelle, won't believe what I'm about to dooo."

Estelle checked the blue compact. "I can't believe what that goony bird is about to do," she said. "Del's landings and take-offs aren't what they used to be."

Del shifted from one foot to the other. Without looking toward Estelle's streetlight, he knew that she was watching him. "Here I go," he said. "Five, four, three, twooo, one. Yahooo!"

The traffic light turned green, and Del leaped. Raising his wings into a V, he arched downward. At the same moment, the blue compact rolled forward.

"How dooo yooou like my moooves, Estelle?" Del yelled as he dropped.

From her high perch, Estelle spotted the danger before Del did. A motorcycle was weaving through the line of traffic. Engine roaring, it barreled around the blue car. The driver, his head hidden in a black helmet, was bent forward, determined to be first through the green light.

"Coo-a-roo!" Estelle called. "Get moving, Del!"

A glimpse of handlebars and a single wheel was all Del saw before he lowered his tail feathers to apply the brakes. No time to land, and no time to fly upward. His only chance of avoiding a collision was to fly straight into the intersection.

"Hoo! Hoooo!" he cried, making the sharp turn.

Flap! Flap! Flap! Del's wings were a blur as he tore across Ashby Avenue. The motorcycle was on his tail. A glance told him that if he veered left, an oncoming delivery truck would crunch him. If he hooked right, he would smack into the rear of a bus. *Flap! Flap! Flap!* Through the blinding bus exhaust, he kept flying up College Avenue.

Overhead, Estelle witnessed everything. She saw the motorcycle gaining on Del. She saw Del beating his wings in a frenzy.

"I can't bear to watch this," she said.

"I just hope Estelle isn't watching," said Del.

The roar of the motorcycle rumbled in his ears. He cut curb to curb, but rows of parked cars blocked his access to the sidewalk.

Flap! Flap! Flap! Finally, a fire hydrant allowed an opening. Dipping a wing,

Del hooked to the right. A long glide took him over the curb. He landed on the sidewalk as the motorcycle roared past.

"I'm coool! I'm coool!" he said, strutting back and forth as if nothing unusual had happened. "Smoooth, coool Del here. Planned it that way."

A pair of flip-flops passed his head. A black terrier on a leash snarled at him. But nothing bothered Del more than the sight of the streetlight pole a few yards down College Avenue. He knew who stood on top of that streetlight. He knew who was staring down at him.

"Coo!" he said.

