

It was rather dark and gloomy when I got up this morning, Tuesday May 12, 2020. It was also cool in our loft because the heat had been turned off in the building. I ate my breakfast while scanning the Denver *Post* and doing the King Crossword. Laini, my wife of 49 years, slept in and when she woke up the sun came out, brightening our loft through the floor to ceiling front windows and skylights in one bedroom.

It was after lunch that she noticed the same person I could see across 15th Street from us. The person walked slowly for about ten feet on the sidewalk, then stopped for five minutes or so.

“We could walk across the street and give her some money,” said Laini.

I was working on the book I am writing and did not think she was waiting for an answer from me despite the plural pronoun. A few minutes later I saw her walking down the hallway toward our front door.

“Don’t forget your mask,” I said, repeating what she has to say more often than I. She put it on and thanked me as she departed.

Now I had more reason to keep my eye on the woman across the street. The backdrop for her was a fence along the 15th Street side of the parking lot of the Federal Reserve Bank. There were more cars in the lot than had been for weeks, I noticed, wondering if there is now more interaction with the banks of Denver. A worker there said one of their big jobs is to see that checks from banks cashed in others are exchanged in meetings.

There was Laini in her gray sweater walking from the Arapahoe side of 15th approaching the woman standing near the bus stop. (Laini read the first draft of this and laughed, saying “I was also wearing pants.”) I could see the two women within about six feet of each other. They must be talking, I thought, knowing that I could get the details when Laini came back. Back she did come through the doorway and into the loft.

“Did you give her some money?”

“Yes, and I told her where she could buy groceries,” and I knew that would be the 7-11 on the ground floor of the Arapahoe side of our building.

“What is she like?”

“Very, very attractive,” said Laini with a surprised smile.

“Black, white?”

“White.”

At about 1:55 I went out the front door for a walk. The sign by the shuttered Rock Bottom at 16th and Curtis said 71 degrees. I turned and faced the sun to feel the warmth on the back of my hands. A young black couple walked past me until she saw a man in the center of the mall. She ran over and I followed her, walking and wondering what was happening. She could see that a young Hispanic male there was smoking. She put her face out with a cigarette in her mouth and he pulled out his lighter to give her a light.

I looked down at his side. There were chess pieces on the black and white chessboard set in a waist high holder made of cement. I was thrilled. Over the past twenty years plus I have watched the players at the several chess sets in the center of the 16th Street Mall. It was a thrill to see it ready for a game again.

“Is this your chess set?”

“Yes,” he said.

“Would you like to play a game?”

“No thank you, but it is so good to see one out. I work as a volunteer at the St. Francis Center and I knew a man pretty well who came in. Then I saw him down here playing chess and there was a big crowd watching him. I asked him about it at the shelter and he said that it was the reason he was homeless. He was obsessed with the game, spending all his time thinking about and playing chess.”

“The government spends millions of dollars and we still have homeless. California,” he said shaking his head.

I agreed and thanked him and started my walk back home through Skyline Park, noting the man sleeping shirtless in the sunlight on his back with his belongings about him. I hurried back home to type this story, still high on seeing the beautiful black and white pieces on the chessboard.