

REFLECTION**Dominos****by Guillermo de Carndonagh**

In a valley bound coal town the air hazy with the fumes and smoke of the smothering culm. Three small boys and a very old man sat playing dominos on the on the porch. The boys drawled their speech in the Irish brogue of the neighborhood and the old man spoke with a thick German accent. Yet, they understood each other very well, such mixing was common. The man was the great grandfather of one of the lads and a regular visitor. He insisted that they keep count in German, and in their heads, he regularly cheated, and after a game took great delight in explaining to the boys how he had taken them in. They of course equally enjoyed this and tried it themselves; occasionally he would even let them get away with it. In the process he taught them not a little arithmetic, and the need to be attentive to detail.

As the afternoon wore on they paused for a while as the old man took a few moments to smoke his pipe and listen to the news from a radio on an adjacent porch. It was all about a political convention. One of the boys scoffed and said; his dad had told him it was all a bunch of bush-wah and did not mean anything to people like us.

The old man turned with an un-accustomed seriousness. He told the boys how when he was not much older than they he had begged his way across two kingdoms so he could conserve his passage money to this country. One of the high points of his life was when he was able to cast his first vote. Perhaps he said to the lad it is only because your father did not have to struggle to obtain it that he held his ballot so cheaply. But this election he believed mattered more than most because it pitted a man of honor against an opportunist. A republic he believed can only survive when its people and leaders revere the stoic civic virtues.

One of the boys said that the priest at Mass had said something similar; that people had an obligation to vote, perhaps it was even a sin not to. He friend laughed; a sin, not to vote for crooks, how could that be? The old man opined perhaps it is because good people stand aloof that so many politicians are crooks.

This deep conversation ended without a conclusion as grandmother appeared with a still warm pie an a pitcher of cold drink. But suppose great grandfather was right!