

Home Country Has Dud finally lost it?

We knew it would happen sooner or later, of course. We looked at each other and nodded, sadly, and then looked back at our companion and fellow knight of the philosophy counter at the Mule Barn coffee

shop.

Dud had flipped. Completely.

Doc looked at Steve, who shrugged. Steve looked at me, and I shrugged, too. Maybe it was reading all those science magazines that

did it. Maybe it was trying, in his small-town way, to keep up with the latest in gadgets. Something, however, had tripped the goofy switch in Dud's brain and the synapses had snapped.

Consider this: "Mornin' Dud," said Doc, as Dud joined us that morning.

Dud smiled and waved at us, then sat at his usual chair and

flipped over the coffee cup.

"Not until late afternoon," Dud said, staring straight ahead at the orange juice machine.

"What's not until late afternoon?" said Steve. Dud waved a hand at him.

"If you get there first, just go ahead and unlock the gate," Dud said to the orange juice machine.

"Where are we

going?" Doc asked.

Dud waved his hand, dismissively, at Doc.

"The upper pasture should be checked first," Dud said to his coffee cup as Loretta filled it. "Then we'll work on down to the Atkins gate."

By this time we were already composing a requiem for Dud's mental capacities.

None of us had the heart to ask about the Atkins gate.

"How long," Dud asked the sugar packets, "do you think it will take?"

Doc looked at me. "I think," he whispered,

"it's already too late."

It was then Loretta gestured toward Dud's left ear, the one away from us. Dud was wearing a blue earring! Looked like something they'd wear on Star Wars.

"OK," he said to his spoon as we all stood and stared at his ear, "see you then."

Then he looked at us. "Hi guys. Sorry. I was on the phone."

I still think he's nuts.

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