

Family Arguments

Marion loved Key Largo, she really did, and she loved visiting her brother to get out of DC sometimes. But when he got into politics, it was just not a great time. When he got going like he was now, it felt more like duty than vacation. She gazed out the open air door toward the center of the pier, trying to retrieve her Keys-Margueritaville- mood.

“This is what’s happening, sis,” Ben lectured. “Ya got a community organizer running the country, and he wants chaos to overwhelm the system so he can step in and save all the unemployed and make them dependent on government. That’s what Communists and tyrants do. He’s stacking the voting deck with truckloads full of illegals, and wants chaos for total control. All about the money. Why don’t you see that? Because the mainstream media won’t tell you, that’s why. Hurray for Peace, Love, Gays, Wealth Redistribution, Climate Change, Democrats. Step right up and vote, never mind if you’re a citizen or not. Twice. We’ll round you up in vans. Give you free phones, too. Marion, he’s smarter than we are and he knows how to steal from our big piggy bank,” Ben continued:

“ Leader of the free world is golfing with rich gay donors this weekend while our borders are overrun, the scandalous IRS emails are ‘lost’, Iraq is burning, the Russians are taking over Europe, the only democracy in the middle east just had an attack on its nuclear facilities, and the “religion of peace” is hacking to death thousands around the world. Soon, it will be at a place near you, right through our borders.”

“Ben, please, save it, would you?” She rolled her eyes at him. Mostly, Marion worried

someone would overhear this nutcase brother of hers. He just kept going.

“ And today, he offers us the arrest, almost two years later, of some scapegoat for the Benghazi embassy terrorist attack after releasing Taliban prisoners for a deserter.” He burped. “Did anybody ever believe that stupid Benghazi video story? On 9/11? Just before an election? Come ON.” Another burp.

Marion took another sip of her Cabernet and watched her brother guzzle yet another beer, his 3rd in less than half an hour. No point in engaging him. She'd flown here for a weekend getaway, and it was feeling more like imprisonment each minute. The pier restaurant-bar TV scrolled the usual disasters. Her big brother was hopelessly right wing, and an embarrassment to her DC friends, so she never invited him to her condo. It was sad, really. In every other way, they were best friends. His humor had pulled her through divorce, job hunting, cross country moves, health problems, insanity. Where would she be, though, without her government health care, pension plan, retirement funds, security? Her brother didn't mind living on the edge, and somehow always pulled through. He hadn't stayed in school, and bragged about having “been kicked out of three Ivy League colleges.” It was actually true. His drinking had been at the root of it, but she hesitated to say anything. After all, she'd done her share in that department herself.

She tried to change the subject:

“How about a sailboat charter with Arnie this afternoon? I'm buying. C'mon, it will be fun.”

But his eyes were on the TV again, suddenly intent, and she was really annoyed this time.

“What NOW? Ben, how can you stay so obsessed?”

The bartender raised the sound as the horror unfolded: multiple explosions, split screens in NYC, Los Angeles, Chicago, New Orleans, San Antonio; storming mob-rivers, bloody heads, severed limbs on street curbs, shipping containers spewing armed foreigners, even baby toting women with machetes. It looked like a bad movie, and she shook her head, thinking about how hardened we all had become to 24 hour violence coverage. Another of those.....but.....wait....”Ben!! Look!! Look!!” Ben was frozen in place, fingers curled around his beer bottle.

A CNN announcer proclaimed,

“The President has declared Martial Law, and has ordered that Border Patrol agents, local police and sheriffs surrender their weapons in the interest of preventing collateral damage. He has dispatched the Department of Homeland Security, the Bureau of Land Management, the FBI special operations teams and CIA special operations units to quell the citizen and vigilante militias. All Americans are asked to ‘shelter in place’ until peace is restored. Emergency food rationing at FEMA shelters with National Guard and Red Cross assistance will begin nationwide at 6 p.m. to prevent looting; all food and medical supplies are hereby declared government property until peace has been restored. As part of our ‘see something, say something’ federal program, all reports of self defense activities will receive cash rewards once verified. From the Rose Garden minutes ago, the President urged all Americans to work together and remain calm, but vigilant, reporting any non-compliant activities to DHS regional offices: dial 0000, the ‘see something say something program.’ Again, the President asks all to remain calm.”

Marion stared at her empty glass, desperately wanting another drink; then she heard sirens at the end of the pier, car doors slamming, loudspeakers, gunshots, heavy equipment backing up, machine gun fire, and voices wailing. When she turned her head back toward the TV, she saw “no signal” at the top; the bartender had disappeared.