

Assiduity Sixteen

by J. Mykell Collinz

I'm fascinated by Don's evolution from an oversized, overweight, curly haired carrot top adolescent with pudgy red cheeks and smart ass remarks to a six foot seven inch bearded mountain man with a serious attitude. He was growing fast even before I met him, of course, but I take a certain amount of credit for his mature development since then. He's eager for power and I'm happy to oblige. He gets the job done. I couldn't ask for a better manager, be it with the architectural planners, the contractors, the local construction crew, or the security team. It allows me to concentrate on juggling finances and servicing debt.

I ask Don if he's aware of Rasheed's involvement with armed militants, and he says:

"You heard that from Uzma? She worries too much. What's involved here is more like a treaty, an agreement to cooperate in times of crisis, an alliance to join with them against other gangs and, of course, against the fascist police state if it ever comes to that."

"You're involved, too?" I say.

"We're all involved, everyone on the security team and the construction crew. But I wouldn't worry about it. The police don't have enough resources to be messing with us."

"But the people you hired have jobs now. Why would they continue to advocate violence against the system which employs them and pays them well?"

"It's street gang warfare, weakness is instantly exploited. We're youngbloods. This treaty strengthens our position. It creates a balance of power, an equilibrium. It makes the whole neighborhood safer, including these construction sites."

I sense a reversal of roles with Don. It's like, I took care of him and now he's taking care of me. And I'm grateful for it. He's a godsend. I feel blessed. And guilty, to a certain degree, for thriving while so much of the world is suffering. It compels me to use my resources responsibly, to be a diligent steward, to not covet

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ownership but to share my good fortune with others who can appreciate the gesture and pass it on.

