

Global Arms - 3

by J. Mykell Collinz

She continued to cooperate with a city council agenda dominated by globalized privatization; even as many of her previous allies, seeing no signs of progress from their new mayor, denounced her in public, calling her a turncoat and, at reform party organizational meetings, used inflammatory rhetoric to incite what remained of her once loyal following.

Early one morning, the chief executive of a multinational corporation made a surprise visit to her office. He operated several large businesses locally, including the privatized security force, featuring aerial drones and surveillance cameras in public places. He also represented all the negative economic and social policies which had originally attracted her to the reform movement.

Eschewing formalities, she expounded:

"You take our jobs, send them to cheap labor countries, create massive unemployment here, home foreclosures, property devaluations. Then you come back, buy the property at bargain rates, start new businesses, and hire immigrant workers?"

"Your local people are not qualified. Cutting edge technology requires the best and the brightest. So? I am forced to bring them in from somewhere else."

She berated herself for liking him, for enjoying his presence, his charming smile, his handsome masculinity. He exuded power and, deep down, she admired his accomplishments; while, at the same time, an inner voice proclaimed: he is a psychopath without a social conscience or a trace of human empathy.

"What about all the other jobs, in convenience stores, gas stations, motels? On labor crews, doing landscaping, roofing, replacing gutters? It's all done by immigrants."

"No one else will do those jobs."

"At what you pay, no. Our workers need a living wage."

"They want more, they can get an education, better themselves. Opportunities exist. Otherwise, work hard and compete along with everyone else in this world, starting from a level playing field."

"This city once had full employment, a strong tax base. We didn't find it necessary to cut back on public employees, police officers, firefighters, school teachers, parks and recreation, until you multinationals gained control."

"The private sector does everything better, while saving money."

"The only money saved goes into your wallet."

"And into yours. You're making good money. As mayor, you have a great future here. Your city is rebounding. It's on the up swing."

"On the upswing? Or bouncing off the bottom? Without enough momentum to reach and sustain the level of a meaningful existence?"

"What is a meaningful existence?"

"Food on the table, a secure home, safe streets, a job, a livable income, educational opportunities."

"Your city has significant momentum now with its great variety of ethnic populations. It is these immigrants who are starting all the new business in your communities, rejuvenating whole neighborhoods previously abandoned by your local people."

"Those neighborhoods were abandoned because you transferred all the good paying jobs to cheaper labor markets in other areas of the world."

"Yes, and it saved me a fortune."

She no longer felt like arguing with him about a concluded phase of the economic war which the multinationals had clearly won.

"How do you balance your accounts with the increasing numbers of once middle class people now finding themselves on the have not side of the equation?"

"Well, I'd like to avoid the use of force, which can sometimes get messy and backfire. You can help me with this by identifying the more radical groups who are likely to cause trouble in the near future."

She thought of using the loaded gun in her desk drawer to seize him as a hostage; but he would probably take the gun away from her because she couldn't shoot him with it. And what would that accomplish besides making her old allies think better of her? Instead, she responded to the irresistible attraction of the one side remaining with decisive economic power.

