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Burning Bridges As We Go

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645 Words

Tides Never Turn

Her cellphone rang just as she was putting baby Claire down in her bassinet.

Darn, I forgot to put it in silent mode, Mary thought. Please don't wake up. Please don't wake up. Please don't....

Too late. Baby Claire woke up.

Darn, Mary swore. That better not be who I think it is calling. She knows better. Unless it was Steve trying to get through. Darn!

Mary's mother, Carol, was stuck in the pre-internet age, and often called Mary's cellphone from a landline where ever she happened to be. And somehow it always coincided with baby Claire's nap time. Like the woman had a sixth sense for when Mary would be putting baby Claire down. Mary wished the call was from Steve. Hoped it was. His deployment return was long overdue and she was worried. She missed the sound of his voice. Among other things.

Thankfully baby Claire let herself be quickly rocked back to sleep, swaddled in her bassinet as she was, giving Mary a chance to check her cellphone messages less than fifteen minutes from the last call.

"Mary...crackle crackle....," the static recording sounded, *"its St...crackle crackle.....Monday.....crackle...lost.....crackle....explo....crackle...serious."* The message cut off and the line went dead.

Mary listened two more times holding her breath trying to hear clearly and distinguish what the message said. She couldn't quite tell.

I definitely heard Monday in there, she thought, but today is Thursday. The rest I'm not sure. Did I hear lost? Explosion? Serious maybe? Oh Lord, I hope that's not what I'm hearing.

As she started to play the message a third time, Mary startled when her cellphone rang in her hand. She quickly answered, "Hello? Hello!"

"Mrs. Mary Hutchins?"

"Yes?"

"Hi, this is Sgt Will Erris with the Seaside police department. Is your mother Carol Ann Severs?"

"Yes. Is everything okay?"

"Yes, ma'am. Your mother is fine, but she's been arrested.

Crap, Mary swore in her head, that's all I need right now. "What can I do for you Sgt?"

"Well, your mother doesn't carry identification. And we haven't been able to identify her through our live scan fingerprinting system. Your mother suggested we contact you claiming you not only could provide third party confirmation but produce a birth certificate for her and arrange bail."

"Yes on all accounts, Sgt. Where is she now? Where can I go?"

"To the Monterey County Jail on Natividad Road, ma'am. We're in booking."

“Thank you Sgt. Can I ask her charges?”

“Disorderly conduct. Your mother participated in an anti-war demonstration this morning at the Veteran’s Administration building and tried to assault an Army recruiter. Luckily for her, he refused to press charges so she only received disorderly conduct and trespass charges after she refused to leave.”

“Thank you, Sgt. I’ll come down as soon as I’m able.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Hutchins.”

Getting ready to leave, Mary couldn’t help reflecting bitterly about her mother. She had her reasons, Mary knew, the main being her husband, and Mary’s father, having been killed decades earlier while deployed to Somalia with the 10th Mountain Division. And the way the Army paid out less than the stipulated benefits because Somalia wasn’t officially classified as a “warzone” meant Carol had not been able to cover the meager mortgage for their house in upstate New York. She lost the house and was forced to move Mary and her back in with her parents in Georgia. Carol had been on the warpath against the Army and its warmongering ways ever since. But constantly creating more problems than she solved, no matter the reason, didn’t exactly endear her mother to Mary. She had a child of her own now and a husband serving in the military as well.

Mary wished history wasn’t repeating. But experience told her tides very rarely turn and mothers have difficulty not fighting wars they couldn’t win.

The End.