

Chapter 11

The Old Woman's Story

Born to Evelyn Gomes on September 4, 1954, Eleanor Grace Gomes was also the daughter of then-President Dwight David Eisenhower. Evelyn had been an aid in the White House before she became pregnant, but the post of First Lady stood occupied, so Evelyn had been sent home to Tulsa on generous terms. Her family were scandalized until they learned of the settlement, then took them in with open arms.

Eleanor had grown to become a great beauty, and competed in pageants at the state level, taking home a trove of ribbons. In 1970, she had been named Miss Oklahoma and sent to Atlantic City to compete in the Miss America pageant. There, she had met a handsome and popular movie star. She didn't take home the crown, but Eleanor did come back with a ring. Her movie star brought her to Hollywood and introduced her to all the famous people she'd ever heard of, and they all complimented her beauty. Their happiness became big news, and all of tinsel-town spoke of it.

Her movie star had an ex-wife, and a week before the wedding, she invited him by to talk things through over yerba mate and yoga. He fell asleep at the wheel on his way home and ran his sports car over the cliffs and into the Pacific ocean. Eleanor's heart broke hopelessly, and her mother despaired and took them on vacation to El Paso, away from the sea.

Her travel agent did not know that the hospitality company that served her customers there had fallen into arrears, and been purchased by some enterprising young men from Juarez. These were glad to host as many American women as might seek accommodation.

At this point, Frank had to stretch out his search. Newspaper records wouldn't tell him everything. He skimmed a library catalogue and found a non-fiction book that included a three-chapter expose on the very enterprise that had preyed upon Evelyn and Eleanor. Frank accessed the full text. According to the authors, women who had survived vacations with these men reported being raped in the taxi cab on the way from the airport, taken to a moldy and filthy motel and raped again, then locked in dog-pens. Men would come by after a long wait and haul them up and strip them naked and search their assholes for goodies, then rape them some more and lock them back up with a few bottles of water.

Things were going very well for these men, selling the women to prostitution rings and harems and slave-pits all over the world. They reached too far, however, when they chose to ransom Eleanor and Evelyn, realizing their family would pay much more than market value. The women had been returned to Tulsa in a grim state. When they reported the details of the hospitality they had received in El Paso and Juarez, everybody from the CIA to the Texas Rangers wanted in on the act of retribution. A joint task force had razed four square blocks near the Rio Grande on the Juarez side. The official death toll from the raid, as reported in Frank's text, was four. Yet the authors had felt moved to include a footnote to the effect that the people of Juarez, who had done the actual counting, had counted one-hundred-thirty-two.

Having cross-referenced court records in his search, Frank found, and cleverly unsealed, an account of a private settlement awarded to Eleanor from her Uncle Earnest, who had lost his testicles to cancer while Eleanor was on vacation in Mexico. A Tulsa judge had determined that Earnest should pay for his niece's mental health care as long as required, and that he should furthermore desist from joining her in bed as she wept, rubbing against her, and moaning, "Oh Fuck, how I miss my balls".