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In Another Country

by Joseph Solis-Mullen

There had been an attack overnight on one of the military bases in the occupied country. Three soldiers were dead, and it thrust the war everyone had stopped wanting to talk about back into the national news spotlight for a good part of the day. The facts of what happened were really quite simple and only filled up about five minutes of airtime (a truck bomb had been detonated at an outer checkpoint and insurgent fighters had entered the base shooting as many as they could before eventually being killed themselves), and so the rest of the morning and early afternoon was filled with pundits and on-air personalities from both sides of the political aisle going back and forth about what was being done right in the war, what was being done wrong, and how the current administration was doing great, how they were doing terribly, how it was at least better than the previous administration, and how it was certainly worse, and so on and so on.

The next day there was a hearing in the Capital, where the banking heads of the nation were called to testify as to how they'd sunk the economy and destroyed peoples' life savings, ruined current livelihoods, and severely dampened the future prospects of most everyone in the country. Their answers, the bankers' answers, to these questions were very long, vacuous, and, despite their emptiness, very difficult to comprehend, but were apparently very satisfactory to those conducting the hearing, who nodded mechanically along, and after eight hours concluded by saying the merits of the bailout proposed for the banks, and put together by the lobbyists and legislators the bankers themselves had bought, would be debated and summarily voted on within the week. It made for quite a dull cycle that day as no one on either side had much to say on the subject other than that it was quite likely to go through for the whole economy would be even further ruined without it, and viewers who were polled found the esotericism of monetary and fiscal policy quite boring and had mostly turned out that day.

The day after that, though, a scandal broke that made for excellent news, the best in weeks, maybe even months. It was discovered that a high-ranking

elected representative of the people had been embezzling money to keep up a mistress in another country. Regardless of party affiliation every station picked up the salacious bit of titillation and ran with it, the actual criminal element playing decidedly second, or maybe third, or even fourth, fiddle. A serious thing, pundits declared roundly; most serious; not right at all, they agreed; in this economy, they said; outsourcing even that, one joked, and everyone on that particular panel had a good laugh, though they quickly regained their severe demeanor.

This was, after all, no joke.

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