

NATIVE GARDENS BY KAREN ZACARÍAS

FRANK SIDE

VIRGINIA

This is silly. They might see us.

FRANK

They are asleep. And I want to see the damage. I want you to see it. They seemed so kind and so civilized. [*GASPS WHEN HE LIGHTS TANIA'S WILTED HYDRANGEA'S AND SEE THEY ARE GONE*] But who rips out Hydrangeas? They could have been saved. Those poor plants are being murdered!

VIRGINIA

It's not good for you to get so worked up about it.

FRANK

These are living things that were planted with purpose and care. Now look at this. It used to be flags...now it's—

VIRGINIA

Stakes! Why are they out so far?

FRANK

Ginny! That's where the new fence is going to go. They say their property is two feet further than the old fence.

VIRGINIA

What? This far? That's crazy. When did they tell you?

FRANK

While I was clipping the ivy. As a favor to them. I'm taking a picture.

VIRGINIA

They want to take our land?

FRANK

The dandy Esquire nonchalantly told me that they own this much of our property.

VIRGINIA

Where did they get that idea?

FRANK

From the documents attached to their mortgage. And then the survey they did ... showed the same thing. They have documents. Do we?

VIRGINIA

It's been decades. God know where ours are.

FRANK

Did you ever think we were taking land that wasn't ours?

VIRGINIA

Us? Of course not! What did you say?

FRANK

I told him to “Hold his Tongue and Shut his BIG Mouth” and I shook my fist and told him I’d see him in Court.

VIRGINIA

Really? You did? To a lawyer?

FRANK

Basically! And then I walked away.

VIRGINIA

You walked away? Please don’t tell me you rolled over like a circus dog.

FRANK

No — I was vicious. And intimidating.

VIRGINIA

You cannot cede an inch with this. You hear? An inch becomes a foot becomes a yard.

FRANK

I assure you. Walking away wasn’t a retreat.

VIRGINIA

Chamberlain looked the other way when it came to Poland. Nothing appeases greed.

FRANK

I’ve been documenting the destruction all evening.

VIRGINIA

But we need more than photos. We need to find those documents. This is our property!

FRANK

We were so nice to them. And they seemed to like us. What have we done to deserve this?

VIRGINIA

Nothing but bring them wine and dark chocolate.

FRANK

Exactly. You know how I worked on the flowerbeds. Just to have a fence slam into them. Sever them. Days before the garden judgment. I’ll never win “Best Garden.” Thanks to them, I may not even be in the running ever. Phillip Saxon will gloat all year.

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PABLO SIDE TANIA SIDE 1

PABLO Frank threatened me.

TANIA Sweet Frank? No way.

PABLO Oh. He showed some big “cojones” last night.

TANIA That term is ridiculous. Testicles are the most delicate part of a man. What did you say?

PABLO Nothing! All I know is he said we are wild, messy people and we should go native somewhere else.

TANIA He did not say that!

PABLO It’s what he meant. And he says he knows powerful people. He says he works for the “agency”.

TANIA What does that mean?

PABLO In Chile it means very bad things.

TANIA Do you think Frank Butley is CIA?

PABLO No! I googled him. He’s GSA. As in General Services. His agency manages other agencies. They buy phones and soap and toilet paper. [*CONVINCING HIMSELF*] Not scary.

TANIA But you said he knows powerful people. And she’s a defense contractor. What have we gotten ourselves in to?

PABLO Nobody tells me what I can do or not do. Not in my house. NOT IN MY BACK YARD!

TANIA Pablo, are you feeling OK?

PABLO They are researching Adverse Possession.

TANIA Virginia and Frank Butley are invoking squatter rights? Do they have a case?

PABLO I told them they didn’t.

TANIA I thought Squatter rights were for poor people.

PABLO It’s a travesty of justice.

TANIA But you say they don’t have a case?

PABLO No, I didn’t say that. I told them they didn’t want to fight Smith, Krause and Wilson.

TANIA You told them to not fight the Man?

PABLO Yes. TANIA Because we are now: the Man?

PABLO Yes.

TANIA One thing is this being between two neighbors. But now you set up that small old couple against a huge industrial law firm ... and everything seems very different.

PABLO Isn't that what the struggle is for you? Moving up? Buying a house? Becoming the boss? Isn't this the American Dream?

TANIA Enabling large institutions to crush little old white people? No!

PABLO They are Republicans!

TANIA They are still people!

PABLO Tania you know better than anyone that we don't reverse years of discrimination, of growing up like second-class citizens, of being the "minority" because in one instance we have the upper hand.

TANIA We? Wait a second, Señor Mister. You weren't called a spic in second grade or asked if you were illegal when you applied for a waitressing job. You had maids and butlers, and took cello lessons, and vacationed in Europe. You grew up with the biggest silver spoon in your mouth of anyone I know. You were never treated as inferior in Chile in anyway.

PABLO No. But I became a minority the moment I moved to this country. And I know that we have to WANT to be the MAN or nothing will ever change.

TANIA No! It's all this Man, Machista, Cojones talk that is the problem. I'm going to talk to Virginia, woman-to-woman. And get this resolved.

VIRGINIA I think I might have a very similar story to yours. I grew up with very few things. Not in New Mexico. But Buffalo. Like you, I made my way into the world. I started earning money ... oh my ... the flushness of it, the possibility of it, gave me quite a rush. Made me want things even more. But things that I could not buy. Like Respect.

TANIA Ginny, we didn't mean to be disrespectful.

VIRGINIA Of course not. But you were.

TANIA You do understand we do have the right to build the fence.

VIRGINIA Yes, I do. But think about it. Your husband makes an impulsive decision that in six days destroys decades of someone else's hard work. Don't you find that kind of ... entitled?

TANIA But you are the ones that felt entitled to plant flowers wherever you want...

VIRGINIA Can you hear yourself? You are accusing us of what? Planting flowers. Now what kind of crime is that?

TANIA It's our land. And those flowers are detrimental to the environment.

VIRGINIA Great! Save the world, but screw your neighbors. What kind of environment is that? You said you didn't understand how this all spiraled. I'm an engineer...So I'm explaining it to you: Your desire for more started this all.

TANIA You mean my greed?

VIRGINIA I didn't say that word. Did I?

TANIA No one has ever called me greedy before.

VIRGINIA You are a woman. They probably masked it with more generous words ... like ambitious and determined ... or bitchy. It's so unfair. Believe me, I know.

TANIA I'm greedy for hoping to get what I paid for? So Virginia, what are you? How did you acquire more land than you bought?

VIRGINIA As far as I remember, this has been like this for a very long time.

TANIA And that's the crux of it. You have because you have. Because you are used to it. Stolen goods are not stolen, they are acquired. The world is already so entrenched in your favor you don't even need to recognize how you benefit from inequity. You are blind to your privilege! And you don't stop unless you are held accountable. You ... you people ...you ...

VIRGINIA You? What do you mean ... by: You people?

TANIA *[BEAT]* You and Frank.

VIRGINIA You mean senior people?

TANIA I mean ... you and Frank.

VIRGINIA Do you mean white people?

TANIA Do not put words in my mouth.

VIRGINIA You are attacking us because we are rich and white. That's classism and racism. Would you make this kind of ruckus if Frank and I had been black? Or Latino? Would you attack us if we had a Cactus in our back yard?

TANIA Oh, because Mexicans only want Cacti in their back yard?

VIRGINIA See! You are Mexican.

TANIA I am Mexican! And American! And Latinx!

VIRGINIA Latin — what?

TANIA X!

VIRGINIA Why are you yelling?

TANIA I want to make sure you hear me, even if you don't want to!

VIRGINIA Ah-ha! See? There it is, the big chip on the shoulder. You would handle this different if we were different.

TANIA No. I would not. If you were my Latinx neighbor and you had 2 feet of our yard, you better believe I would still come and claim it. But ... I bet you would be a lot less resistant to our rightful legal rights if we "fit in better."

VIRGINIA I know you mock us. You think you're better than us because you're young and hip. That, young lady, is ageism.