

Friendships Gone Awry
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By Brenda Lee Huerta

As the pounding persisted on the door, Mary rushed to open it.

“Wait, don’t open it!” the other three furiously whispered. She stopped in her tracks, turning around. John reached out to hold her arm.

“Look through the peephole first.”

She tiptoed over and peered out. Michael had his fist raised to keep pounding and Ella was standing behind him.

“What do I do?” her voice dropped lower. Grace put her finger to her lips and quietly whispered to John and Sylvia.

“Let’s go into the hallway, where they can’t see us. Mary, open the door, but block it and don’t let them in.”

Carefully Mary opened the door.

“What’s all the commotion? I was sound asleep.”

Michael tried to get past her. “Can we come in? We need to talk to you.”

Mary glared at him. “Are you kidding??! It’s 5:30 in the morning! Come back another time and be sure and call me first!” She began to close the door when he abruptly put his arm out and barged in, Ella right behind him.

Mary stumbled back. John started out of the hallway, but Grace held him back with surprising strength.

“What are you doing?” Mary exclaimed.

Michael immediately began shouting. “Enough is enough. Where is the Golden Sassafras? You had better tell us right now. Don’t lie. Did you give it to Sylvia or is it here in the house?”

During his diatribe, Mary had been inching back slowly toward the couch and the end table, her hands behind her back. “You’re right, enough is enough. Why are you so interested in the Golden Sassafras? If you have something evil planned, you might as well forget it.” She immediately regretted saying that. They couldn’t know she had time-traveled and knew what they were up to.

With a startled look on his face, Michael turned to Ella and then back to Mary. “What are you talking about? Ella is your friend and I am too. Why would we be doing anything evil? Tell her, Ella. We’re only interested because Ella thought it would be nice if she got the Golden Sassafras now to place in her home.”

“Yes, yes,” interjected Ella. “It brings back such good memories of our carefree years and the friendship we shared. I am sorry Michael seems abrupt and demanding. He is rather an enthusiastic supporter, loving the story behind it.”

“Well, I don’t have it,” Mary blurted out.

Fire seemed to ignite in Michael’s eyes. “Who has it then?”

Mary looked him straight in the eyes, “I am not at liberty to say. But, I will say that I don’t think we have a chance in the world to get it back and I’m glad!”

Furious, he charged Mary. With her hands behind her back, Mary opened the drawer in the end table, and pulled out a beautifully carved letter opener.

“Don’t come any closer,” she threatened, holding it in front of her.

Everyone froze, holding their collective breath, including John, Grace and Sylvia. Ella was the first to speak.

“Mary, what are you doing? Michael, please, it’s not that important. I just thought Mary might want to share, since it was given to all four of us; and she has had it for over 7 years. Mary, please calm down. As I said, it’s not that important. Think about it and let me know when you get it back from wherever or whomever has it. I can come by and pick it up. It’s only fair.”

Mary kept the letter opener pointed at Michael and Ella. She breathed evenly as she had learned when meditating to bring Henry and Aronia to her side.

“You’re right, Ella. How inconsiderate of me to keep the Golden Sassafras for so many years. Of course, you have the right to share. Let me see about getting it back. I’ll call or text you when it’s back.”

Ella quickly glanced at Michael and gave a small nod.

“That’s fine. Could you please hurry. I’m planning to go home within the next two days.”

It was hard not to look in the direction of the hallway and see what her friends were doing. Slowly, she lowered the letter opener.

“Definitely, no problem.” Looking in Michael’s direction, adding, “Be sure and call before coming again. I’ll let you know, Ella. Until then. . .”

Both turned and walked toward the door. Mary stayed where she was, watching them go out and close the door.

She exhaled loudly and her friends came running into the living room, hugging her. For once, she didn’t push them away.

“You were so brave,” exclaimed Sylvia.

John gazed at her with loving admiration. “You are the best. I’m looking forward to catching up on all those years and lost opportunities.”

Grace, still with a steely look in her eye, said nothing.

Looking at Grace, Mary asked, “What next? Henry and Aronia aren’t going to give it back to me, especially since Michael, Ella and Jing Liu are planning to use it for their benefit, without taking into account what the consequences could be.”

Looking grim, Grace said, “Let’s sit down and plan our course of action. We only have a day or so now.”

“Some iced coffee and a slice of cinnamon/raisin bundt cake would be good about now,” Mary said as she led them to the kitchen. They sat, eating and drinking, as each one dug deep into themselves to come up with an idea to stop the momentum of what could turn out to be disastrous. Fear also entered into the equation because each one was placing their life on the line.

Each one had a lot to lose. Sylvia could lose her life . . . again. Grace was an enigma. With John, there was so much catching up. And Mary was finding a new side to her, braver and willing to take chances.

As they were thinking, pounding started at the door, again.

Brenda has had a lovely time living. Her careers have given her the freedom to travel all over the country and the world, always learning new things. For more than 22 years, she served as the News/Community Relations Director for Univision Radio. Through this connection, she forged many friendships with wonderful people in the Rio Grande Valley and Mexico. On one of those trips to Mexico, she connected with Roda, a connection that continues to lead her into different realms she never thought possible. Thank you, Roda, for being that wonderful lightning rod and a beautiful woman and friend.