

Capitol Punishment

Part 10/17/78

'It's Just Not the Same Without The FBI At the Door'

By Art Buchwald

The Godfather was in a very good mood when I kissed his ring. He invited me to sit down in his office and offered me a cigar.

"What can I do for you?" he asked. "You have any enemies you want me to take care of? Does your son need a job in Las Vegas? Would you like me to fix a horse race for you?"

"No, Godfather. You asked to see me."

"That's right," he said. "I don't remember as well as I used to. Let's see now. Oh, yeh. Tell me about Washington."

"It's okay, Godfather. No better or worse than usual."

"There's lots of crime down there now, huh?"

"Well, there seems to be more than usual. White-collar stuff. You know, federal employes ripping off the government; representatives and senators taking money they shouldn't; contractors being accused of payoffs; not to mention the usual stuff of legitimate companies being indicted for violating every law in the book."

The Godfather said, "I imagine the FBI must be working day and night finding out who is doing what to whom down there."

"They're pretty busy, because every time a scandal breaks the president or Congress asks the FBI to investigate it. It gets them off the hook."

"That's what I figured," he said. "I was wondering why it was so quiet around here. My people said it was too quiet and something was up. But I said, 'Just read the papers. The Feds don't have time to fight organized crime. They got too much to do in Washington investigating their own people. They got nobody left to find out what we're up to.'"

"I think you're right, Godfather. I haven't heard one FBI man or Justice

Department lawyer mention the mob since the Washington scandal broke."

"I know I'm right. I used to have round-the-clock surveillance in front of my house. Four guys in a car at one time, and they took movies of everyone going in and out. Now there's one gumshoe comes on Thursdays and takes three Polaroid pictures, and you don't see him again for a month."

"Does it bother you, Godfather?"

"When you're in the big-time rackets you like to be taken seriously. The soldiers in the family are losing respect for me. They figure if the Feds aren't interested in what I'm up to, I can't be that important. How can I keep everyone in line if the Justice Department acts like I'm not a threat?"

"You have a good point," I said. "What can I do, Godfather?"

"I want you to tell my boys—they only read the sports pages—why the Justice Department don't have time for people like us anymore. I want you to explain that there's so much stealing going on in Washington, all the resources of the FBI have been mobilized to root out corruption in the government. That's why they've put people like me on the back burner. Tell 'em that the Justice Department still considers me a menace to society, but they just don't have the legal talent to find out what I'm up to."

"I'll do it, Godfather. After all it's the truth. There's just so many FBI agents to go around and they have to clean up their own backyard before they go picking on strangers."

"I want you to know I appreciate you doing this," the Godfather said. "I never forget a favor. Can I hijack a truckload of cigarettes for your wife?"

"Thank you, Godfather. But she just gave up smoking."

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