

Marie . . .

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"Then why, do tell, do you scan the personals every day for your name?"

Marie is caught off balance but quickly recovers. "Amusement," she says, dropping her hands into her pockets. "Amusement."

"I see," I say.

"Well, maybe I'm doing a little flame seeking too. I don't have any illusions about it though, and before you ask me about Jason . . ."

"You like him because you can keep your distance. THAT makes a lot of sense."

"Actually," she says, "It does."

In any other mood, I might concede. In this one, I arch my eyebrows and snort.

Marie kicks me in the shins. I howl.

"Thanks a lot," she says, "now I'm depressed."

"Good," I say.

"I guess I'm a movie baby too. Nobody is ever good enough because they just don't match up to the silver screen standards. How could anybody? Anymore people look passionately into each other's eye—the other eye is usually focused on the door."

Marie is off and running. I sigh and slide down the tree, and sit with hands over knees. Marie paces back and forth orating.

I throw a dirt clod at her. She stops in mid-sentence and looks down at me. Her mouth hangs open.

I smile innocently up at her. Marie laughs and slides down next to me. She hooks her arm in mine and puts her head on my shoulder.

"Well," she sighs, "What else is new?"

Elections similar . . .

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at the "wirt, wirt"), Martin Van Buren brilliantly schemed and maneuvered his way into the White House. But once there, he proved disastrously indecisive and inept.

As with Carter, we suffered an enormous economic dislocation (the Panic of 1837). As with the Panama Canal, we gave away large portions of Maine. As now, we couldn't get along with Mexico, and we were ridiculed and loathed by European powers.

Van Buren's fiscal policies and clumsy attempts to restructure government riled his fellow Democrats, as did his inability to reconcile his party's northern and southern wings just like Carter. Many Democrats were

overjoyed to see him go.

The biggest difference between 1840 and now is that—unlike John Anderson—James G. Birney realized the futility of his independent cause and dropped out early. The triumph of abolition—certainly a nobler cause than Anderson's 50 cent gas tax—had to wait another 20 years until the great contest of wits and principles between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas.

Just as many now expect Reagan to do, the amiable Harrison and his hard cider won, though it hardly seemed to matter who did. The consolation, such as it is, is that we survived.

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