

Armageddon

By Ann Casas

Once upon a time there was a very rich man named Marty Melardo. He had everything he ever needed or wanted. Just like King Midas, whatever business or enterprise he started brought him fame and fortune. By fortune I mean he became well-known for his business acumen. Each time he made a successful deal the news would proclaim, "Marty Melardo Lands Another Big One!" and his face and name would be blasted throughout the media. He seemed to have it all.

Unfortunately, he was not satisfied. He wanted more! He began to crave all the attention and would do whatever it took to be noticed. He even bought a television station so that he could have his own show, starring himself. He enjoyed that for a while, but again grew tired of it.

"What I really need to do is run for president, Lola," he told his beautiful blond young trophy wife. She nodded in agreement. She understood that her place was to make Marty happy, and if she discouraged him, he would get angry and become very mean.

"Of course, baby! That would be so fun! I'd love to live in the White House!" she giggled as she rubbed his neck. "How will you start?"

"First, I'll call my personal assistant Justin. He'll arrange for a press conference. I will call my campaign, 'America the Best.' I will make a list of what I need to say to the press and then make that call." He then left to his study to plan his presidential campaign.

"This country is a mess! The criminals from other countries are free to inhabit our land, swarming in like cockroaches. Terrorists are allowed to infiltrate our society and blow up our cities. They are what make our country bad. Make America the Best by closing the borders!" he thought to himself as he began to write.

Marty was on a roll. "America can become the best by monitoring trade with China. Also, I have so much of my business tied up with the Chinese, I'm sure I can benefit from this position." He chuckled to himself as he wrote this down. "More guns, no abortion, no same-sex marriage - let's see, what else can I include? Oh, I know! Create more jobs! The people will love this!" he smiled to himself. "I'll call Justin and see what he thinks."

Marty informed his retinue of his intentions to run for president. "Start ad campaigns going for my presidency on my station. Make sure you schedule time for me to speak publically on current issues so that the people will know where I stand" he informed Justin.

Justin arranged for an open discussion the next week, inviting potential candidates in an open forum that would take questions from the press. He hoped that Marty was informed on the issues. What he could not control was how Marty would answer the questions .

“Mr. Melardo, are you aware of the Ayatollah Khamenei’s position on nuclear armament in the Middle East?” asked a reporter from another station. He waited for Marty’s response.

Marty was totally unprepared to answer this question. He knew he had to say something, so he thought quickly and then responded.

“Ayatollah Smayatolla! He is a towel-headed idiot. What we need to do is find ways to stop tax increases. I say let’s make America the Best! No more unnecessary taxes!” He grinned and then waved at the crowd. His supporters all cheered at this, and the reporter, who realized Melardo had side-stepped his question, gave up.

“Marty Melardo for President!” the people began to chant. Justin arranged for around the clock campaign time for him. Marty was consistently in the lead.

No one was more amazed than Marty at his popularity. “Wow! I just might become president!” he realized. He was on such a power trip that his lack of political experience and protocol didn’t deter him from his goal. “The people love me because I’m not afraid to tell them what *they* really think needs to be done to make America the Best.”

Marty was chosen as his party’s candidate, and as the other party’s candidate was not as charismatic or as rich, he had no trouble winning the election. “Baby! Get ready to move into the White House. You and me will rock this country!” he shouted to Lola as the final results posted.

The first few months were a period of adjustment, but as he settled in, Marty realized he was overwhelmed with international problems. He began to lose his temper when crossed, often offending those in power, especially with foreign dignitaries that questioned his position. “Bomb the bastards!” He would say. War was inevitable.

It was only a matter of time until the offended countries banded together to overthrow Melardo’s government and take control of the economy. As he had made enemies with border countries because of his immigration laws, armies formed with arsenal set to destroy the United States. Foreign markets called in debt, so the stock market quickly crashed. America was a mess!

“Bomb the bastards!” became a battle cry. World War III had begun. Melardo was forced to prepare for an eventual nuclear disaster. When the end finally came, only a few people understood how the situation could have been avoided, but it was now too late.