

If Linda Leary knew anything, it was how to compartmentalize her life. This hour belonged to politics. The half-hour slot afterwards belonged to business. For now, it would just have to wait.

All the fine ladies in the room recognized the president of the Indiana League of Woman Voters. She carried herself regally as she entered the tea room. Her black tailored skirt made her blue silk blouse pop. Her tiny diamonds and perfectly coiffed silver hair announced that she was a lady of wealth and power. As she performed with all the charm of a beloved queen, not one of her subjects would guess that moments ago she had received distressing news.

When the murmur subsided in the room, she turned and walked gracefully to the podium. She stood beside it, not behind it. She stood on her own for everyone to see. She needed nothing to lean on. She did not even need the microphone. With a clear, musical voice, she knew how to make her thoughts heard without amplification.

“Good afternoon, ladies. Thank you for being here. How are you?”

She received a warm round of applause.

“More important,” she shouted, “how is Indiana?” She paused before raising her voice, getting the timing just right. “And most of all,” she shouted, “what are we going to do about it?” The audience reaction brought tears to her eyes.

At 3:45, her son, Paul Heilbrunn, opened the car door and slipped in beside her to talk. “Well, how much did we lose?” she asked.

“A hundred and sixty kilos,” Paul answered. “Frankly, I was afraid of this. Those outsiders who came to us at Christmas fumbled the play. A plane goes down in weather, the cops pick up that Bryce kid, and Stilton vanishes. The kid can hurt us, but that lawyer can kill us.”