

#10 - Weinberger, Mollie

WEINBERGER: But you should be prepared to see that social change requires patience and timing. If you come out swinging a club, they'll bring out theirs, and they always have more of them than you do. But if you chip away at them with the same laws they use to hem you in, then in time they'll get complacent or confused—you'll sneak in and make a significant change without them even realizing it!

MOLLIE: Maybe you are the one changed without realizing it.

WEINBERGER (a beat; frustrated): If you'd have taken my advice a year ago, you might have already begun to see the truth in what I'm saying.

MOLLIE: Yes. And become the next Mary Lilly.

WEINBERGER: No—the first Mollie Steimer. Now the best I can do for you is to get you on a boat to Russia. (*taking out another set of papers and offering them to her.*) Here. I need your signature on this.

MOLLIE (not taking them): What is it?

WEINBERGER: The petition for your release. Along with the others.

MOLLIE: What petition?

WEINBERGER: Look, it's the only way. (*forcibly showing it to her; rapidly*): The first part is just the usual nonsense—you admit you were wrong, you say you're sorry, you concede the government's right to judge you, and you promise to conduct yourselves lawfully in the future.

MOLLIE: What is the matter with you?!

WEINBERGER: Just ignore it, Mollie! The words don't mean a thing. It's only a formality—a compromise which seems well worth making given the alternative.

MOLLIE: But—

WEINBERGER: *But* I knew you'd object, so look here—instead of “A Request for Pardon,” I've called it “A Demand for Amnesty.” And down here, look, it ends with the statement: “My sentiments are the same now as they were at the trial and at the time of the issuance of the leaflets.” Which pretty much cancels out everything that came before. But they never read that far down—

MOLLIE (scornful laughter): You don't understand the slightest thing! My objection isn't to the *wording* but simply to what it is. I've constantly told people that they should never petition the government for *anything*. I can't go back on that *now* just because it's in my interest. By acknowledging their power over us in any way whatsoever—

WEINBERGER: You already admit defeat. Yes, I know the *theory*. But look at the *facts*, Mollie. Right now you are completely in the power of the state for the next *fifteen* years. I assume you're not exactly fond of your lodgings here.

MOLLIE: Don't play games with me.

WEINBERGER: Well, like it or not, this ridiculous little piece of paper is the only way for you to get free of this place. And Jefferson City, which is far worse, believe me.

MOLLIE: I don't care. Besides, what makes my case so special? I have no intention of asking for my release when thousands of others are still in jail.

WEINBERGER: That's just it. Your release can serve as the opening wedge to gain amnesty for all the rest. By refusing to sign, you simply stop having anything done for the others who *want* it done.

MOLLIE: Why don't you demand that *all* political prisoners be released?

WEINBERGER: I just told you, it doesn't work like that.

MOLLIE: But it has to work like that, or it's no good.

WEINBERGER: If the other people's lawyers want to follow my lead, that's fine.

MOLLIE: Oh, I see. You want to be the first. That's why you're in such a hurry.

WEINBERGER: I'm trying to strike while the iron is hot.

MOLLIE: Maybe then you will be invited to tea with Brandeis.

WEINBERGER: Abrams and Lipman have already agreed to sign.

MOLLIE: Fine. Act on their behalf if you like, but leave me out of it.

WEINBERGER: Mollie, just look at where you are.

MOLLIE: I know exactly where I am! And I will not move one inch until my basic human rights are respected. Especially by my own lawyer.

WEINBERGER: How can you say that to me? How? Sometimes I don't know why I even bother. I've worked myself to death for you people, and for nothing—no, it's actually cost me. Abrams and

Lipman try some foolish escape that doesn't have a prayer of succeeding, and guess who has to pay for their return, as well as their guards'. Five hundred dollars! Far worse / is the damage it does to my appeals.

Both overlapping at the /.

MOLLIE: Well, I'm sorry our foolishness has cost / you so much money.

WEINBERGER: And meanwhile here you are, / making such a fuss over nothing.

MOLLIE: I doubt we will ever be able / to repay you every dollar—

WEINBERGER: Look, I don't care if you're ungrateful. / Just don't get in the way.

MOLLIE: —but perhaps the *personal glory* you've earned (*WEINBERGER scoffs.*) from our case will more than make up for the loss.

WEINBERGER: Personal glory! You know, you've always enjoyed mocking my ambitions, but what about your own? Maybe you don't want to be in the newspapers, but you're on a private mission just the same. It's like you're waiting for someone to come along with a club and beat you to death, just so you can prove to yourself how perfect you are. And what a waste of life that is, because we don't need your perfection, Mollie. If you think it's otherwise, then you're only deluding yourself.

MOLLIE: If you think that, then why do you need my approval so badly?

A beat. Both of them are deeply wounded.

WEINBERGER: I don't know, I really don't. I've been asking myself that question for some time now.

MOLLIE: Well, keep asking.