



A Jailbird's-Eye View of Tent City

Di Erickson

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“A Jailbird’s-eye View of Tent City” draws openly from an 18 month stay in county jail. This tale is a lighthearted, comic spoof of Sheriff Joe Arpaio’s Tent City located in Phoenix, Arizona. It contains exploits and anecdotes navigating the perilous and often absurd ins and outs of a detention center which has been a lightning rod for controversy. A Jailbird’s-eye View of Tent City features affable, optimistic schemer, Janie Doughy. At 48, Doughy finds herself confined to indoor lockup where she waits six months for a judge to decide her fate. Here she befriends Maria; a prostitute, who is the maternal, interfering kind with a lifetime habit of butting into other people’s business. Keisha is Doughy’s poker partner who could do more with the raising of an eyebrow than Moses could do with the Ten Commandments. Angel has a glass-eye and a heart of marble, yet Doughy finds herself unaccountably attracted to her. Doughy is finally sentenced to one year in Tent City. Refusing to work in the laundry without Hazmat certification, Doughy is manhandled and tossed into the hole. Humbled by isolation, she returns to the tents only to be hit in the head with a pink sock full of combination locks (Slock) for sitting at the wrong table at chow. Unmoved by unpleasantness, Doughy dreams up a scheme to get cigarettes into the encampment to help shore up her gambling problem. “A Jailbird’s-eye View of Tent City” is a feel good tale that ends in heavenly redemption, while offering: some fights, plenty of lunatics, oodles of racial tension, pink undies, green bologna and a women’s chain gang. Doughy’s contrite manner, delusional optimism, perseverance and a surrounding cast of endearing convicts makes this romp behind razor-wire more comic than corrective.

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