

Murphy

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The town of Murphy was founded in 1840 by a hardened Irishman named Rufus Murphy who established a farm and a small mill by a creek. He had escaped with his wife and two children from New York City to find a peaceful place to raise his family. He found it in Ohio. Murphy saw little growth over the next hundred years. The mill Rufus Murphy founded grew to service local farmers but not much more than this. A number of other farms located near the original Murphy home and a two-lane road built in the 1960s connected Murphy to the outer parts of the nearby city. But there was little growth in the town.

That was until the wealthy Luther Brunswick bought a home outside Murphy in the 1990s and began molding it into one of the wealthiest suburbs in the nation. Brunswick was the wealthiest man in the state and the most successful retailer in America during the last few decades of the twentieth-century and well into the first decade of the new century. His Brunswick Brands stores were the staple of all the malls in the nation.

There is little doubt he was a great retailing genius but perhaps his greatest ability was to create a new vision for retail space. In effect, he was really a builder of new types of shopping environments. He felt retail space needed to be taken from inside malls into the outside world and that this outside world should look

much like the mythological small-town America created in Walt Disney's Disneyland. In fact, many referred to Brunswick as the "Walt Disney of Retail" space. Certainly, the various outside malls he created around the nation were versions of small-town America much like Main Street in the original Disneyland. The buildings on the streets of the town were the stores of leading brands. Restaurants and theaters and live theaters are part of the mix. Leading businesses locate around these little towns that occupy the major space around the outer belts around the nation.

Luther Brunswick grew up in the nearby city and his first job and business ventures were this city. He saw no reason for leaving the city. Brunswick was less than twenty years out of college when he made this city the home of some of the nation's greatest brands. Any retail venture he touched turned to gold under his vision. The vast black buildings of Brunswick Brands could be seen just off the outer-belt around the city.

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His concept for his first great outdoor mall was just across the outer-belt freeway from the grand patchwork of buildings forming Brunswick Brands. It was called The East Town Brunswick Mall (or simply ETB by most people) and it was like a type of Disneyland of retail stores. It had a great central cathedral building somewhat like a huge greenhouse, like the inside of some great railway station of

the past. A grand meeting place for all who have come to the ETB. Spread out in all directions from the central structure are the streets of the town and the parking garages. There was always plenty of parking at the ETB when it started out, but parking got more problematic as the mall grew in popularity beyond even Brunswick's expectations. (Which were always very high)

At the pinnacle of the success of Brunswick Brands, Luther Brunswick moved from his huge mansion in the German section of the city to Murphy. The town was little more than five miles from the ETB Mall and the headquarters for Brunswick Brands. The home Brunswick built in Murphy was the largest home in all of eastern America. In fact, at the time it was built, it was said to be the second largest home in America in terms of square feet. It was built on a 300-acre farm that had a full horse stable, two tennis courts, two pools, a driveway half a mile long and a heliport. The inside of the home was even more spectacular with a full-time staff of 20 and priceless antiques and paintings.

It did not take Brunswick more than a few years to buy all the property around the town and become the largest player in local development. He formed the Murphy Foundation which created a plan for the town. Of course, the plan was really the vision of Luther Brunswick. Like the business brands he first visualized, like the first outside retail environment he created, he saw the town as the perfect

place for his new project. He was always needing new projects to feed his hungry vision of creating something new.

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The project was perhaps his largest project ever. He had created a great retail empire and new types of retail spaces. It only seemed logical for him to create an entire town based on his vision.

In the next ten years, an infrastructure around Murphy was created. Beautiful streets with large trees up and down them. A gorgeous golf course and clubhouse – many say the best in the state – were created, a great green sea around which the big mansions of the future town could be situated. He moved parts of his business out to the surrounding farmlands of Murphy. Soon, other businesses started to follow. One of his trademark signatures for branding everything inside Murphy with white fences along the roads, reminding drivers hey were in Murphy. People said it reminded them of the Blue Grass country in Kentucky. As it turns out, Brunswick did have ancestors in this area and spent much time here in his youth.

A few years ago, the town of Murphy was rated the number one suburb in America by the influential *Business Intelligence Magazine*. Each year, the magazine surveyed the nation's leading suburbs and rated them in a number of ways. Its annual designation of top suburb would usually bring good things like high real estate values to the area, and, not so good things, like more people to the

suburb. The town did little to market itself to the magazine. It simply sponsored the writing team from the magazine when they came to visit the city by putting them up at the local Marriott in Murphy. The city gave them a list and map of places to go and things to see, people to talk to. They were in town maybe five days and talked to many in the town. A month later, the city of Murphy was rated the number one suburb in America and featured in the cover story of the magazine.

Two years after the cover story in the magazine, the growth of Murphy continues unabated. The farms and farmland around the town have given way to huge distribution centers and headquarters for billion-dollar corporations. Beautiful condo communities now push further and further in the countryside around Murphy. Everything has the mark of Luther Brunswick's vision on them. All designed to the strict standards of Murphy.

Once, when Brunswick first moved out here, there was no more than a little two-lane road into the city. Now, there was a six-lane highway, and a few other major roads as well as a bunch of minor ones. In the downtown area of the town, there are now two huge condo projects as well as the headquarters for a large real estate development company. The traffic on the streets of the town have changed much over the years. Once, there was little more than an occasional car. But now, the streets of Murphy are locked in gridlock much of the day.

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The residents of Murphy are an interesting mix of baby-boomers with grandchildren coming to visit and young couples who want the best school for their children (the Murphy School System is rated the number one in the state). Many former leaders in the retail industry (and executives with Brunswick Brands) have retired to Murphy as well as the top doctors and lawyers in the city. Bicycling is a huge thing in Murphy and the downtown area features a store with \$5,000 bikes. The Club 92 Restaurant in the downtown area is considered the best restaurant in the city. The residents expect the best of most everything with the high taxes they pay.

But all is not perfect in Luther Brunswick's world these days and he spends more and more time trying to fix the declining profits of Brunswick Brands. Thirty years ago, they were on top of the retail industry, but new competition has come in as well as online sales. And, the ETB Mall is not the great destination place it once was filled with increasing crime at the mall in the evenings. All of this has given Brunswick less time to concentrate on Murphy. He flies all over the country visiting his declining shopping malls and is seldom seen around town.

Now, there is a growing number of citizens in Murphy who feel the town is changing from its original vision. There is concern that Luther Brunswick is no longer involved in the town, that its future has been turned over to the crass economic interests of developers and those on the board of the Murphy

Foundation. A number of residents meet informally and discuss issues like the increased traffic in the town and the loss of unique things about the town they moved to.

There are a few ways and places of letting off steam in Murphy about these changing conditions. Starbucks in the downtown area is one of the key places for town gossip. People complain about decreased park space over four-dollar lattes. Parking spaces are becoming a rarity. There are other places where discussions of the town take place: the local salons, the health club, the Old Ironside bar and Club 92, the dog park north of town, the town Intranet called Murphy Neighbors (MN). Residents of Murphy post problems to MN. There have been more break-ins around town and one person on the MN wants to know why the helicopter with the searchlight was hovering over Murphy a few nights ago. The MN site has a continual list of complaints. But everyone agrees it has little effect on changing anything in the town. The residents of the town and the city planners seem to have an increasing gulf between them.

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Mary Murphy has seen the great change in the town her distant relative Rufus Murphy founded. She is in her early 60s and still lives in the original home Rufus Murphy built in the early 1840s. The old mill is still on the property and she has restored it and made it into a combination office and social area for various

events in town she has hosted. Mary Murphy is well-known in the town and was Mayor of Murphy in the early 80s before things began to change.

Her husband was killed in the Vietnam War and she has raised their only child, a daughter named Caitlin. The original home and the surrounding two acres are located close to the downtown area of the town. In front of the home is a brass sign noting it is a historic location. The town has wanted to buy her property for a number of years, but she has the stubborn disposition of her Irish relatives and has refused to sell.

Caitlin was born in the mid-80s and went to the small high school in Murphy and then west to college and law school in California where she made a name for herself as a leading environmental lawyer. Recently, Caitlin left her job at the law firm and has decided to take some time off to think out her next career move. She has quickly received a number of offers from other top law firms, but she does not want to jump into another job immediately. She has been involved on the board of a foundation to restore older parts of the city and wonders if a legal career is the best thing for her. A five-year marriage has just come and gone without producing any children. Marriage does not seem the right thing for her.

Fires are raging all around Los Angeles and the air quality is poor and it's a good time to get out of southern California until the air clears. Caitlin calls her mother and tells her she is taking time off to decide on her next direction in life.

Her mother invites her to come back to Murphy and stay with her awhile. It sounds like a good idea and Caitlin agrees. Her mother is excited they will be together. Caitlin used to visit often when she first moved to California, but her visits have been fewer since her work at the law firm.

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Mary picks her daughter up at the airport. On the road into Murphy, Caitlin is startled to see the incredible change in the town since her last visit. The two-lane road into Murphy is gridlocked with traffic and new corporate headquarters fill land that used to be farmland.

“Murphy just created a Corporate Development Zone,” Mary says as they drive by the new business developments. “Another project of our new mayor.”

“None of this would have happened if you were still mayor,” Caitlin says.

“I could never get elected these days,” Mary says. “Times have changed. The Murphy Foundation and Brunswick control everything now. Development is the big goal now days.”

In the next few days, Mary drives her daughter around the sprawling new suburb of Murphy. There are Marriott and Hilton Hotels and endless condo developments. A half mile out of town, bulldozers clear a few hundred acres of farmland to make way for the huge new Target complex being built. Mary tells Caitlin how the town is out of touch with its residents. She tells her about a

growing movement in town to replace the mayor and Brunswick's cronies on the Murphy Foundation.

"They want me to run for mayor again," Mary says to Caitlin one night at dinner. "But I don't need the headaches. Besides, I see no way to change the direction of the town. Development of the entire city is moving out this way and it's impossible to fight the growth direction of a big midwestern city."

The group of unhappy Murphy residents meets each few weeks at the Ironside bar and vent their frustrations over drinks. Nothing ever gets done. Members of the group go to City Council meetings and write articles to the local newspaper the *Murphy Register*, but the town keeps growing without regard to the input from citizens. Mary takes Caitlin to their meeting tonight.

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A mixed group of Murphy citizens sit around a large table in a side room of the Ironside bar. There are a few older couples who have lived in Murphy many years and a number of old friends of Mary. There are also a few young people in the group. The problems of the growing town effect all types of residents. Caitlin recognizes some of the people and they recognize and welcome her. It is good to have her back and see firsthand what the town is going through. After a few drinks, talk gets around to the young mayor of the town Justin Bates. Everyone knows he is little more than one of Luther Brunswick's puppets.

“So, who is this mayor everyone wants to get rid of?” Caitlin asks.

“He’s a former star on the OSU football team,” one-woman answers. “He had a brief career in pro football and then returned to the city as a sports reporter on the local TV station. As you might know, Brunswick is a huge OSU football fan and had an eye on Bates. They met for dinner the story goes. In a month, Bates was on the ballot for mayor of Murphy.”

“The election was hotly contested,” an older man says. “Since we couldn’t convince your mother to run, we put up Angie Collins, your mother’s old friend. It was a close election. Decided by only a hundred ballots in favor of Bates. There was talk the election was rigged. I feel it’s more than talk. Brunswick controls everything in town. It wouldn’t be surprising if he controlled the voting machines.”

“There’s another election for mayor in a month,” says Mary. “We tried to convince Angie to run again but she’s had it with the town and thinking about moving out.”

“The person running against the mayor is no more than another puppet of Brunswick,” the older man says. “No one wants to stick their head out and seriously challenge Bates. It’s not a healthy think to do in this town.”

“Not surprisingly, the members of City Council are Brunswick puppets,” a young woman says. “The city planner, city engineer, public services director, the

town manager, the general counsel. They've all got positions on the Murphy Foundation and Brunswick controls the foundation."

"I worry that Brunswick's got other things on his mind these days with all the problems with his malls and brands," Mary Murphy says. "When he was active in development, there was a grand vision and plan to things. Now, he is distracted by his failing businesses and he travels all over the world trying to fix them. His mind is not on Murphy anymore. I suspect things are more and more controlled by the president of the Murphy Foundation, Max Sennett. I think he does things his way without the approval of Brunswick. I suspect he had something to do with fixing the election for mayor, if it was fixed. I know Brunswick. Have worked with him on some projects. It is difficult to believe he approves of everything going on in it now."

"Did you tell Caitlin about the city's suit to take your property away from you?" a woman asks.

"I didn't want to worry her," Mary says looking at her daughter.

"A suit to take your property?" Caitlin asks.

"The city has filed an eminent domain suit against me," Mary says. "They are demanding I sell the original Murphy home to the city and give up our two acres of property. You know what a central location it is. They want to build a new downtown hotel on our property and turn the mill into an antique store."

“You never said anything to me about this,” Caitlin says.

“I didn’t want to worry you with the divorce and all,” Mary says. “You have enough to worry about.”

“I’ve got enough room to worry about you,” Caitlin says.

Caitlin takes a long drink from her wine and slams the glass onto the table.

“Those bastards,” she says. “They’ve gone too far this time.”

Mary Murphy looks at her daughter in the dim light of the Ironside bar. She has not seen Caitlin this passionate about something for many years.

“What can we do?” asks one of the people around the table.

“We’re going to fight them,” Caitlin says. “My mother is running for mayor again. I’m going to be her campaign manager.”

Mary Murphy looks at her daughter for a moment.

“You’re sure you want to take this on?” she asks.

“Of course,” Caitlin says.

Mary smiles and clicks her wine glass against her daughter’s glass.

“Why not,” she says.

There are congratulations around the table.

“It won’t be easy,” says the older man. “But if anyone can defeat Bates, it’s Mary Murphy.”

“Yes,” the crowd around the table says in unison.

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The next morning, Mary and Caitlin go to city hall and file papers for Mary to run for mayor of Murphy as an Independent. Caitlin files as her campaign manager. They barely make the time limit for filing. The people at city hall know Mary well and are surprised she is running for mayor again. There is more than a little concern because she is well-liked by many in town and everyone knows she is an advocate for low-growth in Murphy.

That afternoon, the two women begin cleaning and rearranging things inside the old mill on the family property. Caitlin buys some long tables and a number of chairs at the nearby Home Depot. At the end of the day, the old mill is beginning to look like a campaign office.

And that evening, Mayor Justin Bates drives out to Max Sennett's home in Murphy. Sennett is the president of the Murphy Foundation and runs the town and development in the absence of Luther Brunswick. He lives in one of the large estates pushed back a quarter mile from the road. Sennett was one of Brunswick's top people in Brunswick Malls and many said he was the main push behind Luther Brunswick's over-expansion of them around the nation and the current crisis they are now experiencing. He came to Brunswick from a huge developer of retirement communities out west.

As Brunswick has been increasingly away from Murphy, traveling to put out fires with his fading malls and brands, Sennett has taken greater and greater control of things in Murphy. Mary Murphy and a few others in town suspect that Sennett is really running the show, but it is impossible to know as the Murphy Foundation is such a secretive organization.

Mayor Bates is beholden to Luther Brunswick for putting him up for mayor of Murphy. But Brunswick was away from town during the election when he beat Angie Collins by less than a hundred votes. There was a demand for a recount, but the city attorney and the election board declared Bates the winner.

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The two men sit in the den of Brunswick's home and discuss the new situation of Mary Murphy running for mayor of the town.

"I don't like it," Mayor Bates says. "Mary Murphy has a big following in town. No telling what kind of trouble she'll stir up."

Sennett is a heavy-set man in his early 60s with a tough, battle-scarred face and cold dark eyes like the black button eyes of a stuffed animal.

"What about Caitlin Murphy, her campaign manager?" Sennett asks.

"More trouble," Bates says. "I had her checked out. A bigtime lawyer from LA who is between jobs. Graduate of the old Murphy High school. Top of her class. Valedictorian. Captain of the soccer team. Popular. Graduate of UC Berkeley

and top in her class at UCLA Law School. Divorced. Mid-thirties. Attractive as hell. And, according to the election registrar, angry as a hornet about our eminent domain action against her mother's property."

"The Murphy property is vital to the development of the downtown hotel project," Sennett says. "You know how much we need this for continued development."

"I only wish Brunswick knew more of the details of the project," Bates says. "I'm not sure he would approve of all the details."

"Leave Brunswick and all this to me," Sennett says. "Right now, we need to concern ourselves with the upcoming election."

Max Sennett gets up and paces back-and-forth in front of the large fireplace in his den.

"What are we going to do?" Bates asks.

"I'm thinking," Sennett says.

Sennett pulls his yellow legal tablet off his desk and begins making a list of bulleted notes for a few minutes. He then hands the tablet to Bates.

"Mary Murphy is not going to know what hit her," Sennett says. "She'll learn you don't fool around with us."

Bates looks at the list and shakes his head.

"Some real dirty tricks," he says. "Maybe we should run this by Brunswick."

“Brunswick is in Europe for the next month trying to fix his malls,” Sennett says. “There is no need to run this by Brunswick.”

“He’ll be blamed for the dirty tricks,” Bates says.

“Isn’t that the point?” Sennett says. “I run the Foundation my own way and Brunswick gets blamed for everything. It’s an ideal situation.”

“You really think your plan to takeover things from Brunswick will work?” Bates says.

“Brunswick is a fading icon,” Sennett says. “His day is past. He’s lost much of his fortune. There’s little fight left in him. I’ve got the foundation board on my side. It’s just a matter of time until we vote Brunswick out of the foundation.”

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Within a week, Mary Murphy’s campaign is in full operation. The old mill is staffed by fifty devoted friends of Mary and some old high school classmates of Caitlin. Signs begin appearing all over town saying “Bring Back the Old Murphy. Vote Mary Murphy for Mayor.” The signs featured the old Murphy home in the background and Mary in front of it.

There is a large rally for Mary in the high school gym and hundreds of support comments posted on the Murphy Neighborhood website. The Ironside bar is busy with gossip about the race: Bates must be defeated; the town must be

returned to control by its citizens. Caitlin creates some ads for the local radio and television station and some articles for the *Murphy Register*.

But things are not all positive for Mary's campaign. Caitlin's article to the *Murphy Register* never makes it into the paper but instead there appears a frontpage headline story by Mayor Bates attacking Mary's character and motives for running. "Her real interest is blocking the progress of the new downtown hotel the town so desperately needs for our future," Bates writes. "The Murphy property stands in the way of progress. Mary Murphy wants to put the town back to the 1840s when her relatives founded the town but of course this is impossible."

There also appears a barrage of local radio and television commercials painting Mary as a terrible mayor of Murphy, a mayor who wanted no growth in Murphy but wanted it to remain like it used to be. The commercials pointed out how Murphy was selected the nation's number one suburb under the vision of Brunswick and the continued work of Bates. The commercials featured pictures of the high school, library, Brunswick Center, vast corporate parks, the health center, the beautiful downtown buildings, the golf course, the tree-lined streets. There were no scenes of the terrible traffic gridlock in Murphy and developments where old parks used to be.

Caitlin contacted Mayor Bates and asked for a debate between the candidates, but Bates declines saying he was too busy with town matters. "There is

no way we are going head-to-head with Mary Murphy in a debate,” Max Sennett tells Bates.

In addition to all of this, there are the usual dirty tricks of removing Mary’s campaign signs and replacing them with Bates’ signs in yards all over town, so it looks as if Bates has most of the town’s support. And, on billboards coming into Murphy, there are false claims that Mary Murphy wants to increase the already huge property taxes of Murphy. It’s an outright lie but she has a difficult time getting this out to the town media controlled by Sennett and the Murphy Foundation.

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Bates, Sennett and the Murphy Foundation held one important card in their hand. They realized that the largest division in Murphy was between the older and younger residents as it is in most towns. The younger residents were more in favor of progress and development than the older residents. None were all that interested in the history of the town. To them, the history of the town started when they moved to Murphy.

Most of the younger residents were millennials in their 30s who recently moved to Murphy from the urban areas in the nearby city. This was their first experience of buying a home and living in a suburb and they didn’t see the big

change in the town the older residents saw. Their major concern was Murphy's low crime rate and the town's top-ranked school system.

While they liked the country charm of the town, the young were used to the amenities of the nearby city. There would be a new Target so that they wouldn't have to travel fifteen miles to the nearest one. There were large sports fields and a new high school football stadium and more restaurants planned and enough coffee shops an ice cream parlors and quaint stores to keep them occupied and distracted from the election.

For the most part, the older residents lived in some of the original condos built when Brunswick first got involved with Murphy. Others had moved into assisted living facilities in town. They were the people who helped stuff campaign letters for Mary Murphy and showed up at her rally in the high school gym, the ones who were around the table at the Ironside bar when Caitlin first came to town. Many had lived in Murphy when Mary was mayor, before Brunswick even got involved with development. Many were active members of the Murphy Historical Society and knew much about the early years of the town.

The division in Murphy between young and new citizens was a natural division, not propelled by any of the propaganda or colorful brochures constantly produced by the Murphy Foundation. It was not complicated situation but a common one controlling much of the politics of the nation as a whole. The older

generations had a memory of the past while the younger generations had no past to have a memory of. The younger residents looked towards the future while the older residents looked towards the past. In many ways Murphy's division reflected the division of the nation as a whole. In many ways, the battle of Mary was that common battle in life between the old and new.

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Despite the heroic efforts of Caitlin and her team, the election is not even close this time. Mayor Justin Bates wins re-election by almost a two-thirds majority. There is no need to fool around with the election results. The town answers strongly that it wants to move forward towards increased development.

But Caitlin fights the eminent domain suit in court and takes it all the way to the state supreme court. The Murphy Foundation puts an army of their best lawyers against her but in the end, Caitlin wins the suit and her mother is able to keep her property. However, Caitlin and Mary discover something unusual in the eminent domain document filed against Mary. The name of Luther Brunswick is not on the document and this makes them suspicious if Brunswick even knew of the eminent domain action against Mary.

A few weeks after the election, Brunswick returns from Europe and Mary gives him a call and tells him she needs to discuss something with him. There has

always been a mutual admiration between the two of them and he agrees to a meeting at his home.

Mother and daughter drive out to his home one day for the meeting. Brunswick's butler greets them at the front door and walks them down the long hall to his study. He is happy to see Mary and she introduces him to Caitlin. Mary can see that he has aged greatly since she last saw him and much of the old fire has left his eyes.

"A duplicate of her beautiful mother," Brunswick says.

"Listen to him," Mary says. "Always trying to get on my good side."

They sit around a circular coffee table on a huge Persian rug Brunswick bought on one of his trips to the Mideast.

"I heard you ran for mayor," Brunswick says.

"We gave it our best effort," Mary says. "But we are fighting against the current of the times. People in Murphy are young professionals now and want development."

Brunswick shakes his head.

"You're right," he says. "You're fighting against the current of the times. It's gone beyond what I foresaw for the town. I wanted to stay involved in things, but I've been putting out my own fires as you know."

Mary hands Brunswick the eminent domain filing against her property.

Brunswick reads it with astonishment.

“I had no idea this was filed,” he says. “Sennett is supposed to tell me about things like this. I specifically told him that you are to always keep your property.”

“He’s been acting pretty much by himself in your absence,” Mary says. “I’ll bet there are other projects in the works you haven’t heard about.”

Brunswick pulls his cell phone out and calls Sennett.

“I want an emergency board meeting of the foundation tomorrow evening,” he says.

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The next evening, the Murphy Foundation meets at the foundation headquarters, a large Georgian building with big white columns in front of it next to city hall. Sennett has been expecting this meeting and has put all his ducks in a row.

After Brunswick screams at Sennett for not getting his approval for new projects and going against his wishes of letting Mary keep her property, Sennett suddenly calls for a vote of the board to replace Brunswick with one of Sennett’s people. The vote is quick and ends up with all board members voting to get rid of Brunswick. Just like that, the man who created the foundation twenty years ago is out.

Brunswick could have made a lot of noise about his firing from the board, but his heart was not in it anymore. The town was changing from the town he created and this was simply a sign of the times. The re-election of Bates as mayor by such a large margin was proof of this. He did call Mary and tell her about this and there was a small piece on page six of the *Murphy Register* about Brunswick being replaced but it was so small hardly anyone saw it. Mary told him he should fight it, but he told her he was through with the foundation and time for him to move onto something else.

He didn't travel but stayed in town at his home where there were constant meetings of his top people. In a few weeks, it was all over the news that he was in the process of selling Brunswick Brands and Brunswick Malls.

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A month after the election, he called Mary and invited her and Caitlin to a meeting at his office in the Brunswick Mall. They drove over to the mall one day. The road to the mall took them past the vast complex of black buildings comprising the headquarters for Brunswick Brands. The usual well-manicured landscaping around the complex was now thick with wild growth and a huge "For Lease" sign stood close to an empty gatehouse entrance to the complex. Only a few lights were on in the office building of the complex and here and there a lone car came and went past the gatehouse.

It was a Saturday afternoon in early December at the height of the Christmas shopping season. But the nearby Brunswick Mall had few shoppers and many of the stores were boarded up. Mary had visited the mall only a few months before, but the quick decline surprised her.

The mall office of Brunswick was on the top floor of the big central cathedral, railroad station-like structure of the mall. A handful of employees were busy putting things in boxes and moving stuff out of the office. Brunswick walked around supervising the packing and giving instructions on where things were to be stored. He saw Mary and Caitlin and motioned them into his corner office.

One part of the office had a window looking down on the main part of the large cathedral building and another window that looked out on the southern part of the mall. On one side of the office were a few large covered tables. Brunswick walked over to one of the tables and pulled the cover off of it.

“I wanted you two to be the first to see this,” he says.

Mary and Caitlin look at the model on the table. It is an architectural model filled with streets and tiny buildings. The buildings were not new, modern ones but appeared old buildings restored.

“My plan for the revitalization of the Elmwood District of the city,” he says.

Mary recognized the area as one of the worst areas of the city with the highest crime rates and greatest poverty in the city.

“There was a half-hearted effort to clean up the area a number of years ago,” Brunswick says, “but it was little more than a campaign promise of the mayor that never really went anywhere. A historic old theater in the area was restored with the hopes of bringing new life into Elmwood but money and enthusiasm ran out not long after the election.”

“So, you’re getting out of the business of creating new malls and towns,” Mary says.

“It’s a losing proposition today,” Brunswick says. “Malls and retail stores are becoming a thing of the past in case you haven’t noticed. No one can fight Amazon. As for town-building, I’m going to leave this to the developers. It’s obvious the residents in Murphy are not interested in the small-town vision I had for the town. You can’t fight two-thirds of the voters in Murphy. You and Caitlin ran a good campaign, but the times are against you, against me. Things move on. Sometimes vision takes dropping an old vision and creating a new one.”

“Your new vision is to restore an old area of the city?” Caitlin asks.

“Yes,” Brunswick says. “An old area of the city and old areas of cities around the nation. Make old things in America valuable again. “I’m tired of creating expensive suburbs and clothing for teenagers and malls in the age of online sales. I’m tired of plowing under good farmland and putting office complexes and distribution centers over it and squeezing out as much money as

you can for space. There are many old things in the nation that need to be restored so that people come back to them and remember them.”

Brunswick then moved over to another table and lifted the cover off of it.

“Here is something special I want to create for you Mary,” Brunswick says.

Mary and Caitlin immediately recognize the model they look down on. It is the old Murphy property in Murphy. Mary’s home and the mill are in the model but in addition are a number of other older buildings. It is laid out like a small village.

“The original Murphy farm and village,” Brunswick says. “I got the original documents and photos from the Murphy Historical Society. I made sure they didn’t say anything to you. I wanted to keep all of this quiet. With your permission, I want to create the Murphy Historical Village so that people can see what the old town was like. Of course, I want your input into all of this.”

There I a small tear in Mary’s eye but she quickly wipes it from her face.

“I want you to run the historical village,” he says. “That is, if you agree with the plan and want to.”

“Yes, I want to,” Mary says. “Of course, I want to.”

She gives Luther Brunswick a hug.

He turns to Caitlin.

“And Caitlin,” he says, “I want you to be my lawyer and key assistant in running my restoration business.”

She hugs Brunswick.

“I think I’ve found a new career,” she says.

* * *

In the next few weeks, Brunswick and the two women are busy locating a new office for his restoration business inside the Murphy Historical Village.

Caitlin travels back to California and puts her LA condo on the market and moves her things to Murphy. She plans on living with her mother while she looks for a new home.

When the new year begins, construction is underway on the Murphy historical village and the restoration of the Elmwood District of the city. Caitlin has taken to wearing hard hats these days and is constantly working with the architects at their trailer offices at the Elmwood project. And Mary supervises construction of the historical village providing historical information only she knows.

And, Luther Brunswick spends most of his time traveling around the nation - not closing malls but opening up old parts of cities, attracting young people back into the cities from new, expensive suburbs. In fact, a lot of the young people in

Murphy are getting fed up with all the development in Murphy and are moving back into the downtown area of the city to raise their families.

Max Sennett and the Murphy Foundation continue to promote the town, but it is hard for the foundation and developers in Murphy to compete with the new top school system in the state and a place that has just been named the number one restored urban area in America by *Business Intelligence Magazine* ... the Elmwood District of the city.