

THE WOMAN WHO DIDN'T LIKE ANYTHING NEW

Narrator: Once there was a woman who didn't like anything new.

Annie (friend on street): Hello, Paula!

Paula: Hi, Annie.

Annie: I haven't seen you in quite a while. What's new?

Paula: Nothing, thank goodness. It's hard enough to deal with things as they are. Anything new would only be worse.

Narrator: Paula's domestic partner felt the weight of this outlook too.

Darlene: Paula, I bought a new kind of coffee to try. I think it will be really interesting.

Paula: What 'd you do that for, Darlene? You know I like the coffee we've been using for the past five years. I don't want to try something new.

(She starts to leave, then turns back.)

Paula: You know what someone said to me at the office the other day? "Why do you wear black and white all the time? Why not try something new, like blue and yellow?" Well, I happen to **like** black and white. I don't want something new.

(Darlene throws her hands up in despair.)

Narrator: Even the Friends Meeting was not immune.

Paula: Hey, clerk, the arrangement of the benches has been changed!

Clerk: Yes, Worship and Ministry decided to try something new.

Paula: I liked the benches the way they were! Besides, they've always been that way.

Clerk (comfortingly): We're going to evaluate the new arrangement at business meeting.

(Paula is not very happy.)

Narrator: One day John, Paula's boss, called her into his office.

John: Black and white again, eh? **I** think you'd look very fetching in red.

Paula: Cut it out, John. Do you have a case for me or not?

John: Yes, I do. The Justice Department—and this comes straight from the President—is anxious to get a conviction of an illegal alien. That would show the public that the Administration is doing something about terrorism. Here at the Federal District Attorney's office, we want to help with that effort, don't we?

Paula: Yeah, sure.

John: I have a case here that I think has good possibilities. Mohamed el-Shakri, an Iranian, overstayed his tourist visa, and there's evidence here that he planned that well ahead of time—it wasn't a spur-of-the-moment decision. Furthermore, when he was in Iran he belonged to a subversive political association, and we think he'll do the same here, if he hasn't already. He's in preliminary detention now. Our job is to see that he's found guilty. Think you can handle it, Paula? If you do a good job, there could be a promotion in it for you.

Paula: I can handle it. We **should** do something about these people who sneak into the country. Because of them we have to pay higher taxes. *(Boss hands her the file.)*

Narrator: A few days later, Paula drove to a neighboring city to gather information.

Paula *(driving along)*: Let's see, I have the names of two people who knew this Mohamed guy, and with a little luck, they can refer me to others...

Suddenly a blinding light flashes into her face.

Paula (*extremely startled*): **AAAGHH!** (*sound of squealing brakes; she struggles to keep control of the car, stops it, and slumps over steering wheel.*) Oh my God!! I almost hit that tree! That light—I can't see—(*light moves a little to one side*)

Voice (*miked*): Paula.

Paula (*further startled*): Who's that? What do you want?

Voice: It's Mohamed, Paula.

Paula: Go away! I don't want to talk to you! I **can't** talk to you—it's against the Fifth Amendment, and attorney-client privilege.....

Mohamed (*interrupting her*): Paula. Why do you want to put me in prison? I'm not a criminal. All I want is to live in a safe place and support my family. I can't do that in Iran. I was jailed and tortured for speaking out against the government.

Paula: Well, why can't you go someplace where you're legal?

Mohamed: No country really wants refugees. You know that. Your country was built by people seeking safety. Refugees deserve a chance, just like those earlier immigrants..

Paula: A new start? Well, maybe.

Mohamed: You also know that your boss has political reasons for wanting a conviction.

Paula: Oh, yeah, John's always looking for political advantage. He's got ambitions.

Mohamed: Chasing success by going after people who are vulnerable—do you want to be part of that?

Paula (*reflecting briefly*): No, I don't! I've never really liked my job, now you put it that way. I'm going to quit and go work for Legal Aid! I don't know how I'll live on the salary they pay...but Darlene will help me figure it out. (*Light goes out. She pauses.*) I think he's gone. Boy, do I feel shaky.

How could something like that happen? Take a deep breath, Paula; calm down. (*She takes a deep breath.*) I feel...different...almost like somebody else.

Narrator: So Paula arrived home safely, having done a lot of thinking on the way.

Darlene: Hi, Paula, what's new?

Paula (*slowly*): I am, actually. I am.

Based on "The Man Who Didn't Like Anything New", in *Adam's New Friend* by David and Carol Bartlett. Story is based in turn on Acts 9:1-19.