

I CAN'T LIVE HERE ANYMORE  
Part 1 2026 In An Increasingly Divided America

Chapter 1  
The Smothers Family, Tyler, Texas

Allen Smothers fishtailed his Tesla up the gravel road to his lakeside home. He glared at the sight of the house he would have to leave behind. The tires strained against the brakes and skidded to a stop at the garage door. Al stomped up the porch steps, yanked open the door and slammed it shut, jarring the David Hockney painting off the wall. Rodney rushed from the kitchen and embraced him.

"Honey, honey, what is it?"

Al pulled his partner's grip from his neck and pushed him onto the couch.

"Allen, darling. Talk to me. What's got you so riled up?"

Allen glared at Rodney. He strode to the picture window. Black clouds enveloped the sky over Lake Tyler.

"The tipping point. I can't live here anymore," said Allen. As he opened the sliding glass door and faced the wind, the storm swept across the water and lashed at his face.

Allen felt Rodney inching up behind him. "Don't. Just do not touch me." The rain soaked their clothing.

"It's the Christians. They run everything here and I cannot breathe at that university anymore. I can't breathe. Do you understand? I'm suffocating in this heavy-fisted state."

"Come inside. Let's dry off and have a glass of wine. Come on."

In dry bathrobes on the sprawling couch, they watched the rain lash at the glass and the lightning strike the lake. Allen took deep breaths and a long drink of *pinot noir*. He poured another glass and sipped at it. A sneer crept to his mouth and he turned to Rodney. "Last week when I introduced my class to *After the Parade*, Doctor Preston warned me. I would not budge. These hillbillies have to get their eyes opened. Yesterday I showed *The Normal Heart*.

"Great film."

"Absolutely. So I got another tongue lashing today by the good doctor, with a threat to sanction me."

"Neanderthal."

"And the looks I get on campus. I can FEEL their eyes glaring at me. I'm being crucified. We have to move."

"Whatever you think is best, dear. Where?"

"Northampton, Massachusetts."

"Oh God, I love that town. By the way, our friends Juliette and Sonya are moving out of Texas, too. San Francisco."

"We can't live here anymore."

The grayness slipped off to the east and two bass boats screeched past their dock.

"Pathetic rednecks."

## Chapter 2

### The Andrews Family, Northampton, Massachusetts

Don Andrews was assembling his world-famous tuna salad when he heard Anna's SUV pull into the driveway. He leaned over the sink and watched his wife carry a box of office stuff up the stairs to their apartment. He opened the door for her as she strode across the porch into the kitchen.

"What's so funny?" She was grinning and her eyes were joyful.

"They finally did it." Anna kissed her husband. "They closed down our clinic."

"And that's a good thing?"

"Well," said Anna, "you know what Joseph said to his brothers who left him for dead, right? 'But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good.'"

"Okay. So despite the fact your pregnancy crisis center is closed and you have no job and hundreds of women are going to be without the care they need, this is all good news to you?"

"Calm down, Detective." Anna set her box on the kitchen table and sorted through the stuff she had accumulated on her desk over the last fifteen years. "Where should I put this angel?" She held a statue of an angel holding a baby up to Don's face.

Don gently pushed Anna's hand to the side, kissed her cheek, and said, "I don't get why you're taking this shutdown of your clinic so apathetically.

"Here, have a tuna salad sandwich. The kids will be home from practice soon. I need to take a shift at eleven because Butch quit. He couldn't take the pay cuts they made on the department. So in five minutes, between bites, tell me why the clinic is closed and why you think that's such a good deal."

"Hmm, another Don Anderson masterpiece." Anna chewed.

"For years now we have been in a battle for our existence. Eight very powerful lobbying groups have been pressuring the Massachusetts legislature to close us down."

Anna thumbed through the folders in her box. She pulled out a folder and opened it to show her husband. "Read this".

The paper was an extract from the American Medical Associations Journal of Ethics. Don read:

*Crisis pregnancy centers are organizations that seek to intercept women with unintended pregnancies who might be considering abortion. Their mission is to prevent abortions by persuading women that adoption or parenting is a better option. They strive to give the impression that they are clinical centers, offering legitimate medical services and advice, yet they are exempt from regulatory, licensure, and credentialing oversight that apply to health care facilities. Because the religious ideology of these centers' owners and employees takes priority over the health and well-being of the women seeking care at these centers, women do not receive comprehensive, accurate, evidence-based clinical information about all available options. Although crisis pregnancy centers enjoy First Amendment rights protections, their propagation of misinformation should be regarded as an ethical violation that undermines women's health." (<https://journalofethics.ama-assn.org/article/why-crisis-pregnancy-centers-are-legal-unethical/2018-03>)*

Anna said, "That's their view. And that view is shared by most of these left-wing Northampton folks, and most of the citizens of this Commonwealth. Lies like this have been professionally packaged, repeated by soft spoken NPR voices and good looking TV personalities, and the state gobbled it all up like kids eating cookies.

"We've been battling them in court, at the State House on Beacon Hill, and on the streets since the Supreme Court overturned Roe versus Wade. We spend more time battling vandals than helping these precious women who are bearing children and have nowhere to turn.

"So this little battle is ending. But the war is raging and the voices of the prophets have been shouting from the walls."

"Fine, but you know what we are going to do before making a final decision."

"Right." Anna finished her sandwich, wiped her mouth with a napkin, and said, "Let's do it. The infantry school decision matrix. Pros and cons."

Don started the chart and labeled it, "Leave Massachusetts".

"By the way, where are we going? Any ideas?"

"I'm thinking of Texas. My brother lives in Tyler."

Don drew a box with a line down the middle. He marked one column "Pro" and one "Con." "Where do you want to start?"

Anna said, "Well, the law hates what I do because it's based on my Biblical values, and they closed down my clinic. So there's that."

Don said, "And the attorney general hates cops, and so does the town of Northampton, so much that they cut my salary in half."

"So there's that," said Anna.

The steps up to the apartment from the driveway slammed with the foot pounding of Sam and his sister Jennifer. Anna and Don gawked at their agitated children.

"Catch your breath there, gangsters. What the heck is going on?" said Ron.

"They closed our school. Trinity Academy has been outlawed."

Anna and Don looked at each other and said together, "We can't live here anymore."