

Garbled

by

Vixxy Fox



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“Blibbidy blab blub blah blah blah...” Judge Bulldog intoned from the bench.

For a moment the entire courtroom was quiet enough that even the Bailiff, who was quite deaf in at least one ear, might have heard a pin drop. The bewigged Prosecutor, sitting at his own table, managed to maintain a completely blank look, while the Advocate, who had been speaking, stood shock still before his table as rigid as the King’s Law. The Hound’s inner ears had paled to the point it matched the powdered wig he wore. Moving his mouth as little as possible he asked, “E’re ya mak’n jest, ya honure?”

“No; I am making fun of you specifically. A jest would be a joke where by everyone would have reason to laugh. As a Queen’s Judge, I urge you to state your case clearly and sufficiently enough that I do not have to guess at every other word you mutter.”

“In Ga’oolie U’ve na problem bee’n understood.”

“You are not in Goolie, where ever on The Lord’s green earth that might be; so there is a problem and it is not mine. If you cannot speak the King’s English then you may not represent the accused in my courtroom.”

“It-is-far-to-the-north-your-honor.”

“That is tedious at best and doable at worse,” Judge Bulldog told him with a nod. “Is there a particular reason the defendant has you as his Barrister?”

“Your Honor,” the Fox sitting at the Hound’s table, “May I say something?”

“No you may not. If you open your mouth other than to answer a question you will be removed from my courtroom and we will continue on without you, Mister,” he looked down at the paper in front of him, “Smith.” Looking up he frowned. “Is that truly your name? Smith?”

“Absolutely.”

“Absolutely, Your Honor,” the Judge corrected.

“I am honored,” the Fox responded.

“Not you,” the Bulldog shot back.

“Me-sir?” asked the defending Barrister.”

“No, sir. Me, sir.” The Bulldog’s frown deepened. Picking up his mallet he banged it once. “You will all stop doing that this moment. This is not a vaudevillian minstrel act. Your client, Mr. Smith, is to adhere to proper courtroom etiquette or I will have the Bailiff give him a good whack upside the head with his staff. His response to my questions will be yes or no ‘Your Honor’; nothing more and nothing less.”

“Yes, Your Honor,” the defending Fox replied.

“Aye, Y’er Honeur,” replied the Barrister.

Judge Bulldog glowered at him. “Did I say aye?”

“No-yer-honor.”

Nodding to indicate he was satisfied, the old Dog pointed to the King’s Prosecutor. “Please read the charges.”

The be-wigged Cat rose and picking up a paper, held it no more than six inches from his face. “Th’ accuussed, won Tomas S’mithh, ese charged weeth thee theft uf won prize chick’en, Yer Honor.”

Judge Bulldog cringed with the reading and when he ascertained said reading was done, because the Prosecutor stopped talking, he turned his attention to the Cat. “I could pretend that I understood what you said, but since this is a Court of Law and based upon ‘truth’, I must confess that I didn’t understand a bloody word you uttered. Let us begin again, shall we? What is your name and from where do you hail? Being a Cat I will assume you are not native to the area?”

“My-family-come-from-the-east.” The Cat told him in the same staccato manner employed by the barrister representing the Fox. “I-am-born-here-and-am-a-Queen’s-Council.”

“All very well and good,” the judge responded, “Very impressive that you are a QC, but how the blazes did you manage to get through your schooling if they could not understand you?”

“M’eye tea’cher ad no problem undeerstand’n m’eye words.”

“Eh?” remarked the judge.

The council for the defense snickered and the defendant Fox wisely gripped his own snout with both paws just to keep himself from saying anything at all.

Frowning deeply the Bulldog looked from one Barrister to the other seeming to understand that he was at the base of some elaborate joke perpetrated by his fellows of the court system. Someone apparently arranged for the assignment of the Prosecuting Barrister and the Defending Barrister based solely upon their familiar accents.

Frowning deeply he said, “Mr. Smith, you will rise please.”

With a scraping of his chair, the Fox rose and stood straight backed. This small detail was duly noted.

“You were in the military?”

“He was,” replied the Council for the Defense.

“I was not asking you, I was asking the Fox,” Judge Bulldog growled. “Mr. Smith, you are free to answer my questions in your own manner.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“Thank you, Your Honor.”

“No sir, the honor is mine.”

The Bulldog looked at him in a hard manner. "We've been down that road and unless you want to see the inside of a cell I suggest you stop it forth with."

"Of course Your Honor."

"You are accused of stealing a fowl, how do you plead?"

"On my knees if it will count for anything." For that he got another glaring eyeball from the Judge. "Quite right... not guilty, Your Honor, I was foully framed."

His Barister leaned over and whispered, "Puns'er nut allowed eye'ther."

"Were you caught red handed?" The Judge asked.

"I was not, Your Honor. The police officer who arrested me found but a single feather upon my coat. He claimed it came from the stolen chicken."

"And you said?"

"It was probably a feather from the pigeon I had for lunch."

"You eat those things?"

"Well... the wild ones by the Cathedral are a bit scrawny, but if you find yourself a good coop..."

Judge Bulldog stopped him with a raised paw. "I do not need to hear about coops and you are not required to incriminate yourself or cause bias in the court. This is where it would be better that your Barrister speak for you."

"I wood, Yur Honore but ya w'ont let me."

"You stop too. I believe I forbad you to utter a word... or in your case an attempted word." To the Fox he said, "Did the arresting officer strike you with his stick?"

"Indeed he did Your Honor. He struck me fair and clean right over the head. It raised a lump the size of a goose egg."

Picking up his gavel the Judge struck it once and told the court, "I find the defendant having been struck over the head for the sake of one feather sufficient punishment for a crime that probably did not happen. Not guilty."

Dismissing the courtroom he bade the two Barristers remain. When they were alone he addressed them quite civilly from his official position behind his bench.

"I do not find fault in your abilities, which I am sure are more than adequate. I do find fault in your incapability of making your words known to my ears. Eyes, you see, and no pun intended,

can make sense out of garble. The ears are less forgiving. There is an old expression – ‘Getting your goat’. This refers to an old Welsh belief that keeping a goat in the barn would have a calming effect on the cows, hence causing them to produce more milk. When one wanted to antagonize one's adversary, they would abscond with the goat rendering the milk cows less- to non-productive.” He paused for dramatic emphasis and then told them, “It would seem that someone wishes to ‘Get My Goat’. I forgive you your verbal handicaps but I do wish you to tell me whom it was that assigned you to this case... a case I will add that was so petty it should never have come to my court in the first place.”

The following day another Judge in another courtroom found his gavel of office firmly nailed to the bench where he was to sit.