

The Impossible Yet Probable Case For Truth

Or

How Things Really Change

by

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“Trouble seeks me out.”

Seeing no one in front of him, the be-wigged judge leaned well forward and peered over the edge of his elevated judicial desk of office. Below him stood a smallish Cat; no more than a kitten really.

“I see,” he managed with a straight face. “Tell me; are you here on official business? If you are a prisoner, you should still be in the ‘prisoner’s dock’ and brought in by the Bailiff so I might officially recognize you.” He frowned, trying to look as official as possible. “Tell me, is your mother here about?”

The little Cat hissed at the pugnacious judge. He pointed a finger at the robed figure and warned, “You tread on old paper.”

“Your Honor,” the judge told him nonplused by the outburst.

“Thank you,” the kitten immediately responded.

“I meant that you are to address me as ‘Your Honor’.”

“Why?”

Being that he was looking downward; the stubby Bull Dog took a fancy handkerchief and wiped his huge maw to keep from drooling. After doing so, he placed it back within his

robe. "Because the law says that you should out of respect for the office," he replied informatively.

Pulling his potpourri canister to his nose, he breathed deeply of the flower pedal perfume to rid his nose of the ever present Cat odor. Their population made up the majority of the criminals he saw on a daily basis and though he'd been seated in this particular court for many a year he still could not abide the stink.

"I see," the little Cat replied, looking around himself at the empty courtroom. Clearing his throat, he turned his attention back to the Bull Dog.

"My Honor," he began again, "Trouble seeks me out."

"Please be so kind as to move yourself to the 'Witness Dock' so I may hear you," the Judge told the child briskly.

"You can't hear me?" the little Cat asked. "HOW ABOUT NOW?" he yelled.

The Judge sighed, teetering on his stool which he was forced to stand upon to look over the top of his tall desk to see the Cat. "You don't need to yell, I am not deaf."

"Daft?" the kitten asked, wiggling a finger in one of his own ears.

"Not daft; that's stupid," the Dog responded, "Deaf as in you can't hear."

"Don't be stupid, I can hear you just fine," the Tabby replied, "But you said you couldn't hear me."

The Judge suppressed a sudden smirk, thinking one of his fellow Judges must surely have put the little fellow up to this. In his mind he heard his fellow saying; 'Here's a half pence, child, go and tease the old Bull Dog; and a crown for you if you can get him to throw you in jail.' Trying to maintain his judgely demeanor, he changed the subject, "I heard that you told me I tread on old paper; did you not mean 'on thin ice'?"

"No," the Cat replied, "Thin ice is fine, just slippery. Old paper you leave claw marks in. Your claws stick in the holes and trip you up. If it's wet, leaves goo between your toes." He pulled a back foot up and wiggled his toes at the Judge. His little ball sack clearly hung out from the side of his baggy britches, causing the Judge to almost choke in mirth. His clothing was obviously 'hand me downs' or borrowed for the day in court.

"I see... yes... goo. How silly of me to not know that." He pointed to the elevated platform with its fancy railing. "Please move to that spot right there so I may properly hear you."

The little Cat finally did as asked, slowly climbing up to the platform and then hanging both arms over the railing which was up to his chin.

“That’s much better,” the Judge told him, “Apparently I am early to court this morning as I see no one is here but the two of us, so I will entertain your claim.”

“Can you hear me now?” the kitten asked him.

The Judge sat back and picking up his gavel, banged it on its little wooden stand one time. “The people will now hear the case of ‘Trouble Seeks Me Out’!”

“You can hear me ok, My Honor?” the child asked loudly.

“Yes, yes, quite so,” the Judge replied. “I am not deaf or daft, nor do I walk on old paper; and I hear you just fine. Since there is no one here but the two of us... and I do find that to be terribly odd,” as he said this he looked around for whoever might be watching, “I will now swear you in.”

The Cat quickly covered his ears.

“Why are you doing that?” the Bull Dog asked.

The child looked at him, not comprehending the words because he had his ears covered.

Leaning forward on to his desk again, the Bull Dog called out loudly, “WHY ARE YOU DOING THAT? IF YOU COVER YOUR EARS YOU CANNOT HEAR ME.”

“YOU GOING TO SWEAR AT ME!” he replied just as loudly. “I DON’T LIKE THAT!”

The Judge made a motion indicating the young tabby should remove his paws from his ears. When he did so, the Bull Dog told him, “I was not going to swear at you, I was going to ask that you swear to tell the truth.”

“I always tell the truth!” the Cat responded.

The Judge nodded, satisfied with the answer. “The people recognize that the Cat has sworn to tell the truth. What is your name, please?”

“Please.”

“It is a nicety.”

“Thank you.”

The Judge sighed, “I meant that saying please is a nicety as I am endeavoring to be pleasant. (‘Which is growing harder and harder,’ he grumbled under his breath.) “Now then, please tell the court your name.”

“Please.”

The Judge screwed his face into a scowl. “I said please! Now tell the court your name.”

“Please.”

There was a pause as the Judge slowly counted to ten, waiting for enlightenment to fill his mind with a bright flash of light. This came about at the end of the count. “Your name is Please?”

“Yes, My Honor.”

“I do not believe I have ever encountered someone named Please before.”

“My mother name me. She say, “Please, do this, and Please, don’t touch that, and Please, do not play with your food.”

“Does she ever say, ‘Thank You’?” the Bull Dog chortled.

“No.”

“I see,” he replied, trying his best not to laugh as the child was apparently being completely earnest in his answers.

“And hear.” the child added.

“Yes, Please, I hear you too.” Taking the handkerchief out he pretended to cough into it to cover a good and heart felt guffaw.

“What is your name?” the cat asked him.

“Judge Tobias Bull Dog,” he responded. “Now plead your case if you will.”

“Tobias Bull Dog you are ugly and not a Cat!” the youngster shouted out.

This cut the Judge to the bone, and his jaw dropped. “Why would you say that?”

“You say ‘judge Bull Dog’ so I did. Not much to go by so I did the best I could. Bull Dogs all ugly, no offence meant, and you are not a Cat. This is fun, now you judge me.”

The Dog picked up his gavel and banged it once, trying to get his mind back to the case. “Now see here...”

“Where?”

The Judge chuckled, moved into a giggle, and then laughed. When he had better control of himself he said, "Very well then, you're short, you have whiskers, and you use your tongue to clean yourself. That by itself is reprehensible."

The kitten licked a paw and dragged it over his face. "You not see me do that," he replied nonchalantly.

"Enough chit chat," the Judge proclaimed, "Tell me your accusation, and let's be on with the proceedings."

"Trouble seeks me out!" the Cat replied, hopping up and down, apparently liking this game.

The Bull Dog was about to reply to this when the door at the back of the courtroom opened and closed. His keen eye saw no one come in. "Who's there?" he called out.

"It's Trouble!" squeaked the little Cat in the 'witness dock', where upon a small black Cat climbed into the 'Dock of the Accused'.

"One, three, two," called the black Cat, "I see you! Wheeeheeeee... my turn to hide!"

The Judge banged his gavel until he had the full attention of both Cats. "Might I presume that you are Trouble?" he asked the black Cat.

This kitten squinted his eyes at the Judge and growled, where upon the Bull Dog banged his gavel again. "One more display like that young Cat and I will see you in contempt."

"What color is it?" the child asked.

"What color is what?" the Judge asked him.

"Contempt. If you are going to see me in it, I will have to put it on."

The Bull Dog smiled a sly smile. "It is a pink dress with little tingly bells all over it. You must put it on and then it will be Please's turn to hide again."

The little Cat's jaw dropped open and for a moment he was at a loss for words. "That not fair!" he finally said.

"Many things may not be seen to be fair," the judge intoned, but I am the Authority and what I say goes."

"Goes where?" both Cats asked him in the same breath.

“To the other side of the world and back again,” he told them both, smiling a smile he had not smiled since he was but a pup. Remembering an old nursery rhyme, he added, “To China, to China where the Cat’s are all silver in color and talk in a sing songy voice.”

Standing up upon his elevated stool, he pointed his gavel, first at Please, and then at Trouble. “You, and you, have seen fit to come into this court, requiring me to preside over your dealings. Be it a game you were playing, ‘OR A JOKE SOMEONE ELSE IS PLAYING’,” he said very loudly, “I AM NOT AMUSED!”

He stopped to snork back a laugh.

“Bless you,” Please told him.

The Judge was taken aback. He had been cursed and called many a foul name during his time in office, but no one had ever blessed him. “Why would you do that?” he asked.

“You hold in sneeze, and not spray everywhere,” Trouble told him. “Mama teach us polite ways.”

“Cats are polite?” he asked them, the question fairly popping out of his mouth.

“Opposite of Dogs,” Please told him, “Of course polite.”

The Judge pointed his gavel at the kitten, and bellowed, “NOW JUST YOU SEE HERE!”

“WHERE?” both kittens bellowed back at him in their small voices. They were beginning to enjoy this game far more than ‘hide and seek’.

And then things happened rather quickly.

With an outraged ‘erk’ sort of sound, Judge Tobias Bull Dog lost his balance. His stool shot out from under him and he fell forward over the top of his elevated judicial platform. Dropping his gavel, he grabbed for the desk’s edge and barely obtained purchase with the very tips of his nails.

Please and Trouble, seeing their new friend in such distress immediately jumped down from the boxes in which they stood. Neither was tall enough to reach the Dog’s kicking feet, so Please braced himself against the tool of official powers and Trouble climbed up on his shoulders, quickly guiding the Judges feet to his very own shoulders.

“I lower down slow,” Please said loudly. “Keep paws on wood for balance.”

When he was almost to the floor, Trouble stepped off, planting his feet firmly and standing still as Please got up to help the Judge down the rest of the distance.

“PLEASE! TROUBLE!” yelled an accented matronly voice from the back of the courtroom.

“HERE NOW!” yelled the baser voice of the Bailiff. “WHAT IN BLUE BLAZES IS GOING ON HERE?”

The mother Cat ran up and grabbed both of her boys by the arms. The Bailiff ran up and grabbed the mother Cat by the arm, and further loud altercation appeared eminent.

“I shall incarcerate them at once Your Honor for making such an attack upon your person,” the Fox Hound brayed.

“You’ll do nothing of the sort!” the Judge told him loudly. “And where were you all this time? Out taking tea and scones I am sure!”

The Bailiff turned a bright red and his expression left nothing to the Judge’s imagination. As soon as he had these Cats outside he was sure to extract his revenge with the hard oak stick of his office.

“Leave us,” the Judge commanded him, “And cancel all of my court sessions for the day. I find I have pressing business to attend to. While you are at it, pencil yourself in on tomorrow’s docket for failing in your job this day.”

The Bailiff quickly bowed, and hurried from the room. He had been working in the Judge’s chambers for many a year and never seen him so angry.

“And keep everyone out of here!” the Bull Dog roared at his retreating back, “I require privacy.”

When they were again alone, the Judge gently bade the mother Cat sit with her two kits, one on either side of her; their paws firmly held in hers with a squeeze that told them how much trouble they were presently in.

“Now madam,” the stout official began, “This is all unofficial mind you, but would you please explain your business with the court this day?”

She did so, and in the end broke down in tears. Life for Cat’s in this Dog’s world was not easy. Her husband, desperate to feed them, had taken a job for a local baker. The Dog had promised him a single loaf of bread for ten hours work which her husband did willingly. When it came time for him to receive his payment the baker gave only half of a stale loaf and told him to piss off. Her husband, quite angered, threw the half loaf at the baker and took a fresh whole loaf as was their agreement. He had been arrested before he was a block from the bakery.

“Tell me,” the Judge said to her, placing a paw on her shoulder, “When was your last meal?”

“A week ago, Your Honor,” she admitted, “But I found the boys a crust of bread this morning.”

“It’s My Honor,” Please hiss whispered; correcting her obvious mistake.

The old Dog smiled, and patted him on the head. “We shall tend to business then after we have a meal,” he told her. “That is, of course, if you will allow me the pleasure of your company. We shall sup at ‘Ye Olde Dog and Suds’,” he said with a wink, “And see if we might just cause a bit of a scandal, as it is known for its Dog only policy.”

Over kippers and cups of sweet cream for the boys, biscuits, kippers and tea for himself and Mother Cat, as that was all she had as a name, the Judge pressed on; gathering the truth that had evaded him for so many years in his myopic judging from the bench. He found that Cats did not smell bad at all. In fact, he had to admit they were much cleaner in their ways than Dogs. He also found that they were an industrious species, taking the lowest of jobs, yet were badly maligned by Dogs in general.

Later that day, the baker was called into the Judge’s chambers. When all was said and done, he left with his tail between his legs, having been given a choice of prison, transport to the new world, or setting up a soup kitchen for the indigent people within their great city. “No one,” Tobias told him, “Should ever go hungry for the want of a coin.”

Ever after, Judge Tobias Bull Dog made it his personal goal to always find the truth in the cases he tried, no matter how eloquent the arguments presented to him.

As for Please and Trouble, Tobias found their father employ at the fish market, helping him set up his own shop. This grew beyond anything any of them could have imagined through simple hard work. The Bull Dog treated the boys as well as if they had been his own children, taking them under his wing and making sure they were both dressed in clothing that left nothing in the wind.

He also made sure they attended the best of schools, whereupon they followed in his footsteps becoming two of the most famous Barristers of their time. In this, Please and Trouble were able to right many wrongs unfairly set upon all Cats living within their great Kingdom of Dogs.

To sum things up tidily for this small story meant to but give a smile:

And so it was that a simple game of Hide and Seek actually changed the course of history.

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