

LET JUSTICE PREVAIL

by Phillip W. Weiss

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Inspired by a true story

Tagline: One man's quest for justice.

Characters

Stavros "Steve" Denopolis – a boxer

Cynthia "Cindy" Denopolis – Steve's wife

Augustus "Gus" Aristedes – Steve's uncle and manager

Louis Bromeier – a businessman

Melissa Bromeier – Louis's wife

Dudley Douglas – a journalist

Victor "Vic" Murphy – a newspaper editor

Mort Feltschein – Louis's attorney

Leon Delsinger – Steve's criminal attorney

Leslie Arrington – Steve's civil attorney

Angela LaPlante – a judge

Police Officer 1

Police Officer 2

Bailiff 1

Bailiff 2

This is a work of fiction. Any resemblances to any persons living or dead are purely coincidental and entirely unintentional.

Scene 1

Year: 1974.

Time: early evening

Place: A living room in an apartment in Philadelphia. A woman in her early twenties is watching television. Her name is Cindy Denopolis. A man enters. He is also in his early twenties. He is dressed in overalls and work shoes. His name is Steve Denopolis and he is Cindy's husband.

CINDY

(turns off the television)

Hey, babe. How was work today?

STEVE

Crappy, as usual. The damn boss keeps loading us up with work.

CINDY

I'm sorry to hear that.

Steve sits down on a chair, takes off his shoes, and stretches his legs.

STEVE

Anyway, it's good to be home.

CINDY

And it's good to have you here.

Cindy goes over to Steve, bends down and gives him a kiss.

STEVE

What's for dinner?

CINDY

I thought I'd make some lasagna.

STEVE

(annoyed)

Lasagna? This is the fourth time this week we're having lasagna! If I have any more lasagna I'm gonna start speaking Italian.

CINDY

(slightly irritated)

We don't have the money to afford anything else!

STEVE

What do you want from me? I'm doing my best.

CINDY

I know you are, but it's just so frustrating. You know that I want to get a job, but I can't find any work. In Greece I worked in a factory but here there are no factory jobs, and I don't know what else to do.

STEVE

(contemptuous)

Factory jobs. Crap work. Is that all we're good for? I didn't come to the United States to work on some crummy loading dock making peanuts. In Athens everybody told me that I could make a ton of money in America and looked what happened, nothing! I can't stand my job, we're poor and I can't stand working for a boss.

CINDY

We've been talked about this a thousand times already, and it's always the same complaint – not enough money, can't stand the job. You're lucky you have a job.

STEVE

Yeah, some luck.

CINDY

Maybe you can get a promotion.

STEVE

(laughs)

Promotion? To what? Head shipping clerk making three dollars an hour and still living in a dump in Philadelphia? That's some future.

CINDY

Well, don't get discouraged.

STEVE

How can I not get discouraged? There's nothing for me here and I can't go back home because there is nothing for me over there either.

CINDY

So, maybe you can go to school and learn a trade.

STEVE

(scoffing)

School? Pay someone money to teach me nothing! How's that gonna put money in the bank?

CINDY

I'll keep looking for a job. In the meantime, try to relax.

STEVE

I don't want you to work. I want to take care of you the way promised I would before we got married.

CINDY

Don't worry about keeping that promise.

STEVE

But I meant it, and the idea of you having to go the work upsets me.

CINDY

But what choice do we have?

STEVE

I don't know. I just don't know.

Cindy is leaving to go to the kitchen when the sound of knocking comes from off-stage.

CINDY

I wonder who that is.

STEVE

Probably someone trying to sell something. Go see who it is.

Cindy opens the door. A middle-aged man enters. His name is Gus Aristedes. Gus is Steve's uncle.

GUS

Hello, Cindy. You are looking lovely.

CINDY

Thank you.

STEVE

Uncle Gus! It's good seeing you.

Steve gets up, hugs Gus and escorts him to a chair. Gus sits.

CINDY

Can I get you anything?

GUS

No, thanks. Nothing for me.

STEVE

C'mon. At least have a beer.

GUS

Okay, a beer.

STEVE

And bring one for me too.

Cindy exits.

GUS

She's a good girl, your wife.

STEVE

She sure is.

GUS

You're a lucky guy. Me, I live alone.

STEVE

Then you're a lucky guy too. (*both laugh*)

Cindy returns with two bottles of beer and gives one to Steve and the other to Gus.

GUS

Won't you have a beer too?

CINDY

I don't drink alcohol.

GUS

Oh, I forgot.

STEVE

Cheers. (*Steve and Gus clink bottles and each takes a drink.*) So, to what do I owe the honor of this visit?

GUS

Please accept my apology for coming here unannounced but I just wanted to see how you were doing.

STEVE

That's so nice of you. Everything is okay.

GUS

That's not what I heard.

STEVE

What do you mean?

GUS

I heard that you're not too happy at the job.

STEVE

I don't know what anyone's been telling you, but they're wrong. I love my job.

GUS

C'mon now. You're talking to your uncle, not some clown on the street.

STEVE

Really, everything is alright.

CINDY

(to Steve)

Why don't you tell him what's been bothering you? *(to Joe)* He's been complaining about everything.

GUS

Is that true?

STEVE

No, not really. I just want to make more money.

GUS

What's wrong with that?

STEVE

Nothing, if I can so it. The problem is that I'm working hard, playing by the rules, keeping my nose clean but don't have a plug nickel in the bank, that is, I have nothing to show for it. And I'll tell you something else, if that damn boss of mine keeps dumping more work on me, I'm gonna give him a rap in the mouth.

GUS

And lose your job.

STEVE

So what? The job is crap and I can't stand working for anyone.

GUS

So what are you gonna do?

STEVE

I don't know! I just don't know.

GUS

Maybe you can go to school.

STEVE

You sound just like her (*points to Cindy*). She said the same thing. Can you imagine me sitting in a classroom? Get real.

GUS

What about becoming a boxer?

CINDY

(*to Gus*)

Oh no! Please don't that up again.

STEVE

(*to Cindy*)

Hey, let me hear what he has to say. (*to Gus*) Go on.

GUS

(*to Catarina*)

Look, as a former boxer myself I can tell you that you have the tools to be a damn good fighter, provided you commit yourself to it.

CINDY

The idea of Steve getting beaten up for a living is disgusting and I won't have it.

STEVE

(*to Cindy*)

You won't have it? Well, about about me? (*to Gus*) How much money could I make?

GUS

If you're good, you can make a bundle.

CINDY

That's right: enough to pay for a decent burial.

STEVE

(angry, to Cindy)

STOP IT! Why are you discouraging me? I'm a man and I want to make something of myself, don't you understand that? I want my day in the sun, I want to live the American dream, not just dream it, not just for you but for us, baby!

CINDY

(upset)

I know you do, but I don't want you to get hurt!

STEVE

(to Cindy)

BUT IF I KEEP LIVING LIKE THIS I WILL DIE! *(to Gus)* So if I decide to become a boxer, how do I start?

GUS

First, we got to get you signed up with a boxing gym, then we get you some equipment, and then I put together a training schedule, which you would have to follow rigorously, with me as your manager and trainer.

CINDY

I don't like this.

STEVE

(ignores Cindy)

When do I start making money?

GUS

When you've trained enough and you're ready, then I'll start finding matches for you. Remember, there's a lot of competition out there, so finding matches can be tough at first, especially if you're an unknown. But if you're flexible, matches can be had. Of course, at first the purses will be small, just a couple of hundred dollars, but if you keep winning and attract attention, then you could make some real money.

STEVE

Like, how much?

GUS

Well that depends on who you're fighting and your place on the card, but it could be four and even five figures. But you gotta be able and willing to fight, and to win.

STEVE

(enthusiastic)

I'm able and willing to fight, and I'll win.

GUS

That's what I want to hear. I'll help you get started, but it's gonna be up to you to make this work. You gotta put everything you have into this, body and soul. Are you willing to do that?

STEVE

Absolutely!

GUS

Good! We'll start first thing tomorrow. With dedication, perseverance and luck, you'll be a champ!

STEVE

(excited)

That's sounds good to me!

Steve and Gus shake hands. Cindy has a frown on her face and shakes her head slowly from side to side.

End of scene 1

Scene 2

Date: The next day

Time: 7:00 PM

Place: The interior of Bailey's Boxing Emporium. Boxers are training: some are shadow boxing, others are sparring, others are lifting weights and working the punching bag. Steve and Gus are in a ring. Both are wearing trunks, head gear and gloves.

GUS

Now, I'm gonna teach you how to box.

STEVE

Okay.

GUS

Now, try to hit me. *(Steve throws a right that Gus easily dodges.)*
Lesson one: always remember that your opponent can move. Now, try to hit me again. *(Steve again throws a right which Gus again easily dodges, but this time he throws his own right which hits Steve squarely on the chest, causing Steve to stagger backwards.)*

STEVE

Whoa! You surprised me!

GUS

Lesson two: always remember that your opponent wants to hit you and therefore to always keep your guard up. Now, try to hit me again. *(Steve throws a weak right that hits Gus on the jaw. Gus doesn't budge.)*

STEVE

You okay?

GUS

You gotta hit harder. Lesson three: try to win a fight by a knock out. The longer the fight lasts the greater the chance of you losing. Therefore, you have to develop a punch.

STEVE

How do I do that?

GUS

By working out, building you upper body strength and strengthening your muscles until they are as hard as steel. But since some fights do go the distance, you also have to build up your stamina until you are able to run at least five miles nonstop. You think you can do that?

STEVE

Sure I can. I'm in great shape.

GUS

Good. Now, let's see what you have learned so far. We're now going to spar. Put up your hands. *(Steve and Gus begin sparring. Steve repeatedly throws punches at Gus, missing each time.)* C'mon, Steve, hit me! *(Steve charges at Gus who pushes him away and gives him a light kick on the butt that causing Steve to lose his balance and fall. Gus helps Steve up.)* You can do better than that!

STEVE

(annoyed)

Why'd you kick me?

GUS

To teach you to always be on your guard, which brings us to lesson four ...

Suddenly Steve slugs Gus square on the jaw, knocking Gus to the mat.

STEVE

(to Gus, on the mat rubbing his jaw)

Lesson four: don't ever embarrass me again.

GUS

You pack some wallop there. How come you didn't hit me like that before?

STEVE

I didn't want to hurt you.

GUS

(getting up, still rubbing his jaw)

Anyway, here's lesson five: learn to take a punch then give it back without mercy. You understand?

STEVE

Yeah, I understand; now, enough of all this talking. Let's start boxing.

Steve and Gus start throwing punches as the lights go out.

End of scene 2

Scene 3

Time: One year later

Place: The locker room at Spectaculum Arena in Philadelphia. Steve and Gus are in the locker room. Gus is removing the tape from Steve's hands.

GUS
(*Ecstatic*)

You did it! You won! (Steve says *nothing*.) You were terrific: a knock out in fifty eight seconds. Wow!

STEVE

My right hand is a little sore.

GUS

How's it feel to be the lightweight golden gloves champion?

STEVE

It feels good. It's better than not being champion.

GUS

It sure is.

A reporter enters. His name is Dudley Douglas.

DOUGLAS

My name is Dudley Douglas and I'm a reporter with the Philadelphia Daily Bugle. You mind if I ask you a few questions?

STEVE

Sure, go ahead.

DOUGLAS

You were terrific tonight. Where'd you learn to punch like that?

STEVE

It's all training and practice.

DOUGLAS

How many fight's you've had so far?

STEVE

I don't keep a count. Maybe thirty or forty.

DOUGLAS

Have you thought about turning pro?

STEVE

Yeah, I thought about it.

DOUGLAS

So, when will that happen?

STEVE

You gotta talk to my manager here about that. (*points to Gus*)

DOUGLAS

(*to Gus*)

So can you tell me when Domingo will be turning pro?

GUS

All I can tell you is soon. But there's no exact date.

DOUGLAS

(*to Steve*)

How do feel about being a Golden Gloves lightweight champion?

STEVE

It's a great honor but to tell you the truth it's not enough. I want more, so you know what? Here's a news story for you. As of right now I'm turning pro, period, no need for waiting, and you're the first to know.

DOUGLAS

(*elated*)

Thanks for the scoop, Steve! That's an exclusive! And I want to tell you something else: you just made a friend.

STEVE

Same here, pal. (*to Gus*) There's nothing wrong with making a new friend.

GUS

Absolutely none, especially when the cat's already outta the bag.

DOUGLAS

Your announcement will be in tomorrow's paper, okay?

STEVE

I'll be looking for it, and make sure it's in big print!

Steve and Douglas laugh and shake hands.

End of scene 3

Scene 4

Time: four years later.

Place: The editorial room at the City Bugle. In the center of the stage is an office desk. Two men are seated, one on either side of a desk. The man seated on the left is Douglas, the man seated on the right is the sports editor, Victor Murphy, also known as Vic.

DOUGLAS

I want to do a feature story on Domingo DiMarci.

VIC

We've been following this guy for years, so why do a feature story on him now?

DOUGLAS

Because the guy is for real and he's been tested and now has a chance to contend for the title. So let's play him up!

VIC

We tried that four years ago after you discovered him.

DOUGLAS

Yeah, but you kept my discovery buried in the middle of the paper.

VIC

With good reason.

DOUGLAS

What are you talking about? Since turning pro he's won twenty-seven fights, twenty four by knock out, including seven in the first round. What more do you want?

VIC

But weren't most of his fights with ringers?

DOUGLAS

No way. He's already fought some of the best. Ernie Smith. Derrick Palmer. Luis Marquez. Pound for pound he's the best boxer in the world today.

VIC

And you're willing to put that in print?

DOUGLAS

Yes, I am. I have personally seen him fight fourteen times and he's won decisively every time, but whenever I write a story you bury it in the racing section.

VIC

Right now he's still no story. No matter how good he is, he's still a lightweight and people wanna read about heavyweights, not lightweights.

DOUGLAS

You're not looking at this the right way, Vic. He's a symbol of the average ordinary street guy who's just trying to survive. Comes to the United States as a teenager looking to make a better life for himself, soon finds himself going nowhere working a dead end job, feels cheated and trapped, and now the guy has a chance for stardom. Who can't relate to that? It's the American dream!

VIC

So, is he in line for a shot at the title?

DOUGLAS

Not quite. Del Covington is interested in putting on the card as the feature event at the Stadium, matching him with Homer McCoy, the Olympic gold medal winner, in a nontitle event. Whoever wins gets a shot at the title.

VIC

So, how do you think he'll do?

DOUGLAS

McCoy is tough but Denopolis will handle him.

VIC

Yeah, but will he win? I don't wanna start doing a spread on the wrong guy. Why not do a feature on McCoy?

DOUGLAS

Because McCoy came up through the ranks and his story is already been published in at least seven other papers while Denopolis is your classic outsider, a lone wolf. He wants a shot at the title, and there is no way that he will be denied.

VIC

Well, okay, we'll go with the Denopolis story, but remember, if this guy loses, I won't forget who put this idea in my head.

End of scene 4

Scene 5

Time: The following day

Place: Bailey's Boxing Emporium in downtown Philadelphia. Steve is in the ring sparring. Gus is standing outside the ring watching them spar. The sparring fighter is pummeling Steve with punches.

GUS

Keep you left up! ... Watch his right! ... Duck and punch! Duck and punch! ... That's it! ... Keep going!

A man enters the scene. He is large, heavysset, well-dress, about 40 years of age. His name is Louis Bromeier.

LOUIS

(to Gus)

Your boy's looking good up there.

(Gus turns to Louis)

GUS

Thanks, Bub, and who you might you be?

LOUIS

My name is Louis de Bromeier and I'd like to speak with Steve Denopolis if I may.

GUS

(to the fighters)

Okay, fellas, take a break. *(Steve and his spar stop fighting; the spar takes a seat in the far corner. Steve exits the ring; Gus gives Steve a towel which he uses to wipe his face.)* This gentleman here wishes to speak with you.

STEVE

Do I know you?

LOUIS

We've never met, so let me introduce myself. I'm Louis Bromeier. I deal in real estate and live on Dekalb Terrace near Fairmount Park.

STEVE

That's just a few blocks from where I live. How come I never seen you around?

LOUIS

Because I just moved here from Utah.

STEVE

Okay, so what do you want to talk about?

LOUIS

I've been reading about you in the papers and from what I've been reading you look like an up and coming guy, and I like that because you remind me of me. I want to become a champ too, in real estate. I'm in the process of buying up rundown buildings and converting them into income producing properties and I thought you might be interested in getting a piece of the action.

GUS

(to Steve)

You sure you want to listen to this guy?

LOUIS

(to Gus)

I can assure you that I am completely legitimate and have nothing to hide.

STEVE

So, what do you want from me?

LOUIS

I want you to become a shareholder in my company.

STEVE

What's a shareholder?

LOUIS

Someone who owns part of a company. You invest money and you get a return on your investment.

STEVE

That sounds good to me. Tell me more.

LOUIS

It's like this: you pay me money, I make you a partner and then you make lots of money. It's as simple as that. You just leave it all to me.

STEVE

(to Gus)

You hear that, Gus? All I gotta do is give him money and before I know it, I'm making money! That's what I like to hear! *(to Louis)* Now, what I wanna know is: How much money could I make?

LOUIS

Right now I can't say for certain because I don't know how much my properties will earn, but I'm sure that once the renovations are completed, it could be quite a lot.

GUS

Excuse me for butting in, but how much money would Steve need to invest?

LOUIS

(to Gus)

Thank you for bringing up that matter. *(to Gus)*. I would be asking you to invest thirty-five thousand dollars, and in return you would have a one-third interest in my company.

STEVE

Thirty-five thousand dollars? *(pause)* No problem! I already have over thirty thousand in the bank and with my percentage of the gate from my next fight with McCoy, I'll be able to afford it easily! *(to Gus)* This sure beats being a shipping clerk!

LOUIS

By the way, I want to complement you on your success thus far. Your boxing career has been very impressive.

STEVE

Thanks a lot.

LOUIS

I read that originally you're from Greece?

STEVE

Yes, right outside of Athens; I came here when I was sixteen years old. My uncle here (*points to Gus*) got me started in boxing, and since then life's been great.

LOUIS

You took control of your life. I like that. That's the American dream. I congratulate you, and if you ever become champ ...

STEVE

Ever?

LOUIS

(*laughs*)

Excuse, me, "when" you become champ, I want to be there to help you guide it along.

GUS

(*to Steve*)

Could I talk to you alone for a moment?

STEVE

(*to Louis*)

Excuse me. *Gus takes Steve by the arm and takes him aside.*
What?

GUS

Are you sure you want to invest your entire savings with this guy?
He seems kinda fishy to me.

STEVE

What are you talking about?

GUS

Look, the guy waltzes in here, we have no idea who he is, makes all kinds of promises about making money and then wants you to pay him thirty-five thousand dollars. That's a lot of money.

STEVE

Hey, he seems on the up and up to me, and besides from what I've heard there's lots of money to be made in real estate and I'd want a cut of the action.

GUS

What's Cindy gonna say?

STEVE

Nothing! It's my money. I earned it and after I become champ, it won't matter anyway.

GUS

You mean, if you become champ. Don't count your chickens before they hatch.

STEVE

What's the matter? You think I won't win?

GUS

I didn't say that.

STEVE

Enough of this talk. I like the guy and I'll talk with my wife, but no matter what she or anyone else says, nobody will stop me from getting what is mine, nobody, you hear that! I will never go back to being a shipping clerk making two fifty an hour with people bossing me around. You can take that to the bank.

GUS

I'm just saying you gotta be careful.

STEVE

Yes, but if I were always careful I'd never do anything, and then where would I be?

GUS

I'm just trying to look out for you.

STEVE

I know that. *(Gus and Steve look at each other, hug, and then rejoin Louis)*
(Steve to Louis) Look, I like your offer very much and I will definitely give it consideration. But right now I need to concentrate on training for my next fight.

LOUIS

The one with McCoy?

STEVE

That's right. If I win that fight I'll be next in line for a shot at the title.

LOUIS

I certainly wish you all the luck in the world.

STEVE

Thanks a lot, Mister ...

LOUIS

Call me Lou.

STEVE

Okay ... Lou.

Louis and Steve shake hands. Gus is looking at them. He is slowly moving his head from side to side, indicating his disapproval.

End of scene 5

Scene 6

Time: One month later

Place: Philadelphia Stadium. Center stage is a boxing ring. A large crowd is watching a fight in the ring. The crowd is really into the fight, making a lot of noise. Steve is one of the fighters. In the crowd are Cindy, Louis and Louis's wife, Melissa. They are sitting right behind Steve's corner.

CINDY

(yelling, anguish)

Oh my, he's taking a beating. I can't stand to watch it.

LOUIS

That's it, Steve, give 'em the old one-two.

MELISSA

(to Cindy)

Your boy isn't looking too good. McCoy is putting him through the ringer.

CINDY

(to Melissa)

Hey, he's not a boy, he's a man.

MELISSA

I didn't mean anything by that.

LOUIS

Hey, ladies, c'mon, watch the fight.

CINDY

That's right: watch the fight and keep your remarks to yourself.

MELISSA

My, aren't you Miss high and mighty. *(to Louis)* Who does she think she is anyway? All evening she's been acting like a prima donna.

LOUIS

On, who cares! Let's root for Steve to win.

CINDY
(*upset*)

Look at his face! He's bleeding!

MELISSA

Well, that comes with being a boxer. So what's your gripe?

CINDY

How would you like it if your husband was the one being hit?

MELISSA

Louis is too smart for that.

LOUIS

Ladies, please. Enough of the garbage talk. Just watch the fight.

The bell rings, sounding the end of the round. Steve returns to the corner. He is bleeding from his nose and mouth and his face is swollen. He looks over to Cindy and the others and waves at them.

LOUIS
(*to Steve*)

You're doing great, pal. Keep on punching!

CINDY
(*to Steve*)

Please, be careful!

MELISSA

Doing great, my foot! He's taking a first-class shellacking. Look at 'em.

CINDY
(*angry, to Melissa*)

Will you shut up!

LOUIS
(*to Melissa and Cindy*)

This is no time to argue. We got to root for Steve to win.

CINDY
(to herself)

I hope they stop the fight. I can't stand watching him get hit.

MELISSA
(flippant)

Aw, what are you complaining about? He's finally earning some real money.

CINDY

True, by being beaten up.

MELISSA

It's the nature of the sport, babe. Deal with it.

The bell rings. Steve gets up and immediately takes a punch in the face.

CINDY
(screams)

No!

LOUIS

C'mon, Stevie, you can win!

The crowd is yelling wildly as the scene ends.

Scene 7

Time: Nine years later. It's 6:00 PM.

Place: The living room in Steve's apartment. The apartment is crammed with clutter that is piled up to the ceiling. Cindy is putting food on the table. Steve enters. He has an unkempt appearance.

CINDY

Where have you been today?

STEVE

At the gym, where else?

CINDY

You and your gym. A lot of good it does you.

STEVE

It does me a lot of good.

CINDY

For you maybe, but not for us.

STEVE

You're always complaining.

CINDY

I have a right to complain. We're still stuck in this dump and you've made this apartment into a pigsty.

STEVE

I want to start throwing stuff out but I don't know where to start.

CINDY

Ever since you lost that fight nine years ago, our lives have become a disaster.

STEVE

I've asked you not to bring that up.

CINDY

I can't help it. You won't work, you don't wash, I don't even know why I still stay with you. It's like you've given up.

STEVE

You don't know what you're talking about.

CINDY

Oh, I don't? Like I didn't know what I was talking about when I told you not to give that Bromeier guy the thirty-five thousand dollars, and you did it anyway, or when I told you not to be a boxer, and look where that got you?

STEVE

Why are you always nagging me? So I made a bad investment. What could we have done with thirty five thousand dollars anyway?

CINDY

Maybe if you had gotten a job, we could have afforded to move out of here. I don't make enough money babysitting and with you on welfare we're lucky that we can even pay the rent.

STEVE

There is no way I'm ever gonna work for someone again. I would rather live in a hole in the gutter than do garbage work for next to nothing.

CINDY

Well, that's where we may wind up, in a hole in the gutter.

STEVE

Let me talk with Gus. Maybe he has some ideas.

CINDY

You've been saying that for nine years. (*Sarcastic*) I'm gonna talk to Gus. Well, he's the one that caused all the problems in the first place.

STEVE

Don't talk disrespectful about my uncle. Because of him, I was a somebody, at least for a while.

CINDY

That's in the past, and you blew it.

STEVE

(anger flares)

Blew it? Just shut up! Shut up, now! I didn't blow anything, you hear!

CINDY

(frightened, placating)

Okay, Steve. I'm sorry I said that. There's your food.

STEVE

I'm not hungry.

CINDY

Look, Steve, you know I still care about you, but still ...

STEVE

But still what?

CINDY

I'm trying to talk to you but you won't listen.

STEVE

I know you care and you even got me involved in your church, but what good has the church been for me?

CINDY

It has taught you to put your faith in something higher and stronger than yourself.

STEVE

I've tried doing that, but here we are arguing again, with you nagging me, like I'm a little kid.

CINDY

I just want what's best for you.

STEVE

Okay, I believe you, but don't tell me what to do. I decide what's best for me and if you don't like it, then ... (*Knocking at the door.*) Who's that?

CINDY

Probably your uncle.

(Cindy opens the door and Gus enters.)

GUS

Hello, Cindy.

CINDY

Hello, Gus. What brings you here?

GUS

I thought I'd come by and check up on my favorite nephew.

STEVE

Have a seat. (*Gus sits at the table.*) So, what's the word?

GUS

I haven't seen you in a while so I wanted to know how you were doing.

STEVE

How come you don't come by to the gym anymore?

GUS

Because when I see you there doing nothing, it upsets me.

STEVE

Whadya mean doing nothing? I help out, give pointers to the boxers.

GUS

C'mon, who are you fooling? Ever since you lost that fight to McCoy you've never been the same. It's like you lost your edge.

CINDY

That's right, Gus. And now all he does is mope.

STEVE

What do you want me to say? I had my shot and I missed. After that, what could I do?

GUS

You coulda kept on boxing and get another shot.

STEVE

That shot was a one-time deal and you know it. After that fight, I couldn't buy my way onto a card. And that newspaper guy, Douglas, who was plugging me in the press, he got fired, and nobody wanted to have anything to do with me, so it was time to leave.

GUS

Well, you can always return.

CINDY

Oh! Doing what?

GUS

(to Cindy)

I was thinking about Steve maybe making a comeback.

STEVE

A comeback?

GUS

Yeah, a comeback. Why not? You're still young enough and besides you're not doing anything else.

STEVE

I am going to this church ...

GUS

Look, I don't want to comment on your religious beliefs, but you've been going to that church for years and what has it done for you?

CINDY

Just a moment, Gus. That church has helped Steve out a lot. When he's feeling down he goes there and prays.

GUS

Well, that's what churches are there for, but does that put money in your pocket? Didn't you once tell me that you want what's yours? (*Steve doesn't answer*). Well, I'm waiting for your answer.

CINDY

(to Gus, alarmed)

Come on, Gus, stop it! Look where boxing got him in the first place!

GUS

(to Cindy)

It gave him a chance to be somebody. It's too bad that it didn't work out but in life there are no guarantees.

CINDY

(to Steve)

Well, I guess it's up to you. I'm not gonna stop you, but I'm telling you I don't like it.

STEVE

I know you don't. That's what makes dealing with this much harder for me.

GUS

By the way, how are things going with your buildings?

STEVE

Not too good. They're still making no money.

GUS

How do you know that?

STEVE

Because Louis tells me. He keeps me posted.

GUS

Well, maybe you ought to check out those buildings yourself.

STEVE

Why should I? Louis knows what he's doing.

GUS

Because, you know, the neighborhood is beginning to change and more people are beginning to move in, so maybe those buildings might be making money.

STEVE

Are you trying to start trouble between me and Louis?

GUS

No! I'm just giving you some friendly advice. In the meantime I want you to start working out at the gym again so you can begin your comeback.

STEVE

Okay. I'll give it a shot. I gotta do something.

GUS

Good. Meet me at the gym tomorrow at 10 AM and we'll get started.

STEVE

Okay, it's a deal.

GUS

I'll see you tomorrow.

Gus leaves.

CINDY

(ominous)

I just hope you know what you are doing.

End of scene 7

Scene 8

Time: One week later

Place: An office. At center stage is a conference table with several chairs. Sitting at the conference are Steve, Louis and a third man, Louis's attorney, Morton Feltschein.

LOUIS

I'm glad you're here. So how are things?

STEVE

Things are going okay.

LOUIS

I heard that you're training again.

STEVE

Yes. I'm thinking about making a comeback.

LOUIS

Well, I'll be rooting for you. *(pause)* So let me tell you why I asked to come here.

STEVE

Okay.

LOUIS

It's like this: I know that the past few years have been hard for you, with you having lost that fight to McCoy, and that you invested thirty-five thousand dollars in my company without a return on your investment. So what I want to do is terminate our business relationship and return your money to you plus another three thousand dollars in interest. I think that would be fair.

STEVE

Why do you want to do this now?

LOUIS

Because after all these years, I don't think those properties will ever generate sufficient income to turn a profit.

STEVE

So you want to give me my thirty-five thousand dollars plus three thousand dollars in interest to buy out my one-third share in the company because the buildings are not making money?

LOUIS

Yes.

STEVE

How do I know you're telling me the truth?

LOUIS

If you don't believe me, ask Mister Feltschein. He'll tell you.

FELTSCHHEIN

That's right, Steve. These buildings are for all intents and purposes worthless, and if you don't accept Mister Bromeier's offer now, his liquidity is such that any cash payments to you in the future may be placed in jeopardy, meaning that he may not have the money to pay you your share, so you'd be well advised to take the money now while his liquidity is still intact.

STEVE

Okay, but a few days ago I checked out these buildings myself and they looked fully occupied. So how can they be losing money?

LOUIS

What you said is true, and I commend you for taking the time to check out the buildings yourself, but because of extremely high and ever-increasing overhead costs, with taxes, repairs, legal, insurance, utilities, and the like, even if the buildings are fully occupied, they're still not making money.

FELTSCHHEIN

Mister Bromeier is correct.

STEVE

Are you telling me that I've been waiting nine years to make the money you promised and now it was all a pipe dream?

LOUIS

I'm sorry for that and I understand how you must feel, but things just didn't work out and so I want to make it right and give you back you money.

STEVE

Well, okay, if that's what you think is best.

FELTSCHHEIN

This is what we think is best. We're trying to look out for you. Let me give you some papers to sign. (*Feltschein gives Domingo some papers.*) Now by signing these papers you agree to accept thirty-eight thousand dollars to fully relinquish your share in Mister Bromeier's company. Do you understand that?

STEVE

Yes, I do.

FELTSCHHEIN

Now, after you sign the papers, Mister Bromeier will write a check for thirty-eight thousand dollars drawn from his private account payable to the company which you will endorse and then we will deposit the check in the company bank from which you will receive your remittance. The reason for this is to show on the books that this payment is a business and not a personal transaction. Either way, you will still receive your money. Do you understand?

STEVE

Yes.

FELTSCHHEIN

Now, if you could be so kind, please sign the papers. (*Steve signs the papers and hands them back to Feltschein.*)

LOUIS

Excellent. You did the right thing, Steve. You're looking out for your future. That's good. Now let me write that check. (*Louis opens a drawer desk drawer and removes a check book and starts writing a check as the lights go out.*)

End of scene 8

Scene 9

Time: Two years later

Place: Bailey's Boxing Emporium. Steve is working the punching bag. Dudley Douglas enters. In the back ground light music is playing.

DOUGLAS

Steve!

(Steve stops punching the bag, turns and faces Douglas.)

STEVE

And who may you ... hey, I remember you! You're that news reporter, Douglas, right?

DOUGLAS

That's right.

STEVE

It's been a long time! How are you? *(pause)* Hey, I'm sorry I lost that fight. I heard it got you fired.

DOUGLAS

Personally, I thought you were ahead on points when the ref stopped the fight, but that's the way it goes.

STEVE

I thought so too, and I thought about filing a protest, but what good would it have done? I knew I was washed up and that I'd never get another shot. *(pause)* So what are you up to now?

DOUGLAS

I'm the chief sports reporter for the Newark Eagle, which is why I'm here. I heard that you had returned to the ring out after your long layoff and I wanted to do a story on you.

STEVE

Let's sit down. (*Steve and Douglas walk over to two empty chairs and sit. Douglas takes out a pen and pad.*) After the McCoy fight I decided to put away the gloves and try something else. So, through my wife, I got involved with a church and started studying to be a minister, but it just wasn't for me. I'm not the book learning type. But it was something to do and it kept me busy and stopped me from thinking about boxing, and what might have been. But there was one problem: I had no income.

DOUGLAS

Could you have gone back to work?

STEVE

There was no way I was ever going to go back to my old job, never! Absolutely out of the question.

DOUGLAS

So how did you manage financially?

STEVE

My wife got a job working as a babysitter and maid for a couple of Jewish attorneys, and I wound up collecting welfare.

DOUGLAS

How did your wife feel about you being on welfare?

STEVE

Well, she wasn't too happy about it but she felt that it was better than me being in the ring, which was something she has always opposed.

DOUGLAS

Yet here you are, back in the ring.

STEVE

After nine years of scrounging, the need for money became too great and after talking with my uncle, who's also my manager, I decided that I had to go back to doing what I do best, which is boxing.

DOUGLAS

So, how did it feel to return to the gym after such a long layoff?

STEVE

At first it felt a little strange because I was away from it so long and it took me a lot longer than I thought to get into shape, but with the help of my uncle, I finally got back my boxing legs and then started getting matches.

DOUGLAS

And how have you done?

STEVE

Two wins and six losses, although in one of those losses I thought I actually won. You see, I'm considered a journeyman boxer, meaning I'm the guy they call to fill a card. I'll fight anyone and it don't matter to me if I win or lose, just as long as I get paid.

DOUGLAS

So, you're not looking for another shot at the title?

STEVE

(laughs)

If that happens, great; I certainly wouldn't say no. But right now I'm just looking for matches, period.

DOUGLAS

And you feel okay with that?

STEVE

Yeah, it's okay. It gets me out of the house and I go on the road, which I like. I've even fought a couple of times overseas.

DOUGLAS

Where overseas?

STEVE

A six-round bout in Moscow and an eight-round bout in Buenos Aires in Argentina.

DOUGLAS

So, how did you do in those fights?

STEVE

I went the distance in Moscow but lost the fight in Buenos Aires by a TKO. But for both fights the pay was very good, and the fans in both cities were great.

DOUGLAS

In what way were the fans great?

STEVE

They love boxing and a lot of them seemed to be rooting for me, which was nice. (*The background music stops followed by a news report.*) Would you mind if we take a break just for a moment while I listen to the news? I like keeping up with world events.

DOUGLAS

Sure, no problem.

NEWS ANNOUNCER

(*off stage*)

This is Mike Mortimer with the two-o'clock news. Our lead story: Earlier today the United Nations Security Council voted to impose some of the harshest sanctions in history on the People's Republic of Balizastan after their leader publicly declared his intention to continue with plans to build a hydrogen bomb. The United States is calling on the international community to take action to deal with the Balizastanian threat. And in business news, a Philadelphia businessman, Louis Bromeier, has been voted Businessperson of the Year by the National Association of Business Owners. According to reports, Bromeier has made tens of millions of dollars from extensive real estate holdings throughout the Philadelphia area, specializing in the upgrading of dilapidated buildings. Bromeier credited his family and hard work for his extraordinary success. When asked about his future plans ...

STEVE

(*angry, shocked, screams*)

**ERNIE, TURN OFF THAT DAMN RADIO, NOW! (*The radio is turned off.*)
THAT SON OF A BITCH! THAT DAMN THIEF! ONE-THIRD OF WHAT HE MADE IS
MINE!**

DOUGLAS

(shocked and alarmed)

What are you talking about?

STEVE

(livid)

That guy Bromeier ripped me off! I own one-third of those buildings! Here I am knocking myself out for years trying to make some money while all the time that bastard has been cleaning up, at my expense! He's not gonna get away with it, you hear!

DOUGLAS

First, calm down, and then tell me what all this is about.

STEVE

(trying to calm down, but still agitated, speaking excitedly)

Nine years ago I became a one-third partner with this guy Louis Bromeier, the guy you just heard about on the news, and all the while he was telling me that our properties were making no money and then a couple of years ago said he wanted to give me back my investment, thirty five thousand dollars plus three thousand in interest, because he felt sorry for me and knew I needed money and that the buildings would never make any money, and now its reported that this thief was making millions of dollars. He lied to me.

DOUGLAS

But what about the money that he repaid you?

STEVE

(agitation building)

I never saw a penny of it! Never! That damn thief, I'll take care of him but good. He's not gonna play me for a chump!

DOUGLAS

This is some story. Struggling boxer ripped off by shady businessman.

STEVE

Yeah, you got your story but what does that do for me?

DOUGLAS

You heard of the power of the press? Nobody likes negative publicity.

STEVE

Negative publicity won't change anything. I'm gonna have to take care of this my way.

(Douglas is rapidly writing notes on his pad while Steve is nervously pacing back and forth as the lights go out.)

End of scene 9

Scene 10

Time: Two hours later

Place: Louis's office. Present are Louis and his wife, Melissa, a middle-aged woman, conservatively attired. They are sitting at the conference table. In the middle of the table is a large trophy.

MELISSA

That's a beautiful trophy they gave you.

LOUIS

Yes, it is.

MELISSA

And well deserved too. It's good that somebody has finally recognized you for all the good work you have done.

LOUIS

Yes, and it has paid well, too.

Steve suddenly enters. He is dressed in street clothing but still has his boxing cleats on.

STEVE

(enraged)

You son of the bitch, I want my money, now!

(Louis and Melissa are shocked and alarmed.)

LOUIS

Domingo, what are you talking about?

STEVE

You told me those buildings would never make money and now I heard they've made millions, and I want my one-third share ... NOW!

LOUIS

I paid you your share two years ago!

STEVE

Don't insult me! You played me for a fool and nobody does that to me. NOBODY!

LOUIS

Would you please clam down? You're scaring my wife.

STEVE

I don't give a damn about your wife. You tried to pull a fast one on me but now I'm onto you. Now pay up ... NOW!

MELISSA
(shouts)

Please leave!

LOUIS

Yes, leave, before I call the police!

STEVE

Call the police. Call whoever you want. I'm here to collect, and I'm through waiting.

LOUIS

But your share in the company ended two years ago!

STEVE

No it did not. I never saw a penny of the money you say you paid me.

LOUIS

But I wrote you a check that you endorsed.

STEVE

You're wasting my time. Start paying, now! I figure you must owe me about three million dollars.

MELISSA and LOUIS

WHAT!

LOUIS

You are insane! This is a shakedown!

MELISSA

You're crazy!

STEVE

(to Melissa)

And you're a slut! (to Louis) Come on! Don't keep me waiting!

LOUIS

I've had enough of this. (As Louis starts to stand up, Steve runs around the table and charges at Louis. As he is about to grab Louis, Steve trips over a telephone wire and tumbles into Louis who falls backward onto the floor with a loud thump. Steve is squatting over Louis.) Oooohhh! My leg! I think I broke my leg!

(Melissa grabs the trophy and hits Steve on the head several times. From offstage comes the sound of sirens which are getting louder. Steve backs away from Louis; Steve is bleeding heavily from his head. Two police officers enter.)

POLICE OFFICER 1

We got a complaint from the people downstairs of a loud disturbance. What's the problem?

MELISSA

(screaming hysterically)

This bastard (points to Steve) barged in here and attacked my husband!

Police officer 2 grabs Steve, quickly spins him around, places him in handcuffs and pulls him away from the table.

STEVE

(agitated, defiant)

I didn't do anything. She attacked me!

LOUIS

(moaning)

Help me! I think I broke my leg!

STEVE
(to Louis)

Good! I hope you die, you bastard!

POLICE OFFICER 2
(to Steve)

Shut up! *(to Louis)* We're calling an ambulance.

POLICE OFFICER 1
(speaking into a walkie-talkie)

We have a ten sixty at 27 Herkimer Lane. Two persons hurt. Send an ambulance. Over.

MELISSA
(Distraught)

That animal *(points to Steve)* almost killed us! He has to be put away!

STEVE
(livid)

You lying bitch! Your thief husband ripped me off!

POLICE OFFICER 2
(to Steve)

Do you live or work here?

STEVE

Who needs to know?

POLICE OFFICER 2

I do.

STEVE

I wanna go home!

POLICE OFFICER 2

Is this your office?

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STEVE

Yeah, it is!

POLICE OFFICER 2

Is your name on the front door?

STEVE

No. So what?

POLICE OFFICER 2

Whose name is on the front door?

STEVE

I don't know. You tell me!

POLICE OFFICER 1
(to Steve)

Stop being a wise ass!

POLICE OFFICER 2
(to Steve)

You are under arrest for disorderly conduct, harassment, assault, extortion, obstructing a police investigation and attempted murder.

STEVE

Attempted murder? If I had tried to murder him, he woulda been dead by now.

POLICE OFFICER 2

You have a right to remain silent. Anything that you say may be used against you in a court of law and you have the right to a court-appointed attorney if you cannot afford one. Do you understand your rights?

STEVE

You're arresting the wrong person!

POLICE OFFICER 2

I asked you something. Do you understand your rights?

STEVE

(still agitated and defiant)

Yeah, I understand them. How come you're not reading her rights too? She tried to kill me!

POLICE OFFICER 1

Tell that to the arraignment judge.

From offstage comes the sound of a siren.

End of scene 9

Scene 11`

Time: Two years later

Place: The visitors room on an inpatient unit of the Pennsylvania State Psychiatric Institution for the Criminally Insane. Seated at a table are Steve, Cindy, Gus, and a fourth person, Leon Delsinger, Steve's court appointed lawyer.)

DELSINGER

Now, Steve, I was able to get your case transferred to the mental health part, which is good, because it got you out of jail.

CINDY

Thank goodness for that!

DELSINGER

But, that doesn't mean your criminal case is over. The complainant still wants to press charges.

STEVE

He got what he deserved.

DELSINGER

Look, I'm not gonna argue your case with you here. I'm just telling you what your situation is and to make sure you understand your options.

STEVE

I already know my options. I can admit that I did something wrong and get a fine and suspended sentence, or I can go to trial, which is what I want.

GUS

And which you could lose.

DELSINGER

Steve, you violating that first order of protection by making three calls to the complainant at his home did not help you case.

STEVE

I didn't do anything wrong.

DELSINGER

You can't be calling that guy, okay?

CINDY

How much longer does Steve have to be cooped up in here?

DELSINGER

That's up to the doctors here and the court. I'm gonna petition the court to place Steve in an outpatient program. *(to Steve)* Have you been taking your medications?

CINDY

He's been taking his medications.

DELSINGER

(to Cindy)

Please, let Steve answer. *(to Steve)* So, have you been taking your meds?

STEVE

Yes, I have, but they just make me feel woozy. I don't like that.

DELSINGER

Did you tell that to the doctor?

STEVE

I did, but they don't seem to care.

DELSINGER

Look, I know it's rough being confined in the hospital, but you have to cooperate with the doctors otherwise it makes it harder to get you released and back to your home.

STEVE

What am I doing here anyway?

CINDY

You see, Mister Delsinger, how he's becoming more forgetful?

DELSINGER

Let me explain again: The court-appointed psychiatrist found that you had some damage to the brain and as a result you needed treatment. The court sent you to an outpatient program but you stopped taking your medications and started calling the complainant, and so your bail was revoked and the court ordered that you be incarcerated in a hospital which is why you are now here. If you show a willingness to cooperate and comply with your treatment plan, then the court may be agreeable to you being discharged to an outpatient program.

STEVE

So what do I have to do?

DELSINGER

You have to comply with treatment.

STEVE

Okay, I'll take my medications. But what about my civil case?

DELSINGER

You mean the one you started a year ago against the complainant?

STEVE

Yeah. I'm suing that bastard.

GUS

(to Steve)

Yeah, but your lawyer said your case was weak.

STEVE

No way. That guy owes me a lot of money.

GUS

I know that, but at the preliminary hearing the court ruled that you had not proven your case.

STEVE

So I'm appealing!

CINDY

(to Steve, imploring)

Why can't you drop it already? What's done is done.

STEVE

Because I can't let him get away with what he did to me. Why should I?

CINDY

But it's only causing you more problems.

STEVE

There is no way that I will drop my case against that guy. I don't care how long it takes and whether I'm in jail or out of jail, or how many times I have to sue, I will never give up, never. He can take that thirty-eight thousand dollars and shove it up you know where.

CINDY

But we could use that money.

STEVE

That's chump change, nothing more. That guy owes me at least five million dollars. He told me that those properties were worthless and he lied to me! He's not gonna get away with it!

CINDY

(to Delsinger)

Do you see what I have to contend with?

DELSINGER

(to Cindy)

I can't comment on Steve's civil case. I can only hope that he prevails. But what I can comment on is how I plan to get Steve released from this hospital, which will require his full cooperation.

STEVE

Look, Mister Delsinger, I'm appreciative for all that you have done for me so far, but I want to get out of here, now!

DELSINGER

Well, if you let me help you, then maybe

STEVE

Maybe? That's all you can give me? Maybe?

DELSINGER

I can't promise you anything, but I can say this: if you don't want to listen to me, then get yourself another attorney. I don't want to waste your time or mine. Okay?

STEVE

(somber)

Alright; you win. I'll listen to you.

DELSINGER

Now that's the right attitude. Okay, this is the plan

End of scene 10.

Scene 12

Time: Three years later.

Place: A room in the Philadelphia Civil Courthouse. Center stage is a large conference table. On both the left and right sides of the table are chairs. Steve, Cindy, and Leslie Arrington, Steve's attorney, are seated on the left; Louis, Melissa and Feltschein are seated at the right. Seated in the middle is Angela LaPlante, a court-appointed mediator.

LAPLANTE

My name is Angela LaPlante and the court has appointed me mediator in the case of Denopolis versus Bromeier. The purpose of this conference is to determine whether this case can be settled without going to trial. Please note that this proceeding is off the record and there will be no sworn testimony. Noting that all parties are present, we can start. The plaintiff may begin first.

ARRINGTON

Your honor, this case is very simple. My client ...

STEVE

I want that bum to admit that he lied to me and to pay me the money he owes me.

FELTSCHIN

I object to the plaintiff's characterization of my client.

LAPLANTE

The plaintiff is to refrain from using abusive or offensive language.

STEVE

What? That I called him a bum? I'm just telling the truth.

LOUIS

You barged into my office like a bandit and terrorized my wife and attacked me and now you're calling me names. Disgusting!

STEVE

That office is one-third mine!

LOUIS

You're out of your mind. That's why you were put away.

STEVE

It should have been you who was put away, not me! Why don't you pay me what you owe me?

LOUIS

Look, I offered to repay you the thirty-five thousand dollars that you had invested and you agreed to the offer.

FELTSCHHEIN

(to Steve)

Did you not endorse a check for thirty-eight-thousand dollars?

ARRINGTON

We have already stipulated to that; but my client never saw a penny of the money.

FELTSCHHEIN

And since my client offered to make good on that sum, then what are we doing here?

ARRINGTON

As far as my client is concerned, non-receipt of the money voided the original agreement, hence my client's status as a partner remained intact and in effect, and accordingly, your client owes my client a one-third of the income from the properties owned by your client proportionate to my client's share in the company, retroactive to the date when they first formed their partnership.

FELTSCHHEIN

(to Arrington)

I think you're stretching the law of contracts to the limits.

STEVE

I'd like to stretch your neck, you shyster.

FELTSCHHEIN

Once, again, I object to the plaintiff's outburst.

LAPLANTE
(to Arrington)

Counselor, please control your client.

ARRINGTON

Yes, your honor. (to Steve) Stop calling the defendant names.

STEVE
(to Arrington)

He's the thief, not me!

MELISSA

Your honor, if I may?

LAPLANTE

Yes?

MELISSA

This man (*points to Steve*) is a thug who almost killed my husband.

STEVE
(to Melissa)

And you almost killed me!

MELISSA
(to Steve)

We were defending ourselves against you!

STEVE

Wrong! You were trying to chase me away from a place that is one-third mine!

MELISSA
(to Steve)

You're delusional!

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CINDY
(to *Melissa*)

Listen, sister. Stop provoking him.

MELISSA

Who you calling sister?

CINDY

Me, that's who! Whadya gonna do about it? Try to kill me, like you did my husband?

MELISSA

We were defending ourselves against a maniac!

STEVE

You ripped me off and I'm the maniac?

LA PLANTE

Ladies and gentlemen. We must have order or I will suspend this meeting.

CINDY
(*pointing to Melissa*)

She started it!

MELISSA

I started it? You started with ME! You're as nasty as your husband.

LA PLANTE
(angry)

ENOUGH! If there are any more outbursts I will have this room vacated. (*to Cindy and Melissa*) Now, do you understand?

Silence

I need to hear that you understand.

CINDY

Okay, I understand.

MELISSA

Alright, but she started it.

LA PLANTE

I don't want to hear that again. Now let's proceed. (to Feltschein) Mister Feltschein.

FELTSCHIEIN

(to LaPlante)

Let's get to the point. To settle this case, my client has offered to pay the plaintiff thirty-eight thousand dollars, which is the money that the plaintiff is owed. Is he willing to accept this offer?

LAPLANTE

(to Arrington)

The defendant has made a firm offer. Do you accept?

ARRINGTON

That offer is a joke.

FELTSCHIEIN

I'm sorry that you feel that this is a joking matter.

ARRINGTON

I didn't say that and please don't put words in my mouth.

LA PLANTE

(to Arrington)

Mr. Arrington: does your client accept the offer?

ARRINGTON

No, he does not.

STEVE
(to Feltschein)

Listen, pal, Just pay me what I'm owed.

FELTSCHIN
(to Steve)

That is exactly what we want to do. You agreed to accept thirty-eight-thousand dollars to relinquish your share in my client's company and after you learned that my client's properties had become profitable, you've been trying to back out from the agreement ever since. That's the entire case, a case that you cannot win.

ARRINGTON

Objection to the counselor's last comment.

LA PLANTE

Mr. Feltschein, your last comment was out of order. The merits of this case will be decided by the court.

ARRINGTON
(to La Plante)

Thank you.

STEVE
(to Feltschein)

I can't win this case? Says you! I never received a penny of the thirty-eight thousand dollars and you know it. All I want is what's mine, which is one-third of the millions Louis made. So, take out your check book, write down a decent number, one that has at least six zeroes and a number three at the far left, and we can end this bickering and leave this room as friends.

FELTSCHIN

I don't think that is going to happen.

ARRINGTON
(to Feltschein)

I don't see why not. Your client misled and deceived my client for financial gain. My client was a one-third shareholder in your client's company and was tricked into signing away his interest in the company, thus the agreement to terminate my client's share is void and my client's share in the company remains in effect, and as my client so eloquently stated, all you need to do is write a check that contains a certain fair and equitable number.

FELTSCHHEIN

Your argument is without any legal foundation.

ARRINGTON

I disagree. A contract not completed is a contract that is void. Your client defrauded my client and all my client wants is to be made whole, that's all. So, just do what's right and write the check and we can be done with this.

FELTSCHHEIN

You are demanding millions of dollars, money that my client neither has nor owes.

STEVE

(to Feltschein)

You know, I'm getting sick and tired of you and your client putting me and my wife through the ringer.

CINDY

It's been horrible.

MELISSA

(pointing to Steve)

That's his fault, not ours.

LOUIS

(to Steve)

I spent a month in the hospital because of you.

STEVE

I can't help it if you're clumsy.

LOUIS

You attacked me! I did not attack you.

CINDY

Then how come it was Steve who was beaten up?

MELISSA

Because we had to defend ourselves.

CINDY

From someone who wanted to talk with his business partner?

MELISSA

Who asked him to visit?

CINDY

(to Melissa)

Who asked YOU to be here?

MELISSA

(to Cindy)

I'm beginning to get fed up with you.

STEVE

(to Cindy)

Quiet!

LOUIS

That's no way to talk to you wife.

STEVE

(to Louis)

Who the hell are you to tell me how to talk to my wife?

CINDY

(to Louis)

Who asked you for your help? All we want is the money you owe Steve.

MELISSA

He doesn't owe your precious husband a dime. Okay.

Cindy stands up and throws her pocketbook at Melissa's head. The pocketbook misses Melissa by inches. Pandemonium ensues. Everyone is yelling.

MELISSA

(screams)

Why you nasty bitch!

LA PLANTE

Order in the court! Guards!

Two bailiffs enter.

STEVE
(*Yelling at Louis*)

Who asked you to rip me off?

LOUIS
(*yelling at Steve*)

Nobody ripped you off.

STEVE
(*sarcastic*)

Yeah, right!

LOUIS

You are pathetic.

STEVE

You can call me all the names you want, but if you think you're gonna get away with ripping me off, you have something else coming to you.

FELTSCHHEIN
(*to Steve*)

You see, you're becoming threatening again.

STEVE

I'm not threatening anyone. I want what's mine, period, and nobody will deny me, not you (*points to Feltschein*), nor you (*points to Louis*), or you (*points to Melissa*). Do I make myself clear?

BAILIFF 1

QUIET!

Silence.

LAPLANTE

Based upon what I have heard thus far, I have determined that the parties are not able to arrive at an agreement. Therefore I shall recommend that this matter proceed to trial. This meeting is adjourned. I am ordering that the room be cleared now!

LaPlante, Louis, Melissa and Feltschein exit.

STEVE

(elated)

Did you hear that? Finally, with the Lord's help, I'm gonna have my day in court! *(vigorously shakes Arrington's hand).*

ARRINGTON

It looks like it.

CINDY

You already had your day in court once and you wind up in a state mental hospital

STEVE

(to Cindy, elated)

That was different. Now, with this guy on the job *(gestures toward Arrington)*, we're gonna win!

CINDY

Okay. I'll be back. I gotta go powder my nose. *Cindy exits.*

ARRINGTON

Your wife is a nice lady.

Pause

If you don't mind, I'd like to ask you something.

STEVE

Sure, go ahead.

ARRINGTON

Why do think the Lord's going to help YOU?

STEVE
(surprised)

He listens to my prayers.

ARRINGTON

But with all the billions of people on this planet, why should the Lord pay particular attention to you?

STEVE

Because we're all equal before the Lord, so he pays us equal attention.

ARRINGTON

Okay, I get that, but still, how's that helped you so far?

STEVE

The ways of the Lord are hard to figure out. Job went through the ringer before he found salvation.

ARRINGTON

That doesn't tell me anything.

Cindy returns.

CINDY

What are you two guys talking about?

STEVE

Nothing much: just small talk.

CINDY

Didn't sound like that to me.

STEVE

My good friend here is quizzing me over something I said.

ARRINGTON

(placating)

Na! I was just curious. You go ahead and think what you want.

STEVE

Hey, look, I didn't mean to offend you.

ARRINGTON

You got it backward. I hope I didn't offend you.

CINDY

Mr. Arrington, I know what you were talking about. Steve talks all the time about how the Lord is going to save him.

ARRINGTON

Look, if that's what gets you through the day, fine!

BAILIFF 1

Why are all of you still here?

ARRINGTON

We were just about to leave.

BAILIFF 1

You need to leave now because we got to lock up.

STEVE

(irritated)

The man said that we're leaving!

BAILIFF 2

(annoyed)

Pardon me?

STEVE

I said we are leaving, okay!

BAILIFF 2

Then why do I still see you here!

ARRINGTON
(placating)

Officer, we are leaving.

STEVE

I don't need to take this crap from him.

BAILIFF 1
(angry)

Can that talk, now!

BAILIFF 2
(to Steve)

I am ordering to leave this room, now!

STEVE

Hey, back off!

BAILIFF 1

Calm down right now or I will have to arrest you.

STEVE

What a bunch a baloney! I didn't do anything.

ARRINGTON

Sir, please understand, my client has emotional issues.

STEVE

You think I'm crazy!

BAILIFF 1
(to Arrington)

Can't you control your client?

ARRINGTON
(irritated)

I resent that question.

BAILIFF 2

Like I told your client, I'm telling you too: calm down now.

STEVE

(to Cindy)

Can you beat that? He thinks I'm crazy.

CINDY

Well, aren't you? Isn't that why you were in the hospital?

BAILIFF 2

If the bunch of you are not out of here in five seconds you will all be placed under arrest.

CINDY

(to Steve)

Let's get out of here.

STEVE

(angry)

I don't like being pushed around.

BAILIFF 2

That's it! You're all under arrest. You and you *(points to Steve and Cindy)* turn around and put your hands behind your backs.

Melissa complies. Steve does not move.

Bailiff 1 grabs Steve and tries to turn him around. Steve breaks free and punches the bailiff in the face. The bailiff collapses on the floor, blood pouring from his nose and mouth. Bailiff 2 pulls out a taser and shoots Steve in the abdomen. Steve immediately collapses.

ARRINGTON

Oh, no!!!

CINDY

(screaming)

No!

BAILIFF 2
(to Bailiff 1)

Are you okay?

The Bailiff 1 does not reply. Bailiff 2 takes out a radio phone.

This is part 7 on the 4th floor. I have an officer down and seriously injured; the perpetrator has been tazed. Need an ambulance now! This is an emergency. Out.

STEVE

(on the floor, groaning)
Why did you do that for?

Bailiff 2 grabs Steve, turns him around, grabs his arms, pulls them behind his back and cuffs him.

BAILIFF 2

Now you are under arrest.

CINDY
(to Steve)

Look what you've done!

STEVE
(moaning)

I didn't do anything. *(to Arrington)* Do something.

CINDY

What a mess!

ARRINGTON

Listen, I'm your civil attorney and right now there's nothing I can do for you.

CINDY
(to Arrington)

What kind of attorney are you?

ARRINGTON

I'm starting to ask myself the same question.

Bailiff 2 cuffs Cindy.

STEVE

Hey. Leave my wife alone!

BAILIFF 2

Sir, I suggest you keep quiet.

Arrington is exiting.

BAILIFF 2

Where do you think you're going? You're under arrest too.

ARRINGTON

(surprised)

Me? What did I do?

STEVE

(moaning)

My stomach hurts.

Bailiff 2 grabs Arrington and hand cuffs him.

BAILIFF 2

You are all under arrest for assaulting an officer of the court, disorderly conduct, obstruction of justice, conspiracy to riot, and creating a disturbance in a court.

ARRINGTON

(to Steve)

I hope you're happy now. Now we'll all be going to court, thanks to you. What do you have to say about that?

STEVE

I know I've done stupid things, but at least I realize that what I've done has been stupid, which is more than I can say for most people who do stupid things too and never admit it. So, as we go off to jail, me for the second time, I can only say, in response to your question, that the Lord is saving me for some greater purpose, the details of which I do not know and cannot know. Further, I know that I've hurt other people, but I've been damaged too, by my pride, my selfishness, and my vanity. These are my weaknesses. But at least I know my shortcomings, as bad as they are.

ARRINGTON

If you know all this, then why don't you change your ways?

STEVE

I have no choice in the matter. I am what I am and do what I do. I did not choose to be born poor or without social advantages, and tried to play according to the rules, and lost twice, in the ring and in business. That makes me a two-time loser, which does not make me feel too good. But as the good book says, I am the light of the world, and I don't want that light to go out, no matter how many dumb and destructive things I do. I am meant for better things. I know that I've gotten you and my wife into trouble and that is my fault, for which I will take the blame, but things will work out for the best.

ARRINGTON

I hope you're right. Let justice prevail.

The end.