

# TACT COURAGE AND ELOQUENCE WITH PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATIONS IN LETTERS OF LAWYERS GIVING THEIR BEST RULES FOR WINNING CASES

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he rarely settled for frivolous game shows or sitcoms like *Gomer Pyle* or *The Beverly Hillbillies*, or even *I Dream of Jeannie*, but committed himself to serious dramas that required intellectual involvement—*Guns, Smoke, Bonanza*, and *The Fugitive*. He preferred *Scrabble* to all other board games, because it expanded one's vocabulary. As a member in good standing of the Book-of-the-Month Club, he'd already acquired nearly thirty volumes of the finest in contemporary literature, and thus far he'd read or skim-read more than six of them. He would have read all of them if he had not been a busy man with such varied interests; his cultural aspirations were greater than the time he was able to devote to them. Friday, December 29, was a grand day: cool but not cold; high scattered clouds ornamenting a Wedgwood-blue sky. The streets were agreeably abustle but not swarming like the corridors of a hive, as sometimes they could be. San Franciscans, reliably a pleasant lot, were still in a holiday mood and, therefore, even quicker to smile and more courteous than usual. Nolly adored her laugh, so musical and girlish. He would have made all sorts of a fool out of himself, anytime, just to hear it. As Sklent so insightfully put it: Some of us live on after death, survive in spirit, because we are just too stubborn, selfish, greedy, grubbing, vicious, psychotic, and evil to accept our demise. None of those qualities described sweet Naomi, who had been far too kind and loving and meek to live on in spirit, after her lovely flesh failed. Now at one with the earth, Naomi was no threat to Junior, and the state had paid for its negligence in her death, and the whole matter should have been brought to closure. There were only two barriers to full and final resolution: first, the stubborn, selfish, greedy, grubbing, vicious, psychotic, evil spirit of Thomas Vanadium; and second, Seraphim's bastard baby—little Bartholomew. Still pretending sleep, Junior delighted in the realization that the detective himself had dragged a red herring across the trail and was now busily following this distracting scent. Joey couldn't raise his head, couldn't turn more directly toward her ... because his spine had been damaged, perhaps severed, and he was paralyzed. At the stream Serrenen, where it runs within the north wall of the city, the midwife gave Otter his true name, by which he is remembered in islands far from Havnor. Thrusting the red rose at her again, insistently pressing it against her hand to distract her, Junior swung the Merlot, and just as Sinatra sang the word sugar with a bounce, the bottle smacked Victoria in the center of her forehead. Some acts were distasteful, too, such as searching the lunatic lawman for his car keys and his badge. Yet for all his love of reading and of music, events suggested that for mathematics he had a still greater aptitude. "All right," Celestina conceded, and looked relieved. "Thank you, Paul. You're not only an exceptionally brave man but a gracious one, as well." "And," Joshua cautioned, "you better prepare for a long day. I'm pretty sure Dr. Chan will want to consult with an oncologist." "Thirsty," Agnes rasped. Her voice was Sahara sand abrading ancient stone, the dry whisper of a pharaoh's mummy talking to itself in a vaulted sealed for three thousand years. "I'll always know your face," he promised. "Even if you have to go away and you're gone a hundred years, I'll remember what you looked like, how you felt." The ghost cop was forty feet behind him, beyond ranks of other pedestrians, every one of whom might as well have been faceless now, smooth and featureless from brow to chin, because suddenly Junior could see no countenance other than that of the walking dead man. The haunting visage bobbed up and down as the grim spirit strode along, vanishing and reappearing and then vanishing again among all the bobbing and swaying heads of the intervening multitudes. He was, in fact, a first-rate driver, with an impeccable record at the age of thirty: no traffic citations, no accidents. Behind her, he said, "And is that my gray cardigan? What did you do to my cardigan?" The bandaged man stormed up from the ruin of the living room, gauze fluttering around his lips as his hard exhalations seemed to prove that he wasn't a long-dead pharaoh reanimated to punish some heedless archaeologist who had ignored all warnings and violated his tomb. So this wasn't a *Weird Tales* moment. Finally sleeping, he had anxiety dreams of being in a public rest room, overcome by urgent need, only to find that every stall was occupied by someone he had killed, all of them vengefully determined to deny him a chance for dignified relief. Cypresses lined the entry drive to the cemetery. Tall and solemn, the trees kept guard, as though posted to prevent restless spirits from roaming out into the land of the living. "Just that she's aware of all the ways things are," Maria added. "Like you and Barty." Celestina was hardly more than a child herself, pretending to have the strong shoulders and the breadth of experience to bear this burden. She felt half crushed. So the practice of their lore and the teaching of it had become perilous. Those who undertook it were often those already outcast, crippled, deranged, without family, old-women and men who had little to lose. The wise man and wise woman, trusted and held in reverence, gave way to the stock figures of the shuffling, impotent village sorcerer with his trickeries, the hag-witch with her potions used in aid of lust, jealousy, and malice. And a child's gift for magic became a thing to dread and hide. Commodified fantasy takes no risks: it invents nothing, but imitates and trivializes. It proceeds by depriving the old stories of their intellectual and ethical complexity, turning their action to violence, their actors to dolls, and their truth-telling to sentimental platitudes. Heroes brandish their swords, lasers, wands, as mechanically as combine harvesters, reaping profits. Profoundly disturbing moral choices are sanitized, made cute, made safe. The passionately conceived ideas of the great story-tellers are copied, stereotyped, reduced to toys, molded in bright-colored plastic, advertised, sold, broken, junked, replaceable, interchangeable. When Junior tried to lift Victoria, her voluptuousness lost its appeal. As dead weight, she was heavier than he expected. Hisscus, Nork, and Knacker exchanged sharp glances, nonplussed. Finally, one of them said, "We couldn't do that, Mr. Cain. Not until you've consulted an attorney." CLOUDS SWARMED THE late-afternoon sun, and the Oregon sky grew sapphire where still revealed. Cops gathered like bright-eyed crows in the lengthening shadow of the fire tower. body on the flight out of San Francisco. When finally her obligations were met, she. Phimie's eyes widened, her hand tightened painfully on her sister's hand, her entire body convulsed, thrashed, and she cried, "Unnn, unnn, unnn!" Bent like an ape, he humped the musician north along the alley. The original cobblestone pavement had been coated with blacktop, but in places the modern material had cracked and worn away, providing a treacherously uneven surface made even more treacherous by a skin of moisture shed by the fog. He stumbled and slipped repeatedly, but he used his anger to keep his balance and be a winner, until he found a distant enough dumpster. Curiously, reciting these facts usually calmed him, as though speaking of disaster would ward it off. Since Friday, however, he had found no comfort in his usual routines. Otter said nothing. The black service road seemed to come out of nowhere, then to vanish into a void, and Junior suddenly felt dangerously isolated, alone as he had never been, and vulnerable. Her voice as bright as her bed ensemble, spiritual sister to baby chicks everywhere, yellow Angel raised her head from the pillow and said, "Will you have a wedding?" excited, shrieking. Branch to branch, the flapping of wings is leathery, demonic. The only other sounds are the thud. The cop weighed too much to be carried any distance, the blanket proved effective, the decision to drag him was wise, and the whole process was value neutral. WHEN AT LAST Paul Damascus reached the parsonage late Friday afternoon, January 12, he arrived on foot, as he arrived everywhere these days. "As she comes closer to full term," said Dairies, "she's at great risk of preeclampsia developing into full eclampsia." An exceptionally attractive

woman, alone at the bar, stirred his desire. Glossy black hair: the tresses of night itself, shorn from the sky. THE MORNING THAT it happened was bright and blue in March, two months after Barty took Angel for a dry walk in wet weather, seven weeks after Celestina married Wally, and five weeks after the happy newlyweds completed their purchase of the Galloway house next door to the Lampion place. Selma Galloway, retired from a professorship years earlier, had subsequently retired further, taking advantage of the equity in her long-owned home to buy a little condo on the beach in nearby Carlsbad. EARLY CHRISTMAS EVE, gallery brochure in hand, Junior returned to his apartment, puzzling over mysteries that had nothing to do with guiding stars and virgin births. He had recently learned about the demigods of classic mythology in one of the selections from the Book-of-the-Month Club. This wasn't thrill killing-which, now that he'd had time to think about it, he realized was beneath him, even if in the service of personal growth. This would be murder for good, justifiable cause. Hound shrugged. He didn't choose to tell Losen that people hated him disinterestedly. "There's no clear evidence of birth defects, but a couple tests reveal some worrisome anomalies. We'll know when we see the child." The bullet had been fired by a renegade cop who was every bit as lousy a marksman as he was a corrupt scumball. He'd been aiming for Nolly's crotch. JUNIOR CAIN WANDERED among the Philistines, in the gray land of conformity, seeking one-just one-refreshingly repellent canvas, finding only images that welcomed and even charmed, yearning for real art and the vicious emotional whirlpool of despair and disgust that it evoked, finding instead only themes of uplift and images of hope, surrounded by people who seemed to like everything from the paintings to the canapes to the cold January night, people who probably hadn't spent even one day of their lives brooding about the inevitability of nuclear annihilation before the end of this decade, people who smiled too much to be genuine intellectuals, and he felt more alone and threatened than eyeless Samson chained in Gaza. "I know you, kid. You can handle anything from here on, whether it's a sold-out show or it's not, whether you're going to be famous or just another nobody." The paramedic snatched the oxygen feed from his patient's nose and quickly elevated his head, providing a purge towel to catch the thin ejecta. Like all ICU waiting rooms, where Death sits patiently, smiling in anticipation, this lounge was clean but drab, and the utilitarian furnishings didn't pamper, as though bright colors and comfort might annoy the ascetic Reaper and motivate him to cut down more patients than otherwise he would have done. As the paramedic shoved the gurney across the step-notched bumper, its collapsible legs scissored down. Agnes was rolled headfirst into the ambulance. He felt so happy, he was improving every day in every way, life just got better-but then something happened that was worse than the shooting. It ruined his day, his week, the rest of his year. He either detected their well-concealed surprise or assumed they would be curious as to why, in spite of extensive surgery, he still wore this Boris Karloff face. Though Celestina was still holding Angel, Wally kissed her, and again it was lovely, though shorter than before, and Angel said, "That's a messy kiss." For an instant, his attention had been distracted by Vanadium's presentation of his empty hands. Nevertheless, there was no way the cop could have snatched the coin out of the air. "I said it didn't work that way, and it doesn't. Yet ... I don't actually walk in those other worlds to avoid the rain, but I sort of walk in the idea of those worlds. . . ." "He's a wonderful boy, so very bright, so very full of life. Blindness will be hard, but it won't be the end. He'll cope without the light. It'll be so difficult at first, but this boy ... eventually he'll thrive." No weekend had ever passed so quickly, and no midnight had ever brought with it such dread. Leaving Spruce Hills, Junior thought he was putting distance between himself and his enigmatic enemy, gaining time to study the county phone directory and to plan his continuing search if that avenue of investigation brought him no success. Instead, he had walked right into his adversary's lair. "We want the scary one, 'specially if it has spiders, Pixie Lee said squeakily but defiantly. When he woke, he was in a hospital bed, his upper body slightly elevated. The only illumination was provided by a single window: an ashen light too dreary to be called a glow, trimmed into drab ribbons by the. "Then you have a big advantage, and you'll have to tell us all about yourselves," Agnes said. "I'll get the coffee brewing ... unless you'd like to help." Everything was proceeding precisely as Junior had envisioned in the instant when Naomi had first discovered the rotten section of railing and had nearly fallen without assistance. The entire plan had come to him, wholly formed, in a blink, and during the following two circuits of the observation deck, he had mulled it over, seeking flaws but finding none. "Mrs. Lampion, in a case like this, I've found that the greatest mercy is directness. Your son has retinoblastoma. A malignancy of the retina." He said this as though confident Agnes would understand what he meant, with a smile and with a glint in his eyes that almost became a wink, as if they were members of a secret society in which these three repeated words were code, embodying a complex meaning other than what was apparent to the uninitiated. "Paul told us the night he first came to the parsonage. About Agnes here ... and what had happened to Barty. And all about his late wife, Perri. I feel like I know Bright Beach already." He wasn't required to torture himself in search of pleasant conversation with those they visited. Agnes had virtually invented pleasant conversation. Snapping the cylinder into place, he rose to his feet. Already he had a new plan, and the cop's revolver was the most important tool that he required to implement it. Paul was nearest to that corner when he halted Grace in her rush toward certain death. Before he quite realized what he was doing, he found that he'd flung open the door and climbed half the single long flight of steps, as surefooted as Doc Savage or the Saint, or the Whistler, or any of the other pulp-fiction heroes whose exploits had for so long been his adventures by proxy. "That was five years ago. After more surgeries than I care to remember, I was left with these." He raised his goblin hands again. "There's pain in humid weather, less when it's dry. I can take care of myself, but I'll never be a card mechanic again ... or a magician." If their relationship had not been limited to a single evening of passion, if they had not been of two worlds, if she had not been underage and therefore jailbait, they might have had an open romance, and then her death would have touched him more deeply. From a cutlery drawer, Tom withdrew a knife. The largest and sharpest blade in the small collection. He slipped behind the door and raised the pewter candlestick over his head. Weighing perhaps five pounds, the object made a formidable bludgeon, almost as good as a hammer. "No, I didn't see him," Junior reminded the attorney. "I just assumed, when this harassment started here." Through the big window beyond her, the charry branches of the massive oak tree formed a black cat's cradle against the sky, leaves quivering slightly, as though nature herself trembled in trepidation of what Junior Cain might do. Agnes Lampion would enthrall them, for hers was a life of clear significance. That they seemed equally interested in Paul's story, however, surprised him. Perhaps they were merely being kind, and yet with apparent fascination, they drew out of him so many details of his long walks, of the places he had been and the reasons why, of his life with Perri.

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