

“It pleases me to no end that so many of you are here today.” The Governor’s voice boomed over the sound system as he held the microphone closely to his lips. “I told my staff just last week that I feel there is going to be a real revival of the political clout of the common people in the State of Indiana. I have sensed this grass-roots movement since having taken over as your Governor. You, the people, have wanted to see changes. That is what this hearing today is all about. We are all anxious to see the political process a person goes through in order to have a chance to become a Supreme Court Justice in this great State.

“I would like to think you came here today because you knew I was going to be speaking.” The Governor paused and glanced around sheepishly as smiles and laughter scattered through the House. “But I can see that something far greater has brought you here: the chance to let your presence be heard here at the Capitol. Believe me, fellow Hoosiers, your presence is heard.”

Applause filled the chamber as the Chief Executive magically maneuvered the crowd with psycho-politicized words and phrases.

“I knew when I selected this man to the High Court that I had chosen a great man of high integrity. I find today that he is also a popular man with the people of the State of Indiana. This assures me that I indeed did my homework when I narrowed the candidates from three fine choices down to this man.

“And now we are to this stage of the process. These nine senators on the Judiciary Committee are to question this nominee to see just what he is made of. Certainly I could not have done a thorough investigation into the life of the nominee with the rigorous schedule that I have. Therefore, these fellow elected officials will scrutinize the nominee for me. Then they will vote whether to recommend this man to the whole Senate for confirmation.”

Lee whispered, “Is this guy for real? Is this how all lawyers end up?”

“He does come off rather strong, doesn’t he,” Laura held her hand to her mouth as she whispered back.

“Samson should have been so strong,” deadpanned Lee sarcastically.

“He just knows what it takes to get to be Governor.”

“Think of the money we could have made selling tomatoes to the crowd. Or even No-Doz.”

The Governor droned on about the checks and balances of Indiana Government.

Lee sighed. “Well, this is the last time I let you pick the places we date.”

“Shhh... listen, or you’ll embarrass us both.” She looked seriously at him.

“I guess I shouldn’t complain. The last girl I dated was in a Geology laboratory.” He paused after speaking and glanced her way. Laura slowly turned her head in his direction and gave him a puzzled look. He continued with, “It took her a whole day to wash Carbon 14 off of herself.”

Laura smiled, although not yet having it sink in about Carbon 14 dating. Shaking her head, she turned back to face the Governor. Lee looked at the second hand on his watch. It took her exactly thirteen seconds before she understood the meaning of his joke.

At that moment, his literal meaning caught her so off guard that she started shaking while stifling a laugh. She realized that this was neither the time nor the place to start laughing uncontrollably. Holding her head down, she grabbed her already spreading lips, and with her thumb and index finger, pulled the sides of her mouth back to normal position. Tears started out of her closed eyes as she tried to imagine anything that was not funny. *I am laughing at a dumb joke*, she thought, which made her want to laugh even so much more at herself for being so stupid. She envisioned everyone looking at her, which made red rush to her face. Her ears burned, though she did not know why. She reached over and poked him in the ribs with her index finger.

“Unmmm. What was that for?”

“For you and your stupid jokes, Stonewall,” she said through gritted teeth.

“What, do you send letter bombs to comedians, or something?”

“I’m sorry. It’s the only thing I could think of to make me stop laughing.” He could tell she really did feel bad.

“If that’s what you do for dumb jokes, then do you knife me after a good one?”

“You’d better hope you never tell a good one, and we’ll never find out.” She patted his head.

“Then I’d better stick to lawyer jokes.” He gave her a wry, half-smile.

Laura returned to the serious of this hearing and realized how Lee had taken her mind off the reality that her future rested upon the outcome of an already pre-planned scenario. For a brief moment in time, he had been there to make her laugh and give her enjoyment, in spite of the circumstances. She realized that he had brought out something in her that had been missing for a while; something her father had always given her—a lighter view of life. She felt she knew Lee and shared a common bond. Not since before her father passed away had she laughed as tearfully. They had known each other for only one day, but already he had impacted her life in a positive way. This was exactly how she envisioned true friendship starting. She thanked God in her heart that He was gracious enough to bring Lee into her life. Of course, she always believed that nothing was by chance, but that God made divine appointment between two people. She certainly was glad that she had kept this divine appointment, and met this delightful friend.

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Pastor Hancock lay on his bunk in the small cell and reflected on the entire process of booking a person. He wondered if he had thrown a cog into the normal booking procedure. He had only responded in a way he felt would be pleasing to God. Of course, that way was unorthodox to the deputies in charge of processing prisoners.

The preacher emanated a kind and gracious spirit to everyone he had come in contact with at the jail, which was located in the basement at the west end of the Courthouse. The deputies all treated him with the same reverence the State Troopers had shown him in front of them. Captain Leland spoke with the Sergeant in charge, apparently notifying him of the actions of Sergeant Booker and the ramifications of arresting a pastor in a small community.

When the preacher had given the needed information to the officer booking him, the pastor had kindly reminded him that he was indeed innocent until proven guilty, and he expected to be treated as an innocent man, which he certainly was. He also shared with

him that he knew his rights, and that he had a right to go before a magistrate immediately, that he had a right to face his accusers, and that he demanded all his rights at all times, including his right to time.

After having asked for and having received a sheet of paper and pencil, the pastor wrote down the officer's name, and badge number, and content of the rights he had affirmed in front of the officer, he witnessed to the other man about how great a God he had Who would love him enough to send a preacher here to speak to him about his soul and where he would spend eternity. Tears came to the officer's eyes as he wondered why a man who showed such concern for others would have been brought here.

The fingerprinting procedure was equally a different experience for those involved. Again, it seemed the pastor was in control, instead of the officers. When by rote the officer had explained the entire procedure, he asked the pastor to give him his hand to be fingerprinted.

"What for," asked the pastor.

"We need to take you fingerprints," responded the officer.

"What am I guilty of?"

"Uh...nothing..."

"Then I respectfully decline to give you my fingers."

"Uh...why...?" The officer's face looked stunned.

"Because my God gave them to me as marks of identification. So far, He is the only one who knows them by sight, and it is going to stay that way until I am convicted of a crime. If God sees fit to have me convicted of a crime, then I will gladly submit them to you, on orders of a civil magistrate, so they may be used to deter me from committing another crime. My fingers are part of my property, and even the Fourth Amendment guarantees my right to be secure in my property."

"SARGE?!"

The sergeant entered the small fingerprint room.

"Sarge, the Preacher won't give me his fingerprints."

The bewildered sergeant stared at the pastor in disbelief.

"Now, what is the matter, Preacher," the sergeant stated calmly.

"I have a religious objection to giving you my fingers to have them printed."

"Why?"

"First I want to know why you need them."

"Well...they're for identification purposes."

"But you already have identified me. I have told you who I am. Don't you believe me?"

"Sure we believe you, Preacher." The older officer's mind raced for an answer to a dilemma he had not encountered in his twenty-five years on the force. "We just need to make sure you haven't been convicted of another crime."

"You mean you send the set of prints to the FBI?"

"No, Preacher, only if we suspect that you might have committed a previous crime."

"Well, I haven't."

"I believe you, Preacher, but we're only doing our jobs."

"And where does it say that you have to take an individual's fingerprints against their religious objection?"

“I don’t know. We’ve never had to before.”

“Then I suggest you not do it, lest you violate my First and Fourth Amendment rights as applied to the state by the Fourteenth Amendment.”

The two officers stared at each other in total disbelief.

“I’ll have to get the okay from the Sheriff, Preacher.”

“I understand, Sergeant.”

“Escort the Preacher back to his cell.”

“Yes Sarge.”

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“Judge Jones,” started Chairman Parrish, “before we start the questioning process, do you have an opening statement to make?”

“Senator Parrish, I feel I may best serve the interests of this committee and its time by foregoing an opening statement, and offering myself for questioning.” The judge opened seriously and confidently.

Senator Allen immediately jumped in. “Mr. Chairman, do I understand the nominee correctly? Does he not feel this committee and all these good people of Indiana worthy of an opening statement? And his remark about our time, would he suggest that we have not spent dozens of hours already in the preliminary investigations of the nominee, and would not be willing to spend a few more minutes getting to know his intentions, should he ascend to the highest court of the state? Would the nominee suggest that we go by the proceedings quickly, so that he may be confirmed in the next minute by a simple vote, and not have us understand the kind of man who wishes to be a Supreme Court Justice?”

The judge’s eyes remained fixed on the chairman while Senator Allen spoke. Not a muscle moved. There was only the calm reaction of reaching for a sip of water while waiting for the chairman to address the questions of the senator on the far right end of the committee. Nancy’s knuckles tightened as she made fists underneath the table.

“I feel that Senator Allen has a point, Judge Jones,” the chairman responded calmly, “Do you feel that we should hear a statement as to your beliefs or intentions? Or even a cordial statement of greeting?”

Nancy thought to herself, *those buzzards. If he would have given a statement, they would have tried to rip it apart. Now he says nothing, and they try to rip that apart, too. How can a person win against these unscrupulous people?*

The judge responded coolly.

“...On the contrary, Mr. Chairman. My research indicates that over the last more than fifty years, those nominees who held forth the position of liberal interpretation of the Constitution, when questioned by the Judiciary Committee at their Confirmation hearing, always gave an opening statement. Those future Justices who held the position of interpretivism, or a strict adherence to the Constitution, did not give an opening statement to the committee. I simply pay respect and homage to those Justices whom I desire to be categorized with, and at the same time reveal to the honorable people on this committee what kind of Supreme Court Justice I will be if this austere body confirms me.”

Applause filled the chamber one again, drowning out a statement Senator Allen was trying to make. He gave up once he realized that he would need to shout in order to have his point be heard.

Laura gave a thumbs-up sign to Lee, signifying that what the judge had said was part of the research done by her the previous day. Lee pointed at Senator Allen, rolled his eyes, and gave a thumbs-down sign.

“Thank you for that bit of Indiana history, Judge Jones. I’m sure many here today will never forget that analysis. We will move on to the questioning. The way we will handle the questioning, for the knowledge of the people who have come to view the hearing, will be in this manner: We will start from the senator on my far right, which is your left, with Senator Grimes. Then we will work toward the far left, which is your right, and end with Senator Allen.”

“Mr. Chairman?” The gruff voice belonged to Senator Winiger.

“Yes, Senator Winiger?”

“With the Chair’s permission, and if there are no objections with my fellow committee members, may I beg the privilege of questioning the nominee last?”

All eyes looked toward the old, but distinguished man, thirty-five years in the Senate, and every bit the liberal he was when he first was elected. His solid white hair revealed his age of sixty-nine, along with the rugged lines in his face. With the new change in the liberal leadership, there was little use for old “whining Winnie”, as the younger liberals called him behind his back. Now, no longer with any political clout, he became only another vote for liberal laws to be passed. The younger senators humored the old senator, if for no other reason than the fact that he would be retiring after the next term and would be out of their hair forever.

“Are there any objections?” The chairman looked both ways at the senators on either side of him.

“Mr. Chairman.” It was Senator Allen. “I would be honored if my esteemed colleague would take my place to question the nominee last.”

The two senators, Allen and Winiger, smiled and gave a single nod to each other.

“The Chair, to serve the interests of seniority, finds no problem with the change.”

“You have made an old man very grateful, Mr. Chairman,” sounded the graveled, old voice.

“With further discussions, we will start with Senator Garr.”

Already an extreme hush had come over the crowd. Even those watching on the monitors in other rooms had their eyes fixed on the television screens, as if watching a drama unfolding. Oblivious to everyone except five senators was the fact that this drama was already scripted and being performed as per the director’s instructions.

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“I need a volunteer.” No hands went up. “...How about Don, here in the front row?”

I knew I should have sat in the back,” Don Peters moaned as those around the room laughed.

“Come on up here and help me out, Don,” said the man known to them as Billy. “I’ve only had three fatalities in twenty years.”

Don hesitated as he realized what Billy had said, but upon seeing the man's smile, Don knew the man was kidding with him. He stood, maneuvered around the table, and stood, facing the hand-to-hand combat instructor.

"For your information, men, I am a fifth degree black belt in Tae Kwon Do. Each of you, in order to continue in the NOCM, must join a martial arts academy near where you live. Believe me, it will be the best training that money can buy. It will make you confident in yourself and your abilities, and it will definitely help you to defend yourself against attacks.

"I am going to show you, by using Don here as my dummy, a few moves that may help you save your life some day." He turned to face the volunteer. "I have a knife, Don. If I start to stick you in the mid-section, how would you block it?"

The instructor slowly brought the knife in his right hand forward and, as Don was taught in the armed services, the volunteer blocked the instructor's wrist with his own right wrist.

"That is correct. I see Don has had some training in this area. Now, show us the double arm block."

As accurately as Don demonstrated the single arm block, he crossed his wrists, bringing them down in front of him, and easily wedged Billy's right wrist between them.

"Stop... now let me show you the fallacy of the old training of blocking the hand with a knife in it. I know that if a person blocks my knife hand the way that Don has, he is in a lot of trouble. All I have to do is place my free hand on top of his wrists and hold them against my other hand, the one with the knife in it. As I hold his wrists with my free hand, I draw the knife back, turning the blade over, and easily slice the tendons and veins in both of his hands, leaving him totally helpless against my next moves."

As he still held Don's hands with his left hand, the instructor gave three lightning fast kicks to Don's head, each time stopping on inch from striking the temple.

"Don, what are you going to do, when faced with a fighting situation, and you know that I, as your opponent, can kill you, no matter what technique you use to block my knife?"

"I guess I'd run." All the men laughed.

"That is correct. I would, too. And remember, men. If you have an impossible situation, don't try to be a hero. You won't be showing how macho you are by getting killed. Run. I repeat, run as fast as you can. Live to fight again when the odds are on your side. That's not cowardice, that's just plain smart."

Pens and pencils were furiously writing the principles being taught them to survive and make a difference. They would soon become a part of a team who would help bring true justice back to America.

"Don, what if you had a handgun, and you knew that I was going to kill you by using my knife, if I could?"

"I'd tell you to drop the knife."

Shaking his head in disgust, Billy argued. "No, no, no! Don, trained fighters know that in the time it take you to tell me to drop the knife. I could already have plunged it into one of your vital organs, and you'd be dead. Gentlemen, you can see that Don watches too many movies. A person who tells you to drop your weapon is not a person who will pull the trigger. They are the person who has not made the decision whether or not they can take a life, before that time comes. If they think they will make that decision

at that moment, they'll be dead before the decision is made, if they're up against a trained fighter.

“Listen men. This is the most important advice I'll ever give you. Don't wait until that moment comes before you decide whether or not you can kill a human being. The moral decision comes now. That way, you'll only be making the mental decision of 'how' when the time comes for you to kill.”

Don sat back down at his table, wondering deep in his heart if he could ever take another person's life. Certainly he could in a war situation, or in defending his family. But would he for any other reasons? He would have to think about that for a long time to come.