

“I think the whole thing stinks to high heavens, Tom.”

The voice belonged to Montgomery County Prosecutor Wayne Riley as he, Thomas Boyd, and Special Investigator Arnold Sawyer sat in the prosecutor’s office on the ground floor of the County court building in downtown Crawfordsville. Riley, a big man, had graduated from law school fifteen years earlier. After a brief period in private practice and a few years as a deputy prosecutor, he had run for county prosecutor on a law-and-order ticket. His nickname, Buster, although given to him by his boy-hood friends, came in handy as his campaign slogan. His campaign manager used the idea of a “Crime-Buster” who kept drugs off the streets and criminals behind bars. The commercials had quickly become classics. Each showed a crime taking place, the criminal being caught by the police, and a judge giving a guilty verdict, all because of the new prosecutor “Crime-Buster Riley.” The popular theme music asked the voters. “*Who ya gonna call?*” The voters in the commercials yelled “*Crime-Buster.*” This had been the most talked about prosecutorial race in the state.

That was three years ago. Now the still popular Wayne Riley sat behind his desk, looking up angrily at Boyd.

“But Wayne, we have an airtight case against the church and its pastor.”

“Let me get this straight. You send one of your caseworkers there. She doesn’t even see the place, so you send another caseworker in *undercover*? And she takes her kid and enrolls her in the Day Care? And if I don’t have enough trouble with the police entrapping people, now I have to worry about the Welfare crowd sending in secret agents in order to entrap? You have no case, no outside witnesses, and no evidence, and you expect me to *prosecute*?”

Riley’s booming voice echoed down the hall as county workers were arriving to their jobs. Many workers wished they could go back home if someone has already riled the prosecutor this early in the morning.

“Hey, the guy is already guilty. He has to prove his own innocence. This is Welfare, remember, not homicide.”

“Yeah... I remember. Your whole system reeks, Boyd. You people rely on a judge or a jury to do your dirty work. You make an accusation, and then you expect someone like Arnie here to try to come up with something so you don’t look bad.”

“I never look bad, Wayne. After all, I’m only looking out for the best interests of the child.”

“In a pig’s eye.... You’ve only been interested in yourself since I’ve known you. The only thing you’ve done good for kids is to not have any yourself.”

The Welfare man ignored the prosecutor’s remarks, knowing that his bark was worse than his bite.

“I really want this guy, Wayne.”

“Don’t worry. If there is anything, Arnie’ll find it. But if I don’t get anything else to go on besides your flimsy evidence, I’ll drop the whole case before it goes too far.”

“It’s already gone too far. This whole thing sets up vital legislation for this session.”

“Are you telling me that the state Welfare people are behind all this? For crying out loud; you people beat everything I’ve seen. You’d turn your own mother in if it meant making new laws that give you more control over everybody.”

“Do I tell them you will back them on this?”

“You tell your state buddies that Buster Riley plays ball with no one outside his ball park. I’ll investigate, but if we come up empty, the case will be closed.”

Boyd though, *If you investigate, with all the pressure you’ll get, you’ll either stick it to this church or lose the next election, Buster.*

“I have the list of Day Care parents. Wayne” It was the calm, soothing voice of the county investigator who worked under the prosecutor. “I’ll start on it this morning.”

“I’m positive Arnie will find something, Wayne,” said Boyd, standing to his feet.

“You’d better hope we do, Tom, or I’ll have Arnie investigate you and your office, and see how you like it.”

The Welfare man sheepishly grabbed his briefcase and headed out the door. He knew no one could withstand the scrutiny of this investigator, especially himself.

“How do you want me to handle this Wayne?” The thin man leafed through the pages of names that had been confiscated from the church.

“Like walking on eggs, Arnie.... You say nothing to anyone except me about what you find. I don’t want this preacher tried in the press and found guilty before he gets a chance to defend himself. You concern yourself with the list of Day Care parents only. I don’t want this office accused of harassing a church. That’s all I need is to lose the Christian voters.”

“What about Lee Jackson?”

“You let the Sheriff take care of that. Tresh’s men need to keep busy, too. You’re a shadow, so keep out of the mainstream investigation. I need you unbiased expertise.”

The two men rose from their chairs.

“It that preacher locked up downstairs?”

Sawyer nodded.

“Have a jailer bring him up here, pronto.”

As the investigator left his office, the prosecutor walked to his window and watched Thomas Boyd get into his car and drive off. Riley’s thoughts focused on bureaucrats like the Welfare man. These people were not elected officials, like he was. They did not have to answer to the people who vote, like he did. These types constantly fed their jobs with innocent people. Here he was as prosecutor, trying to work himself out of a job by ridding society of real criminals when the Welfare system constantly changed the rules as to what a criminal was, even to the extent of making a whole new breed of criminals – those who did not measure up to what the Boyd’s of this world thought was a good parent.

Hadn’t Wayne’s father spanked him, sometimes hard? The prosecutor looked on his father with love and respect, thanking him for disciplining him so rigidly. That is what made him learn to discipline himself. Shaking his head, he proceeded back to his desk and the day at hand.

Laura was sipping coffee as Lee entered the Bob Evan’s Restaurant. She almost lost the sip she had taken as she noticed her friend coming toward the table dressed in black slacks, a black turtleneck, and black sunglasses attached to his regular glasses. Her mouth opened slightly and her eyes widened as he slid into the booth across the table.

“Lee, I don’t believe you! Here you are, wanted by the police, needing to blend in with a crowd, and you look like someone from the old *Man From Uncle* series.”

“Sorry, but I’ve never had to be on the run before. I didn’t know how to dress. Is this too obvious?”

“Only if you’re not at a funeral...”

“I have a change of clothes in the car.”

“Good. Have you seen this morning’s paper?” she asked as she handed the second section across the table.

“Some good articles about the judge...?”

“Well, yes, on the front page. Look at this one on the front of the State section.”

The headline read *Church Day Care Accused of Abuse*. Lee perused through the article, reading not only a very biased account, but all lies.

“I don’t believe this. How in the world can anyone write...?”

“Keep reading. It gets worse.”

He read on aloud.

“The head of the Day Care, Mr. Lee Jackson, is still at large, but a source at the Sheriff’s office states he will be in custody shortly. An injunction is being filed with Judge Eugene Hoffman to close the Day Care indefinitely until an investigation into these horrendous allegations of abuse and neglect can be completed. A source at the state Welfare department said that these unlicensed church-run Day Cares are just time bombs waiting to explode. The state legislature is considering a bill making mandatory the licensing of all Day Cares next week.”

Lee felt heaviness in his chest.

“I wish you could have waited until after breakfast to show me this. I just lost my appetite.”

“I’m sorry. I should have thought first. Please forgive me.”

“That’s all right. I didn’t have much of an appetite anyway.”

“Here, have some coffee. You look like you didn’t get much sleep last night.”

She grabbed the pot on the table and poured a cup for him. He took the cup and sipped.

“Thanks.”

“Let’s change the subject for a while and see if your hunger comes back. You need to eat something.”

“Then tell me about Lem.”

“You really don’t want to know.”

“Please.”

“Well, it all started with my father. His name was Paul Stephen Stiley. He always signed his name P.S. Stiley. So the P.S. became an afterthought, as a post script on a letter, like ‘P.S. I love you’.”

He thought, *I could be so fortunate that you would.*

“When I first started printing my name back in Kindergarten, I would print L.M. Stiley. My best friend read it phonetically one day and started calling me Lem. I thought she was calling me “Limb”, because I was so skinny, but the teacher found out the truth. All the children called me Lem back then, and it caught on. My mother still says it out of habit. See, I told you it was stupid.”

“Laura, I’m finding out that nothing that concerns you is stupid, but merely an added feature which makes you so special.”

He waitress came up to the table.

“My name’s Sandy and I’ll be serving you,” she said with a pleasant smile.

“My name’s Lee, and this is Lem, and we’re the people you’ll be serving.”

The smile turned into a puzzled look.

“May I take your order?”

“Do you have any prison food? I am going to have to start getting used...”

His left shin received a kick from under the table.

“Stop making fun of my cooking again. Sweetheart,” Laura smiled with tight lips across to her friend and then up to Sandy. “Just bring up two number three breakfasts with two small orange juices. Thank you.”

Sandy left the table.

“I don’t believe you. Here you are, dressed like a serial killer, saying your name to a waitress and acting like an idiot in public.”

“Sorry. I’ll have to get used to not being myself. It’s just that all this is so unreal to me. I cannot even imagine anyone thinking I could hurt any little kids.”

“Well, promise me you’ll be careful what you say.”

“I promise.”

“I called Judge Jones this morning. He said he’d meet with us to see if he can be of any assistance.”

“Could he arrest me?”

“I don’t think he would. It’s outside his jurisdiction; plus, he’s doing it as a favor to me.”

“How about if we both tip the waitress,” Lee said seriously, with furrowed brow.

“Okay,” stated his puzzled friend.

“I wonder if Sandy has good balance.”

Laura delivered another kick under the table to the same shin.

“How come I’m the only one getting a kick out of this meeting?”

“You keep it up, and *I’ll* turn you in.”

“Pastor Hancock, I trust you are being treated well,” said the prosecutor as the preacher sat down across the desk.

“As well as can be expected...” The pastor smiled a friendly smile at the prosecutor.

“Do you need anything? Is there anything I can get you?” Riley was showing his sincerity of wanting to be helpful, not just being nice in order to influence the pastor his way.

“I would appreciate it if I may get a pen and paper that I could write a Writ of Habeas Corpus with.”

“I don’t see the need in your writing a writ, but I’ll the supplies you need. If you write it, I’ll have my secretary type it for you.” The man smiled as he retrieved some of his favorite pens from his front desk drawer and a legal pad from his credenza.

“Typing it won’t be necessary. My research indicates that a handwritten writ is more likely to be noticed by the Supreme Court than a typed one.”

“And why would a preacher want to delve into the ugly profession of law?” Riley asked inquisitively.

“Why would the prosecutor want to delve into the ministries of a church?” responded the pastor.

“Preacher, I just want to find out what’s going on. It’s my job, and sometimes I have to do things I don’t like to do.”

“Mr. Riley, why was it you wished to see me?”

“First of all, I wanted to meet you. Second, I wanted to see how much of this can be resolved before it goes to far.”

“Should you be talking to me without an attorney present?”

“Not really. You can have one in here if you want. I just wanted to hear your side of the story before I did anything.” The pastor sensed the genuine timbre of the prosecutor’s voice.

“The truth is I really do not know anything. I was arrested. The officer spoke about abuse. That’s all I know. I’ve sat in jail for eighteen hours, and not one has questioned me or told me anything.”

Riley wondered how Tom Boyd would like to spend eighteen hours in the county jail.

“Preacher, I hope this thing is a big misunderstanding. I’ll do my best to sort it all out. I can’t say that I’m on your side, but I want you to know that I’m on the side of truth.”

“Will I be able to face my accuser?”

“You were arrested on an information the court received from the Welfare Department. So far, the accused party has not come forward as yet.”

“I thought I could only be arrested on an indictment from a grand jury.”

“That’s a federal crime, Preacher. The state works a little differently than that.”

“You mean, if I had committed a federal crime, I would not have spent the night in jail?”

Embarrassed, Riley said, “That’s about the size of it.”

“Then maybe we should change the state court system.” The pastor never passed on an opportunity to get a public official to think.

“It would not be cost effective, Preacher. To have a grand jury convene for each person brought in would cost a bundle of the taxpayer’s money.”

“Maybe fewer people would be brought in; and only those whom the state had enough real evidence to bring about a trial. As it is now, only one person decides.”

“It’s not a perfect system, Preacher, but it works pretty well.”

“And what if the prosecutor can be pressured to prosecute a case to further a compelling state interest?”

Hearing the phrase “compelling state interest”, Riley knew the man seated across from him was well read on Constitutional Law, especially the First Amendment.

“Preacher, I give you my word that Wayne Riley will not succumb to pressure from anyone.”

The prosecutor reached back into his desk drawer and pulled out two sharpened pencils. He handed them across the desk to the man of God.

“A pencil is even more attention grabbing than a pen. The case of Gideon...”

“...Versus Wainwright.” The pastor finished the sentence for the prosecutor. “May this case have a shocking an effect on the entire system as Clarence Earl Gideon’s.”

The prosecutor smiled and acknowledged the pastor’s legal knowledge with a raised eyebrow and a slight nod.

“You study law before, Preacher?”

“I am a student of God’s law book, the Bible. By the way, could I have access to a law library?”

Riley was taken by surprise by this strange request. He grabbed his personalized not paper, wrote a few lines on it, and handed it across his desk.

“Here Preacher.... Show this to the jailer. The County Law library is right down the hall. He’ll take you there whenever you would like, except after hours. Anything else I can get you just let me know.”

“Thank you, Mr. Riley.” The pastor arose and moved toward the door.

“Oh, by the way, Preacher....” The man of God turned to face the prosecutor. “We’re not going to take your fingerprints. First, if this thing is dropped, then it’s a moot issue. Second, I’ve checked into it enough to know that I don’t want to fight it in court. Third, after seeing how knowledgeable you are in law, you may have a case there. The thing is, I don’t think I can give bail unless you’re processed.”

“I understand, Mr. Riley.”

The pastor turned and walked into the next room where a waiting deputy was there to take him back to his cell.

Prosecutor Riley moved back over to his window and gazed outside to let his eyes rest again. He thought to himself about having a pastor in jail one floor below, especially one so humble, intelligent, and respectable. He said out loud to himself, “I got the good guy locked up, and the bad guys are in their plush offices looking for other good guys to lock up. If this isn’t a screwed up world....”