

Everyone Versus Everyone

Story by Arthur Jay
Cover art and design by Dave Estes

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording, photocopying, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

© 2015
Arthur Jay Publishing

*This book is dedicated to M, M,
and everyone else.*

Table of Contents

I.	There's Going to Be a Trial
II.	To the Courthouse
III.	The Scene in the Courtroom
IV.	Opening Remarks
V.	Arthur Jay Testifies
VI.	Tyrone Jenkins
VII.	First Recess
VIII.	Greta Gernhart
IX.	Aspiring Artist Jackie Lim
X.	Second Recess
XI.	PhD. Gustavo Jeremiah
XII.	Congresswoman May Farleigh
XIII.	The Illuminati
XIV.	Third Recess
XV.	Closing Remarks
XVI.	Jury Deliberations
XVII.	The Verdict

I

There's Going to Be a Trial

The alarm clock buzzed at 6AM, Monday morning. *Bzzzz BZzzz BZZzzZZ*. Arthur Jay was lying in bed awake, after a sleepless night. The sun was just peeking over the rooftops in Arthur's neighborhood, glistening off the chimney caps, and the birds were chirping outside his bedroom window. *Chirp chirp. Time to get up Arthur Jay. Chirp chirp. Time to get up.*

Arthur yawned and stretched his arms over head. *All right already*, Arthur said to himself. *Time to get moving. Today's the big day.* Today was the day of the trial.

Arthur was ready for this day to come and go. The last few weeks had been tough. The media attention was overwhelming. Paparazzi shoved cameras and recorders in his face, everywhere he went. He couldn't buy groceries or pump gas without someone asking for a comment. Everyone wanted to know how he would testify. But his lawyer, Otto Griebel, had trained him well. *No Comment*, he'd say. *No comment.*

This morning, the stage fright was mounting. Visions of himself, stumbling or stuttering on the stand, floated past his mind. No less than the fate of America rested in part on his shoulders, and the whole world would be watching live. *You better not screw this up*, he told himself. As it always does on big days, doubt was knocking on the mind's door, but Arthur Jay wouldn't tolerate it. *Head up my man. Carry on. A man's got a job to do, and he's gotta do it.* So Arthur Jay pushed his blanket aside, stood up, and farted.

Standing in his bedroom, Arthur could see out the hallway window. News vans were parked on both sides of the street. On the sidewalks, cameramen unpacked their bags and linesmen ran cables in between a sea of people. Interviewers mingled amongst the crowd with microphones in hand, checking the pulse of the revelers and curiosity

seekers who had gathered to get a first hand glimpse of Arthur Jay, one of the chosen six who would testify that day on behalf of the Plaintiff.

The *chopchopchop* of a helicopter echoed overhead. Policemen paced along the edge of Arthur's front lawn, standing proud in their navy blue uniforms. Up and down the barricaded street, policemen and spectators speculated on the substance and outcome of the trial, kidding about their plans for the money. To be fair, Arthur himself was thinking about the money, and what he was going to do with it. *Goddamn it*. But Arthur didn't like those thoughts. *Focus, my man*, he told himself. *It's not about the money*. And it really wasn't. At least at first. Arthur had signed up for this trial under completely different illusions, thinking that his testimony might matter, and that his words would make a difference. Now, on the big day, small inklings of doubt nibbled at the edge of his conscience. Arthur wondered if the trial might actually be a mistake. But there was no turning back. So Arthur took a deep breath, stepped out of his bedroom and got on with the morning.

A shower, shave, a cup of coffee, a bowl of cereal and a rinse of the hands later, Arthur Jay was standing in front of the mirror in his socks and underwear, holding up shirt and tie combos. Having settled on a yellow shirt and blue tie, Arthur put on his best pair of gray trousers. They were stained where he dropped a chicken wing, a week earlier, but a jacket would cover that. So Arthur pulled his favorite brown sports coat out of the closet and slipped it on. *Like a million bucks*, he thought as he adjusted himself in the mirror. Then without reason for delay, Arthur grabbed his keys, stepped out the front door and into the arms of destiny.

Immediately, flashbulbs went off. The police couldn't keep the media back. Like a pack of vultures they rushed at Arthur. "Mr. Jay, Mr. Jay. How are you feeling? Are you nervous? How will you testify? What are your thoughts?" A dozen cameramen and journalists crammed to hear Arthur's response. Arthur said nothing. Two officers with burly arms reached past the microphones to grab Arthur by the collar and tug him free of the pushing, elbowing, mass of media. The police rushed him to a waiting black town car where a chauffeur in a dark cap helped him into the back seat. Then, safe behind a locked door, Arthur rolled down the window and smiled at the cameras. He gave a thumbs-up and shouted. "Today's going to be a great day for America! Justice is in the air!" He rolled up the window and the car took off.

II

To the Courthouse

The ride from Arthur's cul-de-sac to the courthouse downtown was just long enough for Arthur to collect his breath and settle his thoughts before the long day. Arthur looked out the car window and dreamt back to the day six months ago when he sacrificed a whole Saturday to sign up for the trial. Under clear blue skies, Arthur spent a morning standing in line for the chance to speak for the Plaintiff in Otto's initial lawsuit, Springfield versus Springfield. It was a gimmick to be sure, but the radio ad promised free coffee and the chance to make a difference. Arthur stood in line with almost one hundred other early applicants for four hours, drinking coffee and chatting before he was called before Otto for an interview.

At first, applicants like Arthur Jay were in it just to make a political statement and do something different for a change. Attorney Otto Griebel was only interested in getting some publicity for his struggling practice. The morning after Arthur's interview, Arthur spotted himself in the local newspaper in the background of a black and white photo, stuffing a donut in his mouth. There he was with powdered sugar all over his black shirt, right next to a small squib about the speculative trial. Arthur was surprised when Otto called him back a week later to ask him to testify. "Of course I'll testify," Arthur replied.

Unbeknownst to Arthur, the story was spreading quickly. Within days of the phone call, an article appeared in the Chicago Tribune. The next day, USA Today, CNN, and the BBC picked up the story. Arthur, still oblivious, was shocked to see Otto Griebel one night on his television set, speaking about the trial on an evening news show. Stone-faced, Otto addressed his fellow Americans in primetime.

"Good citizens of America. The proof is all around us. Democracy has failed. The promises of our forefathers were no more than whispers in the night. Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness were mere sweet nothings, designed to butter us up. Look past the glitz and the glamor of your television sets and ask yourselves what's really going on. Are we really free, or just slaves to the illusion of the American Dream? Who here, doesn't expect more

from this life? What ever happened to the honor of an honest day's work? Where did the time go, when values weighed more than gold? When did we abandon rock and roll for the corporate consistency of popular music? How many of us have traded our wild spirit for the cold comfort of a cubicle?

“Ladies and gentlemen, when did celebrity become the talent and not talent the celebrity? When did inequality become acceptable? When did we let medicine become big business or open up our prisons to investors? Who decided that profits trump trees? Why is politics a popularity contest, and not a means to a better world?

“Fellow Americans, look around you. Democracy is dead. Society isn't what it used to be, and the only way to justice is through the courts. So join me. Join us. Join our lawsuit. Everyone join everyone against everyone, in the class action lawsuit of Everyone versus Everyone, and let's settle this once and for all. For you. For me. For the promise of a better tomorrow.”

Within twenty-four hours, the story of the trial went viral. Otto received emails and phone calls in droves. He had to upgrade his internet service and hire a secretary. In no time, the whole country was caught up in the mania. The first to sign on with the Plaintiff sensed little risk but great reward if they won. Eventually, even the skeptics joined in, for fear of being left behind. Besides, all they had to do was sign on the dotted line, cross their fingers, and pray for the money. The hysteria didn't break until each and every red-blooded American of voting age, from coast to coast and sea to shining sea, had officially signed on as Plaintiff. Thus was born the class action lawsuit of Everyone versus Everyone. For the sake of America, freedom and democracy, everyone was suing everyone.

Now that the day of the trial was here, Arthur Jay wasn't quite sure which side he was on. If everyone was suing everyone, and everyone was guilty, did that make him guilty, and if he was guilty, who was going to pay for this thing anyway?

The car started to slow. The driver put on his blinker and pulled into the exit lane. Arthur sat up. They were almost at the courthouse. As the car pulled up to a stoplight, Arthur could see the crowds in the distance. They stretched for a mile down Main Street toward the courthouse, and they got thicker as the car drew nearer. Thousands of gawkers of every color, creed and religion, stood six people deep on the sidewalks. The car came to a stop outside the courthouse. The chauffeur came around to open the door. As Arthur stepped out of the car, a whiff of deep fried falafel floated past his nose.

Across the street, a hipster with tattooed arms was yelling from a truck, “Falafel for a dollar, everyone eats for a buck!” Next to the truck an Asian man was selling t-shirts that read, “I sued everyone, and all I got was this lousy t-shirt.” Next to him, a fat kid sipped a Big Gulp while his mother posed for a photo with a stranger in a cowboy hat. Revelers rejoiced up and down the street. College kids shot-gunned beers. Hippies rolled their own. Elderly with walkers sipped from flasks and told-you-so’d, and throughout the crowd, the media flittered, filming and recording everything. Somewhere a child let go of a red balloon. It floated up and over the stone facades of Main Street and into the clear blue sky.