

Real Lawyers

A Novel

KENNETH FARMER

**To the hardworking real lawyers of the Jefferson District Public
Defender of Louisville, Kentucky**

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Paul Fields gazed dubiously about the waiting room of the Louisville Public Defender's Office, where a piece of Plexiglass shielded a receptionist. On the public side of this window, several shabbily attired persons perched uncomfortably on a row of white plastic chairs, anchored to the floor by a metal base. The hard-looking clientele muttered among themselves about problems they had encountered in the city's byzantine justice system and eyed Paul, who wore a gray handy-down suit, slightly too large for his slender frame. A white shirt, conservative tie, and fresh haircut completed the look: a schoolboy, perhaps; or a guilty client trying to appear respectable.

Through a speaker in the fortified glass, the receptionist droned a phrase at Paul that she had no doubt uttered a thousand times: "Full name and date of birth." When he provided the requested information, she said sharply, "You're not on the client list. Go back to court and get our office appointed."

"You don't understand. I have a *job* interview," Paul replied.

At this the doughy woman looked up for the first time, then nodded and angled her chin toward a heavy wooden door to the inner office. "In here," she said.

She pressed a button, causing the lock to buzz, and escorted him down a long hallway of small offices separated by thin drywall. They came to a door bearing a black plastic name plate inscribed in white lettering: Karlton Garrity, Chief Public Defender.

The woman rapped sharply on the metal doorframe and ushered Paul inside, where he waited, facing several tables cluttered with files and documents. No plaques, degree certificates, or artwork hung on the walls. Paul assumed this was the case, since the Public Defender's Office had plenty of business and no need to impress.

Amidst the jungle of paper, a portly man with sad sunken eyes and a receding hairline sat behind a drab government-issue desk while eating a bagel. A bead of sweat rolled down the side of his bedraggled face. His deep blue eyes narrowed in a penetrating gaze at a television monitor. The camera panned a kitchen where the partially clad and blood-soaked body of an elderly woman sprawled across the floor. Her decapitated head lay several feet away. The lights had been dimmed in the office to facilitate the playing of the video. So chilling was the crime scene that Paul nearly gagged.

Abruptly the man at the desk looked up from his breakfast and pressed pause on the video player. "Are you Paul Fields?" he asked. Under the circumstances, his quiet but firm voice seemed macabre.

"Y-yes," Paul answered.

"Please have a seat."

Paul took his place on the edge of a chair in front of the desk, maintaining a stiff, upright posture. Needless to say, he felt very uncomfortable.

"Here for the job?"

"Yes sir."

"First of all, name's Karl Garrity. Second of all, let's cut the formal bullshit. Tell me something: Are you prepared to work

sixty to seventy hours a week representing the poorest of the poor who don't think you're a real lawyer?"

The question caught Paul off guard. "But I *am* a real lawyer. I graduated from law school and passed the bar."

Garrity gave a dismissive wave with his bagel-free hand and offered two words: "yeah, sure."

"I don't get it. What's your point?"

The prospective new boss swallowed a mouthful of bagel and said, "Well, there are lawyers and there are real lawyers."

"So what's a real lawyer?"

Garrity shrugged. "One day you'll find that answer within yourself."

"Does that mean I got the job?"

"Not yet—I need to test your mettle first."

Paul braced himself for the third degree.

"You didn't grow up around here, I assume."

"No, I'm from Stillwater, Minnesota."

"Much crime there?"

"Not really."

"This is the South, you know. Not exactly a favorable environment for a defense attorney," the head man warned. "We get hardcore cases in this city, something your hick town probably didn't have."

"We had a murder a few years back—"

Garrity interrupted, his voice rising from calm to manic. "This video is from a murder case of my own. The defendant hacked the victim's head off with an ax." He paused for effect. "Do you know how many chops it took?"

Paul did not answer, for the question seemed rhetorical and a matter of ghoulish curiosity.

"Seventy or eighty, according to the cops."

Must have been a dull axe, Paul thought. Axes were kept sharpened in Minnesota.

The Chief Public Defender pressed forward at a rapid clip. “We have a burglary where the intruder attacked an eighty-year-old homeowner. For the hell of it, he branded her with a red-hot spatula, leaving scars in the exact shape and dimension of this kitchen implement up and down her legs. We got a case involving a college kid, who made the mistake of dining at a fast food joint in the wrong part of town. He was kidnapped, robbed, sodomized, and murdered. Why, this morning, one of my assistants is challenging whether the prosecutor can charge both sodomy and rape of a small child, because the medical examiner can’t tell which due to all the injuries—”

“Okay, okay, I get it, stop!”

“Well, do you have the stomach for this shit or not?”

Paul opened his mouth, still reeling from the relentless description of horror and crime scene video. He hadn’t yet vomited, though he kept a careful eye on the waste basket just in case.

Garrity continued with the dress down. “And don’t tell me you’re here to help the poor,” he warned. “I’m so sick and tired of people who say that. Goddamnit, you’d think they’re Mother Teresa in some orphanage in Calcutta. They burn out in two months and do securities litigation for the law firm of blah, blah, blah, and blah. They make more money but still don’t know shit—”

“I can handle it,” Paul blurted. He took a deep breath, then spoke in a resolute, measured tone. “I’m here to get good trial experience on the worst cases with the worst clients, not to help the poor. The best way to learn to play chess well is without a queen.”

The new employer raised a bushy eyebrow. “I’m beginning to like you. Job doesn’t pay much: fifteen grand a year, with a raise to seventeen five in six months.”

“Experience is my compensation.”

Garrity grunted. “Think it over during the weekend and let me know Monday. If you’re not up for it, I’ll completely understand. You’ll just be like the ninety-eight percent who never come back after this interview.” On that note, he pressed play on the video machine and resumed eating his bagel.

Paul had prepared himself to be a lawyer since he was ten. In high school, while interested in sports, he hadn’t been athletic enough to participate. So he’d expressed his competitive nature in activities such as debate, chess, and mock trial. He had graduated from college at Winona State University in Minnesota and later law school at the University of Louisville, where he had spent the vast majority of his time cloistered and unexposed to the city’s seamier side.

He’d passed the Kentucky Bar Exam in October of 1985 and was still looking for work in late November when the job interview came up. His law review experience made a lucrative job in a large firm possible. He chose not to apply, since he was not interested in becoming a sled-dog who wouldn’t see the light of a courtroom for years. Nor did he care to return to Stillwater, where he would likely encounter a steady diet of good-old-boy drunk driving and domestic violence matters. He preferred instead to cut his teeth as a trial lawyer on hard-core criminal cases found in a larger city.

He headed to the Public Defender’s Office bright and early Monday morning, having spent a long, boring weekend sitting in his hotel room, watching TV, reading, and just plain thinking. He had had nothing planned, as he assumed he would return to Minnesota on Friday afternoon, having been told the banal line, “Don’t call us, we’ll call you.” His mind could not avoid the conversation with Garrity, however, who acted as if he wanted to scare him away. Yet this made the job all the more intriguing,

for in a strange sort of way Paul welcomed challenge, even the potential for adventure.

He drove back downtown and parked on Market Street near several porn stores gaudily advertising “Girls, Girls, Girls” and “Live Nude Show” on tawdry neon red and yellow signs. When he got out of his car, he encountered a vagrant who asked him for a cigarette.

“Sorry, man, I don’t smoke.”

“Don’t be calling me man, motherfucker,” the guy snarled before stumbling off.

A few doors down, two drunken men and a woman brawled as they charged out of a bar, apparently opened for people getting off the graveyard shift. One of the men pummeled the other’s face with the aid of a smashed beer can fashioned into a brass knuckle. He and the woman ran off. Paul did nothing to stop the fight, as this might be interpreted as siding with one combatant or the other, thereby inviting retribution. He wondered if he had bitten off more than he could chew with Louisville.

Despite the seedy milieu Paul appeared at Garrity’s office prepared to tell him he wanted the job. “I’ve made a decision,” he told his new boss boldly.

“And?”

“I’m in.”

“Good. Come with me. I’ve got someone you need to meet.”

The chief public defender led the way down the hall to a smaller office occupied by a tall middle-aged man with graying hair and stylish tortoiseshell glasses. He introduced himself as Fred Engstrom, a senior assistant in the office.

“I want you to show him around this morning,” Garrity said. “Try not to be too hard on him, okay?”

Engstrom brushed past with a stack of manila file folders and a legal pad, beckoning to Paul. “I’ve got about ten district court

cases on the docket and no time to waste. Hang with me the best you can.”

They walked across the street to Louisville’s Hall of Justice, a six-story concrete fortress that was the most frequented, though not necessarily the most popular, part of the downtown. Engstrom explained the place doubled as a jail on the fifth and sixth floors, with its basement being dedicated to seg, or segregation, designed for people “who have difficulty playing with others or who need to be protected because of something they are or did.” A guard patrolled atop the structure with a rifle—apparently in the event an inmate escaped to the roof and was brazen enough to jump down six floors.

Inside the building, Paul felt as though he had entered a large urban bus station. White plastic, semi-circular bench seats stretched down a long concourse surrounded by various courtrooms and led to an escalator that ferried justice system travelers to parts unknown amidst a rising haze of cigarette smoke. Innumerable people, mostly cops and rough-looking defendants and family members, milled about helter-skelter. In front of one of the courtrooms, he heard a prosecutor, or perhaps it was a defense attorney, yell out someone’s name. At a different courtroom, a man argued about whether his sentence would “run wild” (consecutively, Engstrom explained) with one of his sentences. Another guy insisted his good time be applied to the beginning of his sentence, rather than the “ass end,” making him eligible for a privilege or program. The air stank of urine, vomit, and pungent body odor, and the hallways rang with a cacophony of babies wailing, lawyers bickering, and defendants bitching. This state of organized confusion, Paul learned, was called Jefferson District Court.

“I have to use the restroom real quick,” he told Engstrom.

“Fine, I’ll wait right here,” the older lawyer responded, smiling like a Cheshire cat.

Paul soon discovered the bathroom featured commodes stuffed with toilet paper and human excrement, and stalls replete with gang graffiti and tagger art. He tried to use the urinal but it too was plugged, causing someone else's piss to splash upon his shoes. When he turned to wash his hands, he saw grimy sinks and mirrors coated with dried spit and snot. While there were no Mother Teresa public defenders, their work environment seemed to share elements with Calcutta.

"I should've told you," said Engstrom, still smiling. "It's best to find a bathroom at a different venue."

The tour of the courthouse continued. In front of the doors to a courtroom reserved for initial appearances, near the entrance to the building, a silver-haired slovenly looking man sat on a canvas folding camp chair. Every so often he gesticulated in an apparent attempt to gain the attention of defendants exiting the courtroom.

"Who's that guy?" Paul asked with disgust.

"Ralph Mancini. He's a hallway lawyer."

"What's a hallway lawyer?"

Clearly annoyed by the elementary nature of the question, Engstrom rolled his eyes and lectured, "A hallway lawyer has no office, no files, no secretary, and no law books. His office is the hallway of the courthouse. Hence, he is a hallway lawyer."

Paul approached the decrepit old man to get a better look. His tie, splattered with coffee and food stains, was draped around his overweight neck with its knot sufficiently loosened to keep it from choking the blood supply to his wasted brain. He had no suit jacket or sport coat, thereby exposing a wrinkled shirt that bore large sweat marks at the armpits, occasioned by the insufferable heat and humidity of Louisville's summer months during which he had undoubtedly worn the same shirt.

Engstrom explained that Mancini and other hallway lawyers would stand in front of initial appearance court to catch

defendants leaving and solicit their business; they were the ambulance chasers of criminal court. "He started using that camp chair several years ago as a way of making himself more comfortable. Turned out to be a wise investment for him."

"He's here every day?"

Engstrom nodded. "Every morning when you pass by this courtroom, you'll see him and his disgusting ilk. Defendants suffer under the delusion that paying a hallway lawyer, however little, is better than having one of us. In their mind, he is a real lawyer, because he's not free."

Such a practitioner, Paul learned, knew nothing about his client's case, much less filed a motion or conducted a perfunctory investigation of the facts. Why should he? The facts did not matter. All he needed to know was the charge, since this told him the standard deal. Armed with this paltry information, he'd approach the prosecutor and solicit that deal, all for fifty or a hundred bucks a pop.

"Come on," Engstrom urged. "I have to get my cases signed up."

They progressed from courtroom to courtroom, where Paul's new mentor put client names on a list on the door. "If you do this, they'll wait to conference your case until you arrive and not bench warrant your client," he explained. "A bench warrant is a judge's order to arrest a defendant for missing court."

In front of two misdemeanor courtrooms, Engstrom called out some names into a crowd of defendants, cops, and lawyers. Perhaps three clients emerged and anxiously greeted him. After speaking briefly to each, he and Paul entered a conference room just off one of the courtrooms. At least three conversations were going on at once in the eight-by-ten smoke-filled room. About a hundred letter-sized envelopes were piled on a table.

"What are these?" Paul asked, fingering through some of them.

“Court files,” Engstrom said. “Each charge gets an envelope. The outside has a list of dates and corresponding notes regarding what was done previously or offered on the case.”

Paul peeked inside one of the envelopes or “files” and observed a couple of onion-skin miniature subpoenas, a list of prior convictions, and an arrest slip. The arrest slip was a half-page check-the-box form that had a very brief description of the events by the cop.

“Is this all?”

“Yep. That’s it.”

“No narrative police report?”

“Nope. Over the years the prosecutors have instructed the police, at least in misdemeanor and traffic cases, never to generate a detailed report,” Engstrom replied with benign acceptance. “Otherwise the cops might be pinned down on something they’d said earlier.”

“I guess there’s more information in the prosecutor’s file, which you can get by a discovery motion—”

“Wrong. The court file is the prosecutor’s file in District Court.”

One of the other lawyers in the room started laughing and grasped an envelope for effect. “If you move for discovery, the judge will get pissed off at you for clogging up his file,” he drawled. “A big ol’ discovery motion don’t fit in here.”

“But aren’t a defendant’s rights more important than whether a motion can be squeezed into one of these envelopes?”

The other lawyer snorted as Engstrom admonished, “You file a discovery motion down here, and the judge will screw you somehow or someway.”

Paul blinked, bewildered. The only information he would have in defending a case in District Court was a check-the-box form and a one-line description of the events. *There’s not even the pretense of fairness in this process*, he thought. Apparently

everything he had learned in law school about pre-trial motions and writs of this and that was now irrelevant. Such scintillating legal pyrotechnics had no place in the inner workings of this system. “What if a case goes to trial?” he challenged doggedly. “How does the cop remember what happened?”

“Trial!” exclaimed a prosecutor.

“Yeah. Trial by jury still exists the last time I checked,” Paul said sarcastically.

Everyone in the room fell silent, as though someone had used a swear word in church. Then they broke out laughing.

As the laughter subsided, Engstrom wrapped his arm around Paul’s shoulders and said, “Hey, no one has time to try anything here. Besides, if you lose, the judge will give your guy the max.”

Paul flushed with embarrassment and anger. *These lawyers are allowing the court system in Louisville to be turned on its head*, he grumbled to himself. Expediency has become more important than justice.

Engstrom separated out the envelopes assigned to his clients and caught the attention of one of the conference room prosecutors.

The prosecutor rattled off esoteric gibberish while blowing cigarette smoke out of his mouth: “I’ll dismiss the T-BUT under, if he pleads to DC and takes sixty on the shelf. On this other turd, \$100 and costs on PI—”

“Come on, waive the costs. It’s a PD case,” Engstrom protested.

The prosecutor ground out his cigarette and said, “Whatever. Another free ride courtesy of the boys in Frankfurt.”

“What about this Assault 4? Your victim’s a no show.”

“Fire sale. Today only. Peace bond on an amendment to harassment.”

“Pass it on terms then.”

The prosecutor scrawled a few barely legible notes on the envelopes and handed them to Engstrom, who escorted Paul out

of the conference room and gave the envelopes to the bench prosecutor, who put them in line on a table in front of the judge. The bench prosecutor sat on a stool next to the table and appeared to be the judge's assistant because of his physical proximity to him and his failure to announce his appearance on each case.

The defense lawyers waited their turn in the first row of pews. Mancini was also present, with his camp-chair parked at his feet. The only thing he had in his hands was a copy of the racing form for that afternoon's horse races. He marked his bets down, as though he were doing a crossword puzzle while waiting for a bus. He conveyed the impression he knew the horses better than his own clients.

After several minutes Engstrom's cases were called, and the bench prosecutor read off the deals from the back of the envelopes, using the same short-order-cook jargon Paul had heard in the conference room.

Afterwards Engstrom defined the cryptic vernacular: "T-BUT under is Theft by Unlawful Taking, a misdemeanor. If the value of what was stolen is over \$100, it's T-BUT over and a felony. PI is public intoxication; sixty on the shelf means sixty days jail, suspended for two years of unsupervised probation. DC is disorderly conduct, and passing a case on terms means the next time the Commonwealth can't ask for a continuance..."

Paul's head was spinning. He had never been taught this incomprehensible array of terminology, a secret code required for entrance into a club of which he was not a member. He earnestly asked, "Is there a list of these terms I can study?"

Snickering at this naïveté, Engstrom said, "You're kidding, right?"

The next stop was traffic court, where a client found himself in custody. He had fled the police and resisted arrest, so he had high cash bail. His name: Billy Joe Williams.

"The guy has a bad record and isn't a happy camper," Engstrom forewarned.

The bailiff brought Billy Joe out of the holdover cell that led into the courtroom. The area immediately in front of its door served as Engstrom's temporary office. Paul glanced over his mentor's shoulder as he spoke to his client.

Billy Joe was an immense African-American man with massive hands and a barrel-like chest. He was perhaps in his mid-thirties and dressed in a dingy white jail jumpsuit. He appeared tired, as though he had just woken up. Paul was able to smell his bad breath even from his position. Toothpaste must be a privilege in the jail, he surmised.

"They want six months on the fleeing, run wild with your parole revo," Engstrom whispered so as not to disrupt the prosecutor's prattle at the bench.

"Kiss my ass," the client spewed, obviously rejecting the offer.

Engstrom did not react to the display of profanity. "You've got no case, and if you lose at trial, the judge will run twelve months wild on you."

Billy Joe's nostrils flared with indignance, and his eyes widened into a menacing stare. Then without warning, he spat hard in Engstrom's face.

The prosecutor's banter stopped and everyone in the courtroom craned their heads to marvel at the spectacle. To Paul's amazement, Engstrom calmly pulled out his handkerchief and wiped himself off while the bailiffs marched the still volatile client back into the holdover. The judge resumed the court session with aplomb. No doubt he had seen it before.

"I can't believe he just did that," Paul said. "Don't you think you should get off the case?"

Engstrom frowned. "We'd have to farm it out to some private lawyer, and there's not enough money in the conflict fund."

The older attorney's toughness, humility, and dedication moved Paul. Most people would have been incensed, but he had elevated his client above his own ego.

"Next is Felony Court," Engstrom said. "And we don't want to be late."

"What's the big hurry? They must have plenty of cases to handle," Paul called out, following at a brisk trot and dodging various courthouse patrons along the way.

"Felony Court is Lil' O's court, where prelims are done before a case gets kicked upstairs to Circuit Court. If you're not there when they get to the end of the sign up list, he'll go ahead and do the prelim without you. If the defendant isn't around, he'll do the prelim without him."

"What do you mean? That would violate the defendant's right to an attorney and right to be present."

"Lil' O wants to get out of here and go to his supply company."

"Supply company? I thought he was a judge."

"District court judges all want to leave early so they can do what they want," answered Engstrom. "Some go to the track, some drink, some golf, some jack off, and Lil' O—well, he drives a forklift at his supply company."

"Why do they call him Lil' O?"

"He's the son of a circuit court judge named James O' Laughlin—Big O," Engstrom said. "Lil' O got elected because he had the same last name. His yard signs read, 'Elect O' Laughlin for Judge.' No one knew the difference."

Paul felt miffed that the voters had unwittingly participated in this nepotistic rise to power. For all they knew, Lil' O was completely unqualified and possessed none of the faculties of fair-mindedness and compassion it took to be a good judge. If he does the preliminary hearing without you, can't you file an appeal?" he asked.

"It's called a writ of habeas corpus, as the client is being illegally held in jail. We call them writs of hocus-pocus around here," Engstrom added with a tight-lipped smile. "But they're extra work, and in the meantime your client suffers."

At Felony Court, Engstrom quickly conferenced his case while Paul listened attentively. The prosecutor's drill was the same: move the envelopes. "We'll amend to trespass with twelve months on the shelf for this dirt bag," he said, the standard first-time deal on a burglary charge.

Paul added to his courthouse repertoire of terms "dirt bag," "scumbag," "shit bird," and "turd." He should have taken notes, but this would have only served to accentuate his already artless presence. So he quickly discarded the idea.

"He wants a prelim," Engstrom countered, causing the prosecutor to shove the case envelope across the table at him without a word.

Engstrom and Paul exited the conference room and sat in the front of the courtroom, where Lil' O had already taken the bench. He did not appear to be much older than Paul. His connections to his dad had allowed him a position of power and authority early in life, Paul guessed. His square jaw, bronze complexion, and perfectly coiffed, light brown hair suggested nothing had ever gone wrong for him. The right side of his lip turned up in disdain as he watched the bailiffs bring out Engstrom's client, a wiry white guy whose arms bore many tattoos.

During the hearing, a cop explained why the defendant was charged. Since hearsay was allowed, he related what other witnesses had told him. After this summary testimony, the prosecutor went back to cutting more deals, not even bothering to listen to cross-examination, for he seemed to know the result before it occurred. At one point he even interposed an objection from the conference room—his idea of humor. Lil' O paid the mockery no mind.

Once probable cause was found, and the case was referred to the Grand Jury, Engstrom asked Paul to cover an initial appearance for him. He had another place to be, or so he claimed.

“All you say when the case is called is, ‘The defendant appears in person with his attorney, Paul Fields, reserves all jurisdictional objections, and stands mute.’ Then argue bail after the judge enters a plea of not guilty for him.”

“What’s the charge?” Paul asked, thinking it was a routine misdemeanor appearance.

“Charges, actually. Kidnapping and Armed Robbery.”

Paul gulped. These were serious felonies of which he knew nothing. Law school had never taught him how to do an initial appearance. Instead he’d spent his time reading cases and being grilled by erudite professors. “Wait a minute, I can’t do this,” he said. “I don’t know what I’m doing yet.”

“It’s just an initial appearance. Ask for the lowest bail you can, they’ll order some high cash bail, and you’ll be out of there.” Engstrom seemed resigned to the fact that whether he appeared or the tyro Paul, the result would be the same.

“Okay, what’s the guy’s name?”

“Isaiah Jackson.”

On the way over to the initial appearance Paul read the arrest slip. Since the case involved a felony, the summary had more detail than the blurbs in misdemeanor court. Nevertheless the facts were simple: Jackson and one of his bad-actor friends had accosted a teenage pizza delivery guy at gunpoint. They drove him to his mother’s house, where the twenty-two year old client told her that they had her son and demanded money for his release. She called his bluff and summoned the authorities, thereby foiling the not-well-thought-out plan. The defendant and his sidekick took off in the pizza guy’s car, which made it

easy for the police to apprehend them several blocks from the mother’s home.

Paul found the holdover area behind the courtroom and stated in a submissive, questioning voice Isaiah Jackson’s name in front of several defendants being guarded by two bailiffs. A tall, thin African-American male stepped forward.

“Sup?”

“I’m Paul Fields, your lawyer, uh, just for today.” He reached out to shake the client’s hand, who refused the gesture of friendship.

“Just for today?”

Paul had hardly instilled any confidence by this slip of the tongue, having effectively referred to himself as a lackey pinch-hitter. “Uh, Engstrom couldn’t make it, and he asked me to cover,” he explained as nicely as he could muster. Yet niceness was not the right language.

“What kind of shit is that, ‘*just for today*?’”

The other defendants laughed mockingly at this insolence.

“I don’t want no little white-boy-grocery-clerk speakin’ for me *just for today*.”

“Ooh,” the audience of inmates uttered in an owl-like chorus that echoed around the small chamber. They were perhaps excited by the possibility such disrespect would spark an entertaining physical confrontation that would enliven their otherwise dismal routine.

The tension subsided when Isaiah sat down on a metal bench in the stark concrete-block-walled room, putting his elbows on his knees and hands on his cheeks. He stared at the floor vacantly as Paul began to inquire about his background for bail purposes.

“Have you lived in Louisville all your life?”

Isaiah said nothing.

“I asked, have you lived in Louisville all your life?”

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Isaiah stood and swaggered across the holdover. “You could say that.”

“Have you ever missed court?”

“Nope.”

“Got any family ties here?”

“Just get on with it. The man’s goin’ do what he’s goin’ do.”

“You work?”

“I’m a businessman.”

“Oh really?” Paul was amazed someone Isaiah’s age had a business. Hoping he could get him to open up, he stupidly asked, “What kind of business is it?”

“None of your fuckin’ business.”

Isaiah’s buddies resumed their derisive cackle.

The conversation went no further, as the judge started his routine speech given to all the defendants in the courtroom. Paul could hear the litany being simultaneously broadcast to the hold via a speaker system. The amplifier did not work properly, so the words could not be clearly discerned.

“You have the right...(static) and anything you (static) can be used....(static)....”

“What’s going on?” Paul asked.

The bailiff replied, “The judge is reading ‘em their rights.”

About the Author



Kenneth Farmer began his 34-year legal career as a public defender in Louisville, Kentucky, before moving back to his native Wisconsin, where he served as a prosecutor until he retired in 2011. During this time, he defended or prosecuted thousands of cases, including everything from the mundane

traffic matter to the not-so-routine capital murder charge.

Farmer has lived and traveled extensively in France, speaks French fluently, and has studied the French criminal justice system with the assistance of lawyers and prosecutors from that country.

To date, he has published two novels: *Real Lawyers*, the story of a newbie public defender who proves he is a real lawyer, and now *Chez Betty*.