

Chapter One

Judgment Day



“Mr. Richard Johnson, a.k.a. Prick, you are charged with vandalism, theft, indecent exposure, and public intoxication. How do you plead?”

“For the record, Your Honor, I do not refer to myself as ‘Prick.’”

“You don’t have to, Mr. Johnson. Now answer the question.”

“Not guilty, Your Honor!”

His attorney, Becky, laughs. “OMG! You did all that? You have got to be kidding me. I have to tell Janelle about this. She is not going to believe it!” The attorney pulls out her cell phone.

Prick whispers out the side of his mouth. “That’s because I didn’t do it. And how is it that you forgot what I was being charged with? You’re my freaking lawyer!”

“Well, I can’t be expected to remember everything.”

“What kind of beaver forgets? You rodents may not be too bright, but your capacity for memorization is supposed to be above reproach. Now do your freaking job, and stop posting to the Dam Network!”

“Oh no, you didn’t just say that.” She rolls her eyes. “Ahem!” She tucks the cell phone away. “The defense would like to see this so-called evidence, Your Honor.”

The prosecutor rummages through twenty-two eyewitnesses.

In a deep southern accent, the judge speaks. “After overwhelming evidence, the court would like to ask Mr. Johnson if he would like to change his plea.”

Becky speaks up. “Ah, no. We’re going to ride this one out, Your Honor.” Prick now caught in a daze feels a sharp elbow from Becky. “This is really getting good. All we need is some popcorn.”

“Why didn’t you cross-examine any of the witnesses?”

“Because they all made good points duh.”

“But the mole was blind!”

“Well, I certainly can’t badger a blind witness. We’d lose the sympathy vote. Don’t worry. I’ve got one trick up my sleeve.”

“Well, I’m very worried.”

She raises her voice. “Your Honor, the defense would like to call Richard ‘Prick’ Johnson to the stand.”

“You’d better get me outta this. And stop calling me that!”

Prick takes the stand.

“Prick, do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and—”

“Blah, blah, blah. Pricks do not lie. On with the show.”

“Ah ha! So you do refer to yourself as a prick!”

“No, my species is prick. My name is Richard.”

“I don’t get it.”

“Will you just proceed with the line of questions, Counselor?” the judge says.

“Mr. Prick, if I may, are these your initials—R. J. Prick—scratched onto the town center’s new sculpture called *Iron Canopy*?” The lawyer nods, telling him to say yes.

He hesitates. “Yes.”

“Is it possible there is another R. J. Prick out there?”

“Yes, it is possible!” he says confidently.

“Not likely. I mean, really? Who would want to refer to themselves as a prick?” She laughs. “But I digress.”

Prick’s face contorts into a mass of confusion.

“Prick, was that name given to you at birth?”

“No.”

“So, ‘Prick’ isn’t even your real name, is it? That means you’re a big fat liar, aren’t you? *Aren’t you?*”

The judge looks confused and then interrupts. “Counselor, please stop badgering your own witness, and get to the point.”

“Well, Judge, if Prick isn’t his real name, then ipso facto he couldn’t have vandalized that sculpture!”

“The court has already established that his nickname is Prick, owing to an unpleasant personality, and that he ran into the sculpture with his car and urinated at the base of the sculpture.”

“Oh, really... Well, I got nothing!” She leans over to Prick. “Looks like you’re screwed.”

“Your Honor, my lawyer is an idiot, and I would like to try my own case.”

“Fine. We’ll do it your way. Prick, were you under the influence of Satan’s poison on the night you were arrested?”

“Ahem. Your Honor, I do not recall anything named Satan’s poison.”

“Did you go to the Suwanee Town Center, drive into our beloved artwork, get out the car, and scratch ‘R. J. Prick was here’ on the sculpture?”

“I do not recall, Your Honor.”

“There are twenty eyewitnesses.”

“Well, sometimes they say all pricks look alike. I happen to know a lot of pricks, Your Honor. Don’t you?” He gives a slight chuckle.

“Yes, I do. I meet them every day in my courtroom—just like today. The record says the police had to pull you off of the sculpture.”

“Sir, they found me in the same vicinity as the sculpture and assumed I was their man. On another note, Your Honor, one of your so-called eye witnesses didn’t even have any eyes—so you can do whatever you like with that piece of vital information.”

The judge pulls out his cell phone.

“You posted a selfie and video of you on the sculpture—dated last night—and texted it to all of your friends and family, boy genius.”

“I would like to request a forensic video specialist to confirm that this is in fact me on the videotape.”

“Prick, irregardless of what you might think is going to happen here today, you won’t be able to talk yourself out of this one. It just so happens that I am a forensic video specialist, and I con—”

Prick rudely cuts off the judge with a look as if he just bit into a lemon, gritting his teeth and sucking air through his mouth.

“Aaagh! Hold up. I’m... I’m sorry, Your Honor. What did you just say?”

The judge is annoyed and clearly doesn’t like interruptions while talking. He glares at Richard, who quickly recovers before the judge can say anything.

“Your Honor, I just wanted to make sure that I heard you correctly.”

“I said I am a forensic video specialist. And don’t cut me off again.”

“Um...yes, yes, yes. And I’m glad there is no conflict of interest there, but I meant before that.”

“I said, irregardless of—”

He cuts the judge off again. “That’s it!”

The judge gives Richard a blank, evil stare.

“Please forgive me, Mark, but...um...do you mean ‘not regardless’ or ‘regardless, but not really,’ because that’s clearly not a word.”

The courtroom bursts into laughter. The judge bangs his gavel on the desk six times. He yells, “Order in the court! I said, order in the court! One more outburst, and you will be in contempt. And you will refer to me as Your Honor.”

Prick looks back at the crowd, raises both eyebrows, smiles, and then shrugs his shoulders as if to say, *it isn’t my fault*. The judge points his gavel directly at him.

“You think you’re smart, don’t you?”

Prick pauses a moment. “Well, I did graduate from the most prestigious school here in Suwanee, and I speak six languages.”

“Yes, yes, we all know you think you’re a smarty and supposedly a graduate, but I did some digging. Come to find out, you’re not as smart as you think you are. Now, let’s get to the matter of theft. It says here that you literally stole candy from a baby.”

“Your Honor, the kid was fat. It wasn’t candy. It was a case of PB Max bars, and I helped myself to one. Also on that—”

“Now, I understand that chocolate goodness mixed with peanut butter is hard to resist, but you just can’t go around taking what’s not yours.”

“He didn’t need it, and I personally consider myself as an angel of mercy. I just saved that little monster three years of his life. Also, you just mentioned...the word *supposably*.”

“Get to the point.”

“That’s also not a word! You just can’t go around using knee-slappin’, hillbilly language. You’re a judge, for crying out loud.”

The courtroom roars with laughter. Prick turns, looks at the crowd with utter disgust, and then slaps both wrists together as if to say, *take me away*.

The judge, furious, jumps on top of the desk and screams, “Order! Order! Order in the court!” He then bangs his gavel multiple times all over the desk, raising both feet off the desk with each hit for that extra impact. Finally, the gavel breaks.

The courtroom quiets, and the judge is left standing on top of his desk, his chest expanding and contracting with each breath. When he calms down, he speaks.

“Okay, that’s enough. You have been found guilty. You will reimburse the city for the cost of the statue, which is twenty-five thousand dollars. And since you already have ten thousand community service hours left to complete from the last six times before a judge, the city council and I have decided to banish you from Suwanee to the Suwanee Dam until we deem you worthy of this city again.”

“But, Uncle Mark, you’re the only person on the city council.”

“And that’s why my decision is final. Case dismissed. Please escort this prick to the Suwanee Dam Road, and drop his butt off.”

“Uncle Mark! My dad will hear about this!” Prick shouts.

The judge hesitates. He then slams what’s left of the gavel on the desk and yells, “And *supposably* is a word—because I used it!”

“That doesn’t make it a word!” Prick’s voice fades as an officer escorts him out of the courtroom.

Becky addresses the judge. “OMG, Your Honor. That was a good one. High five.”

The judge stares.

“Or not...” She slowly backs out of the courtroom.

The judge looks sternly at Becky as she attempts to walk off.

“Not so fast—Ms. Becky, is it? You know, Prick used to be a bright young feller, had the world at his feet. Oh, how the mighty have fallen. Oh well! Now let’s talk about your compensation.”

Becky pulls out her cell phone and types the words “Phase two complete.”