

I AIN'T CALLING YOU A TRUTHER

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CHARACTERS

JULIA, late 20s, Yale-educated lawyer, slightly arrogant

JIMBO, mid 40s, an easily offended Alabama yokel

JUDGE MARGARET PRICE, mid 50s, socially conservative, liberal at heart

PLACE

A Courthouse in Birmingham, Alabama

TIME

Now.

NOTES

If at anytime the audience audibly reacts to something (laugh, groan, etc.), **JUDGE PRICE** is to yell “Order! Order in the court!” or something similar.

Scene: The courtroom.
At Rise: Everyone enters. **JUDGE PRICE** sits elevated center stage, **JIMBO** sits on the witness stand left, and **JULIA** sits at a table, right.

JUDGE PRICE

(shuffling her papers, clearing her throat)
Hello, everyone. The court is now back in session after a brief recess. For the record: as you all know, we are reviewing the case of James “Jimbo” McGee versus Emily Silverman. Mr. McGee-

JIMBO

That’s me!

JUDGE PRICE

...yes, sir. Mr. McGee is a native of Mobile, Alabama who reached national notoriety last year. He was accused of planting a kilogram of cocaine in the unlocked trunk of a car in the Craighead Elementary School parking lot. Later that day, the car, occupied by the Robinsons, an African-American family of four, was pulled over and searched by highway police. The cocaine was found, the mother and father were arrested and convicted for the minimum sentence of 20 years, and the children were put into foster care. These convictions and decisions were overturned seven months later when video surfaced of Mr. McGee: a) Procuring the cocaine, b) Consuming some of the cocaine, and c) Planting the cocaine in the Robinsons’ car and subsequently firing a handgun in the air while yelling racial epithets.

JIMBO

Wasn’t me!

JUDGE PRICE

Mr. McGee, please let me finish. (*Pause*) The Robinsons went on to sue Mr. McGee. A jury of Mr. McGee’s peers found him guilty of disturbing the peace, but not of drug possession or hate crimes. Mr. McGee served 30 days in the county jail and paid a fine of \$200. Many were upset by this verdict, including Emily Silverman, a cartoonist. Miss Silverman drew a cartoon titled “Jimbo McGee Throughout History” that was published in The New York Times, portraying Mr. McGee engaging in a number of illicit activities. These activities include: puncturing a hydrogen balloon on board the *Hindenburg*, stuffing the ballots in the 2012 Russian presidential election, and pushing the iceberg that struck the *Titanic*.

JIMBO

Still wasn’t me!

JUDGE PRICE

Mr. McGee, I am warning you! *(Pause)* Mr. McGee was, to quote his first testimony, “rustled as hell” that Miss Silverman and The New York Times would, respectively, illustrate and publish this comic. He subsequently filed for a defamation lawsuit and has chosen to represent himself. Miss Silverman and The Times are represented by Mrs. Julia Sergerson. Alarming, Miss Silverman has been missing since yesterday evening. No one has heard from her, but Mrs. Sergerson has insisted that the case continue. Before recess, Mrs. Sergerson called Mr. McGee to the stand, and I believe she still has questions for him. Mrs. Sergerson, you have the floor.

(JULIA walks to the center and faces the house.)

JULIA

Thank you, your honor. Today, I intend to prove that my clients were well within their rights as satirists and publishers to illustrate and publish this cartoon. *(Approaches JIMBO’S stand)* Mr. McGee, you admit to the charges you were previously detained for?

JIMBO

Yes ma’am, I do.

(JUDGE PRICE takes a magazine out from under her seat and begins reading it.)

JULIA

What about the charges you were not convicted for? The drug possession and the like.

JIMBO

That? Hmm... yes ma’am, admitted.

JULIA

Your honor, Mr. McGee just admitted to charges of felony drug possession!

JIMBO

Huh?

JULIA

I propose we dismiss the court for today and reconvene as soon as possible, this time with Mr. McGee as the defendant.

JIMBO

Uhm... objection! You can’t get me on that, due to... double jeopardy!

JULIA

Are you serious?

(JULIA and JIMBO both look at JUDGE PRICE, who is only just noticing the situation. She shrugs as if to say “What?”)

JUDGE PRICE

Sustained.

JULIA

But... your honor, he just admitted to planting cocaine in a young family's car!

JUDGE PRICE

Mrs. Sergerson, my decisions are final. Sustained.

JULIA

Very well. Mr. McGee, what are the grounds for your defamation lawsuit?

JIMBO

What do you mean?

JULIA

The generally accepted legal definition of defamation and libel involves five points: the accusation must be false, it must be genuinely embarrassing, it must be published by a third party, it tangibly damages the subject's reputation, and the accusation is done intentionally with no attention paid to actual facts.

JIMBO

I think it hits all those points. Right on the head.

JULIA

How so, Mr. McGee?

JIMBO

Well, the comic is wrong. I was not even a baby when the Hindenburg sank or the Titanic exploded. Plus, I have never been to Russia, nor do I intend to visit. Alabama, born, bred, and buried!

JULIA

(visibly frustrated)

Mr. McGee, I don't think anyone actually believes you did those things-

JIMBO

That's what you think, but can you speak for everyone?

JULIA

I feel that I can.

JIMBO

Well, I don't think so, Ms. Seegererson.

JULIA

It's Sergerson.

JIMBO

When that cartoon came out, my momma called me up and said she was horrified with this comic that Silverman woman had drawn. She said that she felt like she didn't know me anymore, that her son was such a terrible person. She was talking and talking and laughing, like some crazy person.

JULIA

I think she was being sarcastic, Mr. McGee.

JIMBO

Objection!

JULIA

What?

JIMBO

My momma would never do something as terrible as be sarcastic to her own son. Sarcasm is the devil's speech.

JULIA

Mr. McGee, I can assure you that speaking in such a way is not aligned with any sort of satanism.

JUDGE PRICE

Mrs. Sergerson is right. Overruled.

JIMBO

What would you know about god and the devil anyway, Burgerson-

JULIA

It's Sergerson.

JIMBO

I don't think you grew up in a household of God. Matter of fact, your name sounds pretty jew-ey to me.

JULIA

Mr. McGee! Objection!

JIMBO

For what?

JULIA

Discrimination based on religious affiliation.

JIMBO

Bergeron, this is not discrimination. You'd know if I was discriminating against you.

JULIA

Are you calling me a liar?

JIMBO

I ain't calling you a truther!

(Pause. JIMBO and JULIA look at JUDGE PRICE again. JUDGE PRICE realizes she is being looked at and steps in.)

JUDGE PRICE

Mrs. Sergerson, I happen to know that you've taken your husband's last name, and that your maiden name is Armstrong. This is true, correct?

JULIA

Yes, but-

JUDGE PRICE

(interrupting)

Do you attend synagogue regularly, Mrs. Sergerson?

JULIA

My husband and I don't practice regularly, but he remains culturally jewish.

JUDGE PRICE

Then Mr. McGee isn't discriminating, he's simply mistaken. Overruled.

JULIA

But your honor-

JUDGE PRICE

Overruled, Mrs. Sergerson! As a matter of fact, I think we've had enough deliberation for today.

JULIA

Your honor, we've barely gotten into the facts of the matter.

JUDGE PRICE

What we're doing is little more than a formality. I've read all of the case documents and I reached my verdict last night. The court finds Miss Emily Silverman and The New York Times guilty on charges of libel and defamation. Their actions have been determined as detrimental to

JUDGE PRICE (CONT.)

Mr. McGee's social and employment prospects. Miss Silverman and The Times are now to pay lump sums of \$500,000 each within 90 days of adjournment. With that, this court is adjourned.

(JULIA is standing in shock as JUDGE PRICE bangs her gavel and begins to pick up her papers and exit left. JIMBO is overjoyed and pulls out a 40 oz. of Hennessy from behind his stand and jumps down, exiting right as he yells:)

JIMBO

Billy-Bob, you there? I got off! We're gonna be rich!

(JULIA snaps out of it and approaches JUDGE PRICE, grabbing her arm.)

JULIA

Margaret, what the fuck just happened?

JUDGE PRICE

Ms. Sergerson, this is incredibly unprofessional-

JULIA

Knock it off. I've never seen you give in to bullshit like this. What. Happened?

JUDGE PRICE

(sighs)

Julia, do you know the first thing about politics? About diplomacy?

JULIA

I would say I do. I got my degree at Yale.

JUDGE PRICE

Degrees from Yale don't mean shit when you're playing this game. Can I give you some advice?

(pause)

Stop trying to save everyone.

JULIA

Margaret-

JUDGE PRICE

Politics and law is a dirty, dirty game. Saving one person will always anger another. You're young and bright, Julia, but this is something they don't teach you in class. It's the difference between staying in the local circuit and moving on to greater things.

JULIA

Greater things? Like this gross excuse for a verdict?

JUDGE PRICE

Oh, please. The Times can handle the fee, and Emily will be fine. I couldn't let them win, I need to keep the state on my side.

JULIA

What do you need the state for?

JUDGE PRICE

I'm going to be the first elected female governor of Alabama! I'll be damned if anything stands in my way. Someday, maybe... the White House.

JULIA

You disgust me.

JUDGE PRICE

You're a good kid, Julia. Just don't let your naivete get in the way of your success.

(JUDGE PRICE exits. JULIA is still for a beat, and then her phone rings. She answers it.)

JULIA

Hi, Sam, what's up? Okay. Not good, we lost the case. I thought it was open and shut, too. Margaret totally threw me under the bus, that vicious bitch... what? Emily's been found? That's great! What? Emily's been... found. Oh my god. Where are you? I'll be right there.

(Hangs up, pockets her phone, and rushes off right)

No, no, no, no...

(JULIA exits right)

END OF PLAY