

# LIARS AND LAWYERS

## Part One

Lights, camera, cue action.

I enjoy a view of the Pacific Ocean.

The judge has ordered a recess in the proceedings. The Posse is on trial. They lie, cheat and steal.

The ‘victims’ of their peculating and purloining are hedge fund managers and other Ponzi schemers.

Surely you’ve heard of the female vigilantes whose patron deity is Posse Galore?

My seatmate pulls a volume from the rack that dispenses reading matter.

There are no pictures or conversations.

I like dialogue in my books.

“Children know how to play the game,” he remarks.

There’s no one else around.

I suppose he’s addressing me.

“Still, that well-known ‘Liar’s Paradox’ baffles me.”

“ ‘This sentence is blue’,” I mind his cue. “One example.”

“ ‘This sentence is silly’,” he offers another. “ ‘This statement is a lie’,” he continues. “Can a sentence be true and false at the same time?” he asks.

This fellow is dressed a bit on the weird side of southern California.

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Now that's bizarre.

To stay awake, I pull a volume of caselaw – or was it codelaw? – from the rack.

'And just what is the use of a book,' I think to myself, 'without pictures or conversations?'

The hot day made me feel very sleepy and stupid, and I wondered whether the pleasure of making a daisy-chain would be worth the trouble of getting up and picking the daisies, when suddenly –

I found myself at lunch.

'This can't be a dream,' I said to myself. 'How often do you get lunch in a dream?'

We enjoy the best seats in the place, on the terrace of Santa Barbara's most famous seaside restaurant

"Paul, if I may," my companion offers his hand. "I suppose I could have introduced myself," he waves, "back in the basilica of justice we left behind us."

"You're alive," I greet him.

"It surprises me too," he gestures at the seascape. "But it's been worth it, so far."

"The voyager's reward," I suggest, "is the most beautiful weather in the world. And it is," I add, "the same latitude as the island of Crete."

"I invited someone to join us," Paul says. "If that's okay."

"I'll pick up the check," I laugh, "if it's Augustine."

"It's Titus," he replies.

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“As in ‘the Epistle to’?” I ask. “I am impressed.”

“I owe him one,” Paul concedes.

“But before we consider,” I signal our waiter, “the merits of the Epistle – featuring the World’s Most Embarrassing Logical Blunder in scripture – let’s get something to drink.”

We order up and sip our iced teas.

“Alcohol at lunch,” I ‘ching ching’ my tablemates, “and long preambles make me sleepy.”

“I’ll drink to that,” Paul winks at me.

“There seems to be,” Titus takes the conversational lead, “something about talking about talking.”

“‘This statement is a lie’,” I give a ‘for instance,’ “is a sentence that seems to be talking about itself.”

“Is this about lawyers?” Paul asks. “Lawyers are always talking about talking.”

“It’s in their nature,” I mumble.

“Liars can’t tell the truth,” Titus joins in. “They have to lie.”

“It’s in *their* nature,” Paul winks at me.

Titus and Paul wave Augustine into the nearest seat.

“Augustine,” I offer my hand. “The author of *The Confessions*. Are there others here?” I ask. “

“Everybody’s who’s anybody.”

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Augustine takes his ice tea from the waiter.

“I live down by the beach. It’s a gated community.”

“The City of God?”

Titus laughs at his own joke.

“It sure beats whatever else I might be doing,” Augustine shrugs. “So what’s up?”

“*Against the Academicians*,” I signal my interest in the topic.

“Augustine’s maiden essay,” Titus points out. “He called Paul’s gaffe a ‘flimsy trick’.”

“Et tu, Augustine?” Paul recoils in mock dismay.

“I have entertained,” Paul studies his nails, “hopes of bringing Augustine over to my side.”

“You had it right all along?” Titus guffaws. “Lotsa luck with that one, partner.”

“And with him, perhaps I could bring the Academy along,” Paul adds.

“A tall order,” I turn to Augustine. “They’ve pretty much made a meal of Paul for two thousand years.”

“Buy us all lunch,” Augustine suggests, waving at an ancient figure and her companion, who now enter our ristorante, “and the rest is history.”

“A long time ago,” Paul begins, “the Mediterranean was the world’s ocean. And there was Crete. Shimmering beaches. Knossos’s red and blue columns.”

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“The grave of Nikos Kazantzakis,” Augustine adds. “Author of *Zorba The Greek*.”

“I knew that,” I pull a face.

“I wanted you to know that *I* knew it,” Augustine sniffs.

“People who lived there were reputed to have problems telling the truth,” Paul goes on. “They were, in fact, reputed to be liars.”

“Steady on, lad,” Augustine counsels.

“ ‘For this cause left I thee in Crete’,” Paul quotes himself writing Titus, and turns Titus-ward to make this more clear – “ ‘that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee’ .”

“So far so good,” I compliment Paul, “but the King James is a bit frumpy, don’t you think?”

“Continue,” Augustine signals our narrator of The Epistle to Titus.

“ ‘For a bishop must be blameless’,” Paul continues, “ ‘as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers’ .”

“Chapter one,” Augustine supplies the citation. “Verses five through nine.”

“It was a bit of a muddle,” Titus adds. “It certainly confused me. ‘Tips on how to be a better bishop?’ Or were you telling me what qualities to look for when I named bishops? *Episkopos* and *presbyteros* doing more or less the same jobs in the first century.”

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“I was training you,” Paul throws up his hands. “Think of the epistle as a how-to. Training believers to talk to unbelievers.”

“That clears everything up nicely,” Titus laughs.

“They’ll stop first at the bar,” Augustine stays my gesture.

I have recognized Xantippe and Socrates.

“For a snort,” Paul adds.

“At eleven in the morning?” I ask.

“Tough crowd,” Titus explains.

“If you go to trial,” Augustine reflects, and more to Paul than to me, “you should consider hiring Socrates as your expert witness. On dialectics.”

“Paul’s going to be on trial?” I ask.

“Let’s say he’s earned a retrial,” Augustine explains.

“We can start at verse 10,” Titus suggests.

“I admit it,” Paul responds. “I was not obliged to discuss ‘bad men’ in general. I was speaking,” he waves his hand, “in generalities. How would I rate a bishop’s performance of his duties?”

“Ah blunder,” Titus sighs. “Thy name is digression. Verse 10, I hasten to add.”

“ ‘For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers ... Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake’ .”

“Verses 10-12,” our maitre d’ adds, and acknowledges my nod. “Antoninus Pius, servirla.”

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He clicks his heels.

“ ‘One of them’ – ” Titus speaks up. “May I?” he asks Paul.

Paul has no choice but to chant the lines along with him.

“ ‘Even a prophet of their own, said, “The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.” This witness is true’ .”

“Quoting a guy reputed to be a liar – ”  
But this interruption is itself interrupted.

“I’m Charlemagne,” the recognizable hulk of a man offers his hand, “and here is the The Venerable – ”

“Bede,” his ‘body man’ explains. “It’s my job to hold the mirror while he combs his magnificent and Frankish beard.”

Before I can respond, Charlemagne is back ‘on message.’

“Liars make,” Charlemagne declares, “poor witnesses. In my humble opinion. And I’m a Holy Roman Emperor.”

“Why would this help Titus, Paul?” The Venerable asks Paul. “Why would ‘this witness is true’ or more precisely ‘all Cretans are liars,’ overwhelm your prospective persuadee?”

“Verses 10-12,” a new voice provides the citation. “A browbeater’s delight!”

“Cyprian!” our crowd waves him over.

“That’s my job,” he explains. “I do citations.”

Augustine pumps Cyprian’s hand and insists ‘next to me.’

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“The Professor’s buying lunch,” Augustine explains, expanding my generosity.

“There’s no law school in Alaska,” I point out.

“I’ll bet there’s a story there,” Cyprian prompts me.

“Chief Justice Rehnquist – ” I launch into my favorite honorific.

“There you go again!” Titus slaps me on the shoulder.

#### *Apparatus*

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