

Condemned to Repeat It

by Mike Combs

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More roughly than what was probably required, the Bailiff pushed the shackled defendant into the courtroom. The RV-Prosecutor was already seated, as was the Court-Astrologer.

The Psychic-Stenographer entered next, and sat down at her tiny desk. She looked disapprovingly at the older-style manual stenograph machine which sat in replacement of her computerized one. They had dug this relic out of storage when her well-used electronic machine had finally stopped working.

The repairman had done everything he could to fix her original machine before he hauled it away, including Therapeutic Touch and crystal healing. The Psychic-Stenographer wasn't terribly surprised when the TT didn't bring a response (computers had never struck her as the type to respond to warm, human contact), but she had really held out hopes for the crystal amulet to do the trick. She seemed to remember reading long ago that something like a quartz crystal was the heart and guts of these ancient machines. Surely there would be some kind of simpatico. But nothing.

She had asked if they couldn't fix it the same way people fixed computers when they used to build them.

"No one has the knowledge to fix these old computerized systems like that anymore."

"Didn't they publish repair manuals at they same time they built these machines?" she had asked. "Surely at least a few of those manuals are still around."

"They are," was the reply. "But understanding them requires a very linear, reductionist mode of thinking. A mind-set far removed from our more modern, holistic means of understanding the universe."

Now the rest of the court personnel were filing into the courtroom, along with members of the gallery. At last, the Channeler-Judge strode in behind the bench, black robes billowing out behind him. The judge always seemed to be in a hurry.

The Channeler-Judge picked up his new brass gavel, (he had an embarrassing habit of breaking the wooden ones) and gave it one, smart rap.

"May we have the reading from the Court-Astrologer, please?"

The Court-Astrologer glanced over her charts once more, and then stood to address the courtroom.

"Venus is rising in Gemini, so there is probably an excellent chance of justice being well-served today. Jupiter influences may lead to a tendency towards leniency."

"Thank you," the judge replied.

"However, where personal-life decisions are concerned, sexual tensions could lead to quick..."

"Yes, thank you," the judge said irritably. "May we get on with this? Remote Viewer-Prosecutor, what are the charges, please?"

The RV-Prosecutor rose, and read from his papers.

"Jonathan Randall, you are hereby charged that on the night of April 10th, of the year 2053 New Age, you did willingly and knowingly participate in an abduction of and experimentation upon a certain Sarah Hamilton carried out by the Grays. You therefore stand accused of Conspiring with Grays."

"It's a lie!" shouted Jonathan, coming to his feet.

"Sit down," scolded the Channeler-Judge. "Oh, before we get any further; Bailiff, would you please accompany the bounty hunter to the clerk so he can get his payment, and be back to his duties while we sort this all out?"

The bounty hunter rose and said, "Thank you, your Honor." He then turned, and, with a flourish of his cape, departed with the bailiff. Bounty hunters were such eccentrics.

"RV-Prosecutor, call your first witness."

"Call Roger Hamilton to the stand."

The witness swore on "Out On a Limb", and sat in the witness stand.

"Where's the Court-Hypnotist?" the Channeler-Judge cried. "Let's get this witness in a trance as soon as possible, so that we can get to the truth of this matter."

"Here, your honor." The Court-Hypnotist was a small, slender man who didn't seem to match his deep, baritone voice. His low, resonant, New-England accented tones served him well in his profession.

The Court-Hypnotist waved a crystal amulet before the witness, murmuring softly, and soon the desired surrender of will was achieved. The RV-Prosecutor stepped over.

"Now Mr. Hamilton, if you would please, just tell us your story in your own words."

"Well, Sarah and I both have been getting abducted by the Grays something fierce for the last five years or so," Hamilton softly began. "At least one night a month they paralyze us, fly in though the walls, and take one or the other. Little guys with large heads, and enormous, black, almond-shaped eyes."

"I would like to bring it to the court's attention that this description is consistent with all other descriptions," the Prosecutor interjected.

"Duly noted. Proceed."

"Well, anyway, sometimes there are government men with them. One night last month I noticed one of them was my neighbor, Jonathan."

"Is that gentleman in the courtroom right now?"

Despite the fact that the eyewitness' eyes seemed closed, he pointed directly at the accused. Perhaps he was only squinting.

"Let the record show..."

"Yes, yes, yes," the Judge growled. "Get on with it."

The RV-Prosecutor turned back to the witness. "What happened next that night?"

"Ummm, they took us both that night. They levitated us out through the window..."

"Wait a minute!" Jonathan said. "Your windows don't open."

"Irrelevant," said the Prosecutor. "This court has already demonstrated that the Grays can pass through walls. Passing any human through a closed window could scarcely be beyond their abilities."

"Sustained."

Jonathan gripped his head, and went down to his elbows on the tabletop.

Hamilton continued his unconscious testimony. "That night they did the usual sperm and egg removals. But they also used three needles to put holes in my head."

The Prosecutor said, "I would like to draw the court's attention to the fact that there are three, evenly-spaced welts on Mr. Hamilton's upper forehead."

"FOR GOD'S SAKE! THEY'RE ZITS!!!" Jonathan cried.

"Mr. Randall, we would like to remind you that assistance from the accused is not desired," the Channeler-Judge admonished.

"They must have done something to Sarah's appendix that night. The next morning it had burst. She was so sick. We tried everything: Homeopathy, Aromatherapy, Psychic Surgery, Acupuncture. Towards the end, I pulled our life savings, and had a Qi Gong specialist flown in from Beijing to adjust her meridian energies. But nothing anyone could do could save her. She died two weeks ago."

The witness was then awakened and dismissed. The Prosecutor walked over to the bench. "Your Honor, in addition to this testimony-evidence, I also have here sworn affidavits that crop circles appeared on the west side after the night in question."

"Excellent," the Judge said. "Hard, corroborating evidence is always helpful in cases like this." He fixed severe eyes on the accused. "Mr. Randall, Conspiring with Grays is a serious accusation. How do you plead?"

"Not guilty. Roger's just pissed off at me because my dog won't stay off of his yard. He's making up this whole thing about me being involved in any alien abductions."

"That will be for the court to decide," the Judge said. "Bring in the Court-Aura Reader!"

The Aura Reader walked around Jonathan, gazing at him fixedly. "There is a definite violet color to his aura," she reported. "This is classically associated with Extra-Terrestrials, or humans who were Extra-Terrestrials in past lives. It could be that, or it could be from long, close association with spacemen. It is possible that he is himself a Gray; many who live among us in human form have revealed themselves. In fact..."

She held her crystal pendant up in front of one eye, and squinted through it at him. "On other planes...his eyes do seem to sort of wrap around his head."

"In light of this new evidence, I would like amend the charges to Conspiring with Grays, Possibly a Gray Himself," said the RV-Prosecutor.

"Very well," said the Judge.

"Can I ask you a question about these auras you see?" Jonathan asked.

"Defendant, you are not the one here to ask questions," said the Channeler-Judge.

"It's alright your Honor," said the Aura Reader. "I am always happy to educate anyone on the nature of the universe around us." She turned to Jonathan, smiling primly. "Ask away."

"These auras of yours, do you see them by reflected light, just like all other objects?"

"Well, first off, it's not *my* aura, it's *your* aura. But the answer to your question is no. Aura perception has nothing to do with external light. It is your own internal luminescence, seen not with the retinas, but with the soul."

"In that case, I suppose you can see everyone's aura even in the dark, right?" Jonathan asked pointedly.

The Court-Aura Reader's eyes shifted off to one side. "Errr... well, yes," she said, although it didn't look like her thoughts had ever been down this particular path before.

"Fine," he said. "Then turn out all the lights. I'll try to get away. If you can still see me, you can catch me, and we'll all know you're legit."

There was a bit of consternation in the gallery. The judge banged his gavel.

"Mr. Randall, this is little more than a rather transparent attempt to escape from the clutches...I'm sorry...from the hands of the Law!"

"Quite true, your Honor," the RV-Prosecutor agreed. "In addition, I would like to object on the grounds of Scientific Methodology. Your Honor? Sir?"

The Channeler-Judge had his eyes closed, and was muttering to himself. First one eye, then the other opened.

"Sorry, just repeating my mantra. Sometimes I have to stop and re-center myself when dealing with thoroughly difficult people!" the Judge said, glaring at the defendant.

"Scientific Methodology," the Prosecutor repeated.

"Oh, yes, yes. Sustained."

Jonathan's fists clenched.

"Call in the court-diviner," cried the Judge.

An elderly man entered with a satchel. He began to pull out two wires bent into "L" shapes, stopped, and then apologized.

"Sorry. Wrong ones. These are the golf-ball finders, not the truth diviners."

"Could we move this along as quickly as possible?" the Judge asked.

The Court-Diviner had now pulled a second pair of wires out of his case which were indistinguishable from the first. He walked around the defendant's chair, holding the rods out. Like the needle of a compass, they unfailingly swerved toward Jonathan.

"Very definite signs of deception from the accused. Most certainly he is not telling us all the truth. Unless...", he stopped circling for a moment. "You don't happen to have gold fillings do you?"

"Yes, as a matter of fact," Jonathan replied.

"HMMMM. Well, still, I would say very definite indicators of gross deception."

"I think you're full of stuff," Jonathan informed him.

"You might be saying that," the Diviner responded confidently, putting his bent wires away, "But you're not thinking that."

"Stenographer, read back the defendant's last thoughts," the Judge ordered.

She raised the tape, and read from it. "Damn, the human's divining instruments see through my disguise."

Jonathan bolted up. "I never said that!"

"Mr. Randall, must we remind you that the Psychic-Stenographer's function is not to take down your words, but your innermost thoughts as you think them?"

"Well, how do we know she's a real psychic? Not everyone is. How do we know she's not just telling us she is? What are her qualifications?"

The stenographer shot him a withering stare. "I have been featured in eighteen magazine and newspaper articles, and on three different television specials in the last ten years alone."

"I'm perfectly satisfied with the Psychic-Stenographer's credentials," the Judge insisted. "Now please be seated!"

"Well, what about the Diviner's credentials?" Jonathan persisted. "Hey, let's do this: Let's put a black hood over his head, and then spin him around twenty times. Then everyone in the court stand around him in circle. If he can..."

"Objection. Scientific Methodology," cried the Prosecutor.

Now the Channeler-Judge appeared to be addressing his mantra directly to his large, brass gavel. At any rate, he was staring intently at the handle, stroking it steadily with one finger, and silently mouthing the same one-syllable word again and again. When he belatedly realized another objection had been made, he stopped and quickly sustained it.

"Defendant, your suggestions invariably remind the bench of the kind of deterministic, objective, mono-reality thinking that was banned with the dawning of the new millennium," the Judge said sternly. "Now sit down!"

Jonathan collapsed down into his seat.

"This is a merciful court," the Channeler-Judge continued. "Therefore, we would like to give you one last chance for leniency. This court is willing to give you the benefit of a doubt that you only conspire with Grays, and are not actually a Gray yourself. If so, then you are no doubt part of the massive government conspiracy to keep the truth from the public. If you will confess this to the court, and hand over all classified documents and records in your possession concerning the truth about UFOs, we are prepared to go easy on you."

Jonathan spread his hands. "I have no information to give you."

"I would like to add Complicity in the Great Conspiracy to the charges at this time, your Honor," the RV-Prosecutor said.

"Done," said the Judge.

Jonathan buried his head in his arms, manacles clinking.

Suddenly, there seemed to be some kind of commotion out in the hallway. A loud argument was penetrating the doors. Then, there was silence, and the doors flew open. A woman in her twenties strode into the courtroom. Before the great doors swung shut, the Bailiff could be briefly seen, knees pointed together, arms crossed over his middle, and with a peculiar, strained expression on his face.

"Ruth!" Jonathan cried.

"What's the meaning of this interruption?" demanded the Channeler-Judge. "Who is this intruder?"

"Your honor, I am Ruth Randall, Jonathan's wife. I would have been here from the beginning, but these goons have been barring me from these proceedings. But you must hear my testimony! Jonathan could not possibly have been out hurting anybody or out doing *anything* that night. He spent the entire night in our bed. I know he never left, because I slept very poorly that night. At the same time Mr. Hamilton insists he was being man-handled by my husband and taken to a space ship, Jonathan lay sleeping in my arms!"

"Inadmissible," said the Prosecutor, cool as iron.

Ruth turned to gape at him incredulously. "What do you mean, inadmissible?"

"Mrs. Randall, there are any of several explanations for why you might think Mr. Randall was with you that night. It often happens that a Gray will take on human form, and substitute himself for a man while he is away. Laying with Grays is a very serious charge, and I don't think you want to prompt an investigation on that score. Another possible explanation is that your husband astrally projected himself while his body remained behind."

The Prosecutor was addressing the courtroom now. "The most recent thinking on the abduction phenomenon characterizes it as more of a psychical occurrence than a physical one. It may be less a case of corporeal beings from other planets arriving in metal spaceships as spiritual beings from another dimension intruding upon our own. The characterization of the Grays as 'spacemen' may indeed be little more than a holdover from the kind of scientific superstition common before the dawning of the New Age."

"What's the matter with all you people?" Ruth asked of them. "Are you all insane? Are you all blind?"

"Mrs. Randall," the Judge began, "Have you noticed our statue of Lady Justice we have here? Have you noticed that she wears a blind fold?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever wondered why that is so?"

"No," Ruth said, sullen now.

"She is blindfolded to remind us always that what is seen can be false, whereas what is believed in our hearts is known to be true," the Judge explained.

"What about the scales?"

"Well, I can see you missed my point," the Channeler-Judge said with disappointment. "Now please be seated."

Ruth sat down. Jonathan looked at her with an expression not yet entirely devoid of hope.

"Now," the Judge continued, "If there can be no more interruptions, I should like to pass judgment at this time. For a case of this seriousness, I can turn to none less than Sarius, Atlantean High-Priestess of the Mystical Order of Frod."

The lights in the courtroom suddenly dimmed, except for a soft spotlight on the Judge's bench. The Judge's eyes closed, and his head slowly rolled side to side. The entire court leaned forward attentively.

The Judge's mouth opened, and one silky, falsetto word came out.

"Guilty."

The lights came back up. The Channeler-Judge jerked with a start, and opened his eyes. The court buzzed. Jonathan stared off into the distance, not seeing anything.

"What was the verdict?" the Judge asked.

"Guilty, your Honor," the RV-Prosecutor supplied.

"I see. Now all that remains is the sentencing. Mr. Jonathan Randall, this court has found you guilty of the charges brought against you. You are hereby sentenced to being taken to the nearest mall parking lot, being tied to a stake, having firewood heaped about you, and having a fire lit and built up until such point as you spontaneously combust. I would additionally like to issue a restraining order against your guardian angel to prevent him or her from interfering in the carrying out of this sentence."

"NOOOO!" Jonathan screamed. He jumped up, and began to bolt from the courtroom. Several members of the gallery grabbed and restrained him until the Bailiff, now evidently recovered, was able to get Jonathan into a headlock. Ruth battered the Bailiff, and had to be restrained herself.

"ORDER, ORDER, ORDER!!!" shrieked the Judge. He was on his feet now, and began pounding his mighty brass gavel like an out-of-control pile driver. The RV-Prosecutor discreetly backed away, certain that any second the gavel was going to splinter its plate into a hundred flying fragments.

Jonathan was still struggling in the grip of the Bailiff. "Settle down. Settle down!" the Bailiff yelled. "Don't make me use my Ninja skills on you, now!"

Ruth twisted away from the mob, and staggered over to the Judge's bench to plead for mercy. She couldn't get his attention because his eyes were closed, and he was humming to himself. Behind him, the Court-Aura Reader was working over his aura, pulling out all the negative karma lest it trouble some future life. She made little plucking motions all around the air surrounding the Judge's head and shoulders. Her head moved back and forth, and she sometimes blinked, jerking back a little, giving the impression that the judge's bad karma occasionally splashed up into her face like the water from a lawn sprinkler.

When she was finished, the Judge's eyes snapped back open. Then he held up his brass gavel, and smiled for the first time that day. The handle of the gavel was slightly bent.

"Hey, look here! Looks like all those Psychokinesis seminars are finally beginning to pay off," he related with delight. "And speaking of seminars, I have one to give myself in less than two hours. Remote Viewer-Prosecutor, is there anything else on the docket today, anything important?"

The RV-Prosecutor scanned it quickly. "Nothing of any great consequence, your Honor."

"Fine," the Channeler-Judge said, banging his crooked gavel one last time. "Then I declare this court of the Municipality of Salem, Massachusetts to be adjourned!"

The End

A few notes for the reader...

Anyone who thinks the claims made against any character in this story are too insane to be stated by any real person should study the history of the Inquisition.

Anyone who thinks the human race is less cruel now than in the Middle Ages should turn on the Six O'clock News.

Anyone who thinks the kind of superstitions which darkened the Middle Ages are dead and gone forever should attend a New Age seminar.

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