

"FOURTH AND SHORT : A Comedy"

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CHARACTERS:

ATTORNEY – female, dressed professionally. British.

YOUNG MAN – dressed business casual. Local accent.

OLDER MAN – blue collar, street wise. Local accent.

Setting: A law office.

Time: Present day – a Monday in December.

We are at a law office represented by a table with a chair (for the lawyer) and two more chairs (for the visitors). As the LIGHTS come up, the YOUNG MAN is in one of the visitor chairs, with the OLDER MAN on top of him, strangling him.

OLDER MAN

You jerk! You low down, undermining, little, good for nothing! How dare you pick him up! And right as I was about to... *(continue ad lib insults until...)*

An ATTORNEY enters.

ATTORNEY

Gentlemen?? What in the world is going on here?

The two men ignore her and continue their argument.

YOUNG MAN

You had the chance to get Rodgers, but you were too slow, so what do you expect? I needed him this week, when Manning went down...

OLDER MAN

Why you snot-nosed... Can't an old man make himself a drink before having the rug pulled out from under him?

ATTORNEY

Gentlemen, that's enough!!

They freeze with the OLDER MAN choking the YOUNG MAN, and they both look up at the ATTORNEY.

ATTORNEY

Really, gentlemen? Is all this necessary?

OLDER MAN

Darn sure, it is. This whipper-snapper just cost me first place!

YOUNG MAN

I gave you time, uncle! If you hadn't been so slow...

ATTORNEY

Enough, you two! Sit down!

Still no movement from the men...

NOW!

They finally give in and the OLDER MAN takes the other chair, pouting. The YOUNG MAN is rubbing his neck.

Thank you. We are here to execute Mr. Schlager's will, not to engage in a wrestling match. Do you understand?

Grumbings of agreement from the two men.

Now, as the remaining beneficiaries of Mr. Schlager's estate, you have been called here...

OLDER MAN

On a Monday, no less.

YOUNG MAN

With two games going tonight, and first place on the line...

ATTORNEY

Gentlemen, what on earth are you ranting about?

OLDER MAN

Just tell us what we get, ma'am, so we can get out of here, get on our computers and make our moves for tonight.

ATTORNEY

"Make your moves?" I beg your pardon?

YOUNG MAN

Our league, lady.

OLDER MAN

You know, Fantasy Football.

The ATTORNEY doesn't get it.

YOUNG MAN

We each got teams. Don't you know about football?

ATTORNEY

Not as you call it here in the States.

OLDER MAN

We both got teams in this league, see. We pick our guys, you know, and get points on how they play in this week's games. And I was in first place...

YOUNG MAN

Not any more!

OLDER MAN

Why you...

*The OLDER MAN starts for the YOUNG MAN
when the ATTORNEY bangs on her desk violently.*

ATTORNEY

Gentlemen, stop!

OLDER MAN

Anyhow, my nephew here, my own flesh and blood, takes the best QB available right out from under my nose, and now...

YOUNG MAN

That pot is mine, old man. Besides, you don't need that money. I do.

OLDER MAN

Can you believe that? My own nephew...

YOUNG MAN

It's fourth and short, uncle. Crunch time. I just did what I had to...

OLDER MAN

Can't believe it.

ATTORNEY

Gentlemen, though I understood less than half of what you just said, we need to get on with Mr. Schlager's will. Are you both composed enough to proceed?

OLDER MAN

Yeah.

YOUNG MAN

Sure.

The ATTORNEY opens her briefcase and removes an envelope. She then opens the envelope and removes a cassette tape from it.

YOUNG MAN

Are you kidding me? Who still uses those things?

OLDER MAN

They were used a lot, before you could make sentences with that big mouth of yours. One of the ways we listened to music in what you consider "the Stone Age." Way before those "Siri things" came along. And you think you know everything.

ATTORNEY (*with a chuckle*)

Enough, sir. Though I must agree, when this was brought into our office as Mr. Schlager's last will and testament, it did take a fair amount of billable hours to find something that would play it. But luckily, we did.

She removes a cassette player from her briefcase as well.

I'm afraid the speaker doesn't work, so I'll be reciting the audio while using earphones.

She shows some earphones, and also takes out sheet of paper.

OLDER MAN

You know about earphones, right? They still got those, right?

YOUNG MAN

Shut up, old man.

ATTORNEY

Gentlemen, please! I also have the transcription here. You may take turns following along, if you'd like to confirm that what I'm saying is, in fact, the last wishes of your brother and your father, Mr. Alfred Schlager.

OLDER MAN (*grabbing the transcription*)

Gimme that.

The ATTORNEY presses play, and begins to read as if she was a sports announcer:

ATTORNEY

"Good afternoon, everyone! The weather here in the den is a controlled 72 degrees, a perfect day for a reading of my last will. If you're listening to this, I know that both parties are in the room, and its time for the coin toss to determine who gets home field advantage throughout the reading!"

YOUNG MAN
Home field?

OLDER MAN
What the heck's that supposed to mean?

ATTORNEY
I'm just relaying the words of Mr. Schlager.

YOUNG MAN
This is weird. He was never at home, and now we're supposed to care about what he has to say?

OLDER MAN
Quiet!

ATTORNEY (*back to reading*)
"Since my brother is the older team, he can select heads or tails. We'll take a time out for the referee to toss the coin."

She stops the tape.

OLDER MAN
Referee?

YOUNG MAN
What is he talking about?

ATTORNEY
Mr. Schlager included this coin with the cassette. It has a heads and a tails. It's his wish that you, sir, choose one of the sides, and I'll flip the coin. Please choose.

OLDER MAN
Uh, heads.

The ATTORNEY flips the coin, it lands on the floor.

ATTORNEY
I'm afraid it's tails, sir. The young man wins.

YOUNG MAN
Woo-hoo! What do I win?

ATTORNEY
We'll take a listen.

She presses "Play," and assumes the announcer voice.

ATTORNEY (*continuing*)

"If we're at this part of the tape, then the kid has won the toss. Sorry about that, brother. Son, you got the ball on the your 35 yard line. First and ten. You drop back in the pocket, and... you throw... and... it's complete! A 15-yard gain to midfield. Still first down."

OLDER MAN

Hey, when do I get the ball?

ATTORNEY

One moment. I believe this section on the recording is next...

She fast forwards the tape and presses "play."

ATTORNEY (*as announcer*)

"Uh-oh, there's a flag on the play. Unsportsman-like conduct against my brother. You always were the impatient one in the family. The penalty is that I sold my penthouse condo in the city, and instead of giving the money to you, I've donated it all to St. Sebastian's. Still first down for the youngster."

YOUNG MAN

Yes!

OLDER MAN

What??

ATTORNEY

Mr. Schlager's instructions were very clear based on the previous results.

OLDER MAN

What the hell does THAT mean?

ATTORNEY

Sir, PLEASE!

The ATTORNEY presses "play."

ATTORNEY

"The quarterback takes the snap, drops back. Uh-oh, he's got pressure from the defense! He scrambles, he's on the run, but he's got nowhere to go and goes down for the sack."

OLDER MAN

Yes! That's for stealing my players!

YOUNG MAN

Augh! No way!

ATTORNEY

"That's a big blow for the visitors! You know that surround sound room that I had, son? I donated it to the Boys and Girls Club!" *She stops the machine.*

YOUNG MAN

I can't believe it! I thought that room was mine!

OLDER MAN

I get it. He didn't like us. Big deal. This is stupid. Why are we here if we're not gonna get anything? This is a joke.

ATTORNEY

I assure you, sir, it is no joke. Please continue to listen...

The ATTORNEY presses "play."

"For getting the sack, I've booked a European holiday for my brother!"

OLDER MAN

Really? You're pulling my leg.

ATTORNEY (*reaches into her briefcase*)

No leg pulling here, sir. Here is your ticket. Don't worry, it's quite real.

YOUNG MAN

Hey, let's hear more of that tape! I want to know how I do.

ATTORNEY

"How you do?" or "What you get?"

YOUNG MAN

Just press the "play" button, lady.

She presses "play."

"So far, it's a tough battle between the two teams. When they've stuck to the game plan, they've shown a respectable degree of success. If they've tried to read the other team's signals from the other sideline, however, they've gotten burned for multiple scores... Okay, the home team still has the ball. Let's see what they can do. Here's the second down play... it's a run. A smart call to keep the defense honest. The runner gets 5 yards. Here's the third down play... a short pass route... complete! Just short of the first down marker, though... It's fourth down and short... will the coach go for it? What do you say... (*looking at the Young Man*) son?"

YOUNG MAN (*to the Attorney*)

What should I do?

END OF EXCERPT.