

Marcel's got a problem: he looks guilty

"You're going to be indicted," my attorney told me.

"Why?" I asked him. "I'm innocent." My feelings were hurt.

"I hired this guy as my attorney because people said I should have one.

I'd protested that I didn't need a lawyer, since I was innocent. And I'd tried to demonstrate that to the police by meeting with them on my own, whenever they wanted to talk.

"That was not a good idea," my attorney said. Already I felt that he was doing a poor job.

"I didn't do it," I said. "How many times do I have to say it?"

"That's not relevant to our defense," he said.

"Wow, what kind of lawyer are you?" I asked. I had paid him a \$50,000 retainer for a first month.

Not a likable guy

"This is not a comedy show, Marcel," he said. "This is life and death. This is your life."

"But I didn't do it," I objected.

"You need to take this seriously," he said.

"You're not a very optimistic person," I said.

He looked at me like I was an idiot. Perhaps I was.

"You're not a likable guy, Marcel," he said. "And that is a big problem."

"Hey, I'm a great guy!" I said.

"Marcel," he said, "You have a sociopathic personality. You can charm people in the short-term. But when they get to know you, they realize you

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have zero empathy. You don't care about anyone but yourself."

"That's harsh," I said. "But this is the land of the free."

"I'm just telling you what we're up against. You're not a likeable guy," he said.

"So," I said.

"You look guilty," he said. "That's going to make it difficult."

"What's that say about our legal system?" I asked.

He looked at me like he was considering raising his fee.

A strategy

"I could throw a gay jacket on you," he finally said.

"What's that mean," I asked.

"That I reveal during the trial that you are a homosexual; that you and your wife had an understanding; and separate lives; that you were in a tryst with another man during the time of her death; it could work."

"Stories like that," he continued, "shake a juror's expectations. Then we can move in to create a new foundation. If we do it late in the trial, and unexpectedly, just be prepared."

This guy had come with high recommendations, but I was starting to feel nervous. "Why does everyone think I'm gay?" I asked. He ignored me.

"Or I could do my Columbo routine," he said, "Where we play the David and Goliath card. But you have too much money. The jury wouldn't buy it."

"What about the justice card?" I asked. "What about playing that one?"

Why not a new name?

"Don't underestimate the tricks," he said. "The tricks are important."

He was starting to sound like a water dowser in the dessert.

"I'm going to change your name," he said.

"What's that mean," I asked.

"What's your middle name?" he asked.

"Ralph," I said.

"During the trial I'm going to refer to you as Mr. Tesco, and if I have to use a given name, I'm going to call you Ralph. Then at some point late in the trial, I'm going to switch to Marcel."

"Why," I asked.

"You'll see," he said.

And off he went to Antonio's Nut House on California Avenue for peanuts, whiskey and beer.

This guy had come highly endorsed, but it wasn't sounding good. I wondered if I could do a better job as my own attorney.

Tomorrow: Episode 15. To catch up on previous episodes, go to johnangellgrant.com.