

# WHY DO I WRITE: Shakespeare lied

## Act 1 – Names aren't really necessary

His calling for an appointment was surprising. I knew who he was; we served on the same board for years. I was sure he knew plenty of lawyers between his business and my location. He said he was on his way to Galveston – “Can I see you? I need a couple of hours of your time.” He was older than I. He spoke in a baritone, much like an instrument. Not a staccato voice – hesitant, fragmented, halting - no his was smooth, calm, a deliberate delivery of words and expressions. Like all baritones, his was a low-pitched brass instrument, with a bore which was conical – a white man’s baritone though – distinctive, different.

I placed him on hold and asked he be inserted into the schedule. I sat and waited, wondering the possible scenarios. I didn’t wonder long.

“The client is a little early... can he come back...?”

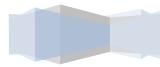
“Really...”

“Yes...you want him to have a seat or do you want me to bring him back...”

“There is no need, I will come out and greet him.”

He extended a hand, a purposeful smile, so did I. “Sorry I’m a little early.”

“No, no ... not a problem...Come on back.”



He sat and immediately moved perceptibly from one level to another. His movement told me he was a tad nervous. “I need some advice. I don’t know what to do.”

This was time before the election of our current president. A time when illicit affairs, criminal charges, wayward conduct of politicians and his/her charges meant sometime to the American public, and to the politicians. No, no, no, I am not referring to a pre-historic time. This was in state of our politics in the A.D. ([A.D. stands for Anno Domini](#), which is Latin for “year of our Lord,” and it means the number of years since the birth of Jesus Christ). Absolutely foreign concepts; however trust me on the history.

Gary Hart’s, a prominent Democratic candidate for the presidency, political career disappeared once [he challenged the press](#) to find sometime on him. They did. His ambition was converted to the misplaced and misguided plans of mice and men. [George McGovern’s](#) run for the presidency and his vice presidential choice ([Thomas Eagleton](#)) ambitions were also for naught. Eagleton resigned immediately when his mental health treatment (for depression) was revealed (shame on us). McGovern trudged forward to suffer one of the most one-sided defeats in presidential election history. [Richard Milhous Nixon](#) knew no shame, lie after lie, until it was revealed when he knew what he knew – as political commentators are wont to say. He resigned from the presidency after the Watergate burglary went awry, after the checks and balances of the republic worked. He waved adieu to a selective audience; moving toward an aircraft to retire to California. He admitted he was an indeed a crook - a different time are those; a different time are these.

My visitor told me he served on a community-action board in Houston. He said one of the current candidates for the presidency was <sup>2</sup>permitted to serve his community service with the

organization during his tenure - for possession of cocaine. "A favor his dad." He gave me names, dates, times. The information caused me to join him. I too moved from level to another level, in my chair.

"Why are you telling me this...?"

"I had to talk to someone."

"Why?

"I don't know what to do. The records are no longer at the courthouse."

"How...? ... There should be a record, was he serving a probation?"

"They are longer there...I checked...yes, he served his community service was at our organization."

"...Court records don't just disappear."

"They have disappeared," this repeated in a matter-of-fact manner. "The only other person who was knows any of this and who was there at the time, is the Executive Director – she is now dead. He said her name. I knew the name. I had never met her. I recalled the death announcement in the Houston papers. I remember the candidate's *daddy's* praise of her in the papers. I wondered then the connection.

"I have been receiving calls from the press."

"Oh..."

I didn't take notes. Immediately, I understood there was no need. Part of me knew he didn't want me to do so. I watched both eyes. I studied his facial expression – left side, right side, no need - his aura also told me he was nervous, scared in fact. I understood immediately - even if I told him to talk, to tell the truth - he didn't have the courage to do so. No, he didn't say

he had been threatened. He didn't say some amorphous, unknown, secreted, governmental entity was following him physically, electronically recording; every word, every movement. He didn't need to tell me why he was fearful of talking.

Local and national media had done their research, and were starting to make contact. They told him why they were calling. This caused him to flee to Galveston, to talk. He didn't have to tell me his talking would irretrievably place him in another place and time, change his life's path. I understood this fear. This is maybe why our current President insists on personal attacks – destroying the lives of ordinary people, begging others to do his bidding in his attempt to expose the whistleblowers to the continual malfeasance.

History tells me he never said a word; distance, time and life circumstance says we never talked about his right to remain quiet and not talk to the press, about anything; a silence which continues to play a quiet refrain against history's song. The probationer was elected. My visitor's silence permitted the probationer to alter the story - alcohol instead of cocaine, then he – the probationer – used silence to his benefit - refusing to answer any other questions, a self-righteous indignation was his. Others who continued to question were never able to obtain enough credible information to connect the dots. No firsthand knowledge, no credible dates and time parameters; remember the documents down at the courthouse were no more, others had died, fear drove him to a self-imposed exile. Those who continued? – their careers were detoured, or destroyed because they dared continue questioning and reporting; seeing some dots, missing others, fooled by a fool who wanted the nation's attention.

## Act 2 – He sold his soul to the devil

The legal profession is somewhat akin to a small town. Interconnected, a little incestuous, a disjointed family – related, partly estranged, never ever willing to admit a common social deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) and incestuous bound. Same manner of speaking, walk, behavior, thinking; genes blended smoothly around a common profession. To the wordsmiths, oh absolutely, I recognize there is not such term as a common social deoxyribonucleic acid. The reference serves a useful purpose. Just bear with me.

He reintroduced himself. He gave me more this time: supplementing his history while explaining why he had returned. This time he admitted what I suspected initially - he was licensed lawyer who primary function was to serve as a runner for one of the state's most prominent trial lawyers. Photogenic was his boss - tall, handsome, smart – a cocksure soul, willing to tell others readily of his greatness and wealth. The boss the architect of an illegal, case running scheme which fed the monkey, and provided him the cases needed to continue fuel his drive for additional wealth and greatness.

On call – he and three, four, five lawyers – he never gave me all of their names, their cities and office locations. He said they moved on a moment notice - across the terrain - county and state lines, at times to other countries to sign up accident victims. An agreed upon compensation rate – few papers, documents bound them – handshakes and their word was the bond.

My initial representation of this lawyer was a related grievance filed by the State Bar. The Bar's paperwork sought information from him. Even though the document was in the form of a grievance, I couldn't discern a legitimate complainant and said as much to the Bar's counsel.



The documents seemed strange to me – saying one thing, implying another. I didn’t actually know what the other was and worked to get the grievance dismissed. It was dismissed.

The new information completed the picture; filled in the lines, contouring and coloring, providing a complete picture. I said “oh” internally. I may have moved my mouth. To this day, I pray I didn’t let my thoughts dribble out.

“He owes me money – between four and seven, eight million.”

The grievance affected their relationship causing the boss immediate silence and severance; moving away, cancelling appointments, breaching promises made - honor no more. The boss too was facing a pending, much publicized grievance against him at the time. The grievance accused him of running cases. The newspaper accounts identified the number of lawyers he hired to protect him – not for others, for him. There was no mention of the names I heard the client mention. The State Bar’s picture was never filled in, completed – not completed coloring, contouring, texturing. They never saw the full picture, the boss’ full involvement, the totality of the scheme.

“I want to sue.”

“Do you...? How do you prove the relationship, the cases, and the settlement amounts... Do you remember the prostitution cases from law school...?” He did answer the last part of the inquiry. He talked for another hour, pulling documents out – connecting him to the boss. Phone records, airline, hotels, case expenses and communications between the firms. He knew what he was doing. I readily agreed to a limited attempt – *ahem*, for forty percent of the stake. I proposed writing a letter to the boss, saying what he knew, providing some documents and demand payment. The fear was real, more real than I saw at the time.

Strangely, instead of the agreement relieving him, for some reason he started crying. He told me how scared he was of the boss; how much money the boss had – “I’m afraid. I can’t.” His words made it sound I was attempting to force him to do something he didn’t want to do. He cried and mumbled in an unrecognized language; words falling out and over, shattering and exploding on the table, against the floor, the wall, in mid-flight; undistinguishable syllables and phases, after the flood gates were opened.

In hindsight, he understood my question. He had struck an untenable bargain. Suing would reveal him, the boss, others, the scheme; the ugly underside of belly of big-dollar personal injury practices - subjecting the head of the snake and others to the State Bar’s investigation, possible criminal prosecutions. My limited offer was an attempt to walk a fine line – an offer I should not have made.

I have never been trained in confessional interviews. I had never been to confession. I wasn’t raised Catholic. I knew I couldn’t provide him contrition and I didn’t want to; moving from one location in the conference room to another, reaching and handing him tissues, helped little. I took a seat across from his and watched him cry his eyes out and spill his guts. He asked I not make copies of the documents. I slid the documents across the desk. I destroyed my notes and watched him move to the other side of the door. I did not see a soul move with him. After listening, I realized his soul didn’t come with him when he initially arrived. It never joined us during the interview. No matter how much money he made in the scheme, his soul flittered away, wanting to participate no more. He disappeared down the hallway, dragging his proof, shoulders sloped downward; wiping, shedding tears, never to be seen again.

## Act 3 – He ran the other way...

I had represented him in a divorce proceeding. “I don’t do divorces”, wasn’t good enough for him. He explained his wife was accusing him of abuse and “if there is such a finding I will lose my certification to carry a weapon. … If I can’t carry a weapon, I can’t hold a job as a peace officer. I have never hit that woman.” I didn’t know this to be the law, after checking, I didn’t hide my surprise, “Wow, really.” I undertook the representation, was able to avoid any such finding, backing the wife off, winning the trial before the court. Years had now interceded our last meeting; we both were a little older. He was still a county employee, still a peace officer. This time however he seemed more distraught, more than he ever was during the dissolution of his marriage.

“I don’t know if you know, I was recently involved in an incident at the courthouse. An inmate grabbed my gun and we struggled in the holding cell. Mr. Griffin, I have never been so scared in my life, fighting over the weapon, one second having control - the next seeing my own death… Since the incident my health has been compromised.”

His voice shook. His hands did too. I couldn’t tell whether his physical attributes was because of having to recall the story, or whether because of compromised health - it may have been both; it probably was because of both.

He was having problems finding out from his employer what happen to backup. “The time between the incident and time they arrived aren’t consistent?” Why no one was written up for their mistakes? Why no one seemed to care bothered him – “I was in a near death experience and no one has answers. I need your help.”

“Did you know I was in the hallway when this happened?”<sup>8</sup>

“No.”



I had just arrived on the floor, exiting from the elevator when confronted by inmates in disarray. No other civilian was in the hallway at the time. The inmates were as shocked as I, asking what to do. They understood the danger of their unsupervised status – not wanting to get shot, begging, and pleading for help. “Which way...?” .... “He – (pointing) - grabbed the officer’s gun!” ... “We are not involved!”

Bang, boom, kaboom - bodies touching bodies - bodies striking immovable objects, not in a Batman comic kind of way, real-world violence; the unmistakable sounds of conflict, grunts, groans, the exertion of physical force. They fled immediately when an inmate grabbed the officer’s gun. The wanted no part of this, flinging the door open, rushing into the hallway, frightened, the door slamming behind them. The sounds were now muffled, though still distinctive.

“Go into the courtroom!”

I opened the door and screamed – telling an initially startled Judge what was happening – “They need somewhere to go – an officer is in the holding cell struggling with an inmate over his gun!” His Honor seemed non-pulsed - telling the inmates to take a seat, telling his bailiff to remain in place before calling the next case.

Did he understand me? Did I mumble?

I considered moving from the courtroom door to the holding cell’s door – ten, twelve feet away. I saw images in my head play out before moving: officers entering the holding cell, mistaking *my black self for the assailant and shooting me, pushing the inmate aside, apologizing later for their reasonable mistake; telling a federal jury I posed an immediate and credible threat. Surely, there is a better alternative.* I told him what I was thinking. This caused him to

cry more. He hearing the truth, not wanting to hear the truth, crying, crying, crying – told me this grown man’s bellow was the discarding, in one fell swoop, of the life-long admonition that men aren’t supposed to cry.

I turned away from the courtroom door and ran down the hallway, to the remaining courtrooms on the floor. One was in a jury trial. The other was not. Both had bailiffs. One judge instructed her bailiff to stay. The bailiff seemed relieved. The other Judge acted like I was screaming in French, no Swahili – smiling, waving at the unknown tongue. The bailiff moved in my direction. He asked me whether I was staying, I said “no”. He locked doors to the courtroom.

There wasn’t any other alternative in my mind, and *ass-whooping it is to be*. I ran back to the holding cell door – they then came, the Calvary. To my right-rear – to my right I saw a deputy coming; to my left-front I heard noises in the stairwell. *No ass-whooping this time*. I stepped back and away from the holding cell. The officer to my right-rear moved rapidly towards me – thirty, twenty, ten feet away – then it happened, visibly losing his cookie, eyes, face, body movements told on him. A frightened exclamation point he became, immediately stopping, tucking, turning and running as fast as he ran toward me moments earlier, in the opposite direction. *Punk-ass coward* – I thought. An angry incensed teenager I became, screaming, “hey, hey”. You may think I am being cruel, I think not. I have seen cowards before. A clerk for the courts was running him when he arrived on the floor. She saw what I saw, and ran behind him screaming. Her slight frame followed him into the stairwell, screaming for him to turn his punk-ass around.



“Pam, I don’t remember her last name. Skinny, white female, blond hair, she has been with the clerk’s office for years.”

He admitted then, “She told me to come to talk to you.” He revealed the first deputy on the scene name appeared in the reports he was given access. I was unable to place the name with a face. “Did he tell you the truth?”

“No, he made up some reason why he didn’t get there until after the other two officers arrived to help. I had already secured the inmate. I was sitting when they entered, trying to gather myself.”

“The other deputies – those in front of me, to my left arrived next”, I said, “Three, four seconds after the first deputy ran the other way. I think. Actually when I turned back around, they had entered. The first deputy – the one who had fled came back a minute or two later, after Pam followed him into the stairwell, calling him a coward; yelling to him to ‘turn your coward ass around’.”

There was never a time he stopped crying. His melanin imbued skin moved through the array of browns during our visit. He never asked me for help. He told me there no was reprimands, suspensions, or firings. No news article, no stories of courage – because there was none. He struggled over his gun, his life – both non-negotiable conditions, while a fellow deputy found a different refuge, in the opposite direction.

His Judge had demanded he bring the inmates, even though he brought to the Court’s attention a second officer was needed to transit them from one location to another. “My opinion didn’t matter.” He cried more. The relationship with the department was no longer the same.

He didn’t tell me then - I knew – he was not the same. He moved toward the door. I followed,

“call me if you need my help.” His head remained lowered, “I will, Mr. Griffin. I will.” We didn’t talk much after our last meeting. He remained with the department a little longer. The death – his death – a short time later, seemed destined.

## Act 4 – Life is not a play, not a stage

Why do I write? - because the rhythm of life is unlike a play, a movie, nor the well-worn pattern of the modern day novel; scripting heroes and villains, predictable patterns, while the challenges of life oft-times is incapable to being scripted, and feels like, seems like – is – continual slaps, gusts of wind, never ceasing. There are times when life characters are incapable of bowing on cue, fail woefully in remembering lines, losing their place on stage – missing and misplaced character. Life isn’t a stage. The stage is actually an attempt to present a facsimile of our lives – and imperfect stab actually, art.

“[All the world's a stage](#)” is the phrase that begins a monologue from William Shakespeare's pastoral comedy *As You Like It*, spoken by the melancholy Jaques in Act II Scene VII Line 138. The speech compares the world to a stage and life to a play and catalogues the seven stages of a man's life, sometimes referred to as the seven ages of man. It is one of Shakespeare's most frequently quoted passages.”

All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances,  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages. At first, the [infant](#),  
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.

Then the whining **schoolboy**, with his satchel  
And shining morning face, creeping like snail  
Unwillingly to school. And then the **lover**,  
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad  
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a **soldier**,  
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,  
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,  
Seeking the bubble reputation  
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the **justice**,  
In fair round belly with good capon lined,  
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,  
Full of wise saws and modern instances;  
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts  
Into the lean and slippered **pantaloons**,  
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side;  
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide  
For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice,  
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes  
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,  
That ends this strange eventful history,  
Is **second childishness** and mere oblivion,  
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

A good story is one of full these imperfect lives – where the music skips, no matter how many times you wipe the record, correct the settings, adjust your connections. There are no rights or wrongs, even in worlds where there are/maybe/will be clear distinctions between rights and wrongs. Stories which are unpredictable – with shades of grey, mixed with tinges of fuchsia – the predictable stages of our lifecycles do, can and will go astray.

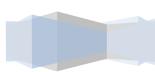


The Acts represent a spattering of people no different than the rest of us – vulnerable humans confronted by unexpected, life contingencies. Characters not necessarily willing to become front page cover - profiles in courage, not. Encountering conditions which cause them to reach out for advice, after the winding pathway becomes too muddied; searching for someone to listen; hoping – sometimes against hope – there is a skillset – a thing, something – which can help clear the path. Oh sometimes there is help, other times the starkness and biting conditions convinces us/them – he, she - how imperfect we all are - too small, not strong enough, too short to reach the counter – wishing, wishing, wishing to recede back in time to an earlier stage.

When [Madelyn Murray O'Hare](#) – an American activist supporting atheism and separation of church and state - called she had an emergent need to talk, “soon”. She mentioned she would call back the next week. “I’m in San Antonio. I want to talk with you. … It is important. … I need an appointment.” I had never talked to Ms. O’Hare before. I knew the name. I knew her history. Hers was a familiar voice - rash nerves, strained to a breaking point, frazzled. Madelyn Murray O’Hare never called back. Later the news reported she was missing. Eventually her body was found. [She had been murdered.](#)

Truth is better than fiction – I contend. The common misquote of Shakespeare’s observations is the actual lie; the actual quotation and observation is not.

Seeing the unbelievable, watching tormented souls move in and out; admitted faults, vulnerabilities; fright, worry, tears, performed on life’s stage, playing out in living color, daily, monthly, yearly; improbable, implausible, frightening life challenges. Seeing even those who are highly skilled attempt an unsteady tap dance on a pin’s head – withering, falling away, they too human.



I write in an attempt to remain true to the storytellers, who have faithfully bestowed their trust on my ears and eyes. I write so the listener/reader can readily understand there are times where there aren't any heroes, only people trying to get to one place to another. If you still are not convinced of my description of life – not necessarily a stage, not necessarily a play – perhaps you can appreciate the unpredictable set out in a fictional setting:

Half of the stage light had fallen, shattered, askew - stage right. The curtain was in disarray, hanging on a cable, dangling, taking on the appearance of a thread holding a red velvet cape, daring the bull with each flutter. The star of the show moved out of harm's way – pass the curtain line. She fell, unexpectedly, rapidly, downward onto the apron – rolling, tumbling into the orchestra pit, breaking both of her legs and left arm. The star's screams and anguish were muted by the oohs and aahs (the Statesman did say the theatre always did have world-class acoustics). The audience cowered and crawled out the theatre when a tuba fell against the concrete. "We thought it was gunfire", some said. One of the people interviewed said, "it was a gun...!" She wasn't there – Sara was a local prostitute walking by at the time. Be clear, she wasn't there. A great interview though, colorful. Her expressions flooded the internet, local and national news, meme worthy was Sara – as she always is, particularly when she works, doing what she does. This is what precipitated the theatre closing after one hundred and twenty years of service to the community.

Do you feel better? Is this more comforting?

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Acts 1-3 are non-fiction, admittedly frightening, the stories representing a taste of the strange fruits of life (bad fruit you say!) and part of life's stories which have to be told. The

protagonist in Act 1 never called during or after the presidential election. The candidate's lawyers did, asking a constitutional question, as they wound their way to the United States Supreme Court. I remember listening, late during the night; the lawyer explaining their theory on the phone. I may have written something expressing my doubt with regards to their ability to succeed on their legal theory. "Unless you obtain a revolutionary opinion from the Court, you don't win", I said. They did. I still don't believe they did.

The protagonist in Act 2 existence is unknown to me. The boss to whom he sold his soul to is long dead. I don't remember the name of *he who sold his soul*. I remember the boss' name because of his continued prominence, up until the time of his death, and my encountering him later in a case in which he tried to high-jack fifty lawyers' (demanding we sign our cases over to him). This occurred in a mass-tort case when the boss refused to tender expert reports and discovery he had obtained as lead counsel. We exchanged insults after lunch. He kept asking me my name (not a question of endearment) – I told him "you can call me Jack". I have never been known by such a name. I apologize to all the Jacks of the world. I asked him what his name was – this was a greater insult, those who are deemed famous, important, the self-ordained great ones hate it, flat hate it, when those below them don't know their name. "And your name is what...?" With this said the importance of this fight was greater than male bravado: without the reports and discovery, the other plaintiff lawyers' (meaning our clients also) cases would be dismissed. The boss wasn't successful in the new attempt at extortion.

The protagonist in Act 3 - as the story recounts - is dead also. One would never be able to draw a causal connection (a legal term) between the incident, employment dispute and his death. I don't need any such legal proof, my heart tell me so. A body folded, tucked in an



involuntary fetal position told me. A harrowing bellow – from paper sack brown to tones of beige, chocolate, cinnamon; the skin on his hands and face changed, while he cried without embarrassment or shame – said so also. His smile disappeared. His health deteriorated, this wounded man receded rapidly inward before the rest of us knew he was dying.

All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances,  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages.

Repeatedly misquoting Shakespeare and what was actually said is the lie. If I am wrong in my interpretation Shakespeare is a lie ... These are few of the reasons why I write.

