

BY THE BOOK

Written by
David F.M. Vaughn

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

A bustling courtroom filled with various defendants, lawyers, and prosecutors milling about.

THEME MUSIC begins to play.

The two doors in the back of the room open simultaneously.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Now entering the court is Danny Allen, an aspiring entrepreneur from Tampa. He is suing his ex-girlfriend for breach of contract.

DANNY, 35, doughy and blonde, enters the courtroom in an ill-fitting suit, walks through the small wooden gate, and stands at a podium.

TYPEWRITER-STYLE SUPER: DANNY ALLEN. PLAINTIFF. UNEMPLOYED.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Next up is Susan Davis, a Miami fashion photographer who says the contract between them was never valid, and claims that the lawsuit is frivolous.

Susan huffs through the doors and stomps to her podium. She is 35, and has the over-styled haircut of a woman who would work at a Fantastic Sam's.

TYPEWRITER-STYLE SUPER: SUSAN DAVIS. DEFENDANT. PHOTOGRAPHER. 5'9" 130 LBS. GIVE OR TAKE.

She turns and shoots Danny daggers with her eyes. He smiles back at her lovingly.

OFFICER PAUL (50s with some sass) enters the courtroom through the judge's chamber door.

OFFICER PAUL

All rise, for the honorable Judge Silvia Muñoz.

The courtroom attendees stand as JUDGE MUÑEZ, 57 and clearly at the end of a long day, enters.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Today we will see whose contract is void, and who's just annoyed, in the case of "Say Cheese and Sue."

TYPEWRITER-STYLE SUPER: SAY CHEESE AND SUE

Judge Muñoz BANGS her gavel.

JUDGE MUÑOZ

OK. Mr. Allen, I see from your petition that you are suing Ms. Davis for breach of contract. Is that correct?

DANNY

That is correct.

JUDGE MUÑOZ

And Ms. Davis, is that really your hair?

SUSAN

...yes. Why would -

JUDGE MUÑOZ

Well then, let's start from the beginning, shall we? What happened, in your own words, Mr. Allen?

DANNY

Your honor, the defendant and I entered into a contract -

SUSAN

- it was NOT a contract -

DANNY

- we entered into a contract. After said contract was signed, the defendant disappeared from my life for 15 years.

JUDGE MUÑOZ

Let me see the contract in question.

Officer Paul walks to Danny, who hands him a book. As Officer Paul walks away, he eyes Susan's hair suspiciously.

Susan self-consciously tends to her hair.

Officer Paul hands Judge Muñoz the book.

DANNY

As you can see, my ex-Bae and I agreed to the terms, conditions, and date of the contract in question.

(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

It was signed, and was due to be executed this year. Our thirty-fifth, to be exact.

Judge Muñoz holds up the large Middle School yearbook.

JUDGE MUÑOZ

This is a yearbook.

DANNY

(too close to the podium
microphone)
Yes, your honor.

The Judge rolls her eyes. She opens it to a marked page.

JUDGE MUÑOZ

Ok, Ms. Davis, do you dispute you wrote the following - "My little Danny Boy - I can't believe this year is over! It's gonna be so hard to say goodbye to you, because we are soul mates! I know you're going to do amazing things at Tarpon High. And hey, if we're not married by the time we're thirty five, then let's get married, k? KIT4evr. -Sue."

SUSAN

Of course I wrote that, but...your honor, may I say something?

JUDGE MUÑOZ

Sure, but I'm not sure I'll be able to hear you over that hair.

SUSAN

Why is that even - never mind. Listen, when I was thirteen, I loved Danny.

She looks to Danny sweetly.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I did. He was my first boyfriend, and I thought the world of him. We met taking pictures for the yearbook. But I was thirteen. I also wanted to marry Chris Kirkpatrick from N*SYNC.

OFFICER PAUL

Really? *He* was your first choice?

SUSAN

Regardless, I was a teenager. And I said a lot of things I didn't mean. Danny -

She looks back to him, who's tearing up.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

- You are sweet, and I had a good time dating you for three weeks in middle school. But until you showed up at my gallery opening last week, I hadn't even thought about you, or this silly promise since I was a kid. This suit is nuts, and I think you know that.

Judge Muñoz takes off her glasses, and directly addresses Danny.

JUDGE MUÑOZ

This is pretty cut and dry.

SUSAN

Finally, some sense!

Jude Muñoz bangs the gavel.

JUDGE MUÑOZ

Ms. Davis, you entered into a legally binding contract with Mr. Allen.

SUSAN

Wait, what?

JUDGE MUÑOZ

As well as set the terms of this good faith agreement yourself, I may add, effectively creating an arranged marriage -

SUSAN

You've got to be kidding -

JUDGE MUÑOZ

- which is legally binding in this state.

SUSAN

This is crazy!

JUDGE MUÑEZ

This is Florida! Ms. Davis, you are in breach of contract. I find you and Mr. Allen's marriage contract valid and order it executed. Tomorrow at noon.

SUSAN

What!?

JUDGE MUÑEZ

Down here in Florida, we have a little thing called integrity. Here, when you say you're going to marry your childhood friend if you're both still single by the age of thirty-five, you do it!

The room is BUZZING. Judge Muñoz bangs her gavel down.

DANNY

(looking at Susan)

We did it!

JUDGE MUÑEZ

Quiet in the courtroom! Quiet! Now, onto the next count. You're charged with failure to "stay cool," "have a gr8 summer," and "keep in touch forever." How do you plead?

THE END.