

Court Appointed Lawyer - Woman - Treats client like processing paperwork.

"Yes, I remember you. You are my other lawyer."

"Yes, that's right." I slid along my bench to the far corner three feet distant. "We need to talk before you appear before Judge Sutter."

"Yes, let's talk."

"I have some bad news, Mister Garcia. I'm sorry."

"What is the bad news?"

"The judge is going to sentence you to the upper term, Mister Garcia.

It is not an easy thing for me to tell you this."

"That's okay. You are good. Please tell me what this means?"

"Well, Mister Garcia, it means he's going to sentence you to a seventeen year term, I'm afraid."

"No, this cannot be. You check your papers," he patted the pile of folders. "You have the wrong Garcia."

He smiled politely at her absurd mistake. "There are many, many Garcias, yes?" He looked to me.

"Yes," I said, "many people are named Garcia."

"No, Mister Garcia," the woman included me in her task, "it is you. You are the right Mister Garcia."

"Seventeen years? It cannot be. Can this be? They tell me three years before and I tell them no. Seventeen years cannot be!" He was patient in his explaining of the process to her.

"No. You turned down their offer, Mister Garcia. You went to trial and were found guilty. The court generally--almost always--insists on the upper, at the least the middle, term when you make them spend the money for a trial." She shifted on her ample buttocks as her allegiances split. "They really hate it when you guys do that," she told me.

"I will not do such a time." Garcia said it as a fact.

"It really isn't your choice to make." She stood. Garcias would come and go. She had her own problems and plenty of clients. "You can appeal when you get to wherever it is they send you."

She had already quit calling him by his name. He had joined her collection of sad human histories.

"Where they are sending me?" Garcia repeated emptily.

"Whichever prison. Get someone in the law library there. They'll have the forms you need."

"Who can help me there?"

"Ask the other inmates. They'll know of someone. I'll see you in the courtroom."

Her duty done, she thrust her hand at him, eager to be let go. As Garcia rose gracefully to lightly shake her fingers, she reached her free hand behind and rapped briskly on the door.

"Maybe the judge? He change his mind, maybe?" The guard banged the door ajar.

"No, this
judge pretty much goes with the D. A.'s suggestions. Sorry. Good luck." The door closed on a
new kind of silence. My stomach growled.