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### The Best Story Wins: A Review of John Bobo's Advice for New Prosecutors

Admittedly, it occurred to me at 10:30 p.m. on the Monday night before the Wednesday this book review was due that I didn't have to read the entirety of *The Best Story Wins* by John Bobo in order to write the assigned book review for it. I haven't actually written a book report since the third grade though, and in the third grade the thought of not finishing my work, or in the very least, the thought of not doing my work properly, didn't even cross my eight year-old mind. So here I am after putting in a 12 hour day on my "day off" just coming home from school confronted by my 27 year-old evil conscience and yet, I still couldn't put the book down - I knew that if I didn't stay up to finish the last 80 pages, I'd be missing something - so instead, I missed my date with my bed.

But there it was . . . the best part: *The Danger of Burnout: The Warrior's Life*. And not ten minutes after I overcame my contemplated laziness was I listening to a seasoned prosecutor talk to me (someone aspiring to be in that highly coveted new class of prosecutors) when he said, "I didn't know much then, but I knew that to deal, day in and day out, with the affairs of man took a special kind of person, and that I wanted to be that kind of person." I felt as though Bobo was narrating the same way Gordie Lachance recounted his boyhood journeys in the movie *Stand By Me*. In any case, that one sentence, ladies and gentleman, is what I have been trying to articulate in my own microcosm.

That's not to say that it took me until page 203 to realize that I am meant for this line of work . . . I've thought about it for a while. It was by page 203, however that I started to get annoyed with how somehow John Bobo knows the answer to why I am destined to be a prosecutor better than I do. It is, after all, the affairs of man that explains the allure of prosecution, I suppose.

Although written in vignette form, that theme is prevalent throughout *The Best Story Wins* - whether it jumps out at me from the first chapter, "Being a Prosecutor," or whether it's just camouflaged in trial advocacy techniques where the affairs of man equate to the affairs of the juror - and the ability to speak to a jury without actually speaking to them.

In that same vein, another feature of this book that struck me as nothing but useful is the fact that, sure I've learned some of these advocacy techniques in class or been told to use them, but Bobo actually injects storytelling throughout his book which actually teaches its readers when to use the material. Take for instance my favorite pop culture reference: *The Ms. Jackson Cross* (p. 148). Now, not only do I understand the primacy and recency issues discussed by my trial advocacy professors, but I'll never forget it and I know how to use it.

One thing I would never have thought of in the course of my nascent career, however, would have been the fact that defense attorneys are not our friends, as discussed in the chapter "Working and Battling with Defense Attorneys." Had I not read the book, I would never have realized that the friendliness manifested by defense

attorneys in court is sometimes just a strategic façade. There I was assuming that the defense bar should be given the benefit of the doubt sometimes. After reading this excerpt I realized defense attorneys are really analogous to those homeless people who ask for change and then rob you blind. I mean, what are the odds that's actually going to happen to you when you stop to be the Good Samaritan that day - but it can, and I think that's his point.

I'd like to thank John Bobo for his discussions or references to humility throughout. I really appreciate them and think they don't only apply to the prosecutorial setting - I wish more law students would take humility into account. I think in the adversarial realm it's easy to want to speak over others, get the last word and fall into the trap of being completely overbearing and, as a result, unattractive to people - uncharismatic. There wasn't one chapter that I can recall that didn't emphasize common courtesies or respect for others. And the reference to how "Ted Bundy was a good law student" really struck home for an array of factors that need not be shared. ("The law attracts sociopathic personalities." page 12). Or, how about "Don't be a know it all." I hope everyone reads this book - or at least everyone who thinks they know it all. But even then, the know-it-alls think they knew that.

I think what I took away most from this book, ultimately, is that reading it made me even more passionate about the career I'd be honored to enter into - even despite all Bobo's caveats. As a non-fictional work, despite its lack of a plot, or suspense, I truly enjoyed every minute and that kept me turning every page. After finishing the book, all I can think about is how I hope I can articulate my passion as well as Bobo has, because I would be honored to join the ranks of those who are sometimes: manipulated by defense attorneys; or who sometimes burn out from working so hard and being so underpaid; or of those who work for the people who would thank them, but for the fact that the defendant took away that chance. I think every prosecutor should read this book to remind them that every day is a new day that shouldn't be just another day of going through the motions.

So, here I am typing my thoughts in the middle of the night like Doogie Howser, but I have finished my first book report since the third grade. And, though I'm somewhat nostalgic, I admit that The Best Story Wins may be replacing The Happy Puppy on my bookshelf.