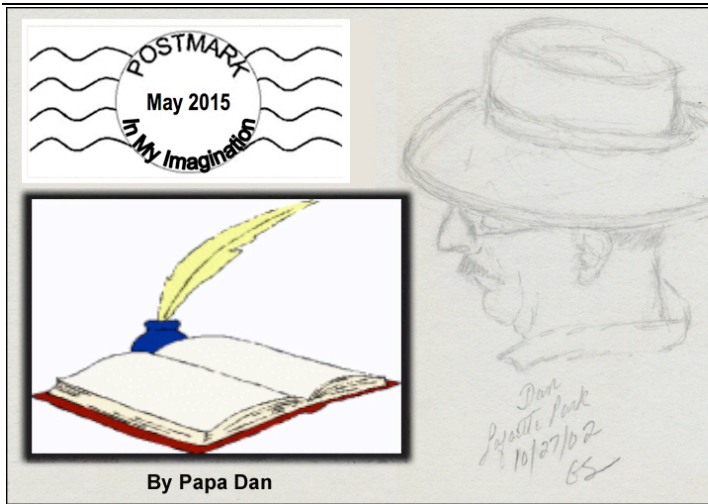


A Morning Conversation

By Dan Sapone



By Papa Dan

It felt like the start of a workday like any other. The look and feel of my office and my desk were familiar and unmistakable. My 'to do' list was the usual combination of two or three quick and easy tasks, one or two difficult but do-able ones, and a handful of things that I was probably never going to get done so would still be on my list later in the week. I could still feel the optimism associated with the first hour of the day, when the phone rang.

=====

The screen on my phone showed an area code I didn't recognize so I knew it wasn't local. "Hello, this is Dan."

"Mr. Sapone, I apologize for calling you at work, but *Linked-In* only showed your workplace and your switchboard operator was kind enough to put me through. My name is Aaron Sorkin. An acquaintance of mine sent me a link to a story you posted on your blog. It's the one-act play called *Some Explaining to Do*. I was hoping to have an opportunity to talk to you about it."

I have to admit it took a long moment for all that to sink in. I understood the words all right, but it took a while to make sense and the voice sounded a bit distant. My mind quickly went from 'Wow' to 'Ah-come-on- on now,' to 'What is this?' Words did eventually come out of me. I said, "OK, this is a good joke but . . . I, uh, yes I do have a blog, and . . . look, several people know how much I admire your work, that is, well, Aaron Sorkin's work, well enough to play this trick on me — but forgive me, but I certainly know the name, but, I don't mean to be rude, but I have no way of knowing that you are who you say you are and I have a hard time believing that Aaron Sorkin would be calling me."

"So you know my work?" he said.

"Of course, you . . . uh, Aaron Sorkin that is, has produced and written some of the best television I have ever seen. I mean, if I had to rank all-time TV shows, well, at the top of the list there's *The Newsroom* and then *The West Wing* and way down below that there's everything else I've ever seen in my life. So, who is this really?"

"Well, Mr. Sapone, I appreciate the kind words, but I happen to be acquainted with your Poet Laureate there in Pleasanton from a writing conference she invited me to on the

West Coast. You can call her and she'll confirm that, if you like. Sandra sent me the link to your story on your blog *ConVivio*, and it got my attention. It really stands out from the rest of your . . . I mean the other pieces on your blog are, well, they're fine if a bit obvious and, I wouldn't exactly call them trite, but well, look, I really didn't call to insult you; but I liked the one-act play very much. It had some of the qualities I admire in American short fiction, you know, it revealed the character quickly with your dialogue, it got to some serious issues with a little humor without hitting me over the head, and it happens to be on a theme I am interested in. And starting with 'Act One' and ending with 'Intermission,' it made me want more. I mean I can really imagine that there are some interesting places to go with an Act Two and an Act Three."

"Dan, are you still there?"

"Yes, so you're telling me that you're really Aaron Sorkin? Really."

"Yes, sir, as awkwardly as I've introduced myself, yes, I am. Listen, I am coming out to San Francisco next month and I'd like to talk to you more about your play. For example, do you have plans to extend it? You sort of imply that you have more in your back pocket. I mean, what happens to your main character when he goes back to Earth, presumably in Act Two? And then, does he come back up there in Act Three, as you imply? And who *is* the voice behind the door? Does he do the 'explaining' that you suggest he must? I actually want to hear what he might have to say."

I'm still finding this all hard to believe -- "Well, sir, to be honest, I do have a plan for Acts Two and Three but they haven't quite made it onto the paper, if you know what I mean."

"Yes, Dan, I do know what you mean. It took me awhile to figure out that the whole *Newsroom* story was really about Charlie Skinner, not so much Will and Mackensie. I mean '*that's how I got to Memphis,*' if you know what I mean."

"Yes, I get it. I saw the final episode. And I do have answers to your questions about my main character, but . . . why exactly are you interested in my little story? I mean, you can write circles around me and what could you possibly want with my little play?"

"Well, Dan, I am kinda between projects right now, what with the *Newsroom* series all over, I've been wanting do a movie and, your story got my attention. I can imagine . . ."

An annoying buzzing sound interrupts him in the background.

"Oh, excuse me, Daniel . . . my other line, oh, I've got to take this, I'm really sorry. Look, can I call you back? I'll get back to you — perhaps this afternoon — I'd like to talk some more."

I heard a click, but the buzzing didn't stop.

Oh, right. I suppose my alarm clock had been buzzing for quite a while. Of course . . .
