

A MODERN MAJOR LAW CLERK

(To the tune of “Modern Major General” by Gilbert & Sullivan)

lyrics by Jed S. Rakoff

(i)

I am the very model of a federal district judge’s clerk,
The kind who comes in Saturdays and never once begrudges work.
I keep a stern decorum and I never give the slightest smirk,
Not even when some hot-shot lawyer makes my judge look like a jerk.

I know the “Blue Book” backwards, from “cf.” and “contra” to “accord.”
I place my commas perfectly and never ever once get bored.
And if my judge should get it wrong, and my good preachments are ignored,
I say “Oh judge, it’s all my fault,” and promptly fall upon my sword.

I laugh at all my judge’s jokes, and listen to his endless spiel.
I never pay the slightest heed to his reversals on appeal.
And even in those moments when it looks like he has gone berserk,
I smile and say, “More coffee, Judge?” – a perfect district judge’s clerk!

(ii)

I am the very model of a federal district judge’s clerk.
My judge is sheer perfection, free of any fault or flaw or quirk.
So what if he can’t reason and his mind is just a muddled murk?
If judges could decide the law, what would be left for the law clerk?

And, truth to tell, my judge can’t spell, his punctuation’s rather lame,
But he looks real good in a robe, and that’s what counts, or so they claim.
I draft his best opinions, and his best ideas come from my brain,
But being very modest still, I always let him sign his name.

I have a social conscience too, I always wear it on my sleeves.
I feel the pain of prisoners, for pro se plaintiffs my heart bleeds.
Next year I’ll make a million bucks, but though I’ll treasure every perk,
My soul is safe, ‘cause once I was a federal district judge’s clerk!

