

The Art of the Duel

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Characters:

ALEX, male congressman who has been challenged to a duel

AARON, male congressman who challenged ALEX to a duel

DAWN, female, younger than ALEX/AARON, arbiter of duel

Props: 2 Pistols (preferably not real!), box that looks like it could carry 2 more pistols, laptop

Setting: Clearing in the woods

(At rise, only DAWN and ALEX are on stage with ALEX pointing his pistol at DAWN. DAWN is carrying a laptop and small box):

DAWN: What do you think you're doing?

ALEX: I'm here to preserve my honor. What does it LOOK like?

DAWN: But you're pointing your gun right at me.

ALEX: "Pistols at Dawn".

DAWN: I know that but...

ALEX: You're "Dawn", right? Aaron told the arbitration agency that we didn't want a woman doing this but they insisted you'd be fine.

DAWN: And I'll BE fine – this isn't my first rodeo.

ALEX (not impressed): No Bull. But this isn't a rodeo – this is a DUEL – if you're not up for this, now's the time to back out.

DAWN: I AM up for this – but you can't be pointing your pistol at me. In fact, you shouldn't ever point it at anything you're not planning at shooting.

ALEX: I KNOW how to use a gun!

DAWN: I'm actually a firearms instructor and I don't think you do. You sure know how to shoot your mouth off, though.

ALEX: I've watched a TON of Westerns so I know what I'm doing.

DAWN: And I've spent a lot of time listening to the Beach Boys but that doesn't mean I know how to surf!

ALEX: This may all be moot, though, if Aaron doesn't show up.

DAWN: You mean "The 1st party"? He challenged YOU so he's the 1st party and you're the 2nd party.

ALEX: Well, I'm the first one here. What happens if he doesn't show?

DAWN: American Standard rules of duel.

ALEX: Where you learned...

DAWN: In school. He gets a 10-minute grace period and then he forfeits – your honor is intact, whereas HIS honor is impugned. Is that him now?

(AARON runs onto the stage): I'm here – traffic was miserable & mapquest screwed me.

DAWN: Uh... no pistol?

ALEX (to AARON): Did you not even READ the contract? BYOP. Bring Your Own Pistol (To DAWN): So does he forfeit now?

AARON (to ALEX): You'd LIKE to weasel out of this – I thought BYOP was "Bring Your Own Peeps". I was GONNA bring my own pistol, though, but there's no way I can get to here from my house without going thru SOME school zone, government building, or whatever, and I didn't wanna get busted on the way over. Arbiter has pistols, right? (Looking expectantly at DAWN). I told you, Alex, no skirts!

DAWN: I'm a VERY competent arbiter, thank you very much – and I have TWO pistols here (points to box).

AARON: Does your husband know you took his guns?

DAWN (a bit miffed): They're MINE – I bring them to every duel because I often run into a clown like you who isn't prepared. I'm a CERTIFIED arbiter. So man-up and accept the fact that I'm in charge here.

AARON: Yeah, well, maybe you should chick-up and lose the attitude. I thought you were supposed to be neutral.

DAWN: We're all here now so let's get started – First Party (nods at AARON), Second Party (nods at ALEX).

AARON (nods formally towards ALEX): Two.

ALEX (nods formally towards AARON): One.

DAWN: Good! Now, let's go over the terms of the duel.

AARON: It's real simple – person who dies, loses.

DAWN: Will you let me do my job? Why did you even BOTHER hiring an arbiter if you're not going to allow her to do due diligence?

AARON: What's this about "doodoo diligence"?

ALEX: Let's let her do her job, Aaron.

AARON: Call me "One" – we're keeping this all legal!

ALEX (sighs): Let's let her do her job, ONE.

DAWN: Thank you, TWO.

AARON (to ALEX): Suck up!

DAWN: First order of business is to point out that tree over there with the target on it. Should either of you want to NOT shoot the other but STILL keep your honor, you can shoot at that target. Don't just shoot in the air – I know it SEEMS honorable – but it's also extremely reckless.

AARON: Don't you mean "grossly negligent"?

DAWN: Either way, it leaves us ALL open to the possibility of a lawsuit.

ALEX: Except for the dead person.

AARON: Can I look at the pistols in the box?

DAWN: You're jumping ahead a bit, One, but OK (opens the box for AARON to peer in).

AARON: Those are some fine guns. Didn't bring a sharpie, though, did you?

DAWN: What for?

AARON: So I can make SURE that the bullet has HIS name on it.

DAWN: We'll all know if you shoot him but go ahead and both of you make sure that your pistols are to your liking.

AARON: I think HIS is DOUBLE action and both of yours are SINGLE action!

DAWN: Doesn't matter. You're each using only one bullet. After the bullet is discharged, the duel is over.

AARON: What if he goes on a shooting rampage? He'll have the advantage.

ALEX: I'm not gonna go on a shooting spree.

AARON: I said "rampage".

ALEX: Either one – This duel was YOUR idea, remember?

DAWN: And if he DOES go on a shooting spree --

ALEX: Or rampage...

DAWN: He loses his honor and YOU win by forfeit.

AARON: But I'll be dead.

DAWN: But you'll have your honor and he will irrevocably lose his. That's what this is all about, right?

AARON: He smeared my name and so I must restore my honor!

DAWN: Uh, this is not really my purview but how did Two insult you?

AARON: With a racial slur! He said I should be blackballed from the committee.

DAWN: That's it? That's not really a...

AARON: And then he said my speeches all sounded like "White Noise". More racism!

ALEX: Hey, YOU were the one who made a sexist comment – saying that I was guilty of "malfeasance".

DAWN: I don't think any of this should reasonably be construed as....

ALEX: And THEN you smeared my constituents, saying they were a "homogeneous bunch".

DAWN (incredulous): And THIS is worth a duel? Unbelievable!

AARON: Hey, just do your job and stay neutral.

DAWN: Oh, I'm neutral, all right – I think you're both equal idiots.

ALEX: Can we just get on with this? I know we're paying you by the hour.

DAWN: And I've got a soccer game to referee in 2 hours so, ok, if I can go over the terms without any further interruption (looks at laptop). We're ok with the pistols and the "no-loss-of-honor target". How about the "DNR" clause?

AARON: If I get shot by TWO, here, I don't want you waking me up. Just let me die rather than live the rest of my days in disgrace.

DAWN: But what if you get shot in, say, the thigh?

AARON: I think we're all adults here...(Looks towards ALEX)... Two?

ALEX: Agreed, here, One – it's up to the party who is injured to ask for help -- IF he wants it.

DAWN: No loss of honor, then?

AARON: Only if he uses The Lord's name in vain.

ALEX: Agreed. And, while we're at it, let's say that ALL profanity is grounds for forfeit and loss of honor.

AARON: With you on that, Two.

DAWN: OK, we're making great progress here. So you start back-to-back and then count off 10 steps.

AARON: SIMULTANEOUSLY!

ALEX: And SLOWLY. No fast count!

DAWN: Simultaneously and slowly. You then turn in whichever direction – clockwise or counter – and then you're free to fire at either the other party or the NLOH target.

AARON (to ALEX): NLOH ?

ALEX (to AARON): No Loss of Honor. Learn the lingo, will you?

DAWN: Once you hear "Ten", you're free to turn and fire – a common misconception is that you have to wait for the word "Turn" but that's actually not true.

ALEX: Good to know.

AARON: Let's DO this!