

TWO

Why would I
 Receive a subpoena? Well, actually, I get them
 Quite often—you see, I'm the manager
 Of a small, independent
 Video store—its just around
 The corner
 From my apartment, and there's always
 Bad checks,
 Stolen credit cards, unreturned tapes, once in a while
 An actual shoplifter—
 So I get subpoenaed about once every month,
 Six weeks or so, but I hardly ever
 End up
 Testifying
 In court—I'm the witness the prosecutors
 Keep up their sleeves—
 Bored out of my skull, I sit there
 Waiting
 Until the defense attorney
 Realizes his bluff has been called
 And enters
 The guilty plea.

The fluttering leaf was still flickering,
 Frozen in mid-flight
 On my TV as I returned to my couch, trying to think
 Which case
 Would have gotten this far—
 My money was on
 Louis B. Weston, Jr., the crackhead who,
 In four days,
 Had written more than three thousand
 Dollars of worthless
 Checks to businesses here in the area, including
 A six dollar
 And thirty-three cent check to Omni Video, approved
 And initialed
 By yours truly for the rental of three
 Jean-Claude Van Damme movies, which Mr. Weston, Jr.

Later tried to sell
To an undercover cop on the street
For ten
Bucks each.

But this subpoena—there was something
Different about it
When I looked at it closely—there weren't any
Helpful brochures
From the Victim/Witness Bureau—
And in the place where they usually put the name
Of the defendant, it said,
"Special Investigation, RICO Task Force,"
And the name
Of a federal court judge.

An hour later, after I watched
For the twenty-fourth time,
Yojimbo wreak
His climactic vengeance on the predatory
Gang of gamblers, leaving the town windswept,
Depopulated,
But finally at peace, I picked up
The phone and called
My friend Tim—he's an assistant D.A. The receptionist
Asked for my name and said
Wait, just a minute, she thought she'd seen him
Just go by.
Then she put me on hold and after an interminable
Muzak medley
Of Whitney Huston's greatest hits, the receptionist returned,
Her voice
More formal now and told me
That Tim was on special assignment
And no longer worked
Out of that office. Could she take a message? I said no,
No thank you, just a personal,
Social matter, I would try to get hold of him
Later at home.

Two minutes later my phone rang, and Tim's voice,
Hushed and urgent,
Accompanied by the edgy, irregular

Drone

Of passing traffic, poured out at me—he seemed to know,
In advance,
Everything I was going to say, and impatiently
Answered my questions
Before I could ask them,

"Look, I'm calling from a pay phone. I'm not
Supposed to talk to you—
Get yourself a lawyer. It means racketeering—continuing
Criminal enterprises—we know
About the Porno Club. Discreet, my ass!
You know damn well
I'm not talking about pornography. Look, you and Paulie
Are my oldest
Friends, or were. I've taken myself out of this,
Where you two
Are concerned. We know
About the money! Get yourself
A lawyer. We've got
Gunther Mandrake—
Yeah, Gussie Mandrigo, the same guy, yeah, right—
About as fictional
As you or me. Get yourself a lawyer and don't
Tell anyone
I called you. Tell the truth, co-operate,
And maybe you can stay
Out of jail."