

"Well...", said Joe, "This story may not have as deep of a moral as some of the others- to be quite honest, I'm not entirely sure what the moral is. But this is what happened."

Here Begins the Bartender's Tale

"A few days ago, a man came into my bar. It was around eleven in the morning. Only a few people were scattered around the room. The lunch crowd hadn't started to arrive yet, so it was quiet. He had the looks of a prosperous man who had recently fallen on hard times: his suit was rather shabby, his shoes had been expensive when they were new, but were years old.

He sat down and ordered a drink- bourbon on the rocks. When I brought it to him, he started talking. 'My name's Dave', he said. That was unusual- most people drink in silence when they come in alone, and if they do talk, it's after they've had a few.

'Nice to meet you, Dave, I'm Joe', I replied. It quickly became clear, though, that he didn't want a conversation, he just needed to talk.

"They took everything, you know. How? Because I let them. But I didn't know it. They took my home. They took Kate!" At this, he slammed his fist into the counter. After the beginning, I was pretty sure that he hadn't started his drinking

that morning in my place. I know how to handle rowdy drunks, but after a minute, he calmed down.

'Joe. Where do you live?' he asked.

'Little house out on Long Island', I replied.

'Did you know that if someone wants to build on your land, and the local government decides that it'd be more beneficial to the public and create more income taxes, they can take it?'

'No! How could they do that?'

'It's called eminent domain. Last June, the Supreme Court ruled just that. It was a close case, you know- the ruling was 5-4. One of those justices I especially hate: David Souter. If he hadn't ruled in favor, there wouldn't have been a majority...

But shortly after the ruling, some moron in my hometown decided that it would benefit the public to take my house and build a hotel on it. I fought it as hard as I could, but guess what? It was legal.

Well, my wife, Kate, didn't like that at all. I'd been spending too much time at work- a lot of good that did me- and we were already having some troubles.

When they kicked us out of the home that we'd spent 15 years in, that was too much for her. She packed up and moved to her sister's house.

I was rather distressed about that, and called her everyday, trying to get her to come back to me-I was staying with an old college roommate. Instead, it just got worse. I'd explained to the children that their mother wanted to get a divorce, but that I still loved her. Pretty soon I got called to court for the divorce proceedings, and she used what I'd said to the kids to claim alienation of affection. That meant that she got the kids, she got our money- she got everything.

Well, I didn't even have a job anymore- I'd taken a leave of absence, and I'd had to quit when the divorce stuff came up- I couldn't handle going there every day. I left town and ended up here. I got a job working part-time in an office. But the thing is- I've no one to blame it on but myself.

If they hadn't taken my home away, none of this would have begun. And they couldn't have done that without that Supreme Court case. See, the thing is- I told you my name was Dave. It's David- David Souter.'

Dave left shortly after that. But I keep thinking about him. He thought that he was doing the right thing, for the public good, when he ruled that case. But look at what it did to his life! Was the court right? Was it fair to everyone? I don't

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know if what happened was right, I don't know if it was fair. But I do know this:

it was just."