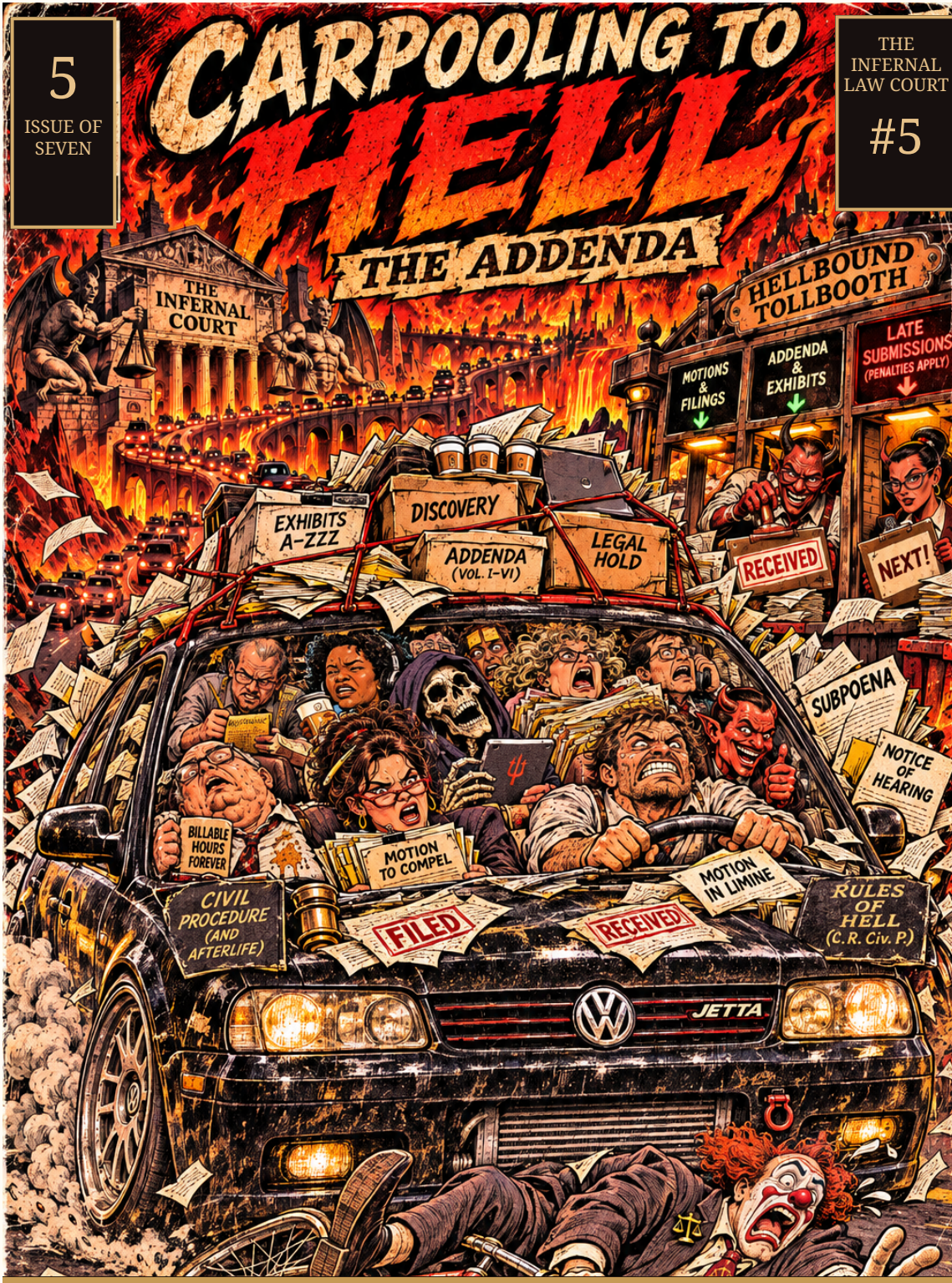
5
ISSUE OF SEVEN

THE INFERNAL LAW COURT
#5



Wayne R. Delayglas

THE DOCTRINE OF ADMINISTRATIVE PERFECTION

THE NO “MOORE” HARM SERIES

CARPOOLING TO HELL: THE ADDENDA

WAYNE R. DELAYGLAS

ISSUE V OF VII

THE DOCTRINE OF ADMINISTRATIVE PERFECTION

JUSTIN A. TAHAI

Notice of Fiction

This is one installment in a seven-part work of fiction and satire. Every Injustice, relative, tribunal, exchange, alleged doctrine, and reported event in the story is invented. The institution is the target of the caricature; no real judge's private family or personal misconduct is depicted. The invented children remain safe.

In the fictional Court of Reciprocal Jurisprudence, seven self-important officeholders are shown imaginary opportunities to spend ordinary family time. They are required to navigate the procedural doctrines they have adored. The recurring driver operates a modified black 1999.5 Volkswagen Jetta; the opposing attorney, Billmore, is a clown on a bicycle who invoices for every inconvenience.

ISSUE FIVE

WAYNE R. DELAYGLAS

The Doctrine of Administrative Perfection

In re an Application to Be Heard, Rejected for Want of the Correct Description of Hearing

Wayne R. Delayglas approached Door Five with a leather briefcase, five certified copies of everything, and the confident bearing of a man who knew all the rules and assumed that the rules were delighted to know him.

Behind the glass stood a safe, invented child holding two tickets to a local planetarium. The tickets were simple, blue, and dated for tonight. An illuminated sign over the door said **PLEASE SUBMIT A REQUEST FOR ENTRY**.

"A straightforward ministerial undertaking," Delayglas observed. "I shall prevail by compliance."

A brass kiosk protruded from the wall. Its screen displayed ninety-seven filing categories, each with an authoritative title and a description so nearly identical to every other category that selection required either revelation or a twenty-seven-volume treatise on typographic nuance.

MOTION — MOTION TO ENTER — FILED
OTHER FILING — OTHER DOCUMENT — FILED
LETTER — FROM PARTY — FILED
APPLICATION — REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO REQUEST APPLICATION — FILED

Delayglas selected *Motion to Enter*. The portal asked him to identify the person to be served. He entered his own name, only to be told he lacked authorization to receive service on behalf of himself.

"But I am myself."

ERROR: AUTHORIZED SERVICE CONTACT NOT PROVIDED.

"I certify that I have personal knowledge of being myself."

ERROR: CERTIFICATE OF PERSONAL SELFHOOD NOT RECOGNIZED.

"Perhaps my name is misspelled."

ERROR: CORRECTING YOUR NAME MAY ALTER THE IDENTITY OF THE PARTY FOR WHOM YOU ARE NOT AN AUTHORIZED SERVICE CONTACT.

Delayglas attempted to telephone assistance. A recorded voice directed him to a link. The link directed him to a support portal. The support portal announced that the requested page did not exist and supplied a second link to report the missing first link. The second link redirected him to the first.

"Remarkably circular," he said.

"Institutional continuity," corrected Miss Quill.

Billmore coasted up on his bicycle, its wheels now fitted with sharpened rubber stamps that applied **REJECTED** to any paper unfortunate enough to fall near the spokes.

"I can offer premium technical assistance," he said. "Our firm charges a modest fee for searching for the correct filing category, another fee for discovering that it was not the correct category, and a final fee for advising you to contact technical assistance."

"You are technical assistance."

"I am the professional premium approximation of technical assistance."

Delayglas attempted the kiosk again. His first envelope returned with the explanation **INCORRECT FILING CODE**. He selected the category specified in the rejection notice. The corrected envelope returned because the proposed

order was not submitted as a separate PDF. He uploaded the proposed order. A third return advised that the document had to be described in the comments field using language which itself required quotation marks that the software silently removed.

The kiosk emitted a solemn congratulatory chime after each rejection.

THE SYSTEM HAS SUCCESSFULLY MAINTAINED ITS INTEGRITY.

A line of fellow filers watched in fascinated dismay. One carried a shoebox containing a small home, another a stack of medical releases, another a brief requesting nothing more than a date for a hearing. The clerk did not examine their requests. She did, however, enforce the required spacing between the court name and the docket number with a zeal formerly reserved for the defense of fortresses.

Delayglas demanded a hearing on the access problem.

"Please file a motion," said Quill.

"That is exactly what I am unable to do."

"Then the Court cannot consider the inability because it has not been properly brought before the Court."

"And if I bring it to you by hand?"

"Certainly, if the governing rules permit it. The window is open from nine until noon, except on days when the window is closed for administrative reconciliation. You may call ahead to inquire whether the window is open, although our telephone will advise you to consult the website."

"The website gives me a broken link!"

"Then you have received the most up-to-date available information about the website."

He stamped his foot. The planetarium tickets behind the glass began to fade as the invented evening progressed. The

child held them carefully, then finally slipped them into a pocket. The door remained untouched by human hands, while the kiosk received so many corrections that it issued itself a certificate of exemplary public service.

"It has done absolutely nothing!" cried Delayglas.

Miss Quill drew herself up. "Nothing? Your Injustice, this machine has produced thirteen notices, transmitted seven acknowledgments, generated twenty-six redundant service notifications, and recorded four distinct failures to accomplish the initial objective. That is forty-nine administrative acts in relation to one request. Few public servants could claim such productivity."

"None of those acts got me through the door!"

"Outcome bias," Billmore whispered. "A dangerous form of amateurism."

The screen flashed again:

RESUBMIT WITHIN FOUR BUSINESS DAYS IF YOU WISH TO PRESERVE YOUR ORIGINAL FILING DATE. RULE 35(E).

A second notice appeared:

RESUBMIT WITHIN FOUR BUSINESS DAYS IF YOU WISH TO PRESERVE YOUR ORIGINAL FILING DATE. RULE 35(F).

Delayglas read both.

"Which is it?"

"Both documents are authoritative," Miss Quill said.

"They can't both cite different subsections for the same instruction!"

"Your objection displays an alarming unwillingness to appreciate the substantive flexibility of administrative letter designation. The clerk's duty is not to resolve your confusion. It is to document it."

He composed a question so precise and polite that a frightened accountant might have framed it: *Please identify the controlling provision, correct filing type, and precise resubmission steps necessary to preserve the original attempted submission date.*

The system rejected the inquiry for exceeding the character limit while simultaneously advising him to include the full text of the required statement, which was longer than the character limit.

Satan appeared holding a gold medal embossed **INFERNAL LEADER IN PROCESSED EVENTS**.

"Congratulations," he said. "You have demonstrated exceptional administrative activity without allowing the content of your request to inconvenience the institution."

Delayglas refused the medal.

"I have spent all day working for a system that is supposed to work for me."

"An intriguing reversal," Satan observed. "But perhaps you regard the burden as a proof of moral worth."

"I regard it as a design failure."

The driver of the Jetta had been repairing its engine nearby. He looked up at the words *design failure* as though someone had finally spoken his native language.

"What happens in your shop when the instructions contradict themselves?" Satan asked him.

"You correct the instructions."

"What happens when a customer needs the thing to work today?"

"You don't congratulate the service desk for opening another ticket. You fix what's stopping the job."

Delayglas asked for a pencil. For once, he did not request an approved form. He turned the medal over and wrote on the back:

Administrative procedures should tell filers exactly what must be corrected, apply published rules consistently, allow a usable method of cure, distinguish duplicate automated notices from independent events, preserve timely attempted submissions when the rules permit, and never confuse docket processing with a decision on the merits.

"But people will expect the system to function," Billmore objected. "A terrible precedent for the future of the profession."

"Then the future of the profession," said Delayglas, "will have to endure the embarrassment of functioning."

Satan inserted a fifth bookmark into the ledger.

The planetarium beyond the glass closed for the evening. The fictional child walked home safely beneath a real-looking sky that nobody had charged admission to view. Delayglas watched the door, its illuminated instruction still blinking.

He had complied with the system so persistently that the system had mistaken his endurance for proof of its adequacy.

There is perhaps no more exquisite achievement of substantially substantive antiquity than a process that burdens its users, blames them for the burden, and then cites the resulting volume of paperwork as evidence of its tremendous public value.

INTERLOCUTORY ORDER NO. V

WHEREFORE, the Court rejects the petitioner's prayer that all interfaces become instantly perfect, a standard no mortal or infernal engineer could satisfy. It does, however, **RESERVE** the proposed requirement of intelligible, consist-

ent, correctable filing procedures. The kiosk's application for an award for exceptional throughput is **DENIED**, its forty-nine ceremonial notifications being insufficient evidence that anybody received a substantive answer.

Clerk's note: This order was entered under two filing codes and counted only once.

THE NEXT PROCEEDING

ISSUE VI

Julia M. Limbopez · The Doctrine of Substantive Sufficiency

The Court retains the matter for further consideration. The time lost in the meanwhile shall not be presumed refundable.