

THOUGHTS THAT STICK

LAW, LIFE & EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

THIS MONTH

NEWSLETTER

Insights from the courtroom to the coastline

Sinners and the Danger of Easy Villains

Let's start with a simple question. Is there a dark force quietly bleeding people dry, or are we just very good at inventing monsters when we do not understand something?

That tension sits at the heart of *Sinners*, one of this year's most interesting Best Picture contenders. On the surface, it is moody, violent, strange, and soaked in blues mythology. Underneath, it is a story about power, fear, history, and the way societies decide who gets labeled dangerous, corrupted, or expendable. It begins as one kind of story and slowly reveals itself as something much more uncomfortable.

That structure mirrors criminal cases more than people realize.

In the real world, once someone gets tagged as the villain, everything that follows tends to confirm the label, whether the

evidence actually supports it or not. Narratives harden quickly. Bias fills in gaps. Context disappears. The system often rewards the clean story over the accurate one. This is called confirmation bias.

Good defense work lives in that tension. It forces the uncomfortable questions. Who benefits from this version of events? What assumptions are driving the conclusion? What facts are being ignored because they complicate the narrative?

Sinners keeps asking the audience to re-evaluate what they think they are seeing, and who they think the real threat is. That is exactly what juries should be doing in every criminal case and perhaps what we should be doing out in the world too.

P.S. If you recently discovered you have an evil twin, let me know if he or she needs a lawyer...

NEW YEAR IN ST. PETE



Happy New Year from all of us at the firm! The photo here captures the downtown St. Pete waterfront and skyline glowing at sunset as the city settles into the evening. This is a quiet reminder to reset, look forward, and appreciate the place you get to call home (wherever you are) as a new year begins.



We started the year with a not guilty verdict in a DUI case. That puts me at 2-0 against DREs. Good outcome for our client and a solid way to kick off the year. Another reminder that assumptions do not equal proof and that preparation still wins cases. More on this one in a future email newsletter.



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What Happens After You Think It's Over

At its core, *One Battle After Another* (another Best Picture candidate) is a film about escalation. What begins as a seemingly contained family story slowly opens into something much larger. Questions of paternity, identity, and hidden history collide with government power, surveillance, and people who are willing to bend rules when they believe the ends justify the means. Every time the characters think they have reached solid ground, another layer peels back and the fight starts all over again.

The movie's tension comes from that constant shift. A private conflict becomes public. A personal secret becomes leverage. A closed chapter reopens because someone finds a piece of information that was never supposed to surface. The audience is never allowed to settle into a comfortable version of the truth.

That structure mirrors real criminal cases more than most courtroom dramas ever manage to show.

In practice, a case rarely stays in the lane you expect. A simple DUI arrest can suddenly involve contested blood evidence, missing video, or questions about officer credibility. A rear-end crash turns into a battle over fault, medical causation, and data pulled from vehicle systems. A witness who seemed reliable becomes complicated once records, relationships, or incentives come into focus. Like the film, each new fact forces a reassessment of what the case actually is.



The movie also explores how power operates behind the scenes. Certain characters benefit from access, influence, and institutional protection. Others spend the entire story trying to get the truth into the open while navigating systems that were not designed to make that easy. That imbalance feels familiar to anyone who works in criminal defense. Government agencies control evidence, timelines, charging decisions, and narratives long before a jury ever sees a case.

One of the film's most effective elements is how it shows consequences compounding over time. Small decisions create larger problems. Cover-ups demand more cover-ups. What could have been resolved early becomes harder to untangle with every passing step. By the final act, no one is dealing with the original problem anymore. They are dealing with everything that piled on top of it.

That dynamic plays out constantly in real cases. Violating someone's constitutional rights becomes a suppression issue.

A sloppy investigation creates credibility problems that ripple through the entire case and become a major theme. A rushed arrest turns into motion after motion. What looked simple on day one becomes layered and unpredictable by the time trial approaches.

The title captures the truth most lawyers learn quickly. Legal work is not about one dramatic moment. It is about persistence. Each motion, hearing, hour spent reviewing discovery, deposition, and negotiation is its own fight. Some battles feel small until they quietly become the ones that change the entire case.

One Battle After Another earns its Best Picture buzz because it understands that stories do not resolve cleanly when power, fear, and hidden incentives are involved. They evolve. They escalate. They demand attention long after everyone wishes they were finished.

In courtrooms, that reality shows up every day. The work continues not because lawyers enjoy the fight, but because justice rarely arrives without it.

What We Carry With Us

The film adaptation of *Hamnet*, another best picture candidate, is not loud about its grief. It does not chase big emotional moments or tidy resolutions. Instead, it lingers in the quiet spaces where loss slowly reshapes a family. Small routines become fragile. Ordinary moments feel heavier. The absence is not dramatic. It is persistent. The movie understands that real grief often unfolds gradually, not in a single catastrophic moment, but through a steady erosion of what once felt permanent.

What makes the story especially haunting is how personal loss quietly echoes into something larger. The film suggests that the death of a child may have influenced the creation of one of the most enduring works of art in history. Not intentionally. Not symbolically. Simply because deep loss changes how a person thinks, notices, and creates. Meaning often emerges later, not at the moment the pain occurs.

That idea landed differently for me.

My father lived through a very slow, multi-year decline from dementia. It was less like losing someone all at once and more like watching pieces of a person gradually disappear, almost like *Flowers for Algernon*. His intelligence faded. His independence slipped away. The parts of him that defined how he moved through the world slowly became harder for him to access.

It did not change how I view his legacy. But it did change how I understand vulnerability, dignity, and the way people struggle when parts of their mind stop cooperating with who they used to be.

That perspective shows up in my work more than I probably realize. It has made me more attuned to clients navigating substance abuse, mental health challenges, and cognitive struggles. When someone's judgment, memory, impulse control, or emotional regulation starts working against them, the consequences compound quickly. Watching that process unfold up close changes how you listen. It changes how much patience you carry into the room. It changes how you weigh accountability against humanity.



Hamnet captures that same tension. The characters are not defined by their worst moments or their grief, but by how they continue living alongside it. The film never pretends loss makes people stronger or wiser. It simply shows how it becomes part of the background architecture of a life.

The movie also quietly reframes legacy. Shakespeare's work becomes immortal, but the film reminds us that legacy is shaped long before recognition ever arrives. It is formed in private moments, in how people endure loss, protect what remains, and find ways to keep moving forward when certainty disappears.

In criminal defense, those questions surface constantly. Clients are rarely just dealing with a charge. They are navigating addiction, anxiety, shame, fear, family pressure, and identity shifts all at once. Once you have watched someone slowly lose parts of themselves, it becomes harder to treat those struggles as abstractions or character flaws.

Hamnet resonates because it respects human fragility without trying to simplify it. Grief is allowed to exist without neat explanations or closure.

We all bring something into our work. Experience, loss, responsibility, memory. The things that reshape us rarely announce themselves, but they quietly shape how we advocate, protect others, and define what matters.



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A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER TO
INFORM AND ENTERTAIN

We Accidentally Built a Real Firm

Marty Supreme is the kind of movie that reminds you it's okay to stop apologizing for winning (i.e. Best Picture). Loud, chaotic, unapologetic. Entirely committed to the bit.

Lately, I have been showing up on the news more often, and the brand recognition is finally catching up with the great results we get for our clients. The growth feels real now, not just theoretical.

There's a familiar critique that shows up anytime someone builds fast in a profession that loves hierarchy. You're too young to own a firm. Too young to be taken seriously.

Turns out the courtroom doesn't care about age. It cares about preparation.

Brand matters. Consistency matters. Showing up matters. Momentum compounds when you stop playing small and start owning the lane you're already in.



Silencing critics is rarely loud. It happens quietly through execution.

Am I the best ping pong player alive? No way (but fun fact... my grandfather was borderline pro). Am I committed to building this firm into something elite? Absolutely!

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

2026 Judge Robert J. Simms High School Mock Trial Exhibition

Honored to be one of the volunteer juror/attorney-judges at the January 24, 2026, and February 21, 2026, rounds of competition.

Gasparilla Pirate Fest

The Gasparilla Pirate Fest in the Tampa Bay area is scheduled for Saturday, January 31, 2026, with the annual pirate invasion and parade taking over downtown Tampa that day.

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