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The Battle of the Brads

HOW THE REAL BRAD PITT WON IN COURT AGAINST A WOMAN SCAMMED BY A FAKE BRAD

When actor/producer Brad Pitt makes headlines, it's usually to take credit for an award, talk about his new hairstyle, or fend off the latest gossip about his relationship with Jennifer Aniston. But last fall, the '90s heartthrob made the front page of Page Six for an entirely different reason: He won one of the craziest lawsuits of the year.

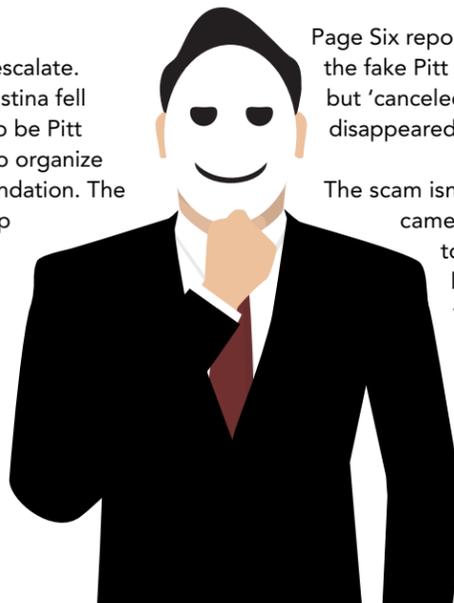
The saga started out strange and continued to escalate. It began in 2018 when businesswoman Kelli Christina fell for a Brad Pitt charity scheme. A man claiming to be Pitt approached Christina online and asked for her to organize fundraisers for his charity, the Make It Right Foundation. The charity is very real. Pitt founded it in 2007 to help rebuild New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, and as of 2019, it had funded more than 100 eco-friendly homes. However, the Make It Right Foundation has also been hit by scandal after scandal, including allegations of poorly built houses "rotting and collapsing." And, of course, the Pitt who'd contacted Christina wasn't the real deal.

None of this mattered to Christina, though. She was just excited that "Brad Pitt" had taken

an interest in her! According to Page Six, in addition to soliciting donations, the Pitt wannabe also wooed Christina romantically with what she later called, "discussions of marriage." Just when things were getting steamy, the fake Brad took off with the businesswoman's cash.

Page Six reports that "in court papers, [Christina] said that the fake Pitt asked her for \$40,000 to attend the events, but 'canceled' at the last minute each time — then disappeared with the money."

The scam isn't even the craziest part. When the truth came out, Christina sued the real Pitt for failing to protect her from his double! After a long time on the court's docket, a judge finally dismissed the \$100,000 lawsuit last November and Pitt reclaimed his dignity. Luckily, some good came out of the whole debacle. According to Page Six, Christina is now working on "a joint project between the government and the Hollywood establishment" to protect future victims from scammers like the Pitt impersonator who broke Christina's heart.



When Life Shakes You Up, Find a Coach

How My First Coaching Experience Got Me Through Law School

When we face great adversity in life, it's very natural to be scared. I've been there myself — a particularly potent memory of it occurred over 39 years ago when my wife and I first decided we'd go to law school.

Although I was the only one attending law school, I say "we" because it was a decision that we knew would alter the course of our lives. We took huge risks that we didn't think twice about in order to go to Washburn Law School: We moved to another state (Kansas), sold much of our property, and rented out our recently purchased home.

There was no "undo" button to reverse our decisions if we failed. And we didn't consider what to do if I did drop out of law school — failure was not an option.

Unfortunately, after we moved, I discovered that law school was extremely challenging for me. I was a young man, but I hadn't been a student in over seven years. I wasn't used to reading and analyzing hundreds of pages every single day.

I wasn't the only one struggling. On the first day of school, classrooms were packed. Then students started to disappear. By the time the first month went by, and our classes were much smaller, it dawned on me that those students weren't coming back. And if I didn't improve on my grades or studying techniques, I'd disappear with them.

That shook me up! Quickly after that revelation, I sat down with my wife and told her everything. She told me, "Call Dave."



When we first moved to Kansas, we met with Dave and Susie, a couple from my hometown. Dave had recently graduated from the same law school and looked us up when we first moved into our apartment. Although they were a very nice couple, we didn't talk much after we met.

I told her that I was hesitant since it was already 8 p.m. But my wife was insistent: "No, you've got to do it right now."

It was a very hard phone call to make because I had to admit to someone that I was failing, even drowning, and not sure what to do.

So, I called Dave, and I explained to a person I barely knew how much I was struggling with the material. He said: "I'll be right over." I couldn't believe it.

When he arrived, with a little help from my wife, I managed to tell him everything. It put me in a very vulnerable position — so I was very appreciative when Dave's priority was to listen to me. With pure kindness, he listened and then listened some more.

Then, after I explained about the preparation I was doing, he helped me realize that I was making it much harder for myself than it really was. "Talk to me about a case," he said. "Tell me a story." I started trying to read out of the book, but he said, "No, put it away. You don't need the book. You just need to remember the important elements of the story."

It was a completely different mindset for studying law. When Dave left an hour and a half later, I felt tremendously empowered. It changed everything.

In many ways, it was my first coaching experience. Nobody has to go through adversity alone; sometimes people can give that coaching experience out of the kindness of their hearts, but it can be a great asset to seek out coaching yourself.

You don't have to wait until you're really shook up or facing hardship, of course. Adults need tutors, teachers, and coaches too, not just kids. I recommend coaching to everyone I know. Even today, I still employ coaches and meet with them regularly. Success can be a very confusing road, but a little help from a coach can make it so much clearer.

-Bill Steffens



The Original Death by Chocolate 17TH CENTURY CHOCOHOLICS GET REVENGE

National Dark Chocolate Day and National Chocolate Fondue Day both fall this month (on Feb. 1 and Feb. 5, respectively), and in honor of those tasty holidays, we investigated the original “death by chocolate” — an act of legendary revenge.

Rumor has it that the controversy started in the 1600s in Chiapas, Mexico, when a group of chocoholic churchgoers started bringing their favorite sweet snack to services. This annoyed the bishop, who resorted to banning parishioners from eating chocolate during church. As an article in Indian Country Today tells it, the chocoholics got back at the bishop by poisoning his daily cup of chocolate, an Aztec chocolate drink. Who knew the ancestor of hot cocoa could be so deadly?

Surprisingly, this crazy story isn't the origin of the “death by chocolate” cake we love today. That dessert was created in 1993 by Chef Marcel Desaulniers, then-owner of The Trellis restaurant in Williamsburg, Virginia.

Here's the restaurant's mouthwatering description of the seven-layer confection, which takes three days to make:

“The decadence begins with layers of moist chocolate cake, dark chocolate ganache, crunchy chocolate meringue, and an airy chocolate mousse. The cake is then coated in a glaze of dark chocolate and served on a pool of chocolate sauce with house-made milk chocolate ice cream, topped with a hand-rolled white chocolate truffle, and finally dusted with white chocolate powder.”

Is your mouth watering yet? The original version of death by chocolate might be a bit complex for the average chef, but if you're craving a slice, you can find more accessible recipes at Delish.com and SugarGeekShow.com. Just remember that when you pull it out of the oven, we don't live in the 1600s, so you should probably restrain yourself from poisoning anyone who steals a bite!

How much do you love chocolate? Would you be willing to die for a taste of your favorite candy bar? Would you kill for one? You've probably never thought to ask yourself these questions, but if tall tales can be believed, arguments over chocolate have, in fact, turned deadly.

FROM BOOKS TO ... PRESCRIPTION DRUGS?

Amazon Launches Amazon Pharmacy

For years, Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos has been vocal about his plan to disrupt the American health care system. In 2018, Bezos and his millionaire pals Warren Buffett (CEO of Berkshire Hathaway) and Jamie Dimon (CEO of JPMorgan Chase) formed a company called Haven Healthcare to “stem the rise of employer health care spending,” according to Bloomberg Businessweek.

That venture fell apart, but Bezos never took his eyes off the prize. That same year, Amazon bought a drug-delivery startup. In 2019, it started selling its own brand of over-the-counter medication. Then, in November of 2019, Amazon opened Amazon Pharmacy to sell prescription drugs online. The new program offers Prime members two-day delivery and massive discounts on generic and name-brand drugs. Given Amazon's history, this was no surprise.

Since starting in 1994 as a marketplace exclusively for books, Amazon has worked toward becoming a one-stop shop for everything, especially all things health and fitness. Health-conscious people have bought workout equipment, supplements, snacks, fitness books, and more on the website for years. Then, in 2017, Amazon bought the organic grocery store Whole Foods and offered shopping discounts to Prime members, further cornering the market of health-conscious consumers.

Both the Whole Foods purchase and the failed Haven Healthcare venture foreshadowed the arrival of Amazon Pharmacy. The latter showed how serious Bezos is about diving into the highly regulated realm of health care and insurance. The former revealed the growing importance of Prime membership in an increasingly Amazon-owned world.

According to Business Insider, Prime members have access to “discounts of up to 80% on generic drugs and 40% on brand-name medications when paying without insurance” through Amazon Pharmacy. Doctors can also send prescriptions directly to Amazon. If you have insurance, you can simply type your insurance and payment information directly into the website and have medication delivered to your door. To check out Amazon Pharmacy, head to Amazon.com and click on the menu in the top left corner of the home page. Then scroll down to “Programs and Features.”

All of that said, Amazon isn't the only — or even best — option for purchasing prescription drugs online. The U.S. Food & Drug Administration's BeSafeRx program offers tips and a comprehensive list of online pharmacies nationwide. Visit FDA.gov today to learn more.



TAKE A BREAK



‘MY FURRY VALENTINE’ PUP SNACKS

Inspired by SugarTheGoldenRetriever.com

Who needs a Valentine's Day date when you have a furry friend at home? This Feb. 14, show your pooch your love with these frosty strawberry dog treats. Use a heart-shaped silicone mold to make this snack extra festive.

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup plain yogurt
- 1/4 cup frozen strawberries, puréed

Directions

1. Fill each heart in the mold 3/4 full with yogurt.
2. Freeze the yogurt hearts for 1 hour.
3. When the yogurt is set, add the puréed strawberry on top of each heart to fill the rest of the mold.
4. Freeze for another hour, then share the tasty treats with your dog!

Note: If you don't have a heart-shaped mold, you can freehand your treats on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet. Freeze 1 tbsp dollops of yogurt for an hour, then top with 1/2 tsp of strawberry purée and freeze another hour.

Lonely on Valentine's Day?

Try These 3 Tricks to Improve Your Mindset

If you feel like the “before” actor in a Match.com commercial right now, you're not the only one. Valentine's Day causes an epidemic of loneliness. But contrary to those cheesy commercials, the feeling isn't exclusive to people struggling to find a date — and it won't necessarily be solved by one.



What is loneliness, really?

Psychology Today defines loneliness as “the state of distress or discomfort that results when one perceives a gap between one's desires for social connection and actual experiences of it.” That means you can get lonely any time you crave a deeper connection to someone, even if you're married and have 500 Facebook friends. If COVID-19 lockdowns and canceled holiday celebrations have left you frustrated and sad, you've caught the loneliness bug.

How can you fight the feeling?

- **Work out your social muscles.** If you don't push yourself to connect with others regularly, it's easy to fall into the trap of loneliness and depression. You have to commit to your social life just like you would to an exercise routine. To do this, try blocking off time in your calendar to call your friends or loved ones, or join an online group with regular Zoom meetings you're committed to showing up for.
- **Add more art into your social life.** Researcher Jeremy Nobel, the head of The UnLonely Project, says that getting creative with other people could help reverse loneliness. If you're feeling disconnected, try collaborating with your sibling, roommate, friend, spouse, or child on something artistic. You can paint together, have a jam session, take photos, or write a poem. Whatever you choose, getting creative will bring you closer.
- **Find and fix your negative behaviors.** Does scrolling through social media make you feel like you're missing out on all the fun or leave you feeling like a zombie? If so, it's probably time for a hiatus. As you go about your day or week, keep a notebook with you and write down what you're doing when you feel loneliness creep in. By identifying those negative behaviors and swapping them with positive ones, you can turn your thoughts around.

Loneliness is serious: It's a predictor of premature death, and one leading researcher compared its health impacts to smoking 15 cigarettes a day. If you're coping with loneliness, try the tips above, and if you continue to struggle, reach out to a counselor near you.