

# **(REX IS NOT YOUR LAWYER**

"Mabel Howard's Wrongful Termination"

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TEASER

OVER BLACK:

REX (V.O.)  
*November 5th, 2009. Lake  
Industries versus Avalon Insurance.*

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON: REX ALEXANDER.

REX (V.O.)  
*It was a multi-million dollar  
insurance fraud. Mr. Lake had  
burned his factory to the ground  
hoping for a fresh start. But the  
arson was crude and amateurish.*

REX (CONT'D)  
Rex Alexander for the defense.

Rex (33) is handsome, clean-cut, charismatic... seemingly perfect. Behind him, a PACKED GALLERY, a SKETCH ARTIST and a PHALANX of LAWYERS flank him on either side.

REX (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
*You'd think with so much at stake,  
he'd have been more professional.  
But men like Lake and Madoff, they  
understand it doesn't take much to  
fool people.  
(beat)  
Only I'm not people.*

PLAINTIFF LAWYER  
Plaintiff calls Janet Lake.

Rex watches JANET LAKE walk to the WITNESS STAND,

REX (V.O.)  
*Calling your wife as an alibi  
witness should be cut and dry. But  
if you can just find that one loose  
thread... anyone can be unraveled.*

Mrs. Lake, left hand on the Bible, raises her right hand. As she does, we notice a sweat STAIN under her right armpit.

LINDSEY  
(whispers to Rex)  
Never wear a dark blouse when  
you're about to perjure yourself.

Rex smiles, as we PUSH IN on a stunning and ambitious woman sitting to Rex's right. This is LINDSEY STEERS (34).

REX'S VOICE

*Lindsey was my second chair... Our relationship began in law school. I sat behind her in Torts, admiring the dexterity of her fingers and her impeccable notes... Sex was inevitable. Now we were engaged and things were perfect. She loved me and I loved astonishing her.*

Rex turns his gaze from Lindsey to Mrs. Lake.

PLAINTIFF LAWYER (IN B.G.)

And you say your husband never left your sight that entire night?

REX

(rising)

Objection. Counsel's question assumes a fact not in evidence. He hasn't even established they were together yet.

JUDGE

Yes. The objection's sustained.  
(admonishes Plaintiff)  
Counsel, you know better than that.

Rex sits back down, leans in to Lindsey, under his breath,

REX

I sincerely doubt it.

She grins. Under the table she playfully squeezes his thigh.

LINDSEY

Show-off.

PLAINTIFF LAWYER

Alright. Fine. Mrs. Lake, were you with Mr. Lake that evening?

MRS. LAKE

Yes. We always go out for donuts on Sunday nights.

Rex is one of Chicago's best litigators. Sitting behind him is BRUCE SWEET (33), decent, honest, one of Chicago's second-best litigators). Rex leans back and whispers to him...

REX

Okay, there it is. Now be ready.

BRUCE

Are you sure? I think it's too risky.

REX (V.O.)

*Bruce had been my best friend since the fifth grade. He was solid, but not spectacular. Never trusted himself enough to take a chance. And that's what made me so deadly in court. So breathtaking.*

PLAINTIFF LAWYER (O.C.)

No further questions.

Rex stands, smiles pleasantly at Mrs. Lake. She smiles back.

REX

Mrs. Lake, could you repeat that part of your answer where you and Mr. Lake had donuts together?

MRS. LAKE

We ate chocolate-frosted donuts, which were really out of this world. Tom was sort of complaining about his fantasy baseball league.

REX

Thank you. And now my associate Bruce will rise and disrobe.

Rex glances at Bruce, who begrudgingly stands and starts to remove his jacket and tie.

JUDGE

Excuse me?

REX

From the waist up of course, and with the Court's indulgence.

Bruce removes his shirt, revealing a T-SHIRT...

Printed on the front of it in big black letters: **"WE ATE CHOCOLATE-FROSTED DONUTS, WHICH WERE REALLY OUT OF THIS WORLD."** Rex gestures for Bruce to turn around. He does. Printed on the back: **"TOM WAS SORT OF COMPLAINING ABOUT HIS FANTASY FOOTBALL LEAGUE."**

REX (CONT'D)

Mrs. Lake, how did I know exactly what you were going to say?

Everyone's stunned. A rattled Mrs. Lake looks to her husband. Rex winks at Lindsey, walks to the jury box.

REX (CONT'D)

I knew exactly what you were going to say because it is word for word the same testimony you gave at your deposition. In fact, I liked it so much, I made it into a T-shirt. Why did you memorize your testimony, Mrs. Lake?

MRS. LAKE

I don't... I guess I thought...

Rex turns back to Mrs. Lake and, for the first time, we see his distinctive "I Got You" smile. She knows she's caught.

REX

It's the "sort of" that really impresses me. It makes the line seem natural, spontaneous. Someone very clever put that "sort of" in there, didn't they?

Mrs. Lake looks to her husband, terrified.

REX (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*And that's when it began.*  
(perplexed)  
I can't feel my hands.

MRS. LAKE

I'm sorry?

REX

My hands. I can't feel them.

The courtroom sits forward. *What did he just say?* Rex slowly raises his right hand to his face. It's shaking.

REX (CONT'D)

What is this?

PLAINTIFF'S LAWYER

Your honor, I object!

REX

Yes, yes, I object as well. I... I can't breathe.

(MORE)

REX (CONT'D)

And that ringing. Could somebody  
please stop that ringing?!

Rex covers his ears and the noise of the courtroom CUTS OUT.  
It is replaced by the sound of his rapid HEARTBEAT.

CLOSE ON: Rex's face. Sweat beads on his forehead as he  
shuts his eyes tight, trying to will the nightmare away.

REX (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And that was it.

After a moment, his face starts to relax.

LINDSEY

(standing, concerned)

Rex?

Rex crosses to the center of the room, faces Mrs. Lake.

REX

I'll be brief because my throat is  
closing, and my left eye is already  
blind... I'm sorry if I put you on  
the spot, Mrs. Lake. I'm even more  
sorry that your husband makes you  
lie for him.

(turns to the Gallery)

But as a lawyer, my job is to  
expose my opponents for what they  
are. And to present my own clients  
as I want them to be --

(then, to Bruce)

Which reminds me, don't you dare  
let them move for a mistrial.

(then back to the jury)

Ladies and gentlemen, I want to  
thank you for being so attentive.  
And now if it pleases the Court,  
since I'm about to die, I'm going  
to move to the floor.

Rex slowly crumples to the ground.

FROM ABOVE we see a shivering Rex very carefully lay himself  
out in the middle of the courtroom floor. We PULL UP as a  
crowd congregates around him. Then we go TIGHT ON Rex's wide-  
open eyes. After a beat, they snap shut and we...

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

FROM ABOVE: Rex lies on the ground, with his eyes closed. People are crowded around him: Lindsey, Bruce, a medic, etc. We slowly PUSH IN on Rex's face...

REX'S VOICE

*I lay there... paralyzed. My mouth  
couldn't make words, and I still  
needed to tell Lindsey how I felt --*

COHEN'S VOICE

*Rex.*

REX'S VOICE

*In the end, I guess I was the one  
who unraveled --*

COHEN'S VOICE

*Rex!*

Rex's eyes SNAP OPEN. We quickly PULL BACK and we are in...

A THERAPIST'S OFFICE

REX

What?!

Rex has been telling this story to DR. BARRY COHEN. Cohen, early 50s, is clearly frustrated.

COHEN

You've told me this story a hundred times.

REX

It's a great story.

COHEN

It'd be one thing if you were probing deeper with each telling, getting more out of it somehow.

REX

But we're making so much progress. Like last week, when you noticed how I'd set out to unravel Mrs. Lake, but then it was me who unraveled? Today I put it directly into the story and it felt incredible.

Dr. Barry Cohen is exploding with bottled up anxiety. Finally it just has to come out.

COHEN

I'm terminating our relationship,  
Rex.

REX

Why?

COHEN

One very simple reason... When you came to me six months ago, we agreed it would be safe for you to practice law in an advisory capacity as long as you did not attempt to speak in court yourself. Three times you have brutally violated this agreement, with disastrous results.

REX

How do I know I'm cured if I don't try to get back up there?

COHEN

See, there you go again. You don't "cure" chronic panic attacks. With time and patience you might learn how to control them.

REX

Why wait until now? My last attack was over a month ago.

Rex smells a rat. Cohen grows increasingly uncomfortable.

COHEN

You continue this unstable,  
transitory life at the hotel.

REX

You said I needed to be in a low-stress environment.

COHEN

You cut off contact with Lindsey,  
and yet she's all you talk about.

REX

Now you've given me three reasons.  
Didn't you just say there was one?

COHEN

Don't lawyer me, Rex.

REX

Were you lying to me then, or are you lying to me now?

COHEN

My decision is final. You won't be billed for this session, of course.

Cohen stands, guides a slightly bewildered Rex to the door.

REX

You're hiding something.

COHEN

I'm sorry I couldn't help you.

REX

At least give me something to remember you by.

COHEN

Like what?

REX

Give me your tie.

COHEN

Goodbye, Rex.

Rex snatches a SILVER ASHTRAY off the table and exits. We stay with Cohen as he shuts the door and leans against it. He takes a deep breath, relieved.

INT. REX'S HOTEL SUITE - LIVING ROOM / OFFICE - DAY

We are CLOSE ON the silver ashtray sitting on a shelf. We PULL BACK revealing other objects -- a kid's swimming trophy, a top hat, a pair of earrings, a faded notebook -- all suggestive of a man trying to preserve his past.

REX (O.C.)

"Dear Lindsey. I accidentally took home the file but--"

SOPHIA (O.C.)

How would you feel if someone hacked into your e-mail account?

REX (O.C.)

I use encryption software.

We PAN DOWN to find Rex seated at his desk in front of a computer. SOPHIA KRAFT (24, a uniquely appealing woman, bursting with enthusiasm) sits next to him.

SOPHIA

I still think that it's wrong.

REX

Objection noted. Keep reading.

SOPHIA

"I accidentally took home the file but I could bring it by your place tonight." Okay... well, clearly he wants to sleep with her.

REX

You have no idea what's in that file. And Bruce doesn't live that far from Lindsey's apartment.

SOPHIA

You asked my opinion.

REX

But look at her answer: "that's okay, it can wait until morning." Obviously, she's not interested.

SOPHIA

She signs it "Sweet Dreams."

REX

So? Sweet Dreams? So what?

SOPHIA

When a woman says "Sweet Dreams," to a man she's really telling him that she hopes he'll think about her as he sleeps. In bed.

A disturbed Rex stands and crosses to the back wall.

REX

You're a child, what do you know.

SOPHIA

I'm twenty-four and you might actually be losing her this time.

Rex draws the curtains, revealing a BAY WINDOW that overlooks a never-ending Lake Michigan. The suite is large and elegant. This is clearly one of Chicago's finest hotels.

REX

I thought you were supposed to be finding us our next case.

Sophia smiles. It's hard not to fall in love with Rex.

SOPHIA

I have two possibilities.

REX

Go on.

SOPHIA

A man's dog was cremated.

REX

(curiosity peaked)  
Was it dead?

Sophia shoots a look. Rex's interest fades.

SOPHIA

The owner wanted it stuffed.

REX

Taxidermy? Is this really what my life's work has come to?

SOPHIA

Chillax. You're thirty-three...  
There's also this.

Hands Rex a sheet of paper.

REX

Mabel Howard?

SOPHIA

She was a school bus driver. Until the private school let her go.

REX

Wrongful termination of a school bus driver? That's our case?

SOPHIA

Dead dachshund or a breathing bus driver. Those are our choices.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. REX'S HOTEL SUITE - LIVING ROOM / OFFICE - LATER

Sophia takes notes. Rex is on a couch across from MABEL HOWARD (49, black, honest, solid as a rock). She's been knocked down her fair share in life, but she always gets back up. On the ground next to her is a DUFFEL BAG, bearing the "Hanover Academy" emblem.

MABEL

I never had an accident. Never broken the law. No child has ever been harmed on my watch. Driving that bus was my life.

Rex tries to look interested, but he seems to be preoccupied by his reflection in the MIRROR hanging behind Mabel's head.

MABEL (CONT'D)

And then one day Headmaster Rice just snatched the keys out of my hand. Thanked me for twenty-five years of work, sent me on my way.

SOPHIA

Oh my gosh. That's terrible.

MABEL

Mr. Alexander, private school kids can be a handful. And I can stand the jokes. The constant screaming. All those terrible songs they sing about me, like I'm not a human being. Like I don't have ears.

(beat)

But that boy cut up my bus.

REX

What boy?

MABEL

Jared Craig. Senator's son. Cut up a seat with a hunting knife.

REX

Elizabeth Craig's son?

MABEL

So I dragged him off to Headmaster Rice's office. Kid takes a weapon to school, code of conduct calls for suspension at the least.

SOPHIA

How did you know it was Senator  
Craig's son who did it?

MABEL

I confiscated his bag... And sure  
enough, I found the knife. But the  
very next day--

SOFIA

Headmaster Rice took your keys.

She nods. Rex seems skeptical.

REX

You have any witnesses? Any real  
evidence of retaliation?

MABEL

I have my word.

REX

Your word isn't a case. In this  
State, a person can be fired for  
almost any reason. I know this  
because I've fired a lot of people  
for a lot of reasons.

(beat)

Ms. Howard. People ask me to coach  
them for one of three reasons: they  
can't afford a practicing attorney;  
they actually want to represent  
themselves in court;

(looks at her pointedly)

Or their case is such a dog... I  
mean loser, nobody will touch it.

Rex stands to show Mabel to the door. She seems desperate.

MABEL

I'm here because I heard you were  
the best. And even if you did go  
crazy--

REX

I didn't go crazy.

MABEL

I got less than a week before this  
trial, and I've already done all  
the filing myself...

Mabel pulls an OVERSTUFFED FOLDER from her duffel bag.

REX  
Ms. Howard, please.

Mabel has too much dignity to continue. She moves to the door, slightly limping.

SOPHIA  
I really think you should look at her file.

REX  
Thanks, but there's really no need.

So Sophia just blurts it out --

SOPHIA  
Hanover is a Gladwell school.

Rex is momentarily stunned,

MABEL  
Right. Gladwell owns two-hundred schools all over the country.

REX  
(to Sophia)  
You knew about this all along, didn't you.

Sophia smiles and nods gleefully.

MABEL  
Knew about what?

SOPHIA  
Mr. Alexander used to work for the law firm that represents Gladwell. In fact, his ex-fiancee still does.

Rex snatches the file from Mabel, springs into action.

MABEL  
I thought he said it was a dog.

REX  
In lesser hands, perhaps.

MABEL  
And he doesn't think he's crazy?

SOFIA  
Sadly, no.

Watching them watch Rex, already working feverishly,

EXT. COG HILL COUNTRY CLUB - GOLF COURSE - DAY

The eighteenth hole at the most elite country club in the Chicago area.

REX

So, Lindsey ever ask about me?

Bruce says nothing as Rex sets up his ball.

REX (CONT'D)

She won't return my calls. I stopped by the firm but they won't let me in.

BRUCE

You can't exactly blame them. You kind of left everyone in the lurch, running away to Canada...

REX

Does she ask about me or not?

BRUCE

(delicately)

You put her in sort of a tough position, don't you think?

REX

Why? What has she said?

BRUCE

Look... I'll mention that you asked about her, if you want. But this is between you guys.

Rex gets ready to swing. His form is amazing, he looks great, and... whack! The ball ends up in the woods.

REX

I'll just talk to her myself when I see her at the courthouse.

BRUCE

What are you working on?

REX

Just a little case I managed to drum up: Mabel Howard vs. Gladwell?

BRUCE

Seriously, Rex? She's been schlepping that wet blanket around Chicago for six months and nobody will touch it.

Bruce lines up his shot.

REX

Did you know the woman has to work two jobs just to survive? Husband's out of the picture. She's got three kids she can't afford to take care of anymore, so she had to ship them to Atlanta to live with her cousins. Her littlest is diabetic, by the way.

BRUCE

All really sad. Only Gladwell didn't need a reason to fire her.

REX

But if they did use one, then they're liable for it... A person collapses in front of you, the law let's you pass right on by. But if you stop to help, well, then you're responsible for what happens next.

BRUCE

Very clever, but it's a loser.

REX

I've won with less.

BRUCE

True. But Mabel Howard hasn't.

Bruce nails the ball. Perfect.

CUT TO:

INT. REX'S HOTEL SUITE - LATE AFTERNOON

Mabel sits on the couch. Rex stands in front of her, preaching from the CONTRACT he holds in his hand.

REX

...which brings us to section two-point-five: Rex is not your lawyer. You are your lawyer.

(MORE)

REX (CONT'D)

In a situation where you feel malpractice has occurred, you will have no one to sue but yourself. Understood?

MABEL

Understood.

REX

Two-point-six: Rex is not your mother. He will not love you unconditionally.

(looking up)

No need to take notes. You'll get a copy.

Mabel puts down her pencil. Rex turns the page.

REX (CONT'D)

Two-point-seven: Rex is not your cheerleader. He is not here to stroke your ego, but to tell you how to win.

MABEL

I haven't seen my kids in months. Please tell me I'm going to get my job back.

REX

We'll do better than that. Gladwell's going to have to pay for what they've done. That's why we're also seeking punitive damages. Which brings me to the final section. Two-point-eight: Rex is not your summer intern.

(back to Mabel)

If we win, I take thirty percent. So if you'll just sign here...

Rex puts the contract in front of Mabel. She starts to sign.

REX (CONT'D)

... and here. This copy's for you.

(hands her a copy)

Congratulations, Mabel Howard. You're a lawyer.

MABEL

(with determined pride)

I'm a lawyer.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWOEXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

It's court day. Rex, waits on the courthouse steps, as Sophia and Mabel approach. Mabel looks very professional - impeccably dressed in a suit, hair done - but she's limping a little. Sophia carries a CANE.

SOPHIA

The suit was on sale. I did her hair myself.

REX

We'll make a lawyer out of you yet.  
(puts glasses on Mabel)  
We need that jury to trust you. So you have to look smart, professional. What about the cane?

SOPHIA

She doesn't want to use the cane.

MABEL

It's just a little gout.

REX

The limp is distracting. It makes you look weak. And if you look weak, so does your argument. Take the cane. It's really nice.

Mabel digs her heels in for a beat. Finally she accepts the cane and uses it as they ascend the courthouse steps.

CUT TO:

INT. COURT CORRIDOR - DAY

Rex, Sophia, and Mabel wait anxiously for the courtroom to open. Lindsey sits with Bruce down the hall. Lindsey and Rex make eye contact. They move to meet each other. He's trying very hard to be casual.

REX

Mabel Howard versus Gladwell?

LINDSEY

What are you doing, Rex?

REX

What am I doing?

LINDSEY

Are you actually pretending that you didn't know I'd be here?

A beat.

REX

Did you get my calls?

LINDSEY

You mean your two phone calls?

REX

You didn't call me back.

LINDSEY

So you decided to sue my client?

Bruce and Sophia monitor the situation from a distance.

LINDSEY (CONT'D)

I didn't hear from you for six months. I left to take a shower. When I got back to the hospital, you were gone. Next thing I hear, you're in Canada?

REX

Canada was a mistake... But that's all behind me now. The important thing is I'm back.

LINDSEY

Back? Back to what?

REX

To my life. To me. My ex-therapist says I'm almost there.

LINDSEY

You left therapy?

REX

His decision.

LINDSEY

Why? What did you do?

REX

I guess there was too much rehashing of the past for his liking.

LINDSEY

So now we're supposed to just move on, no questions asked.

REX

If you're cool with that.

She looks at him, beat,

LINDSEY

See you in court, Rex.

REX

I saw that.

LINDSEY

What?

REX

You were about to straighten my tie. But you stopped yourself.

Rex flashes his "I Got You" smile. Lindsey can only shake her head, turns and walks away toward Bruce.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

The courtroom doors swing open REVEALING Rex, Mabel and Sophia. The imposing room is half full. Mabel takes it all in - the high ceilings, it's overwhelming.

MABEL

Sure are a lot of people in here.

REX

Now remember -- there's no need to rush it. The slower you speak, the more likely they are to listen.

MABEL

I made up some note cards to make sure I don't leave anything out.

REX

You're supposed to have it memorized. This is the first impression.

SOPHIA

You'll be great, Mabel. Just try to look up whenever you can.

Sophia pats her on the shoulder, and takes a seat in the gallery. Lindsey and Bruce are at the defendant's table with FOUR SUITED MEN from the Gladwell Corporation. Rex and Mabel sit down at their table.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

JUDGE LAWRENCE A. SILBERMAN presides. Mabel stands in front of the jury, with her cane. Her hand shakes as she begins to read, very stiffly, from her INDEX CARDS...

MABEL

My name is Mabel Howard, and I'm here because I was wrongfully terminated from my position as a bus driver for the Hanover Academy. I held this job faithfully for twenty-five years, but now this firing has left me...

Mabel drops her cards. As she bends down to pick them up, for what seems to take an eternity, Rex tries to stay calm.

MABEL (CONT'D)

(resumes reading)

I planned to hold him accountable for his vandalizing of my bus.

(flips to the next card)

With no husband in the picture, I had to send my children to Atlanta where--

Mabel realizes something is off, shuffles through her cards.

MABEL (CONT'D)

I'm a little turned around here.

Rex looks down and shakes his head, hoping it will go away.

MABEL (CONT'D)

Here we go. I got my main point.

(reading, with passion)

That is why you must give me back my job! And because retaliation is the ugliest form of wrongful termination, I believe punitive damages are also in order to the tune of...

(whispering, embarrassed)

...one-point-five million dollars.

She smiles helplessly. Rex puts his head down on the table.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Bruce addresses the jury.

BRUCE

Our side of this story is just a single unexciting piece of law.

Bruce pauses, making sure he has each jurors' attention.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Illinois is an employment at-will state. That means, like it or not, a private entity can release an employee from his or her job without giving any reason at all. Now, it appears that Ms. Howard is a bit of a conspiracy theorist--

MABEL

Objection, his honor! That isn't right.

JUDGE SILBERMAN

(gently)

That isn't a legal objection, Ms. Howard. And it's your honor.

Bruce continues.

BRUCE

She's going to ask you to believe a rather fabulous story. That a United States Senator inexplicably orchestrated the firing of a woman she's never even met... Now I'm not saying Mabel Howard is lying. I'm sure she believes every word. But this is a court of law, and Ms. Howard has to prove her case with facts, not with what she believes.

Bruce returns to his chair. Mabel is fuming.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - SUNSET

The sun sets behind the buildings, silhouetting the Chicago skyline, as Rex walks along the beach with his mentor/mother, ELLEN. She's 54 and neatly contained in her black PRADA SUIT and BOW TIE. Rex has taken off his shoes and rolled up his suit pants.

ELLEN

How do you intend to challenge the word of a U.S. Senator with no evidence or witnesses?

REX

Thought you might have some advice.

ELLEN

Just remember to have fun with it.

REX

That's your advice?

ELLEN

Why do we always have to talk about the law? I'm not your professor anymore.

REX

You're still my mother.

ELLEN

Feel that breeze, Rex. This is why I cherish these walks.

Ellen turns to look out over the water. Rex does the same. They take it all in, breathing deep. After a moment...

ELLEN (CONT'D)

I've been spending evenings with Dr. Barry Cohen.

REX

What does that mean?

ELLEN

When I first telephoned to see if he'd treat you, we hadn't spoken in over a decade. But the moment I heard his voice, it was like we were right back at Williams.

REX

My God. Are you sleeping with him?

ELLEN

I've come to a crossroads in my life, Rex. I'm fifty-four years old. Tenured at one of the finest law schools. Got my name on a textbook...

REX

So that's why the little liar cut me loose. How long has this been going on?

ELLEN

Six months? Thirty years? Depends on how you count. We had a brief flirtation as undergrads. But I was with Ezra Baxter at the time. And he was with Dori Hiller. And... well, that's life.

REX

How can you date that hack?

ELLEN

He's not a hack. He makes me feel alive, sensual.

Rex just stares at her in disbelief.

REX

Since when are you impulsive?  
Since when are you... soft?

ELLEN

I've arranged for a dinner tomorrow night. So my boys can get acquainted properly. And who knows? Maybe you can find in him the father you never had.

Rex says nothing. She walks off. He calls after her.

REX

You missed your own sister's funeral so you could take the bar!

ELLEN

(looking back)  
That's just something I did once, Rex. It's not necessarily who I am.

Ellen continues down the beach. Rex stands there aghast, the waves lapping against his shins.

CUT TO:

INT. REX'S HOTEL SUITE - LIVING ROOM / OFFICE - NIGHT

Sophia sits in a chair beside the desk. A passionate Rex paces in front of her, while Mabel watches.

SOPHIA

She has a point. How do we attack a Senator without any evidence?

REX

By first attacking everyone else.

SOPHIA

Guilt by association. I like it.

MABEL

It's nice you see your mother.

REX

Believe me, it wasn't fun. Now pay attention... Headmaster Rice, when I brought you the knife I confiscated from Jared Craig, was he suspended?

SOPHIA

(Southern accent)

No sir, he was not.

REX

Isn't there an automatic suspension for bringing a dangerous weapon to school?

SOPHIA

(Southern accent)

It was our determination that the knife was not dangerous.

REX

(stops pacing)

What are you doing?

SOPHIA

You don't like it?

REX

It's not helping. He doesn't have  
a southern accent.

(to Mabel)

Why aren't you taking notes?

Mabel picks up her pad and pen. Rex pulls out a SMALL SWISS  
ARMY POCKET KNIFE and continues.

REX (CONT'D)

You don't consider this knife to be  
a dangerous weapon?

SOPHIA

That's correct.

REX

Why not? Not big enough?

SOPHIA

For one thing. Yes.

REX

How much bigger would it have to  
be? Twice as big?

SOPHIA

Sure. Why not.

REX

Well, that's very interesting.  
Because this isn't the knife I  
confiscated from Jared Craig.  
This, Headmaster Rice, is Jared  
Craig's knife.

Rex pulls out a much larger HUNTING KNIFE from his pocket.

REX (CONT'D)

Seems at least twice as big to me.

Rex then abruptly breaks character, turns to Mabel.

REX (CONT'D)

Did you get all that?

Mabel nods weakly. And we hear the BANGING OF A GAVEL.

BAILIFF (PRE-LAP)

Court is now in session. The  
Honorable Lawrence A. Silberman  
presiding.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Everyone is set: judge, jury, bailiff. Bruce, Lindsey and the Gladwell Suits are at their table. Rex and Mabel sit at theirs, with Sophia right behind them in the gallery.

REX

Remember. Small knife, big knife.  
Now what's our first line?

MABEL

Maybe this time I should be a  
little more off the cuff.

REX

No. No off the cuff.

Mabel stands up and speaks slowly, proudly.

MABEL

The plaintiff calls Headmaster  
Rice, your honor.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Headmaster Rice is all sworn in. Mabel stands in front of him. Rex smiles at Lindsey. Uncomfortably, she smiles back.

MABEL

Headmaster Rice. Ladies.  
Gentlemen. Members of the jury.  
His honor, may it please the court.  
Well, here I am.

Rex cringes. She's improvising.

MABEL (CONT'D)

Good morning, Mr. Rice.

RICE

Good morning, Mabel.

MABEL

I'm sorry it's come to this. But  
it is nice to have your attention.

A long beat. Mabel seems unsure of what she's going to say.

MABEL (CONT'D)

In addition to your duties at school, don't you also serve on the board of the Gladwell Corporation?

RICE

I do.

MABEL

Lots of important people on that board -- doctors, CEOs... Senators. I'm sure you all help each other out, do each other favors. So tell me, Mr. Rice. Did you do Senator Craig a favor by having me fired?

RICE

No, I did not.

This stumps her a little.

MABEL

Then why was I fired?

RICE

Look... it's already painful enough.

MABEL

I'm standing here asking you.

RICE

Very well... We felt there was a growing problem with your temper.

Mabel is stunned.

RICE (CONT'D)

Some of the students were becoming scared of you. That's not the environment we provide at Hanover.

Rex closes his eyes. This is awful. Mabel is stunned. She looks at Rex for help, but he can do nothing.

MABEL

At times I may have let my personal frustrations bleed into the work a little. But I have never raised my hand up on a child.

RICE

Nobody's suggesting you hit anyone.  
But would it be fair to say you had  
a problem managing your anger?

Mabel thinks this over. Rex's jaw is clenched, and his hands  
are gripping the table, struggling to hold himself down.

MABEL

Twenty-five years on the grind, I'm  
sure I had a few bad days.

RICE

Do you think an anger problem is  
cause for getting fired?

MABEL

I mean, you put it that way, yeah,  
I guess I see your point. But I  
don't believe that's why you fired  
me.

RICE

You're free to believe what you  
like. Now were there any more  
questions for me? I do still have  
a school to run.

Overwhelmed, Mabel looks at Rex who repeatedly motions with  
eyes as if to say, "Come sit down now." Mabel turns to Rice.

MABEL

No. I can't think of anything.

JUDGE SILBERMAN

Mr. Sweet?

BRUCE

That won't be necessary, your  
honor. I'm honestly not sure what  
else I could ask.

Mabel uses her cane to walk slowly back to the table.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOTEL RESTAURANT - DAY

Rex paces, Mabel sits at a table, eating out of her lunchbox.

REX

What did I specifically say?  
"Never ask a question you don't  
know the answer to."

MABEL

I know.

REX

And answering questions from him?

MABEL

I got nervous. I have a lot riding  
on this.

REX

You're not the only one.

MABEL

I don't win, I don't get my kids.  
But I'm not clear, what is it you  
don't get again?

Rex looks at Mabel. He's saved by Sophia's entrance from the  
lobby, holding an ENVELOPE.

SOPHIA

Our subpoena for the Senator's  
phone records just came back.

REX

And?

SOPHIA

One call to Rice's office. Two to  
his cell phone. All on the same  
day.

MABEL

That's evidence, right?

Rex grabs the envelope and rifles through the documents.

REX

That is most definitely evidence.  
Maybe we can still dig out of this.  
(looks at Mabel)  
You ready to take on a Senator?

Mabel nods with uncertainty, and we...

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

One of Chicago's premier dining destinations. Rex, Ellen, and Dr. Barry Cohen are enjoying appetizers.

COHEN

I'd like to apologize for the way I handled our separation. I let my emotions cloud my judgement.

REX

In other words, you were totally unprofessional.

COHEN

Look, it hasn't been an easy time for me. Ever since Gretchen passed on... it's been...

Cohen gets a little choked up. Ellen grabs his hand.

ELLEN

Oh, Barry...

COHEN

No, it's okay. It's something that happened.

(to Rex, more bravely)

Ever since Gretchen passed on, I've felt a certain guilt about falling in love again. But then your mother came back into my life...

Cohen picks up Ellen's hand and kisses it.

COHEN (CONT'D)

I was terribly conflicted. My panic attacks started up again.

REX

Your panic attacks?

COHEN

On an ethical level, I knew I couldn't continue to treat you.

REX

(to Ellen)

You sent me to someone who suffers from panic attacks?!

COHEN

Why do you think I became a specialist?

(to Ellen)

They say that most research is really me-search.

ELLEN

(smitten)

I've never heard that.

Ellen and Cohen lean in and kiss lightly on the lips. Rex looks sick. Cohen starts pouring everyone more wine.

COHEN

And now that we've weathered the storm, perhaps you'd like to finally meet me as a man. I'm sure you must have many questions.

Rex is so disturbed, he's not even sure where to begin.

REX

How many times have you been married?

COHEN

I'm twice divorced. Once widowed.

REX

Any children?

COHEN

Twelve.

REX

(to his mother)

What is this? What are you doing?

ELLEN

Living my life.

REX

Look at yourself. I barely recognize you. Where's your bow tie?

ELLEN

Why do I have to wear my bow tie all the time?

REX

(standing)

Because it's who you are!

COHEN

Rex...

Rex throws his dinner roll at Cohen's face. Nobody knows what to say. Rex folds his napkin, and walks out. Cohen looks down, confused. Ellen strokes his head.

CUT TO:

INT. REX'S HOTEL SUITE - LIVING ROOM / OFFICE - DAY

Sophia sits at the desk. Rex is lecturing Mabel.

REX

A politician is different than other witness. That's because they're more practiced at sticking to their talking points.

MABEL

You mean they lie easier.

REX

Yes, but only because they're used to it. Used to the spotlight, used to being the center of attention. But we have to take that all away. Understand?

MABEL

Okay, but how?

REX

October 7th, 2004. Etsell versus Bancroft.

We PUSH IN on Rex's eyes. Quickly PULL BACK and we are in...

A COURTROOM - FLASHBACK - DAY

Rex stands in front of GOVERNOR ALLEN, who is on the stand.

REX (V.O.)

*The man I was cross-examining was a Governor. He sat in that witness stand looking confident and poised.*

REX (CONT'D)

Governor Allen, do you have an account with the Bancroft Group?

GOVERNOR  
I most certainly do not.

REX (V.O.)  
*Only I needed to show him he wasn't here for a photo opportunity, that he was in a court of law.*

REX (CONT'D)  
May I approach the witness?

A FEMALE JUDGE nods to Rex and he steps closer to Gov.

REX (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
*With every confident step I took towards him, I watched his poise begin to evaporate.*

The Governor begins to fidget in his seat, itch his neck.

REX (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
*You see I discovered that the Governor was allergic to shellfish. So just before court, I had taken a bath in twenty pounds of crab meat. I was potent enough to put the man into anaphylactic shock.*

Rex is now within inches of a seriously itching, Governor.

REX (CONT'D)  
Governor. Do I need to remind you that you are under oath, sir?

MABEL'S VOICE  
*Excuse me, but I am not bathing in any kind of crab meat.*

SNAP BACK TO:

REX'S SUITE - DAY

Mabel sits on the couch, Rex is frustrated.

REX  
What?

MABEL  
Just so we understand each other.

REX

You don't have to bathe in crab  
meat, Mabel. The point is people  
love to see a politician squirm.

MABEL

Oh. Got it.

REX

Good. Let's run it again. From  
the top. No improv on this one.

Rex sits in a chair. Mabel stands and takes a deep breath.

MABEL

Madame Senator, first let me thank  
you for your time.

SENATOR (PRE-LAP)

Glad I could be here.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Mabel stands in front of SENATOR ELIZABETH CRAIG (40s,  
poised) holding a folder of evidence. The courtroom is now  
packed with spectators and press.

SENATOR

Always eager to help clear up a  
misunderstanding.

MABEL

Did you know I voted for you,  
Madame Senator?

SENATOR

Well, I appreciate that.

MABEL

Southern Lowell district. You were  
the "Tough on Crime" candidate. Is  
it embarrassing for a "Tough on  
Crime" candidate when her own child  
commits crimes?

BRUCE

Objection!

JUDGE SILBERMAN

Sustained.

MABEL

Don't worry, because I can rephrase. Has your son Jared ever been arrested for a crime?

SENATOR

I can't recall any charges, no.

MABEL

Oh. Okay.

Mabel seems thrown. Is she lost? Rex is on the edge of his seat, mouthing the word "arrests." Mabel recovers.

MABEL (CONT'D)

Except I think I used the word "arrests." But I won't put you on the spot. Let's see here...

She looks over some police documents from her evidence folder.

SENATOR

Jared has had a few mix-ups but...

MABEL

Which one of us is going to say the number of arrests?

The Senator is realizing that she underestimated this situation.

SENATOR

Two arrests.

BRUCE

Objection. This is completely unrelated.

Rex is loving this - his handiwork in action.

JUDGE SILBERMAN

Sustained. Try to stay relevant, Ms. Howard.

MABEL

Been trying to do that my whole life, your honor... Now on October twelfth, when Jared told you I turned him in for cutting up my bus, how long did you wait before you called Headmaster Rice?

Bruce stands to object but the Senator answers first.

SENATOR

That might be the most leading question I've ever heard.

MABEL

I'm sorry, I'm not a lawyer normally. Could you explain what you just said?

JUDGE SILBERMAN

You state the question with certain assumptions built in.

MABEL

Oh. And I guess I can't do that.

SENATOR

Not when the entire premise of the question is a total fabrication. I didn't even know about the slashed seats until I heard about it from my attorney yesterday.

Mabel pulls another document from her folder. Rex is elated.

MABEL

Then you should call Verizon, because they charged you for a call to...

(checking the paper)

Mr. Joseph Rice, at four-eighteen on... October twelfth! So clearly it wasn't all fabricated.

SENATOR

I talk to Joe frequently. I do have a son at his school.

MABEL

If you were calling the Headmaster about Jared, it must have been pretty serious. Had he committed another crime?

BRUCE

Objection!

MABEL

Okay, okay, I take it back. What was the call about, then?

SENATOR

If I recall correctly, I needed to let him know that I'd be late to our monthly board meeting.

MABEL

For sixteen minutes? Because it says here the call was sixteen minutes. And that doesn't even include the two other calls you placed that day to Mr. Rice's cellular telephone.

(offering phone bill)

Would you like to see?

The Senator is frozen. She needs to answer smoothly and soon. Rex's eyes light up. He lives for these moments.

SENATOR

If you really must know, my mother has been feeling rather ill. There are two very good lung specialists with children at Hanover, and I wanted to know Joe's opinion of them.

A long beat. Mabel tries to read her. Rex leans in.

MABEL

Your mother was ill?

SENATOR

Not that she'd enjoy having the details of her health spilled out in public.

Mabel takes a step towards the Senator. Rex senses danger.

MABEL

Shame on you, Senator!

SENATOR

I'm sorry?

MABEL

I watched you lay hand on a bible not ten minutes ago. And now you're going sit here and take your mother's health in vain, on top of everything else?!

SENATOR

I believe I've answered all your questions. Will that be all?

MABEL

Are you going to stand by that word?!

BRUCE

Objection, your honor.

JUDGE SILBERMAN

That's enough, Ms. Howard!

MABEL

(in the Senator's face)

DO YOU STAND BY THAT WORD!?

The situation has spun out of control. Rex's urge to intervene finally becomes too much for him, and he stands. But once he's on his feet he freezes up. He can open his mouth but he can't speak. The courtroom is so hectic, nobody even notices.

JUDGE SILBERMAN

Bailiff, escort Ms. Howard back to her seat. We're moving on to cross.

The bailiff takes Mabel's arm but she shakes him off and returns to her seat. Rex is still standing helpless, slowly losing control of his body. Bruce approaches the Senator.

BRUCE

Just one question. And please answer not as a public servant, but as a mother. Would you ever want anyone yelling at your child the way Ms. Howard just yelled at you?

SENATOR

I most certainly would not.

BRUCE

Thank you. Nothing further.

REX

Wait!

Everything stops and all eyes are on Rex.

REX (CONT'D)

I have something I'd like to say.

And with that, Rex collapses.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Dr. Barry Cohen sits in the middle of the empty courtroom, cradling a sleeping Rex in his arms. Ellen and Sophia watch as Rex begins to stir.

COHEN

Hey there, big guy. Welcome back.

REX

I'm never getting better, am I?

COHEN

Anything is possible. But you must let go of what is no longer. Start holding on to the promise of what might come. Do you think you can do that?

REX

I don't know what you just said.

COHEN

If you'll have me back, I'd like for us to continue our work together. Will you have me back, Rex?

REX

Mother?

ELLEN

Barry and I have discussed. We believe he can help you.

COHEN

You really won't find a better specialist in the greater Chicago area. I'm kind of "it" when it comes to panic attacks.

ELLEN

Don't push, Barry.

COHEN

I'm just saying...

REX

Dr. Cohen?

COHEN

Yes, Rex.

REX

I'm sorry I threw my dinner roll at your face.

COHEN

If you hadn't thrown that dinner roll, we might not be here.

Ellen smiles. Barry Cohen's philosophies move her. Rex and Cohen stare at each other for a beat.

REX

You can let go of me now.

COHEN

Okay.

Cohen and Rex awkwardly untangle themselves from each other.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOTEL POOL - DAY

A physically destroyed Rex lounges on a floating raft, still in his suit pants and an open dress-shirt. He holds an ice pack to his forehead. Mabel is at a table, eating from her lunchbox. Sophia is sunning on a patio chair.

REX

I said if she doesn't break, then you leave it! You say "no further questions." What is so hard?

MABEL

I can't stand a liar.

REX

She's a politician.

MABEL

Still isn't right.

REX

Right has nothing to do with it.

MABEL

Maybe this was all too much.  
Taking on a big company like this.  
(she sighs, defeated)  
(MORE)

MABEL (CONT'D)

Can I call my kids from your phone?  
It's my birthday this weekend.

REX

You have to focus. When Jared  
takes the stand tomorrow he's going  
to lie like crazy. You drove the  
kid for a year, you must have some  
dirt on him.

MABEL

Even though I think that boy is  
evil, I'm not selling out a child.

Mabel keeps eating her sandwich.

REX

Mabel, what do you know?

MABEL

What Jared did to my bus was  
against the law. But this is--

Mabel stops herself. Sophia suddenly looks up

REX

This is what?

Mabel returns to eating her sandwich.

REX (CONT'D)

At least tell me if Jared knows you  
know about whatever it is.

MABEL

Yes, Jared knows I know.

REX

Then you won't even have to say it.

MABEL

I won't?

SOPHIA

No. A secret loses its power once  
it's revealed. As long as Jared  
believes you'll reveal it, that's  
all we need.

REX

(gleeful)  
It's a really bad one, isn't it.

CUT TO:

EXT. COG HILL COUNTRY CLUB - GOLF COURSE - DAY

Rex and Bruce pull up in their GOLF CART. Rex takes out his putter. Bruce locates his ball on the green.

BRUCE

I need to ask you a question, Rex.

REX

Sorry, but we're not settling.

BRUCE

Settling? Are you kidding?  
What I was going to say is that I  
think I'd like to start seeing  
Lindsey. And I was wondering if I  
might have your permission.

Rex gets down on the ground, and examines the grass.

REX

Well, that's very big of you,  
Bruce.

BRUCE

It's been six months, but I still  
thought I should ask.

A beat.

REX

Has it already started?

BRUCE

Not really.

REX

Not even little things?

BRUCE

Well, sure.

REX

Flirting?

BRUCE

Yes.

REX

Kissing? It's okay. These are all  
little things.

Bruce nods, feeling guilty.

REX (CONT'D)

Here's another question. Can a man ask permission for something he's already done?

BRUCE

No.

REX

So you're not asking permission for little things. You're asking permission for big things.

BRUCE

(laughing uncomfortably)  
Very clever, Rex.

REX

Are you in love with my fiancée?

BRUCE

Ex-fiancée.  
(then)  
Yes.

REX

Here's another question. Based on your own personal experience: what do you think is overall a stronger force over most human beings? Love? Or permission?

Bruce wants out of this conversation. He lines up his shot. Rex picks up his own ball and begins to clean it.

REX (CONT'D)

Well, let's just think. Of all the books and plays and poems and songs ever written, how many are about love, and how many are about permission?

BRUCE

I don't know, Rex. You tell me.

Bruce swings lightly and his ball goes into the hole.

REX

Here, I'll try to give you a question you can answer. Suppose I don't give you my permission. If you really love my fiancée, is that going to make any difference?

Bruce picks up his ball and pockets it.

BRUCE  
Probably not.

REX  
So you're not really asking  
permission for anything, Bruce.  
Not for little things, because you  
didn't wait for me on those. And  
not for big things, which we know  
are more powerful than any force on  
earth.  
(sets down his ball)  
So what I'm wondering is...

Rex stands back up and looks at Bruce.

REX (CONT'D)  
If you're not asking for  
permission, what are you doing?

BRUCE  
I'm sorry I even tried. I'll see  
you at the next hole.

REX  
Destroying our friendship, maybe?  
Kicking a man when he's down?  
Rubbing it in? Those all seem like  
pretty good possibilities. Don't  
leave. I have the floor!

BRUCE  
(walking away)  
There is no floor.

REX  
The answer is no by the way! I do  
not give you my permission!

BRUCE (O.C.)  
Screw you, Rex.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Rex and Mabel are seated, waiting for court to begin when a  
BLACK FAMILY walks in and sits behind Mabel.

MABEL  
Who the hell are they?

REX

Your family. That's your brother.  
That's your cousin. And that one  
there is your sister. Or maybe  
she's your mom.

MABEL

That isn't my mom.

REX

The jury already thinks you have a  
temper problem. Making matters  
worse, not a single person has  
shown up here to support you. That  
speaks to your character.

MABEL

And that fake family speaks to  
yours.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Mabel questions JARED CRAIG (13, preppy) on direct. Senator  
Craig watches from the gallery.

MABEL

Do you remember us having a private  
conversation on my bus, around the  
middle of last October?

JARED

Yeah.

Jared looks at his mother, then at Bruce, then back at Mabel.

JARED (CONT'D)

You thought I was carving up your  
seats. Except I wasn't.

MABEL

Did you tell your mother about it?

Jared looks at his mother. She smiles encouragingly. He  
gets ready to answer "no" but Mabel interrupts him--

MABEL (CONT'D)

Actually, let's come back to that  
question.

(looking at her notes)

Does the name Kyle Evans mean  
anything to you?

This catches Jared off guard.

JARED

Um... he goes to my school?

MABEL

You boys got to be pretty good friends this year, huh?

BRUCE

Objection. This is completely irrelevant.

MABEL

Bruce doesn't know that. How does he know that? You a mind-reader Bruce?

JUDGE SILBERMAN

Overruled.

MABEL

There we go.  
(back to Jared)  
So... Kyle Evans.

Jared just stares at her.

MABEL (CONT'D)

Or if you want, we can go back to the question about your mother.

Jared is trapped. He looks to his mother.

MABEL (CONT'D)

Did you tell your mother that day about our meeting on the bus?

Almost imperceptibly, the Senator shakes her head "no." But Jared decides that whatever he's hiding is more important.

JARED

I told her you thought I slashed your seats... even though I didn't.

There's an audible gasp from the court.

MABEL

Well now I'm stumped. Because I could have sworn she said... wait I have it written here...

(reading from her notes)

(MORE)

MABEL (CONT'D)

"I didn't even know about the slashed seats until I heard about it from my attorney yesterday."

Mabel folds up her notes, incredibly satisfied.

MABEL (CONT'D)

So I guess she just went and forgot. Thank you so much, Jared.

Mabel returns to her seat flushed with excitement. Rex swells with pride, and winks at Lindsey. Flustered, she looks away. Bruce leans back and confers with the Senator, who seems to be trying to make a decision. Finally she nods, and whispers something to Bruce. Bruce walks up to Jared.

BRUCE

Let's just make this easy, Jared. Kyle Evans.

Jared is terrified again.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Since my opposing counsel saw fit to make this kind of move, I guess we'll just have to take it to the end.

(beat)

Did you ever kiss Kyle Evans?

JARED

No.

BRUCE

Apparently, it's all in your journal.

An emotional Jared looks to his mother, completely betrayed.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

If you want, we can have that journal subpoenaed. Read through the whole thing right here.

Jared is shattered, struggling to fight back tears.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Is that what you want, Jared?

JARED

(breaking)

Fine. Yes. We kissed... one time. But it was just that one time. And I'm sorry. I'm really sorry.

Bruce takes a step back, and nods.

BRUCE

Thank you, Jared. That was very brave. And given that Ms. Howard essentially blackmailed you, I'm sure the court can forgive any little fibs you told in your previous testimony. Provided, of course, that you tell the truth now.

The Senator gives him a controlled yet stern look. An ashamed Jared nods his head.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Good then. Did you tell your mother about the bus seats?

JARED

No.

JUDGE SILBERMAN

Young man, I caution you to tell the truth. This court will not tolerate another lie.

JARED

I am telling the truth.

BRUCE

So why didn't you tell the truth before?

Jared shrugs.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Probably because Mabel Howard was threatening you. Just as she's been threatening children for twenty-five years.

MABEL

Objection!

BRUCE

No need. I'm all done.

Bruce walks back to his table. Mabel turns to an angry Rex.

MABEL

I don't understand. What happened?

REX  
We just lost the jury.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTHOUSE BAR - DAY

Rex enters, scans the room the mostly empty room, and finds Lindsey eating at a table. He approaches and sits.

LINDSEY  
That wasn't very nice, what you did to that kid back there.

REX  
Me? What about your new boyfriend, Bruce?

Lindsey looks up, startled, beat,

LINDSEY  
I was going to tell you. I just...

REX  
Knew how ridiculous it might sound?

LINDSEY  
You're an asshole.

REX  
So what if you're smarter than he is? He's generous. He's kind.

LINDSEY  
That's right.

REX  
Who cares if you don't love him?

LINDSEY  
You don't know that.

REX  
I know what I saw.

Lindsey waits. Rex has no choice.

REX (CONT'D)  
When he writes you e-mails it's always "Love, Bruce" or "I can't wait to see you." But when you write back it's never that.  
(MORE)

REX (CONT'D)

It's "Fondly" or "Truly" or even  
sometimes just your name.

LINDSEY

I knew you might have figured out  
my e-mail password.

(carefully)

I didn't want to hurt your  
feelings.

Rex is stunned. He didn't see that coming.

REX

We were supposed to spend the rest  
of our lives together.

LINDSEY

Where? Canada?

Lindsey stands, takes money from her wallet, puts it on the  
table, before six months of devastation rises to the surface.

LINDSEY (CONT'D)

You know that panic attack was the  
only time you ever showed any  
vulnerability in our entire  
relationship, do you realize that?  
The only time you weren't trying to  
amaze me.

REX

I thought you liked being amazed.

LINDSEY

I did... But if you didn't think  
that I could stand to see you fail,  
then you never actually believed  
that I loved you. That I was  
capable of taking care of you for  
once. And if that's true...

(fighting tears)

I know who you were, Rex. Only you  
never gave me the chance to show  
you who I was.

Lindsey picks her bag and walks out.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. REX'S HOTEL SUITE - LIVING ROOM / OFFICE - DAY

Rex watches Mabel, deep in thought, while she's on the phone with one of her kids. Sophia lays sprawled on the couch.

MABEL  
(into phone)  
Just keep yourself in one piece.  
Momma's going to bring you home  
soon.

She's trying to be steady for her children, but we can hear the emotion in her voice.

MABEL (CONT'D)  
I know, baby, but try to be strong.  
Your sisters are going to be  
looking to you now.

Suddenly --

REX  
Put down that phone.

MABEL  
(covers phone)  
Can I just take a minute? They  
still wanna sing Happy Birthday.

REX  
If you want your kids, hang up.  
(snatches the phone)  
She'll call you back.

Rex slams down the receiver. He has everyone's attention.

REX (CONT'D)  
So we've backed ourselves into a  
corner, and the question has to be  
asked: Where did we go wrong?  
Where did I go wrong.  
(off Mabel, Sophia)  
I gave you all my moves. My style.  
But those strategies were designed  
for a rhetorical force of nature.  
With anyone else they fall flat.

MABEL  
I don't think I was that bad.

REX

You were terrible. But you were terrible as me... Mabel you have so much not going for you. You're virtually unemployable. No husband to speak of. Children shipped off. Only I never let the jury see that, never trusted them enough to understand how... vulnerable you really are.

Sophia sits up. Where is this coming from?

SOPHIA

Where is Rex Alexander and what have you done with him?

REX

You're going to cry, Mabel Howard. Just like you did on the phone.

MABEL

That was on account of my birthday, and being away from my kids.

SOPHIA

I'm sorry, Mabel.

MABEL

(smiles sadly)  
The big 5-0, and I'll be alone.

REX

(some wheel has turned)  
Of course! You're turning fifty.

MABEL

Guess it's silly to cry at my age.

REX

Oh you're gonna cry. You're gonna cry right in front of that jury.

MABEL

I don't know if can, not with all of those people looking at me.

REX

You will because I'm going to teach you how.

SOPHIA

Right. Because you're so in touch with your emotions.

Rex shoots a look, then taps an iPod and an aria from *Madame Butterfly* starts to play.

REX

Close your eyes, Mabel. Close them  
and let me show you how Tom Hanks  
won an Oscar as a gay man.

Mabel looks skeptical at Sophia, but she does it.

REX (CONT'D)

Now breathe in. You too, Sophia,  
Let's all just breathe it in.

Rex "breathes it in" with enormous passion. Both women halfheartedly join in. And now Rex begins to sing along with the aria. His voice is amazingly sweet and pure. Sophia and Mabel open their eyes and look at each other. *What the hell is going on here?* Rex holds up a LIPSTICK TUBE.

REX (CONT'D)

This is called a tear-stick.  
(dabs it under his eyes)  
It makes your eyes water just a  
little, just enough.

Rex dabs the tear stick under Mabel's eyes.

MABEL

Enough for what?

REX

Can you feel it? Now bite your  
lip, because you have to show that  
jury you'll do almost anything to  
keep it together.

Mabel looks at Sophia, then awkwardly bites her lower lip.

REX (CONT'D)

Good. Now you're angry, Mabel.  
And you're scared. But you don't  
want them to see you cry! You're  
not a weak woman.

MABEL

No, I am not.

By now, Rex's own eyes have filled with tears.

REX

Now watch carefully. At just the  
right moment...

(MORE)

REX (CONT'D)

I will bat my left eye. And a tear  
will roll down my cheek.

CLOSE ON: Rex's left eye. He shuts it, and we follow a  
single tear as it rolls down his cheek.

REX (CONT'D)

And then my right.

The same thing happens.

REX (CONT'D)

And I give it a beat, before I  
quickly wipe those tears away.  
Maybe I can still get out of here  
with my dignity. But sometimes no  
matter how hard we try. No matter  
how much we tell ourselves not to--

Tears now stream down his face as the music climaxes.

REX (CONT'D)

Don't cry, Rex. Don't cry...

As the music winds down. Mabel and Sophia stare at him.

MABEL

I don't see how that's going to be  
enough to win my case.

REX

You didn't let me finish.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Everyone is in their places, including Mabel's fake family.  
Ellen and Cohen have come too, and are sitting with Sophia in  
the gallery. Mabel stands before the jury, leaning on her  
cane. She seems tired. This trial has taken its toll.

MABEL

We come a long way the last few  
days. Yes we have.

She nods. Some of the jurors nod back. They're listening.  
She removes her glasses and places them on the jury box.

MABEL (CONT'D)

I'm not going to lie. I'd say it  
was pretty much a disaster.

(MORE)

MABEL (CONT'D)

I screwed the pooch at least a dozen times.

Mabel starts to examine the cane as she talks.

MABEL (CONT'D)

Don't get me wrong. I'd still represent myself. That part was fun. And it was nice getting to know all of you fine folks. One thing I wouldn't do, though, is hire that man over there. Because that's when I let the devil in.

She points at Rex. He looks alarmed. What!?

MABEL (CONT'D)

Next thing you know, you start pretending that you use a cane.

Mabel shakes her head, then breaks the cane over her knee.

MABEL (CONT'D)

Pretending that some sad collection of black folks is your family.

She indicates the fake black family. They all look ashamed.

MABEL (CONT'D)

That boy gave me a magic tear-stick. Supposed to make me cry. Wanted me to use it right here now in front of you all. And that's when it finally hit me just how far I'd fallen, and I decided that I wouldn't do it. I wouldn't cry.

We SLOWLY PUSH IN on Rex's face, landing TIGHTLY on his LIPS. Though it's imperceptible to anyone in the courtroom, we can see that he is mouthing Mabel's words.

MABEL (O.C.) (CONT'D)

But I've been a puppet in his little show long enough. I'm not a beggar, and there isn't anybody dead, so nobody needs to cry.

BACK TO: Mabel shaking her head in disappointed in herself.

MABEL (CONT'D)

I never wanted one-point-five million dollars. What I wanted was my job back.

(MORE)

MABEL (CONT'D)  
(quietly)  
My route.

And for A QUICK FLASH we're back in Rex's...

HOTEL SUITE

REX  
My route.

We INTERCUT between Mabel and Rex. (Note: In the hotel suite, it would be the night before and Rex is at his desk working feverishly on SPREAD SHEETS, marking them and referring to GLADWELL EMPLOYEE DOCUMENTS and TABLES that are strewn across the desk, while mimicking Mabel's every word, as he obviously works on some new angle of the case.)

COURTROOM

A pause. There is total silence. Mabel is barely whispering, but somehow her voice carries.

MABEL  
East Stanley to Fulson to Central  
to Cross.

HOTEL SUITE

Rex still energetically multi-tasking,

REX  
Then over to Baker to pick up the  
Davis twins...

MABEL  
Circle the park if there's  
traffic...

REX (IN HOTEL)  
Then gather all those soccer boys  
on Lakeview...  
(his voice cracks)  
Always been...

MABEL  
(her voice cracks)  
... a lot of kids on Lakeview.

Some of the jurors are starting to get emotional. Mabel is too, so she closes her eyes.

MABEL (CONT'D)  
Then we ride along the river.  
Eighth avenue to Brattle...

REX (IN HOTEL)  
...and we're almost home.

MABEL  
Up the hill and around the bend...

REX (IN HOTEL)  
... finally to school.

Rex opens his eyes. They are brimming with tears. Mabel opens her eyes. They are brimming with tears.

MABEL  
I told myself I wouldn't cry.

REX (IN HOTEL)  
I took care of your children. You trusted me to keep them safe. And I took that trust seriously.

#### COURTROOM

A single tear streams down Mabel's cheek. Some of the jurors are crying too.

MABEL  
I got them kids to where they needed going. And I got them there in one piece.

Mabel uses a tissue to wipe her nose.

MABEL (CONT'D)  
I won't take up any more of your time. Your minds are probably made up by now, anyway.  
(a sigh, she's exhausted)  
And I figure I've done enough lawyering for one lifetime.

#### HOTEL SUITE

Rex has also found whatever he's been looking for and slowly sits back in his chair. He breathes a sigh of relief and then flashes his smile - He's still got it.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Everyone is assembled in the courtroom to hear the verdict.

JUDGE SILBERMAN

Mr. Foreman, I understand the jury  
has reached a verdict?

FOREMAN

(standing)

We have, your honor.

JUDGE SILBERMAN

Will the defendant please rise?

Bruce, Lindsey and the Gladwell men rise. Mabel does too.  
The moment is at hand.

FOREMAN

In the case of Mabel Howard versus  
Gladwell Corporation, we the jury  
recognize Gladwell's right to  
terminate Ms. Howard's employment.

Everyone reacts. Mabel is devastated. Rex waits for more...

FOREMAN (CONT'D)

However, on the charge of Employee  
Discrimination in the form of  
retaliation, we find the Gladwell  
Corporation guilty and award Ms.  
Howard punitive damages in the sum  
of five hundred thousand dollars.

The courtroom erupts. Mabel beams -- she's getting back her  
kids. But Rex remains placid. He turns to look at Lindsey,  
she meets his glance, then looks away. Rex then watches  
Bruce quietly shaking hands with what should be visibly upset  
Gladwell Suits. Only they're not. Sophia notices Rex's look  
and we see it peak her (and our) curiosity.

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Rex walks down the courthouse steps toward Bruce, who's  
putting the now joking and jovial Gladwell Suits in a black  
limousine, about to get in himself.

REX

Seem like a happy bunch for losers.

BRUCE

Just glad to have the case behind them.

REX

I wonder why they think that? That this case is behind them, I mean.

BRUCE

You just won a half a million, Rex. Let's not gloat.

REX

Oh, I've only started winning.

(off Bruce)

You know the first thing that didn't make sense? Senator Craig. Why would she sell out her only son to defend Gladwell against a simple school bus driver?

(beat, off Bruce)

How much did Gladwell give to Senator Craig's campaign last year?

BRUCE

I don't know what you're talking about.

REX

I'm talking about birthdays, Bruce. Mabel Howard's. She was fired just a few months before her fiftieth.

BRUCE

Well, now she has a half a mil.

REX

Divided by how many other people?

(off Bruce; uh oh)

Six months. Six months before her pension and benefits vested... I know a little something about Gladwell's Employee Plan because our Labor Department drew it up. And you know what? Turns out almost sixty percent of Gladwell's bus drivers and maintenance staff had their jobs terminated in the last five years -- all before their fiftieth birthday. Time was running out on Mabel Howard, wasn't it? So when Senator Craig's son's situation came up, Gladwell called in a favor.

BRUCE  
It's a nice story.

REX  
Oh it's more than a story. With  
punitive damages, it's at least a  
three hundred million dollar class  
action lawsuit against Gladwell.

Bruce looks at Rex, beat, then nods at his formidable friend.

BRUCE  
Guess I'll see you around, Rex.

REX  
I'll see you in court, Bruce.

Bruce gets into the limousine, putting on a strained smile  
for his now unwitting clients, the Gladwell Suits.

INT. COURT CORRIDOR - DAY

Lindsey is buying a cup of coffee from a vending machine.  
Rex walks up and leans against it.

LINDSEY  
Eighth avenue to Bartell. That  
would add an extra mile.

REX  
People like parks.

She starts to walk away.

REX (CONT'D)  
How come you're not celebrating  
with Bruce?

LINDSEY  
We lost the case remember?

REX  
Did you? I think half a million  
dollars is a pretty small price to  
pay to cover up a corporate policy  
of age discrimination.

LINDSEY  
I wondered when you'd realize.

REX

About the other night, you were right. Everything you said was right. I was ashamed.

LINDSEY

What do you want from me, Rex?

Rex grabs her by the arm and pulls her into...

AN EMPTY COURTROOM

REX

Come home with me tonight.

LINDSEY

That's what you think? You write one clever close and I'll fall right back into your arms?

REX

Don't you miss me?

LINDSEY

Of course, I miss you. But if I go home with you, you'll convince me to stay. You are convincing, Rex.

REX

Then tell me what to do.

LINDSEY

Go back to therapy. For real this time.

She holds his gaze.

REX

Give me something to remember you by at least.

Lindsey looks into his eyes, searching for the man she fell in love with. Then she takes a breath, leans in and kisses him on the lips. It's soft but intense. She pulls away.

LINDSEY

Goodbye, Rex.

She exits. He stands there, sad but hopeful.

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Rex finds Sophia, with Mabel Howard hailing a cab.

REX

Mabel! Where are you going?

MABEL

I got a plane to catch. I'm going to get my kids.

REX

Where in my beautifully scripted closing argument did it say anything about not needing one-point-five million dollars?

MABEL

I added it in. I never needed so much money. I just wanted my old life back.

This stops Rex cold. Maybe he and Mabel aren't so different.

REX

I know what you mean.

They're both a little sad to say goodbye.

MABEL

I really felt bad about saying all those things about you back there. Truth is, you were the only one who really listened to me.

A taxi stops. They shake hands. Mabel starts inside, but turns back and tosses Rex the tear-stick. He catches it.

REX

Thanks, but I don't need a used tear-stick.

MABEL

It's not used.

Mabel gets in and drives off. After a beat, a pensive Rex and an inspired Sophia walk in the opposite direction.

SOPHIA

So we just paid our hotel bill for the year.

REX

Maybe you haven't seen the charges  
for room service.

SOPHIA

Those too. We already have forty-  
three voicemails from other  
employees terminated by Gladwell.

REX

Life is good, isn't it?

SOPHIA

You know after we get finished with  
Gladwell, we should try to  
represent a murderer maybe. An  
innocent one of course.

REX

You know you kind of talk a lot.

SOPHIA

Yeah, well you kind of faint a lot.

We let them walk on, the sun bouncing off of Lake Michigan.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

Tell me one of your stories.

REX

Most people hate my stories.

SOPHIA

I'm not most people.

REX

No, you're really not.

They keep moving towards the shimmering lake.

REX (CONT'D)

January 23rd, 2003. Lancaster  
versus the State of Illinois.

SOPHIA

You took on the whole State?

REX

Piece of cake.

Sophia smiles as Rex launches into another fabulous story as  
the bursting light of the sun engulfs them, and we...

END OF SHOW