

"LIAR, LIAR"

Rough Working Draft
by
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INT. FULGHAM KINDERGARTEN -- WEDNESDAY MORNING

Two dozen KINDERGARTNERS listen to their teacher, MS. BERRY. The word "Work" is on the blackboard.

MS. BERRY
"Work." Today we're going to
share what our parents do for
work.

QUICK CUTS of a series of five-year olds standing beside their desks, addressing the class:

JEFF
My dad is a truck driver.

MELINDA
My mommy is a doctor.

CAROLYN
My dad is a librarian and my
mom is a vegetarian.

THEODORE
(with difficulty)
My father is a struck-sheer-al-
engine-ear.

CRAIG -
My mother is an actress. She
works at Denny's.

KELLY
My daddy works at a place
where they make stuff, and my
mommy is a mommy.

ELLIOT
(looking a little
crazed)
My father is a postal worker.

The QUICK CUTS end with MAX:

MAX
My mom's a teacher.

As Max starts to sit:

MS. BERRY
And your dad?

MAX
(hesitant)
My dad? He's... a liar.

MS. BERRY
(taken aback)
A liar? I don't think you
mean "a liar."

MAX
Well... he wears' a suit and
goes to court and talks to the
Judge and--

MS. BERRY
(relieved)
Oh! I see-- you mean he's a
lawyer.

Max shrugs.

INT. COURTROOM . . . DAY

FLETCHER REID, early 30's, stands before the JUDGE. His
manner is utterly genuine and convincing.

FLETCHER
A dark street. . . a stormy
night. . . two desperate men
struggle. . . one man is taken
to the hospital, the other to
jail. The prosecutor wants
you to believe this is an
open-and-shut case of a poor
man, brutally victimized.

He nods at the victim - - a fragile OLD MAN in his 70's.

FLETCHER (CONT' D)
Well, for once I agree with
the prosecutor. This is an
open-and shut case -- but the
true victim is my client.

Fletcher's CLIENT is a 250 pound brute in a suit.

FLETCHER (CONT' D)
Put yourself in his shoes for
a moment--walking home from
church, alone, in a
frightening part of the
suburbs.

As he describes his client's movements, Fletcher ACTS THEM
OUT.

FLETCHER (CONT' D)
You're nervous, timid, looking
over your shoulder -- when
suddenly, you encounter *him* -
(pointing at the
old man)
pouncing from the shadows.
You quiver in fear. The
streetlight flashes on
something shiny in his hand--
a knife?

Suddenly Fletcher becomes the attacker, brandishing a
weapon. The jurors RECOIL.

FLETCHER (CONT' D)
And in that terrifying instant
you do what any respectable
citizen would -- you defend
yourself. Only after you
shatter his arm and collarbone
do you realize it's all a
mistake... the man was merely
walking away from an ATM
machine, the apparent flash of
metal caused by his bank card.

He reveals the weapon in his hand is only a credit card.

FLETCHER (CONT' D)
(concerned)
As you stand over his
crumpled, though potentially
still-dangerous form, your
heart goes out to him. You
want to help. First, you
gather up the many bills he
dropped, to stop them from
blowing away. Second, in an
effort to get the name and
number of someone to notify,
you take his wallet. Finally,
you leap into the man's Lexus
to head for assistance, when
suddenly a police car speeds
up. You breathe a sigh of
relief: "Someone to look -after
the injured man! Oh joy!"
But do the police applaud your
initiative? Do they hail your
heroism? No-- they arrest you
and throw you in the slammer!

He walks along the jury box:

FLETCHER (CONT' D)

- And why? Why does the State turn its massive power against this individual?

(takes an impressive moment, then answers his own question:)

Discrimination,
(to a black juror)

But this time it's not based on race.

(to a female juror)

Not based on gender.

(to a man wearing a crucifix)

Not based on religion,

(to a heavy set juror)

No--this time it's discrimination based on size!

- I know what the prosecution wants you to think -- it's always the big guy's fault. Is that what we've come to as a society -- persecuting people because they're large?

Fletcher points accusingly at the opposition.

FLETCHER (CONT' D)

Shame on you, Mister Prosecutor! Shame on you!

(turning back to jury)

The state is trying to barbeque my client on the spit of Justice. Only you can douse the flames. The decision is yours. And please...don't let your emotions run away with you. The fact that my client is a family man, raising his sons alone after the tragic death of their mother, has absolutely no bearing on this case.

In the front row we see two sad-faced YOUNG CHILDREN.

FLETCHER (CONT' D)
Instead, let cold reason be
your guide as you decide the
fate of this church-going,
orphan-raising widower!

Fletcher returns to his seat. Jurors, dab their eyes.

EXT. COURTHOUSE -- AFTERNOON

Fletcher bounds down the stairs, passing a fellow LAWYER,

LAWYER
How's it going, Fletcher?

FLETCHER
(he's won)
Another gratifying day serving
Justice.

Fletcher's huge client catches up to him.

CLIENT
Hey great job, Mr. Reid. I
wish there was some way I
could show my appreciation.

FLETCHER
Stay out of my neighborhood
after dark.

A PUBLICIST carrying a clipboard approaches Fletcher.

PUBLICIST
Mr. Reid, do you have a
moment-?

FLETCHER
No, I'm late picking up my
son.

PUBLICIST
-Because a couple of reporters
want to interview you about
your big win today.

Fletcher instantly shifts directions.

FLETCHER . . .
How's my hair?

And he's off to woo a GANG OF REPORTERS.

EXT. SUBURBAN PORCH - AFTERNOON

A sad Max and his mother, AUDREY, wait silently on the steps.

MAX
What time is it?

AUDREY
(checks her
watch)
I'm sure he just got tied up
in court again.

Finally, Fletcher's BMW pulls up. Max races to him, delighted.

MAX
Dad!

FLETCHER
Maximilian!
(calls out a
command)
TRANSFORMERS!! .

Fletcher instantly becomes a human version of the TRANSFORMER TOY making ROBOTIC MOVEMENTS and SOUNDS. Max knows the routine well, moves in perfect sine with dad. . . .
Until --

FLETCHER
Malfunction in vector 3!!
Malfunction in vector 3!!
(pretends to lose
control of a
'robotic' arm)
Look out! It's on tickle
mode!!

Fletcher's "mechanical arm" becomes CLAW-LIKE, TICKLING MAX like crazy! Max loves it.

Audrey watches these two kids, smiles.

FLETCHER
(re: Audrey)
And who is this lovely lady?
Max, could you introduce me?

MAX
That's no lady, that's mom!

AUDREY. •
Thanks, Max.

• FLETCHER

Mom? !

(under his
breath)

Hi mm. . . I don't remember her
looking that good,

(becomes the
robot again)

Malfunction in Vector 4!
Malfunction in Vector 4!

Fletcher's other robotic arm becomes a "pincher", comes
after Audrey.

AUDREY

(playfully)

Keep Vector 4 away from me.
Unless you want Vector 4
chopped off.

FLETCHER

You know, you were much easier
when we were married...

(re: her luggage)

So where are you off too?

AUDREY

Stanford. I'm delivering a
paper.

FLETCHER

Oh really? Where I live, we
use a boy on a bike.

MAX

Hey mom, dad's taking me to
see wrestling!

AUDREY

(mildly
protesting)

Oh, Fletcher!

FLETCHER

(playfully
mimicking her)

Oh, Audrey!

AUDREY

Do you have to take him to
those things? They're so
violent.

Fletcher IMITATES the familiar wise, old INDIAN CHIEF DAN GEORGE.

FLETCHER/DAN GEORGE
The boy must learn the way of
the warrior. And who better
to teach him than Rowdy Rod-
Piper and Big John Stüd?

Audrey can't help but LAUGH.

FLETCHER/DAN GEORGE
He must be schooled in the way
of the face-claw, the sleeper-
hold, and the purple nuxple.
For only then--

AUDREY
(playfully)
Shut up!!

FLETCHER/DAN GEORGE
(to Max)
The squaw will never
understand us.

A HORN HONKS. It's the good-natured, affable JERRY. Max runs up to him.

JERRY
Max, my man!

Jerry gives Max "five", then kisses Audrey on the lips.

JERRY
Fletcher, good to see you?

FLETCHER
What? No kiss for me?

JERRY
(re: luggage)
What do you say, Max? Give me
a hand?

Fletcher grits his teeth as Jerry gives Max a piggyback ride to get the luggage.

FLETCHER
(to Audrey)
I didn't know the boyfriend
was going.

AUDREY
Jerry. His name is Jerry and
yes, he's going.

Audrey heads inside.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Audrey enters, shuts the blinds.

FLETCHER
To Stanford? Overnight? Does
this mean you two are...
(cringes, can't
say the words)

AUDREY
I've been seeing him seven
months, what do you think?

FLETCHER
I was hoping that after being
married to me, you'd have no
more strength left.

AUDREY
Well you have to remember when
we were married, I wasn't
having sex nearly as often as
you were.

FLETCHER
MEDIC!! I've been hit.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Audrey locks up.

FLETCHER
Well, great... I'm so happy
for you two. I am just Mister
Happy man. Happy, happy,
happy.

AUDREY
Relax, Fletcher. It looks
like Jerry's taking that job
offer in Boston.

Fletcher turns sincere.

FLETCHER
Aud, I am so sorry...

Behind her back, he FLAILS in celebration. She glances back... He stops, whistles innocently.

JERRY
(calling to
Audrey)
Ready?

Audrey and Jerry say goodbye to Max. They get in his Explorer.

FLETCHER
(to Audrey)
You gonna be okay? Because if not, we could leave Max with your sister and I could go out with you two, does that appeal to you at all?

They drive off.

FLETCHER
Wave to the soon-to-be ex-boyfriend, Max.
(flipping Max the keys)
You drive.

INT. BMW - AFTERNOON' - MOVING

Fletcher is driving, Max beside him

MAX
Dad, are we really going to go to wrestling?

FLETCHER
Absolutely, Maxattacker. We just have to stop by the office for one minute.

Max SIGHS. He's heard this before.

EXT. SKYSCRAPER - AFTERNOON

Establishing the headquarters of ALLAN, STEWART & KONIGSBERG.

As they head inside, Fletcher and Max pass a BEGGAR.

BEGGAR
'Scuse me, sir. Do you have any change?

FLETCHER
(patting his
pockets)
'Fraid not. Sorry.

INT. SKYSCRAPER LOBBY - AFTERNOON

Fletcher grabs The Daily Journal, paying for it with a
HANDFUL OF CHANGE. His son takes this in.

On their way to the elevators Fletcher and Max pass PHILIP,
a dweebish bore.

PHILIP
Fletcher!

FLETCHER
Philip!

PHILIP
And this must be Max!

FLETCHER
(trying to brush
him off)
. Yes. Yes it is. Well, it was
good seeing you--

Fletcher starts off with Max, when Philip calls after him.

PHILIP
You know, Ethel and I had a
blast at our last little get-
together.

FLETCHER
Oh, me too. I can never get
enough of charades. We'll
have to do it again sometime.

Fletcher heads into an open elevator... only to find the
door's closing impeded by Philip's foot.

PHILIP
When?

FLETCHER
Soon.

The door again begins to close... when Philip stops it.

PHILIP
How 'bout tonight?

FLETCHER
Not that soon. I'm taking Max
to see wrestling--

PHILIP
We love wrestling. We could--

FLETCHER
I don't think so. See, Max is
really shy around strangers.

Max looks up at Fletcher. He isn't.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)
Tell you what -- give me your
card as a reminder. I'll call
you. Soon. Promise.

PHILIP
Great!

Philip hands him his card just as the door closes.

INT. ELEVATOR - AFTERNOON

Max watches as his father TEARS PHILIP'S CARD IN TWO.

INT. RECEPTION AREA OF LAW OFFICES - AFTERNOON

The receptionist, JANE, greets them. Jane has an ODD,
UNATTRACTIVE HAIRDO. A large GIFT BASKET is on her desk.

JANE
Hi, Mr. Reid.
(indicates, her
hair)
What do you think?

FLETCHER
Fabulous! I love it.
(indicates the
basket)
What's this?

JANE
I don't know who sent it. But
it's for Mr. Allan. It's his
anniversary.

FLETCHER
Ah... The Partnership
Committee meeting still
scheduled for Friday?

JANE
(as she goes)
Yep...

Fletcher quickly removes a gift card from his pocket, scribbles on it, puts it in place of the one already there

MAX
What are you doing?

FLETCHER
Oh, I'm... fixing the card,
(shows him the
old card)
Look, they spelled Mr. Allan's
name wrong. Have an apple.

INT. MIRANDA'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

...Where a troubled FRED RAND is talking to MIRANDA, a beautiful, steely partner.

FRED
I can't do it.

MIRANDA
Fred, it's your duty to
present the strongest case
possible.

FRED
The strongest case possible,
consistent with the truth.

MIRANDA
Let the Judge decide what's
true. That's what he gets
paid for. You get paid to
win.

FRED
If you insist on my taking it
to trial, I'll represent Mrs.
Cole aggressively and
ethically. But, Miranda -- I
won't lie.

Miranda looks out her window, calculating.

MIRANDA
Then we'll just have to find
someone who will.

INT. HALLWAY OF LAW OFFICES -- AFTERNOON

Fletcher strides through the hallway with Max, calling out GREETINGS to his colleagues.

FLETCHER
Hey, Pete! Great tie! • .

Max looks at PETE, -whose fashion-disaster tie startles him.

FLETCHER
Thomas--looks like you're
losin' weight.

THOMAS glances up from a file. Max notes that he's corpulent.

THOMAS
Gained three pounds.

FLETCHER
(wedging past
him)
On you, it works.

Fletcher arrives at his office. WE MEET his secretary, the fiftyish, worldly-wise and world-weary GRETA.

GRETA
Max! What's new?

MAX
Well... it's my birthday
tomorrow. We're having a
party and everything.

Fletcher's EYES WIDEN. He has clearly forgotten.

GRETA
I'm sure your dad'll give you
something wonderful.

Fletcher tries to wave her off, awkwardly stopping when Max turns to him.

MAX
Yeah?

FLETCHER
Oh, yeah. You're going to
love it. Uh, why don't you
play in my office for a
minute? Fax something, sue
someone, have a good time.
We'll be leaving in a second.

Max heads into the office. Fletcher closes the door behind him turning it into a silly, two-handed wave.

FLETCHER (CONT' D)
Damn! I completely forgot.

GRETA
Oh, there's a surprise.

Greta produces a wrapped GIFT.

FLETCHER
You're a saint. I should get you something.

GRETA
You did.

She holds up another, smaller package.

FLETCHER
Ah. Well, I always do the classy thing. Any calls?

She hands him a stack of mail.

GRETA
Let's see...
(checking messages)
Judge Patterson's clerk. He needs your filing.

FLETCHER
Tell him it's in the mail.

GRETA
(jotting down a note)
Right. You'll do it next week. Mr. McKinley phoned, questioning that fourteen hours you billed on Christmas Eve.

FLETCHER
Write him a long, explanatory letter. Then bill him for the letter.

GRETA
(jotting down a note).
Done. Your mother called.

FLETCHER
I ' m on vacati on.

GRETA
This is your fifth week. . . .

FLETCHER
It's a long vacation.

GRETA
(jotting down a
note)
"Break mother's heart." Done.
And that's it, except
Miranda's looking for you.

FLETCHER
(checking watch)
As if I don't have anything
better to do than bow and
scrape at her royal perfumed
partner feet. Tell her I'm in
court.

GRETA
Court's closed.

FLETCHER
Tell her I broke my leg and
had to be shot.

GRETA
(whispers)
Why don't you tell her
yourself?

As Miranda approaches, Fletcher switches gears in an
instant:

FLETCHER
--And then send out a notice
of judgement on my win today!

GRETA
(dry)
I'll get right on it.

Fletcher turns -- and pretends to be surprised.

FLETCHER
Miranda! I didn't see you.
Hey, you look lovely, today.
Here, I bought you a gift.

He grabs Greta's gift and hands it to Miranda.

MIRANDA

Thanks. I heard about your victory today. You're making quite an impression on the partnership committee.

FLETCHER

(feigning
puzzlement;
then)

Oh, that's right. You folks are meeting again soon. "Allan, Stewart, Konigsberg, and Ried." There's something about the rhythm of fours. It's like a full measure. Well, anyway, I've got a client waiting in my office--

MIRANDA .

Actually, something important has come up. You're not busy tonight, are you?

Before Fletcher answers, we:

CUT TO:

INT. FLETCHER'S OFFICE - EVENING

A sad Max sits on Fletcher's big sofa. His heart sinks further when Fletcher enters. . . carrying two boxes of documents.

MAX

We're not going, are we?

FLETCHER

Of course we are. A promise is a promise. We are gonna see wrestling or my name isn't Fletcher T. Reid.

FLETCHER
(to wrestler)
Could you hand me that?
(the wrestler
does)
Thank you.
(without looking
up)
We are having some fun, eh
Maxer?

PUSH IN on Max; he isn't.

•INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Jerry paces. Audrey is on the phone, waiting. She notices
Jerry pacing.

AUDREY
Are you alright?

JERRY
Uh, yeah, just, uh... how long
are you gonna be on the phone?

AUDREY
I just wanted to say good-
night to Max, but he must
still be out with Fletcher,
(hangs up)

JERRY
(suddenly)
Will you marry me?

She's SHOCKED.

AUDREY
Uh... would I...? What did you
say?

JERRY
(nervous)
I proposed, I... Look, I know
this Boston thing is a great
opportunity, good job,
money... everything. But I
started to think about being
three thousand miles away from
you and Max. And I didn't
like it. I-- Look, I know
it's a lot to ask, to move and
everything, but I... I love

you. I love your son. Will
you marry me?

She stares at him, excited, but nervous.

EXT. HIGH RISE APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING

Early morning outside Fletcher's building.

INT. FLETCHER'S STUDY - MORNING

Fletcher types on his computer. He's been up all night.

He leans back, rubs his eyes. When he opens them he sees
Max standing there in pajamas. Fletcher SMILES.

FLETCHER
Max Factor... Happy birthday.
How old are you today?
Thirty? Forty?

MAX
Five.

FLETCHER
Well, you've held up well. I
only wish there was some way
to commemorate such an
occasion, some small symbol to
mark this day, like...

Fletcher produces --

FLETCHER
. . . A present! .

Max eyes it with wonder.

MAX
What is it?

FLETCHER
(no idea)
It's... it's.
(it hits him)
a surprise.

Max knows his father doesn't have a clue but he rips the
box open, revealing, a BASEBALL, GLOVE, DODGER'S CAP, and
FULL MAJOR LEAGUE STYLE UNIFORM

MAX
Baseball stuff!

FLETCHER
Baseball stuff.

MAX
(hugging his dad)
Will you play catch with me?

FLETCHER
Absorootentootenlutely.

Max beams.

FLETCHER
Tonight. After your party,
you have my word on it.

Max nods sadly as Fletcher turns back to his work.

EXT. JERRY'S CAR - MORNING

Jerry and Audrey are driving. Audrey's holding a couple of
airline tickets.

AUDREY
(re: tickets)
Jerry, these are for tomorrow.

JERRY
The company wants me to get
started right away.

AUDREY
I can't just pick up and move
to Boston with two days
notice.

JERRY
Just come check it out. You
and Max, see the town. Let's
pick out a place together.
Then, if you want to turn me
down and scar me for life,
fine.

AUDREY
It's just not that simple...
What about my job? I've been
at UCLA three years.

JERRY
It's New England. They're
lousy with colleges. You
can't swing a bat back there
without hitting a college.

You'd get a job there in a second.

AUDREY
There are other factors involved.
(points)
There they are now. • .

They pull up in front of Fletcher's building where Fletcher and Max are waiting. Fletcher's still reviewing a file.

As Audrey gets out of Jerry's car, Max runs over.

AUDREY
Did you have fun? How were the wrestling matches?

FLETCHER
Big fun. Manly fun. Am I right, Maxi e?

MAX
(half-heartedly)
It was fun..

FLETCHER
(re: Audrey)
So how were the wrestling matches? Did you have fun?

JERRY
Max, my man! My happy birthday man!

Max and Jerry exchange "fives" and a hug. Jerry gives Max a light punch on the arm.

JERRY
One-two-three-four-five... and one for good luck.

FLETCHER
Did you see that? He struck the child!

MAX
Look what dad got me!
(shows the glove)

JERRY
Whoa! Great! I have my glove in the car. We'll stop in the park on the way home and play catch. Then tonight we'll oil

it, wrap a rubber band around
it. . . It'll be great.
(to Fletcher)
Great birthday present, dad!

Fletcher hates him. Jerry and Max go to Jerry's car.

FLETCHER . .
(makes a fist)
When is it his birthday?

AUDREY
Something's come up. We need
to talk.

MAX
Mom, let's go. I want to
play.

AUDREY
(to Fletcher)
We'll talk tonight.

FLETCHER
Tonight?

AUDREY
Max's birthday?

FLETCHER'
Oh, yeah, right. Seven. I
knew that. I did. I blocked
it out weeks ago. The
seventeenth of May. Max's
birthday.

AUDREY
It's the eighteenth.

FLETCHER
The seventeenth of May is the
day I remind myself that the
eighteenth is Max's birthday.
See you tonight.

They drive away.

INT. MIRANDA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Miranda, and Fletcher's new client, VIRGINIA COLE, an
alluring woman in her early thirties/ review the document
he spent the previous night putting together.

VIRGINIA
This is good. This is really
smart.

FLETCHER
Thank you.

VIRGINIA
Only it's . . . Like not true.
Every word of it is a lie.

Fletcher and Miranda exchange glances.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)
I mean . . . isn't that a
problem?

FLETCHER
Mrs. Cole, the only problem
here is that after you've
provided years of faithful
service and loving support, of
raising his children -- They
are his?

VIRGINIA
Hm? Oh yeah. One for sure.

FLETCHER
After all that, your husband
wants to deny you a fair share
of the marital assets based on
one single act of
indiscretion--

VIRGINIA
Seven.

FLETCHER
Hm?

VIRGINIA
Seven single acts of
indiscretion.

FLETCHER
--Seven acts of indiscretion,
only one of which he has any
evidence of, and all of which
he himself is responsible, for.

VIRGINIA
He is?

FLETCHER

Mrs. Cole, I stayed up all night last night studying your case. Not just your case... but you. And, by now, I feel I know you. You are the victim here. The wife of a cold, distant businessman. Starved for affection, driven into the arms of another man--

VIRGINIA

Seven.

FLETCHER

(not missing a beat)

--Seven other men. You're not trying to deny him what is rightfully his. All you're insisting on is what is rightfully yours. And maybe an idgy-smidgy bit more. I think you're bending over backwards.

VIRGINIA

Well, I did agree to give him joint custody of the kids...

(to Miranda)

He's always been a good father.

FLETCHER

And you've always been a good wife.

VIRGINIA

(getting worked up)

Yeah . . .

FLETCHER

There's such a thing as being too nice. That's why you need aggressive representation. To show the court that there is more than one side to this story. All I'm asking is the opportunity to see that justice is done on your behalf.

(takes her hand)

Will you give me that opportunity?

He stares into her eyes. A moment, then...

VIRGINIA
Yes! I'm tired of getting
kicked around.

FLETCHER
Good for you!

VIRGINIA
Thank you, Mr. Reid. I'm so
grateful I have an attorney I
can trust.

She gives him a HUG and momentarily grabs his ass. With a
farewell nod to Miranda, she leaves.

Miranda turns, smiles at Fletcher, then shuts the door.
She moves in on him.

MIRANDA
You're good. You're really
good.

FLETCHER
Oh, pshaw.
(pronounces it
with the "p")

She picks a piece of lint off his jacket.

MIRANDA
No, I mean it. The Cole case
is worth a truckload of money
to this firm, not to mention
the press it's going to
generate. You win this case
and I guarantee you'll make
partner.

(straightening
his tie)
Actually, how would you like
to make a partner right now?

FLETCHER
Excuse me?

She grabs his lapels and pulls him in for a deep KISS.

INT, AUDREY AND MAX'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A PARTY in progress, KINDERGARTNERS being entertained by a
MAN in a clown suit and clown make-up.

CLOWN
(singing)
Captain Fuzzy is my name,
Making children happy is my
game,
With a shake and a juggle,
And a big belt buckle,
You'll all be glad I came.

He flops down on his back causing something in his pants to
HONK. Audrey and Jerry watch.

AUDREY
(indicating the
clown)
What do you think?

JERRY
Well, if you don't hire your
brother, who will?

She heads into...

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

JERRY
They called me again from
Boston. They really want me
there tomorrow.

AUDREY
. . . I can't go to Boston.

JERRY
How come?

AUDREY
Max.

JERRY
He'll love it there.

AUDREY
It's Fletcher.

JERRY
Fletcher?

AUDREY
I can't move Max three
thousand miles away from his
father.

JERRY

Audrey, I have never said a bad word about your ex --

AUDREY

I know.

JERRY

But how much responsibility does Fletcher take for Max, now? He'd never come over if you didn't remind him.

AUDREY

I know. But if they're three thousand miles apart they'll never see each other. Fletcher will never come to Boston and how can I send Max cross-country to him?

JERRY

So because your ex-husband is unreliable, we can't --

AUDREY

I know, it's not logical, it's emotional. I'm sorry.

Pause.

JERRY

I still want to marry you.

AUDREY

Are you sure?

Jerry picks up the PHONE, pulls out a piece of paper, dials.

JERRY

(into phone)

Mr. Crisitelli, Jerry She!ton... I hope I'm not calling too late... Mr. Crisitelli, I'm afraid I have to turn down your offer... So am I... Well, I've fallen in love with this beautiful woman in L.A. and she doesn't want to leave and I won't leave without her... Well, thank you very much... Yes, good-bye.

(hangs up)
He wasn't there, but that's
1 the speech I would've made.

She smiles and KISSES him. The PHONE RINGS. Audrey answers.

AUDREY
Hello...

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. MIRANDA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

AUDREY
Fletcher, where are you?
We're getting ready to cut the
cake.

FLETCHER
Urn, actually, something has
come up. A problem on a new
caaa--

Miranda bites one of Fletcher's nipples.

FLETCHER
A-h-h-h-!

AUDREY
What happened?

FLETCHER
Nothing. I just nailed my
•knee into the desk... Listen,
I'm really sorry I can't 'make
it.

AUDREY
Max is going to be so
disappointed.

FLETCHER
I'll make it up to him, I
promise. I'll pick him up
from school tomorrow, okay?

AUDREY
Do you want me to put him on
the phone?

Miranda starts "reeling in" the phone cord.

FLETCHER
Ah, no. I have to go.

AUDREY

Right.

ANGRILY, she hangs up. Fletcher stares UNHAPPILY at the phone, before Miranda THROWS HIM BACK ONTO THE COUCH.

INT. AUDREY AND MAX'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

WE PAN DOWN from banners reading HAPPY BIRTHDAY, MAX! . . . to a room full of guests . . . to a desultory five-year-old.

Audrey finishes lighting the candles on the homemade cake.

AUDREY

All right, birthday boy, make a wish.

Max doesn't respond.

AUDREY (CONT'D)

C'mon, honey. It can be anything-- whatever you want most in the world.

When he doesn't respond, she leans down to him.

AUDREY (CONT'D)

Max, your dad is sorry. He had to work.

MAX

He said he was coming. He promised.

AUDREY

Yes, well, he . . . promises he'll see you tomorrow.

Max doesn't believe it. <

He turns his full attention to the candles on the cake. In VOICE OVER we hear what she does not.

MAX (V.O.)

I wish, for just one day, Dad couldn't tell a lie.

He takes a breath -- and blows out all the candles. A strange WIND blows the drapes and the wisp of smoke up, up, up . . . to the clock on the wall. It's 9:15.

CUT TO:

A clock on a wall. It's 9:15'. We are--

INT. MIRANDA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

PAN around Miranda's office, where the displaced sofa is adorned with Fletcher's shoes...

To the credenza, where Fletcher's pants hang...

To the lamp, where Fletcher's shorts swing...

To the desk, where a ravished Miranda lies next to Fletcher. Superbly confident of the answer, she asks--

MIRANDA

So... was it good for you?

Without thinking, Fletcher responds in the most astonishing way possible-- he TELLS THE TRUTH.

FLETCHER

I've had better.

Miranda turns to him in disbelief -- but it's nothing compared to the LOOK OF SHOCK on Fletcher's face.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE MIRANDA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The door opens -- and the naked Fletcher is forcefully kicked out. He goes TUMBLING over a desk as a RAIN OF CLOTHES follow.

The door SLAMS SHUT again, leaving him without his pants.

A CLEANING LADY stares at him in shock, then takes her broom, aims for his crotch, SWINGS. and. . .

INT. BEDROOM - FRIDAY MORNING

An alarm CLOCK RINGS. Fletcher BOLTS UP in bed. With regret and wonder he remembers:

FLETCHER

"I've had better?"

INT. FLETCHER'S BATHROOM - MORNING

Fletcher brushes his teeth, looks up at his reflection in the mirror, mouth foaming.

FLETCHER

"I've had better?!"

INT. HALLWAY OF FLETCHER'S APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING

Dressed for work, Fletcher waits for the elevator.

FLETCHER
(laughing it off)
"I've had better?"

It arrives. He steps in.

INT. APARTMENT ELEVATOR - MORNING

The elevator is empty, except for Fletcher... and a beautiful young WOMAN.

FLETCHER
New in the building?

MODEL
I just moved in Monday.

FLETCHER
Ah. Well, you must allow me
to give you the grand tour.

MODEL
(she's
interested)
Oh? Do you do that for all
the new tenants?

FLETCHER
No. Just the ones I want to
bang like a drum.

Fletcher's face REGISTERS extreme SHOCK and...

INT. LOBBY OF APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING

We HEAR a SMACK off camera and a PING as the elevator door opens. The model storms off and A STUNNED Fletcher steps out, rubbing his freshly slapped face.

EXT. COURTRROOM -, MORNING

A SHAKY Fletcher strides toward the courthouse... when he is accosted by a BEGGAR.

BEGGAR
Any change, Mi ster?

FLETCHER
Absolutely.

But he continues walking.

BEGGAR
Could you spare some?

FLETCHER
Unquestionably.

Fletcher walks faster, PUZZLED that he has answered truthfully. The beggar is even more puzzled.

BEGGAR
Will you?

FLETCHER
No.

BEGGAR
How come?

FLETCHER
Because I resent your presence. You fill me with an unpleasant mixture of disgust and guilt. Further, I don't believe you'll use the money for food, but I believe you'll use it for, at worst, drugs, or, at best, whiskey, or . cigarettes. Also, I'm cheap.

As Fletcher heads up the stairs...

BEGGAR
Jerkoff.

INT. COURTROOM - MORNING

A winded Fletcher joins Virginia at the respondent's table,

VIRGINIA
You look like you're having a rough morning.

FLETCHER
I've had better.

He WINCES as he recognizes the words. Then, an extremely wealthy, respectable industrialist, RICHARD COLE enters with his attorney, DANA APPLETON, young, brisk, confident.

DANA
Good morning, Fletcher.

FLETCHER
Dana.

RICHARD
All right, Virginia, how much
will it take to put an end to
this?

FLETCHER
Fifty per cent of your estate.

Richard is SHOCKED.

DANA
Fifty per cent? With a pre-
nup and proof of adultery?
What's your case?

FLETCHER
Our case is simply this. . .

Fletcher opens his mouth to enlighten her -- but he CAN'T
GET THE WORDS OUT. He tries to FORCE OUT SOUNDS, but
succeeds only in looking like a fish gasping on dry land.

DANA
Interesting, though based on
your track record, I expected
a little more.

Nearing panic, Fletcher whirls to his BRIEFCASE and grabs
the brief.

FLETCHER ..
Wait! Wait! I've got it in
writing!

But when Dana tries to take the document, the astonished
Fletcher finds himself PHYSICALLY UNABLE TO RELEASE IT.

DANA
Let go!

FLETCHER
I'm trying!

He INVOLUNTARILY snatches the document away and IT PULLS
HIM to a nearby TRASH CAN where he throws it out.

At this moment the BAILIFF calls.

BAILIFF
All rise for the Honorable
Judge William Stevens.

DANA
Very funny, Fletcher. You
want to play hardball, I'm
game.

JUDGE STEVENS takes the bench.

JUDGE STEVENS
Calling case BA 09395, Richard
Cole versus Virginia Cole.
How're we doing this morning,
counsel?

DANA
Fine, thank you.

JUDGE STEVENS
And you, Mr. Reid?

FLETCHER
Well, I'm a little upset about
a bad sexual episode I had
last night--

Fletcher screeches to a standstill, suddenly aware of what
he just said. After an awkward silence--

JUDGE STEVENS
(dryly)
Well, you're still young.
It'll happen more and more.
In the meantime, what do you
say we get down to business?
First, Mr. Reid, I see that
your client was previously
represented by Mr. Rand of
your office.

FLETCHER
Yes, Your Honor.

JUDGE STEVENS
I take it you're seeking to
substitute in as counsel?

FLETCHER
Yes, Your Honor.

JUDGE STEVENS
Fine, fine. And for the
record, the reason is?

FLETCHER

Mr. Rand had severe ethical objections to my client's case.

Fletcher is incredulous. Somehow his greatest asset in the world, his mouth, has become his worst enemy.

JUDGE STEVENS

I take it you don't share the same ethical objections, Mr. Reid?

FLETCHER

I have lower standards, Your Honor.

JUDGE STEVENS

I see. Well, if Mrs. Cole wants the substitution of counsel, I'll allow it. Is that what you want, Mrs. Cole?

Virginia looks to the judge, then to Fletcher, whose unorthodox style seemed so brilliant earlier.

VIRGINIA

(unsure)

Yes?

JUDGE STEVENS

Fine.

VIRGINIA

(aside, to Fletcher)

What are you doing?

FLETCHER

(worried)

I don't know.

(to judge, with some

desperation)

Your Honor, I'd like a continuance!

JUDGE STEVENS "

This case has already been delayed several times, Mr. Reid.

FLETCHER
I realize that, Your Honor,
but I'd really, really, really
like a continuance.

JUDGE STEVENS
I'll have to hear good cause,
counselor. What's the
problem?

FLETCHER'S P. O. V.

The ROOM begins to SPIN slowly -- then faster -- then
faster -- until we wind up squarely on --

FLETCHER'S FACE

FLETCHER
I can't lie!

JUDGE STEVENS
(impatient)
Commendable, Mr. Reid, but I'm
still waiting for the good
cause. Now, do you have it or
not?

FLETCHER
(truthful)
Not.

JUDGE STEVENS
Motion for a continuance
denied. Is there any chance
of a settlement in this case?

DANA
I don't think so, Your Honor.
Mr. Reid made it abundantly
clear that the last thing in
the world he wanted was to --

FLETCHER
(desperate)
SETTLE! SETTLE! SETTLE!

Dana and Mr. Cole look at Fletcher with surprise.

JUDGE STEVENS
There appears to have been a
change in strategy. Let's go
to my chambers and negotiate.

He BANGS the gavel.

INT. JUDGE STEVENS' S CHAMBERS - MORNING

Dana and an apprehensive Fletcher sit before the judge

DANA

Your Honor, under the terms of the prenuptial agreement, if Mrs. Cole commits adultery, she is entitled to nothing. We have in our possession an audiotape made by a licensed private investigator of an explicit act of sexual congress with a man who is not her husband.

JUDGE STEVENS

Sounds pretty damning, Mr. Reid.

FLETCHER

It certainly does.

DANA

However, my client has no desire to see his ex-wife destitute. Against my advice, he's willing to offer her a cash settlement of two point four million dollars.

JUDGE STEVENS

Two four seems like a pretty fair offer, Mr. Reid.

FLETCHER

Fantastically fair.
Phenominally fair. In fact,
I'd say beyond fair, bordering
on stupid.

Dana fumes. The judge finds Fletcher's boldness refreshing.

JUDGE STEVENS

What are you suggesting, Mr. Reid? That Ms. Appleton's willingness to proffer such an offer betrays a lack of faith in her position?

FLETCHER

(utterly sincere)
No, not at all. She's got my client dead to rights. When

attorneys go to sleep at night, they dream of having a case as strong as hers.

DANA

Can the sarcasm, Reid. All right, I admit it -- I've seen you make even the lamest case fly. But this time I have you. Even Clarence Darrow couldn't explain this away.

She brandishes the audiotape.

JUDGE SAMOAN

Well, Mr. Reid? without a dynamite explanation, I'd say you're dead in the water. How's your client's story?

FLETCHER

The best that money can buy, Your Honor.

JUDGE STEVENS

Strong corroborating evidence?

FLETCHER

We have evidence that you are not going to believe.

Despite herself, Dana is beginning to look worried.

JUDGE STEVENS

You're pretty confident how this trial is going to come out, eh, Mr. Reid?

FLETCHER

(hopeless) .
"Confident" is too weak a word, Your Honor. I am certain what will happen if I take this puppy to trial. The verdict will be a stunning, humiliating defeat that will cut a spectacularly promising legal career off at the knees.

Fletcher is referring to himself, of course, but Dana thinks he's speaking about her. She buckles.

DANA
All right! Double the offer!
Four point eight! And not a
penny more.
(venomous, to
Fletcher)
Bastard!

She storms out, leaving an astounded Fletcher behind.

JUDGE STEVENS
You are some negotiator, Mr.
Reid. If your client has half
a brain, she'll jump at the
offer.

CUT TO:

VIRGINIA
No!

We are --

INT. COURTROOM - MORNING

Fletcher has joined Virginia at the respondent's table

FLETCHER
No?! Mrs. Cole, this offer
was a miracle. I'm talking
about a walking-on-water,
Lazarus-rising-from-the-dead,
find-no-line-at-the-friggin'-
DMV miracle! You've gone from
two point four to four point
eight million in...
(checks his
watch)
four minutes. Think of it
this way -- now you're getting
paid seven hundred thou per
schtupp!

• • •
VIRGINIA
Mr. Reid, you convinced me
yesterday -- I'm the victim
here, starved for affection,
driven into the arms of
another man--

FLETCHER
Seven! •

VIRGINIA
-- Seven other men. With the
story you came up with, I
don't think I can lose. I
want to proceed.

FLETCHER
Mrs. Cole, you don't
understand, I--

But before Fletcher can finish, the judge enters.

JUDGE STEVENS
Well, Mr. Reid. Do we have a
settlement?

Fletcher looks pleadingly at his client, but she is firm.
He shakes his head unhappily. The judge is irritated.

JUDGE STEVENS (CONT' D)
There's no settlement. Trial
to start at one-thirty sharp.

He BANGS the gavel. Fletcher emits an involuntary whimper.

INT. HALLWAY OF LAW OFFICES - MORNING

DAZED, Fletcher makes his way down the hall. Jane comes
toward him wearing a hairstyle that resembles a nest. He
tries to avoid her, but...

JANE
What do you think?

FLETCHER
I think you need help.

HORRIFIED, Fletcher hurries on. The heavysset Thomas
ambulates in his way.

THOMAS
What's shakin', Fletcher?

FLETCHER
Your cellulite, Tubster.

The now panicked Fletcher breaks into a run, passing Fred.

FRED
Hi ya, Fletcher. How's the
Cole case going?

FLETCHER
(not stopping)
'Straight into the crapper, you
wuss, with my career right
behind it.

P
Fletcher is RUNNING NOW, COVERING HIS EARS and SINGING
LOUDLY so as not to hear OTHER EMPLOYEE 'GREETINGS...

FLETCHER
LA-LA-LA-LA-LA-LA!!

Fletcher speeds past--

• GRETA
Hi, boss. What's happeni ng
with--

FLETCHER
DON' T ASK! FOR GOD' S SAKE,
PLEASE DON' T ASK!

-- And races into his office.

INT. FLETCHER' S OFFICE - MORNING

He leans against the door, trying to catch his breath.

FLETCHER,
(pacing)
Don' t pani c. You can beat
this - it' s all a matter of
willpower.

He dives for his desk and rifles through it.

FLETCHER
A test. . . Something small...
Aha!

He holds up a BLUE PEN.

FLETCHER (CONT' D)
Red. Red. All right. Focus,
(with great
deliberation)
The color of this pen is • r--.
R--. R--! The color of this
pen is--blue! AAAAHH!
(burying his
head)
Ahhhh! One' tiny lie and I
can' t say it!!

(suddenly sitting
up)
' I'll write it!

He takes a sheet of PAPER, his pen and writes "This pen is . . ." He tries to write an "R" but can't. He STRAINS. STRAINS HARDER. He's out of his chair, on the desk. His feet KICK OVER OBJECTS on the shelves behind him. He finally forces pen to paper. He looks down where he wrote inadvertently:

"This pen is blue. "

FLETCHER
NO, NO, NO, NO, NO! ! ! !

Greta enters to find--

FLETCHER running around the office, shaking the blue pen in the air.

GRETA
Boss, what's wrong?

FLETCHER
. The pen is blue!! The pen is
blue!! The GODDAMN PEN IS
BLUE!!!

Almost weeping, he collapses into a chair. A moment -- then Greta tentatively offers him a red pen.

GRETA
Red?

FLETCHER
(bitter)
Oh, that's easy for you to
say?!

GRETA
Are you all right?

FLETCHER
(getting up)
I have to go home.

GRETA
Home? Was the case settled?

FLETCHER
No. I have to be in court at
one-thirty.

GRETA

Well, then how can you go home?

FLETCHER

I don't know, I don't know!!!

GRETA

Okay.

(walking on eggshells)

Before I forget -- Rubin and Dunn called. They want to know where the Darvis settlement offer stands.

FLETCHER

I only proposed a settlement to dick with them. I never had any intention of going through with it.

Not certain why her boss would shoot himself in the foot, Greta nonetheless jots down his remarks.

GRETA

'...dick with them.' Okay. Your accountant, Philip, called to remind you about getting together.

FLETCHER

I'd rather shave my ass and sit in vinegar..

GRETA

(jotting down a note)

Got it. And your mother called again. Are you still on vacation?

FLETCHER

(emphatically nodding "yes")

No.

GRETA

So then you're here?

FLETCHER

(emphatically shaking his head "no")

Yes.

GRETA
I'm having a little trouble
following you. what do I say
to your mom?

FLETCHER
(resigned)
Tell her I'm a thoughtless son
who'd rather spend ten hours
clogging the wheels of justice
than five minutes talking to
her-- but only if she asks.
You might also add that she
deserves better, though I hope
to God you don't.

GRETA
Thanks for clearing that up.
And that's it, except your ex
called and asked when you were
cowering over to see your son.

FLETCHER
(remembers)
OHH! I'M SUCH A SHIT!!

He reacts, particularly stunned **by** this truth.

INT. VOLVO - MOVING / FLETCHER'S OFFICE - MORNING

Audrey is driving Max, who wears his new baseball uniform
when her cellular PHONE RINGS. She picks it up.

We INTERCUT between car and office.

FLETCHER
Audrey--

AUDREY'
Hey, Fletcher. I was
wondering if you were going to
still pick up Max after school
today.

FLETCHER
I don't think I can. I had a
case I was certain would
settle and it didn't. I have
to go to trial this afternoon,
God help me.

AUDREY
(not believing
him)

Right.

FLETCHER
It's true... I really do want
to see Max, today.

Fletcher considers what he just said, realizes it is true.

FLETCHER (CONT' D)
How about that. I really do.

AUDREY
(cynically)
But things keep coming up at
the last minute.

FLETCHER
Yes, but-this time it's
different.

AUDREY
I see. And how is that?

FLETCHER
(he walked into
it)
This time I'm telling the
truth.

AUDREY
But last night you weren't?

FLETCHER
No.

AUDREY
What were you doing?

FLETCHER
Having sex.

AUDREY
(barely holding
her temper),
It must have been with someone
very "special."

FLETCHER
No. It was with someone I
don't even like. But I
thought it would help my
career and at the moment that

seemed more important than
attending my son's birthday!

AUDREY

My God!!

She SLAMS DOWN the phone.

INT. FLETCHER'S OFFICE

Fletcher BANGS THE PHONE against his head in frustration! '.

FLETCHER

AHHHHH!! I WHAT IS WRONG WITH

ME!!

EXT. FULGHAM KINDERGARTEN - MORNING

The Volvo parks.

Audrey gets out. She leans over to say good-bye to her
son.

MAX

Is dad picking me up?

AUDREY

No, I'm sorry, Max. He can't
make it. I will. I'll work
it out.

Max is disappointed.

MAX

I guess my wish didn't come
true.

AUDREY

What wish?

MAX

I wished that, for just one
day, Dad couldn't tell a lie.

Max heads toward his teacher. Audrey is deeply moved.

INT. FLETCHER'S OFFICE

He's dialing the phone.

FLETCHER

Answer, answer, answer...

INTERCUT WITH AUDREY'S CAR

AUDREY

Hello.

FLETCHER

Audrey, let me explain.
Something has happened to me--

AUDREY

Fletcher, something else is
about to happen to you.

FLETCHER.

What do you mean?

AUDREY

Max and I are moving to
Boston.

FLETCHER

What?!

AUDREY

Jerry asked me to marry him.
He wants Max and I to fly with
him this weekend to pick out a
house. And I'm going to go.
God knows I don't have any
reason to stay here.

FLETCHER

(panicking)
Wait, you can't move! If you
take Max away... I'll
practically never see him.

AUDREY

Well then you'll have pretty
much the same relationship you
have with him now.

FLETCHER

Audrey, please.... Is this
because of what I just said on
the phone?

AUDREY

That was the straw and this is
the camel's back saying
goodbye.

FLETCHER

Where are you?

AUDREY

Heading home.

FLETCHER

When you gee there, stay
there. I'll be right over.
We have to talk.

AUDREY

Fletcher--

FLETCHER

I'll be right- there!

He hangs up and heads for the door. It opens and Miranda enters.

FLETCHER (CONT' D)

Aaaah!

MIRANDA

Fletcher. Fletcher, Fletcher,
Fletcher. I must confess--
after last night's incident, I
was. . . hurt. So hurt. I was
tempted to do whatever little
things lie in my power to
scuttle your chances of making
partner.

Fletcher is FRIGHTENED.

MIRANDA (CONT' D)

But then I thought, "No,
that's not fair. Fletcher
didn't mean to insult me."

(straightening
his tie)

"It was just some massive,
boneheaded misunderstanding,
and Fletcher is very, very
sorry."

Fletcher smiles. It looks like he's off the hook, until--

MIRANDA (CONT' D)

Isn't that right, Fletcher?

FLETCHER

(in agony)

Uh -- not really, no.

MIRANDA

(stunned, angry)

No? No?! What are you
saying? Have you no respect
for me?!

FLETCHER

None, whatsoever. I mean, I'd like to respect you, and if it weren't for your mistreatment of the associates, your rudeness to the staff, and the fact that your work sucks, I would.

MIRANDA

But -- what about last night?

FLETCHER

I was afraid you wouldn't support my partnership if I turned you down. Plus, I have an immature need for sexual conquests.

INT. HALLWAY OF LAW OFFICES - MORNING

We HEAR A SMACK! The door flies open -- and a furious Miranda stalks off.

INT. FLETCHER'S OFFICE - MORNING

Fletcher rubs his freshly SLAPPED FACE..

INT. BMW - MOVING / EXT, STREET - MORNING

Fletcher speeds away. He pulls the blue pen from his pocket.

FLETCHER

Gotta focus. . . gotta focus.

He's so preoccupied that he speeds through a crosswalk and almost hits an OLD MAN.

FLETCHER

The color of the pen is -- red!

But he hasn't regained the ability to lie -- he's referring to the RED LIGHT he just ran, nearly colliding with a truck. The DRIVER screams:

DRIIVER

What's your problem, schmuck?!

FLETCHER

(the truth)
I'm an inconsiderate prick!

Fletcher once again focuses on the blue pen.

FLETCHER (CON "ID)
C'mon, you can do this! The
color of the pen is -- RED!

This time he's referring to the flashing red light of a
POLICE CAR in his rearview mirror.

FLETCHER
Shit!!

Fletcher pulls over. A POLICE OFFICER strolls up.

POLICE OFFICER
Do you know why I stopped you?

FLETCHER
Depends on how long you were
following me.

POLICE OFFICER
Why don't we take it from the
top.

FLETCHER
• (in agony)
Here goes -- I didn't fasten
my seatbelt, I didn't glance
in my rearview mirror, I
didn't signal when I pulled
away from the curb, I sped, I
followed too closely, I ran a
stop sign, I almost hit :a
Chevy Camaro, I almost hit a
geezer, I sped some more, I
failed to yield at a
crosswalk, I changed lanes in
the intersection, I changed
lanes without signalling, and
I changed lanes in the
intersection-without
signalling while running a red
light and speeding.

A long moment.

POLICE OFFICER
May I see your driver's
license?

FLETCHER
No.

POLICE OFFICER
And why is that?

FLETCHER
It's in my other pants.

POLICE OFFICER
I see. And where are your
other pants?

FLETCHER
Hanging from my boss's
credenza.

POLICE OFFICER
Do you expect me to believe
that?

FLETCHER
No.

POLICE OFFICER
Do you think I'm an idiot?

FLETCHER
Yes -- but that's beside the
point! My license actually is
in my other pants, and they
actually were hanging from a
credenza! I wouldn't lie to
you! I mean, I would if I
could, but I can't!

POLICE OFFICER
I see. So you .. have no reason
to try and hide your license
from me?

FLETCHER
I didn't say that. I have
other reasons. Seventeen
reasons, to be precise.
(begrudgingly,
off the
officer's look)
Unpaid parking tickets.
(beseechingly)
Be gentle.

EXT. AUDREY'S HOUSE - MORNING

A cab speeds up to the house. Fletcher runs out. Audrey is
headed to her car.

FLETCHER
Audrey, wait!

AUDREY
Wait? You know, I just had an insight into myself. I'm crazy. You call me up and tell me to wait here because you'll be right over and -- here's the crazy part -- I actually wait.

FLETCHER
I can explain--

AUDREY
I missed a department meeting. I. . . Did you come in a cab?

FLETCHER
Yes.

AUDREY
Where's your car?

EXT, POLICE IMPOUND YARD - MORNING

Audrey finishes paying the impound-yard CASHIER and joins Fletcher, who is waiting alongside hundreds of towed cars.

FLETCHER
Thank you. . I can't tell you how much this means to me.

AUDREY
I can. One thousand, six hundred, and fifty-four dollars and eleven cents.

FLETCHER
Ow.

At this moment WE HEAR a hideous scraping noise -- and a TOW-YARD EMPLOYEE whips Fletcher's BMW into view and parks... revealing a prominent new scrape on the door.

FLETCHER (CONT' D)
You scratched my car!

TOW-YARD EMPLOYEE
Where?

FLETCHER
Right there!

TOW-YARD EMPLOYEE
Oh that? That was already
there.

FLETCHER
(outraged)
Why, you -- you liar! Do you
know what I'm going to do
about this?

TOW-YARD EMPLOYEE
What?

FLETCHER
(angrier and
angrier)
...Nothing! Because if I take
you to small-claims court, it
will just drain eight hours
out of my life, and you
probably won't show up, and if
I finally got the judgment
you'd just stiff me anyway, so
what I'm gonna do is piss and
moan like an impotent jerk and
then bend over and take it up
the tail pipe!

TOW-YARD EMPLOYEE
You've been here before,
haven't you?

He flips Fletcher the keys and goes.

AUDREY
Well I can't remember when
I've had more fun, now if
you'll excuse me, I have a
class.

She starts out.

FLETCHER
Audrey, wait. I want to talk
to you about this Boston
situation.

AUDREY
What do you want to say?

FLETCHER
You can't go. It's not fair.
Taking Max three thousand
miles away is not fair.

AUDREY

Let's define "fair." Last night a five-year old boy was crushed because his father lied to him about coming to his birthday party. Fair?

FLETCHER

Last night--

AUDREY

-- Was none of my business. When it happened two years ago it was my business, but now I don't have to care anymore. See, that's the magic of divorce. But it does matter to Max. Everything you do matters to him... and everything you don't do.

FLETCHER

All right-- now let me tell you something... you're absolutely right. I'm guilty of all charges. I'm throwing myself on the mercy of your court.

Audrey doesn't know what to say. Fletcher seems very sincere, but she can't trust him.

FLETCHER {CONT'D}

I have an idea. I'll come over tonight, right after court lets out and play with Max. Have him invite some friends over. We'll have a game and everything. Then, you and I can sit down and talk.

AUDREY

We're suppose to be on a plane tonight--

FLETCHER

No, Audrey. Just talk to me about this first. Please. Audrey, I've lost you. Don't make me lose Max, too.

AUDREY

You're really coming?

FLETCHER
This is iron-clad. This is
the mother of all promises.
What time?

AUDREY
... Six?

FLETCHER
Ten- to- si x.

AUDREY
(unsure)
All right... only if I tell
Max you're coming and you
don't show up and I have to
see that look on Max's face --
that heartbreaking look-- it's
Boston, Fletcher.

FLETCHER.
I will be there.

As Audrey gets in her car -- .

AUDREY
I hope so. Do you know what
your son was doing at nine-
fifteen last night? He was
making a wish on his birthday
cake. He was wishing that,
for just one day, his dad
couldn't tell a lie.

She drives away. Fletcher starts for his car, pensive,
when a new thought strikes him.

FLETCHER
Oh my God! That-'s it! An
innocent kid -- a heartfelt
plea-- a birthday wish! Sure,
it's impossible --but it
'makes sense!..! If he can wish
it, he can unwish it!

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HALLWAY

Fletcher marches quickly down the hall, cake box under his
arm.

INT. MAX'S KINDERGARTEN CLASS

Ms. Berry's reading a story when Fletcher enters. Max
brightens.

MAX

Dad!

MS. BERRY

Are you Max's dad? I'm Ms. Berry, Max's teacher!

FLETCHER

Hi. Listen, I need to talk to Max--

MS. BERRY

Mr. Reid, we were just talking about careers. You're a lawyer, aren't you?

FLETCHER

(wary)

Yes.

MAX

Mr. Reid it would be wonderful for the children to hear something positive about lawyers!

FLETCHER

Well, actually-- •

MS. BERRY

Children! Mr. Reid is going to tell us what it's like to be a lawyer.

She leads the kids in APPLAUSE. Fletcher takes center stage. The children stare, rapt with attention.

FLETCHER

Uh, hi. Uh, I'm a lawyer and I work at a big law firm with a lot of other lawyers and I do stuff in a law court. Thank you.

He starts out.

MS. BERRY

One moment, Mr. Reid. Maybe some of the children have questions

(hands shoot up)

Jeffrey?

JEFF

What kind of lawyer are you?

FLETCHER

Mostly, I'm a divorce lawyer.

BILLY

What's that?

FLETCHER

It means if you're daddy left your mommy, he'd call me.

CRAIG

So what do you do?

FLETCHER

(growing more and
more impatient)

I help people fight over their money and their children.

THEODORE

Can't they fight without you?

FLETCHER ' "

They could but then J wouldn't make a living.

JILL

Why would my daddy leave my mommy?

FLETCHER

To marry a younger woman. To escape a loveless marriage and have cheap meaningless sex. To cling to an illusion of youth as his body gives way to sore backs, flat feet, spare tires, gum disease, hair loss, liver spots, kidney stones, clogged arteries, diabetes, goiter and eventual death.

The kids EYES GO WIDE. A moment, then:

MS. BERRY

(brightly)

Well, I think it's time for fingerpainting.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

They're in the playground just outside the classroom.

FLETCHER
Monster-Max.

MAX
Dadzilla. You came to play
catch?

FLETCHER
No. I'd like to, but I can't
right now.

Max is disappointed again.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)
I'm sorry I missed your party
last night. How was your
Uncle Glen?

MAX
Stupid. His big nose and
stupid orange hair...

FLETCHER
That's why he should have worn
make-up.

Fletcher elbows Max, playfully, trying to induce a laugh.
Max doesn't laugh.

MAX
I want to play kickball with
my friends.

FLETCHER
Yeah, okay, urn... Your mother
told me about... the wish you
made last night. It came
true.

Max is amazed.

MAX
Really? You mean you have to
tell the truth?

FLETCHER
Yes.

MAX
No matter what?

FLETCHER
No matter what.

Max grins -- then suddenly asks, in rapid succession.

MAX
Is wrestling real?

FLETCHER
In the Olympics, yes. On
Channel 23, no.

MAX
Will sitting close to the TV
set make me go blind?

FLETCHER
Not in a million years.

MAX
If I keep making this face--
(makes a horrible
face)
will it get stuck that way?

FLETCHER
Uh-uh.

MAX
.If I go in the water right
after lunch, will I drown?

FLETCHER
Only if you can't swim

MAX
Why do I have to eat squash?

FLETCHER
Because your mom buys it.

MAX
How come you're always too
busy to play with me?

The sudden shift in tone startles Fletcher. He feels
awful.

FLETCHER
I . . . I don't know. I'm . . . Hey,
you know I'm coming over
tonight. We're gonna play
together.

MAX
Baseball?

FLETCHER

. Yes! This is absolutely an
A-number one promise. You and
I -- tonight -- baseball.

Fletcher and Max do their ritual "five" slap.

FLETCHER

Now, listen, Max, I need a
favor from you. I'm in a
little trouble today. I need
you to take that wish back.

MAX

So you can lie?

FLETCHER

Not to you.

MAX

To who?

FLETCHER

Max, sometimes grownups...
need to lie. It's hard to
explain, but if... Look,
here's an example. When Mommy
was pregnant with you, she
gained a little weight.
Seventy pounds. I thought she
was gonna give birth to a car.
But she'd say to me "How do I
look?" So I'd say, "Oh,
honey, you're beautiful,
you're glowing."¹¹ Otherwise, I
would've hurt Mommy's
feelings. Understand?

Max nods.

MAX

You didn't think she was
beautiful.

FLETCHER

Right. No... Max, I don't
know how to get along in the
grown-up world if I have to
stick to the truth. I could
lose my case, I could lose my
promotion, I could even lose
my job... Do you understand?

Max shakes his head "no."

FLETCHER (CONT' D)
Will you help me anyway?

A moment -- then Max reluctantly nods.

FLETCHER (CONT' D)
That's my boy!

Fletcher opens the box, revealing a cake and candles.... He takes out two birthday hats. He puts one on Max and one on himself.

FLETCHER (CONT' D)
Now, do whatever you did last night... only this time, make an un-wish.

Not really happy, Max turns to the candles on the cake. He takes a breath-- and blows them out.

MAX
I did it. ^

FLETCHER
Great! Great! Now to test --

Fletcher spots an attractive FEMALE teacher. Fletcher hurries to her and says something. A moment. Then she SLAPS HIM

Fletcher returns to his son.

MAX
Did it work?

FLETCHER
(rubbing his sore
cheek)
Not like I'd hoped. Did you really unwish it?

Max nods.

MAX
Only...

FLETCHER
Only what?

MAX
Yesterday, when I wished it, I really meant it. This time when I unwished it I only did it 'cause you told me to.

FLETCHER
(losing patience)
Well, then do it again. Only
this time, mean it.

MAX
I can't.

FLETCHER
Why not?!

MAX
Because I don't want you to
lie.

FLETCHER
I explained this to you! I
have to lie. Everybody lies!
Mommy lies, even the wonderful
Jerry lies--

MAX
But you're the only one who
makes me feel bad.

Fletcher is stunned by how much this hurts.

MS. BERRY
(calling)
Max, recess is over, come on
in.

MAX
I have to go.

FLETCHER
I am coming over, tonight,
Max. You believe me, don't
you?

Max hesitates, then nods.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)
I'll see you tonight, buddy...
That's a promise.

Max heads back to class. Fletcher picks up the cake, looks
at it, then dumps it in a trash barrel.

EXT. SKYSCRAPER - DAY

A worried and preoccupied Fletcher is heading toward his
office building when a MACHO ATTORNEY passes by.

MACHO ATTORNEY

Yo, Fletcher! How's it hanging?

FLETCHER

Short and shrivelled.

Fletcher hurries up the steps when he spots Philip. He shields his face with his briefcase. Philip recognizes him anyway.

PHILIP

Fletcher! I'm still waiting for your call. I guess you must've lost my card --

FLETCHER

No --

PHILIP

Or my phone was busy --

FLETCHER

No --

PHILIP

Or you just forgot --

FLETCHER

No --

PHILIP

(cannot be discouraged)

Or something. So anyway, why don't you swing by my place around seven-thirty!

Philip starts off, when Fletcher calls after him resolutely.

FLETCHER

Philip... I don't want to come over to your house!

A long moment, then --

PHILIP

Fine! We'll go out! There's this new karaoke bar I've been dying to try. I'll pick you up at your office! Seven-thirty! !

And he runs off. Frustrated, Fletcher hurries on.

INT. OFFICE' S - DAY

Fletcher drags himself past Greta's desk. Miranda gives him the stink-eye. Fletcher doesn't see her.

GRETA

Do you want your messages?

FLETCHER

No.

He goes into his office. Greta is concerned. She follows him in, leaving his door open.

INT. FLETCHER' S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Fletcher collapses onto his couch. Greta enters.

GRETA

Are you okay?

FLETCHER

My son hates me.

GRETA

No! He loves you. I've seen you together. You're his hero.

FLETCHER

Oh yeah? Last night at his birthday party, he made a wish. That I wouldn't be able to tell a lie for one whole day.

GRETA

Kids...

FLETCHER

It came true.

GRETA

What?

FLETCHER

It's true. Didn't it seem odd to you that I kept telling the truth all morning?

GRETA

Well, yeah, but...

(incredulous)
You're telling me that you
can't lie.

FLETCHER
That's right! I am incapable
of lying.

INT. OUTER OFFICE

Miranda is eavesdropping. A wicked gleam in her eye

INT. FLETCHER'S OFFICE

GRETA
Just today?

FLETCHER
Apparently until 9:15 tonight.
It's a twenty-four hour curse.

GRETA
Yes, those are going around.

FLETCHER
You don't believe me.

GRETA
Of course not.

FLETCHER
Go ahead. Ask me something
I'd normally lie about.

She thinks.

GRETA
All right. Remember a few
months ago, I wanted a raise--

FLETCHER
(quickly)
Forget it. Let's not do this.

GRETA
-- and the firm wouldn't give
me one. And I asked you if
you would give it to me out of
your own pocket and you said
the company wouldn't permit it
because it creates jealousy
among the other secretaries?
Was that true or did you just
not want to pony up the dough?

INT. OUTER OFFICE

Greta is emptying all her personal effects into boxes. She's leaving. Fletcher is on the phone and looks very harassed.

FLETCHER

Greta, please...

(into phone)

Yes Judge Stevens, hi!..

Fletcher Reid. I'm scheduled to be in your court in half-an-hour... Judge Stevens, I badly, badly need a continuance... so I can go home and stay there the rest of the day... 111? Am I ill?

He wants to say "yes", but he can't.

FLETCHER

In a way.

(covers the mouthpiece)

Please, lie to him for me.

Greta holds up a framed photograph.

GRETA

I remember when you bought me this silver frame. From Tiffany's.

(questioning)

... Tiffany's?

FLETCHER

Jumbo's House of Junk.

She throws it in the trash and keeps packing.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

I'll give you the raise!

GRETA

(gives him the finger)

Here's your raise.

FLETCHER

(into phone)

Hi, Judge Stevens?... Yes, I know I haven't given you a reason.

The PHONE RINGS.

FLETCHER (CONT' D)
(into phone)
But if you could just do this
for me, I--

The phone won't stop ringing. . . ' .

FLETCHER (CONT' D)
Hold on, please,
(pushes two
buttons)
Hello... Mom!!

The phone flies into the air. He catches it.

FLETCHER {CONT' D)
Mom... Well, I wasn't actually
on vacation... Because I
didn't want to talk to you...
Because you insist on talking
to me about Dad's bowel
movements -- size, color,
frequency... I'll call you
later... No, not really.

He pushes -two more buttons. Then SCREAMS.

FLETCHER (CONT' D)
Oh dammit! I cut him off! I
cut off the Judge! Greta...

He falls to his knees.

FLETCHER (CONT' D)
I'm on my knees in a nine
hundred dollar suit. Don't
leave.

Greta stops. She seems to consider.

GRETA
A few years ago a friend of
mine had a burglar up on her
roof.

FLETCHER
Yes?

GRETA
A burglar. -He fell through
the kitchen skylight and
landed on a cutting board on a
butcher's knife, cutting his
leg. He sued my friend. The

burglar sued my friend.
Thanks to guys like you-- he
won. My friend had to pay him
six thousand dollars. Is that
justice?

FLETCHER

No. . . but what' s your poiit!

GRETA

My point is, it's hard to get
justice. But this is justice,
(pinches his
cheek)

Have a nice day in court,
bubbi e.

She leaves. Fletcher starts to give chase...

FLETCHER

Greta--

He runs directly into Miranda.

FLETCHER

Aaaah!

Miranda smiles like a cat that's trapped a mouse.

MIRANDA

Ah, Fletcher, so nice to bump
into you. Are you busy?

FLETCHER

Extremely.

MIRANDA

Good. Would you follow me,
please?

Highly nervous, Fletcher follows Miranda down the hall.

MIRANDA (CONT' D)

Fletcher, did you know that
the partnership committee is
being headed up by Mr. Allan
himself?

(off his wary
nod)

Say, you used to work directly
for Mr. Allan, didn't you?

(off his varied
nod)

Tell me, what do you think of
him?

FLETCHER
(helpl ess)
He's a pedantic,
pontificating, pretentious
bastard, a belligerent old
fart, a worthless, steaming
pile of cow dung.

MIRANDA
(grinning)
How delightful!

She swings open a door, ushering Fletcher into --

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The room is filled with ATTORNEYS, including MR. ALLAN,
the founder himself. Fletcher freezes.

MIRANDA
Pardon me for interrupting
your meeting. Mr. Allan, you
remember Fletcher Reid.

MR. ALLAN
•It's good to see you again,
Fletcher.

An involuntary WHIMPER from Fletcher.

MIRANDA
Oh, that's right. You used to
work together. Tell me, what
do you think of Mr. Allah?

Fletcher gulps. This is it. His career is history. He's
trying to hold it back, but--

MIRANDA
I said... What do you think of
Mr. Allan?

FLETCHER
He's a pedantic,
pontificating, pretentious
bastard, a belligerent old
fart, a worthless, steaming
pile of cow dung.

DEAN SILENCE. Then -- Mr. Allan bursts into raucous
LAUGHTER. He is joined by everyone except Miranda, who
looks on, STUNNED. Everyone pounds the table in hysterics.

MR. ALLAN
Marvelous! Marvelous! That's
what I love most about this
firm-- the collegial
atmosphere, the hearty good-
fellowship!

Miranda is incensed.

MR. ALLAN (CONT'D)
And thanks for those flowers
for my anniversary. My wife
loved them.

FLETCHER
Well, I'm due in court... bye-
bye.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Fletcher exits the conference, closes the door, breathes a
sigh of relief, then FAINTS.

INT. COURTROOM

CLOSE UP of Fletcher, seated alone at a table. His hands
are on his face. He looks totally dazed. At the other
table, sit Dana Appleton and Mr. Cole.

BAILIFF
All rise.

They do. Judge Stevens enters. He sits. Everyone sits.

JUDGE STEVENS
Counselors, are we ready to
begin?

FLETCHER
(eagerly and a
little too
loudly)
No sir! We are not ready to
begin. My client has not
arrived.

The doors OPEN and Virginia Cole enters with her CHILDREN
and a NANNY.

FLETCHER • .
-- until now.

He collapses into his chair.

(to Falk, with
determination)
Did you and Mrs. Cole ever
make lo-- forni-- roll in the
h-- make the beast with two
ba-- Did you two ever fu--
fu-- Fu!

He begins to hyperventilate. Virginia turns to Falk.

VIRGINIA
Water! Get him water!

Falk hurries into the building as Fletcher hacks on.

FLETCHER
Fu-- fu--

VIRGINIA
Sit down! Get some air!
(slaps him on the
back)
Try to relax! Breathe deeply!

Falk hurries out with a cup, hands it to Fletcher, who
downs it in one gulp -- then spews it out again, SCREAMING
in PAIN. -

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)
What?! What?!

FALK
I couldn't find any water, so
I got him coffee!

Fletcher runs up and down the steps, frantically fanning
his scalded mouth. The bailiff appears.

BAILIFF
Judge is taking the bench.

Fletcher's expression turns to terror.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

The judge settles in. Mr. Allan and a smug Miranda look on
from the gallery.

JUDGE STEVENS
You may proceed, Mr. Reid. .

Everyone turns to Fletcher in anticipation. In a voice
quaking with fear...

VIRGINIA
Sorry. One of the kids threw
up in the car.

Virginia takes her seat, leaving her two young children
sitting dejectedly in the gallery with their nanny.

FLETCHER
(i ncredul ous
whi sper)
You brought your kids. . . to
your divorce?

VIRGINIA
(by way of
expl anati on)
Sympathy.

FLETCHER
Well, it's working. I feel
sorry for them already.

The judge BANGS the gavel.

JUDGE STEVENS
Ms. Appleton, you may begin.

CUT TO:

Dana Appleton questions BRYSON, a private investigator.
Fletcher watches with mounting anxiety, NERVOUSLY DRINKS
from a GLASS OF WATER at his table.

BRYSON
(referring to his
notes)
-- From March six through June
twelve, I surveilled Mrs. Cole
at the behest of Mr. Cole.
During that period, I noted
that Mr. Cole left each day
between seven-forty and seven-
fifty. Thereafter, Mrs. Cole
would frequently have a male
visitor arrive and stay for
one to four hours. I was able
to take several photographs of
the male visitor.

He shows a photo -- of a strapping hunk. Fletcher TAKES A
HUGE DRINK.

DANA
I see. And do you know what
Mrs. Cole and her male visitor

did during their frequent...
visits?

BRYSON

Well, they were pretty good
about keeping the shades drawn
-- but I sure was able to
hear. I made an audiotape of
one such, "session."

He hands her the tape. Fletcher refills his glass.

DANA

With the Court's permission, I
would like to play the tape.

FLETCHER

Your Honor, I object!

JUDGE STEVENS

And why is that, Mr. Reid?

FLETCHER

(can't help
himself)

Because it's devastating to my
•case.

The judge is startled by his candor.

JUDGE STEVENS

Overruled.

As Dana pops the tape into a player, Fletcher anxiously
DOWNS THE GLASS.

Periodically CUTTING to Virginia, Mr. Cole, Dan and the
thirsty Fletcher, we hear Virginia and her visitor engaged
in intense physical activity.

MALE VISITOR (O. S.)

So, what did you say? You
ready?

VIRGINIA (O. S.)

Oh boy am I ready.

MALE VISITOR (O. S.)

Good. Let me help you off
with that. Come on, lie down.

VIRGINIA (O. S.)

Wait a minute. Do you have
protection?

MALE VISITOR (O. S.)
Right here. Okay, now I'm
gonna show you something new.

VIRGINIA (O. S.)
Oh, I've never done it like
this before. . . .

MALE VISITOR (O. S.)
Don't worry, you can take it.
Oh yeah. That's it. There
you go. Yes! Yes!

WE HEAR labored rhythmic breathing.

MALE VISITOR (O. S.) (CONT'D)
Yes, yes, yes --

As Dana fast-forwards again, then resumes... with still
more labored breathing, building intensity and --

MALE VISITOR (O. S.) (CONT'D)
Oh yeah, bring it on home --
yes! Yes! Yes!

VIRGINIA (O. S.)
Yes! YES! YES!

The groans reach their incredible climax. There's a still
moment. . .

As the shy COURT REPORTER, the macho BAILIFFS and the no-
nonsense judge all mop their brows, Dana shuts off the
tape. She turns to Fletcher with a satisfied smile.

DANA
Your witness.

FLETCHER
No questions.

JUDGE STEVENS
No questions? .

VIRGINIA
No questions?

FLETCHER
(afraid to ask
any)
No questions.

DANA
(triumphant)
Petitioner rests.

JUDGE STEVENS

All right, Mr. Reid. You may proceed.

FLETCHER

(to himself)

How?!

Gathering his courage, he stands, downs the last of his water, and moves to the lecturn. He's about to speak... when a WONDERFUL FEELING sweeps through him.

After a moment, he grins.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

Would the Court be willing to grant me a short bathroom break?

JUDGE STEVENS

It can't wait?

FLETCHER

Not unless you want to mop up.

JUDGE STEVENS

(frustrated)

All right, but get back in here immediately so we can finish this.

Fletcher beams. Then necessity compels him to race out.

INT. REST ROOM - DAY

Fletcher stands before the urinal, taking the longest leak in legal history. Relief. Then, he looks at his watch. It's only 4:15.

FLETCHER

What did I think? That I could piss for forty-five minutes?!

He HITS HIS FOREHEAD in frustration... and gets an idea. He HITS HIMSELF AGAIN and AGAIN, SMASHES HIS HEAD INTO THE WALL, POKES HIMSELF IN THE EYES, YANKS ON HIS EARS, finally KNOCKS HIMSELF IN THE STALL, where he continues his attack.

A MAN enters, hears a commotion from behind the stall door.

MAN

What's going on in there?

FLETCHER (O. S.)
I ' m abusing myself! Do you
mi nd?!

The man looks disgusted. He carefully leaves the room.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

The judge is PISSED. Suddenly the bailiff helps in the
severly beaten Fletcher. The entire courtroom is SHOCKED.

BAILIFF
I found him like this in the
bathroom. Somebody beat the
hell out of him.

JUDGE STEVENS
Who did this?

FLETCHER
(truthfully)
A madman, Your Honor.. A
desperate fool at the end of
his pitiful rope.

JUDGE STEVENS
-What did he look like?

FLETCHER
(describi ng
hi mself)
About five eleven, hundred
ei ghty-fi ve pounds, crazed
look in his eye.

JUDGE STEVENS
Bailiff, have the deputies
search the building.

A HUBBUB rises. He bangs the gavel.

JUDGE STEVENS (CONT' D)
Under the circumstances, I
have no choice but to recess
this case until tomorrow
morni ng at nine.

Fletcher smiles serenly -- until --

JUDGE STEVENS (CONT' D)
-- Unless, of course, you
think you can still proceed?

Fletcher covers his mouth in a desperate attempt to avoid
answering, but he can't repress the truth.

JUDGE STEVENS (CONT'D)

Can you?

FLETCHER

Yes, I can.

JUDGE STEVENS

Splendi d. *I admire your*
courage, Mr. Reid. I'll give
you a few minutes to compose
yourself, and then we'll get
started.

Fletcher looks as if he has just been sentenced to death.

EXT. COURTHOUSE STEPS - DAY

Fletcher sits on the courthouse steps, miserable. PHONE
RINGS.

FLETCHER

Hello.

INTERCUT WITH MAX AT HOME. AUDREY IS THERE.

MAX

Dad. . .

FLETCHER

(summoni ng up
enthusi asm)

Maxi-pad. How's it going?

MAX

Great. You know Paul and
Emanuel from across the
street?

FLETCHER

The twins.

MAX .

(excitedly)

Well, they never want to play
baseball with me, but I told
them I was gonna play tonight
with my Dad, so now they want
to play with us. Is it okay?

FLETCHER

Sure.

MAX
Oh boy. We're setting up a
whole field in the yard.
Where we buried Petey the
hamster is second base.
(Fletcher sighs)
You're still coming right?'

FLETCHER
(sees Virginia
approaching)
I'll be there. I gotta go
now, Max. I'll see you in two
hours.

Max hangs up.

MAX
(to Audrey)
He's really coming.

She smiles, but she's worried. .

COURTHOUSE STEPS

Virginia approaches with her handsome lover, LAURENCE FALK.

VIRGINIA
Mr. Reid, you remember
Laurence Falk, the man from
the tape.

FALK
How are you?

FLETCHER
I've slipped into the seventh
circle of Hell, thank you, and
you?

Virginia exchanges an anxious look with Falk.

VIRGINIA
Shouldn't we go over our
testimony?

FLETCHER
Well, basically the plan is I
walk you through the tape step
by step, I ask you questions--

VIRGINIA
And we give the explanation
you came up with.

FLETCHER

Exactly.

FALK

So all we have to do is lie.
Sounds simple enough.

FLETCHER

Doesn't it? And I'll finish
up with a dramatic series of
questions, something like...
"Mr. Falk, isn't it true that
you and Mrs. Cole have never
made lo--"

But Fletcher GAGS. He CAN'T GET THE QUESTION OUT. The
others look concerned, but he waves them off.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

Sorry. I'm fine. "Mr. Falk,
isn't it true that you and
Mrs. Cole have never made lo--
lo--"

To his horror, he GAGS AGAIN, unable to form the word.

FLETCHER

(to himself)
Oh my God! I can't do it! I
can't finish the question if I
know the answer is a lie!

At this moment Miranda and Mr. Allan come up the steps.

MR. ALLAN

Don't let me interrupt,
Fletcher. I just want you to
know I'll be observing this
afternoon. Miranda insisted I
see you in action.

Fletcher shoots a hateful look at Miranda. She smiles.

MR. ALLAN (CONT'D)

I'm looking forward to it. Go
get 'em!

Mr. Allan and Miranda head into the building, leaving
Fletcher more desperate than before.

FLETCHER

C'mon! Gotta rephrase the
question!

FLETCHER
Respondent calls... Lawrence
Falk.

Fletcher's clears his throat. Here goes...

FLETCHER
Mr. Falk, do you know my
client, Virginia Cole?

FALK
Yes.

FLETCHER
Isn't it true that your
relationship with *my* client is
entirely platonic, not?

The "not" was INVOLUNTARY. It takes everyone by surprise.

FALK
Excuse me?

FLETCHER
If I might rephrase your
Honor.
(trying again)
Is your relationship with my
client entirely patonic, not?
Is your relationship with my
client not entirely platonic?
Is not your relationship with
my client entirely platonic?
(thinks he's got
it, beams with
confidence)
Mr. Falk, is not your
relationship with my client
entirely platonic?

FALK
(confused)
No. I mean, yes. I think.

FLETCHER
Yes, is your relationship with
my client not entirely
platonic, or yes, is not your
relationship with my client
entirely platonic?

FALK
What?

FLETCHER
How 'bout just answering the
question you think I'm asking?

DANA
Your Honor, he's badgering the
witness!

JUDGE STEVENS
It's his witness!

FLETCHER
Did you ever not make lo--
Did you not ever make lo--
(losing it)
YOU HAD SEX WITH HER EVERYTIME
YOU MET, DIDN'T YOU? DIDN'T
YOU?!!

Falk looks shaken as Fletcher barrels on, unable to stop

FLETCHER
(screaming at
him)
ADMIT IT! YOU SLAMMED HER!!
YOU STOKED THE FUR FIRE! YOU
-DID THE YAM DANCE! !

FALK
(breaking down)
YES, YES, -- IT'S TRUE! I
HUMPED HER. BRAINS OUT! !

A GASP from the audience. All eyes are on Fletcher.

FLETCHER
(weakly)
No further questions.

DANA
Uh...no questions.

JUDGE STEVENS
(to Fletcher)
Call your next witness.

FLETCHER
I have no further witnesses,
your Honor.

A MURMUR erupts from the crowd.

JUDGE STEVENS
You have no further
witnesses?!

Fletcher meekly shakes his head, no.

VIRGINIA
(whispers, to
Fletcher)
What are you doing? Call me.

FLETCHER
(to Virginia)
I can't.

JUDGE STEVENS
Mr. Reid?

VIRGINIA
Call me, damn it!

FLETCHER
You don't understand. I can't
lie. Until nine-sixteen
tonight, I can't even ask a
question that calls for a lie!

Virginia GRABS HIM BY THE TIE, pulls him CLOSE to her face.

VIRGINIA
Listen, you bastard. I want
my money. I am not gonna wind
up a 31 year old divorce on
welfare because my scum bag
attorney had a sudden attack
of conscience!

Fletcher suddenly stops -- focused on something Virginia
said.

FLETCHER
(to himself)
Thirty-one?

JUDGE STEVENS
Mr. Reid, we're not getting
any younger...

Fletcher quickly looks at the blowup of Virginia's prenup
and her passport.

JUDGE STEVENS
(he's had it)
Mr. Reid you have presented
virtually nothing in the way
of evidence and as such I have
no choice but to rule in favor
of --

FLETCHER

WAIT!

Silence.

FLETCHER

(dramatically)
Your Honor, I call Virginia
Cole to the stand.

Stunned, Virginia nervously makes her way up,

MR. ALLAN

(in the gallery)
What the hell is he doing?

MIRANDA

Kissing his career goodbye.

The Baliff stands before the witness.

BALIFP

Do you swear to tell the
truth, the whole truth and
nothing but the truth, so help
-you God?

VIRGINIA

I do.

Fletcher approaches, . CONFIDENT NOW, COCKY.

FLETCHER

Mrs. Cole -- may I call you
Virginia?

VIRGINIA

Yes.

FLETCHER

But that would be a lie,
wouldn't it?

VIRGINIA

What do you mean?

FLETCHER

Isn't your true name...
(brandishing
passport)
Carlotta?!

VIRGINIA

Well, yes. But it wasn't me
so I started using Virginia.
Is there anything wrong with
that?

FLETCHER

Not really. It's just the
first and smallest in the
tissue of lies that is the
Kleenex of your life. Let's
take one simple document as a
sample of your veracity, shall
we, Carlotta?

He grabs her purse from the desk, rifles through it,

FLETCHER

Your driver's license. What
color are your eyes?

VIRGINIA

Blue.

FLETCHER

True blue? What if I asked
you to remove your contact
lenses? What color would they
be then?

VIRGINIA

(reluctantly)

Brown.

FLETCHER

And here it says you're a
blonde. Are you?
(off her silence)
C'mon, Carlotta, there's a
very easy way for us to check.
If you don't remember, perhaps
Mr. Falk will.

VIRGINIA

Brunette.

FLETCHER

More like a dirty brown, isn't
it?

(she nods)

Let's see - . - "Weight: one-o-
five"? Please...

VIRGINIA .

One-eighteen.

(off his look)
One- twenty- six. I swear!

FLETCHER

So on this single document,
you basically lied at every
opportunity. I'm sure a woman
as vain as you would also lie
about her age. It says you
were born in 1964. What's the
truth? 1962? '60? How young
did you try to make yourself?

VIRGINIA

(joyfully)
Wrong! I didn't lie to make
myself younger. I made myself
older. I was born in 1965!"

FLETCHER

(feigning
surprise)
What? You're trying to tell
us you lied to make yourself
older?

VIRGINIA

Yes! * lied so I could get
married! So there Mister 'I
got- all- the- answers- because- I-
went- to- law- school '!

JUDGE STEVENS

Mr. Reid, does this have a
point?

FLETCHER

Oh, you bet it does, your
Honor!

(on a roll)

My client lied about her age
because she was only 17 when
she got married. Which makes
her a minor. And in the great
state of California, NO MINOR
CAN ENTER INTO A LEGAL
CONTRACT WITHOUT PARENTAL
CONSENT INCLUDING- -

DANA

(defeated, to
herself)
Prenuptual agreements.

FLETCHER
(knows he has
them)

PRENUPTIAL AGREEMENTS! THANK
YOU VERY LITTLE! This
contract is void!!! The fact
that my client gets nailed •
more often than a two-by-four
is irrelevant. Standard
community property applies and
this woman is entitled to half
of the marital assets or
thirty-seven point three-nine-
five million dollars!!

(to Dana)

You . . . are TOASTTTTT!!
(dramatically)

Nothing further, your Honor!

A MURMUR OVERTAKES THE ROOM!

/
JUDGE STEVENS

(banging his
gavel)

Quiet! Let me see-the license
and birth certificate.

All is quiet while the Judge reviews the documents. Then:

JUDGE STEVENS

In light of this new evidence,
the court must rule in favor
of the defense. Mrs. Cole is
hereby awarded half of the
marital assets -or thirtyrseven
million three hundred and
ninety-five thousand dollars.

The courtroom ERUPTS. FLETCHER' S WON! Dana, Mr. Cole are
devastated.

MR. ALLAN

That son of bitch pulled it
off!

Mr. Allan gives Fletcher a thumbs-up; simultaneously,
Miranda gives him the finger.

JUDGE STEVENS

Order! Order!! Now i
understand both parties have
agreed to joint custody. Is
that correct?

FLETCHER AND DANA

Yes--

VIRGINIA

No! I'm contesting custody.

Fletcher freezes.

FLETCHER

What?

VIRGINIA

(re: her husband)

Payback. For him trying to prevent me from collecting my thirty-seven million.

FLETCHER

He was entitled to prevent you. You committed adultery. You only won because you're a liar, remember?

VIRGINIA

No. You pointed out that my husband took advantage of a poor underage girl. I was the victim here. And now I'm going to hit him where it hurts.

FLETCHER

But -- but -- you said he was a good father.

JUDGE STEVENS

Mr. Reid? Do we have an agreement on custody or not?

Fletcher takes a distressed look at the children.

FLETCHER

No.

JUDGE STEVENS

In that case, there will be a custody hearing tomorrow morning at nine. Court is adjourned!

He BANGS THE GAVEL. Everyone gets up, but Fletcher's attention is drawn to a commotion between Virginia and her kids.

VIRGINIA
Stop that! We're leaving now!

CHILD
I want to go with Daddy.

Fletcher watches, horrified, as she drags the kids away from their tearful father.

MR. COLE
Don't worry. I'll see you no matter what. I promise.

Mr. Allan has made his way up to Fletcher.

MR. ALLAN
(re: the commotion)
I love kids. They give you so much leverage in a case like this.
(pats Fletcher on back)
Congratulations, partner. how does it feel?

And with that question asked, as he watches poor Mr. Cole and his kids, the truth dawns on Fletcher like a sledgehammer!

FLETCHER
Excuse me. Just a second.
(to the Judge)
Your Honor? Your Honor?
Wait!

JUDGE STEVENS
We're adjourned, Mr. Reid.

FLETCHER
Screw that!! She lies and she wins?! What are we, nuts?

Everyone stops, watches Fletcher.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)
This woman -- my client -- goes down with the frequency of a nuclear submarine and we just gave her thirty seven million dollars because she's a liar! And now as an extra added little bonus, we're going to let her steal, the kids, too?

JUDGE STEVENS
Mr. Reid, you are out of
order!

FLETCHER
(screaming)
• SO' S THE HAND DRYER IN THE
MEN' S ROOM!! Do you ever stop
to ask yourself, why do people
hate us? Could it be because
what we did here today sucks?!
We don't care about the truth!
We don't want to find the
truth! We want to win! We
want to win at all costs...and
you know what the worst thing
about wanting to win so badly
is? WINNING! Winning and
finding out you're left with
nothing!

JUDGE STEVENS
That's enough, Mr. Reid --

FLETCHER
-Let' s see what I' ve done
today. I' ve helped a gold
digging slut get richer. I' m
taking this guy' s kids away.
(to Mr. Allan)
I don't like you in the least,
now I' m one of your partners!
YOU WANNA KNOW WHAT IT FEELS
LIKE MR. ALLAN? IT FEELS LIKE
SHIT! BUT TO TELL YOU IT
FEELS LIKE SHIT, FEELS FUCKING
GREAT I I

Fletcher does feel strangely fantastic. Free,

JUDGE STEVENS
That's it, Mr. Reid. I find
you in contempt!

FLETCHER
*GOOD! I' M CONTEMPTIBLE! MY
WHOLE GODDAMN LIFE IS JUST ONE
BIG FAT FIB! YOU LIKE MY
HAIR? --*
(mussing hair)
MOUSSED! SHOULDERS --
(ripping out
pads)
PADDED! SHOES --

(kicking them
off)
LIFTED! TEETH --
(pulling out
caps)
CAPPED! FIVE-NINETY A
CHICKLET!!

COMMOTION in the court. The judge BANGS HIS GAVEL!!!

JUDGE STEVENS
Bailiff! Remove Mr. Reid from
the courtroom!

FLETCHER
You wanna know the truth? Oh
yeah, let's let it rain... The
truth is is that I've traded
my life... a beautiful wife, an
incredible son for THIS PISS
POT OF BIG DOUBLE O'S!

The bailiff grabs Fletcher, forces him out...

FLETCHER
GO AHEAD, YOUR HONOR, BANG
YOUR GAVEL --- KEEP TELLING
YOURSELF YOU'RE A BIG SHOT! DO
I SENSE A CASE OF GAVEL ENVY!!
WHAT'S THAT UNDER YOUR ROBE --
INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE?!!

(the judge is
turning beet
red)

I TOUCHED A NERVE DIDN'T I?
WE'RE ALL A BUNCH OF BULLSHIT
ARTISTS!! IS THAT THE TRUTH
IN YOUR PANTS OR ARE YOU JUST
HAPPY TO SEE ME??

Fletcher is pushed passed Mr. Allan.

MR. ALLAN
You just killed your career.
I hope you're happy.

FLETCHER
I'M BEYOND HAPPY MY BUTT FACED
FRIEND--- I'M EUPHORIC!

EXT. AUDREY'S PORCH - ' DAY

A sad Max is seated on the steps. TWO other BOYS are there
with baseball equipment.

PAUL
We're going home.

EMMANUEL
Yeah, thanks for the great
game, Max.

Emanuel knocks Max's hat off. Audrey's been watching from
the door. She goes and sits by her son.

AUDREY
Max, honey. Your dad had a
very big case today. It
probably just--

MAX
I don't want to talk about it.

AUDREY
Okay.

MAX
(suddenly)
I hate dad! I hate him!

AUDREY
Honey, don't say that.

Max is really upset. It's "that look" and then some. The
look Audrey never wanted to see again. She makes a
decision.

AUDREY
Max, there's something I want
to talk to you about. . .

INT. JAIL AREA

Fletcher's handcuffed and is led to jail by TWO OFFICERS-.
There's a happy/crazedness to him now. The truth is
pouring forth, but he looks way, way off the deep end.

(desperately,
passing a phone)
Phone call!!! Phone call!!! I
get to make a phone call!!!

INT. AUDREY'S KITCHEN -- DAY

Max and Audrey at the table. The airline tickets Jerry gave her are in front of them

MAX
When would we move?

AUDREY
Soon. My semester's almost over. You only have a week left of school... You like Jerry don't you?
(he nods)

So what do you say, should we check it out? Jerry wants us to come with him tonight. He has to pick out a place to live and he really wants our help?

MAX
Could I get a sled for when it snows?

AUDREY
Of course you can.

Max thinks, then:

MAX
Okay.

INT. JAIL

Fletcher's holding a phone. He's frantic, now.

FLETCHER
(re: ringing
phone)
Answer! Answer!! Answer!!!

The phone RINGS, Audrey answers it.

AUDREY
Hello.

INTERCUT FLETCHER/AUDREY

FLETCHER
Audrey! It's Fletcher--

AUDREY
(pissed)
I can't talk now, Fletcher.
We have to pack.

FLETCHER
Wait, the most amazing thing's
happened to me! I am feeling
so good...
(realizing)
Pack?! Did you say pack?!

AUDREY
Max was sitting on the porch
again, waiting for his dad. I
won't let you do this to him
anymore. I won't let you do
this to me.

FLETCHER
Audrey, wait. Please, I need
to talk to you. I swear, I'm
a changed man. Just come to
the courthouse with a thousand
dollars and bail me out...
Hello?
(to a cop)
One more call!! I need
another call!!

INT. JAIL CELL - DAY

Fletcher is pacing back and forth. A GROUP OF TOUGH PRISONERS are on the far side of the cell, trying to stay as far away from Fletcher as they can.

FLETCHER
And what about our water
supply? You don't think "the
man's" dumped enough toxins to
render every dick in this cell
as lifeless as a beached
minnow? You're damn right!
"The man" does anything he
wants. We're nothing but
puppets... Little game pieces
they move back and forth.

A DEPUTY appears.

DEPUTY
Mr. Reid. ^

FLETCHER
That's me. Fletcher T. Reid.
Pawn no. 332-154-9867.

DEPUTY
You made bail. Some woman.

INT. OUTER AREA

Fletcher rushes in.

FLETCHER
Audrey?
(he spots)
Greta?!

GRETA
Am I too late? Have you been
sexually molested yet? I
could circle the block.

FLETCHER
Greta! Greta!! Look at
you, you well preserved,
underpaid, overworked,
underappreciated thing you.
Give me a hug! You came and
got me out!! Hug me!!

GRETA
(totally wierded
out)
Yes, well, I heard you went
all noble in front of Mr.
Allan so--

FLETCHER
You know what?! I love you.
I loveyouloveyouloveyou. I
want to hug you. Come here..,

GRETA
Mr. Reid, what has gotten into
to you?!

FLETCHER
Just the truth, Greta.
Fifteen years of being stuck
in a lie is nowhere near as
powerful as one day of being
stuck in the truth.

(checks his
watch)
Oh, my God!! I have to go!
Thanks again, Greta!
(as he runs off
he calls back to
her)
By the way, the truth is that
I need you and I couldn't file
a paperclip without you!

Greta smiles, then catches herself, and quickly regains her
"composure".

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS/INT. BMW

Fletcher's driving like a madman...

FLETCHER
(on his phone)
Answeransweransweranswer...

We HEAR a RECORDED VOICE:

VOICE
The subscriber you called is
either unavailable or outside
the calling area.

FLETCHER
Shit!!

INT. LAX UNITED TERMINAL - DAY

Audrey and Max meet Jerry by the ticket counter. Max is
wearing the Dodger cap his dad gave him. Jerry surprises
him with a Boston Red Sox hat.

JERRY
A little going away present.
I was gonna get you a bowl of
clam chowder but they only had
Manhattan.

AUDREY
Say thank you, Max.

MAX
Thanks.

Max takes off the hat his dad gave him and replaces it with
the Boston hat.

INT. BMW - DAY

Fletcher's on the phone. He sails passed a parked POLICE CAR.

FLETCHER

(into phone)

Shelton, Jerry Shelton.
What time's that flight leave?

7:50. Thank you.

(checks his
watch)

Oh, shit! Shit!! Shit!

Fletcher spots the FLASHING LIGHTS.

FLETCHER

Shiiiiit!!!

He pulls over -- so quick he jumps the curb.

POLICE OFFICER

Would you step out of the car,
please?

Fletcher obeys.

FLETCHER

Listen; I know I'm driving a
little crazy but i have an
emergency to attend to...

The cop's just getting off his walkie talkie.

POLICE OFFICER

I'm impounding this vehicle.

FLETCHER

Why? What for? For changing
lanes?

POLICE OFFICER

I just ran your tags through
the computer. You've got
seventeen unpaid parking
tickets.

FLETCHER

No! I paid them! This
morning! That's the truth! I
swear!!

POLICE OFFICER

Not according to the computer.

FLETCHER

The computer is wrong! It
' hasn't been updated. The
computer's a liar!

POLICE OFFICER

You can straighten it out at
the impound yard.

FLETCHER

(checks his
watch, firmly)

NO!

POLICE OFFICER

No?

FLETCHER

That's right, no! I'm not
gonna lose my son because some
stupid clerk was too lazy to
update the computer.

(getting cockier.
as he goes)

Now if you want to follow me,
you can follow me and take the
car after I get where I'm
going. I'm a lawyer and I
know my rights! Understand?!

CUT TO:

A TOW TRUCK drives away with Fletcher's car, leaving
Fletcher stranded.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

Fletcher frantically tries to hail a...

FLETCHER

Taxi! Taxi!!

No luck. He spots

A PAYPHONE

digs through the Yellow Pages. Finds "Ten Minute Taxi".
Yes! He fishes for change. Shit! He doesn't have any!!

FLETCHER

(looking
heavenward)

Noooo!!!

He spots a man walking by.

FLETCHER

'Scuse me, sir. Do you have
any - -

The man turns. It's the same BEGGAR Fletcher was rude to
outside the courthouse.

BEGGAR

Change? Absolutely.

He continues walking.

FLETCHER

Could you spare some?

BEGGAR

Unquestionably.

The beggar continues on.

FLETCHER

Alright, I get your point.
But this is a crisis! Look,
I'll give you ten bucks.

The beggar pulls out a quarter and holds it up.

BEGGAR

(admiring
quarter)

It's so shiny and new.

FLETCHER

Twenty.

BEGGAR

Minted in Denver. Imagine
that.

FLETCHER

Thirty-four. That's all I
have.

A moment as the beggar thinks, then:

BEGGAR

It's worth twice that to screw
you.

He walks off, grinning.

FLETCHER

JERKOFF!

BEGGAR

LAWYER!

Fletcher turns, spots a familiar building in the distance.

FLETCHER

My office!!

INT. LOBBY FLETCHER'S OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

He starts in the front door, when a SECURITY GUARD stops him

SECURITY GUARD

Whoa, where do you think
you're going?

FLETCHER

I just need to use the phone
to call a cab. I work here.

MR. ALLAN (O. S.)

Used to work here.

Mr. Allan has just exited the elevator.

MR. ALLAN

(to security
guard)

Son, that man is trespassing.

The guard starts toward Fletcher threateningly.

FLETCHER

Hold it!

(to Mr. Allan)

I've got ten years worth of
dirt on you and this firm, and
I'm in the kind of mood today
to get a lot off my chest.
You let me use the phone or I
start talking!!

CUT TO:

Fletcher's is THROWN ON HIS ASS in the street. Mr. Allan
has watched from atop the stairs of the building.

MR. ALLAN

Still euphoric, Reid?

He goes back inside. • Fletcher starts to get up when a CAR
SCREECHES to a HALT, inches away.

MAN'S VOICE (O . S .)

Fletcher! •

It's PHILIP.

PHILIP

Seven-thirty... It's Karaoke
time!

Fletcher runs up and HUGS the astonished man,

FLETCHER

PHILIP!! LOOK AT YOU!!! MY
PHILIP!!

Fletcher KISSES HIM ON THE LIPS.

INT. PHILIP'S CAR - DAY

Philip's driving Fletcher.

FLETCHER

You're saving my life, Philip.

PHILIP

You know, it's funny, but for
some reason I was beginning to
think you didn't like me.
Isn't that silly?

FLETCHER .

No. It's not silly. I don't
like you.

PHILIP

What?

FLETCHER

I *don't* like you. I'm sorry.
I find you boring. I hate
charades. And you wouldn't
know a good time if it sat on
your face.

(feels bad)

I'm sorry. It was easier than
telling you how I really felt.
Are you upset?

A moment, then:

PHILIP

No. To be honest, I don't
like you either. You treat
people like obstacles and you
cheat at charades. .

FLETCHER
Then why are you always trying
to socialize with me?

PHILIP
You're a client. I figured if
I didn't try to be your
friend, you'd get a new
accountant.

FLETCHER
Philip, I don't like you as a
person, but I'm crazy about
you as my accountant. I'd
never hire a new accountant.
Never!

PHILIP
So we don't have to like each
other anymore?

FLETCHER -
Not at all.

PHILIP
All right. Sooner I get you
to the airport, sooner I can
dump your sorry ass off.

EXT. AIRPORT -- DAY

Philip's car skids to a stop. Fletcher jumps out.

INT. LAX TERMINAL - DAY .

Fletcher races in.

FLETCHER
Bedelayed. Bedelayed. Fog,
rain, something, anything...

He sees the DEPARTURE BOARD

"Flight 69. Departs 7:50. On Time. Gate 17."

Fletcher looks at the clock -- It's 7:46!! Holy Shit!!

INT. LAX ESCALATOR

Fletcher pushes his way HE a crowded escalator. Past
people standing on the left despite the SIGN that says
STAND ON RIGHT.

FLETCHER
Excuse me. . . excuse me. . . Come
on folks, let's let the
frantic man pass... Sorry...
Thank... you... Standing on
the right, passing on the
left. They can't make this-
deal any easier than it is...
Come on... coming through...

At the top,- a WOMAN in a NURSES UNIFORM asks for money...

WOMAN
Help the poor?...

FLETCHER
(speeding past)
I don't trust you. I don't
know what the hell that
uniform is. Sorry.
(a Hare Krishna
tries to stop
him)
NOT NOW, TOGA BOY!

INT. LAX - SECURITY AREA

Fortunately, there's no line at the metal detector.
Fletcher races right by but SETS OFF THE ALARM

INSPECTOR
Please step through again.

FLETCHER
Ahhh!!! Damn. . . ;

Fletcher frantically tosses his keys, cufflinks, his Rolex
into a tray.

He tries again. It BUZZES again!

FLETCHER
What? I'tii practically naked!

A guy in a TURBAN passes over him with a DETECTOR WAND.

FLETCHER
It's called a ZIPPER, Hodgy...

The wand BEEPS over Fletcher's front pocket. He reaches in
and pulls out the now familiar BLUE PEN...

INT. LAX - DEPARTURE CONCOURSE

Fletcher races by Gate 15, 16, gets to 17... but sees the PLANE Slowly TAXIING AWAY.

FLETCHER

Nooo!!!

Fletcher spots a door marked "NOT AN EXIT". Goes for it when a FLIGHT ATTENDANT interrupts.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Can I help you?

FLETCHER

Look out!! ! --
(truthful)
-NOTHING'S COMING!!

The woman raises her eyebrows and looks anyway. And Fletcher BOLTS THROUGH THE EXIT!

EXT. TARMAC - DAY

He scurries down a flight of stairs calling after the plane which is moving away.

No way he'll catch it.

Then, he sees a MECHANIC working on a MOBILE STAIRS UNIT (These are the steps they pull up to planes) Fletcher gets an insane idea. . .

The worker hears an ENGINE START, looks up to SEE FLETCHER in the truck, driving off, TOWING THE STAIRS.

WORKER

Hey!! Hey!!!!

But Fletcher's gone.

EXT. AIRPLANE - DAY

Fletcher's DRIVING THE STAIRS trying to catch up with the plane. GROUND WORKERS react.

Soon, the "stairs" are racing alongside the plane.

Fletcher looks for signs of Audrey and Max but he's too low to see in the plane.

He grabs the TOOL BOX' on the passenger's seat, -puts it on the accelerator, pinning it to the floor. Then, he CLIMBS THE STEPS!

The "stairs" sway back and forth as he reaches the top.

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY - MOVING

PASSENGERS calmly read while outside FLETCHER speeds along, WAVING HIS ARMS like a maniac. The ENGINE NOISE drowns out his call for...

FLETCHER
MAX?!! AUDREY?!!

A STEWARDESS stands in the aisle, giving the safety lecture.

STEWARDESS
In case of a water landing,
please use your seat cushion
as -

•Her MOUTH DROPS as she notices Fletcher.

EXT. TARMAC - DAY

Fletcher is BANGING on the windows. People on the plane POINT, STARE in amazement.

Fletcher looks ahead, SEES the stairs about to CRASH INTO THE WING! Fletcher desperately fiddles with some controls. At the last second, finds the one that LOWERS THE STAIRS.

He surfs under the wing...

. . . and RAISES UP THE STAIRS at the other side.

Fletcher's at the front of the plane, where he finally spots . .

MAX, AUDREY AND JERRY SEATED IN THE BULKHEAD

Max has the window seat, Audrey and Jerry are next to him. Audrey has on her headset and Jerry is looking for his seatbelt. NEITHER SEES FLETCHER.

Fletcher SCREAMS to get their attention. But it's TOO NOISY.

Then, Fletcher looks ahead and his EYES GO WIDE!

FLETCHER'S POV

The RUNWAY is ENDING!.

Just then, Max looks up... SEES HIS DAD. Audrey is now trying to help Jerry find his seat belt.

AUDREY
(checks under his
seat)
It's right here, honey.

MAX
Mom! Mom!!

AUDREY
Just a second, Max.

MAX
Mom, it's dad!

AUDREY
What? What about dad?

Audrey turns. Then she sees Fletcher WAVING weakly...

AUDREY
Fletcher?!

AT THAT INSTANT -- THE PLANE MAKES A SHARP TURN!

BUT THE STAIRS DON'T! They keeps going straight, heading •
right for the END OF THE RUNWAY and a parked LOADED LUGGAGE
CART. . -

And BAM! FLETCHER, THE STAIRS, THE LUGGAGE ALL GO FLYING!

Audrey strains to watch as FLETCHER lands hard ONTO A
MOUNTAIN OF BAGGAGE!

CLOSE ON FLETCHER

With all the strength he has he lifts his head, sees he's
in one piece, and then COLLAPSES IN DEFEAT.

CUT TO:

INT. JAIL CELL - NIGHT

Fletcher's BANGED UP pretty good. His head is BANDAGED.
He puts a COLD COMPRESS to his BRUISED FOREHEAD and WINCES.

FLETCHER
(mumbles to
himself)
Oh boy, the truth hurts. Yes
indeed.

DEPUTY
Mr. Reid. Someone made bail
for you.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Fletcher comes out LIMPING, totally dishevelled, missing a shoe, and still holding the compress.

FLETCHER
(weakly)
Greta? Is that you?

He looks up and is surprised to see AUDREY and JERRY waiting for him just outside the door.

Max is sitting at the bottom of the stairs, still ANGRY. He sees his dad, then quickly turns away.

FLETCHER
(to Audrey and
Jerry, trying to
seem chipper)
Sorry I made you miss your
flight, not really.
(no response)
You're obviously a little
upset, not that I blame you...
although I'll bet you'll still
get the bonus miles. . .

AUDREY
Fletcher, are you crazy?
What were you doing?

FLETCHER
That's two questions. A; Yes,
but I think the legal term is
temporarily insane. And B; I
was trying to finally have
that talk with you about
Boston.

Audrey's patience are growing thin...

FLETCHER
Okay, okay... The whole truth
and nothing but the truth,
(with difficulty,
sincerely)
I tried to stop the plane
because it was taking off with
my life... you and Max.

This comes as a surprise to Audrey. Not just what Fletcher said, but the way he said it.

FLETCHER

I know you've met somebody...
somebody pretty great... and
the truth is I wish you didn't
but you did and... All I'm
asking is... Please don't move
to Boston. Please don't take
Max away.

She's definitely moved by Fletcher, but not convinced.

AUDREY

You can come visit anytime.
It's only a four hour flight.

FLETCHER

I don't want to visit him.
That's what I've been doing--
visiting him, dropping by,
stopping in. I want to be in
his life. I don't want to be
some jerk that sees him at
Easter. I want to be his
father.

Fletcher turns to Jerry.

FLETCHER

I know I have no right to ask,
but can I talk you out of
taking that job? I can get
you a better job here in L. A.
I've got all kinds of
connections... what do you do
again?

JERRY

I design security systems.

FLETCHER

How symbolic. Okay great.
You know Pac-Tec?

JERRY

The biggest.

FLETCHER

One of their systems shorted
out and burned down a
supermarket. I got them off.
Another proud day for justice.
If I ask them they'll beat
your Boston offer in two
seconds. . .

AUDREY

Don't put Jerry in the middle.

JERRY

It's okay.

(to Fletcher)

Boston means this

(snaps his
fingers)

to me. All I want is for this
lady and Max to be happy.
Preferably, with me. Whatever
they want, I'll go along with.

They both look to Audrey.

AUDREY

All I want is for Max to be
happy.

Audrey looks over to Max seated at the bottom of the
stairs. He's still upset.

AUDREY

You better know your jury.
You're hot exactly Max's hero
today.

FLETCHER

Just let me present my case.

Fletcher walks over,, tries to be playful, starts WALKING,
TALKING LIKE THE TERMINATOR.

FLETCHER/TERMINATOR

I have been sent from the
future to destroy you. . .
Argghhh!

(no response, a
beat)

You mad at me?

Max nods. Fletcher's at a loss for how to begin. Then:

FLETCHER

You wanted me to stop lying.
But lying isn't the problem ..
Why we lie ~ that's the
problem. Sometimes we lie to
make someone else feel better.
But sometimes we lie because
the truth gets in our way...

(touches him)

But being an adult means you
sacrifice some things for more

important things. Much more important things. I was so stupid, Max.

(pointing to his own head)

Malfunction in vector one. All this time you've been here and I could see you anytime I felt like it. And I... didn't. Please don't go to Boston. Max, I love you more than anything else in the world and you know it's true. I couldn't say it if it weren't true. Not today.

A moment as Max studies his father, then:

MAX

(to Audrey)

He's telling the truth, Mom. He's not allowed to lie. I made a wish and anything Dad says has to be the truth.

(to Fletcher) ..

Right?

But Fletcher's looking at his watch...

FLETCHER

Max. .. it's 9:22.

AUDREY

What?

FLETCHER

Max, you made the wish at 9:15. I've been able to lie for the last seven minutes.

Max steps away from Fletcher.

MAX

So then, you were...

FLETCHER

No! It wasn't a lie. I just wanted to be honest with you and tell you -- there was no wish to guarantee it anymore. You just have to believe me.

Max looks at Audrey, who is letting Max decide for himself
Max looks at Fletcher and tries to decide.

MAX
(to Audrey)
Mommy... do we have to go to
Boston?

Audrey looks at Jerry, then back at Max.

AUDREY
No. We don't have to.

Fletcher hugs his son -- the kind of hug that says "I'll
never let you go."

MAX
(to Fletcher)
Can we play catch tomorrow?

Fletcher smiles. . .

EXT. PARK - DAY

A beautiful park with a baseball diamond. Fletcher is
seated on a bench, waiting. He's dressed in sweats, with a
baseball glove. Soon, Jerry, Audrey, and Max pull up...

MAX
Dad! !

FLETCHER
Maximum! !

Fletcher picks Max up.

MAX
Transformer!!! .

Fletcher and Max do the TRANSFORMER ROUTINE again...

FLETCHER
Malfunction in vector seven.
I have lost control of my
affection reflex...

Fletcher starts KISSING MAX on the head over and over. He
sees Audrey.

FLETCHER
Procreate! Procreate!

AUDREY
(playfully)
Fletcher... You're gonna lose
a limb--

MAX
Come on, dad, let's play
catch!!

FLETCHER
Sure . . .
(starts to toss
Max)
Here you go, mom.
(Max screams)
Oh, you mean with a ball...

He puts Max down. Max runs into position. Fletcher stops for a second and turns to Jerry, man to man.

FLETCHER
I take back every dirty,
dishonest thing I ever said
about you, wrote about you,
faxed about you, E-mailed
about you.

JERRY
Appreciated.

Fletcher tosses the baseball up and down.

FLETCHER
So, you up for a little
friendly competition?

JERRY
No, you go play with your son.

FLETCHER
I wasn't talking about
baseball.

A slow smile from Jerry. Fletcher winks and tosses the ball to Max.

FLETCHER
(to Max)
Alright, it's time to show you
the old Fletcher Reid change
up . . .

Fletcher winds up in an EXAGGERATED SUPER FAST MOTION, then instantly shifts to SUPER SLOW MOTION. Max CRACKS UP. Audrey LAUGHS. Jerry can't help but smile, too.

There may be better things in life... but at this moment, it's hard to think of a single one. Honestly.

THE END