

## ALSO BY PAUL GUAY & STEPHEN MAZUR

### TELEPLAYS

The Wonder Years: Truth or Dare  
Married... With Children: Covet Thy Bundy

### SCREENPLAYS

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The C-Note  
Abra-Cadaver  
The Christmas Spirit  
Magicians Anonymous  
The Little Rascals<sup>1</sup>  
Mr. Magoo<sup>2</sup>  
Liar, Liar  
Phreaking<sup>5</sup>  
Spy vs. Spy  
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Return of the Little Rascals  
The Breakers<sup>5</sup>  
Slap Her, She's French<sup>5</sup>  
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## ALSO BY PAUL GUAY

### POETRY COLLECTIONS

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Night Ritual  
Reap From Midnight-Bladed Seeds  
Swim Cold at Noon in Indigo  
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### COMEDY SKETCHES

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### PLAYS

Closing Time  
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<sup>1</sup> co-screenplay and co-story credit; <sup>2</sup> no relation to the 1997 film; <sup>3</sup> revisions by; <sup>4</sup> a draft polished by; <sup>5</sup> co-author; <sup>6</sup> co-author, co-story credit; <sup>7</sup> co-story credit

# INTRODUCTION

by Paul Guay & Stephen Mazur

Dear Reader: You are about to encounter the shooting draft of *LIAR, LIAR*. If, however, you would like to read the screenplay as Nature intended it to be, along with a different Introduction, please buy *LIAR, LIAR: the screenplay, writers' draft*. Thank-you for your moral and financial support.

-- The Writers

On March 18, 1990, we jotted down an idea for a movie: "For one day, a guy who's been a liar must tell the truth."

On March 18, 1997, we attended the world premiere of *Liar, Liar*.

What happened in the intervening seven years?

Well, first we turned the idea into a pitch. We hadn't decided whether our hero should be involved in real estate, politics, boxing or divorce law, but in 1990 we pitched the basic story to nine different companies.

All of them turned it down.

We had moved on to other projects, including *The Little Rascals* (1994), when on April 14, 1994, Imagine executive David Friendly mentioned that Brian Grazer had an idea for a film about a liar. Before David could tell us Brian's idea, we jumped in and told David ours.

Moments later we found ourselves telling the same idea to Brian in two sentences.

Moments later we heard Brian saying, "We're going to make this movie!"

A whirlwind acceptance four years after the film world had greeted the idea with yawning indifference? We left Imagine with our heads spinning, asking each other, "What the hell just happened?"

What the hell happened was, we got hired to turn our idea into a movie.

In August we had an outline... in November we had a first draft of the screenplay... in March 1995 we had a second draft... in June we had a third draft... then Jim Carrey was signed to star... Tom Shadyac was signed to direct... and, with input from Imagine and the director and the star, in March 1996 we had a fourth draft... then a fifth...

We moved on to other projects, including polishing a draft of *Mouse Hunt* (1997), and eventually the movie began shooting.

*Liar, Liar* opened on March 21, 1997, and reached a number of milestones. It was the fourth-highest-grossing release of the year, the second-most-successful film of Jim Carrey's career, and Imagine's most successful film ever. Jim Carrey was nominated for a Golden Globe Award as Best Actor in a Motion Picture (Musical or Comedy), and the film won the People's Choice Award as Favorite Comedy Motion Picture of 1997.

Our heads have slowed down a little bit, but sometimes, if you catch them in just the right light, you can still see them spinning.

"LIAR, LIAR"

Screenplay

by

Paul Guay & Stephen Mazur

September 11, 1996

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.

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."

CONTINUED

1 CONTINUED

1

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.

2 INT. COURTROOM -- DAY

2

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 -- You're walking from church, alone, in one of the toughest parts 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. The streetlight flashes on something shiny in his hand... No time to think!!

CONTINUED

Suddenly, Fletcher makes SLASHING MOTIONS with the "shiny" object. 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 of someone to notify, you take his wallet, fully intending to return it. You leap into the man's Lexus to head for assistance, when suddenly a police car speeds up. You breathe a sigh of relief: "Oh, joy!! Help has finally arrived!" But do the police applaud your initiative? Are you praised for your heroism? No -- you're thrown to the ground, forcibly cuffed, your rights are not read to you, but shouted at you in a very hostile tone. Now ask yourself, at this point do you have any choice but to lash out blindly at your attacker?

Fletcher points accusingly to the "attacker," a FEMALE COP with a FAT LIP.

FLETCHER

Woman or no woman, you put those guns on you become a threat. A loose cannon. And possibly, from my client's perspective, the deadly enforcer of a police state!

(MORE)

CONTINUED

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

I only wish someone had strolled by with a camcorder at that glorious moment in the history of our quote democracy!! No wonder people are afraid to reach out and help each other. "I don't want to get involved," that's what they say. My client tried. And what did he get?

(gestures to the room)

All this.

Fletcher leans over the jury box, makes eye contact with an ELDERLY FEMALE JUROR wearing A CRUCIFIX.

FLETCHER

(sincerely)

I'm reminded of the story of the Good Samaritan. Luke 10 verse 25. The message of that story was "reward those who help their neighbors."

(dramatic pause)

What message will you send?

Fletcher returns to his seat. The old woman is visibly moved.

3 EXT. COURTHOUSE - AFTERNOON

3

Fletcher bounds down the stairs. He passes a fellow lawyer (CHRIS DARDEN).

LAWYER (CHRIS DARDEN)

Hi Fletcher! How'd it go in there?

FLETCHER

Oh just another victory for the wrongly accused.

LAWYER (CHRIS DARDEN)

(sarcastically)

Yeah, right.

The lawyer exits.

Fletcher's HUGE CLIENT catches up, removes his sportcoat revealing muscular arms and violent-looking TATTOOS.

CONTINUED

CLIENT

Great job Mr. Reid, want your  
coat back?

FLETCHER

(waves him off)

No, I'm sure you'll be needing it  
again soon.

CONTINUED

3 CONTINUED

3

A PUBLICIST carrying a clipboard approaches Fletcher.

PUBLICIST  
Mr. Reid, do you have a moment?

FLETCHER  
No, I'm sorry. I'm late. It's my day to be with my son.

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

Fletcher instantly shifts directions.

FLETCHER  
Yeah? How's my hair?

And he's off to woo several REPORTERS.

4 EXT. SUBURBAN PORCH - AFTERNOON

4

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 pulls up. Max races to him, delighted. Fletcher jumps out of the car and grabs Max, wrestling.

MAX  
Dad!

FLETCHER  
Maximillian! How you doing little buddy?

MAX  
Good.

FLETCHER  
Yeah, me too. Except this arm has really been bothering me. It's as if it has a mind of it's own.

CONTINUED

MAX  
 (knows what's  
 coming)  
 Oh, no dad...

FLETCHER  
 ...I'm becoming... THE CLAW!!

Fletcher TICKLES MAX like crazy.

FLETCHER  
 Run, boy. Run... Save yourself.  
 No one can stop it!

Max playfully takes cover behind Audrey.

MAX  
 Do the Claw to Mom, Dad! Do the  
 claw to Mom!!

FLETCHER  
 Okay.

Fletcher starts his hand towards Audrey whose look says  
 "don't even try it!"

FLETCHER (CONT'D)  
 Uh-oh. The Claw's only weakness.  
 Sub-zero temperatures. Yipe-yipe-  
 yipe...

AUDREY  
 (pleasantly)  
 Did you have any trouble finding  
 the place?

FLETCHER  
 (confused)  
 Finding -- ? I used to live h--  
 Oh! I get it.  
 (to Max)  
 I'm late.  
 (to Audrey)  
 I ran out of gas. The gauge is  
 broken or something. I had to  
push it...  
 (straining)  
 ...all the way up this hill.  
 Fortunately, I'm endowed with the  
 strength of ten men...

Audrey doesn't want to, but she can't help at least  
 chuckling a little.

CONTINUED

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.

CONTINUED

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

FLETCHER/DAN GEORGE

The young boy must grow to be a warrior. Who better to guide him than Rick Rude and Randy Macho-man Savage in the Cage of Death.

Audrey and Max can't help but LAUGH.

FLETCHER

He must learn the sleeper hold, the pile driver, and the purple nurple. 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 is nice and friendly, but with a touch of formality about him.

JERRY

Hello, Max!

FLETCHER

(under his  
breath)  
Oh, good.

JERRY

Look at you. You must grow by the minute.

Jerry gives Max "five."

JERRY (CONT'D)

Fletcher, a pleasure to see you.

Jerry kisses Audrey on the lips.

FLETCHER

What? No kiss for me?

Jerry laughs, but his attention is on Audrey. He holds her hand and talks to her as if every word really matters.

JERRY

How are you?

CONTINUED

AUDREY

I'm... fine.

JERRY

How can I make your day better?

AUDREY

(at a loss)

Um... I....

FLETCHER

I know how you can make my day better.

Audrey lightly gives Fletcher a BACKHAND SLAP to the arm.

AUDREY

(to Jerry)

Oh! I've got more boxes for you.

JERRY

You're an angel.

FLETCHER

Boxes?

AUDREY

I told you a couple of weeks ago. He's moving to Boston Saturday.

FLETCHER

Oh, right, the job, the thing, the... what do you do again?

JERRY

(patiently)

I'm a hospital administrator.

FLETCHER

Right, right! Well, we're gonna miss you, buddy. It won't be the same around here without old....

JERRY

Jerry.

FLETCHER

Jerry!

AUDREY

The boxes are in my car.

JERRY

Those can wait. I made this young man a promise.

CONTINUED

He produces a baseball from his pocket.

JERRY (CONT'D)  
Ready for a quick catch?

MAX  
Sure.

JERRY  
Good-bye, Fletcher.

FLETCHER  
Hey, really, good luck.

CONTINUED

Fletcher grits his teeth as he watches Jerry run off with Max.

FLETCHER  
I forgot the boyfriend was moving.

AUDREY  
Jerry. You know his name is Jerry.  
And yes he's moving.

Audrey goes to her car. Fletcher follows.

FLETCHER  
I'm sorry. I hated him a lot less  
than your other boyfriends. It  
wasn't serious, was it?

AUDREY  
Um... Semi-serious.

FLETCHER  
You guys aren't... you know...  
(cringes,  
implies sex)

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

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

CONTINUED

AUDREY

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

FLETCHER

(pretends he's been hit below the belt)

Oooh! And the ref takes a point away.

Audrey is watching Max and Jerry play catch. Jerry is instructing Max in one of the finer points of throwing a ball.

AUDREY

Max is going to miss him.

FLETCHER

(a little hurt)

I'll be here.

Audrey lets this pass.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

Hey, Max, we should get going.

MAX

Okay.

(to Jerry)

'Bye.

JERRY

So long, Champ.

AUDREY

Bye, Max. We'll pick you up in the morning.

FLETCHER

Bye. Bye, bye.

(flipping Max the keys)

You driving?

Max rolls his eyes.

5 EXT./INT. AUDREY'S BMW - DAY

5

Fletcher is driving, Max beside him.

MAX

Dad, are we really going to go to wrestling?

CONTINUED

FLETCHER

Absolutely, Max Factor. We just  
have to stop by the office for one  
minute.

Max SIGHS. He's heard this before.

6 EXT. SKYSCRAPER - AFTERNOON

6

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)

I'm all out. Sorry.

7 INT. SKYSCRAPER LOBBY - AFTERNOON

7

Fletcher grabs The Daily Journal, pays for it with a  
HANDFUL OF CHANGE. His son takes this in. Fletcher  
WHISTLES, walks on.

8 OMITTED

8

9 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.

10 INT. RECEPTION AREA OF LAW OFFICES - AFTERNOON

10

The elevator doors open, revealing Fletcher who exits.  
Max walks aside him.

RECEPTION AREA - CONTINUOUS

The receptionist, JANE, greets them. Jane has an ODD  
HAIRDO. Like a bad Roseanne Roseannadanna.

JANE  
Hi, Mr. Reid.

FLETCHER  
(shocked)  
Whoa, hey. Did you do something  
to your hair?

JANE  
(not liking her  
hair)  
Yeah, it's too short isn't it?

CONTINUED

FLETCHER

No, no. I mean, that's the thing nowadays, right? Isn't that the thing?

JANE

He said it would frame my face good.

FLETCHER

(trying not to laugh)

Well, that's exactly what it does. It totally frames your face.

(trying to get away)

I'm just gonna go in the office.

Fletcher COVERS a LAUGH by CLEARING HIS THROAT in an EXAGGERATED MANNER. Jane watches him walk away, looks slightly suspicious, but let's it go.

11 INT. HALLWAY OF LAW OFFICES - AFTERNOON

11

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

FLETCHER

Hey Pete -- did you lose a little weight?

PETE is corpulent.

PETE

I don't know, maybe...

FLETCHER

Looks and personality. Double threat man.

Another COLLEAGUE calls out to Fletcher...

RANDY

Hey, Mr. Reid.

FLETCHER

(doesn't know his name)

Hey... man.

RANDY

It's Randy.

FLETCHER

I know...

CONTINUED

11 CONTINUED

11

A guy with a notepad and a HUGE WHITEHEAD ZIT turns to Fletcher.

ZIT GUY

Takin' lunch orders, Mr. Reid.  
Anything?

Fletcher tries not to stare at his nose.

FLETCHER

I'm ah... full. From breakfast.

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 got you  
something wonderful.

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

MAX

Yeah?  
(looks at dad)

FLETCHER

Yeah, you bet. Uh, why don't you  
play in my office for a minute? Go  
fax something... Sue somebody for  
everything they got. We'll be  
leaving in a second.

Max heads into the office. Fletcher closes the door behind him.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

Damn! I completely forgot.

GRETA

Oh, there's a surprise.

Greta produces a wrapped GIFT.

CONTINUED

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 to confirm your meeting tomorrow.

FLETCHER

Strep throat. No, some kind of virus. What's going around?

GRETA

Asian flu.

FLETCHER

Great!

GRETA

(makes a note)

And your mother called.

FLETCHER

I'm on vacation.

GRETA

This is your fifth week.

FLETCHER

Snowed in. Phones are down.

CONTINUED

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 feet. How much ass do I have to kiss to make partner in this damn place. 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 judgment on my win today!

GRETA

(dry)

I'll get right on it.

Fletcher turns -- and pretends to be surprised.

FLETCHER

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

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

MIRANDA

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

FLETCHER

(feigning  
puzzlement;  
then)

Oh, that's right. You folks are meeting again soon. I've just been keeping myself so busy, I haven't even thought about it. Just work and sleep. Work and

(MORE)

CONTINUED

11 CONTINUED 4

11

FLETCHER (CONT'D)  
 sleep... But that's how I am when  
 I feel appreciated... Anyway, I've  
 got a client in my office. Better  
 not keep him waiting...

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

Before Fletcher answers, we:

CUT TO:

12 INT. FLETCHER'S OFFICE - EVENING

12

A sad Max sits on Fletcher's big sofa. Fletcher enters  
 carrying two boxes of documents. Max knows what that  
 means.

MAX  
 We're not going, are we?

FLETCHER  
 Of course we are. A promise is a  
 promise.

13 INT. WRESTLING ARENA - NIGHT

13

AN ANIMATED WRESTLING MATCH IN PROGRESS. THE CROWD CHEERS  
 WILDLY.

MAX  
 Dad, look. Look!!

Fletcher is totally focused on a legal file.

FLETCHER  
 (barely looking  
 up)  
 I'm watching. I'm watching.  
 Wooo! Yeah. Kill 'em.

One WRESTLER flies out of the ring into the seats. The  
 OTHER WRESTLER beats him right next to Fletcher.

MAX  
 Dad, you're missing it.

FLETCHER  
 (making notes)  
 Hold on, hold on, hold on.

CONTINUED

13 CONTINUED

13

FAKE BLOOD SPURTS across one of Fletcher's documents. He gets mad, wipes the page with his sleeve.

FLETCHER

Damn it!

As the fight continues, PUSH IN ON MAX, sad.

14 INT. RESTAURANT - EVENING

14

Audrey and Jerry are having a romantic dinner.

Audrey is eating with a hearty appetite, but Jerry is ignoring his food and watching her. She's not aware that he's staring. She's making "mm" noises, enjoying the food. She looks up and discovers Jerry watching her. She becomes self-conscious.

AUDREY

(mouth full)

What?...

She starts checking her chin and blouse for food.

JERRY

Sometimes I just get pleasure from looking at you.

AUDREY

(mouth still full)

Oh... thank you.

(swallows)

JERRY

(very seriously)

Audrey, there are moments in life that you know are critical. Choices that have to be made upon which all one's future happiness will depend. This is one of those moments.

AUDREY

(nervously)

What are you saying? I --

JERRY

Will you marry me?

She's STUNNED.

AUDREY

But you're --

CONTINUED

JERRY

I know. I'm moving to Boston. I want you and Max to come with me. Audrey, I've been giving this a lot of thought. You know I'm not prone to wild, spontaneous flights of romantic fancy. You and I together is something that just makes too much sense to ignore. I'm ready, I think you're ready. I love Max, you love Max. It's right. It fits. But if I go to Boston now without our settling this, it's going to disappear. A lost opportunity. So what do you say?

She's still stunned.

15 INT. FLETCHER'S APARTMENT - MORNING

15

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

Hey, Creepy. Happy birthday. How old are you? Twenty-two? Twenty-three?

MAX

I'm five, dad.

CONTINUED

FLETCHER  
 (scribbles note)  
 Okay, return the beer keg and  
 cancel the dancing girls. I guess  
 this is all I have for you then.  
 (produces a  
 present)

Max eyes it with wonder.

MAX  
 What is it?

FLETCHER  
 (no idea)  
 It's... it's...  
 (it hits him)  
 ...a surprise. Alright, it's a  
 pony. Just open it.

Max 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)  
 Cool, let's play catch. I'm gonna  
 be Nomo! And you can be Jose  
 Conseco, Dad! Can we play, Dad?  
 Can we play?

Max beams.

FLETCHER  
 Absolutely. Right after your party  
 tonight, we'll do it. You and me.  
 I've just got to really concentrate  
 on this right now.

Max nods sadly as Fletcher turns back to his work.

Jerry and Audrey are driving to pick up Max.

JERRY  
 If you said 'yes' we could tell  
 Max, right now. Also, I could get  
 the plane tickets, I could --

AUDREY  
(pressured)  
Oh, this is just...

JERRY  
I know I'm rushing you. I have no choice. I'm looking at a new house in Boston this weekend. I want it to be a house that we choose. Both of us.

AUDREY  
What about my job? I've been at UCLA three years --

JERRY  
I did some research.

He pulls a piece of paper out of his pocket.

JERRY (CONT'D)  
There are more four-year universities per capita in New England than anywhere else in the world. A woman with your abilities? Please....

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

17 EXT. FLETCHER'S APARTMENT

17

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

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

JERRY  
Happy birthday, Max!

Jerry gives Max light punches on the arm.

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

FLETCHER  
He struck the child. Did you see that?

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

CONTINUED

FLETCHER

Incredibly brutal. Intensely violent. I think Max is ready to ride the school bus now.

JERRY

(very earnestly)

Now, Max, if anything at those matches frightened you, we can talk about it. It's okay to be frightened.

FLETCHER

(muttering)

I'm getting a little frightened right now.

CONTINUED

MAX

No, I'm okay. 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

Thanks, Son.

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

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

I'm so glad my gift could bring those two together. My plan to phase myself out is almost complete.

AUDREY

Something's come up. We need to talk.

MAX

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

AUDREY

(to Fletcher)

This is important. Can we talk tonight?

FLETCHER

Tonight?

AUDREY

Max's party?

FLETCHER

Oh, yeah. Sure, 'course. We'll talk then. Great.

(calling to the car)

Hey Maximus! I'm outta here. Jerry. Enjoy my wife!

Fletcher walks away.

Miranda and Fletcher's new client, VIRGINIA COLE, an alluring woman in her early thirties, review a document.

VIRGINIA

This is good. This is really smart.

FLETCHER

Thank you.

VIRGINIA

Only it's... like not true. 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

Pardon me?

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, you're the victim here. The wife of a cold, distant businessman. Starved for affection, driven into the arms of another man --

CONTINUED

VIRGINIA

Seven.

FLETCHER

(not missing a  
beat)

-- yeah, whatever. You're not trying to deny him what is rightfully his. All you're insisting on is what is rightfully yours. And maybe a fraction more. I think you're bending over backwards.

VIRGINIA

Well, I did agree to give him joint custody of the kids... He's always been a good father.

FLETCHER

And how does he repay you? By dragging you through a painful litigation process. This isn't just about you and Mr. Cole. This is about all women. Everywhere. Where would Tina Turner be right now if she had rolled over and said "hit me again Ike and put some stank on it?!" The message she sent was "Wake up sisters!! There's no such thing as a weaker sex!"

(dramatic pause)

What message will you send?

Virginia's moved, empowered.

VIRGINIA

You're right, Mr. Reid. I'm tired of getting kicked around.

FLETCHER

Good for you!

VIRGINIA

I'm so grateful I have an attorney I can trust.

(hugs him,  
whispers in his  
ear)

Thank you...

She momentarily GRABS HIS ASS. With a farewell nod to Miranda, she leaves.

Miranda turns, smiles at Fletcher.

CONTINUED

MIRANDA

You're good. You're really good.

FLETCHER

Yeah, I'm alright.

MIRANDA

No, I mean it.

She moves in on him, picks a piece of lint off his jacket.

MIRANDA

The Cole case is worth a truckload of money to this firm. If you win this case, I guarantee you'll make partner.

(straightens his tie)

In fact, how would you like to make a partner right now?

She pulls him in for a DEEP KISS.

19 INT. AUDREY AND MAX'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

19

A PARTY is in progress, with 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 makes a silly noise and flops down on his back which causes 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?

20 INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

20

Jerry follows Audrey into the kitchen where she prepares the cake.

CONTINUED

JERRY

So, have you thought about it?

AUDREY

Yeah... I don't think I can go.

JERRY

How come?

AUDREY

Max.

JERRY

He'll love it there. I'll take him to Fenway Park. There's hiking, camping --

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

Or anyone.

JERRY

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

AUDREY

But when he does come, it makes Max so happy. They have their own little world together.

JERRY

Max and I have that, too.

AUDREY

It's different. He... he does the Claw.

JERRY

The Claw?

CONTINUED

AUDREY

Yeah. He does "Oh, look out. I'm the Claw! I can't stop it. Oh..."

Jerry is staring, perplexed.

AUDREY (CONT'D)

Well, there's something about it. I can't really... The point is, 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.

The PHONE RINGS. Audrey answers.

CONTINUED

20 CONTINUED 3

20

AUDREY

Hello...

INTERCUT WITH:

21 INT. MIRANDA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

21

AUDREY

Fletcher, where are you? We've been waiting for you. Max won't cut the cake till you get here.

FLETCHER

Um, oh man. Actually, something has come up. I've got this problem on a new caaa --

(Miranda bites  
one of  
Fletcher's  
nipples)

A-h-h-h-!

AUDREY

What happened?

FLETCHER

Nothing. I just stubbed my toe on the desk... Listen, I'm really sorry but I just... I just can't make it.

(jumps in his  
lap)

The boss is ah... really ridin' me...

AUDREY

Max is going to be so disappointed.

Miranda gets up, starts "reeling in" the LONG PHONE CORD. Fletcher follows the receiver struggling to talk.

FLETCHER

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

AUDREY

You're gonna pick him up?

FLETCHER

Yes, yes.

CONTINUED

21 CONTINUED

21

AUDREY

Alright... Do you want me to put  
him on the phone?

FLETCHER

Ah, no. I have to go.

Miranda takes the receiver, HANGS UP.

AUDREY

Right.

ANGRILY, Audrey hangs up.

22 INT. MIRANDA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

22

Fletcher stares UNHAPPILY at the phone, then, Miranda  
ATTACKS, THROWS HER LEGS AROUND HIM, KNOCKS HIM BACK ONTO  
THE COUCH.

23 INT. AUDREY AND MAX'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

WE PAN DOWN from banners reading HAPPY BIRTHDAY, MAX!... to  
a now half-filled room 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.

CONTINUED

AUDREY

Yes, well, he... promises he'll see you tomorrow. He's going to pick you up from school.

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 8:15.

CUT TO:

A clock on a wall. It's 8:15. We are --

24 INT. MIRANDA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

24

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

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

MIRANDA

That was incredible... 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.

25 INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE MIRANDA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

25

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

The door SLAMS SHUT again. Fletcher's left standing, bewildered.

FLETCHER

"I've had better?"

26 INT. BEDROOM - FRIDAY MORNING

26

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

FLETCHER  
(relives it)  
"I've had better?"

27 INT. FLETCHER'S BATHROOM - MORNING

27

Fletcher brushes his teeth, looks up at his reflection in the mirror, mouth full of toothpaste, shaking it off.

FLETCHER  
"I've had better?!"

28 INT. HALLWAY OF FLETCHER'S APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING

28

Dressed for work, Fletcher waits for the elevator. It arrives. He steps in.

29 INT. APARTMENT ELEVATOR - MORNING

29

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

FLETCHER  
Hi. New in the building?

MODEL  
I just moved in Monday.

FLETCHER  
Ahh. You like it so far?

MODEL  
Everybody's been really friendly.

FLETCHER  
Well, that's because you have big jugs.  
(panicked,  
covers)  
I mean... your boobs are huge.  
(again)  
I mean... I want to squeeze 'em.

Fletcher's face REGISTERS extreme SHOCK and...

30 INT. LOBBY OF APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING

30

We HEAR a SMACK and a PING as the elevator door opens. The pissed model stands, arms folded, as a STUNNED Fletcher stumbles out, rubbing his freshly slapped face with a look of total confusion.

31 EXT. COURTROOM - MORNING

31

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

BEGGAR  
Any change, Mister?

FLETCHER  
Absolutely.

But he continues walking.

BEGGAR  
Could you spare some?

FLETCHER  
Yes, I could.

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

BEGGAR  
Will you?

FLETCHER  
(shaking his  
head)  
Uh-uh.

BEGGAR  
How come?

FLETCHER  
Because I believe you will buy  
drugs with it. Also, I resent your  
presence. You fill me with an  
unpleasant mixture of disgust and  
guilt. I just want to get from my  
car to my office without having to  
witness the depth of your sorrow.  
Plus, I'm cheap.

Fletcher lets out an EXASPERATED SIGH.

BEGGAR  
Jerkoff.

32 INT. COURTROOM - MORNING

32

A worried Fletcher joins Virginia at the respondent's table.

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

CONTINUED

FLETCHER  
 (like a game show  
 host)  
 Ding, ding, ding. What do we have  
 for her, Johnny?

He WINCES. Then, a 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 percent of your estate.

Fletcher's pleased, that came out okay. 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! It's 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, CRUMPLES IT INTO A WAD, and PITCHES IT BASEBALL STYLE toward the back of the room. It BOUNCES OFF a GUARD'S FOREHEAD. He glares at Fletcher. Fletcher mouths the words, "sorry."

DANA

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

At this moment the BAILIFF calls.

BAILIFF

All rise for the Honorable Judge William Stevens.

FLETCHER

(under his  
breath)

Honorable. Ha!

Fletcher LAUGHS, sees the STENOGRAPHER looking at him. Fletcher shakes his head as if to say, "Please don't type that."

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 steps forward...

FLETCHER

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

Fletcher takes a step back, SQUELCHING HIS REACTION. 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.

(MORE)

CONTINUED

JUDGE STEVENS (CONT'D)

Reid, I see that your client was previously represented by Mr. Rand of your office.

FLETCHER

(thinks)

Yes, Your Honor.

JUDGE STEVENS

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

FLETCHER

(thinks again)

Yes, Your Honor.

JUDGE STEVENS

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

FLETCHER

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

Fletcher SUCKS AIR THROUGH HIS TEETH. 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 trying not to speak, shakes his head "no."

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?

CONTINUED

FLETCHER  
 (whispering  
 conspiratorially)  
 I don't know.  
 (JUMPING UP, in  
 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  
 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!!!

CONTINUED

32 CONTINUED 5

32

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.

33 INT. JUDGE STEVENS' CHAMBERS - MORNING

33

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's clammy. Trying to subdue the monster.

FLETCHER

Yeah...

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. Phenomenally fair.

Dana fumes.

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?

CONTINUED

FLETCHER

No, not at all. She's got us right where she wants us. 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 STEVENS

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

FLETCHER

Oh, it's a really good one.

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

"Confident" is too weak a word, Your Honor. If this goes to trial, the verdict will be a humiliating defeat that will cut a very 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!

CONTINUED

FLETCHER  
(incredulous)  
What?

DANA  
(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 --

Fletcher has joined Virginia at the respondent's table.

FLETCHER  
No?! Mrs. Cole, this offer was a  
miracle. I'm talking about a walk-  
on-water, rise-from-the-dead, find-  
no-line-at-the-friggin'-DMV  
miracle! You've gone from two-  
point-four to four-point-eight  
million in four minutes.

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  
-- Yeah, whatever. 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.

But before Fletcher can finish, the judge enters.

CONTINUED

JUDGE STEVENS

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

Fletcher looks pleadingly at his client, but she is firm.

FLETCHER

(bursts out with  
a frustrated...)

No!

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.

DAZED, Fletcher makes exits the elevator. Jane comes toward him with the same hideous hairstyle. She wears a VERY LOUD, DAY-GLO DRESS.

JANE

Hi, Fletcher. Like the new dress?

FLETCHER

Whatever takes the focus off your head.

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

PETE

What's up, Fletcher?

FLETCHER

Your cholesterol, Fatty.  
(calling out)  
DEAD MAN WALKIN'!

Fletcher turns to Randy, the guy who's name he never remembers.

RANDY

Hey, Fletcher.

CONTINUED

FLETCHER

Heyyyy....

(tries to get his  
name, then  
quickly)

You're not important enough to  
remember!

Fletcher, panicked, breaks into a run past the guy with the  
HUGE ZIT.

ZIT BOY

(note pad ready)

Hi Mr. Reid, what's it gonna be?

FLETCHER

(looking at the  
zit)

A pock mark, eventually!

Fletcher speeds past --

GRETA

Hi, boss. What's happening with --

FLETCHER

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

-- And races into his office.

36 INT. FLETCHER'S OFFICE - MORNING

36

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

FLETCHER

(pacing)

Don't panic. You can beat this --  
it's all a matter of willpower.

He dives for his desk and rifles through it.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

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

He holds up a BLUE PEN.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

(looking away)

Red. Red. All right. Focus.

(with great  
deliberation)

The color of this pen is rrr --  
rrrr -- rrrr --! The color of the

(MORE)

CONTINUED

FLETCHER (CONT'D)  
 pen is -- Rrrrrrrrrroyal 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, the pen and writes "This pen is..." He tries to write an "R" but can't. Then, like a man possessed, the pen PULLS HIS ARM ONE WAY, THEN ANOTHER, WIPING EVERYTHING OFF HIS DESK. He grabs his wrist with his other hand and forces it back onto the page.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)  
 (as he forces  
 his hand)  
 GET OVER HERE!! RIGHT NOW!!  
 WRITE IT!! WRITE IT!!

He pins his hand down and... his hand WRITES IN PERFECT CALLIGRAPHY "blue."

FLETCHER (CONT'D)  
 No, No, NO!!

Suddenly, the "pen" goes OUT OF CONTROL, begins to write blue ON EVERYTHING!!

He grabs a LEGAL BOOK and BEATS HIS HAND OVER AND OVER!!  
 But IT KEEPS WRITING...

FLETCHER (CONT'D)  
 STOP IT!! STOP IT!!

Then, Fletcher's EYES GO WIDE as the pen TURNS ON HIM, starts COMING AFTER HIS FACE. He GRABS IT, but it pushes it's way to his face, where it writes "BLUE" on his forehead. "They" continue to struggle until Fletcher is forced UNDER THE DESK.

37 INT. HALLWAY - GRETA'S DESK

37

Greta hears the NOISE, gets up...

38 INT. FLETCHER'S OFFICE

38

Greta enters to find the DESK SHAKING, RUMBLING. A moment, then Fletcher emerges from underneath. The word "blue" has been written all over his face.

CONTINUED

GRETA  
Boss, what happened?

FLETCHER  
The pen is blue!! The pen is  
blue!! The GOD DAMN PEN IS BLUE!!!

WEEPING, he collapses into a chair.

GRETA  
Are you all right, Mr. Reid?

FLETCHER  
(getting up)  
I gotta go home.

GRETA  
Home? Was the case settled?

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

GRETA  
Well, then how are you going to go  
home?

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

Fletcher paces nervously.

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.

GRETA  
(incredulous,  
jots note  
anyway)  
"...dick with them." Okay. Got  
it. And your mother called again.  
Are you still on vacation?

CONTINUED

FLETCHER  
(emphatically  
nodding "yes")

No.

GRETA  
So then you're here?

FLETCHER  
(emphatically  
shaking his head  
"no")

Yes.

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

FLETCHER  
(remembers)  
OHH! I AM SUCH A SHIT!!

He reacts, particularly stunned by this truth.

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

39

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 is at his wet bar, rubbing the "blue" off his face  
with a wet towel.

CONTINUED

FLETCHER

Here's the thing, I really can't.  
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 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

Now, 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."

CONTINUED

FLETCHER

No. See that's the thing. I don't even like her. But she's a partner. I thought I could help my career by making her squeal.

(quickly)

I mean... by changing her oil.

(possessed)

I mean... by BUTTERING HER LOOOVE MUFFIN.

AUDREY

My God!!

She SLAMS DOWN the phone.

40 INT. FLETCHER'S OFFICE

40

Fletcher DROPS THE PHONE and FALLS BACKWARDS ON THE FLOOR.

FLETCHER

AHHHHHH!!!

(sincerely)

What's wrong with me?

(compelled to answer)

I'm getting what I deserve, I'm reaping what I sow, I'm --

Fletcher SLAPS HIS HANDS OVER HIS MOUTH and LETS OUT A MUFFLED SCREAM.

FLETCHER

MHHMMHHHHMMH!!!

41 EXT. FULGHAM KINDERGARTEN - MORNING

41

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?

CONTINUED

41 CONTINUED

41

MAX

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

Max heads toward his teacher. Audrey is deeply moved.

AUDREY

Wait, Max. I have something  
important to tell you...

42 INT. FLETCHER'S OFFICE

42

He's on his knees at the wetbar. He dials the phone.

INTERCUT WITH:

43 INT. AUDREY'S CAR - DAY

43

Audrey's driving away from Max's school.

AUDREY

Hello.

FLETCHER

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

AUDREY

Fletcher, something else is about  
to happen to you. Max and I are  
moving to Boston.

FLETCHER

What?!

AUDREY

Jerry asked me to marry him. Max  
and I are going with him this  
weekend to look for a house.

FLETCHER

I thought it was semi-serious.

AUDREY

Well, it's been given a violent  
shove into serious.

FLETCHER

(panicking)

You can't move to Boston! I'll  
never see Max!

CONTINUED

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 with the broken back saying good-bye.

FLETCHER

Where are you?

AUDREY

Heading home.

FLETCHER

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

AUDREY

Fletcher --

FLETCHER

I'll be right there!

Fletcher heads out...

44 INT. HALLWAY

44

A colleague starts to ask Fletcher a question...

COLLEAGUE

Hey, Mr. Reid, I --

Fletcher runs, PUTS HIS FINGERS IN HIS EARS, SINGS LOUDLY so he can't hear anyone else...

FLETCHER

LA-LA-LA-LA-LA-LA!!

45 ELEVATOR BANK

45

He frantically pushes the elevator button. It arrives, he steps in...

46 INT. ELEVATOR

46

Fletcher breathes a huge sigh on relief, turns and sees MIRANDA already in the elevator.

FLETCHER

Aaaah!

The doors shut. Fletcher is trapped.

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, pushes the lobby button frantically.

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, bone-headed 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

Well, I am sorry I insulted you.  
(relieved)  
That's the truth...

MIRANDA

Good.

FLETCHER

(can't hold back)  
I should be grateful that you're helping me screw my way to the top.

47 INT. LOBBY - ELEVATOR BANK

47

We hear a SMACK! The doors open. Fletcher walks out PISSED, holding his freshly slapped face, leaving Miranda stewing.

48 EXT. OFFICE PARKING STRUCTURE - DAY

48

Fletcher's car speeds out, ALMOST HITS CROSSING TRAFFIC.  
The DRIVER SCREAMS:

DRIVER  
What's your problem, schmuck?!

FLETCHER  
(screaming)  
I'M AN INCONSIDERATE PRICK!

49 INT. CAR - DAY

49

Fletcher drives like a maniac. Gets stuck behind a truck with a bumper sticker that says: "HOW AM I DRIVING?" He can't get around this guy. Fletcher picks up his car phone, ANGRILY DIALS. Someone on the other end picks up.

VOICE (O.S.)  
(through phone)  
LTD Trucking.

FLETCHER  
(screams into  
phone)  
TOO SLOW!!! SO SAFE! SO GOOD!!

He slams down the phone, goes around the van and RUNS A RED LIGHT. Passes a POLICE CAR parked on the side of the road.

Fletcher sees the flashing red light in his rearview mirror.

FLETCHER  
Shiiit!!

50 EXT. STREET

50

Fletcher pulls over. 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?

CONTINUED

FLETCHER

(in agony)

Here goes -- I didn't fasten my seatbelt, 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, I sped some more, I failed to yield at a crosswalk, I changed lanes in the intersection, I changed lanes without signaling while running a red light and speeding.

A long moment, then:

POLICE OFFICER

Is that all?

FLETCHER

No.

(can't keep it  
in)

THERE ARE UNPAID PARKING TICKETS!

He PUNCHES THE GLOVE BOX BUTTON. A REAM of PARKING TICKETS SPILL OUT. Fletcher turns back to the cop.

FLETCHER

Be gentle.

51 EXT. AUDREY'S HOUSE - MORNING

51

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 this though --

AUDREY

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

FLETCHER

Yes.

CONTINUED

51 CONTINUED

51

AUDREY  
Where's your car?

52 EXT. POLICE IMPOUND YARD - MORNING

52

Audrey finishes paying the impound-yard CASHIER.

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 Mercedes 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

(MORE)

CONTINUED

FLETCHER (CONT'D)  
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 pursues.

FLETCHER  
Are you marrying this guy because  
you're mad at me?

AUDREY  
No. I divorced you because I was  
mad at you.

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

AUDREY  
What do you want to say?

FLETCHER  
Is this guy right for you? I mean  
he's so... not me.

AUDREY  
That's one of his best qualities.

FLETCHER  
I'm not saying he's not a nice guy.  
He just seems kind of....

Fletcher stiffens up.

AUDREY  
You're wrong. I mean, sure  
sometimes he's a little -- but  
since we've been going out, he's  
really started to -- Hey! I don't  
want to discuss this with you.

FLETCHER  
Audrey, you can't go. It's 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.

CONTINUED

FLETCHER

All right -- now let me tell you something... I'm a bad father. I mean...

(realizing it's true)

...I am a bad father.

Fletcher said this sincerely. Audrey can sense this and feels for him.

AUDREY

You're not a bad father. When you show up.

FLETCHER

(getting an idea)

What if I come over, right after court lets out and play ball with Max. And then, you and I can sit down and talk before you make a rash decision.

AUDREY

We're leaving tonight.

FLETCHER

Please, Audrey. Give me one more chance. I'm throwing myself on the mercy of the court. I lost you. I know that's over -- but please -- don't make me lose Max, too. Give me the chance to be the father I started out to be.

Pause.

AUDREY

You're really coming?

FLETCHER

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

AUDREY

...Six?

FLETCHER

Ten-to-six.

CONTINUED

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

If I don't show I will pack you myself. I will lovingly wrap your knickknacks in bubble paper.

As Audrey gets in her car...

AUDREY

I hope so. Do you know what your son was doing at eight-fifteen last night? He was making a birthday wish that for one day, his father 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! It's impossible -- but it makes sense!... If he can wish it, he can un-wish it!

53 INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

53

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

54 INT. MAX'S KINDERGARTEN CLASS - DAY

54

Ms. Berry's reading a story when Fletcher sticks his head in the door.

FLETCHER

Excuse me, I'm looking for my son, Max?

Max brightens.

MAX

Dad!

FLETCHER

Could I borrow him for just a sec?

They're in the playground just outside the classroom.

FLETCHER  
Monster-Max.

MAX  
Dadzilla. You came to play catch?

FLETCHER  
I'd like to, but I can't right now.

Max is disappointed again.

FLETCHER  
Listen, Max, I've got to talk to you... Your mother told me about that wish you made last night. It came true, Max. Your wish 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.

MAX  
Is wrestling real?

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

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

FLETCHER  
Not in a million years.

MAX  
If I keep making this face -- will it get stuck that way?

CONTINUED

FLETCHER

Uh-uh.

Max is elated!

MAX

(turns to his  
friends)

Hey everyone, my dad can't lie!

DISSOLVE TO:

Fletcher is surrounded by a pack of students RAPIDLY RIFLING off questions so fast he can't even answer. He's backed up against a swing set, trapped.

OVERWEIGHT KID

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

KID #1

Can the Ebola virus spread to the  
United States?

KID #2

Does the tooth fairy exist?

KID #3

The Easter bunny?

KID #4

The boogey man?

KID #5

Are there monsters under my bed?

KID #2

Is there a God?

KID #1

Are we all going to die?

KID #3

Where do babies come from?

FLETCHER

No. Yes. No. No. No. No. Hope  
so. Not sure. Sorry, but yes.  
And babies are created through the  
joining of your mother and father's  
reproductive systems. Do you  
understand?

CONTINUED

ALL

No.

FLETCHER

Good. Now if no one has anymore questions --

MAX

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

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

FLETCHER

(to the kids)

Excuse us.

He takes Max aside.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

Max, I'm sorry. I'm not going to be too busy anymore. I promise. In fact, I'm coming over tonight. We're gonna play together.

MAX

Baseball?

FLETCHER

Yep! You and me -- tonight. Double header. No rain delays.

Fletcher and Max do their ritual "five" slap, then EACH GRABS THEIR CROTCH and SPITS.

FLETCHER

Now, listen, Max, you gotta do something for me. I need you to take that wish back.

MAX

So you can lie?

FLETCHER

Right. But not to you. You see, Max, sometimes grown-ups... need to lie. It's hard to explain, but if... look, here's an example. When Mommy was pregnant with you, she gained a good forty pounds. There was nothing she wouldn't eat. Daddy was scared. But when she'd ask me "How do I look?" I'd  
(MORE)

CONTINUED

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

say, "Honey, you're beautiful, you're glowing!" If I'd've told mommy she looked like a cow, I would've hurt her feelings. Understand?

Max nods.

MAX

My teacher told me real beauty is on the inside.

FLETCHER

That's just something ugly people say. Max, no one can survive in the adult world if they have to stick to the truth. I could lose my case, I could lose my promotion, I could even lose my job. Now, I need your help, Max. Okay?

MAX

(reluctantly)

Okay.

FLETCHER

Great!

Fletcher opens the box, revealing a cake and candles. He puts a birthday hat on Max and one on himself, then lights the candles.

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

Excellent! Now, I need a little test --

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

CONTINUED

Fletcher returns to his son.

MAX

Did it work?

FLETCHER

(rubbing his sore  
cheek)

Not like I'd hoped. Did you really  
un-wish it?

Max nods.

MAX

Only...

FLETCHER

What? Only what?

MAX

Yesterday, when I wished it, I  
really meant it. This time when I  
un-wished 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.

CONTINUED

MAX

Mom says we're moving to Boston.

FLETCHER

That... isn't for sure yet. She promised we'd talk about it when I come over tonight. I am coming. You believe me, don't you?

Max hesitates, then smiles and nods.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

I'll see you tonight, buddy. That's a promise.

An upset and preoccupied Fletcher exits the elevator, passing by a MACHO ATTORNEY.

MACHO ATTORNEY

Yo, Fletcher! How's it hanging?

FLETCHER

Short, shriveled and always to the left.

Fletcher passes by Jane.

FLETCHER

Hi Jane.

JANE

(still upset)  
Piss off.

59 INT. OFFICES - DAY

59

Fletcher drags himself past Greta's desk. She's holding the phone.

GRETA  
 (indicating  
 receivers  
 Fletcher, it's Skull. He knocked  
 off another ATM machine, this time  
 at knifepoint. He needs your legal  
 advice.

Fletcher grabs the receiver.

FLETCHER  
 Skull? Stop breaking the law,  
 ASSHOLE!

And he slams the phone down.

59A INT. JAIL BOOKING AREA - DAY

59A

Skull, the mugger we recall from the opening scene, holds the phone and FUMES.

60 INT. FLETCHER'S OFFICE

60

Fletcher collapses on the couch. Greta enters.

GRETA  
 Boss, are you alright?

FLETCHER  
 My son hates me.

GRETA  
 He loves you. I've seen you  
 together. You're his hero.

CONTINUED

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

(incredulous)

What?

FLETCHER

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

GRETA

Well, yeah, but...

(incredulous)

What are you trying to say, you're incapable of lying?

FLETCHER

That's right! I am incapable of lying.

GRETA

Just today?

FLETCHER

Apparently until 8:15 tonight. It's one of those twenty-four hour curses.

GRETA

Yeah, those are going around.

61 INT. OUTER OFFICE

61

Miranda is eavesdropping. A wicked gleam in her eye.

62 INT. FLETCHER'S OFFICE

62

FLETCHER

You don't believe me, do you?

GRETA

Of course not.

CONTINUED

FLETCHER

Ughh, how ironic. Okay. Ask me something you think I'd normally lie about.

She thinks.

GRETA

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

FLETCHER

(quickly jumps up, ushering her out)

Forget it. I don't want to do this.

GRETA

-- and the firm wouldn't give me one...

FLETCHER

Greta, please --

Fletcher MOANS and GROANS through Greta's next speech.

GRETA

-- 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?

Greta empties her personal effects into boxes. She's leaving. Fletcher's on the phone, looks very harassed.

FLETCHER

Greta, wait...

(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... ill? Am I ill?

(MORE)

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

(thinks)

That is the perfect question for you to ask.

(covers the mouthpiece)

Greta, please, lie to him for me.

Greta holds up a framed photograph.

GRETA

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

(questioning)

...Tiffany's?

FLETCHER

Garage sale. Six-fifty. Marked down from ten.

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 an answer. But...

The PHONE RINGS.

FLETCHER

'Illness' could mean so many things and I --

The phone won't stop ringing.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

Can you hold please?

(pushes two buttons)

Hello... Mom?!!...

(looks to heaven, what next?)

Hiiii. Well, I wasn't actually on vacation... Because I didn't want

(MORE)

CONTINUED

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

to talk to you... Because you insist on talking to me about Dad's bowel movements -- size, color, frequency... I'll call you later... I mean, not really. It's just an expression.

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)

Greta, don't leave. I'm on my knees in a nine hundred dollar suit.

Greta stops. 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... I would've got him ten.

GRETA

Goodbye, Mr. Reid.

She walks away. Fletcher jumps up.

FLETCHER

Oh, no! Wait! I didn't understand the question!

CONTINUED

GRETA  
 (still walking  
 away)  
 Have a nice day in court.

FLETCHER  
 Greta --

Fletcher tries to catch her but he runs directly into  
 Miranda.

FLETCHER  
 Aaaah fuckin' hell!

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

MIRANDA  
 Well, it's nice to see you too,  
 Fletcher? 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? You  
 used to work directly for Mr.  
 Allan, didn't you?  
 (off his wary  
 nod)  
 Tell me, what do you think of him?

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

MIRANDA  
 (grinning)  
 How delightful!

She swings open a door, ushering Fletcher into --

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

You know, Fletcher was just telling me how much he thought of you. Why don't you tell Mr. Allan -- what do you think him?

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

FLETCHER

(resigned)

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

DEAD SILENCE. There is a long pause. Everyone looks at Mr. Allan, not sure what to do. Then -- Mr. Allan begins to LAUGH UPROARIOUSLY.

MR. ALLAN

That's the funniest damn thing I've ever heard. You're a real card, Reid. I love a good roast. Do Simmons.

FLETCHER

Okay. Mr. Simmons, you are TOO old. You should've retired a decade ago. I don't understand why you don't die.

Mr. Allan can't contain his laughter. Mr. Simmons starts laughing. Everybody joins in. Fletcher seizes the moment and takes over.

FLETCHER

And you, Tom... you are the biggest kiss ass I've ever seen. You've got your head so far up Mr.

(MORE)

CONTINUED

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

Allan's ass sometimes I can't tell where you end, and he begins.

MR. ALLAN

(still laughing)

Priceless.

FLETCHER

(turns to the rest of the group, starts pointing)

You have bad breath caused by gingivitis.

(points)

You couldn't get a porno star off.

(points)

Your hair piece looks like a dead squirrel that was scraped off the highway.

(quickly does the rest of the group.)

Loser -- idiot -- wimp -- degenerate -- slut.

Everyone is laughing.

FLETCHER

(laughing)

I'm not kidding. I hate you people. I hate all of you.

The room explodes in laughter.

MR. ALLEN

I like your style, Reid. That's just what this stuffy place needs. A little irreverence.

Miranda is incensed.

FLETCHER

Good. See you later, dickhead.

Fletcher exits.

MR. ALLEN

(turns to a colleague)

Dickhead! Priceless!

Fletcher exits the conference, closes the door and FAINTS.

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. The nanny, LUPE, carries a three-year-old girl and holds the hand of a six-year-old boy.

VIRGINIA

Hurry up. Move it, move it.

Fletcher hears her and BLURTS OUT a SONG ala Mighty Mouse.

FLETCHER

Here she comes to wreck the day!

The Judge BANGS the gavel.

JUDGE

Mr. Reid!

FLETCHER

Sorry, Your Honor.

Virginia hustles the kids to their seats.

BILLY

I'm tired.

VIRGINIA

Lupe, you keep him quiet. I'm not  
even close to kidding.

(to Fletcher)

Sorry. Billy threw up in the car.

FLETCHER

Nice try, Billy.

Virginia takes her seat.

CONTINUED

FLETCHER (CONT'D)  
 (incredulous  
 whisper)  
 You brought your kids to your  
 divorce?

VIRGINIA  
 (by way of  
 explanation)  
 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.

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 blinds drawn, but I was  
 able to make a recording of one  
 such session.

CONTINUED

DANA

Your Honor, as you are aware under the terms of the prenuptial agreement, if Mrs. Cole commits adultery, she is entitled to nothing. With your permission we'd like to play the following tape recording.

The Judge signals to proceed. Dana hits a button on a tape recorder.

VIRGINIA (ON TAPE)

Oh yes. Oh yes. Do it to me. Do it good... Oh, not in there. A girl has to save something... Yes, yes, yes!

People react to Virginia's climax, all are caught up in the moment. A BEAD OF SWEAT drips down the bailiff's forehead.

FLETCHER

Oh come on. Your Honor, how can it be proved that the male voice on that tape is not Mr. Cole himself?

VIRGINIA (ON TAPE)

Oh my God. You are such a better lover than my husband.

MALE VOICE (ON TAPE)

Thanks. Well, I've got to go. I still haven't cleaned your pool.

FLETCHER

I object, your Honor!

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.

FLETCHER

Good call!

CONTINUED

Everyone stares at Fletcher. He takes another big gulp of water.

DANA

Your witness.

Fletcher anxiously DOWNS THE GLASS.

JUDGE STEVENS

All right, Mr. Reid. You may proceed.

CONTINUED

FLETCHER  
(to himself)

How?!

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

After a moment, he grins.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)  
Your Honor, would the Court be willing to grant me a short bathroom break?

JUDGE STEVENS  
It can't wait?

FLETCHER  
Yes, it can. But I've heard that if you hold it you can damage the prostate gland making it very difficult to get an erection or even become aroused.

JUDGE  
Is that true?

FLETCHER  
It has to be.

JUDGE  
Well then, I better take a little break myself. But you get back here immediately so we can finish this.

The judge gets up and retires to chambers. Fletcher beams and races out.

68 INT. RESTROOM - DAY

68

Fletcher stands before the urinal, taking the longest leak in legal history. Relief.

FLETCHER  
How am I gonna get out of this?

He KNOCKS HIS HEAD against the tiles above the urinal.

FLETCHER  
Think. Think. Think. Ow!

CONTINUED

68 CONTINUED

68

Suddenly, he gets an idea. He HITS HIMSELF AGAIN and AGAIN, SMASHES HIS HEAD INTO THE PAPER TOWEL DISPENSER, PUTS LIQUID SOAP IN HIS EYE, PULLS CLUMPS OF HAIR OUT OF HIS HEAD, STICKS HIS HEAD IN THE TOILET AND SMASHES THE SEAT DOWN ON IT, finally he THROWS HIMSELF BACK AND FORTH AGAINST THE WALLS OF THE CUBICLE, TEARING AT HIS OWN CLOTHING.

A MAN enters, watches Fletcher's self-mutilation.

MAN

What the hell are you doing, man?

FLETCHER

I'm kicking my ass! Do you mind?!

Fletcher STOMPS ON HIS OWN TOE and SCREAMS.

FLETCHER

Damnit!!

He starts to CHOKE HIMSELF with his own TIE and RUNS INTO THE WALL.

The man slowly backs out of the bathroom. Fletcher continues the beating.

69 INT. COURTROOM - DAY

69

The judge is PISSED. Suddenly, the bailiff helps in the severely 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

(describing himself)

About six-two, hundred eighty pounds, big teeth, kinda gangly.

CONTINUED

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 morning at nine.

Fletcher smiles serenely -- until --

JUDGE STEVENS (CONT'D)

-- Unless, of course, you think you can still proceed?

Fletcher tries to avoid answering, but he can't repress the truth.

JUDGE STEVENS (CONT'D)

Can you?

FLETCHER

(whimpering)

Yes... I can.

JUDGE STEVENS

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.

70 EXT. COURTHOUSE STEPS - DAY

70

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

FLETCHER

Hello.

INTERCUT WITH MAX AT HOME. AUDREY IS THERE.

MAX

Dad...

FLETCHER

(summoning up enthusiasm)

Max. How's it going?

CONTINUED

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

Cool. You still wanna be Jose  
Conseco?

FLETCHER

Sure. Who else is gonna hit that  
famous Nomo slider.

(sees Virginia  
approaching)

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.

71 EXT. COURTHOUSE STEPS

71

Virginia approaches with her pool man, KENNETH FALK, a  
Joey Buttafuoco type.

VIRGINIA

Mr. Reid, you remember Kenneth  
Falk, the man from the tape.

FLETCHER

How could I forget?

FALK

How you doin'?

CONTINUED

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

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 gotta 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 --"

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

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

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 final  
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!

VIRGINIA

Are you alright?

CONTINUED

FLETCHER

I'm fine. I just... I need to relax. Breathe deeply and calmly and ask you this question.

Fletcher breathes in... and tries again...

FLETCHER

Mr. Falk, isn't it true that you and Mrs. Cole have never made lo... lo... lo...

He tries with all his might.

FLETCHER

lo-- lo-- lo...

Suddenly, Fletcher GAGS, leans over the railing and PUKES into the bushes.

At this moment Miranda and Mr. Allan come up the steps. They've seen what happened.

MR. ALLAN

Little courtroom jitters, eh Fletcher. It's a good sign. I used to get 'em myself.

Fletcher emerges from the trash can. Mr. Allen sees his bruised face.

MR. ALLAN

What happened, son?

FLETCHER

I was attacked in the men's room.

MR. ALLAN

Well, we'll find the bastard and file a complaint. There's good money in personal injury.

(beat)

By the way, I'll be observing this afternoon. Miranda insisted I see you in action. Go get 'em, dickhead!

He goes.

MIRANDA

Go get 'em, dickhead.

As Miranda exits, Fletcher shoots her a hateful look and a SERIES of NASTY GESTURES.

72 INT. COURTROOM - DAY

72

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

JUDGE STEVENS

You may proceed, Mr. Reid.

CONTINUED

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

FLETCHER

Respondent calls... Lawrence Falk.

Fletcher 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?

(quickly)

I object, Your Honor.

JUDGE

To yourself?

FLETCHER

Yes. But... I would like to rephrase the question.

(beat)

Mr. Falk, would I be accurate if I described your relationship with Mrs. Cole as totally professional?

(quickly)

I object your honor. And I move to strike!

JUDGE

Mr. Reid, I don't know what you're on, but you better get to the point and quick.

FLETCHER

Thank you, sir. Is your relationship with my client entirely platonic, NOT? Is not your relationship with my client entirely platonic?

(he does the

'entirely

platonic' in a

low suggestive

voice while

humping the air)

Did you ever not make lo-- Did you not ever make lo-- lo-- lo--

CONTINUED

JUDGE  
Mister Reid!!!

FLETCHER  
(losing it)  
YOU HAD SEX WITH HER EVERY TIME  
YOU MET, DIDN'T YOU? DIDN'T YOU?!!

Falk starts to speak.

FLETCHER  
(screaming at  
him)  
LIAR!!

DANA  
He's badgering the witness.

JUDGE  
It's his witness!!

FLETCHER  
YOU SLAMMED HER!! YOU DUNKED YOUR  
DONUT! YOU GAVE HER DOG A  
SNAUSAGE!! YOU STUFFED HER LIKE A  
THANKSGIVING TURKEY!!!

Fletcher begins to GOBBLE in Falk's face.

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  
Do I dare ask you to call your  
next witness?

FLETCHER  
I have no further witnesses, your  
Honor.

A MURMUR erupts from the crowd.

CONTINUED

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

FLETCHER  
 (to Virginia)  
 You don't understand. I cannot  
 lie. I cannot be dishonest in any  
 way! Until eight-fifteen tonight!

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 divorcee on welfare  
 because my scumbag attorney had a  
 sudden attack of conscience!

Fletcher suddenly stops -- focused on something Virginia  
 said.

FLETCHER  
 (to himself)  
 Thirty-one?

Fletcher quickly looks at the blow-up of Virginia's prenup  
 and her passport.

JUDGE STEVENS  
 If Mr. Reid, has no further  
 witnesses, then I have no choice  
 but to rule in favor of --

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

Another MURMUR from the gallery.

JUDGE  
 Order! Order!  
 (everyone quiets)  
 Mr. Reid, it is out of sheer morbid  
 curiosity that I am allowing this  
 freak show to continue. Mrs.  
 Cole...  
 (gestures toward  
 the stand)  
 -- if you dare...

Virginia makes her way up.

CONTINUED

MR. ALLAN  
(in the gallery)  
What is he doing?

MIRANDA  
Kissing his career good-bye.

The Bailiff stands before the witness.

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

FLETCHER  
(quickly)  
I do.  
(everyone looks  
at him)  
I mean...  
(gestures to  
Virginia)

VIRGINIA  
I do.

Fletcher grabs Virginia's license from the evidence table.  
He approaches, CONFIDENT NOW, COCKY.

FLETCHER  
Mrs. Cole, is this your drivers  
license?

VIRGINIA  
Yes.

FLETCHER  
Can you tell the court what color  
your eyes are please?

VIRGINIA  
They're blue.

FLETCHER  
Really? 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?

(MORE)

CONTINUED

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

(off her silence)

If you don't remember, perhaps Mr. Falk will.

VIRGINIA

Brunette. I'm a brunette.

FLETCHER

Thank you, now 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. But that's not the truth either, is it? Is it?!

VIRGINIA

No.

FLETCHER

Can you tell me what it says here on your birth certificate under date of birth?

DANA

I object your Honor. What does this have to do with anything?

JUDGE

Overruled. Answer the question, Mrs. Cole.

She reads it to the court.

VIRGINIA

1965.

FLETCHER

(feigning  
surprise)

Now let me get this straight. That would mean you lied about your age to make yourself older. Why would any woman want to do that?

CONTINUED

VIRGINIA

I changed it so I could get married.

FLETCHER

And the truth shall set you free!  
(on a roll)

My client lied about her age. 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 ANY LEGAL CONTRACT WITHOUT PARENTAL CONSENT INCLUDING --

DANA

(defeated, to herself)

Prenuptial agreements.

FLETCHER

(knows he has them)

PRENUPTIAL AGREEMENTS! This contract is void!!! The fact that my client has been ridden more than Seattle Slew is irrelevant. Standard community property applies and this woman is entitled to half of the marital assets or twenty-two point three-nine-five million dollars!!

(dramatically)

Nothing further, your Honor!

(to Dana,  
pantomimes a  
basketball shot)

SWISH!!

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.

CONTINUED

He BANGS THE GAVEL. The courtroom ERUPTS. FLETCHER'S WON! Dana, Mr. Cole are devastated.

MR. ALLAN

That son of bitch pulled it off!

Mr. Allan gives Fletcher the thumbs up. Miranda looks upset.

MR. COLE

What the hell is going on? I didn't know she was underage.

DANA

Doesn't matter. The contract's void.

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

If I get sole custody of the kids I could make another ten grand a month in child support payments.

FLETCHER

You just won twenty million dollars?

VIRGINIA

You said it yourself, I'm the victim here. 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.

CONTINUED

FLETCHER

No.

JUDGE STEVENS

In that case, there will be a custody hearing on the nineteenth at nine A.M. 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!

BILLY

(begins to cry)

I want to go with Daddy.

VIRGINIA

You stop crying, or I'll give you a reason to cry. Lupe!

He runs to his father. Fletcher watches, horrified, as she drags the child away from their tearful father.

LITTLE BOY

Daddy...

MR. COLE

Don't worry. I promise we'll be together. Whatever I have to do...

MR. COLE is pained as his CHILDREN are all SOBBING. Fletcher is in pain as he watches the nanny separate the children from their father.

Fletcher can't keep his eyes off the kids.

MR. ALLAN

(re: the commotion)

I love children. They give you so much leverage in a case like this. You did an incredible job out there -- partner.

Mr. Allan SHAKES Fletcher's hand. Fletcher stares at his hand in horror, like he's shaking hands with the devil.

CONTINUED

MR. ALLAN  
 (off Fletcher's  
 lack of  
 reaction)

Look, he's stunned, he can't  
 believe it.

Judge Stevens stands up to leave the bench. Fletcher  
 recoils from his boss.

FLETCHER  
 (suddenly)  
 Your honor?  
 (the judge stops)  
 May I please approach the bench?

JUDGE STEVENS  
 We're adjourned Mr. Reid.

Fletcher charges up to the judge anyway.

FLETCHER  
 Your Honor, I think we've made a  
 big mistake.

JUDGE STEVENS  
 Mr. Reid, I'm very tired and  
 cranky...

FLETCHER  
 I know. But this is just...  
 wrong. Isn't it? I mean, I  
 manipulated the system. Just  
 because I'm good at it, doesn't  
 mean I'm right. It's a  
 technicality!

JUDGE STEVENS  
 Young man, having my judgment  
 mocked in open court -- by the  
winning counsel -- is not something  
 I'm prepared to tolerate.

FLETCHER  
 Awww. Where's Yitzhak Pearlman  
 when you need him? Maybe you can  
 tell that to the kids when they  
 become the Children of the Corn!  
 (off the judge's  
 stern look)  
 I wish I hadn't said that.

CONTINUED

JUDGE

Mr. Reid, one more word and I will hold you in contempt.

FLETCHER

I hold myself in contempt, why should you be any different.

JUDGE

Bailiff! Take him away.

The bailiff starts off after Fletcher.

FLETCHER

(indicates Mr. Cole)

This man is a good father!

(to Mr. Allan)

And children are not leverage!

The bailiff grabs Fletcher. And forcibly drags him out.

FLETCHER

No, don't do this. I've got a date to play ball with my son. I can't be late. It's my last chance!! I'M JOSE CONSECO!! I'M JOSE CONSECOOOO!!

And Fletcher's gone, leaving everyone thinking he's nuts.

73 EXT. AUDREY'S PORCH - DAY

73

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 sees "that look."

CONTINUED

73 CONTINUED

73

AUDREY

How 'bout I take you to a ball game?

MAX

Tonight?

AUDREY

No. Tomorrow. In Boston.

They go in the house.

74 INT. JAIL AREA - DAY

74

Fletcher's handcuffed and is led to jail by TWO OFFICERS.

FLETCHER

(desperately,  
passing a phone)

Phone call!! Phone call!! I get  
to make a phone call!!

75 INT. AUDREY'S HOUSE - FRONT HALLWAY - DAY

75

Audrey is locking up, still upset.

MAX

And could I get a sled for when it  
snows?

AUDREY

You know what else you'll need, a  
shovel.

MAX

I don't think I want a shovel.  
How about a snowmobile?

AUDREY

Well, we'll talk about it.

(beat)

You okay with this?

CONTINUED

MAX

(nods)

Are you?

AUDREY

I'm fine. This'll be great.  
Jerry's great. Ready?

The PHONE RINGS. She answers it.

AUDREY

Hello.

INTERCUT FLETCHER/AUDREY

FLETCHER

Audrey! It's me --

Audrey starts to hang up.

FLETCHER

For the love of God, don't hang  
up!!

AUDREY

I can't talk now, Fletcher. Our  
flight leaves at eight.

FLETCHER

What?!

AUDREY

(pissed)

I saw that look again. I'm taking  
Max where you can't do that to him  
anymore.

FLETCHER

Audrey, wait! The most amazing  
thing's happened to me! I swear,  
I'm a changed man. Just come to  
the courthouse with a thousand  
dollars and bail me out... Hello?  
Hello?

(to a cop)

One more call!! Just one more.

SMASH CUT TO:

77 INT. JAIL - HALLWAY

77

Fletcher is between two guards, being dragged off by his elbows. He's ranting as he goes.

FLETCHER

Money has become our God. We've perverted ourselves into thinking that the material things we leave behind are more important than people in our lives.

(it hits him,  
thrilled)

Don't you see it, man? It's all about love!! It's all about love!!

The JAIL CELL DOOR SLAMS in his face. Fletcher turns and out of the darkness walks -- a VERY PISSED-OFF SKULL (the mugger from the opening scene).

SKULL

Hi, Fletcher. You want to smart off to me now? Huh?

He TOSSES FLETCHER AGAINST THE WALL. Then, picks him up, gets right in his face.

SKULL

Now what have you got to say?

FLETCHER

You must be in terrible pain.

SKULL

Why, you --

He PUNCHES Fletcher, sends him REELING ACROSS THE CELL.

SKULL

Anything else?

FLETCHER

(wishing there  
wasn't)

Yes. When you punch me, you're really punching yourself.

SKULL

Well, then I'm really gonna be hurtin' after this...

He KICKS him REPEATEDLY.

CONTINUED

FLETCHER  
 (sucking wind)  
 That's for disappointing Daddy.  
 (kick)  
 That's for being an underachiever.  
 (kick)  
 And that's for being the broken  
 little boy who's ashamed to admit  
 that he's frightened.

He PICKS FLETCHER UP, SLAMS HIM AGAINST THE BARS. Fletcher has clearly touched a nerve.

SKULL  
 (screams)  
 I needed a lawyer!

FLETCHER  
 You needed a hug!

A beat. Skull's face fills with emotion. We think Fletcher's dead. But then, we hear a WHIMPER. Skull's eyes well up and suddenly, he PULLS FLETCHER INTO A DESPERATE EMBRACE. Skull SOBS OPENLY.

FLETCHER  
 It's okay. Just let it out. You  
 can't heal it if you don't feel it.

Then, a DEPUTY appears.

DEPUTY  
 Mr. Reid... you made bail.

Fletcher turns, is overjoyed to see Greta.

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

FLETCHER  
 Greta! Oh, thank God!!  
 (turns back to  
 Skull)  
 Gotta go, Skull. I'm proud of  
 you.

Skull nods. Fletcher goes to Greta and the Guard at the cell door. He is energized, DRUNK WITH THE TRUTH.

CONTINUED

77 CONTINUED 2

77

FLETCHER  
 (excitedly)  
 I've learned the most amazing  
 thing, Greta. I'm insecure so I  
 have to overachieve just to feel  
 good about myself!

GRETA  
 You just figured that out?

FLETCHER  
 YES!!

78 OMITTED

78

79 EXT. JAIL - DAY

79

Fletcher and Greta burst out the doors. Fletcher is still  
 ELATED, intoxicated with the truth.

FLETCHER  
 How did you know I was here?

GRETA  
 One of the other secretaries called  
 me at home. They said you went all  
 noble.

FLETCHER  
 Yeah. Oh, man I have to go get my  
 car. Audrey's on her way to the  
 airport and I'm gonna lose Max  
 forever. And I can't let that  
 happen. I love him! You know,  
 this truth stuff is pretty cool!

Fletcher starts off. Greta stops him.

GRETA  
 Fletcher... what do you really  
 think of me?

Pause.

FLETCHER  
 You know, I have to tell the truth?

She nods.

FLETCHER  
 I think you're wonderful!

CONTINUED

79 CONTINUED

79

He hugs her and leaves her feeling very happy. Then Fletcher turns and runs, SHOUTING like Jimmy Stewart in "Bedford Falls."

FLETCHER

I love my son!! I love my son!!

He runs right by the BEGGAR he refused to give change to earlier. But Fletcher quickly RUNS BACK, empties out his pockets, gives him all of his money.

FLETCHER

Here! Take everything. But it's not gonna make you happy!

Fletcher dances off.

80 INT. CAR/EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

80

SKIDDING around a curve, we HEAR Fletcher SINGING the theme from "The Courtship of Eddie's Father."

FLETCHER

People let me tell you 'bout my  
best friend,  
He's a warm boy, cuddly toy,  
My up my down my pride and joy.

The CAR SCREECHES around ANOTHER CORNER. Fletcher's SINGING A DIFFERENT TUNE.

FLETCHER

Teach your children well,  
Their father's hell,  
Will slowly go by.

The car SCREECHES around another corner. Fletcher is SINGING ANOTHER TUNE.

FLETCHER

And the cat's in the cradle and  
the silver spoon,  
Little boy blue and the man on  
the moon  
When you coming home Dad,  
I don't know when  
But we'll get together then, Dad  
You know we'll have a good time  
Thennnn!!!

81  
THRU OMITTED  
86

81  
THRU  
86

87 INT. LAX TERMINAL - EARLY EVENING

87

Audrey and Max find Jerry waiting for them as they arrive at the boarding gate.

Max is wearing his new baseball GLOVE. Jerry is very happy to see them.

JERRY

Hey! There you are -- just made it.

(to Audrey, very earnestly)

This is the happiest moment of my entire life.

AUDREY

(a little tense)

Oh. Me... mine... ours... also.

Jerry, suddenly gets an idea.

JERRY

Hey, Max...

Delighted with himself, Jerry PANTOMIMES to Audrey to "Watch this."

JERRY

(poorly)

"Oh, watch yourself. The Claw is coming... at you. Oh, you're scared of the Claw.

Max is staring at him as if he's crazy. Audrey is, involuntarily, shielding her eyes.

AUDREY

(gently)

Um... Jerry. That's okay. Don't...

JERRY

Hm?

AUDREY

It's -- you don't have to...

STEWARDESS

Flight 1511 to Boston now boarding.

The announcement almost seems to make Audrey Jump.

JERRY

Well, that's us! Are you okay?

CONTINUED

87 CONTINUED

87

AUDREY  
 (nervous energy)  
 I'm fine. Great. Ready to go.

Jerry looks at her, a little concerned as they start to board.

88 EXT. AIRPORT - EARLY EVENING

88

The car speeds towards the TOWER Terminal. He's singing yet another tune.

FLETCHER  
 Honesty, is such a lonely word.  
 And everyone is so untrue.  
 Honestyyyy, is hardly ever  
 heaaarrrd --

Fletcher's car SKIDS TO A STOP. He jumps out, runs up to a SKYCAP.

FLETCHER  
 What gate's flight 1511 leaving  
 from? It's an emergency!

SKYCAP  
 Ah...that's gate 123... But, the  
 flight's already boarded.

FLETCHER  
 What!!

SKYCAP  
 Sorry.

The Skycap walks away. Fletcher, frustrated, looks to the conveyor belt, gets an idea.

We STAY WITH the Skycap as he arrives at his station, talking back to Fletcher WITHOUT LOOKING.

SKYCAP (CONT'D)  
 If you want to go to Boston, the  
 next flight leaves tomorrow  
 morning, seven AM. Flight 194.

As the Skycap talks, we SEE FLETCHER RIDING ON THE CONVEYOR BELT behind him, disappearing into the guts of the airport.

The Skycap turns to look for Fletcher, but he's gone.

89  
THRU OMITTED 89  
90 THRU 90

91 INT. PLANE - DAY 91

Jerry, Audrey and Max are seated near the bulkhead. Audrey quickly leafs through a magazine, still NERVOUS.

JERRY  
Are you sure you're alright?

AUDREY  
(mind elsewhere)  
Fine.

A FLIGHT ATTENDANT interrupts.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT  
Would you like anything to drink  
before take-off?

AUDREY  
Yes!! Anything with liquor.

JERRY  
(concerned)  
Audrey --

AUDREY  
(a tad hostile)  
I'm fine!

JERRY  
(hands up,  
defensively)  
Okay.

He sits back and looks at her. He's TROUBLED.

91A INT. BAGGAGE DEPOSIT AREA - DAY 91A

Bag after bag moves by, then we SEE FLETCHER RIDING ON THE CONVEYOR BELT along with the luggage. He's DUMPED OUT onto the floor, gets up and races by stunned baggage handlers.

91B INT. BAGGAGE AREA/TARMAC - DAY 91B

Fletcher races outside, looks up to see Gate 123 unoccupied. He turns and looks:

FLETCHER'S POV

The TOWER JET is taxiing away.

CONTINUED

91B CONTINUED 2

91B

FLETCHER

Nooooo!

Fletcher slumps, defeated, when he suddenly sees his answer.

FLETCHER'S POV

A MECHANIC is finishing working on some sort of airport utility vehicle.

WORKER

Well, that ought to do it.

Suddenly, the vehicle TAKES OFF OVER HIM. He jumps up to see Fletcher driving away in what we now realize is a GIANT MECHANICAL STAIRCASE.

WORKER

Hey!!

FLETCHER

(looks back,  
shouts)

Thank you. It's running great!

92  
THRU OMITTED  
96

92  
THRU  
96

96A EXT. TARMAC - DAY

96A

We see the TOWER JET taxiing further down the runway. REVEAL Fletcher on the mechanical stairs in hot pursuit.

Fletcher soon catches up to the plane, but is too low to see inside. He shifts a lever, the stairs RISE, and he CLIMBS UP THE STEPS!

97 OMITTED

97

98 INT. AIRPLANE - DAY - MOVING

98

PASSENGERS calmly read while FLETCHER speeds along, OUTSIDE THEIR WINDOWS.

FLETCHER

(drowned out by  
engine noise)

Max?!! MAX?!!

CONTINUED

98 CONTINUED

98

The PASSENGERS are unaware of his presence, reading, chatting away. TWO KIDS have Virtual Reality headsets on and can't see Fletcher. One passenger unknowingly LOWERS HIS SHADE right in Fletcher's face.

99 EXT. TARMAC - DAY

99

Fletcher then spots Jerry and Audrey several rows ahead. He speeds up the vehicle.

100 INT. PLANE - SAME TIME

100

Audrey downs her drink. Jerry watches her, knows something's wrong.

JERRY

Audrey... I love you.

AUDREY

(nervously)

Oh... thank you.

JERRY

(confirmed)

That wasn't the answer I was looking for.

AUDREY

Oh... Thank you, very much?

JERRY

Audrey, be honest. You wouldn't by any chance be doing this because you're mad at Fletcher, would you?

Audrey starts to deny it, but then can't. But before she can speak, Jerry registers a look of shock!

JERRY

Fletcher?!

AUDREY

No, it's not Fletcher... it's --

JERRY

No, no...

Jerry points to the window. Audrey turns, SHOUTS IN FEAR! Max looks.

MAX

Dad?!

101 EXT. TARMAC - CONTINUOUS

101

Fletcher is waving to Max. He looks possessed.

FLETCHER

Hi, Max! I made it. I'm late but  
I made it!

MAX

What's he doing?

AUDREY

(in shock)

He, um... he... came to, uh... see  
us off. Wave.

FLETCHER

I won't let you go, Max. I won't  
let you go!!

Other people now see FLETCHER AND PANIC.

102 EXT. TARMAC - DAY

102

Fletcher FLOORS THE STAIRS, RACES UNDER THE WING, AROUND  
THE NOSE OF THE PLANE

103 OMITTED

103

103A INT. TOWER - SAME TIME

103A

An AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER is looking out the window,  
incredulously:

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER

Security...

We SEE what he SEES: THE STAIRS and FLETCHER racing in  
front of the plane.

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER (CONT'D)

We've got a situation here. Some  
idiot's just hijacked a flight of  
stairs.

104 OMITTED

104

104A INT. COCKPIT - DAY

104A

The PILOT prepares for take-off.

CONTINUED

PILOT  
(into mic)  
Tower nineteen, requesting final  
departure clearance.

Suddenly, a SHOE HITS THE WINDOW.

CONTINUED

104A CONTINUED 2

104A

CO-PILOT

What was that?

PILOT

It looked like a shoe!

Then, ANOTHER SHOE HITS THE WINDOW. The Co-Pilot leans over, looks out the window and sees a barefoot Fletcher driving alongside, underneath him.

FLETCHER

(waves his hands  
like a cop)

Pull over!! Pull this thing  
over!!

104B INT. COCKPIT

104B

CO-PILOT

(into mic)

Tower One, we've got a Code Red.  
We're gonna have to stop the plane.

The Pilot HITS THE BRAKES.

104C INSERT THE AIRPLANE'S TIRES SKID, SLOWING DOWN

104C

Outside, Fletcher sees this, and REJOICES.

FLETCHER

YES, YES, Y --

Fletcher turns and reacts in horror:

104D EXT. PLANE - CONTINUOUS

104D

He sees the butt of another airplane to his left fire up its engines. Fletcher and the stairs are instantly engulfed in a hurricane force blast of jet wash.

The stairs and Fletcher spin out of control....

Hitting a cement barrier....

Sending Fletcher flying....

Into a baggage cart....

Causing a pile-up of airport vehicles....

CLOSE ON FLETCHER between the strewn bags.

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

105  
THRU OMITTED  
108

105  
THRU  
108

109 EXT. AIRPORT RUNWAY - LATER

109

Buzzing with activity. COPS, PARAMEDICS, AIRPORT SECURITY. The plane has been pulled over and the passengers mill about the runway.

Jerry, Max and Audrey make their way through the swarm. We see Fletcher lying on a stretcher, handcuffed.

A COP tries to stop them.

COP  
That's far enough, folks.

AUDREY  
He's my husband. I mean was.

COP  
Well, he could still be alive.  
I've seen things...

Audrey sees that Fletcher isn't moving. She's worried that Fletcher might be seriously hurt and doesn't want to bring Max over there.

AUDREY  
Max. Stay here with Jerry. I'll  
be right back.

She hurries over to Fletcher who's lying flat on the tarmac. His legs are going in strange directions.

FLETCHER  
Audrey! Good news. Both my legs  
are broken. So they can't take me  
right to jail.

AUDREY  
Are you in a lot of pain?

CONTINUED

FLETCHER

(cheerfully)

No. The doctor says I'm in shock. But in about an hour he says the pain will be excruciating. How was your flight?

AUDREY

It was aborted, thank you.

FLETCHER

Do you still get the mileage?

AUDREY

(to the doctor)

Does he have a head injury?

FLETCHER

No. I'm thinking clear. I've never been this clear. Everything's changed. I'm --

MAX (O.C.)

Dad?

They look up and see Max who has come over with Jerry.

JERRY

(to Audrey)

He was getting kind of upset.

FLETCHER

Max...

MAX

Are you all right?

FLETCHER

No. I'm hurting. Here.  
(touches his  
heart)

Max doesn't understand.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

I'm a dope, Max. I'm a big fat dope. All this time you've been here and I could see you anytime I felt like it. And I... didn't. Then your mom told me you were moving to Boston and I started to think -- I could be sitting around some time and want to look at you and hold you and play with you...

(MORE)

CONTINUED

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

and I won't be able to. I don't think I'm gonna do too well with that. 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.

He struggles to sit up. He takes Max's hand.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

I love you and I'll never hurt you again. Please don't move to Boston. Please, give me another chance.

Fletcher looks at Max's watch. It's eight twenty-two.

MAX

(to Audrey)

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

(to Fletcher)

Right?

FLETCHER

Max... it's 8:22. You made the wish at 8:15. I've been able to lie for the last seven minutes.

Max steps away from Fletcher.

MAX

So then, you were...

FLETCHER

No! It was the truth. I just wanted to be honest with you and tell you -- You just have to believe I love you and that I've changed.

A beat as Max thinks, then he turns to Audrey:

MAX

Mom, do we have to go to Boston?

Audrey smiles.

AUDREY

No, we don't have to.

CONTINUED

Max hugs Fletcher. Fletcher holds on with all his might. Audrey smiles warmly. Jerry steps forward.

JERRY

(to Audrey)

I've got to go to Boston. That's an open ticket, if you change your mind.

(beat, as he looks to Fletcher holding Max)

Looks like he's got his father back anyway.

Paramedics begin wheeling the stretcher towards an ambulance.

MAX

(to Fletcher)

Can we play catch when you're better?

FLETCHER

What's wrong with right now?

Max beams, takes a ball out of his pocket. Fletcher holds up his hands in a catching position. Max tosses the ball. Fletcher catches it.

Fletcher, as he's being wheeled, tosses it back. Max catches it. They toss back and forth until Fletcher is in the ambulance. Fletcher's last throw comes out of the ambulance, just before the doors close. Max and Audrey watch as the ambulance drives away.

110 OMITTED

110

110A INT. AUDREY'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

110A

Written on the screen: One year later.

Max sits at the head of the table, Audrey beside him. There are birthday decorations.

AUDREY

Almost time to open the presents, Max. Are you excited?

MAX

Yeah, but where's Dad?

She shrugs. A beat. Then we hear Fletcher (V.O.) from the kitchen.

CONTINUED

FLETCHER (V.O.)

Hold your horses creepy, I'm  
comin'. I'm comin'....

Fletcher comes from the kitchen holding a cake with candles  
burning. He switches the lights off and walks toward the  
table, starts SINGING HAPPY BIRTHDAY. Audrey joins in.

FLETCHER/AUDREY

Happy Birthday to you.  
Happy Birthday to you.  
Happy Birthday dear Maximum.  
Happy Birthday to you.

Fletcher sits down, next to Audrey.

CONTINUED

AUDREY

Okay, Max. Make a wish. Wait, I'm not sure we should do this.

FLETCHER

Oh, come on, Audrey. What are the chances of it happening again?

AUDREY

Yeah, you're right. Okay, Max. Go ahead.

While they watch intently, Max thinks and then blows out the candles.

The room goes COMPLETELY DARK. We hear MUFFLED SOUNDS coming from Fletcher. Max calls out from the dark.

MAX (O.S.)

Dad? Mom?

Max goes to the light switch, turns it on and sees:

Audrey KISSING Fletcher. Fletcher KISSING back. Then, they stop and look into each other's eyes. Fletcher turns to Max.

FLETCHER

(accusingly)

Max? Did you wish that Mommy and I would get back together again?

Max didn't.

MAX

(sincerely)

No. I wished for rollerblades.

Fletcher looks at Audrey. She mischievously offers him the butt of the cake knife.

AUDREY

Would you like to cut the cake... Dad?

FLETCHER

I'd love to, but... I've had this terrible pain in my arm. I don't know what it is....

Fletcher grabs his arm and as he pretends to struggle, Max SCREAMS with joy....

MAX

It's the claw!!

CONTINUED

FLETCHER  
(holding up his  
twisted arm)  
Arghhhh!!!

Audrey and Max SQUEAL with delight as they run "for their lives."

AUDREY  
Run, Max! Run!!

A demented Fletcher dramatically raises his claw hand.

FLETCHER  
NO ONE CAN STOP IT!!!! ARGHHH!  
AHHH!!

He playfully runs after them.

We hear the sounds of a family playing together, joyfully.

FADE OUT

THE END