

LIAR, LIAR

RED
ORIGINAL

1 INT. FULGHAM KINDERGARTEN -- WEDNESDAY MORNING

1

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

2 CONTINUED

2

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

FLETCHER

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

2 CONTINUED 2

2

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.

LAWYER

How'd it go, Fletcher?

FLETCHER

(he's won)

Nothin' but net, my friend.

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

CLIENT

(offers the jacket and tie)

Mr. Reid, you want this stuff back?

FLETCHER

(waves him off)

I'm sure you'll be needing them again.

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

4 CONTINUED

4

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!!

Audrey shakes her head with a "don't even try it" look.

FLETCHER
 Uh-oh. The claw's only weakness.
 Sub-zero temperatures. Yipe-yipe-
 yipe...

AUDREY
 Fletcher, you're forty-five
 minutes late.

FLETCHER
 I know... I know... I'm sorry...
 Next time somebody's car breaks
 down, they can just wait for
 Triple A. I must have jumper
 cables written all over me.

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

4 CONTINUED 2

4

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

Max, my man!

FLETCHER

(under his
breath)
Oh, good.

Jerry gives Max "five."

JERRY

Fletcher, good to see you.

Jerry kisses Audrey on the lips.

FLETCHER

What? No kiss for me?

JERRY

(going along
with the joke)
Maybe a good-bye kiss. I'm moving to Boston Saturday.

AUDREY

Jerry got a scouting job with the Red Sox.

CONTINUED

4 CONTINUED 3

4

MAX

Cool.

JERRY

(to Max)
 Hey, look what I got for you.
 (hands him a
 baseball)
 Major League approved.

- MAX

Wow!

JERRY

Let's toss a few. I wanna show
 you the famous Jerry Shelton
 curveball.

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

FLETCHER

I didn't know the boyfriend was
 moving.

AUDREY

Jerry. 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

4 CONTINUED 4

4

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.

JERRY (O.S.)

(calling to
Audrey)

Ready? We don't want to be late for our reservation.

Audrey and Jerry say good-bye to Max. They get in his Explorer.

AUDREY

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

They drive off.

FLETCHER

Bye. Bye, bye.

(knowing they
can't hear him)

Good luck with your compromise...

(flipping Max
the keys)

You driving?

Max rolls his eyes.

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

5

Fletcher is driving, Max beside him.

MAX

Dad, are we really going to go to wrestling?

FLETCHER

Absolutely, Max Factor. We just have to stop by the office or 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.

They are soon spotted by PHILIP, a dweebish bore. He runs after them.

PHILIP
Fletcher!

FLETCHER
Philip!

PHILIP
Is this the famous Max?

FLETCHER
(trying to brush
him off)
Yeah. Yeah it is.

PHILIP
You know, my son's Max's age. We
should have them play together.

FLETCHER
Absolutely. Well, it was good
seeing you.

Fletcher continues on with Max, when Philip calls after him.

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

CONTINUED

7 CONTINUED

7

FLETCHER

Oh yeah, me too. It was amazing.
I was getting pretty good at those
charades. We'll have to do it
again sometime. We should, we
should...

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

PHILIP

When?

FLETCHER

Soon.

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

PHILIP

How 'bout tonight?

FLETCHER

Oh, tonight I'm taking Max to see
wrestling--

PHILIP

We love wrestling. We could go
down there with you--

FLETCHER

No, no. You can't. It's...
totally sold out. Isn't it, Max?
(not waiting for
an answer)

Yeah, it's sold out. Maybe next
time. Hmm... Tell you what --
give me your card as a reminder.
I'll call you. Soon. Promise.

PHILIP

Great!

Philip hands him his card just as the door closes.

FLETCHER

Great! This is excellent.

8 INT. ELEVATOR - AFTERNOON

8

Max watches as his father BREATHES A HUGE SIGH OF RELIEF,
then TEARS THE CARD UP.

9 INT. MIRANDA'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

9

...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 and tosses Philip's card in a garbage can. Max walks aside him.

RECEPTION AREA - CONTINUOUS

The receptionist, JANE, greets them. Jane has an ODD HAIRDO. Like a bad Rosanna-Rosanna Danna.

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

10 CONTINUED

10

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 WHITE HEAD 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

11 CONTINUED 2

11

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)

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's is totally focused on a legal file.

FLETCHER
 (barely looking
 up)
 I'm watching. I'm watching.
 Woo! 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

Don't worry, me and Max will come visit you over his summer break.

Jerry pulls out a small, thin box.

JERRY

I got you something.

AUDREY

We agreed, no good-bye presents.

JERRY

You agreed. Just open it.

She opens it. It is two airline tickets.

AUDREY

(hesitant)

Two tickets to Boston. For Friday night?

JERRY

I can't live three thousand miles away from you and Max. Look, I know it's a lot to ask to move and everything, but I...I love you. I love your son. Marry me.

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

15 CONTINUED

15

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)

MS. BERRY
 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.

16 INT. JERRY'S CAR - MORNING

16

Jerry and Audrey are driving to pick up Max.

JERRY
 If you said 'yes' we could tell
 Max, right now.

CONTINUED

16 CONTINUED

16

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

JERRY
I'm sorry. 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 your house, too.

AUDREY
I can't just pick up and move to Boston. What about my job? I've been at UCLA three years-

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

AUDREY
There are other factors...
(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.

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

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

JERRY
Max, my man! My happy birthday man!

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

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

CONTINUED

17 CONTINUED

17

FLETCHER

He struck the child. Did you see that?

MAX

Look what dad got me!
(shows the
glove)

JERRY

Whoa! Great! I have my glove in the car. We'll stop in the park on the way home and play catch. Then tonight we'll oil it, wrap a rubber band around it... It'll be great.

(to Fletcher)

Great birthday present, dad!

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

FLETCHER

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.

18 INT. MIRANDA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

18

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

18 CONTINUED 2

18

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

I know.

JERRY

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

AUDREY

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

JERRY

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

AUDREY

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

The PHONE RINGS. Audrey answers.

CONTINUED

20 CONTINUED 2

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.

MS. BERRY

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

23

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

23 CONTINUED

23

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 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 per cent 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!

CONTINUED

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

33 CONTINUED 2

33

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 --

34 INT. COURTROOM - MORNING

34

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.
I--

But before Fletcher can finish, the judge enters.

CONTINUED

34 CONTINUED

34

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.

35 INT. LAW OFFICES - MORNING

35

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

35 CONTINUED

35

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
 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

36 CONTINUED

36

FLETCHER (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
(CONT'D)

pen is-- Rrrrrrrroyal 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
(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
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
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

38 CONTINUED

38

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.

GRETA
Your accountant, Philip, called to
remind you about getting together.

CONTINUED

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

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

FLETCHER
(emphatically
nodding "yes")
No.

GRETA
So then you're here?

FLETCHER
(emphatically
shaking his head
"no")
Yes.

GRETA
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

39 CONTINUED 2

39

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

43 CONTINUED

43

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

50 CONTINUED

50

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
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 -- 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?

55 EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

55

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

55 CONTINUED

55

FLETCHER

Uh-uh.

Max is elated!

MAX

(turns to his
friends)

Hey everyone, my dad can't lie!

DISSOLVE TO:

56 EXT. PLAYGROUND - JUNGLE GYM

56

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

56 CONTINUED 2

56

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!

57 EXT. EATING AREA - TABLE

57

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

57 CONTINUED

57

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

57 CONTINUED 2

57

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.

58 EXT. SKYSCRAPER - DAY

58

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

MACHO ATTORNEY

Yo, Fletcher! How's it hanging?

FLETCHER

Short, shriveled and always to the left.

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

PHILIP

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

FLETCHER

No --

PHILIP

Or my phone was busy --

FLETCHER

Wrong.

PHILIP

Or you just forgot --

FLETCHER

Air ball.

PHILIP

(cannot be discouraged)

Well anyway, why don't you swing by my place!

CONTINUED

58 CONTINUED

58

Philip starts off, when Fletcher calls after him resolutely.

FLETCHER
Philip... I don't want to come
over to your house!
(pokes his
forehead with
every syllable)
I--do--not--want--to--come--over--
to--your--HOUSE!

A long moment, then --

PHILIP
Fine! We'll go out! There's this
new country western bar on Main
I've been dying to try.

Fletcher runs off. Philip YELLS after him.

PHILIP
I'll meet you there at seven!

Incredibly frustrated, Fletcher hurries on.

59 INT. OFFICE'S - DAY

59

Fletcher drags himself past Greta's desk.

GRETA
Do you want your messages?

FLETCHER
No.

He goes into his office. Greta is concerned, follows him in.

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

60 CONTINUED

60

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

62 CONTINUED

62

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?

63 INT. OUTER OFFICE

63

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)

CONTINUED

63 CONTINUED

63

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
 Aaaaah 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 --

64 INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

64

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

64 CONTINUED

64

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--slu
t.

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!

65 INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

65

Fletcher exits the conference, closes the door and FAINTS.

66 INT. COURTROOM - AFTERNOON

66

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

66 CONTINUED

66

FLETCHER
 (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:

67 INT. COURTROOM - LATER

67

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

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

He shows several photograph of Virginia and a man caught in
 an embrace.

BRYSON
 I also made this recording.

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
 (MORE)

CONTINUED

VIRGINIA (ON TAPE) (CONT'D)
 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!

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

67 CONTINUED 2

67

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 it 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. REST ROOM - 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

69 CONTINUED

69

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

70 CONTINUED

70

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, LAURENCE FALK, a
Joey Buttafuoco type.

VIRGINIA

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

FLETCHER

How could I forget?

FALK

How you doin'?

CONTINUED

71 CONTINUED

71

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

71 CONTINUED 2

71

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 weakly wipes his mouth.

MR. ALLAN

I just want you to know I'll be observing this afternoon. Miranda insisted I see you in action. Go get 'em, son.
(he goes)

MS. BERRY

Fletcher shoots a hateful look at Miranda. She smiles.

MIRANDA

Go get 'em.

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

FLETCHER

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

FALK

Yes.

FLETCHER

Isn't it true that your relationship with my client is entirely platonic?

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

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 scum bag 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.

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

MIRANDA
Kissing his career good-bye.

The Bailiff stands before the witness.

BALIFF
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

72 CONTINUED 7

72

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

72 CONTINUED 10

72

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

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 -- DAY

75

Audrey is locking up, still upset. She angrily shuts off
the lights, closes the blinds.

MAX

And could I get a sled for when it
snows?

AUDREY

Of course you'll get a sled. It's
a necessity in New England.

(beat)

You okay with this?

MAX

(nods)

Are you?

AUDREY

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

The PHONE RINGS. She answers it.

AUDREY

Hello.

76 INT. JAIL

76

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?

(to a cop)

One more call!! I need another call!!

77 INT. JAIL CELL - DAY

77

Fletcher is pacing back and forth, RANTING to himself like a street person. A GROUP OF TOUGH PRISONERS are on the far side of the cell, watching this lunatic.

FLETCHER

Money has become our God. We're willing to sell our soul for the almighty buck. We've perverted ourselves into thinking that the material things we leave behind are more important than people in our lives.

(it hits him)

Yes!! It's all about love, man!! We just want to be loved!!

TOUGH PRISONER

Why don't you shut up.

CONTINUED

77 CONTINUED

77

FLETCHER

Of course you'd like to me to shut up, because what I'm saying confronts you in some way.

TOUGH PRISONER

What the fuck are you talking about, man?

FLETCHER

You're obviously harboring feelings of abandonment and by intimidating me you hope to gain acceptance with your peers.

TOUGH PRISONER

I said, shut up!

FLETCHER

Don't you see, anger isn't a feeling. It keeps you from feeling. Where do you hurt? Tell me... It's okay...

The huge prisoner GRABS FLETCHER BY THE THROAT and PINS HIM AGAINST THE WALL. The other prisoners LAUGH as Fletcher's about to get his ass whipped. But then, we hear a VOICE:

VOICE (O.S.)

My mother left me when I was four.

Everyone turns to see ANOTHER TOUGH PRISONER stepping forward.

TOUGH PRISONER #2 (CONT'D)

That's when I started getting in trouble. I just wanted attention.

Fletcher is moved.

FLETCHER

It's alright. Let it out. You're with friends.

DISSOLVE TO:

78 INT. PRISON HOLDING CELL - LATER

78

A big BLACK GUY is crying on Fletcher's shoulder.

FLETCHER

That's it. Doesn't the truth feel good?

The prisoner nods.

CONTINUED

78 CONTINUED

78

FLETCHER

You see, when you stabbed that man
97 times you were really stabbing
yourself.

PRISONER #3

(agreeing)

Uh-huh.

FLETCHER

Okay, everyone group hug.

They all make one big hug, until a A DEPUTY appears.

DEPUTY

Mr. Reid...

Fletcher turns.

DEPUTY

You made bail. Some woman.

79 INT. OUTER AREA

79

Fletcher rushes in, looking around.

FLETCHER

Audrey?

He sees Greta.

FLETCHER

Greta??

GRETA

(sourly)

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

FLETCHER

Greta! I've learned the most
amazing thing. I'm insecure and
immature so I attempt to
over-achieve in order to feel good
about myself at the expense of
everyone one around me. How did
you know I was here?

GRETA

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

CONTINUED

79 CONTINUED

79

FLETCHER

Yeah.

GRETA

Listen, tomorrow you'll call Mr. Allan, you'll give him a snow job, you'll be the fair-haired boy again. I know you.

FLETCHER

(shakes his head)

I'm thinking of opening my own little practice. You know, help people who really need it.

GRETA

Really?

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

(points to his heart)

See if there's a soul left in here to salvage.

(checks his watch)

Oh, man, I have to go. Audrey's on her way to the airport and she and the boyfriend are gonna buy a house in Boston together and I'm gonna lose Max forever. Thanks Greta.

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.

He hugs her and leaves her feeling very happy.

80 INT. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

80

Fletcher drives like a maniac down a busy freeway.

CONTINUED

80 CONTINUED

80

FLETCHER

Don't worry, Max. Daddy's coming!

But he soon hits a snarl of traffic. Cars are moving, but very slowly.

FLETCHER

Come on, come on...

He notices cars passing him in the CAR POOL LANE, where there are signs that clearly state; "Minimum, two passengers."

Fletcher turns to the left, gets in the diamond lane for a second, but then involuntarily JERKS THE WHEEL BACK CAUSING THE CAR TO SQUEAL OUT OF THE DIAMOND LANE, back into traffic.

He tries again and again. But each time, he is forced back.

A MOTORCYCLE COP watches this game of bob and weave and takes off in pursuit.

Fletcher soon spots the flashing lights.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

Shit shit shit shit!

CUT TO:

81 EXT. FREEWAY - DAY

81

Fletcher's parked now. The officer approaches.

POLICE OFFICER

Would you step out of the car, please.

Fletcher obeys.

FLETCHER

I'm sorry. I know, I haven't been driving nicely, but I have a terrible emergency --

POLICE OFFICER

I'm impounding this vehicle.

FLETCHER

What for?

CONTINUED

81 CONTINUED

81

POLICE OFFICER
I ran you through the computer.
You've got seventeen unpaid
parking tickets.

FLETCHER
No! I paid them! This morning!
I swear!

POLICE OFFICER
Not according to the computer.

FLETCHER
The computer is wrong. It hasn't
been updated. I paid these
tickets like eight hours ago.

POLICE OFFICER
You can straighten it out at the
impound yard.

Fletcher's frustrated beyond belief.

FLETCHER
(checks his
watch, firmly)
NO!

POLICE OFFICER
No?

FLETCHER
That's right, no! I'm not gonna
lose my son because some stupid
clerk was too lazy to update the
computer.
(getting cockier
as he goes)
Now if you want to follow me, you
can follow me and take the car
after I get where I'm going. I'm
a lawyer and I know my rights!
Understand?!

CUT TO:

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

82 EXT. CITY STREETS PAY PHONE - DAY

82

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

CONTINUED

82 CONTINUED

82

FLETCHER
(looking
heavenward)
Noooo!!!

He spots a man walking by.

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

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

BEGGAR
Change? Absolutely.

He continues walking.

FLETCHER
Could you spare some?

BEGGAR
Unquestionably.

The beggar continues on.

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

The beggar pulls out a quarter and holds it up.

BEGGAR
I'd like to give it to you, but
how do I know you're not going to
use it to buy drugs? I just want
to get from the curb to my
shopping cart without having to
witness the depth of your sorrow.
Plus, I'm cheap.

Fletcher opens his wallet.

FLETCHER
Alright, twenty.

BEGGAR
(admiring
quarter)
It's so shiny and new.

FLETCHER
Thirty.

CONTINUED

82 CONTINUED 2

82

BEGGAR
Minted in Denver. Imagine that.

FLETCHER
Thirty-four. That's all I have.

A moment as the beggar thinks, then snatches the money and gives up the quarter.

BEGGAR
(as he exits)
God, I live for moments like this.

FLETCHER
Jerkoff.

BEGGAR
Lawyer.

83 INT. CAB COMPANY - DAY

83

An OPERATOR answers the switchboard:

OPERATOR
Airport Taxi.

84 INT. PHONE BOOTH

84

Fletcher is talking to the cab company.

FLETCHER
I need a taxi to the airport right away. I'm at the corner of sixth and Oak...
(beat)
Forty-bucks?! Okay.

Fletcher hangs up and sets out on foot. He soon sees a ready teller machine.

He races to it.

85 EXT. READY TELLER - MOMENTS LATER

85

Fletcher takes his cash from the machine. A LARGE BRUTE wearing a ski mask appears from behind Fletcher, puts him in a head lock and pulls him into an alley.

LARGE BRUTE
Give me your money!

CONTINUED

FLETCHER

Please don't do this. I need the money. I have to see my --
(recognizing the voice)
Say that again.

LARGE BRUTE

I said, give me the money!

FLETCHER

What a second. Dan? Dan Pittard?

DAN

Yeah.

FLETCHER

It's me, Fletcher Reid. Your lawyer.

Dan takes off his ski mask. It's the large brute that Fletcher got off in the beginning of the film.

DAN

(suddenly warm)
Fletcher, my man. How's it going?

FLETCHER

(relieved)
Oh, thank God. Can I have my money back, please? I'm in a rush to get to the airport.

DAN

Sure. You won't tell anybody about this, right?

Fletcher pauses, here it comes. He has to tell the truth.

FLETCHER

Well... actually, I will, yes.

DAN

What? You're going to turn me in?

Fletcher nods.

DAN

That was a big mistake. Now I'm gonna have to kill you.

FLETCHER

(resigned)
Today, I would expect nothing less.

CONTINUED

85 CONTINUED 2

85

Dan starts BEATING THE SHIT OUT OF FLETCHER.

He tosses him into a group of garbage cans, then dives after him.

Dan is about to finish him off with a huge punch, when suddenly, both of Fletcher's HANDS COME UP WITH GARBAGE CAN LIDS in each hand. He crashes them against Dan's head like cymbals. Dan goes down -- and out!

Fletcher takes his money back.

FLETCHER

I need that money to see my kid!

Fletcher races just in time to see HIS TAXI driving away. He runs after it.

FLETCHER

Stop!! I'm here!! Stop!!

The taxi speeds off. Fletcher slumps over out of breath, defeated.

Just then, a CAR BEARS DOWN ON HIM. It SKIDS TO A STOP inches from Fletcher.

A man gets out. It is PHILIP, dressed in a very silly looking cowboy outfit.

PHILIP

Hey partner, sorry I'm late.

Fletcher looks up, he's standing right in front of the COUNTRY WESTERN BAR Philip invited him to.

PHILIP

What happened to you? You can't go line dancing looking like that.

86 INT. PHILIP'S CAR - EARLY EVENING

86

Philip's driving Fletcher.

FLETCHER

You're saving my life, Philip.

PHILIP

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

CONTINUED

FLETCHER

No, it's not silly. I don't like you.

PHILIP

What?

FLETCHER

I don't like you. I'm sorry. I find you boring. You whine too much, I hate charades and I hate country music.

(feels bad)

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

A moment, then:

PHILIP

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

FLETCHER

Then why are you always trying to socialize with me?

PHILIP

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

FLETCHER

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

PHILIP

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

FLETCHER

Not at all.

PHILIP

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

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 Max)

Whoa, you brought your glove. I don't know if they'll let us play on the plane. Oh! Look what I got for you. A Red Sox hat.

He puts it on Max's head.

MAX

Thanks.

JERRY

(turning to
Audrey)

I'm so glad you're here.

He gives her a peck on the lips. She seems tense.

STEWARDESS

Flight 61 to Boston now boarding.

The announcement almost seems to make Audrey jump.

JERRY

Well, that's us! Are you okay?

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

Phillip's car SKIDS TO A STOP. Fletcher opens the door.

FLETCHER

Thank you, Philip.

PHILIP

Go get 'em pal.

(beat)

I mean...business associate.

Philip drives off. Fletcher runs into the terminal.

89 INT. TERMINAL - CONTINUOUS

89

Fletcher races in, checks the DEPARTURE BOARD.

FLETCHER
Be delayed! Be delayed!

It reads:

"Flight 1511: Departs 8:00 p.m. On Time. Gate 23."

Fletcher looks at the clock -- It's 7:56! Holy shit!!

Fletcher takes off... races right through the

90 METAL DETECTOR

90

but SETS OFF THE ALARM.

FLETCHER
Ahhh!!!

INSPECTOR
Please step through again.

Fletcher frantically tosses his keys, a pen, his Rolex watch into a tray.

He tries again. No alarm.

The Inspector turns to hand Fletcher back his things. But Fletcher's gone!

91 INT. PLANE - DAY

91

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

JERRY
(trying to make
light)
That Evelyn Wood course really
paid off, huh?

AUDREY
(mind elsewhere)
Huh?

A FLIGHT ATTENDANT interrupts.

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

AUDREY
Yes!! Anything with liquor.

CONTINUED

91 CONTINUED

91

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.

92 INT. TERMINAL - EARLY EVENING

92

Fletcher is pushing his way on one of those CROWDED PEOPLE MOVERS.

FLETCHER
Excuse me... excuse me... Standing
on the right, passing on the left.
They can't make this any easier
than it is... Come on....

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

WOMAN
Help the poor?...

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

93 INT. GATE 23 - EARLY EVENING

93

Fletcher runs to the gate, his eyes go wide:

FLETCHER'S POV

The plane is taxiing away from the gate!

FLETCHER
(to the ticket
agent)
No. No, no, no. You have to stop
the plane.

CONTINUED

93 CONTINUED

93

TICKET AGENT
I'm sorry. It's too late.

Fletcher spots a door marked "NOT AN EXIT".

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

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

94 EXT. TARMAC - DAY

94

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

FLETCHER
Wait!! Wait!!!

But there's no way he'll catch it.

Then, he sees a MECHANIC working on a MOBILE STAIRS UNIT. Fletcher gets an insane idea...

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

WORKER
Hey!! Hey!!!!

But Fletcher's gone.

95 EXT. AIRPLANE - DAY

95

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

96 INT. TOWER - SAME TIME

96

An AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER'S mouth drops when he sees:
THE STAIRS and FLETCHER racing alongside the plane.

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER
(totally
incredulous)
Security. We've got a situation
here. Someone's just hijacked a
flight of stairs.

Airport security vehicles take off in pursuit.

97 BACK ON THE RUNWAY

97

Fletcher's too low to see in the plane, so he CLIMBS THE STEPS!

He's about 30 feet from the plane and tries to get the pilot's attention.

MS. BERRY

Fletcher

(waves his hands
like a cop)

Pull over!! Pull this thing
over!!

He catches the pilot's attention. The pilot's doesn't know what the hell is going on. But he's not stopping.

Fletcher steers the stairs towards the plane.

98 INT. AIRPLANE - DAY - MOVING

98

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

FLETCHER

(drowned out by
engine noise)

Max?!! MAX?!!

The PASSENGERS are unaware of his presence, reading, chatting away.

99 EXT. TARMAC - DAY

99

Fletcher is BANGING on the windows.

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

MAX, AUDREY AND JERRY

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.

CONTINUED

100 CONTINUED

100

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
It's Fletcher.

AUDREY
No, it's not... 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.

She and Max wave. She's staring in disbelief.

102 EXT. TARMAC - CONTINUOUS

102

The plane begins to accelerate. The second wing flies
toward him from behind. At the last possible moment he

CONTINUED

- 102 CONTINUED 102
 lowers the stairs, and just avoids being whacked by the wing.
 The jet is over him as he rides, BARELY FITTING UNDER THE WING.
 He manages to accelerate the stairs and to stay even with...
- 103 INT. PLANE - CONTINUOUS 103
 Fletcher's face RISES UP at the window again.
 JERRY
 Oh, good. He's back.
- 104 EXT. PLANE - CONTINUOUS 104
 Fletcher tries to keep the stairs even with the plane.
 FLETCHER
 This is the new Fletcher Reid!
 Max! Daddy made it!
- 105 INT. PLANE - CONTINUOUS 105
 Jerry sees something in the distance.
 JERRY
 Look out!
 Fletcher turns and reacts in horror.
- 106 EXT. PLANE - CONTINUOUS 106
 Fletcher's EYES GO WIDE!
- 107 FLETCHER'S POV 107
 The RUNWAY is ENDING!
- 108 EXT. PLANE - CONTINUOUS 108
 AT THAT INSTANT --THE PLANE MAKES A SHARP TURN!
 BUT THE STAIRS DON'T! They keep going straight, heading right for the END OF THE RUNWAY and a parked LOADED LUGGAGE CART.

CONTINUED

108 CONTINUED

108

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

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

CLOSE ON FLETCHER

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

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)

MS. BERRY

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)

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

109 CONTINUED 3

109

Max hugs Fletcher. Fletcher holds on with all his might. Audrey smiles warmly, puts her arm around Jerry.

JERRY

All right, new plan. I keep my old job and instead of courting your son, I spend more time courting you.

(warmly)

Looks like he's got his father back, anyway.

Audrey smiles.

MAX

Can we play catch when you're better?

They begin wheeling the stretcher towards an ambulance.

FLETCHER

What's wrong with right now?

Max beams, takes a ball out of his pocket. Fletcher holds up his hands in 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 INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

110

Written on the screen: One year later.

This is a kids' "Chuckie Cheese" type restaurant. It's Max's birthday party. Kids, noise, pizza etc. Max looks a little upset. We see Jerry sit down next to him and try to cheer him up.

JERRY

Come on, Max. Sometimes people get held up. If someone's a little late, it doesn't mean they're not gonna be here --

MAX

(still a little down)

I know...

CONTINUED

110 CONTINUED

110

ANGLE ON FLETCHER

He's handing out slices of pizza to Max's friends.
Fletcher is in very good spirits.

FLETCHER

She'll be here. You know your
mother. Always busy. Always on
the run.

(offering cheesy
slices of pizza)

Come on, who's up for a triple
bypass?

Fletcher holds a slice of pizza just above the reach of the
children.

AUDREY RUSHES IN, FRANTICALLY

AUDREY

Max, I'm sorry! The parking lot
at work was blocked and I couldn't
get out.

FLETCHER

Right.

She kisses Max. Max smiles.

AUDREY

(to Jerry)

Hi.

(kisses him; to
Fletcher)

Everything okay? I'm sorry I'm
late.

FLETCHER

(acting miffed)

He's only going to be seven once
you know. If you can't take the
time to be at his birthday...

AUDREY

I...

He smiles. She realizes she's being teased.

AUDREY (CONT'D)

Did you guys pick up the cake?

FLETCHER

(panicky)

The cake?!!

CONTINUED

JERRY

Oh, my god?!

FLETCHER

(points)

We did order a really funny
looking pizza, though.

Sure enough, there's a BIG CAKE on the table. She smacks
both of them, then goes to Max.

JERRY

You're alright. For a lawyer.

FLETCHER

You're not too bad yourself. For
a compromise.

Audrey sets the cake down in front of Max. Fletcher goes
to him.

JERRY

Picture!

Jerry AIMS a CAMERA. Max is a little pensive.

MAX

Hey dad, Bobby just said there's
no such thing Santa Clause.
Doesn't Santa exist?

FLETCHER

The truth?

(he thinks,
then)

You bet he does.

JERRY (O.S.)

Smile!

Fletcher smiles a knowing smile. Max grins happily aside
him.

FREEZE

THE END