

The Confession

By

Evan Jones

FADE IN:

INT. COURTHOUSE OFFICE.

We open staring at EDWARD JOHNSON, a hotshot lawyer on a losing streak. He's behind a desk and doesn't look very pleased.

Across from him is CHARLES DILLARD, a high ranking official and Edward's father in law. Charles is holding three files.

He tosses the first file onto the desk.

CHARLES

The Shelton case, acquittal.

He tosses the second folder onto the desk.

CHARLES

The Davis case, acquittal.

He tosses the third folder onto the desk.

CHARLES

The Smith case, acquittal.

EDWARD

I faught for a conviction in every one of them.

CHARLES

Edward, my dear boy, a prosecuting attorney is like a race horse, It doesn't matter how hard he runs, either he wins most of the time or he's put out to pasture.

EDWARD

And if I can't gallop into the home stretch on this race... it may be my last case.

CHARLES

Edward, I'm your father-in-law and I'm deeply concerned about your future, but a woman has been murdered in her kitchen and you'd think a circus had come to town.

EDWARD

Charley, wouldn't you say that I've proved Jensen guilty beyond a reasonable doubt?

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES

Absolutely from every legal aspect, but a jury doesn't want only logic, they want passion. The public doesn't want only argument, it wants theatrics.

EDWARD

You're not asking me to put on a performance?

CHARLES

(sighs)

It's not up to me to ask you anything, boy. But I do know one thing, you send Jensen to the chair and you ensure your political future.

EDWARD

But I've already been promised the nomination for district attorney.

CHARLES

Well, there's a large group of boys down at city hall that would like to see Henderson on the ticket for D.A. instead of you.

EDWARD

Henderson?

CHARLES

I know, I know. He's five years younger, he hasn't half your experience.

EDWARD

But he has charm and assurance. And he's not afraid to use any cheap trick to make a jury laugh or cry. That is it, isn't it?

CHARLES

Well, people talk about him on street corners. How many people know your name well enough to recognize it on a ballot come election time?

EDWARD

Okay, Charles, okay. If that's what they want I'll put a show on for them.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES

There's, um, there's one more thing. It concerns Kathryn.

EDWARD

Kathryn?

CHARLES

Since the day you two were married I've never interfered in, well...

EDWARD

Go ahead, Charley, please.

CHARLES

She came to see me last night, she seemed rather unhappy.

EDWARD

Do you know why?

CHARLES

No, she didn't say. She'd be furious if she knew I even dropped a hint.

EDWARD

Charley, if you have even the faintest idea...

CHARLES

She loves you very much, Edward, naturally she has your success at heart. But the fact that you haven't gotten to the top as quickly as we all hoped. Well, that's just a guess on my part.

EDWARD

Kathryn's been a great help to me.

CHARLES

Perhaps I've said too much. If I have I'm sorry. But this may be your last chance, Edward, politically. You've got to get a conviction.

There's a KNOCK at the door. It opens to reveal a BAILIFF.

BAILIFF

The judge is ready.

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD
Alright, I'm coming.

They all exit the office.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COURTROOM.

Edward is now making his closing statements to the JUDGE, and jury. JENSEN, the personification of trash, looks on from his bench. HENDERSON is his defense attorney.

EDWARD
Ladies and gentlemen, you now have the incontrovertible facts. Each of you must look into your own conscience and admit that if this man, Jensen, is allowed to leave the courtroom Scott-free then murder has been rewarded by toleration. And so the state demands that Jensen be punished to the full extent of the law. Cold-blooded, premeditated murder is the most heinous of human crimes. This killer of the woman he promised to cherish, this slayer of his maiden life must not be allowed to seek the privilege of a prison. So I demand the death sentence.

JUDGE
(to jury)
You will return one of three verdicts: Guilty of murder in the first degree, guilty of murder with the recommendation of life imprisonment, or acquittal. The jury will now retire to consider the evidence.

The jury gets up and leaves to the jury room.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HALLS OF JUSTICE.

The press is now leaving the courtroom. TWO REPORTERS walk out and see Henderson.

REPORTER #1
Oh, there he is!

HENDERSON
Hello, boys.

REPORTER #2
(reaching for his notebook)
Hello, Mr. Henderson

HENDERSON
Oh no, boys. You're not going to quote me in that paper of yours.

REPORTER #1
Off the record?

HENDERSON
Well, off the record, I have to hand it to Johnson. He was trying his best to make it a show during his summation.

REPORTER #2
A matter of poor timing?

HENDERSON
You know, too little too late.

REPORTER #2
I saw a couple of jurymen with their eyes open.

HENDERSON
But they were crying when the defense worked them over. No, gentlemen, I'm afraid Johnson has lost again.

REPORTER #1
Don't be so certain.

HENDERSON
Anyone wanna bet?

REPORTER #1
Give me odds?

(CONTINUED)

HENDERSON

Come now, gentlemen, no gambling in the Halls of Justice. But I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll buy you both a drink at Gallagher's.

They look intrigued.

HENDERSON

Follow me.

They all exit.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE.

A large room. A MAN is in the background putting up curtains. KATHRYN is sitting on the couch looking at different fabrics and designs. She holds one up.

KATHRYN

(to the man on the ladder)

I think I'd like the divan covered with this.

The man nods and climbs the ladder.

The phone RINGS. Kathryn looks at it worried. she slowly makes her way to the ringing phone and answers it.

KATHRYN

Hello?

EDWARD

(filtered)

Darling.

KATHRYN

Edward, what was the verdict?

INT. GALLAGHER'S BAR AND RESTAURANT.

Edward is at the phone booth talking to Kathryn.

EDWARD

The jury's still out.

NOTE: Cut back and fourth between Edward and Kathryn.

(CONTINUED)

KATHRYN

Where are you?

EDWARD

Gallagher's. The jury may be out for hours. Will you come?

KATHRYN

Yes, dear.

She slowly hangs up the phone.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GALLAGHER'S BAR AND RESTAURANT.

Kathryn enters. She looks around for Edward and spots him at a table in the corner. She walks over to him.

KATHRYN

Sorry I'm late. Traffic was awful.

He stands up and greets her. They share a quick kiss. He gets her chair for her like a true gentleman.

EDWARD

What do you want, a martini?

KATHRYN

No, I don't think so right now.

He sits back down. He looks like a nervous wreck.

KATHRYN

Why don't you relax? Every thing's going to be fine.

EDWARD

I wish I was sure. I felt pretty confident... until this morning. Charles spoke to me.

KATHRYN

(uneasy)

What did he say?

EDWARD

Seemed a little worried about my nomination for District Attorney. Seemed to think everything depends on this case.

(CONTINUED)

KATHRYN

If he upset you I'm sorry.

EDWARD

Kathryn, I know I haven't come up as fast as you and your father had thought I would, but please be patient with me.

KATHRYN

Edward, I really believe in you.

EDWARD

Do you?

KATHRYN

Do you think I'd be sitting here if I didn't?

Edward smiles a little.

KATHRYN

Someday your name's going to be important in this state. All you need is the chance to prove yourself politically and there's no way of telling how far you'll go.

Edward takes hold of Kathryn's hand and kisses it.

Henderson walks up behind them and puts his arms around them both.

HENDERSON

Hello, lovers.

KATHRYN

Oh, John. How are you?

HENDERSON

I've got my fingers crossed.

EDWARD

Thank you, John.

HENDERSON

It's like old times isn't it, Sweating it out? Remember the three of us sitting out the Manning trial? Seven hours that jury argued and let him off Scott-free.

(CONTINUED)

KATHRYN

Well, John, I think this time
Edward's jinx is broken. You just
wait and see.

HENDERSON

(chuckles)

Let's hope so. If anyone is
obviously guilty it's Jensen. Good
luck.

Henderson leaves.

EDWARD

Thank you, John.

An older man, DANIEL, approaches Edward.

DANIEL

Excuse me, Mr. Johnson, But how
long until the jury reaches the
verdict?

EDWARD

I don't know.

A PHONE RINGS.

DANIEL

Will it be guilty?

EDWARD

I think I proved Jensen guilty, but
I don't know.

GALLAGHER (O.S.)

The verdict's in! What do you know,
less than two hours.

Edward, Kathryn, and everyone else gets up in a hurry and
leaves.

Daniel tries to get Edwards attention.

DANIEL

Listen, Johnson, I-I-I have
something important to say to you.
Mr. Johnson, please. Mr. Johnson,
it's very important. Mr. Johnson...

But it's too late.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE -- NIGHT.

Edward is laying down with his head on Kathryn's lap. She is holding a letter.

KATHRYN

Now listen to this one.

(reading from the letter)

I am dining on the biggest black crow in town. Congratulations on the Jensen conviction. Henderson.

(puts the letter down)

I'm so proud of you! You know, You're going to be governor some day.

EDWARD

Delusions of grandeur.

KATHRYN

No, the district attorney's office is the next step towards the governor's mansion.

EDWARD

We better take it one step at a time.

KATHRYN

Well, theres no harm in planning ahead.

EDWARD

You'd be the most beautiful governors lady in the history of the world, do you know that?

KATHRYN

Edward?

EDWARD

Yes?

KATHRYN

Now before we start your fall campaign for D.A., Why don't we take a vacation? We haven't been to Europe since... our honeymoon.

EDWARD

Where do you want to go, Italy? Rome?

(CONTINUED)

KATHRYN
How about Florence?

EDWARD
How about a little green stucco
hotel on the Fiume Arno? You know
how much I love you.

They passionately kiss.

The DOORBELL RINGS.

KATHRYN
Don't answer it.

EDWARD
(getting up)
Whoever it is I'll get rid of him.

Edward walks to the door and opens it.

It's Daniel.

DANIEL
(walking in)
Do you remember me, Mr. Johnson?
Could I speak to you?

EDWARD
Not tonight. Why don't you come see
me tomorrow at the office?

DANIEL
Please, only for a minute. It's
very important.

EDWARD
(hesitant)
Alright, just for a minute.

They walk to the couch.

EDWARD
This is my wife, Mister..?

DANIEL
Brady, Daniel Brady. I'd like to
talk to you in private Mr. Johnson.

Kathryn stands up to leave. Edward takes her hand.

EDWARD

No, no, honey. Mr. Brady, anything you want to discuss with me can be discussed in front of Mrs. Johnson. If you'll come to the point quickly, please.

DANIEL

That man you just convicted...

EDWARD

Jensen? What about him.

DANIEL

I've been in Florida a couple of months. I didn't read a paper, or hear a radio, or nothing. Then when I come back, he's already on trial. I didn't know what to do. You can see that can't you?

EDWARD

See what?

DANIEL

I should have come to you sooner, but I was scared.

EDWARD

About what?

DANIEL

Then yesterday, when you were summing up to the jury, I made up my mind to talk to you. This guy Jensen, well, he's kinda young. What is he, thirty-four? I'm past sixty.

KATHRYN

(fed up)

Edward.

EDWARD

Yes, Mr. Brady. Either make sense, or you'll have to leave.

DANIEL

But I need your advice something awful.

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD

For heaven's sake, about what?

DANIEL

Jensen didn't kill his wife... I did.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE -- LATER

Kathryn is in the bedroom against the door listening to Edward and Daniel talk. Daniel is sitting in a chair and Edward is getting a drink.

DANIEL

Gosh, I'm sorry. I kinda upset your wife barging in like this.

EDWARD

That's alright. Can I get you another drink?

DANIEL

Certainly.

Edward pours Daniel a drink and hands it to him. Edward sits on the table across from the chair.

EDWARD

(after a few seconds of examining Daniel)
Now about this preposterous tale of yours.

DANIEL

It's true.

EDWARD

I proved Jensen guilty beyond any shadow of a doubt. Why you want to come here with your story, I don't know... nor do I care. Because it's a lie from start to finish.

DANIEL

If it's a lie, Mr. Johnson, a bright lawyer like you could catch me. Why don't you ask me some questions?

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD

That's exactly what I intend to do.
Let's get to your story right now.

DANIEL

I was hitchhiking east-

EDWARD

The fourteenth of July.

DANIEL

The tenth of July.

EDWARD

Go on.

DANIEL

I got a lift into Milton. I was walking around town trying to figure to get food, a job, anything. Then I saw this big fancy house.

EDWARD

A big brick house on the corner.

DANIEL

A white wooden house on top of a hill. Am I right?

Edward stands up and paces around.

DANIEL

I knocked on the back door. This nice lady answered. She didn't have no job for me, but she made me a sandwich.

EDWARD

What was she wearing?

DANIEL

A blue number.

EDWARD

I wondered when you were going to slip up. She was wearing a pink dress.

DANIEL

It won't do no good. It was blue.

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD

Alright, go on, get on with it.

DANIEL

While she was gone I looked around the jars and the cupboards for money. She came back, caught me at it, and got sore. She didn't yell or nothing, but I knew she meant trouble. That's when I did it. I went off my head.

EDWARD

How did you do it?

Daniel holds out his hands.

EDWARD

(raising his voice)

With just those? Just those?

DANIEL

A black scarf on the back of a chair- No, no, I remember now, it was tan. A tan scarf.

EDWARD

Why were your fingerprints never found?

DANIEL

I wiped them off.

The PHONE RINGS.

DANIEL

Look, ask yourself, would I be sitting here talking like this If I didn't do it? It took a lot for me to come here today, Mr. Johnson.

EDWARD

But I proved Jensen guilty!

Kathryn walks in.

KATHRYN

Edward, Fathers on the phone, he wants to talk to you.

EDWARD

(sitting on the table)

No, not now dear, Tell him I'll call him back.

(CONTINUED)

KATHRYN

Edward, it's very important. You should take it in the bedroom.

She opens the door for Edward and follows him into the bedroom.

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS.

Edward picks up the phone next to the bed.

EDWARD

Yes, Charles?... I see.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTHOUSE OFFICE.

Charles is behind his desk talking on the telephone.

CHARLES

Yes, so there's going to be that vacancy on the sixth ward, and the boys all think that you should run for a US Representative... Yes, isn't that fine?

CUT TO:

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE BEDROOM.

EDWARD

Yes... lunch tomorrow? Fine... goodnight.

He hangs up.

Kathryn looks happy

KATHRYN

Well, it was the Jensen case that did it. I guess when you won that case they could see that what father and I have been insisting all this time was true.

EDWARD

The people's choice.

(CONTINUED)

KATHRYN

That's right. And when they want you down at the hall, you're in.

EDWARD

I can't accept now.

KATHRYN

Why not?

EDWARD

Well you heard that old man. He killed Mrs. Jensen.

KATHRYN

Edward, that's just... that's just an old drunk.

EDWARD

I can't let an innocent man go to the chair knowing someone else did it. I've got to ask for his pardon first thing tomorrow.

KATHRYN

Darling, this is... this is running for congress. This is what you've always wanted, isn't it?

EDWARD

That was before Brady showed up. I can't let Jensen go to the chair.

KATHRYN

Well he's guilty, I don't care what the old man says.

EDWARD

What if he isn't?

KATHRYN

(after a few seconds)

Look, Edward, I... see darling, it's Jensen or us. This could be the beginning of everything you ever wanted.

They kiss passionately.

EDWARD

Alright, alright.

He leaves the bedroom.

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS.

Edward walks in.

EDWARD

(picking up a bottle of wine)
Well, Mr. Brady, Your going to need
another drink for what you're going
to go through.

He fills Brady's glass.

DANIEL

What do you mean?

EDWARD

You just confessed to a murder. You
understand that, don't you?

Edward walks to his desk and takes out a pen and paper. He
puts them on the table next to Daniel.

DANIEL

I don't get it. This paper's blank.

EDWARD

That's for your confession. I'll
fill in the rest later.

DANIEL

Oh, I don't know.

EDWARD

What did you think you were going
to get for a murder? A gold medal?
A pat on the back? A free ticket
home?

DANIEL

I guess I didn't think about it. I
just kept thinking about that guy
who's innocent.

EDWARD

What did you think they were going
to do to you?

DANIEL

Jail. I'm old, Jensen's young. It's
only right they should let him go
and put me in jail.

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD

You think you're going to spend the rest of your days playing checkers on some prison cell? Well you're dead wrong, Mr. Brady, Dead Wrong! Your going to get the same treatment as Jensen. They're going to burn you!

DANIEL

Burn me? Prison, yes, But not that.

EDWARD

Two-thousand volts and they give it to you for three minutes just to make sure!

DANIEL

No! I wont sign! I didn't mean what I said!

Edward walks to the phone, picks it up and calls the operator.

EDWARD

Operator, give me the police.

DANIEL

What are you doing?

EDWARD

Putting you in the chair instead of Jensen.

DANIEL

No! No! No! Don't do it.

Edward covers the receiver with his hand

DANIEL

It's not true, I didn't kill her. It's a lie. It's all a lie.

EDWARD

That's right, Mr. Brady, it's all a lie. It's all a lie from start to finish. And I never saw you before in my life, did I?

Daniel shakes his head "no".

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD
(hangs up)
Alright. Get out of here.

DANIEL
(backing towards the door)
Thank you, thank you, Mr. Johnson.
I didn't know what they'd do to me.

EDWARD
Alright. Get out of here!

DANIEL
(opening the door)
Thank you-

EDWARD
Go on get out of here!

Daniel closes the door behind him.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE -- DAYS LATER.

Kathryn enters from the bedroom wearing a beautiful dress. She walks around the room and checks the clock. She sees an unshaven Edward moping in a chair with a glass of wine in his hand and the bottle in the other.

KATHRYN
How do you like it?

Edward nods.

KATHRYN
Well, it's brand new. Cost you a fortune.

Edward pours another drink for himself.

KATHRYN
(walking towards him)
No, no. No more elbow lifting.

She takes the bottle and sets it on the end table next to the phone.

KATHRYN
It's seven-thirty, time for you to get ready.

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD

Ready?

KATHRYN

You remember? Father's taking us to the governor's testimonial dinner.

EDWARD

I wonder what Jensen's having for dinner.

KATHRYN

Why don't you go and shave? I'll lay your things out.

EDWARD

I can't go.

KATHRYN

Of course you can go. Father will cheer you up, he always does. Come on.

EDWARD

Only an hour and a half left.

KATHRYN

You promised not to think about that.

(she touches Edward's face)

Know something? You really need a shave.

EDWARD

An hour and a half left and he didn't even do it.

KATHRYN

Now listen to me. Jensen killed his wife. You presented that evidence brilliantly. The jury found him guilty and you got a conviction. And I'm proud of you. So is father. Now would you please get dressed?

EDWARD

Would you please go without me?

KATHRYN

Darling, I don't want to leave you alone.

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD

I want to be alone. I'd rather be alone. I'll be alright.

He takes a sip out of his glass and sits back down on the chair.

KATHRYN

Edward, I can't keep father waiting. He's one of the principal speakers.

Edward nods.

KATHRYN

Alright. I'll be home just as soon as I can.

EDWARD

Alright.

She slowly backs away and leaves.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE -- LATER

Edward is still in the chair staring at the clock. It reads 8:55. He gets up to turn on the television when Daniel walks in.

EDWARD

What are you doing here?

DANIEL

The door was unlocked. Every single day I tried to forget. But it was no use. Yesterday I hitchhiked here. I couldn't stand it no more. There's only a few minutes left.

EDWARD

Mr. Brady. I told you not to come here.

DANIEL

There's only a few minutes left, Mr. Johnson!

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD
...That's right.

DANIEL
There's still time, I thought it
all out. I'm willing to die. You've
got to call the governor!

EDWARD
No. It wouldn't be any use.

DANIEL
Well, I'm going to try.

Daniel goes over to the phone and picks up the receiver.

EDWARD
Stay away from that phone.
(hurries toward Daniel)
Stay away from that phone!

Edward grabs the phone out of Daniels hand. Daniel pushes Edward back onto the couch and grabs the phone. Edward grabs the bottle of wine off the end table and smashes Daniel with it. Daniel falls over dead.

The door opens. Its Kathryn and Charles. They're socked when they see Daniels dead on the floor.

KATHRYN
Edward!

CHARLES
(making his way to Daniel)
What on earth?
(he checks Daniel's pulse)
He's dead.

EDWARD
(softly)
I did it...

CHARLES
What happened? What was old Brady
doing here?

EDWARD
(confused)
You know him?

CHARLES
Of course. I'd know old Brady
anywhere. When I was on the bench
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES (cont'd)
he was always confessing to murder.
He'd study the evidence then claim
he did it. He was a bit crazy, but
harmless.

KATHRYN
Edward, Why did you do it?

The BELL SOUNDS on the clock. 9:00PM.

FADE OUT

THE END.