

The English Teacher

By

Kevin Guy Brown

Fiction

WGA

Kevin Brown  
11448 Brawley Rd  
Oak Hills, Ca 92344  
760-956-5980  
kevinbrown33@verizon.net

EXT UCSD, COLLEGE GRADUATION, MORNING.

100's of college students sit in rows as THE SPEAKER, Female late 40's attractive but professional, TALKS. In line to accept their diplomas off stage is MELISSA, ATTRACTIVE FEMALE 24, AND HER FRIEND JOHN, MALE HANDSOME, MELISSA'S FRIEND, 24.

SPEAKER

And don't forget, class of 1990,  
that shortly will be a new decade,  
a new millennium, a new place for  
teachers. A place for new ideas and  
a new generation to take America  
into a new world.

JOHN

(looks at Melissa) I guess we made  
it.

MELISSA

Yes, we work good together as a  
team.

JOHN

Hey, I know we never got much time  
to spend together, outside of the  
library, I was wondering if you  
wanted to go celebrate this  
weekend?

MELISSA

Sure, what did you have in mind?

JOHN

There is a really great three day  
cruise that goes down to Mexico. I  
booked a large suite. Did you want  
to go?

Melissa and John stand, their row approaches the speaker and accept their diplomas. As Melissa and John walk off stage a CAMERA TAKES A PICTURE OF BOTH OF THEM. Just after the flash, MARK CREIGHTON, OLDER 50'S, MELISSA'S FATHER REACHES TO HER AND HANDS HER FLOWERS.

MARK

Congratulations Melissa, my little  
Master of English.

John stands awkwardly as Melissa and her dad hug.

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA

Thanks daddy. Oh, this is my friend John, we study together and stuff.

JOHN

Pleasure to meet you sir.

MARK

Thank you, what was your major science or math?

JOHN

No sir. I just passed my BAR and am going to work for a local law firm.

MARK

Hmm. I guess we always need more lawyers.

MELISSA

We always need more good lawyers dad.

MARK

Well, I have a surprise, since we haven't spent much time together lately I got us round trip tickets to Hawaii, just me and you.

Melissa looks at THE TICKETS AND HOTEL RESERVATIONS.

MELISSA

John, the cruise sounds great. But maybe we can do something else when I get back.

JOHN

Yeah that would be cool. Hawaii will be great. Call me when you get back, I am moving into a new place near downtown.

MELISSA

I will, we'll go have a graduation dinner like I promised.

JOHN

OK. And nice to finally meet you sir, Melissa has told me a lot about you.

(CONTINUED)

MARK

Pleasure son.

Melissa and Mark walk away, John mopes a little. GREG, MALE 24'ISH AND BETTER LOOKING THAN JOHN, JOHNS BEST FRIEND, walks off stage. He sees Melissa walking away.

GREG

So is she going?

JOHN

No. Her dad surprised her, taking her to Hawaii.

GREG

So, let's go together, bug out tonight, be sipping margaritas by eight pm on the pool deck.

JOHN

Yeah, let's do that, no reason to waste a ticket.

GREG

You didn't want to go by yourself did you buddy? Alone? A cruise? You honestly wanted to leave me behind? No one goes on a cruise by themselves. We're chick magnets, let's go celebrate, we have jobs now, no more homework, no more libraries on Friday night. We can buy a hundred girls like Melissa.

JOHN

I'd be happy with just one girl like Melissa.

The camera pulls back John and Greg walk away.

EXT POOL DECK CRUISE SHIP, A FEW DAYS LATER, EVENING

John and Greg sit by the pool. They had on formal wear but now their TIES HANG LOOSE Greg is charming TWO GIRLS like Romeo, John, a little aloof, sits back and watches.

GIRL 1

So you are going to be a doctor, that's awesome.

(CONTINUED)

GREG

Ever since I was a little boy, I just loved hearing Bugs Bunny say, "Hmm, what's up doc?".

Greg chomps on a fake carrot, everybody laughs.

GIRL 2

(looks at John) And you the lawyer, so I can call you to bail me out of jail if I get into trouble?

JOHN

Well the whole trick is to not get thrown in jail, or get into trouble.

An awkward pause, Greg puts his arm around Girl 1 and gives John a WTF? look.

GREG

What he means is, doll, is we should all go back to our suite, and finish this bottle of tequila, and then he'll discuss his fee schedule with you.

GIRL 2

Fee schedule?

GREG

Yeah, the DOWN payment.

Everyone laughs, Girl 2 gives John a smooch.

EXT, HAWAIIIN TIKI BAR, SAME TIME

Melissa and her dad, sit at a table with TALL FRUITY DRINKS AND UMBRELLAS. FIRE DANCERS AND LUAU GIRLS dance in the background. TRISHA A BLONDE GIRL, 50'S OLDER, SITS DOWN in the booth behind them.

MELISSA

I am having so much fun dad.

MARK

What about that John guy, did you call him? He seems like a nice guy.

MELISSA

I did, but I just get his voicemail.

(CONTINUED)

MARK

You're done with college now Mel,  
think about starting a family soon.  
Your mother and I were only 17 when  
we got married.

MELISSA

Tell me a story about mom, dad.

MARK

Well, we actually came to Hawaii  
once, when you were little.

MELISSA

I don't remember that.

MARK

Well, we left you with my sister,  
Shawna, we were only here a few  
days then your mom's cancer started  
getting worse.

MELISSA

And you haven't been back here  
since?

MARK

No.

MELISSA

Dad, I know you decided not to  
remarry, but, now since I am out of  
college and have some offers to  
move, maybe you're the one who  
should think about finding someone.  
I'm Ok with that.

Mark smiles and kind of looks away.

MARK

Well, since you put it that way,  
there is this girl I met.

MELISSA

Why didn't you say something? Oh my  
god, dad, that's wonderful.

Mark pulls out HIS CELL PHONE, he shows Melissa a PICTURE OF  
HIM AND TRISHA, HIS GIRLFRIEND.

MELISSA

She's pretty dad. Where is she  
from?

(CONTINUED)

MARK

Australia. Her name is Trisha.

MELISSA

(In an Australian Accent) Does she make you shrimp on a Barbie and a cold Foster's.

MARK

yeah she does. She's a great cook.

MELISSA

So when do I get to meet her? We should all go out to dinner.

MARK

Umm, actually I called her last night, I missed her and asked her to fly in today.

MELISSA

She's here?

MARK

She's behind you.

Melissa turns around, Trisha gets up and smiles, the girls hug.

TRISHA

I have heard so much about you, and you are as every bit as beautiful as your father said you were.

MELISSA

Thanks, Trisha.

The three sit down together. Mark and Trisha sit next to each other, they hold hands on the table.

TRISHA

I almost missed my flight, I just got a cab here. So what do you think about Australia Mel?

MARK

I didn't get to that part yet Trisha.

TRISHA

Oh, I'm sorry.

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA

Australia, you guys are going on vacation, that's awesome. When are you going, I'd love to come with you guys.

MARK

I actually changed my flight plans from here Mel, we are leaving to Melbourne together after our vacation is over.

TRISHA

Melissa, my home is always open to you, anytime you want to come, I have a large farm, with a nice guest house we sometimes rent to tourists.

MELISSA

You aren't coming back to San Diego dad?

MARK

I'm always a phone call away, you can come down anytime. I thought you were Ok with me seeing somebody hun?

MELISSA

I am dad, it's just I didn't know you had made plans already and, are you getting married soon?

Melissa looks over and notices THE RING on Trisha's finger.

MARK

When we get to the ranch, we are going to have a small ceremony. You can come, I will pay for the ticket, I know this seems sudden.

MELISSA

No, it's not dad, it's totally cool. I just thought I'd have some warning, I mean I'm in Hawaii with you, Trisha is behind me, I mean wow, I need another drink.

A WAITRESS, FEMALE HAWAIIAN 20'S PRETTY, walks by.

(CONTINUED)

TRISHA

Waitress!

WAITRESS

Yes, how may I help you?

TRISHA

Three drinks please, whatever they are having, I'll have a Foster's.

MELISSA

Make mine a Foster's too.

MARK

I want another fruity drink, may be the last one I ever have, so, make it a tall one.

WAITRESS

Two man beers and a girlie drink, coming right up.

They all laugh. The waitress walks back to the bar. She unloads some empty drinks including one shot glass, as she takes the shot glass off her tray we see...

INT, CRUISE SHIP CABIN, SAME TIME

An empty shot glass hits the table. John and Greg sit with the girls, CHEWED ON LIMES AND A SPILLED SALT SHAKER LAY ON THE GLASS TABLE. Girl 2 can barely keep her eyes open. Girl 1 leans onto Greg, almost drunk asleep too.

GREG

Let's hit the sack babe, I'm tired.

GIRL 1

Ok, doc, are you going to fill my prescription?

GREG

I'm too drunk to answer. Good night kids.

JOHN

Good night Greg.

GIRL 1

Good Night, John.

The door closes, John and girl 2 are alone on the couch. John picks her up and carries her to bed. He pulls back the

(CONTINUED)

covers and lays her down. He gives her a kiss and pulls the covers over her, her eyes are barely open. John lays on the CHAIR BY THE BED with a sheet. He smiles at her and closes his eyes.

EXT, OAHU AIRPORT, MORNING.

Melissa, Trisha, and her dad stand by the departing gate.

MARK

So your flight leaves in 1 hour  
from gate 4.

MELISSA

Dad, I'll be fine.

TRISHA

It was very nice meeting you  
Melissa, come anytime, I'll have a  
nice room for you and a friend.

MARK

Or husband would be Ok too.

MELISSA

Dad...

Overhead the announcer calls.

ANNOUNCER

Flight 815 to Sydney, boarding rows 1-20, please check in.

MARK

That's us. Melissa, I want to give  
you something before we leave.

Mark reaches in his bag, he smiles at Trisha, he pulls out some DOOR KEYS AND A GRANT DEED.

MARK

Mel, I want you to have the house.

MELISSA

But, where will you stay when you  
come back?

MARK

With you, in your old room.

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA

You are giving me yours and moms house?

MARK

I'm giving you my house, think of it as an early inheritance.

TRISHA

Melissa, I want to be your friend, always, please call me, for anything, Australia is not that far, really.

Melissa reaches over and hugs her dad, Trisha watches.

MELISSA

I feel like I don't have anybody looking over me anymore dad.

MARK

I always look over you Mel, now you have Trisha too.

Melissa stops and hugs Trisha too.

ANNOUNCER

Last call for flight 815 to Sydney, Rows 1-20 please board.

MELISSA

I love you dad.

MARK

We love you too honey, call me next week, from your new job.

MELISSA

I will.

Trisha and Mark walk on the plane through the boarding gate. Mark and Trisha kiss, they hold hands and walk down the ramp. Melissa looks around, OTHER COUPLES kiss and hug, she stands there alone. Then takes her bag and walks away to her gate. As she gets to the gate she sees a small Mexican Restuarant. She sits down. A WAITER brings over some chips and salsa. As the chips and salsa are placed on the table we see...

## CRUISE SHIP BAR, SAME TIME

The chips and salsa hit the table. John grabs a chip and dips it into the salsa. John takes a drink of his FRUITY DRINK WITH AN UMBRELLA. The deck is empty except for a FEW COUPLES, SITTING ON LAWN CHAIRS, he is otherwise alone except for his BARTENDER, BLACK MALE, 40'S, THINK ISAAC FROM THE LOVE BOAT.

BARTENDER

Up early, where's the little woman?

JOHN

I don't know, I guess I haven't found one yet.

BARTENDER

I saw you and your friend cleaning up at the pool last night, and there is a \$60 bottle of Cuervo 1800 on your tab. Did you forget already?

JOHN

Forgetting is the hard part. I start a new job Monday when we hit port, right to work.

BARTENDER

Then this one is on the house, call it a, five o'clock special.

The bartender hands him a Foster's lager in a big can. Just then Greg and the two girls walk up. Greg makes out with Girl 1, Girl 2 slides up to John for a hug.

GIRL 2

Hi, sweetie, I slept great. I may have to introduce you to my parents when we get back.

JOHN

Why do I deserve that?

GIRL 2

Because you respect me.

JOHN

I respect everyone.

GIRL 2

What's her name John?

(CONTINUED)

JOHN

Who?

GIRL 2

The one you wish you could call and say hello to right now.

JOHN

I'm with you, my cruise friend, let's go get breakfast.

GIRL 2

Ok.

GIRL 1 AND GREG

Breakfast, awesome.

The four walk off towards the buffet, holding hands, laughing, fruity drinks in hand.

INT, BROWN HIGH SCHOOL, AM

KIDS LINGERING around the hallways by their lockers. The SCHOOL BELL rings, kids roll slowly out of the hallways into their classrooms.

INT, MELISSAS CLASSROOM, ENG LIT 101

Melissa stands in front of the class. Behind her on the chalk board reads "MRS. CREIGHTON, LITERATURE"

MELISSA

Good morning class, I trust you all had a wonderful summer. Hopefully you spent some time reading as well as texting and playing war games online.

Melissa wanders the aisles looking at each student and their notebooks. She passes out A PAPER to each student.

MELISSA

I have an exciting syllabus arranged for this year. We are concentrating on the classic literature of America and the world from the 1800 and 1900's. In my class we read. We do not discuss, we do not lecture. We read. I want all students to go the library or local used bookstore and find one

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA (cont'd)  
of the books listed on this sheet,  
and start reading. Each book should  
take no longer than 3 weeks to  
read. A short 1 page report is due  
every day on what was covered...  
The students roll their eyes and  
moan.

As Melissa puts a paper on a student's desk we cut to...

INT, MCFULLER, STANTON, AND ADKINS LAW FIRM, SAME TIME.

A hand reaches onto a desk and picks up a paper. John looks  
at the paper and reads it intently. Behind him on THE  
SHELVES ARE MANY LAW BOOKS. A CLIENT, MR. SHELLING, MALE  
40'S sits in a chair WITH A NECK BRACE AND CANE BY HIS  
CHAIR.

JOHN  
So I have all the information I  
need. It is a very simple rear end  
collision, you are not at fault,  
and you were hit by a Jose's  
Plumbing vehicle. They carry mil 2  
mil commercial policy. We'll sue  
for the max and settle in 6-12  
months, that's just an estimate. In  
the mean time I need you to keep  
track of mileage to doctors visits,  
any lost time from work, any lost  
sleep or discomfort.

MR. SHELLING  
Like a diary.

JOHN  
Exactly. It will give us a better  
case. But keep the facts minimal,  
it can be used to our disadvantage  
also.

MR. SHELLING  
How's that?

JOHN  
Well, say you went horseback  
riding, no one in your condition  
should be on a horse. I want to  
see, "3pm, Tuesday September 14th,  
Not feeling well, laid down for  
nap, could not sleep, pain in lower  
back".

(CONTINUED)

MR. SHELLING

Ok. Thanks for seeing me. Should I call in?

JOHN

Anything serious call Theresa, my secretary, but otherwise we'll have depositions, an informal trial, in 60 days or so, we'll give you plenty of notice.

Mr. Shelling and John shake hands. Shelling leaves, John sits back at his desk. He presses the intercom for THERESA, JOHNS SECRETARY AND PARALEGAL, FEMALE, 40'S.

JOHN

Theresa?

THERESA

Yes sir.

JOHN

Type up a negligence civil suit for Mr. Shelling, looks like I have my first client.

THERESA

Great sir, I'll have that ready for court filing tomorrow.

John sits back in his chair. He punches a few buttons ON HIS COMPUTER, THERE ARE NO APPOINTMENTS. He looks around his office and out the window into downtown San Diego. The camera pans off the window onto...

INT, MELISSA'S CLASSROOM, ENG LIT 101, DEC 20TH

Inside Melissa's classroom. Mel's room is decorated in a CHRISTMAS THEME, SNOWMEN CUTOUTS AND A XMAS TREE DECORATED SIT IN THE CORNER. Melissa walks across the top of each row of students as they pass in their daily reports, she eyes them slowly as she collects them then heads back TO HER LECTERN.

MELISSA

Class, you are doing an excellent job reading this semester. Most of you are getting A's, a few B's. Those of you who are getting anything less is because you are not reading. I really expect you to get caught up over the holiday.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL, a ROCK AND ROLL TYPE, LONG HAIR, GUITAR ON HIS CHAIR, raises his hand.

MICHAEL

Mrs. Creighton, I don't really get the idea of reading ten or twenty pages a night, then writing down in condensed form what we read. Why don't I just go on the web and copy and paste CLIFF NOTES as homework?

MELISSA

You miss the point Michael. When you read a book, you aren't really reading the story, you aren't really listening to what the author wrote. What you need to find is, why is he writing this?

MICHAEL

I'm lost, I just read the book you know. I like listening to Zeppelin. A minor, Gee, Cee, Dee, F. I enjoy the sound of Stairway to Heaven, I mean it's about a lady who knows...

MELISSA

I was listening to that song when you were in diapers Michael, and I don't hear Cee, Dee, F, I hear a song about someone who just didn't do any good in life, and thinks they can buy redemption.

MICHAEL

So if that's what Plant wanted to say, why didn't he say it?

MELISSA

That's the point of literature Michael, Billy, Shirley, (points at other students not paying attention) you can't always say what you really mean by saying what you mean. If you saw Cindy here in the hall, would you say, "That is a very pretty dress Cindy, I really like how the designer uses rayon instead of polyester." (The class laughs) No, you would probably say, "Sweet dress Cindy." Now I highly doubt Cindy's dress has a sugar content of 19% on a brix meter.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

(interrupting) Oh it probably does. She looks sweet. And I don't even know what a brix meter is.

The class laughs, Cindy smiles at Michael.

MELISSA

See class, look what just happened. Me, as the author just wrote a short play on words with you, Michael, regarding Cindy, and making an analogy between being pretty and being sweet.

MICHAEL

Well look at, All of My Love, it's about a guy telling his girl that he is going to give her all of his love. I mean there is a song that says what it means.

MELISSA

Michael. That is a song Plant wrote for his son that died a few years earlier. It's like a tribute. And that's what I want to touch on.

The class is very quiet.

MELISSA

In music and literature, words come together as the author or song writer wishes them to. But once we hear it, it's our job to go back and say, hey, who is he giving all of his love to? And we find out through other stories, that it was his son. And we ask, who was this lady who only thinks the important things of life are made of gold?

CINDY

So, Shakespeare, we don't even know who he is. I can't exactly take Romeo and Juliet, look them up in the phone book and ask them why her parents did not like Romeo.

MELISSA

True, not all questions have answers. Some things are left up to imagination. Let's say Romeo was a

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA (cont'd)  
 anagram for Rome, or the Catholic  
 head of State in the late 1500's.  
 Let's say Juliet was for the  
 Jewish. Maybe he was a Catholic and  
 she was a Jew, and society just  
 wouldn't let them be. That may not  
 be right, but some stories can be  
 played with. I am not grading you  
 on how many pages you read. I am  
 grading you on how many pages you  
 understood. It's OK to make  
 literature personal, I do.

The bell rings. All the students get up and head out.

MELISSA  
 And when you get back from the  
 Christmas break we start on Lewis  
 Carroll books.

MICHAEL  
 I guess I have a lot to read over  
 the holiday.

MELISSA  
 How about reading something that  
 inspires you to write great music  
 Michael? That would get you an A.

MICHAEL  
 Happy holidays Mrs. Creighton.

The camera follows Michael and Cindy walking out the door  
 talking, the camera pans onto a WALL WITH A PICTURE OF...

INT, JOHNS LAW FIRM CONFERENCE ROOM.

John sits with SEVERAL OTHER LAWYERS. THREE OLDER GENTLEMAN  
 SIT AT THE HEAD OF AN OVERLY LARGE TABLE. Behind them are  
 PICTURES OF THEMSELVES ON THE WALL. NUMEROUS PLAQUES AND  
 TROPHIES LINE SHELVES. MRS. SILVIA, A PLUMP BUT PROFESSIONAL  
 WOMAN IN HER LATE 40'S, sits by her STENOGRAPHY MACHINE AND  
 CALLS the meeting to order.

MRS. SILVIA  
 The monthly meeting is now called  
 to order. McFuller, Stanton, and  
 Adkins

MR. ADKINS, 50'S, BALD, PORTLY but stuffed into a SUIT 2  
 SIZES TOO SMALL speaks.

(CONTINUED)

MR. ADKINS

I would like to go over the monthly income statements from September to December. Seems we have brought in 10% more business than the same time last year.

MCFULLER, 60'S, GREY HAIR AND A GRUMPY LOOKING WOOL SUIT answers in.

MCFULLER

I believe this is because our new Junior Associate, Mr. Ridgecrest has been doing an excellent job in the personal injury department.

ADKINS

Well I was going to say that before you interrupted me Mr. McFuller.

MCFULLER

Pardon me Mr. Adkins, continue on with your report of the annual beans.

ADKINS

We are actually up 12% in new cases and likely to close cases in John's department. We are down 4% in class action lawsuits.

John looks around the room kind of bored. Mrs. Silvia types away but glances at John with a firm motherly look of, get focused. Mr. Stanton chimes in.

STANTON

John, what we are saying is this. You are doing a good job. In two or three years you could make partner.

JOHN

Well thank you Mr. Stanton. I, however was hoping to move into the criminal defendant department next year. I can take a few more cases.

MCFULLER

Well John, we don't have a criminal defense department.

JOHN

I can head it up. It will be slow at first, maybe take some pro-bono. Build up a name.

(CONTINUED)

ADKINS

John, we don't do pro-bono work.

JOHN

Well I was reading about this young kid, Tyrone Jefferson, it was in the paper today. I read the story and his public defender is suggesting him take a plea bargain.

ADKINS

So?

JOHN

So? He has an alibi, there are no prints, the blood hasn't even been lab'd out yet.

STANTON

Let me explain John. We don't do criminal work because it's not who we are. There are firms that specialize in that area. Imagine being a foot doctor, and then meeting someone with a brain tumor. So you go spend 3 years in brain school. Now he is dead, but his brother, who is a rich baseball player for the Padres needs extensive surgery for his elbow. So you go spend three years in Sports medicine specialty, well why you were doing that, he retired.

JOHN

It's not medicine. It's law. I studied criminal law in college. I know criminal law.

ADKINS

But you don't know the criminal judge's, you don't know the DA's. They will see new meat like you and Tyrone's plea bargain will go from 10 years to twenty to life. Are you willing to take that chance?

JOHN

Yes I am sir.

MCFULLER

Well we are not. This firm is not. The system will figure out if he is

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MCFULLER (cont'd)  
innocent, give it time. He has 6 months before a trial. Maybe the witness or victim dies in a car accident. Maybe the DA fouls up and he gets acquitted. Patience John. Let's look at this in two years. Go do arbitration for the small claims court on Friday if you feel guilty.

JOHN  
I don't feel guilty sir. As a matter of fact I like my work.

STANTON  
Then good, as we were saying, here is your annual bonus. We like the work you are doing and hope it get's even better.

Adkins hands John AN ENVELOPE. John opens it, A CHECK FOR \$60,000.

JOHN  
Gentleman, thank you very much. I will spend it wisely.

John stands up and leaves, he heads back to his office. As he walks back through the hallway he sees other Attorneys with SANTA'S hats, SECRETARIES AND STAFF drinking and eating FROM FOOD PLATTERS.

INT, JOHN'S OFFICE.

John opens his wallet and pulls out Melissa's picture, on the back reads, "MY BEST FRIEND, LOVE MELISSA 619-555-7624" John walks over to his phone, he looks out in the lobby, people mill about around a Christmas tree, drinks in hand. In his office is a tree with a few small presents. he leans down and looks at one present that says, "TO JOHN".

INT, MELISSA'S APARTMENT, SAME TIME.

On the floor is one gift, it says "To John". SEVERAL BIG STRONG MOVERS CARRY OUT BOXES. On the floor is her phone, she unplugs it. She picks up the ONE XMAS GIFT WITH A CARD ON IT.

INT, JOHNS OFFICE, CONT'D

John dials Melissa's phone number. It rings twice then we hear, "disconnected". John dials it again, "disconnected".

EXT, MELISSAS APARTMENT, CONT'D

MELISSA walks over to her car she puts the phone and the gift inside on her front seat. One of the MOVERS, comes over to her.

MOVER

Ma'am, the address I have from dispatch is 111 Main Street, Del Mar. In case we get there before you, will there be someone there waiting for us to let us in?

MELISSA

No, I'm not moving in with anybody. It was my dad's house.

MOVER

Oh, I'm sorry.

MELISSA

No, he is fine, he moved out of state, it just took me awhile to get moved, I figured the holidays I would have plenty of time to unpack. Here is a key to the front door. Just put it anywhere, I have an appointment and will be there shortly.

MOVER

Yes, ma'am.

MELISSA

Thank you again for doing this on short notice.

Melissa takes out her wallet. She pulls out some FIFTY DOLLAR BILLS and hands them to the mover.

MELISSA

This is a bonus for you guys.

MOVER

Thank you Mrs Creighton.

The mover pulls out his wallet...

INT JOHN'S OFFICE, CONT'D

John puts Mel's picture back in his wallet. His intercom rings.

THERESA  
Mr. Ridgecrest?

JOHN  
Yes Theresa.

THERESA  
There is someone to see you sir,  
should I send them in?

JOHN  
Client?

THERESA  
(Pauses) I don't think so, says his  
name is Greg?

JOHN  
Really? I'll go out to the lobby,  
I'm not staying the rest of the  
day, if anyone calls just page me  
with their number. Tell Greg I will  
be down in a minute.

John puts on his coat. As he does his pager slips off onto the floor, John walks out.

INT LOBBY, DOWNSTAIRS.

Greg waits for John.

GREG  
This place is like Fort Knox buddy,  
are you guy's lawyers or a front  
for the mob?

JOHN  
That is attorney client privileged  
info Doc, you know the drill. How  
you been man, how's the hospital?

GREG  
Long hours, big paychecks. Single  
moms with big exploding tits.

(CONTINUED)

JOHN  
Let's go get a beer.

GREG  
Let's go to the Gaslamp.

JOHN  
Great. So why are tits exploding?

GREG  
This may be something for you to look into. All the breast implants, some are leaking.

JOHN  
They're boobs, they're supposed to leak.

GREG  
Not on the inside.

John and Greg step into A TAXI and drive off. Melissa pulls in, in her car. She gets out with THE PRESENT.

INT LOBBY, CONT'D

Melissa talks to a guard he picks up the phone.

JOHNS OFFICE, THERESA'S DESK, CONT'D

Theresa picks up the phone.

THERESA  
Sorry John left for the day, if this is important I can page him.  
(pauses) Ok, one moment, is there a number he can return your call at?

MELISSA  
Yes. It's a new number, let me get it.

Melissa reaches into her purse, she has a small notepad with some scribbles on it.

MELISSA  
619-555-3332.

Theresa calls the number at enters the number. She enters it as 619-555-3323. Theresa gets back on the line with Melissa.

(CONTINUED)

THERESA

Mrs. Creighton, ma'am, I just paged him he should call you shortly, can I leave him any message?

INT LOBBY, DOWNSTAIRS, CONT'D

MELISSA

No, well, just write down my number and tell him happy holidays. I have a box for him but I will see him later so I'll just hold onto it.

THERESA

Very well ma'am, have a happy holiday.

INT JOHNS OFFICE, CONT'D

Close up on John's pager on the floor blinking and vibrating with the wrong number.

THERESA'S DESK, CONT'D

Theresa writes down the number on a call slip, she sets it on the edge of her desk. Theresa get's up, she grabs her coat and walks away. Other staff wish her Merry Christmas. On her desk ANOTHER YOUNG ATTORNEY AND A CUTE SECRETARY walk over to Theresa's desk, the attorney sets his SWEATY WET DRINK on Melissa's number, instantly smearing the number.

EXT STREET CAFE, GASLAMP, EVE

Greg and John walk down the GASLAMP DISTRICT. Somewhat crowded street. A street cafe and bar has a short line and plenty of other GOOD LOOKING TWENTY SOMETHINGS.

GREG

Wow, alot of nice girls here tonight, especially on Christmas Eve.

JOHN

Like you don't have enough phone numbers in your black book.

GREG

It's not about me tonight, it's about you. What ever happened to Melissa?

(CONTINUED)

JOHN  
Haven't heard from her.

GREG  
Call her?

JOHN  
Yeah, her phone was disconnected.

GREG  
When was this?

JOHN  
Like an hour ago. So tell me, what about these girls?

GREG  
Which girls?

JOHN  
The boob girls.

GREG  
Oh yeah, so we have had a few girls in, mostly strippers, complaining of headaches, nausea and so forth. We thought it was drug abuse but the blood is clean, no dope.

The HOSTESS, FRANCINE, BRUNETTE, TALL SKINNY MODEL TYPE, interrupts.

FRANCINE  
Good evening Greg.

GREG  
Hi Annie.

FRANCINE  
Francine...

GREG  
I'm sorry, Francine of course. Are you going to hold that against me or do I still get a good table?

FRANCINE  
There is a forty minute wait list.

GREG  
Hey I sent flowers.

Francine smiles a little.

(CONTINUED)

FRANCINE

(pauses)

Greg party of Two, Greg party of two.

GREG

We're Greg, party of two.

Some other people look at Greg, they know what the deal is.

FRANCINE

Right this way sir.

Francine grabs TWO MENUS, and leads John and Greg to a nice table. Greg slips Francine a TWENTY DOLLAR BILL.

FRANCINE

Enjoy your meal gentlemen.

GREG

Thank you Annie.

Greg winks at Francine she gets the joke.

GREG

So anyways, we thought it was drugs, clean blood, no Hepatitis. But we run a poison blood platelette and we start seeing this chemical, Tri-Silicate-Glycolene in huge amounts.

JOHN

Maybe it's a new drug compund, something they put in coke or meth.

GREG

That's what we think but we also get other girls too, and then we notice it's only girls, not guys.

JOHN

But all strippers.

GREG

All except one, that's when we reported it to CDC.

JOHN

CDC?

(CONTINUED)

GREG

Center for Disease Control. Any breakout or any sickness in an area that has no cause we have to report it.

JOHN

And they said what?

GREG

That was what was funny. They send down a guy from Scrow Pharmaceuticals..

Waitress, MANDY, comes over to the table.

MANDY

Hi Greg, the usual?

GREG

(squints at her name tag)  
Yes Mandy, the usual, bottle of Merlot.

MANDY

Should I bring two or four glasses?

GREG

Depends, are you getting off soon?

MANDY

Two glasses.

JOHN

Can I have some Bruschetta with that please Mandy?

MANDY

Of course sir.

JOHN

Call me John.

MANDY

Like Doctor John?

JOHN

No. Attorney John.

MANDY

Well, I see Greg now brings an attorney with him where ever he goes.

(CONTINUED)

GREG

Merlot and Bruschetta Mandy, thank you.

Mandy leaves. John looks at Greg.

JOHN

Dude, are you sure she isn't going to spit in our food? I mean, are we safe here?

GREG

Medically speaking, there are very few harmful germs in spit, hasn't killed me yet. Think of it as a little kiss. Anwyas Scrow sends a rep out, he takes copies of lab reports, but he has a Release from CDC.

JOHN

That's weird. CDC can't authorize that. It's like opposing counsel coming into my office and going through my files.

GREG

I know. But nobody says a thing. The order is signed off by a Judge too, Judge Bill Hammer.

JOHN

Greg, this is way over my head. I mean, as your attorney I would advise you to file the correct report with your Hospital Attorney and cover your ass.

GREG

We don't have an attorney on staff right now, got hired onto some big law firm.

JOHN

I don't want to work at a hospital, too many germs.

Mandy returns with MERLOT, TWO GLASSES, AND BRUSCHETTA.

MANDY

Here you go gentlemen. Will you be ordering dinner tonite?

(CONTINUED)

GREG

The usual.

JOHN

Two usuals.

MANDY

Very unusual order John.

GREG

We're like brothers.

MANDY

Two usuals, another bottle of Cab  
with the meal?

GREG

You're going places Mandy.

MANDY

Francine says hi Greg.

Greg takes a look over his shoulder, Francine is taking  
names at her hostess station, she looks at Greg and winks.

GREG

Be quick Mandy, two hungry guys  
here,

Mandy walks away.

JOHN

So I am thinking something is going  
on here.

GREG

At the restaurant, what?

JOHN

No, I need to research Scrow  
Pharmaceuticals. Sounds like a  
Product Liability thing. But they  
are wired into the system. They got  
political protection. Can you get  
the girls to come in after the  
holiday, I want to interview them.

GREG

Yeah sure, got their numbers at  
home.

(CONTINUED)

JOHN

You get phone numbers from sick patients?

GREG

Yeah sure, all the time. I mean sick today, well tomorrow.

JOHN

Am I the only man you call on a regular basis?

Mandy comes back with a bottle of wine, as she sets it on the table we see...

INT, MELISSA'S NEW HOUSE, SAME TIME

Melissa sits at home, she opens a bottle of Cabernet. She turns the TV on, JOHN'S GIFT SITS ON THE TABLE. A FEW CARDS AND GIFTS AROUND HER TREE. UNOPENED BOXES SIT ALONG THE WALL. The house is quiet, she turns on a small radio that plays Christmas Music. She sits back with her glass of wine and opens a book to read. She reaches for her glass of wine to take a sip, we see...

EXT STREET CAFE, GASLAMP, SAME TIME

John reaches over and takes a sip of wine. The restaurant is now mostly empty. Francine and Mandy sit next to John and Greg. They are laughing and talking. John reaches into his pocket.

JOHN

That's strange my pager is missing.

GREG

Have the front desk call it, maybe it fell out.

JOHN

I hope so, I am on call.

GREG

I am on call too, but I am not answering any pages tonite, and neither should you.

JOHN

I need to swing by the office.

(CONTINUED)

GREG

Now? I mean yeah, we can all catch a cab back to my place, swing by the office get your pager.

FRANCINE

I already clocked out.

MANDY

I just have to do some paperwork, maybe take five minutes.

FRANCINE

You can do it tomorrow, Sheryl doesn't care.

GREG

Awesome. Let's go.

The four get up, Mandy takes John's hand, he looks down then smiles at Mandy. John reaches to take the last sip of his wine, we see...

INT, MELISSA'S NEW HOUSE, SAME TIME

Melissa takes the last sip of her wine. She is now in a bathrobe, her book is only a few pages read. She turns around and unpacks some pictures onto her TV stand. Melissa unplugs her phone and takes it off the stand. She pulls out the picture of her and John at Graduation, she smiles...

INT LAW FIRM JOHNS OFFICE, SAME TIME

We pan off the picture of John and Melissa at graduation. He walks into his office. Greg, Mandy and Francine wait by Theresa's desk.

John sees his pager on the floor, it blinks with 619-555-7234. He dials the number from within his office. He hears it ring. We see...

INT, MELISSA'S NEW HOUSE, SAME TIME

Melissa's phone still unplugged. She sets out more pictures of her father with her mother when she was young.

INT LAW FIRM JOHNS OFFICE, SAME TIME

The phone cord dangles on the floor. Greg, Francine and Mandy talk and laugh in the other office. All of a sudden Greg sees John on the floor.

GREG

John, John!

Greg and the girls run in the office, John is on the floor curled up in pain, holding his stomach.

GREG

Oh shit, the pasta.

FRANCINE

Food poisoning?

GREG

No, I ordered the Arrabiata, John can't eat spicy food, hurts his stomach.

MANDY

Is he going to be OK?

GREG

We need to get his stomach pumped, let's carry him downstairs.

The girls help muscle him up, Greg holds him up they exit the office.

INT, ER COUNTY HOSPITAL, LATER.

John is in a gown, Greg sits by his side, John slowly opens his eyes.

JOHN

Where's Mandy?

GREG

Gave them cab fare an hour ago.

JOHN

Wow, I must have passed out.

GREG

When we got here I gave you a Morphine shot.

(CONTINUED)

JOHN  
Some date I am.

GREG  
She left you her number. Kind of  
freaked them out too.

JOHN  
That pasta snuck up on me, I must  
have had a good buzz because even  
the smell of spice sets my stomach  
off.

GREG  
The doctor here ordered X-Rays, I  
don't know why. She's actually  
pretty cute.

JOHN  
Did you get her phone number.

GREG  
I tried, she shot me down.

JOHN  
You're a dog.

GREG  
A dog with phone numbers. Listen I  
am going to Francine's, it's late,  
I got work tomorrow. Are you OK?

JOHN  
Except for that smell, what is  
that?

GREG  
You shit yourself on the way over,  
the cab company is sending you a  
bill too.

JOHN  
So I passed out, shit myself, got  
morphine and she still gave me her  
number.

GREG  
No, I was kidding about the phone  
number. But check out the doctor  
when she comes in, real cutie. Who  
did you call at the office?

JOHN

Funny, nobody answered, maybe  
Theresa gave me a wrong phone  
number.

GREG

Ok, Call me in a few days, let me  
know how the X-Ray turns out.

JOHN

Yeah, setup those girls to come in,  
I want to talk to them.

Greg pats John on the back, he leaves. A FEMALE DOCTOR,  
ROSE MCCOURT, 30, REDHEADED, comes in she closes the  
curtain, she slips on a rubber glove, and rubs some KY JELLY  
ON it.

ROSE

Hi, I am DR. Rose McCourt. I am  
going to do a quick exam, then we  
will have a look at the X-Rays.

JOHN

It's just spicy food, upsets my  
stomach.

ROSE

Well that happens in older people,  
not at your age. I am board  
ceritifed in Gastro-Intestinal  
Disorders and Leukemia.

JOHN

That's an odd certification.

ROSE

Well one finds it hard to eat when  
they have cancer.

Rose reaches and pulls aside John's gown. We see him squint.

EXT MCFULLER, STANTON, AND ADKINS LAW FIRM.

John parks his car. As he walks to the door some men are  
pulling down XMAS LIGHTS, TWO MAINTENANCE GUYS carry out  
UNDECORATED XMAS TREES.

MAINTENANCE GUY 1

Happy new Year Mr. Ridgecrest.

(CONTINUED)

## MAINTENANCE GUY 2

Yes sir, Happy New Year, thanks for the gifts.

John looks puzzled, he nods at the men.

## INT, JOHNS OFFICE, MONDAY

John walks into the office. Other associates and stuff walk by John high fiving him. Calls of good job buddy, need any help call to him. A few secretaries give him the stink eye and walk by without saying anything. John walks into the office by Theresa. Next to Theresa are 5 BEAUTIFUL, VERY LARGE BREASTED GIRLS. Some wear stripper type outfits and are scantily clad.

## THERESA

Mr. Ridgecrest, these women are your 9am appointments. Did you want me to get you some coffee? Extra milk I suppose?

## JOHN

(not noticing her satire) Yes please. Hello ladies I am John Ridgecrest. Thank you for all coming in. We're going to go over some contracts and then get some statements.

JULIE, TALL BLONDE ON THE END STANDS UP.

## JULIE

Hi, I'm Julie, but everyone calls me Jewels. I've never met an attorney with my clothes on before. The other girls laugh.

## JOHN

Well, I guess we have something in common then. The girls are silent.

## JOHN

I've never met an attorney with my clothes off.

Now the girls give a half hearted laugh. BELINDA, also A TALL BLONDE, raises her hand. John is still trying not to stare at all the boobs.

(CONTINUED)

BELINDA

Mr. John?

JOHN

Yes, ma'am.

BELINDA

Belinda.

JOHN

Yes Belinda.

BELINDA

I brought pictures of me before and after, are we going to need to take our tops off today. I mean anything to help.

JOHN

(John pauses) No Belinda, that will all be handled, I mean taken care of, by the doctor we assign to the case. But if we go to trial, the pictures would be given to the opposing attorneys and possibly the jury. Are all of you comfortable with that?

The girls pause for a second and then start laughing.

JOHN

Ok, give me a minute to get our recorder ready, and videotape, and Julie, then Belinda, then...

The girls call out their names, WINNIE, TOOTS, Mary. Just then three more girls with big breasts walk in. They instantly give hugs as they know each other.

INT JOHN'S OFFICE, 9:15

A clock on the wall says 9:15. A VIDEOGUY has a TRIPOD AND VHS CAMERA pointed at an INTERVIEW CHAIR. A recorder sits with a microphone and a GIRL SITS WITH HER STENOGRAPHY MACHINE. Julie walks in and sits down.

JOHN

State your name please.

JULIE

Julie Segall.

(CONTINUED)

JOHN

Please state your current  
Occupation ?

JULIE

Dancer.

JOHN

Very good. Julie, When did you have  
your implant surgery?

JULIE

(blank look).

JOHN

(picks up doctor folder) Let the  
record show June 20, 1988.

JULIE

Yes, I think so.

JOHN

Once you had your implants, did you  
follow the manufacturers and  
doctors recommendations for usage,  
applicability to environment,  
temperature warnings?

JULIE

My boobs?

JOHN

Yes, the implants.

JULIE

Did I do what to them?

JOHN

No, I need to know, are you taking  
care of them like you are supposed  
to?

JULIE

Yes.

JOHN

OK, the dancing you do. Is it jazz,  
classical, swing?

JULIE

Oh it's swing alright.

(CONTINUED)

JOHN

Have you ever been poked?

JULIE

Are you asking me if I'm a virgin?

JOHN

No Mrs. Segall, the implants, on the day you found them leaking, is there any chance you were poked?

JULIE

I don't know probably.

JOHN

So why is it the manufacturer's fault that the leakage is caused by a faulty product?

JULIE

Looks blank, looks at video guy.

VIDEO GUY

Sir, she doesn't understand the question.

JOHN

What's so hard to understand about getting poked?

VIDEO GUY

She thinks you mean that, did she have sex.

JOHN

Mrs. Segall, I am sorry, let me rephrase the question.

JULIE

OK.

JOHN

Did anyone stab you with a knife or shoot you with a gun, causing your breasts to leak.

JULIE

No.

JOHN

Good.

(CONTINUED)

VIDEO GUY

Good.

INT JOHNS OFFICE, NOON.

The CLOCK ON THE WALL says 12:00. It's lunch and John, the stenographer and guy on video are all getting tired. TOOTS, sits in the chair and does a bubble headed blonde imitation. Unsure of much of anything except that she keeps winking at the video guy. The video guy smiles back at John.

JOHN

Well thank you, Toots. That is all the information we need right now we will contact you in about three months.

TOOTS

Thank you John, and here's a VIP card for a free show. You know just in case you get bored. And my personal number on back, call me.

JOHN

Thank you Toots.

Toots now leans over and gives John a big hug, he is grinning but trying to hide it.

Toots leaves, everyone tries to give a professional goodbye.

JOHN

Well that was a waste of 3 hours.

VIDEO GUY

Why? I got great tape here. I could sell this to Lawyers funniest home videos and make thousands.

JOHN

I can't put them in front of a jury. John's intercom buzzes.

JOHN

Yes Theresa.

THERESA

Mr. Adkins would like to see you in his office.

(CONTINUED)

JOHN  
Thank you Theresa.

John gives a long look to the recorder and video guy.

JOHN  
Go get lunch guys, bring me back a sandwich, anything.

John takes out his wallet and throws down a ten dollar bill. He walks out, adjusts his tie tighter.

INT, ADKINS OFFICE, CONT'D.

John walks in Adkins and McFuller stand by the fireplace, not amused.

ADKINS  
John, is this any way to start a new year?

MCFULLER  
A stripper party?

ADKINS  
Didn't you have any fun over the holidays, where was your girl?

JOHN  
Sirs, gentleman, I got a call from a doctor friend of mine, it sounded legit.

ADKINS  
You are going to court to defend big boobs. 90% of juries are conservative, white, retired people. People with standards.

JOHN  
I know, I didn't think it would be this bad.

MCFULLER  
Don't chase ambulances when the lights are off. It means there is a corpse not a case.

JOHN  
I'll notify the clients we won't be taking the case.

(CONTINUED)

ADKINS

And do so quickly, if this gets in the papers we're it will be a PR nightmare, God knows if my wife found out.

JOHN

Found out about what sir?

MCFULLER

John, make the call, please, we have other business to attend to.

John leaves and heads back to his office. On his way back he bumps into, SHIRLEY MADSON A FLAT CHESTED girl, WITH A LITTLE BIT OF A LIMP.

JOHN

Hi, are you here for the interviews?

SHIRLEY

Oh, no I am not looking for a job, I was sent by Dr. Greg about the surgery problem.

JOHN

Oh. You just look different than most of the girls that have come in today.

SHIRLEY

I saw a few, of those girls, in the elevator, sounds like you had a tough day.

JOHN

Not rough, just, chasing an ambulance with no lights on. Listen I don't think we are going to take this case, I hope you didn't have to drive far.

SHIRLEY

Why don't we sit down and talk for a few minutes John, I already paid for an hours parking.

JOHN

Ok, right this way.

John walks Karen into his office.

INT, JOHN'S OFFICE, CONT'D.

John sets up the camera and turns it on, he sits at his desk and watches. Shirley sits down.

JOHN  
State your name please.

SHIRLEY  
Shirley Madson, M-A-D-S-O-N.

JOHN  
You're a good speller too.

SHIRLEY  
4 years college.

JOHN  
Wow. First college girl I've met today. Cheer leading?

SHIRLEY  
No, not quite. I need to let you know I want to keep a low profile. I have a family. I mean, if I can not be in any trial, I don't like trials.

JOHN  
Well I can't guarantee that, but tell me your story, when did the implants rupture?

John watches her on the camera, as she speaks he sits down, his look becomes one of seriousness.

EXT MELBOURNE AIRPORT, AUSTRALIA.

A Large airplance lands in Australia, it is cold and foggy.

EXT, T-RIFFIC SHEEP STATION, AUSTRALIA, DAWN

A large sign by a fence reads, "T-RIFFIC SHEEP STATION". A Kangaroo family is chewing on some grass. There is FOG AND A LIGHT BREEZE. In the distance a LAND ROVER drives down a dirt road. The Kangaroo's scatter. It is a vast open range of sheep. A SMALL HOUSE SITS IN THE DISTANCE.

EXT, TRISHA AND MARK'S HOUSE, AUSTRALIA.

Melissa and her DRIVER, DAKU, ABORIGINIE VERY DARK SKINNED LONG HAIR AND COWBOY HAT, pull up in the Land Rover and get out. Melissa has on a LONG TAN COAT WITH SHEEPS FUR. Trisha and Mark come out from THE FRONT DOOR to greet her.

MARK

There's my girl.

MELISSA

Hi Dad. Oh my god that was a long trip.

MARK

Now you know why we don't fly to the US that often. Heck the car ride is as long as the airplane ride.

TRISHA

Hi Mel, good to see you. Daku, please take Melissa's bags to the guest house.

DAKU

Yes Mrs. Trisha.

Melissa looks around, she holds her dad's hand still.

MELISSA

Oh it is beautiful out here. And all the sheep, there has to be thousands of them.

TRISHA

That looks like a mighty warm coat Mel. We thought you might show up in shorts and flip flops.

MELISSA

July 4th in Australia? Maybe next Christmas.

MARK

I told you she was smart Trisha. Come in the house Mel, let's get settled in. I know you had a long flight.

Cut to:

EXT DESERT HIGHWAY, US 395. LATER

John drives his BLACK BMW through the desert. JOSHUA TREES AND SEMI TRUCKS ARE ON THE ROAD. Some RV CAMPERS AND TRAILERS ARE IN TRAFFIC. HIS TEMPERATURE GAUGE READS 118.

John slows down and signals. He pulls into the DESERT OASIS RV PARK. Some small US FLAGS AND STREAMERS HANG NEAR THE ENTRANCE.

EXT, DESERT OASIS RV PARK, TRAILER 34.

John pulls in front of a REALLY RUN DOWN TRAILER, SINGLE WIDE, ALUMINUM. As he gets out he sees the SWAMP COOLER ON THE PORCH. It is not running and dry. One side is missing.

Over the door reads, RIDGECREST.

EXT FRONT PORCH, TRAILER 34

John knocks on the door. JUDY, AN OLDER WOMAN IN A MOO-MOO, HUNCHED BACK, DARK SUNGLASSES, GREY THIN HAIR answers the door, yet in a cheerful tone.

JUDY  
Hello, who is it?

JOHN  
Mom, it's me, John.

JUDY  
Johnny?

Judy touches John's face, we understand she is blind.

JUDY  
Johnny, it is you. Come on in. How is everything, do you need money? Do you want something to eat.

INT, TRAILER 34, CONT'D.

As John walks in he sees his DAD, JACOB, OLDER MAN, GREY BEARD, sitting ON A LAZ BOY TYPE RECLINER. He is in HIS UNDERWEAR, he watches an EVANGELICAL PREACHER ON TV TALK ABOUT THE END OF THE WORLD. HE SMOKES A CIGARETTE, AN ASHTRAY NEXT TO HIM IS FULL OF BUTTS, ON THE FLOOR ARE MANY EMPTY CRUCNHED UP CIGARETTE APCKS.

(CONTINUED)

JUDY

Jake, get up, Johnny is here.

JAKE

Don't need to. Seen him last year.

JOHN

Good to see you too dad. What happened to the cooler?

JAKE

Oh it ain't too hot today, maybe 120. I thought you were used to it.

John, who is in a nice suit, peels off his coat and tie, he rolls up his sleeves.

JUDY

Johnny, how have you been? Here have something cold to drink.

Judy goes to the fridge, it is nearly empty except for A FEW SODAS. She hands John A HALF EMPTY ONE.

JOHN

Mom, what happened to the cooler? I sent you money to get it fixed. I mean, I send you money for anything you need.

JAKE

We don't need anything. How many people were at the gift shop when the titanic was sinking? None.

JOHN

Dad, we aren't on the Titanic, we're in a desert, it's hot. Get the cooler fixed.

JAKE

Big lawyer, telling me what to do. (he takes a drag from his smoke.) I don't need anything from you boy.

JUDY

Let's not start boys. It's the 4th of July, we should be celebrating.

JOHN

Yes, let's celebrate. Happy 4th of July mom and dad. (John toasts his soda).

As John raises his soda in the air we zoom in on it, then we see.

INT TRISHA AND MARKS HOUSE, CONT'D.

Three cups of coffee are on the table, everyone sits eating eggs and such.

MELISSA

So I worked with this one student all semester. He does not like to read, but can write poetry and music like the best of them.

MARK

But is that fair to the rest of the students? They do their work and he gets to do other work?

MELISSA

Actually he does twice the work of the other students. I talked to his parents and they are glad he is finally doing something in school besides cutting class.

TRISHA

I am glad your school gives you that flexibility, I hear horrendous stories about American Schools. Out here school is the only way out of hard work for a youngster.

MELISSA

Well you look like you lost a few pounds dad.

MARK

Yeah I am in the best shape of my life. I mean it's winter though, not alot of work to do. Even the ranch hands take some time off, go back to their villages. I like the Aboriginie, hard workers, resourceful. How is the house?

MELISSA

Quiet, big, empty. I moved out some stuff from the spare room, made it an office.

(CONTINUED)

TRISHA  
And your husband, what does he do?

Mark covers his face.

MELISSA  
Well I'm not sure what he does, I  
haven't really met anybody yet.

Cut to...

INT, TRAILER 34, CONT'D.

John sits with his parents, he has some BROCHURES OF FLORIDA  
OUT. FISHING, PLANNED COMMUNITY, ACTIVITIES. Jake watches  
the Minister on TV.

JOHN  
Look at this one dad. They have  
special things to do, and people to  
help out mom. You can go out once  
in awhile.

Jake takes the brochure from John.

JAKE  
Too much, too far.

JOHN  
I'll pay dad, you can sell some of  
your older stuff, they have  
furnished units there.

JAKE  
I like it here, it's safe, nobody  
bothers me, except you, and rent is  
cheap.

JOHN  
You won't have rent down there dad,  
it's paid for. Plus they offer  
discounted meals, healthcare.

JAKE  
No, we don't want to go. We're  
safe here.

JUDY  
Thank you John for the offer, but  
we're Ok, we really are.

(CONTINUED)

JAKE

You better get going boy, traffic  
get's thick on a Friday.

John gets up, he stops and looks at A WALL WITH FAMILY  
PHOTOGRAPHS. one has a picture of HIM AND HIS BROTHER IN  
LITTLE LEAGUE BASEBALL UNIFORMS.

JOHN

Heard from Joey dad?

JAKE

He's in prison somewhere, got a  
letter a few months ago, wanted  
some money.

JOHN

What prison dad? Maybe I can look  
at an appeal for him, review his  
case.

JAKE

He ain't really your brother John,  
he said he don't like you. And we  
ain't your parents either, you know  
that, why you always coming round  
here trying to be our son? Go back  
to that Foster place, find your  
real parents. You was a check to  
us till you turned eighteen, then  
you ran off to some college,  
getting all educated. I could of  
got you a job at the glass factory,  
union wages, but you had to be on  
your own. Well you're on your own  
now, deal with it.

Judy gets up from her chair. She feels her way slowly over  
to the door and opens it, she takes John by the hand and  
leads him out.

EXT, TRAILER 34 FRONT PORCH, CONT'D

JUDY

Johnny, there's no reason to come  
here any more, you're OK, we're OK,  
I think we should just leave it at  
that Ok?

JOHN

If that's what you and Jake want  
Judy, I was jsut trying to repay  
something you gave to me, a family.

(CONTINUED)

JUDY

The state paid us allready  
Johnny. We don't ahte you or  
anything, you're just not ours.

JOHN

Ok, take care.

John walks down the porch he goes to open his car door, cut  
to...

EXT, AUSTRALIAN CITY STREET, SAME TIME

A car door opens, Melissa, Trisha and Mark get out. They  
are on a SMALL STREET IN TOWN. There is a small STORE FOR  
SUPPLIES.

INT, SUPPLY STORE, CONT'D

Melissa, Mark and Trisha walk in. a VERY HANDSOME GUY,  
PETER, BLONDE HAIR BLUE EYES CHISELED JAWLINE MANS THE  
COUNTER, he reads a SHEEP MAGAZINE.

TRISHA

Hi Peter.

PETER

Hi Trisha.

MARK

Hi ya Pete.

PETER

G'day mate.

MELISSA

G'day Mate.

PETER

G'day Love.

Melissa walks by she is grinning. Peter checks her out from  
behind the counter while he reads his sheep magazine.

Melissa goes over to Trisha who has A SMALL BASKET. Mark  
lingers in the BEER CASE.

MELISSA

He's a cute one.

(CONTINUED)

TRISHA

He's pretty average for these parts.

MELISSA

I like average. By the way what are we getting here?

TRISHA

A date for you.

MELISSA

Does my dad know?

TRISHA

It was his idea. Peter works on the range in the summer. He saw your picture and said he would like to meet you if you ever came down. Well, you're down, go say hi.

MELISSA

Give me your basket, it looks so obvious.

Melissa takes the basket and tosses SOME CANNED FOOD in it, she walks up to Peter.

PETER

Hi Luv, finding everything ok?

Peter takes the basket and starts ringing things up on the OLD REGISTER.

MELISSA

Yes I am. I wanted to make something nice for dinner tonite, here visiting my dad.

PETER

(looking at the cans)

Well, Super Meow Whitefish with Tuna Sauce, I never thought of that with a Pinot.

Peter holds up a can of catfood, Melissa looks at it embarrassed.

MELISSA

Well talking of Pinot, I wanted to go do a tour of Yarra Valley tomorrow, do you know the area?

(CONTINUED)

PETER

My folks own an estate there. I work here in winter after harvest. Why don't you and your family come out as my guests, It's a drive, pick you up at 10 or so?

Mark and Trisha walk up behind Melissa.

MARK

Ten is good Peter, I look forward to seeing your parents again, wonderful folks.

TRISHA

Well great. Let's be on our way now, need to go to the seafood market too.

MELISSA

Nice meeting you Peter.

PETER

Gday luv.

The three walk out, the fog rolls through the town, it is chilly, the three get into the car and drive off.

INT COURT, 9AM

John sits at the Plaintiff's desk. Large manila folders are spread out on the desk, some LARGE CRATES OF FOLDERS sit behind him also filled with files. A LARGE BUSTY GIRL GETS OFF THE WITNESS STAND and walks into the audience behind John. She sits next to a FEW OTHER BLONDES.

JUDGE HAMMER

Counsel, please call your next witness.

JOHN

The Plaintiff's call Shirley Madson.

A short female, with a flat chest stands up. She is somewhat stocky and avoids eye contact with the jury. She reaches over and adjusts A SMALL AWARD PIN ON HER BLOUSE.

CLERK

Do you solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but he truth?

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY

I do.

JUDGE HAMMER

Please be seated madam.

JOHN

State your name please ma'am.

SHIRLEY

Shirley Madson.

JOHN

Ma'am, are you one of the plaintiff's involved with the Scrow Chemical Breast Implant suit?

SHIRLEY

Yes I am.

JOHN

On what date did you have the implant procedure done?

SHIRLEY

Jan 10, 1990.

JOHN

I would like to enter into evidence, Exhibit 37. The Invoices and Doctor's records from Mrs. Madson's procedure.

John hands A LARGE MANILA FOLDER MARKED MADSON to the Bailiff who hands it to the Jury. The jury quickly passes the file from jurist to jurist, however, JUROR #4, MALE 50'S, SHORT BUZZ CUT GREY HAIR STOCKY, TALL, pauses and stares at Shirley, then at the record. He makes a funny grimace and then hands the file to the next juror.

JOHN

Mrs. Madson, on what date did you start feeling ill from the procedure?

DEFENSE COUNSEL

Objection your honor, the witness could have been ill from a number of things, it's pure speculation at this time why the plaintiff felt ill.

JOHN  
Withdrawn.

JUDGE HAMMER  
Continue on please.

JOHN  
Did you go see a doctor on May 11th  
of 1990 ma'am.

SHIRLEY  
Yes I did.

John pulls a few more PAPERS from his file on his desk and  
walks over to Shirley.

JOHN  
Is this a copy of the office visit?

SHIRLEY  
Yes it is.

JOHN  
I would like to admit documents #38  
into evidence your honor.

John again hands documents from Shirley to the Bailiff. The  
Bailiff hands the papers to the Jury, the Juror #4 reaches  
over and takes the file first.

JOHN  
What did your doctor tell you that  
day?

SHIRLEY  
He said it seemed I had some kind  
of chemical poisoning and he wanted  
to run some blood tests.

JOHN  
Did he send you out to run blood  
tests or did he take a sample in  
the office?

SHIRLEY  
He took two samples in the office.

John again takes a few more pieces of paper out of the file  
and hands them to Shirley.

JOHN  
Are these the reports he sent back  
to you a few days later ma'am?

(CONTINUED)

Shirley inspects some lab reports, we see her name on the documents and the dates, she hands them back to John.

SHIRLEY

Yes those are the lab reports. They were mailed to my home.

JOHN

Thank you. Your honor I would like to admit documents Number 39 into evidence.

John hands the papers to the Bailiff, who again hands them to the Jury. Juror #4 now has evidence 37 and 38 in his hands, he is looking at both of them. The Defense Attorney makes a note of the Juror #4 and leans over to his SECOND CHAIR and whispers something in his ear. SECOND CHAIR looks also, he then pulls the SHIRLEY MADSON file out of his egg crates. John takes another file from his egg crates, it is marked Exhibit 40.

JOHN

Did you talk to your doctor once you received the report?

SHIRLEY

I was at work, so I drove over to his office at lunch.

JOHN

What did he say to you, what did he feel the cause of your illness was?

SHIRLEY

He said I had elevated levels of Tri-Silicate-Glycolene in my system.

JOHN

Did he say what it was or how it got in your system?

SHIRLEY

He had no idea. I asked him and he said it was normally a chemical found in plastic products, and that I had either eaten something or perhaps I had been exposed to it through the air.

(CONTINUED)

JOHN

Did any of your coworkers complain, or neighbors complain of a similar sickness?

SHIRLEY

I asked around and I seemed to be the only one at the time.

JOHN

What happened after that, did you feel better?

DEFENSE COUNSEL

Objection your honor, calls for speculation.

JOHN

I am sure my client can speculate as to whether she does not feel good or not your honor.

JUDGE HAMMER

I will repeat for the last time Counsel. This case hinges on medical evidence and scientific fact. If your client wasn't feeling well then she will have to present some kind of medical evidence that supports her theory that she wasn't feeling well and on what date, and to be verified by a medical report by some licensed doctor, that can be verified and contested by the defense.

JOHN

Understood your honor. Mrs. Madson, did you return to your doctor and if so on what date?

SHIRLEY

On the 20th of May I was admitted to Del Mar Emergency Room.

John takes EXHIBIT 41 from the egg crate and walks back to Madson.

JOHN

Is this a copy of your admittance and records Mrs. Madson?

John hands Shirley some papers that say DEL MAR EMERGENCY on them.

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY

Yes, this is the admittance report, a copy of my surgery report, blood tests, and X-Rays.

JOHN

I would like to enter documents as Exhibit 41 into evidence your honor.

John hands the papers to the Bailiff. The Bailiff walks over and hands #41 to Juror #4.

JOHN

Why were you, for what medical reason were you admitted into Emergency that day?

SHIRLEY

I was at work and went into shock. I lost consciousness and woke up two days later after surgery. I was told that one of, my breasts, ruptured, my lungs were filled with what was later identified as Tri-Silicate-Glycolene. I was poisoned and almost died.

DEFENSE COUNSEL

Objection your honor, speculation on the patients condition of near death.

JOHN

Withdrawn.

John looks over, Juror #4 hands off his files to the Juror next to him, he folds his arms. On the Juror #4 jacket is a SMALL LAPEL PIN that looks just like Shirley's pin on her blouse. It is small but looks distinctly like a police badge.

JUDGE HAMMER

Counsel are you done with your client?

JOHN

Yes your honor. Defense may have the witness.

(CONTINUED)

Shirley flashes John a WTF? look. John rubs his shirt pocket imitating where Shirley's pin is. The second chair is still looking over the Madson folder, he nods to Defense and shrugs his shoulder.

The Defense Counsel stands up with the file, and while glancing at it walks towards Shirley.

DEFENSE COUNSEL

Mrs. Madson, did you do anything out of the ordinary that day that would cause your breast to rupture so suddenly? Did you perhaps fall off the brass pole or poke your self with any foreign objects?

A couple jurors giggle, but not Juror #4.

SHIRLEY

No sir, just a normal day.

DEFENSE COUNSEL

So what is a normal day for you ma'am, I mean where do you work?

JOHN

Objection your honor, the place of work of my clients, has no bearing on the sturdiness or quality of the implant devices, we have already heard expert testimony, by the defense, that their products could sustain up to 10,000 psi pressure in lab tests.

DEFENSE COUNSEL

The plaintiff asked the client what she was doing the alleged day of the rupture, she said working, the plaintiff has already introduced the fact so we just want to clarify what happened.

JUDGE HAMMER

Over ruled. The witness will answer the question.

SHIRLEY

I work for the County.

DEFENSE COUNSEL

(surprised, he glances at second chair)What do you do for the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DEFENSE COUNSEL (cont'd)  
County, or actually, do you have  
another source of income at night?

SHIRLEY  
I work days and night sometimes.

DEFENSE COUNSEL  
For tips or wages?

SHIRLEY  
Wages.

DEFENSE COUNSEL  
Do you receive gifts or gratuities  
from your clients?

Shirley is clearly mad at John. She glares at John, he nods his head, he is in complete control of the situation.

SHIRLEY  
I work Vice.

DEFENSE COUNSEL  
Vice, vice what?

SHIRLEY  
I work undercover for the San Diego  
Sheriff's Department. I pose as a  
street prostitute and arrest  
solicitors and collect evidence to  
use against the street gangs of  
South San Diego.

DEFENSE COUNSEL  
So you got breast implants to blend  
in better while working vice?

SHIRLEY  
No. About 1 year prior to my  
implant surgery, I was attacked by  
a gang member. Someone had found  
out I was an officer and set out to  
kill me.

Some Jurors look away in shame, some stare at the defense, some are getting choked up.

SHIRLEY  
I was grabbed off the street, my  
wire was pulled off, I was beaten,  
both my arms were broken, my  
breasts were cut off, I was thrown

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY (cont'd)  
in a ditch and left for dead. They never found my assailant, but it was most likely mexican mafia. I had breast reconstructive surgery to make myself look like the way I did before my attack. And now, with the rupture, I look worse than when I did lying in that ditch. If I had known that these implants, were possibly bad, I would never have gotten them.

DEFENSE COUNSEL  
Permission to approach the bench your honor.

The Judge looks at the jury, visibly shaken, two other women wipe tears from their eyes. The court will recess for 15 minutes. Bailiff please walk the jury to the cafeteria for coffee or some beverage of their choice.

The Bailiff leads the jury away. Madson sits in her witness chair. John stands up and walks towards her.

JOHN  
(whispering) Shirley, I am sorry we had to do that, I know we agreed not to, but they backed us in a corner, you were my only hope for this case.

SHIRLEY  
I know John, now go in there and get us justice.

John walks in back with the Defense and the judge.

INT JUDGE HAMMERS CHAMBERS, CONT'D

Judge Hammer sits at his desk, Defense and John stand in front of him.

DEFENSE COUNSEL  
Your honor, counsel has tricked us, and lied, and hid the fact that he was putting a peace officer on the stand, he deliberately hid the fact that she...

(CONTINUED)

JUDGE HAMMER

Be quiet Bill, you screwed up. I read all the depositions last week. She stated she worked for the County, you failed to follow up and ask what exactly she did. For God's sake she is wearing a Retired Peace Officer Lapel Pin on her blouse. And even if you did ask her, she still would have been put on the witness stand.

DEFENSE COUNSEL

Your honor, I am asking for you to declare a mistrial, I want a new jury.

JUDGE HAMMER

Mr. Ridgecrest. You have been pretty quiet all day, laying your trap, what do you want now that we are all looking like fools? When we go back out there I will have twenty reporters in my court, interviews of a fallen peace officer, and probably some scandal about health care. Regardless the defense client corporation is ruined. Scrow Corporation has over 500 employees in San Diego, they contribute millions to local candidates, friends of mine. I can declare a mistrial right now but you'll appeal and in two years we'll be right back here.

JOHN

Your honor, I am fighting for the rights of my clients, as a duly appointed attorney for...

JUDGE HAMMER

Save me the shit Ridgecrest, what do you want?

JOHN

Twelve million for each plaintiff, Two Hundred million in a trust fund for future victims, Thirty Three Million attorney fees for myself. I want the product pulled and made safe.

(CONTINUED)

## DEFENSE COUNSEL

Six million each plaintiff, one hundred million trust, thirty three million fees, payable over 5 years.

## JOHN

You are giving me full fees but cutting in half my clients? No. Twelve million, two hundred million, sixteen million 4 years.

## JUDGE HAMMER

Save me the integrity, I am a man of morals speech Ridgecrest, take the offer. If we go back to the jury you will win, but defense can appeal the judgment, figure 4 years in appeals. Think of your clients needs, not justice.

## JOHN

Eight, one fifty, twenty over five.

The defense counsel and his second chair, who is on his cell phone, nod in agreement.

## DEFENSE COUNSEL

We'll send the paperwork over in an hour to your office.

## JOHN

It's going to take more than an hour to type up this agreement.

## DEFENSE COUNSEL

Listen Rookie. You might have won your first game but let me tell you something. We wrote this agreement a year ago, we just have to fill in a few blanks.

## JUDGE HAMMER

So Ridgecrest, when you go out to the reporters, make it look good, contempt of court can have far reaching ramifications. Everyone got what they came for, a deal. My deal is I look good, don't forget it.

## JOHN

Oh, I am probably retiring your honor, I think I found a new line of work.

The judge and Defense look curiously at each other. John walks out of chambers.

EXT, COURT HOUSE STEPS, MOMENTS LATER.

John, Shirley and the other girls approach a reporters lectern with many microphones. Many reporters crowd around snapping pictures.

REPORTER 1

John, what are the terms of the settlement with Scrow Corporation? Are women safe from the implants?

John opens AN ENVELOPE THAT READS, REPORTERS SETTLEMENT ANSWERS. It is dated June 4, 1991.

JOHN

The individual terms of the settlement for each client are confidential. There will be some other funds available to any future litigant, provided they can provide additional doctor based information. Per the agreement, and trial records, there is no proof that Scrow Corporation had any negligence or misconduct in it's product. We can only hope that these are rare and isolated cases that will no longer happen. Scrow Corporation is committed to the safety and happiness of all it's patients.

REPORTER 2

What are your plans Mr. Ridgecrest? Are you going to trial on any other large class action cases? Are you going to write a book?

JOHN

No. I am actually announcing my candidacy for election for Superior Court Judge of San Diego County, Southern District. Judge Hammers seat is opening up as he is retiring this year. I think I can do alot of good working for the public.

INT JUDGE HAMMERS CHAMBERS, CONT'D

Judge Hammer is pouring a glass of Whiskey with the Defense Counsel. He hears John say this and drops the bottle.

JUDGE HAMMER

That little twit, thinks he can steal my job. I have held this office for twenty years.

DEFENSE COUNSEL

Mike. We are going to need a trustee to that hundred and fifty million dollar trust fund we are setting up. Probably pays four hundred thousand a year, alot more than you are making here.

JUDGE HAMMER

Are you offering me a job already Bill? We haven't even gone to the polls yet.

DEFENSE COUNSEL

We need new blood in the court. Plus with your expertise, we won't ever have to disburse a single dime of that fund. And a generous expense account for you too.

JUDGE HAMMER

I remember when I was new blood, fresh out of Law School. We had fun in College didn't we Bill?

DEFENSE COUNSEL

Sure did Mike, sure did.

The three sit in the office sipping their whiskey's. On the TV John shakes hands with reporters. The girls give him hugs. Shirley's husband, an on duty officer comes up and hugs her.

LAW FIRM, NOV 2ND, EVE.

John, the law partners, Shirley Madson (now with nice breasts), some office staff stand around. Ridgecrest for Judge signs adore the walls. Several reporters stand around. John talks to the partners in a corner of the room.

(CONTINUED)

JOHN

So, I guess this is goodbye.

PARTNER

Feeling confident, the polls had you neck and neck with the assistant DA.

PARTNER 2

People rarely elect a civil attorney for a judgeship. You could have waited a few more years.

JOHN

I just felt the time was right.

ROSE, A RED HEADED GIRL ABOUT 30, ATTRACTIVE, WALKS OVER TO John and the partners.

ROSE

Hi Honey.

JOHN

Hi Honey. I thought you might miss this. Busy at the hospital?

ROSE

No, just traffic. I told you to wear the yellow tie, yellow is for victory, purple is for court.

Rose goes over to a small closet in John's office, she pulls a YELLOW TIE out of the rack.

PARTNER

We'll leave you two alone for a moment.

The partners walk away. Rose begins pulling off John's purple tie and tying the yellow tie.

ROSE

I think you look better in yellow anyways.

JOHN

Any news?

ROSE

What kind of news did you want?

(CONTINUED)

JOHN

Well, you left the hospital early, I mean, I am glad, it's just that you never leave early unless something is up.

ROSE

Well once this is over, I think I am going to put a blue tie on you.

JOHN

What's a blue tie for?

ROSE

It's for a new father.

JOHN

That's so wonderful. You make me so happy. I have had this void in my life for so long..

John's secretary pokes her head in and sees them holding each other. Mr. Ridgecrest, there is a Melissa Creighton and guest to see you? Should I let them in?

JOHN

Yes, please do.

ROSE

Is this "the Melissa"? The one you told me about? I finally get to meet her?

JOHN

Yeah I sent an invitation, I haven't seen her in some time.

ROSE

You sound excited. I am starting to feel jealous.

JOHN

Don't be, we're just friends. Plus she probably has a husband, I mean, she has a guest with her.

ROSE

OK. I won't be jealous.

INT LAW FIRM RECEPTION, CONT'D

John and Rose hold hands. The elevator door opens. Melissa comes out, with her BOYFRIEND, WILLIAM, BLONDE HAIR, BUZZCUT, MILITARY UNIFORM.

JOHN  
Melissa, hi, long time no see.

MELISSA  
John. Hi how are you?

Melissa and John hug, somewhat affectionately.

JOHN  
This is my girlfriend, Doctor Rose McCourt.

MELISSA  
Hi, I am Melissa, this is my boyfriend, Captain William Jackson.

Melissa and Rose shake hands, William shakes hands with Rose, then John.

WILLIAM  
Call sign Tracer, nice to meet you. Saw you in the paper last year, big time lawyer eh?

JOHN  
Yes, I mean no I'm just a lawyer, you must be a pilot. Stationed here at Miramar?

WILLIAM  
Yeah, I move around alot. I go where the action is. Girl in every port...

Off Melissa's look.

WILLIAM  
I'm kidding doll, just a saying ya' know.

John and Rose are slowly getting the idea that William is a douche bag.

JOHN  
It's good to see you Melissa. How is everything at work?

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA

Fine. I finished my PH.D in English Literature. I am trying to get into the college level.

JOHN

Great. Uh, we should go inside they are announcing local results soon, some press is here, I hope you guys are OK being on the news.

WILLIAM

You got a couple cold ones in there?

JOHN

I sure do. So how did you get the call name, Racer? Like speed racer?

WILLIAM

Tracer, with a TEE, see...

The two guys walk back into the office together talking, Rose smiles at Melissa they start talking a little.

MELISSA

I am glad John found someone so nice.

ROSE

Thank you, very much.

MELISSA

How did you meet?

ROSE

I was an intern at County. He came in one night with stomach cramps. He said it was nerves, just wanted a muscle relaxer.

MELISSA

He had that in college too, he always thought it was nerves. Usually right before a big test.

ROSE

That's what I thought, but we took an Xray anyways. Turned out he had a small cyst in his stomach. It gets inflamed when he eats too much spicy food. We removed it and now he's all better.

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA

We ate so much Mexican food in college. Wow, never thought of it. I am glad he found a good doctor, you two look so happy together.

ROSE

Thanks. He's going to be a father soon too.

The girls stop. Melissa hugs Rose.

MELISSA

That's wonderful. Has he proposed yet?

ROSE

Well I just told him a few minutes ago. We have only been dating like six months. I think once the election is over maybe we can take a vacation, I hate to pressure him but...

MELISSA

John is a wonderful guy.

ROSE

No it's not that. I had Leukemia as a child and it has been in remission for awhile. Pregnancy will be tough. By the book I shouldn't even be pregnant, but it happened.

MELISSA

If you need anything call me. We can have lunch or something. I have been busy with work and school, spent alot of time in Australia.

ROSE

Down Under? Was that with the pilot?

MELISSA

No, I was seeing this guy whose family owned a winery.

(CONTINUED)

ROSE

I had a long distance relationship  
a few years ago, it's tough.

MELISSA

The distance wasn't a problem, it's  
just that, well, when the cats away  
the rats will play.

ROSE

laughs) We can double date, it will  
be fun. We can go on a cruise or  
something.

MELISSA

(rolls her eyes) William is  
temporary at best. He'll be gone  
in a few months. I mean he's fun in  
his own way.

ROSE

He's your rebound?

MELISSA

Exactly...

INT GENERAL OFFICE, CONT'D

The girls laugh. They walk in and see William and John  
talking over a beer. The news lady on the TV starts talking.

REPORTER 3

And in local races, Mayor Smith has  
won a second re-election. The  
Superior Court Judge race is still  
too tight to call, absentee ballots  
will be counted starting at  
midnight.

OFFICE STAFF

OOhh! Rats. Darn.

Shirley Madson and her husband walk over to John.

SHIRLEY

John, I wanted to give you  
something.

Shirley hands John a 8X11 small wrapped package.

(CONTINUED)

JOHN

Thank you Shirley, I mean, I should probably be giving you a gift, you took the hit the hardest up there on the witness stand.

John unwraps the present. It is a PICTURE FRAME. in the frame is A PICTURE OF A BEACH BY THE OCEAN. On the side it reads FOOTSTEPS.

JOHN

Oh thank you. I know this. The parable of the footsteps on the beach, and Jesus guiding you through the tough times. But there are no footprints on the beach.

SHIRLEY

Yes I know. This is what a friend gave to me when I was recovering the first time I got hurt. You make your own footsteps.

JOHN

Really? So kind of like the beach is empty and I have to choose my direction.

SHIRLEY

I know it sounds corny, but it helped me alot, and I wanted to give it to you.

JOHN

I appreciate it Shirley, I really do. I got a spot at home where it will fit perfectly. Thank You. What are your plans now that you got your settlement?

SHIRLEY

Well minus taxes, we are going to setup a place for spouses of peace officers who have lost their lives. Somewhere to relax for a few weeks or a month.

JOHN

You mean somewhere in Iowa or something.

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY

Somewhere by the beach, maybe  
Florida, you know, footsteps.

JOHN

Yes, I get it. If you need legal  
advise let me know, I would be glad  
to help.

SHIRLEY

Thank you for everything John.

John hugs Shirley and shakes her husbands hand, they leave.

Melissa walks over to the punch bowl where she meets DR.  
WALTER HADLEY, MALE 60'S, BALD, PORTLY.

DR. WALTER HADLEY

Watch out, I think someone put too  
much Gin in the Juice.

Melissa smiles, she takes a cup and drinks it down in one  
gulp.

MELISSA

No, it's right on the money.

DR. WALTER HADLEY

Well I am glad someone around here  
likes a good stiff one.

MELISSA

What do you mean, stiff one?

DR. WALTER HADLEY

No one around here likes a drink or  
two after work. Same thing at the  
College, alot of uptight  
Professors.

MELISSA

Well it's College.

DR. WALTER HADLEY

It's not a morgue. You must be an  
attorney here.

MELISSA

No. Actually I teach English, I am  
an English teacher at San Diego  
High.

(CONTINUED)

DR. WALTER HADLEY  
Really. You should get your  
Masters Degree, we are always  
looking for English Teachers.

MELISSA  
I actually just got my Ph.D. I am  
applying to Cal State Vista for a  
Professorship, but there is alot of  
competition for a few  
positions. My name is Melissa. You  
are?

DR. WALTER HADLEY  
I am Dr. Walter Hadley. I am in  
charge of Personnel for UCV. You  
must be Melissa Creighton then.

MELISSA  
Yes I am.

DR. WALTER HADLEY  
I was just looking at your  
application. How do you know John?

MELISSA  
We went to school together.

DR. WALTER HADLEY  
Excellent. Fine young  
man. Doesn't drink much. So,  
Melissa, come by my office I would  
like to speak to you in person  
about a position, that is, if you  
really want to teach at the college  
level.

MELISSA  
Yes, definitely. Thank you  
Doctor. I am glad I ran into you  
here.

DR. WALTER HADLEY  
Alot of great things happen near  
the punch bowl at office  
parties. Never underestimate the  
power of the punchbowl. I think  
that was Shakespeare.

William walks over, pretty drunk. He swings his arm around  
Melissa's waist. Dr. Hadley walks off.

(CONTINUED)

MCFULLER

Folks, it's getting late, let's meet back here in the morning.

The staff slowly start grabbing their coats and briefcases. The partners come over to John to congratulate him.

ADKINS

Well this race is close John. Are you sure you aren't coming in tomorrow?

ROSE

Are you taking the day off John?

JOHN

No, I resigned from the firm hun. Today was my last day.

ROSE

Shouldn't you have waited a little?

JOHN

No. The election's over, and we got a nest egg from the Scrow Settlement, maybe we should take some time off. You've worked 12 hours a day 6 days a week for what, 8 years?

Melissa's POV. Melissa talks with William, TWO ASSOCIATES, and John's Secretary. She looks over at John, she sees him go down on one knee. He opens a small velvet box with a diamond ring in it. He speaks to Rose but we can't hear him, only William telling stories about planes and bombs. Rose nods her head yes, John stands up and they hug. John looks at Melissa, Melissa smiles and gives a thumbs up.

EXT, UC VISTA, AM

Melissa walks through the campus. She has a ROLLY WHEEL THING WITH BOOKS AND STUFF. She is dressed very professional. COLLEGE STUDENTS WALK BY.

INT, MELISSA'S ENGLISH CLASS, CONT'D

Melissa enters class. MANY STUDENTS SIT WITH THEIR LAPTOPS OPEN, THERE ARE OVER 150 IN THE CLASS. She is slightly taken as she notices the difference between high school and college. A FEW STUDENTS PASS BY HER AS SHE partially blocks THE ENTRANCE.

Melissa walks to her desk and starts unpacking COLLEGE TEXTBOOKS, FICTIONAL BOOKS, AND 3 RING BINDERS.

MELISSA

Good morning class. I am Dr. Melissa Creighton, I will be your Professor for English 104, for the 1992 Spring Semester. I have copies of the syllabus here, please take one and pass it back.

We see a stack of papers being passed from hand to hand, dissolve to...

INT COURT, 9AM

...The stack of papers gets handed to Judge Ridgecrest, John sits behind the bench IN HIS JUDGES ROBE, he views the stack of papers and looks onto court.

The courtroom is filled with many people, it is traffic court. A Latino stands as the defendant, A SHORT ASIAN MAN INTERPRETS FOR THE DEFENDANT. On the other is a LARGE MALE WHITE COP.

OFFICER

So then your honor, as the defendant passed through the red light, he made a one fingered gesture to oncoming traffic.

INTERPRETER

...uno manos todos ala trafico.

OFFICER

I had him on my radar as doing approximately 50 in a 35 zone, allowing for any error the defendant was issued a speeding ticket for 45 miles per hour in a thirty five zone. No ticket was issued for the one fingered gesture, or the red light.

(CONTINUED)

INTERPRETER  
o ya lighto roja.

JOHN  
lighto roja?

INTERPRETER  
Slipped my mind your honor sorry.

INT, MELISSA'S ENGLISH CLASS, LATER

Melissa sets down a Manilla Folder. As she sips her coffee the phone rings.

MELISSA  
Hello. Yes this is. I'll be right there. What room number?

Melissa sets her coffee down but it spills over her GRADED AND UNGRADED PAPERS.

MELISSA  
Damn it!

Melissa grabs her purse she runs out the door hurriedly. As she runs out the door into the hallway we see...

INT COUNTY HOSPITAL CORRIDOR, LATER

Melissa walks hurriedly through the hallway. She runs into A NURSE.

MELISSA  
Excuse me, I am looking for Room 443.

NURSE  
To the left make another left.

MELISSA  
Thank you very much.

Melissa walks hurriedly through the the hall, a left and another left. She comes to ROOM 443. She walks slowly into the room. She sees John, sitting bedside by Rose holding her hand.

ROSE  
I'm sorry John.

(CONTINUED)

JOHN

It's not your fault. I understood the risks when you got pregnant.

MELISSA

Hi Rose. Is it Ok if I come in?

ROSE

Yes of course.

JOHN

Hi Mel, thanks for coming.

John gives Melissa a small hug. Melissa reaches over to Rose and holds her hand. She sits where John was.

JOHN

I am going for some coffee. Mel?

MELISSA

Yes please, anything.

John leaves, Rose and Melissa sit and hold hands.

ROSE

Melissa. You are such a dear friend for coming. I just needed someone to talk to.

MELISSA

All right. I kind of heard the news, are you ok?

ROSE

I stopped working after John got elected. I went from being Super Doctor to House Girl. Tea parties, shopping, I'm bored.

MELISSA

So go back to work.

ROSE

I am, but, not here in San Diego.

MELISSA

You guys are moving?

ROSE

No, that's what I want to talk to you about. You understand John, maybe even more than me. I am looking at going to India. I want

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ROSE (cont'd)  
to work with kids, do some good,  
that's why I became a doctor. I  
mean, I can't save myself, but I  
can save others.

MELISSA  
So it's a temporary thing? John  
will understand. You can postpone  
the wedding.

ROSE  
I am happy with John, I just need a  
challenge every day. I want to  
leave it open between us.

MELISSA  
Is it the Leukemia. Is it back?

ROSE  
With a vengeance, that's why I  
miscarried. I haven't been feeling  
well the last few weeks, I got some  
blood work done. I knew the  
results before I looked at the lab  
reports.

MELISSA  
But John will understand, talk to  
him.

ROSE  
I don't want to drag John through  
this, whether it be three months or  
four months or whatever. I want to  
see John happy, I can't do anything  
else here in San Diego.

MELISSA  
Rose, umm, I don't really have alot  
of experience in this area,  
relationships and so forth. I  
don't want to get into anything  
between you and John.

ROSE  
You're not between us Mel, you're  
with us. Whether it be friend or  
neighbor or super teacher.

John walks in with two coffee's.

JOHN

Hi girls. Everyone OK?

MELISSA

Yes. John thanks for the coffee. I need to get home and do some work. Call me in a few days Ok?

Melissa gives him a peck on the cheek. She walks out with her coffee.

John sits back down in the chair, he takes a sip of his coffee.

JOHN

Honey. I know today was a rough day. I stand behind you, whatever you want to do. I know this pregnancy was unexpected, but I care alot for you.

ROSE

Let's talk about our future John, it's so important to me that our future is together, and free.

JOHN

I agree, what ever I can do to make you happy is where I stand.

ROSE

John...

The camera pulls back to the door, Melissa stands by the door for another second then walks down the hall. We cut to...

EXT, UC VISTA, AM

Melissa walks down the hallway where she runs into Dr. Walter Hdley.

MELISSA

Good Morning doctor.

DR. WALTER HADLEY

Good morning Melissa, I was just coming to your class, I need a favor.

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA  
Anything sir.

DR. WALTER HADLEY  
That young friend of yours, the  
judge...

MELISSA  
John Ridgecrest.

DR. WALTER HADLEY  
Yes. We have a two day paralegal  
class and I need someone to come in  
and discuss some lawyer stuff with  
them. It's for annual training,  
could he do that for us?

MELISSA  
I will call him today sir, when is  
it?

DR. WALTER HADLEY  
Around finals time, that's the  
problem. The BAR has us do this on  
short notice and every one is busy  
with finals.

MELISSA  
Actually, I have his number maybe  
your Secretary can call him and set  
it up.

DR. WALTER HADLEY  
Is there something wrong between  
the two of you?

MELISSA  
No sir, I just thought that...

DR. WALTER HADLEY  
Good. Call him then, I would  
appreciate that.

Hadley walks away. Melissa looks at John's NUMBER IN HER  
PHONE BOOK IN HER PURSE.

INT JOHN'S APT, EVENING

John sits and watches TV, he is in some OLD SWEAT PANTS AND  
A UCSD SHIRT. He has some LAWYERS BOOKS ON HIS DESK The  
phone rings.

(CONTINUED)

JOHN

Hello.

MELISSA

Hi John, it's Mel.

JOHN

Hi, how are you?

MELISSA

Fine, thanks. How is Rose?

JOHN

Sent me a postcard two weeks ago, I send her one.

MELISSA

Hey, Dr. Hadley was looking for someone to teach a Paralegal course next month, he asked me to call you.

JOHN

Sure.

MELISSA

I also got some papers, I can mail them.

JOHN

Save the stamp, drop by.

MELISSA

Sure, same place. Ok, I am actually in the neighborhood I can be by in ten.

JOHN

Great, It will be good to see you.

MELISSA

Ok, see you in ten.

Melissa puts down her cell phone, she pulls out of UCV parking lot.

John hangs up, he goes and turns on the shower.

EXT JOHNS APT, TEN MINUTES LATER.

Melissa pulls up in her car. She checks her hair and puts on some lipstick She walks to John's door and knocks.

John answers he is in some NICE SHORTS AND A WIFE BEATER, SHOWING OFF THE TIME HE SPENDS AT THE GYM.

INT JOHN'S APT, CONT'D.

JOHN

Come on in, good to see you.

Mel leans over and gives him a peck on the cheek.

MELISSA

Good to see you too.

Melissa sets down her purse. John walks over to the counter where he opens a BOTTLE OF PINOT NOIR. MELISSA sees the PICTURES OF HER AND JOHN AT GRADUATION BY THE TV.

MELISSA

I still have this picture too.

JOHN

Yeah, I like it, I mean I don't have a lot of pictures of my friends at college really.

MELISSA

Is that Pinot Noir?

JOHN

Yeah, or did you want white?

MELISSA

Yeah white is better, I mean, a half glass is fine, I have a busy schedule.

John sets down the Pinot. He opens some Sauvignon. Melissa sits down on the couch, she picks up a Lawyers magazine.

JOHN

Thanks for dropping this off. I have never taught before, are they sure they want me?

MELISSA

Oh yeah, a judge is great PR for the campus. They want to start a law school there next year.

(CONTINUED)

JOHN

Another law school, your dad would be proud.

Melissa laughs.

MELISSA

Well thaks for the wine.

JOHN

Oh Ok. I thought you might want to stay for awhile. We can talk.

MELISSA

Talking is fine, I am just under the gun at college.

JOHN

I am too, new judge, new cases, I can't believe how green some of these guys are that come in. Thank God 90% of my work is traffic and misdemeanor criminal.

John moves closer to Melissa on the couch, she smiles at him, but then stands up. Then John stands up.

JOHN

Listen Mel, it's over between Rose and me. We're friends, maybe that's what it was meant to be.

MELISSA

Maybe that's what we were meant to be, friends.

JOHN

I'm not ready to give up quite yet on you.

John leans over to give Mel a kiss, she backs off.

MELISSA

John I have to go. Let's talk some other time Ok?

JOHN

Ok. No hard feelings?

MELISSA

No John, no hard feelings.

Melissa sets down ehr glass she walks out the door, as she does she takes one last look at John.

INT GAS LAMP CAFE, LATER

John sits with Greg, they are drinking TEQUILA SHOOTERS AND BEER.

JOHN

I did everything you told me too. I was clean, I smelled good, I opened wine.

GREG

You went fishing and didn't catch anything. It's not a science John, it's picking up chicks.

JOHN

It can't be that complicated.

GREG

Are you sure she's single?

JOHN

Should I have asked her?

GREG

Hello no. Never ask a girl if she has a boyfriend. Just say hi, within three or four minutes she will start a sentence with, "oh really, my boyfriend blah blah blah".

John takes another shot, he sucks a lime, HE CHASES THE BEER. Just then Mandy comes over.

MANDY

Hey guys, we have a special on jalapeno poppers tonight too, spicy chicken wings, can I get you something?

JOHN

Your phone number, and some wings.

MANDY

Their spicy, I know you don't like spicy food.

JOHN

I like you.

Mandy smiles and walks away.

(CONTINUED)

GREG

You're on full tilt player, be  
careful what you ask for.

Greg takes a sip of beer, as he sets it down we see...

INT MELISSAS HOUSE, SAME TIME

Melissa is on the phone with a GIRLFRIEND FROM WORK, SALLY.

SALLY VO

So why didn't you do him?

MELISSA

I don't know, and it hurt so much to  
leave, he moved close to me my  
heart was pounding...

SALLY VO

So go back.

MELISSA

No, it was probably the wine.

SALLY VO

You had half a glass.

MELISSA

I didn't eat dinner yet.

SALLY VO

You didn't do anything wrong, he  
said no hard feelings right?

MELISSA

I don't have any hard feelings,  
should I call him?

SALLY VO

Call him, after that episode he  
went to the bar to get some easy  
skank. I mean for God's sake he's  
a lawyer...

MELISSA

...judge actually

SALLY VO

Rich, and I mean stupid rich, good  
looking...

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA

.. I should call him.

SALLY VO

No let him call you. If he is your friend he's your friend. And if he is your friend, give me his number.

MELISSA

Sally, come on this is serious.

SALLY VO

I am serious. men go get drunk, chicks call their girlfriends.

Melissa picks up her glass of wine and takes a sip.

MELISSA

How do you know so much about guys?

SALLY VO

Because I'm a girl that's why.

Melissa sets down her drink, we cut too...

INT GAS LAMP CAFE, SAME TIME

John and Greg sit with TWO GIRLS, MANDY AND a NEW BLONDE HOSTESS, GRETCHEN

MANDY

So she left?

JOHN

Yeah. (long pause John takes a drink of his wine) I got a postcard two weeks ago, I mean, you should keep it civilized.

MANDY

That's so sweet of you John.

GRETCHEN

Is that what you would do Greg?

GREG

Totally. Keep it civilized, I mean any relationship that ends, usually ends on a bad note. And if you can stay friends that is awesome.

(CONTINUED)

GRETCHEN

And how many girls do you get post cards from?

GREG

None. They all hate me.

The four laugh, Mandy slips her hand on John's knee.

MANDY

Listen John, my boyfriend is picking me up soon, you are a sweet guy, let's keep in touch OK?

John holds up a napkin with a phone number.

JOHN

So this is a valid number?

MANDY

Of course. It's just not a booty call number.

Mandy stands up, she gives John a small peck on the cheek and walks away. Gretchen walks away with her.

GREG

Incredible, two in one night.

JOHN

Two what?

GREG

I am unsure if it is two successes or two failures. Everything I know about women just flies out the door when I am with you.

JOHN

I'm catching a cab home.

Greg moves close to John, they give a bro hug.

GREG

Listen brother, she was cute in college, she's cute now, sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't, don't get hung up on it. When she wants you, she'll call you, jsut don't scare her off, Okay?

JOHN  
Okay, no scaring.

EXT UCV CAMPUS, AFTERNOON

Melissa walks down the sidewalk, students walk by either side. She seems to be thinking about something. She sees Dr. Hadley.

DR. WALTER HADLEY  
Melissa, kudos.

MELISSA  
For what?

DR. WALTER HADLEY  
I just saw Mr. Ridgecrest, he is teaching his class tonite, I stood in for a few minutes, wonderfully spoken, smart, he could become Tenured staff here if we get our law department off the ground.

MELISSA  
John's here, now?

DR. WALTER HADLEY  
Yes he is. I thought you spoke often to each other, did something happen?

MELISSA  
I'm not sure. I have to go Doctor, I am late.

INT ENGLISH LIT, 10AM

MELISSA walks into the room, the students sit quietly.

MELISSA  
Good afternoon class.

CLASS  
Good afternoon Mrs. Creighton.

MELISSA  
I would like you all to pass in your final exams, which are due today. We will also have a final lecture on...

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA pauses for a moment, she's not happy and is thinking of John.

MELISSA

Class, hold on. The class looks at her and pauses.

MELISSA

I think I want to do something different today. Today's lecture, wait, please pass your final papers back to the owner, we will self grade. The class hesitates and looks puzzled. JOANNE, FRONT ROW FEMALE 20'S BRUNETTE, asks a question.

JOANNE

Mrs. Creighton, what is self grading?

MELISSA

Just what it means, I am going to let you self grade your papers. This is a Senior's class, and you are expected to not only do work, but will also be responsible, as graduates, to grade and critique the work of others. And the first thing you should be able to critique honestly, is your own work.

ADAM, MALE SECOND ROW, LONGISH HAIR STONER TYPE ASKS A QUESTION.

ADAM

Mrs. Creighton, this wasn't in the syllabus.

MELISSA

Good, not everything in life will be in your syllabus. Life can be random. College must prepare you for things not seen.

JOANNE

But this is half our grade in this class. How do we grade our own papers?

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA

That's precisely the point. How do you know good work from bad work. That's what I have been doing for three years. It's not always about good and bad, right and wrong. English is not math, there is no one solution, it is not a procedure, English is feelings and emotion, it's mistakes of our past, and the solutions we have to live with. In math, you can go back and erase things, in literature, poetry, music, you can get by with mediocrity.

ADAM

So I give myself an A. Adam writes a big "A" on his paper.

ADAM

Should I pass this in now? Other students start writing A's on their papers, smiling, thinking this is some kind of joke. MELISSA writes Adam's name on the whiteboard and then an A.

MELISSA

Very good Adam, Adam gets an A. Class did he deserve an A? The class starts erasing their A's on their papers.

JOANNE

He self graded, why shouldn't he give himself an A?

MELISSA

What will you give yourself Joanne?

JOANNE

I give myself an A too, but I deserve it.

MELISSA

There are politicians who deserve a good beating, but that doesn't mean they get one. The class laughs.

JOANNE

Ok, I earned it.

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA

I earn seventy thousand a year, but uncle sam gets 22 percent. So I really only earned fifty six thousand.

JOANNE

So I have to pay taxes on my A?

WILL, BLONDE CLEAN CUT GEEK IN THE THRID ROW JOINS THE ARGUMENT.

WILL

Mrs. Creighton, can we just have you grade our papers like all the other teachers, because no matter how good we do in life, someone will always be there to argue that it can be changed or made better.

MELISSA

Nice observation Will, I give you a B.

WILL

Why a B? My works twice as good as Adam's.

MELISSA

Because life is unfair.

WILL

So I can leave now, with my B?(Will stands up

MELISSA

No we're not done with this lecture yet. Sit down.

ADAM

So today's lecture is about grading papers, and at the end of class we turn in our papers and you change the grade as usual.

MELISSA

No. As I explained, grade your work. What have you done this semester in those five hundred page books of yours, to think that you have learned something this year. Are you here in college to get good grades? Or are you here to learn something?

(CONTINUED)

ADAM

I personally would just like an A.

MELISSA

Then you get an A.

JOANNE

So we have wasted our time all semester to get an A, or in my case a B.

MELISSA

No, nothing is wasted. You still have your final thesis. You can go home and frame it. You can publish it and make money, you can give it to your next employer as a job reference, and tell them how you did all this work, and your teacher walked in one day, kicked you in the teeth, and said too bad. Tell them how after all the hard work and hours you put into something, someone came along and said, I don't need that, start over, and how you smiled, said thank you, and got on with life.

KATHY, ANOTHER STUDENT, CUTE, BRUNETTE, JOINS IN FIRST ROW.

KATHY

Mrs. Creighton, I would like to say, I have learned a lot this semester and this is an excellent lecture. I give myself an A, because I am here to learn, not get a grade. MELISSA writes Kathy on the whiteboard, then a D.

KATHY

What? The class laughs.

ADAM

Because you tried to brown nose.

KATHY

I was being honest.

MELISSA

Let's take a vote class. All those who think Kathy was brown nosing me (more laughter) raise your hands. The students quickly start to raise

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA (cont'd)  
their hands, then look at each other, a few lower, then raise their hands again. Adam's hand is down. About half the class' hands are up.

MELISSA POINTS AT RANDY, MALE, SECOND ROW WHOSE HAND IS DOWN.

MELISSA  
Randy, why is your hand not up?

RANDY  
I took statistical probability class in math, and I figure the way this lecture is going that if I would of kept my hand up, the count in the class would have been 28 up, and 26 down. By keeping my hand down, the count is now 27 vs 27.

MELISSA  
(Counts quickly pointing her finger)  
So you tried to influence the outcome not by a majority vote, but by a tie vote?

RANDY  
A tie means no one is right and no one is wrong. A tie makes YOU the tie breaker.

MELISSA  
This is not a political science class, it's not statistics, it's English Literature. Things should be discussed in here, without fear of retribution.

RANDY  
But you just gave Kathy a D. That was retribution.

MELISSA  
No it wasn't, it was discussion, she spoke up and joined the discussion. There are consequences for that, good and bad. In life you can choose to say nothing, which in your case was a no vote, or you can choose to take risks.

(CONTINUED)

KATHY

I didn't understand the risk.

MELISSA

Sure you did, you risked asking for an A, because three others spoke up and asked for A you felt there was little risk in getting a D.

KATHY

I did my work, I can take this to the Dean and he'll grade my paper and overrule your D. Because it wasn't on the syllabus and the papers grading system was changed, it's illegal.

MELISSA

So I'm a criminal now. Kathy, you just don't get the point of this lecture.

KATHY

There is no point, except to make us wrong and make us pay for something that we can't figure out what you want from us.

MELISSA

I know what I want from you, and you just explained it to the rest of the class. The class sits quietly, Kathy sits and looks in a puzzled manner. Several students whisper to each other. The bell rings.

MELISSA

Put your papers on my desk with your grade, it will be reviewed.

The students get up and approach MELISSA's desk. Papers are put on her desk, All are marked A's. Adam comes up last after the class has mostly left, some students look over their shoulder as they leave.

ADAM

Mrs. Creighton?

MELISSA

Yes Adam.

(CONTINUED)

ADAM

I didn't think you had it in you.

MELISSA

I didn't either, I knew you knew what was going on, you think outside the box, others like Kathy, have to be pried out of their pretty little Christmas wrapped boxes Adam.

ADAM

Mrs. Creighton?

MELISSA.

Don't think too far outside the box, no one will be able to hear you. I appreciate your input today, you will be graded accordingly.

ADAM

I wouldn't expect anything less. Adam walks away, he gets to the door and sees MELISSA picking up the papers and putting them in her briefcase.

ADAM.

Mrs. Creighton, (she looks up), don't be afraid to tell him you love him. MELISSA smiles, Adam walks out the door.

INT, PARALEGAL CONFERENCE, ACROSS CAMPUS, MOMENTS LATER

John walks into class with a LARGE ROLLING PACK OF PAPERS. On the whiteboard reads, Law 129, John Ridgecrest. A class of young students is sitting down. A few students set case briefs on John's desk for homework.

JOHN

So in the case of Smith vs. Smith, the court touches briefly on what is called, consortium. John writes "consortium" on the whiteboard.

JOHN

And now what had happened, if you read your textbooks, as required is, (points to a student, JOHN, MALE

(CONTINUED)

JOHN

That Mr. Smith had accidentally cut off his wife's leg with a chainsaw while working in the yard. She sued for negligence and the court refused to hear the case based on the fact that spouses cannot sue each other for negligence.

JOHN

Why, what was the reasoning? Linda. John, as he talks, checks off the briefs on his desk, he looks back and forth at the students while entering grades in his book.

LINDA, FEMALE, RAISES HER HAND.

LINDA

That by allowing spouses to sue would break down the trust in a marriage, the consortium.

JOHN

Good Linda. But what is this consortium? Why is it so important to the justices reasoning? Why is it important that a marriage is more important than Tort Law? Are we to look into the reasoning and give married couples special privileges to hurt their spouses, act carelessly, and then not be held responsible for it?

LINDA

Well it would allow one spouse, before seeking divorce, to claim negligence and then sue their spouse during divorce to claim extra money from the divorce.

JOHN

Yes and no. The issue of fraud in a dissolution of marriage, or in any tort, is left to the judge who presides over the case. I want to focus on one thing here, consortium. What does that mean exactly?

3rd row, James. JAMES, MALE student.

(CONTINUED)

JAMES

It means sex.

The class giggles a little. John checks off a few more papers.

JOHN

No, not really. Consortium is defined as that special relationship a husband and wife enjoy. It may include sex, but can mostly be observed as companionship and trust.

HALEY, FEMALE 2ND ROW JOINS IN THE CONVERSATION.

HALEY

So why would Mr. Smith's negligence destroy their consortium? Wouldn't tort law be a defining law of a relationship? I mean, your husband hits you, isn't that a tort against a spouse?

JOHN

No that's battery, it's a criminal offense.

LINDA

So if my boyfriend hits me I can sue him for damages, but once I'm married if he hits me he goes to jail. I don't think that's fair.

JOHN

You don't see the reasoning, marriage is a contract protected under law, the relationship enjoyed by you and your boyfriend is not, it's not a legally binding contract. He can leave you at any time without having to go to court to end it, marriage you have to.

HALEY

So consortium is a special trust enjoyed by spouses in a marriage.

John looks down at another paper.

FLASHBACK, JOHN IN COLLEGE, 3 YEARS EARLIER.

INT, COLLEGE LIBRARY.

John looks up from his paper, it is Smith vs Smith. He reads about consortium. As he looks up he sees Melissa, standing by a large Dictionary. He walks over to her shyly.

JOHN

Hi, are you going to be here long.

MELISSA

No, just a few notes on the Etymology of some law words.

JOHN

I'm taking law.

MELISSA

What did you need to lookup?

JOHN

Consortium.

MELISSA

Oh, that's a good one.

JOHN

I guess it means love or something like that.

MELISSA

Love? No, Well kind of. Consortium is a special trust enjoyed by spouses in a marriage.

John is making notes as Melissa talks.

MELISSA

It's when you say, "Hi, how was your day", and caring. It's being able to talk freely without fear of retribution or judgment.

JOHN

Thanks. Did you have a law question?

MELISSA

Pro per.

(CONTINUED)

JOHN

It means you want to represent yourself in court without a lawyer. Do you come here to the library often?

MELISSA

Usually on Friday nights, it's quiet, I get my work done quicker without distractions. I guess I am studying pro per.

JOHN

What's your major?

MELISSA

English Lit. I want to go into teaching.

JOHN

Maybe I'll see you here next Friday, I appreciate the help.

MELISSA

You're welcome.

John looks back down at his paper and writes "Melissa". He looks back up, FLASH FORWARD.

FLASH FORWARD, INT LAW CLASS CONT'D.

JOHN

It is but it's not. Consortium is saying, "Hi honey was your day?" And caring. It's waking up and feeding your newborn at 4am after a long day at work, when your spouse is still sleeping.

LINDA

So consortium is love.

JOHN

If it is love the justice in his reasoning would have said, "Anyone in love can't sue one another." The justice here brought forward a reasoning that he felt was important. I mean, consortium has been around for 1000's of years and it takes until 1950 to actually define it's purpose in law, and in

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JOHN (cont'd)  
relationships? If this principle was so important why didn't the legislative branch pass a law in 1776 outlawing when and how spouses could sue each other?

JAMES  
Because there were no lobbyists paying off people in 1776.

The class laughs.

JOHN  
Ok class, settle down. As a judge these are the things I have to decide in court, and not only decide liable or not liable, or guilty or innocent, but I have to reason, I have to look at the issue before me and say, if I decide this, can I explain to others why I decided that way? Will I decide a case that in 20 years, young students like yourselves can sit down in a class and read and say, WOW! Great reasoning. A lot of law is not the law, it's the way it's applied. And applying the principle of consortium to a case, is, well, thinking outside the box. I want you guys to think outside the box, don't read the law, listen to the facts, as lawyers half of your cases will be decided in mediation, the other half will go to trial and never will you have more than a fifty fifty chance of winning.

HALEY  
So in the case, it seems that the couple was already living apart, but had reconciled somewhat, why didn't the wife argue there was no consortium anymore, thus leaving the husband liable for the tort of negligence? At what point does a relationship have consortium?

LINDA  
It happens from the moment you meet that special person.

JOHN

Good Linda. Maybe we should leave a little early tonight. For homework find and brief two cases that were decided in England, but incorporated into American Case Law, hint, it's probably contractual issues.

The class gets up and lines up to pick up their papers. They all have check marks.

JAMES

Mr. Ridgecrest? Why don't you grade papers like other professors?

JOHN

Because it's law that's already been decided. It's like asking you to comment on three plus two equals five.

JAMES

So as long as I do the work, I can pass the BAR.

John dazes off onto an earlier time of him and Melissa studying in the library.

FLASHBACK, LIBRARY.

John and Melissa sit at a table with piles of books, they have pizza and cokes, they are laughing and making notes. Suddenly John stares intently at Melissa as she writes.

FLASFORWARD, CURRENT TIME

JOHN

There are more important things than a piece of paper on your wall James.

JAMES

She must be very special Mr. Ridgecrest.

James takes his paper and heads to where Haley is waiting by the door. He takes her hand and gives her a peck on the cheek, John watches them leave.

INT, MELISSAS APT, 5PM.

MELISSA walks in the door, she sets her stuff down, she walks over to the door and sits down. She picks up her phone book and looks at it, then at the phone.

INT, JOHNS HOME, SAME TIME.

John walks in the door and switches on the TV. There is news about a CAR CHASE. ON TV SEVERAL COP CARS FOLLOW A WHITE TRUCK, THE ANNOUNCER TALKS.

ANNOUNCER

A high speed chase has been on the freeway for over 20 minutes now. The occupants have not yielded to police requests to stop.

The phone rings, John hits the mute button ON THE TV REMOTE. He looks at the phone, caller id says "MELISSA CREIGHTON". John picks up the phone.

JOHN

(curiously) Hello?

MELISSA

Hello, John, hi, it's Melissa.

JOHN

Hi, how have you been?

MELISSA

Fine. Just finishing up grading finals, end of another year.

JOHN

I just finished the first half of the conference. What's on your mind? I mean, thanks for calling, we haven't talked for a few months.

MELISSA

I know and I really felt bad about that. I'm sorry. Can I make it up to you, I mean, if you are seeing someone I would understand.

JOHN

You're calling me up and asking me to dinner? What did I do?

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA

You are my friend John, you always have been. Pick me up in 20 minutes, we'll go out tonight.

JOHN

OK.

John writes down her address.

JOHN

See you shortly. He hangs up and looks in the mirror.

JOHN

(to himself) Don't blow it this time dude.

John glances at the tv of the car chase, he walks out the door.

EXT, MELISSAS APT, 20 MINUTES LATER.

John pulls up and sees MELISSA standing there. John stops, MELISSA jumps in before he can turn off the car.

MELISSA

Hi, long time no see. John reaches in the back, he pulls out some pink roses.

JOHN

These are for you.

MELISSA

Thank you. I know this great Greek place down the road, we can go there.

JOHN

Yeah the Opinopolous Place, good pita bread.

John puts his hand on his shifter we cut to...

EXT GAS STATION, SEMI TRUCK TANKER, SAME TIME

A TRUCK DRIVER, MALE HEAVYSET REDNECK TYPE, grabs his shifter and lets out the clutch. He pulls out of a gas station.

(CONTINUED)

DRIVER

Dropped off 2000 gallons,  
proceeding to stop number two.

DISPATCH

10-4 truck 227.

EXT CITY STREET, JOHNS CAR. INT JOHNS CAR, CONTD.

JOHN

I thought you might have tossed my  
number in the trash. Thanks for  
calling.

MELISSA

I just always kept it in my  
book You really went to the top in  
your field John.

JOHN

Yes, professionally everything kind  
of fell into place. I never really  
had distractions.

MELISSA

Like a wife and kids.

JOHN

I wouldn't call having a family a  
distraction.

John stops at a red light, behind him in the distant we see  
RED AND BLUE LIGHTS FLASHING.

MELISSA

That's what I was thinking about  
today John. I walked into my class  
and I just kind of fell off my  
ship. I mean I thought my ship was  
sailing and I looked around and had  
no friends on board really. I have  
students who throw me a birthday  
party once a year, I get gifts at  
Christmas, but just from students.

In the rear view mirror the red and blue lights get closer,  
up the street the SEMI TRUCK TANKER GETS NEARER THE  
INTERSECTION.

John looks down at MELISSA's hand, and at her lips as she  
speaks, she continues talking but we can't hear anything  
except the radio and his heart pounding. He looks at his  
hand, then her hand, then back at her lips.

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA

I guess what I'm saying is, life has turned out good for both of us, but maybe if there was a way to turn back time I would have done some things differently.

JOHN

Melissa, I just want to go forward in life, with you, you're my friend and nothing would ever change that, there's something I want to tell you.

MELISSA

I think now is a good time to tell me.

John looks at her, he reaches towards her to kiss her. As he does, the white truck in the car chase swerves around a parked car and into John and Melissa. The truck pushes them into the intersection into the path of the oncoming semi-truck. The semi-truck skids and flips onto it's side, ramming John's car into the light pole. We see the police helicopter in the sky hover above the accident.

INT JOHN'S APT, SAME TIME.

The camera pulls back we are in John's apartment, the "MUTE" sign is still on the TV. We see ambulances arrive. Police violently pull the two felons out of the white truck, all of a sudden the trucks fuel tanks burst into flames, taking John's car into the explosion with it. As the camera pulls back further into John's apartment we see the picture of them holding hands at graduation, other pictures and memento's like a shrine lie by the picture.

Then we see the bottom of the "FOOTSTEPS" PICTURE. We stare at it for a moment. The camera tilts up revealing footsteps where there were none before. We see John standing there in LIGHT SUMMER CLOTHES. He pauses for a second, then smiles. Melissa walks into the frame, she reaches over and kisses John on the cheek. They hold hands and walk towards the sun at the end of the beach. The camera pans down and we see only John's footsteps, and the sounds of the ocean waves breaking on the sand.

FADE OUT.

THE END.