

THE TRIAL

Written by

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INT. CHURCH - DAY

A bright modern church, filled with well-dressed parishioners. An organ is finishing its last few notes.

REVEREND HENRY JACOBS steps up to the podium;, early 50's, and distinguished. A glass of water is nearby.

As he sorts his notes out, the sea of faces uniformly reflect curiosity and concern.

HENRY

Good morning everyone. It's good to be back. I'd like to first thank everyone who ... who helped out during ... and ... let's get started.

Henry puts on a pair of reading glasses and hurriedly glances at his papers.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Could you all turn ... to ...

Henry fumbles, his the side of the podium and knocks the glass of water onto his notes. He frantically tries to stem the damage -

- everyone wonders what's going on, what to do -

Henry's hands stop; they're trembling.

Henry looks up, eyes red, clearly on the verge of cracking.

KEITH, a parishioner in the front row, gets up and approaches Henry, the murmuring of the crowd starting to grow in volume.

KEITH

Are you -

HENRY

I'm fine.

He's not.

KEITH

You don't -

Henry's expression is now dark and foreboding.

HENRY (INTERRUPTING)

I'm. Fine.

Keith backs up, sits down quickly.

Henry composes himself, steel now in his spine. He removes and pockets his glasses.

HENRY (CONT'D)

There is a distinct and definite warning for us, for you, for me! What waits for us depends entirely on our actions here on this Earth!

There is a new expression on the congregations faces; concern and a hint of fear.

HENRY (CONT'D)

"The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked!"

The congregation is becoming more and more agitated by this new direction.

HENRY (CONT'D)

This is cannot be stated any more clearly! You will be tested on your sins! Before you rise or fall; You. Will. Be. Judged!

INT. CORONER'S COURTROOM - DAY

Henry is seated in the middle of a half-full room.

The Coroner is reading from a prepared statement.

CORONER

... and the lack of material evidence to support that Alex Cobb was indeed negligent while driving. Also the fact that his past record had no significant driving offences is no proof of his actions on the night of the 12th. Therefore this court will record a verdict of accidental death.

Henry doesn't react.

A middle-aged couple near the front are relieved, the woman wanly smiling.

Henry abruptly gets up, walks towards the exit.

CORONER (CONT'D)

I also offer my regrets for these deaths, and any other death on the road, and hope this offers some form of closure to all parties involved.

The Coroner gets up, everyone rising, the court emptying.

A hand clasps Henry's shoulder -

- belonging to TIM, late forties, florid face and stocky build, his wife Helen alongside; the middle-aged couple have gotten up, and approached Henry.

TIM

Reverend?

HENRY

Go away.

HELEN

Our son died as well.

TIM

Come on Helen.

HENRY

That's the only justice I've heard here today.

Helen's eyes flare up, then crumple, as Henry stalks out.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Henry is standing near a concrete divider on a highway.

Several bouquets of flowers are wedged in between the concrete, along with photos taped nearby.

Henry runs his finger along the edge of a photo, of a bright, smiling girl.

Less prominent is photos, two or three at the most, of a young sallow-looking man.

Henry tears the photo of the man away, crumpling it up -  
- and dropping it near fragments on glass on the bitumen.

KEITH (O.S.)

Shouldn't litter.

Henry turns around, to see Keith, in a Senior Sergeant's uniform, getting out of his car.

HENRY  
Call it therapy.

Keith has approached Henry.

KEITH  
Wasn't his fault. Alex didn't do it.

HENRY  
The coroner failed to prove Alex killed her.

KEITH  
Means there wasn't anything to find. It was one of those things. You know. Act of ... Chance. Fate.

HENRY  
He'd been drinking.

KEITH  
Blood well below. Half a beer, tops.

HENRY  
And what was someone like Alex doing at that party anyway?

KEITH  
What d'you mean...?

HENRY  
Alex was always ... suspicious. Suspect. Sniffing around her. And he had a criminal record.

KEITH  
Yeah. Nicking a Spider-Man comic in 1993. Bloody public menace.

HENRY  
You're not taking this seriously.

KEITH  
And what you're doing isn't healthy. Do you think Rachel would want -

HENRY  
Don't bring her into this -

KEITH  
You've brought her in already. So you don't believe he's innocent.  
(MORE)

KEITH (CONT'D)

Tell me what's the point in blaming a dead man for something that every expert on the case said was completely out of his control?

HENRY

For putting my daughter in the passenger seat.

Henry walks away. Keith doesn't turn his head.

EXT. SHOP/STREET - DAY

Henry steps out of a supermarket, plastic bag in hand. He glances at the sky, across the street -

- where a group of men in suits are escorting someone in the centre of their group.

Henry frowns, examining them because -

- the escorted, in manacles, looks like ALEX.

Henry's eyes widen in shock: It Is Alex.

HENRY

STOP!

Henry is ignored as Alex is manhandled into an adjacent storefront.

Henry charges across the street. Horns blare as HENRY reaches the store, opens the door -

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

- and finds himself within a wood-panelled corridor. He turns around, examining his surroundings, while moving forward -

The doors he's entered SLAM SHUT behind him.

Henry whirls, trying in vain to open them, he can't budge them an inch as the realisation he's trapped takes hold.

Indistinct SOUNDS behind him -

- make him look towards the end, where shapes are moving within an open passageway.

Henry clutches his shopping bag as he carefully walks forward, tentatively looking thorough -

INTO A LARGE COURTROOM.

It's size accentuates the few people within, some people near the Prosecutor's table, some near the Defendants.

Henry peers at the Defendant's table -

- and a hand touches Henry's shoulder, making his whirl around in shock -

- towards a BAILIFF, thirties, built like the proverbial outhouse.

BAILIFF

Your briefs.

The Bailiff produces a series of cardboard manila folders, filled with files.

HENRY

I - I beg your -

BAILIFF

You're required to be properly prepared before we begin, Reverend Jacobs.

The Bailiff takes Henry's shopping bag, and walks away, towards the Defendant's table.

Henry, thoroughly confused, follows the Bailiff until -

- he sees Alex, being released from his chains by another bailiff, seated at the defendants table. Someone in a suit is seated at the Prosecutor's table, his back to Henry.

Confusion momentarily forgotten by the sight of his recent ire, Henry marches up to Alex, in touching distance -

PROSECUTOR

You're late.

Henry gets his first good look at the PROSECUTOR; forties, slicked back black hair with a widow's peak, goatee. The Prosecutor gives a tight-lipped smile.

HENRY (COLDLY)

Someone tell me just what is going on here.

The Prosecutor smiles, casually sitting on the table next to the terrified Alex, as Henry scans the Court.

PROSECUTOR

You're not insane. Young Alex is dead. When certain souls have seen to have ...

(MORE)

PROSECUTOR (CONT'D)  
lost their way, a Trial can be  
held. Every accused must mount a  
defence.

The Prosecutor avuncularly pats Alex's shoulder, causing Alex  
to flinch.

PROSECUTOR (CONT'D)  
Does that answer all the obvious  
questions?

TRIBUNAL #1 (O.S.)  
This court is now in session.

Henry turns. Three people, androgynous, in suits, are  
presiding over the court, all sporting cold gazes.

Henry approaches the bench.

HENRY  
Your ... Your honours, I shouldn't  
be -

TRIBUNAL #2  
We shall hear your case.

HENRY  
There's a ... Look, I can't ...  
What if I refuse to ... do this?

TRIBUNAL #3  
Nothing.

The Bailiff, at the right of the room, opens a door.

Henry moves to look at -

- an exact replica of the Courtroom on the other side.

In this mirror image, a thick coat of dust and cobwebs is  
everywhere. The reproduction of the Tribunal is in the exact  
same place, still silently observing the courtroom before  
them, while coated in dust and covered in sheets of cobwebs.

Alex is there, similarly covered.

So is Henry, but he is ancient, a hundred if he's a day.

What little hair he has is white, with parchment-thin skin  
and liverspots. He looks completely unaware of anything  
around him, a living zombie.

The mirror-Prosecutor is wearing less dust and cobwebs,  
because his feet are propped up on the desk, and he's reading  
a newspaper. He notices the real Henry, and taps his watch.

TRIBUNAL #1  
Ever.

The threat hangs in the air, the Tribunal regarding HENRY like a specimen on a slide.

Henry turns, slowly returning to his table, where his shopping has been deposited. The Prosecutor, leaning against his table, gives Henry an unpleasant smile along with an up-and-down glance.

PROSECUTOR

I was glad they picked you. Back home, we enjoy a piece of fresh meat.

The Prosecutor casually slides into his chair while HENRY sits, not looking at Alex.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM

A stark empty room save for two chairs and a table. A door opens to admit Henry and Alex inside. The door closes, and Alex turns towards HENRY

ALEX

Reverend Jacobs? What's going on here ...

Henry shoves Alex, knocking him backwards into a seat.

HENRY

Watch your step.

ALEX

WHAT ARE YOU

HENRY

SHUT UP!

This roar has the desired effect. Henry inhales, steeling himself.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Do you know what is going on.

ALEX

They - they say I'm dead.

HENRY

I believe them.

ALEX

Is Rachel okay?

Henry's eye twitches.

HENRY

She is not okay.

ALEX

Oh God.

HENRY

She's definitely not okay. In fact, I had to take a DNA test to help identify her body because facial and dental identification was impossible when your BLOODY DOOF DOOF RADIO WAS PUNCHED RIGHT THROUGH HER HEAD!

ALEX

My Pioneer did that?

Henry clutches the table, then with the slow deliberation of someone controlling themselves, leans over Alex.

HENRY

You're in a lot of trouble, Alex. In fact it's the worst kind of trouble anyone or anything could ever find themselves in. If you want to get out of this trouble you have to convince me that you didn't kill Rachel, because if you can't convince me you certainly won't convince them outside.

ALEX

I swear, I didn't kill anyone.

HENRY

I didn't say tell me, I said convince me! Give me a good reason why a young man, on a clear night, with no traffic on the road, manages to hit a concrete divider head on killing himself and his passenger for any other reason than his own complete negligence!

ALEX

I - I don't know.

HENRY

You've got to do better than that.

ALEX

Okay, okay - I was driving Rachel home -

HENRY

The main road goes away from our house.

ALEX

It's real quiet at that time of night, okay? I was driving her home when -

HENRY

Why were you driving her in the first place?

ALEX

She had a fight with Dave? You know, the -

HENRY

I know who her boyfriend is.

ALEX

I - at the intersection leading off to the ring road, the light was turning yellow, I tried to beat the light -

HENRY

You were speeding.

ALEX

I kept in the limit, okay? Just - look, I was checking to see if any traffic was going through when -

HENRY

Tell me.

ALEX

I don't know. The whole car turned left and - the next thing, a couple of guys are walking me through the street and I'm here.

Henry moves back slightly, expressionless.

ALEX (CONT'D)

That's what happened.

Henry is unresponsive.

INT. COURT

PROSECUTOR

Alex Cobb was possibly one of the most extraordinary examples of the shallow end of the gene pool. A minor miracle he passed High School, he was destined to repeat 'do you want fries with that' until the end of his days.

(MORE)

PROSECUTOR (CONT'D)

His death due to a car crash was no surprise to anyone. What brought this demise to this court was the death of his passenger, Rachel Anne Jacobs.

Alex looks at Henry, who is presenting his best poker face.

PROSECUTOR (CONT'D)

She helped the defendant in high school in his education and his mediocre social life, spoke out in his defence during a lifetime of petty brushes with the law. You would think that would earn a measure of respect. A certain amount of care while driving with her in the passenger seat. Your Honours, we will prove to this court that Alex Cobbs' complete ineptitude and chronic incompetence was the sole factor in Rachel's death.

The Prosecutor nods to the bench, then walks towards his chair.

PROSECUTOR (WHISPERING) (CONT'D)

Good luck.

Henry slowly stands, walks away from Alex.

HENRY

Your Honours. Alex - Alex did not kill anyone. It's been proven by forensic ... Forensic people ...

PROSECUTOR

Technicians.

HENRY

Forensic technicians and investigators that Alex didn't kill ... didn't kill. There is no evidence to single out Alex for trial, and quite frankly, unjust. And to use minor infractions with the law on an otherwise unremarkable driving record is ... wrong. Thank you.

The Tribunal look at each other

TRIBUNAL #1

Is that it?

HENRY

Yes.

TRIBUNAL #1  
The Prosecution will open.

Henry hurriedly sits down.

ALEX  
Was that all?

HENRY  
Shut up.

ALEX  
What now?

HENRY  
They call witnesses.

ALEX  
Who?

Henry opens a book, examining the text.

HENRY  
Anyone they want. You can summon anyone to the court to give testimony, alive or dead. Can't lie, they won't even remember.

PROSECUTOR  
Just don't call up Lennon or Elvis.

The Prosecutor stands.

ALEX  
What about Bon Scott?

PROSECUTOR  
I call Senior Sergeant Keith Miller to the stand.

The doors behind open, and Keith marches in, in his best suit  
-

- right past Henry, without a flicker of emotion or recognition.

Henry watches Keith sit down, the policemen's face expressionless. The Prosecutor strolls up.

PROSECUTOR (CONT'D)  
Please state your name and occupation.

KEITH  
Senior Sergeant Keith Miller of the Victorian Police.

PROSECUTOR

What was your role in the accident investigation?

KEITH

I'm the senior sergeant of the police station nearest the crash scene. I supervised the securing of the crime scene, COORDINATED the uniformed division who doorknocked gathering information about the suspect and the victim, I liaised with both the detectives in Homicide investigating the incident and the forensic technicians who went over the area.

PROSECUTOR

You sound like you're the best person to talk to about the incident.

KEITH

I was also a friend of the family.

PROSECUTOR

Was?

KEITH

Reverend Jacobs is a little stressed at the moment.

Henry's face is made of stone.

PROSECUTOR

Say no more. Can you sum up the findings of the policemen under your command, and the other departments you were in close contact with?

KEITH

The evidence was inconclusive. Heavy rains on the night after the accident wiped a lot of evidence away before the forensic boys could get to it properly.

PROSECUTOR

But these are experienced technicians. Surely they must have had an informal opinion concerning Mr. Cobbs' innocence in this matter ... ?

KEITH

Nothing that they'd want to put down on paper.

The Prosecutor looks around, flashing Henry a smile before turning back to the Tribunal.

PROSECUTOR  
No further questions.

TRIBUNAL #1  
Your witness.

The Prosecutor goes back to his table as Henry slowly gets himself up, and approaches -

- Keith, who is waiting patiently.

Henry waves his hand in front of Keith, who doesn't react at all, a contemplative statue.

TRIBUNAL #2  
Would the defence kindly start?

Henry, startled, clears his throat.

HENRY  
Keith ... Sergeant Miller. You stated that the results were unclear. Inconclusive.

KEITH  
That's right. Lack of evidence couldn't allow a proper admissible conclusion from the forensics team. There were also no witnesses or video footage to support either deliberate actions on Alex Cobbs' part or careless driving.

HENRY  
And there wasn't any other indication - that can be proven in a court, in any court of law - that Alex was indeed engaged in dangerous driving on the night of the accident?

KEITH  
You had me looking long enough.

HENRY  
Yes. Thank you.

Henry turns, and sits down.

TRIBUNAL #3  
Are you finished?

HENRY  
Yes.

TRIBUNAL #1  
 You will adhere to court  
 procedures. Sergeant Miller, you  
 are free to leave.

Keith stands, and walks past, barely a glimmer of recognition  
 on his features. The Prosecutor stands up behind his table.

ALEX  
 Haven't you seen any court shows?

PROSECUTOR  
 The Prosecution calls Mr. Tim Cobbs  
 to the stand.

Alex turns to the outer doors.

ALEX  
 Dad?

Tim Cobbs, late forties, florid face and stocky build,  
 marches past the defence.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
 Dad? Dad! It's me!

PROSECUTOR  
 This isn't helping your case.

Alex shuts up, Henry is glancing between Alex and the  
 Tribunal.

The Prosecutor approaches while Tim is settling himself in  
 the chair.

PROSECUTOR (CONT'D)  
 You're young Alex's father,  
 correct?

TIM  
 Yes.

PROSECUTOR  
 Would he kill a young woman?

Alex's head snaps towards a cold, impassive Henry.

TIM  
 Not that I know of.

PROSECUTOR  
 That's rather ambiguous. Does that  
 mean he's displayed ... angry,  
 violent tendencies?

TIM  
 I think it's called 'passive  
 aggressive'.  
 (MORE)

TIM (CONT'D)

Bit of a whiner actually, never won a fight in school. Bloody embarrassment, even when he's dead. At least I've got a good excuse not to go to church anymore.

Alex violently elbows a surprised Henry.

ALEX (HISSING)

Object! You're supposed to object!

PROSECUTOR

So it would be entirely within the realms of possibility that your son might take any real or imagined insults, and sublimate them into erratic and aggressive actions such as body language ... and less-than-careful driving?

TIM

Yeah, that sounds right.

PROSECUTOR

Thank you Mr. Cobbs, no further questions.

The Prosecutor sits down as Henry approaches Tim.

HENRY

Mr. Cobbs.

TIM

Reverend.

HENRY

Good to know Sundays are free for you now.

TIM

Wife isn't too happy though.

HENRY

Just tell me, what could you have used those Sunday mornings for?

TIM

Sleeping in ... Mowing the lawn ... Some extra time to set up the barby ...

HENRY

Driving lessons.

TIM

I don't understand.

HENRY

You could have spent a little more time with your son teaching him how to drive.

The Tribunal start to watch Henry with more interest.

TIM

His mum did that.

HENRY

I know. If you'd spent more time actually making sure he was fit to go behind the wheel, he might not have been in that accident!

TIM

Never occurred to me.

The Prosecutor hides a smile behind his hand

HENRY

At all? Didn't you once look back, going over your own actions in the past, no matter how far back, and say 'maybe if I said yes then, or no then, I wouldn't be here looking at my child's dead body now'!

PROSECUTOR

Your honours, I don't quite see how this is applicable to the case.

TRIBUNAL #1

This line of questioning is not relevant.

HENRY

No further questions.

Henry stalks off towards his chair. Alex is flabbergasted at what just happened.

ALEX

What was all that about!

HENRY

Your father's an idiot.

ALEX

I'm going to lose. I'm going to lose if you don't get your act -

Alex stops at Henry's fierce expression.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Oh God ...

HENRY  
He has his doubts.

ALEX  
I didn't kill her.

PROSECUTOR (O.S.)  
The Prosecution calls Emmett  
Thompson to the stand.

A late thirties, skinny man is seated at the stand.

PROSECUTOR (CONT'D)  
You were the supervisor of the  
forensic team that worked on the  
car crash site, correct?

THOMPSON  
Yes, I co-ordinated the technicians  
on site, collated the data and  
presented the original report to  
the detectives in charge and the  
coroner.

PROSECUTOR  
Your final outcome was that there  
was too little evidence to make a  
judgement to support either guilt  
or innocence.

THOMPSON  
About four minutes after the crash,  
a heavy rain front soaked the area  
pretty good. Washed the area clean  
of most admissible evidence.

PROSECUTOR  
Although there wasn't any  
admissible forensic evidence, you  
must have reached some form of  
informal conclusion based on your  
work.

THOMPSON  
Well, when we first started, I  
found it odd that the car hit that  
divider more-or-less head on. I  
worked backwards from that, and  
found that there wasn't any skid  
marks created before the driver hit  
the divider. That means he hit the  
concrete without braking.

Henry frowns, concentrating, intent on Thompson's words.

PROSECUTOR  
But you couldn't find evidence to  
support that theory.

THOMPSON

Not admissible in a court of law,  
no.

PROSECUTOR

No further questions, your honours.

Henry cautiously approaches.

HENRY

You ... you stated that ... You  
found it odd that the car hit a  
concrete divider in that fashion.

THOMPSON

You either brake, or you swerve.  
Either the driver was too stupid to  
get out the way or he was suicidal.

HENRY

And then you worked on that basis.

THOMPSON

We examined the wreckage and the  
area based on the position of the  
vehicle and surrounding -

HENRY

I believe you said you worked  
backwards from the car's unusual  
position from where it crashed.

THOMPSON

That's correct.

HENRY

So basically, you used the forensic  
team to justify a supposition,  
rather than examining the whole  
area.

THOMPSON

We were working in the dark, in the  
rain, and evidence was being washed  
away. I had to prioritise tasks and  
manage my team.

HENRY

Would your forming an opinion and  
trying to find evidence to support  
it, rather than forming an opinion  
from all gathered data, skew your  
viewpoint? Make you ... look for  
things that weren't there to  
support your predetermined  
concepts?

THOMPSON  
That is a possibility.

Henry nods, satisfied.

HENRY  
No further questions.

Henry walks back to his table, the Prosecutor watching with an arched eyebrow.

Alex grins, a slight glimmer of hope in his features. Henry looks slightly stunned.

TRIBUNAL #1  
Has the Prosecution concluded?

PROSECUTOR  
For now.

TRIBUNAL #2  
The Defence will present their case.

Henry stands, gathering strength.

HENRY  
The Defence calls Judy West.

A woman in her late forties approaches and sits in the witness stand, as Henry approaches.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
You were hosting the party on the night of the accident?

JUDY  
That's correct. My Damien was having his nineteenth.

Henry sidesteps, extending his arm to Alex.

HENRY  
Did you see this man at the party?

JUDY  
Yes, that's Alex. The boy who died.

HENRY  
Was his behaviour beforehand unusual? Enraged? Did he do or was about to do anything abnormal?

JUDY  
Oh no. Nothing like that. Sort of ... stayed in the back.

HENRY

Did he drink? Or take anything stronger?

PROSECUTOR

Objection. We've already determined Mr. Cobbs was not under any form of intoxication; he's clearly trying to draw this out.

HENRY

I'm trying to determine Alex's actions immediately before the accident.

The Tribunals look at each other momentarily, then draw apart.

TRIBUNAL #1

Overruled. Continue.

JUDY

Not that I could tell.

HENRY

Thank you. Your witness.

Henry sits down. The Prosecutor slowly stands up.

PROSECUTOR

No questions.

As Judy leaves, Henry frowns-

- observing the Prosecutor check his watch.

Later - a man is seated at the stand

WITNESS #1

... he's never done anything dangerous on the road.

HENRY

When you heard about the accident, what was your first reaction?

WITNESS #1

Stunned. I mean, I kept on asking if they got it right ...

Later - a woman at the stand

WITNESS #2

When he was at my driving school, he was very careful.

(MORE)

WITNESS #2 (CONT'D)

Not like those teens you get these days, years spent playing 'Grand Theft Auto' before getting behind a wheel for the first time.

Later - an elderly man at the stand.

WITNESS #3

And he always had time for me, when his family visited. Until I passed on, of course.

Later - a woman in her forties.

WITNESS #4

He would have never, ever placed anyone in that kind of situation. No scrapes, no bingles, always taking care. Ater all, his father wouldn't put an extra name on the insurance. But it wouldn't cost that much, would it.

HENRY

No, it doesn't. One last question. If you could say one last thing to Alex, what would you say?

WITNESS #4

I love you Alex.

Alex smiles.

WITNESS #4 (CONT'D)

... but could you at least have cleaned your room up before?

The Prosecutor stands.

PROSECUTOR

No questions.

TRIBUNAL #1

You are free to go.

PROSECUTOR

I'd like to request a recess.

TRIBUNAL #1

Approved. You have thirty minutes.

CORRIDOR

A dull, wood panelled corridor. Alex and Henry sit on thin metal chairs.

HENRY

I never thought they'd allow twenty-three character witnesses.

ALEX

They did.

HENRY

Thought he'd at least try and stop it.

ALEX

Looks like he couldn't.

HENRY

It's his job to at least try.

ALEX

You're like that guy in every movie who says, 'nothing can possibly go wrong'.

HENRY

I thought I was saying 'something should be going wrong, but it's going suspiciously smoothly'.

ALEX

Whatever, you're ... trying to jinx it.

HENRY

Am I?

ALEX

No ... no you're not.

HENRY

No.

The pair sit, not looking at each other.

ALEX

Think we'll win?

HENRY

Now you're jinxing it.

ALEX

I think we're going to win.

HENRY

I hope so.

ALEX

You're not mad?

HENRY

I think ... I think I'm not ...  
maintaining an exclusive focus on a  
particular point in time.

ALEX

If I win - do you want me to tell  
her anything?

HENRY

I - you know, you hope that you've  
told those people in your life  
everything that needs to be said.  
Because when I first got the phone  
call on that night, I could only  
recall the last words I ever said  
to Rachel.

ALEX

What's that?

HENRY

"I'll record Home and Away. I  
promise."

COURT

Henry and Alex sit down in their chairs, the Prosecutor and  
the Tribunal patiently waiting.

TRIBUNAL #1

Has the Defence concluded?

Henry looks at Alex, then at the Tribunal.

The Bailiff approaches the Prosecutor, handing him a note.

HENRY

The Defence rests.

The Prosecutor stands.

PROSECUTOR

Your Honours. A witness for the  
Prosecution has yet to take the  
stand.

The Tribunal looks at each other.

Along with the mystified expressions of Henry and Alex.

TRIBUNAL #2

This is highly irregular.

PROSECUTOR

But warranted.

ALEX  
He was stalling?

TRIBUNAL #3  
You have already presented your case.

HENRY  
No wonder he let us have all our witnesses.

PROSECUTOR  
Your Honours, this witness has only cleared her own Trial, and is only free right this minute to take the stand. Judgement cannot be carried out without her testimony.

The Tribunal move closer together, as in conference, but their lips and faces do not move. They break apart.

TRIBUNAL #1  
We shall allow this.

The Prosecutor flashes Henry a grin before facing the Tribunal.

PROSECUTOR  
I call Rachel Anne Jacobs to the stand.

Alex and Henry turn in their seats to see -

- Rachel, walking past them, in the same busy, unseeing way as every other witness.

Henry lunges, furious, his nose an inch away from the smiling features of the Prosecutor.

HENRY  
Why would my daughter be under trial?

PROSECUTOR  
Someone raised a point. Turned out to be unwarranted, she was cleared.

HENRY  
Turned out she was kept in trial long enough for you to place a last minute witness?

PROSECUTOR  
You're incredibly suspicious, Reverend.

## TRIBUNAL #1

Do not prevent the Prosecution from fulfilling his duty.

The Prosecution rounds the table, towards Rachel.

Henry is stunned, incapable of anything but staring.

## PROSECUTOR

Rachel Jacobs. In your own words, tell us what happened at the night of the accident.

## RACHEL

Dave and I got into a fight. A big one. That was when Alex offered to take me back home. Dave said something like he was waiting to jump on me as soon as his back was turned or something ... I really didn't think about it until I noticed we weren't going home the way I normally did. Alex said this way was quicker at this time of night but we kept on going faster and faster, and I kept on thinking of what Dave said, so I asked Alex to slow down and stop. I tried to stop him but - then I woke up in the courtroom.

Alex is staring at Rachel, confused. Henry is dumbfounded.

## PROSECUTOR

No further questions.

The Prosecutor leans closer to Henry.

## PROSECUTOR (CONT'D)

Your witness.

The Prosecutor sits.

Henry slowly gets up, but simply looks at -  
- the unresponsive Rachel.

## TRIBUNAL #1

Do you wish to continue?

Henry looks at Alex -

- then walks towards Rachel.

## HENRY

Hello Rachel.

Rachel doesn't respond.

HENRY (CONT'D)

On ... when Alex was going ... how much faster was Alex going?

RACHEL

Past 60, approaching 80.

HENRY

On the highway. Within the speed limit.

RACHEL

Yes.

HENRY

I understand you were angry. Frightened. Confused. But you have to tell me; what did you mean when you tried to get Alex to stop?

RACHEL

When we approached the big intersection - we wouldn't listen, so I grabbed his hands, trying to get him to stop.

HENRY

His hands on the wheel.

RACHEL

Yes.

HENRY

You were in the front passenger seat.

RACHEL

Yes.

HENRY

You grabbed hold of his hands. Your weight - you pulled his hands precisely when he was turned away from you, seeing if there was any oncoming traffic, didn't you?

RACHEL

I might have.

HENRY

You pulled his hands, and the wheel to the left before he knew something was happening, that's how you plowed into the divider, didn't you?

Rachel is silent.

RACHEL  
I can't remember.

HENRY  
I'm afraid so. That's why the car  
radio was in your head; you were  
leaning over to grab his arms.

Henry looks away, then to the Tribunal.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
No further questions.

Henry walks over to his table. By the time he looks up,  
Rachel has gone from the stand.

The Tribunal have leaned in together, and are wordlessly  
debating. They move apart, impassive.

TRIBUNAL #1  
We have deliberated.

TRIBUNAL #2  
We find in favour of the defence.

TRIBUNAL #3  
Alex Cobbs is free.

Alex grins, as the Bailiff releases Alex.

ALEX  
Reverend, I -

HENRY  
Just don't blame Rachel. Please.

ALEX  
Do you?

HENRY  
Can you?

Alex shakes his head.

The Bailiff leads Alex out of the courtroom, towards the door  
Henry arrived in earlier. Henry watches Alex being escorted  
out of the doorway, vanishing from view as soon as the  
doorway closes.

TRIBUNAL #1  
The Defendant can leave.

Henry turns; what?

TRIBUNAL #1 (CONT'D)  
You may leave, Reverend Jacobs.

Henry looks at the Prosecutor, confused.

PROSECUTOR  
 Come on, do you think we'd go to  
 all this for someone like Alex  
 Cobbs?

Henry turns around, looking for the Tribunal; they've  
 disappeared.

HENRY  
 Wh ... why ...

PROSECUTOR  
 This was a Trial. In the purest  
 sense, before Justice was walled up  
 in a courtroom and lawyers and  
 expert witnesses. When it was fun.

HENRY  
 Why would they ...

PROSECUTOR  
 Those creatures judging you have  
 been around since the beginning of  
 creation, with only the purest of  
 souls for company. Of course  
 they're complete bastards.

The Prosecutor stands up, stretches.

PROSECUTOR (CONT'D)  
 See you later.

HENRY  
 Much later.

Henry squares his shoulders, walks out of the courtroom.

PROSECUTOR  
 I'm supposed to warn you to behave.

HENRY  
 I assume, for you, that's a  
 conflict of interest.

Henry walks towards the doors, pushing them open -

EXT. SHOP/STREET - DAY

- into the street where he started. Henry stares in amazement  
 -

- as someone from the supermarket runs across the street,  
 navigating around the traffic.

PARISHIONER  
 Reverend! Reverend Jacobs! What  
 happened? Are you alright?

HENRY

I'm ... yes, I'm ...

PARISHIONER

Did you see something? You went across the street like a bull at a gate! Was there ...

HENRY

Nothing, nothing's wrong.

EXT. FUNERAL - DAY

Henry is standing at a grave, pallbearers are lowering a coffin into a grave -

- the headstone belonging to one Alex Cobbs.

HENRY

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee:  
be not dismayed; for I am thy God:  
I will strengthen thee; yea, I will  
help thee; yea, I will uphold thee  
with the right hand of my  
righteousness. . . . For I, the  
Lord, thy God will hold thy right  
hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I  
will help thee."

Henry looks over a crowd of more optimistic parishioners than before.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Amen.

FIN.