

A CONFLICT OF INTEREST

An Original Screenplay

By:

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INT. BEDROOM - DAY

An alarm clock reading "8:30 A.M." begins to buzz. Beside the alarm clock is a law school case book, family picture with girlfriend and a partially spent can of beer. A male hand appears, fumbles around searching out alarm clock and shuts off buzzer.

The male hand is sprawled and resting on the table top. The man moans as his hand it knocks over the picture and beer can, spilling the remainder of the beer all over the dresser and floor.

EXT. LAW SCHOOL CAMPUS - DAY

The outside of the stately law school main building is alive with students. A sign out front reads: "HASTINGS LAW SCHOOL." Some students pass by and and enter the building.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

A man puts on a T shirt over his head and, when it extends over the chest, it reads: "LAWYERS DO IT BETTER IN THEIR BRIEFS".

INT. LAW SCHOOL BUILDING - ENTRANCE TO CLASSROOM

The plaque next to classroom doorway reads: "ETHICS CLASS - PROFESSOR ABEL".

INT. LAW CLASSROOM - MORNING

Law school graduating seniors are slowly beginning to enter the classroom and take up their assigned seats. Soon the class fills to capacity, although one seat remains conspicuously empty.

Two male students, YALE GRANO and EARL BOYER are seated in class with an empty seat between them.

YALE

If A.J. Is late again, Professor
Abel is gonna... Suddenly,
classroom goes dead silent;
everybody becomes studious and
postures straighten.

(CONTINUED)

PROFESSOR ABEL walks into the classroom and makes his way down the aisle to the podium. He is a "John Houseman" type and is carrying some lecture materials. As he passes, he notices the empty chair seat out of the corner of his eye.

He arrives at the podium and takes out from his pocket a pair of granny glasses which he puts on and utilizes, from time to time, when referring to his notes.

PROFESSOR ABEL

Good morning, class. I would like to direct your attention the Shakespearean play Henry IV, specifically Act IV, Scene II, wherein Dick, the first butcher, says to Jack Cade, the rebel, "The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers". This scenario was written in the year 1590. What it tells us is that public contempt for members of the legal bar, the ranks of which you will soon fill, is as old as the profession itself. The question for today's class, however, is "Why?"

EXT. LAW SCHOOL CAMPUS -- DAY

A disheveled, male student A.J. BARASH walks to class. He is wearing the same T-shirt "LAWYERS DO IT BETTER IN THEIR BRIEFS" along with a corduroy sport coat and jeans. He spots a younger novice-looking first year law student, STEVE, heading in a different direction. A.J. Turns to follow Steve and quickens his pace to catch up to him. A.J. Is carrying two small outlines. He intercepts Steve and they continue walking together.

A.J.

Hi Steve, how's first year law school treating you?

STEVE

Okay, I guess. I'm surviving.

A.J.

Hey, you can do better than that. Listen, have you bought any outlines of first year class lectures?

Steve shakes his head no.

(CONTINUED)

A.J. (CONT'D)

Well, what the hell are you waiting for... First year exams are about to start.

STEVE

I studied real hard... and besides I don't need any short cuts.

A.J.

Take it from somebody who's been there; the key to making it through your first year at Hastings Law is getting your hands on a good outline. You see this...

A.J. shows him the outlines in his hand.

A.J. (CONT.)

Contracts and property, guaranteed A's. I never missed a class and I take copious notes. So what do you say, fifty bucks a piece or seventy-five for the set and they're yours.

STEVE

(skeptical) Yeah, but what were your grades?

A.J.

Hey, I landed a job with Hamilton, Miller, Hudson and Damian, didn't I?

A.J. winks. Steve takes out money and A.J. exchanges for both outlines. A.J. looks at watch.

A.J. (CONT'D)

Jesus, I'm late.

A.J. bolts in the other direction

INT. LAW CLASSROOM -DAY

Professor Abel is briefly glancing at materials on podium and addressing the class.

PROFESSOR ABEL

Inasmuch as this is your last day of law school before graduation, I feel it is my duty to review the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PROFESSOR ABEL (cont'd)
Code of Ethics before you are
turned loose on the unsuspecting
public. Sections 7 and 8 of the
Code demand that a lawyer be...

Professor Abel turns to blackboard behind him and begins to write with his back to the class: "ZEALOUS..."

Behind the professor A.J. quietly and inconspicuously moves across the room to his seat as to escape notice by Professor.

He takes a couple of pieces of legal paper for note taking from Earl because he has none. This causes an almost inaudible TEARING sound as he does it softly and carefully.

Professor Babel continues to write on the board without a flinch.

PROFESSOR ABEL (CONT'D)
So glad you could join us today,
Mr. Barash.

Professor Abel finishes writing: "ZEALOUS BUT NOT OVER-ZEALOUS" and he turns to class.

PROFESSOR ABEL (CONT'D)
A lawyer representing his or her
client must be zealous...
(glancing to A.J.) ...But not
over-zealous. Where, however,
do you draw the line?

A few volunteers' hands go up. A.J. Is fumbling in his jacket, trying unsuccessfully to find a pen.

PROFESSOR ABEL (CONT'D)
Mr. Barash.

A.J.
Sir, the Code dictates the lawyer
must zealously represent his
client's interest; and yet, in the
same breath, admonishes counsel not
to go beyond the bounds of
propriety. The two mandates
conflict; and the line that
separates the two is, at best,
indistinguishable.

PROFESSOR ABEL

You are either very astute, or you obtained an outline from one of my lectures of last semester.

A few CHUCKLES are heard from the class.

PROFESSOR ABEL (CONT'D)

I posit the following hypothetical: You discover that a member of the Bar or Bench acted unethically. What is your obligation as an officer of the court under the Code?

Professor Abel looks to A.J. who draws a blank.

PROFESSOR ABEL (CONT'D)

I apologize, Mr. Barash; that point wasn't specifically covered last semester.

LOUDER CHUCKLING is heard and volunteers' hands go up. Professor Abel acknowledges a FEMALE STUDENT with a gesture.

FEMALE STUDENT

(Matter of factly) You report an attorney to the Bar Association and a judge to the Judicial Qualifications Commission.

PROFESSOR ABEL

Precisely what the Code dictates. However, consider class, the serious practical problems presented to the attorney faced with exposing a fellow lawyer or presiding judge. Have you heard of the conspiracy of silence among lawyers?

Professor Abel looks to the class for an answer and sees no hands. He checks his pocket watch for the time.

PROFESSOR ABEL (CONT'D)

You will. Good luck to those who will be graduating...(eying A.J.) this semester. That's all.

The classroom breaks and we HEAR scattered-light APPLAUSE of class. A.J. Puts on a pair of sunglasses as his exit is interrupted--

(CONTINUED)

PROFESSOR ABEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Mr. Barash.

A.J. Stops in his tracks and looks to Professor Abel who is peering out over his granny glasses.

PROFESSOR ABEL (CONT'D)
Before you can "Do it" you will
first have to become a lawyer.

Professor Abel smugly smiles and A.J. Lowers his sunglasses down his nose a bit, in imitation.

A.J.
Oh, I will

AJ returns same smile. He turns to leave, stops and looks back.

A.J. (CONT'D)
Professor, you've been on my case
since day one, why me?

PROFESSOR ABEL
At Hastings Law, we teach you the
fundamentals of legal reasoning to
enable you to think like a lawyer.
Unfortunately, we cannot teach you
to act like one. Do forgive me, Mr.
Barash, for trying.

CUT TO:

INT. A.J.'S DORM - NIGHT

Books and belongings are packed, ready for imminent move. AJ is sitting on the floor with his back to the wall. Seated on his right and left are Yale and Earl. All three men are dressed casually in jeans and T shirts. AJ is in the process of opening a bottle of champagne. Yale and Earl are holding their plain glasses in anticipation. AJ's glass is at his feet.

A.J.
Our last night, so here's to the
three...

The champagne bottle cork POPS and flies across the room.

A.J. (CONT.)
...legal musketeers...

A.J. fills the glasses.

(CONTINUED)

YALE

... And the best buddies that ever got through three years of law school trials and tribulations.

The three men toast and pound back their champagne as if it were beer.

EARL

Three years. I don't believe it. Seems like just yesterday we lived in fear and panic if called on by Professor Abel in his first year Contracts. Remember his Hippocratic method?

YALE

Yeah, teaching by intimidation.

EARL

Boy, those were the days.

AJ refills glasses and raises his own for another toast.

A.J.

Well, anyway here's to the hypocrite.

All three men toast and laugh.

A.J. (CONT'D)

I should keep my mouth shut. Abel just might follow through on his veiled threat and "F" me in Ethics.

YALE

Come on, be realistic... You keep your mouth shut.

EARL

Anyway, I wouldn't worry. Professor Abel's sensibilities couldn't withstand another semester of AJ Barash.

All laugh. AJ takes sips of champagne and rests his head against the wall, pondering. His eyes close.

YALE

(to Earl) So, are you looking forward to clerking for Judge Eaton after graduation?

(CONTINUED)

EARL

Yeah, I thought about going to work for a law firm right out of school; but clerking for a judge will let me see how the law evolves and judicial decisions are made... Anyway, it sure beats getting dumped on by a senior partner sixty hours a week.

Yale and Earl chuckle. They look at AJ who is still in his own world, apparently not listening.

YALE

Well, not everybody is cut out to be a trial attorney who instinctively goes for the jugular.

Yale tosses a sidelong glance at AJ.

YALE

Anyway, I'm not, and it suits me just fine to stay on in the shelter of this ivory tower as a teacher's assistant and making an academic contribution to the law.

EARL

Hmm, I wonder what the next three years will bring.

AJ opens his eyes.

A.J.

That's easy, kiddo.

AJ pauses to refill his glass and then looks to Yale.

A.J.

The A students become law professors.
(to Earl) The B. students become judges.

EARL

And the C students?

Both Yale and Earl are looking at AJ.

A.J. lifts glass to lips and takes a sip of his champagne with a smile

(CONTINUED)

A.J.

The C students make all the money.

INT. ENTRANCE TO CABIN OF COMMERCIAL JETLINER - DAY

AJ is carrying a Bar Review outline entering the cabin area which we see is nearly filled as remaining passengers are taking their seats.

A stewardess checks AJ's boarding pass and indicates the specific seat location with a gesture. AJ heads towards assigned seat on the left of aisle and notices out of the corner of his eye a lovely young lady, CHERI DAMIAN, who is aware of the effect her looks and attire have on men.

AJ hesitates at the point of his assigned seat and deliberately sits in the wrong seat next to her.

AJ begins to read material he brought on board, but with very strained and split conversation.

CAPTAIN (VIA LOUDSPEAKER)

This is your Captain Speaking.
Flight attendants prepare for take
off. Flight 431 from San Francisco
to Los Angeles will be departing
momentarily.

AJ, who can't help himself, steals another look at Cheri as the plane takes off.

CHERI

You're not very cerebral, are you?

A.J.

Huh? Not what?

CHERI

Cerebral, you know. The mind--
interested in the metaphysical.

A.J.

Oh, the latter, very much indeed.

CHERI

The latter?

A.J.

Physical, yes. The meta--I can take
it or leave it.

Cheri smirks and A.J. begins to introduce himself.

(CONTINUED)

A.J. (CONT'D)

I'm AJ.

CHERI

Cheri (pronounced

AJ takes her hand and lightly shakes it and continues holding it almost subconsciously.

A.J.

Do you live in rainy San Francisco?

CHERI

No, L.A. I was just her to...

Cheri looks at her hand still being held by AJ and clears her throat.

CHERI (CONT.)

Uh hemm... Excuse me, a little more meta and a little less physical, okay?

She politely withdraws her hand.

A.J.

Oh, I'm so sorry. It's just that I'm a law student... And I'm a little...

CHERI

Horny?

A.J.

Absent minded... from final exams. I just graduated from Hastings Law School and am about to take the Bar Exam. Then I begin as an associate for the law firm of...

Cheri flashes a disappointed look and crosses her legs to the other side, exposing more of her inviting body.

CHERI

Not another lawyer.

A.J.

What do you mean?

CHERI

Boring, one track minds-- eating, breathing, and sleeping with the law. Too bad its not female, you could live happily ever after.

(CONTINUED)

A.J.

What a fantastic pair of legs you have.

CHERI

Stop that.

A.J.

Why? Are you afraid of being taken for a sex object, or do you just enjoy dressing like one?

CHERI

You lawyers have a line for...

A.J.

I just wanted you to know that I have at least a two-track mind, maybe more. And I've got nothing planned for the next few days except rest, relaxation and some L.A. sun.

CUT TO:

EXT. AIRPORT ARRIVAL AREA - DAY

The rain pours down outside of LAX Airport. AJ looks up at the sky with disbelief. He motions for a taxi. Cheri steps up beside him and pulls his hand down and waves flags a for her car with the other.

A stretch limo pulls up next to them in an area for automobiles which is also under cover, taking the only available spot. Cheri and AJ's bags are at their feet. The CHAUFFEUR exits and comes over to Cheri.

CHAUFFEUR

Pleasant trip, Miss Cheri?

CHERI

Lovely. I'd like you to meet AJ...

A.J.

(adding) Barash.

AJ extends hand to chauffeur and they shake very briefly.

CHERI

So you do know how to shake hands properly.

They both share a smirk.

(CONTINUED)

CHAUFFEUR

I'm sorry the weather is so unaccommodating.

CHERI

Well, Daddy can't take care of everything, can he?

CHAUFFEUR

Your mother is at the club if you would like to join her.

The chauffeur begins to put her bags in the trunk of the limousine.

CHERI

AJ, honey, don't you just love rainy days in L.A.?

A.J.

Well, its not exactly what I had in mind.

CHERI

Imagination, darling. They didn't take that away from you at law school, I hope.

CHERI (CONT'D)

Vivaldi's Four Seasons softly playing, a bottle of Dom Perignon, lightly chilled, raindrops pattering on the window, you and me...

Cheri takes A.J.'s hand in hers.

CHERI (CONT'D)

...holding hands and losing ourselves into each other's eyes and...

Cheri's mouth moving as she continues her wonderful plans for AJ, but we don not hear her words because the SOUND of a HONKING HORN is heard.

A small Toyota pulls up without a window down and a young woman, GINA PISANI, inside yelling.

GINA PISANI A.J.! A.J.!

AJ looks like he just lost his best friend and fantasy.

(CONTINUED)

CHERI

A fan club-- of one.

A.J.

Don't move, I'll be right back.

AJ goes over to the girl in the Toyota. He leans through the through partially opened driver's window, and tries to give her a small, quick kiss.

A.J.

Hi honey. Boy, its great to see you.

GINA

Who's the girl?

AJ is getting soaked from the rain.

A.J.

Nobody. Just somebody I met on the plane. Any more third degree and I'll catch pneumonia. Please go ahead, over there. Park under cover. I'll get my bags and meet you in a minute.

Gina looks skeptical and doesn't move.

A.J. (CONT'D)

Come on, you're stopping traffic...
Look.

Gina looks in rear view mirror and sees cars lined up behind her and some are honking their horns. She drives away as instructed.

AJ turns to Cheri and sees limousine pulling away as he is left standing in the rain.

INT. A.J.'S PARENTS' HOME - EVENING

AJ, Gina, AJ's parents, MARY and SAL BARASHI, and his brother, VINCE, who's a few years older and much more "Italian-looking" than AJ, are all seated at the family table. Everything about the home is modest and simple.

Sal is seated on the far end, Vince on one side and AJ and Gina on the other side, with Gina next to Mary. Gina and Mary are serving seconds to Vince and Sal who are eating with gusto. AJ passes on the food. He hasn't touched his plate.

(CONTINUED)

MARY

AJ, I missed you so much while you were away at school. It's wonderful to have you home again. I don't believe it. My baby boy, all grown up--and now a lawyer.

Mary sees AJ is not eating.

MARY BARASHI (CONT'D)

Mange. Mange. Even F. Lee Buckley has to eat.

A.J.

Bailey, Momma, not Buckley. Besides, I'm not hungry. I got a lot on my mind. You forgive me?

Mary understands her son.

SAL

What, they don't teach you to eat in law school?

AJ stares at his plate picking at his food, without moving his head. He glances, without expression, at his father.

SAL (CONT'D)

You know, your mama cooked this up special just for you on account of your graduation and all.

A.J.

Is food all this family thinks about?

GINA

What you do think of your son, the lawyer?

MARY

It's wonderful, isn't it, Sal?

SAL

Yeah, sure. Just what the world needs, another high priced, loud, big mouth.

AJ rises from the table in frustration. He throws his napkin on the table and leaves the room.

(CONTINUED)

A.J.

At least I'll be getting paid for it.

MARY

You had to do it again... didn't ya? We couldn't just have a nice family meal... all of us?

Gina begins to clear some of the dishes.

GINA

Come on, I'll help.

Mrs. Barashi joins in. Sal continues to eat. Vince rises.

INT. A.J.'S OLD BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A.J.'s bedroom is a modest bedroom with old Beatles poster and a U.C.L.A pennant on wall. AJ is sitting on twin bed with his hands crossed behind his head, gazing at the ceiling.

Vince enters and, at the sight of AJ, begins to mock the motions of a sparring boxer with his hands.

VINCE

C'mon, you wanna go a few?

AJ gives him condescending look. Vince takes up a chair next to bed sitting with his legs straddling the chair back.

VINCE (CONT'D)

Man, loosen up... What's your problem?

A.J.

I don't know. I guess the ole man sees black and I see white.

VINCE

Look around you, AJ. The world is gray.

Both chuckle.

VINCE (CONT'D)

Look, AJ, Pop wanted you in the business with us. He got over it. But when you changed your name, you lopped off a part of him, too; and I think it hurt him.

(CONTINUED)

A.J.

He's hard as the concrete he pours;
and besides, what's wrong with
wanting more than this. It's the
American dream. And,

A.J. (CONT'D)

Vince, I want to live it, not just
dream it.

VINCE

A.J. , dreams are fine. It's
fantasies that get you in trouble.
Remember, baby brother, you can run
away from all of "this", but it has
a way of catching up with you
sooner or later. So why don't you
get out there and give Pop a hug.
You'll both feel a lot better.

A.J.

It won't work this time... I don't
want what he wants. We are
different people and I'm going
places--I can just feel it.

VINCE

You're not listening: You put your
pants on the same way as him... and
me, Antonio Joseph Barashi.

Vince slugs is brother in the arm.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

We see four people in an elevator in business dress. AJ is
dressed in a nice suit but not a "Wall Street" suit. A
pretty girl in the elevator who AJ smiles at, as the
elevator door opens. She exits and his gesture is not
returned.

The elevator continues to the penthouse floor with AJ and
another YOUNG LADY who appears to be a plain, but nicely
dressed legal secretary. As the doors of the elevator open
to the law firm reception area. Straight ahead is the
reception station and open entrance way to the firm.

The young lady exits the elevator, smiles at the
RECEPTIONIST and goes right in. AJ pauses... and he falls in
love with everything around him.

INT. COURTROOM -- DAY

We see the JUDGE, opposing council, LITIGANTS and a packed gallery in a courtroom where closing argument is about to begin. Seated at the plaintiff's table is JACK DAMIAN, trial attorney in his fifties; very well groomed, well dressed, and very smooth with a flair of flamboyance. Along with Jack are two children: BOY, age 10, and GIRL, age 5.

The judge briefly reviews his notes and looks up to the jury.

JUDGE

(to jury) Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, this is the final portion of the trial stage called "Closing Argument" where attorneys for plaintiff and defendant have the opportunity to speak to you directly before you begin deliberating so as to arrive at your verdict. I caution you, nothing the lawyers say is evidence, but only argument. Mr. Jack Damian, for plaintiff, will go first. (to Damian) You may proceed. sir.

Jack Damian rises as the entire courtroom looks on, captivated by his charisma.

DAMIAN

Thank you, Your Honor.

Damian approaches the Jury slowly and carefully looks at each and every one of them.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)

May it please the court. Ladies and gentlemen of the Jury...

INT. LAW OFFICE - DAY

MR. KANNER a partner at the law firm is giving AJ a tour of the firm. Kanner is a typical law office manager; plain, late forties and very conservatively attired. He walks AJ through what appears to be a typical, fast track, law office, brimming with activities as secretaries, clerks and lawyers go about their daily business. From time to time, a smile of recognition is given Kanner.

(CONTINUED)

They pass the conference room and peek in, and the tour continues. AJ is more interested in the surroundings than Kanner's speech.

KANNER

The law firm of Hamilton, Miller, Hudson and Damian was started fifty years ago by Jack Damian's father who passed away ten years ago. Unlike other firms, his philosophy was to represent only the well-heeled clients and, as you can see, it has paid off. They peek in on the busy word-processing computer room and continue tour.

KANNER (CONT'D)

We try to maintain a certain image in the firm...

Kanner glances at AJ's attire.

KANNER (CONT'D)

Partners, staff, and their image should be polished at all times. Clients expect to get what they pay for.

A.J. flirtatiously winks with a secretary walking by.

KANNER (CONT'D)

And here we don't shit where we eat. With Jack Damian soon to be sworn in as president of the Bar, we'll all be under a lot of scrutiny.

INT - LAW LIBRARY - CONTINUED

Kanner and AJ enter law library.

KANNER (CONT'D)

(whispering) This is the law library.

A.J.

I never would have guessed.

We see a young, very well dressed attorney in suit and tie, MR. PEPPER, and a younger law clerk type in less stylish shirt and tie, MR. BOTTOMS. Both are working, but are disturbed by AJ's voice, and look up at the distraction.

(CONTINUED)

KANNER

Mr. Pepper and Mr. Bottoms, meet
Mr. Barash.

AJ extends his hand to the men.

Both Pepper and Bottoms briefly shake hands with AJ, barely without rising and quickly; and without wasting time, go back to their tasks at hand.

Kanner exits and AJ follows.

AJ spies a girl from behind, not at all dressed in law office garb, yet looking very fashionable, and her features from behind remind him of Cheri. He stares in that direction as if looking at a mirage.

KANNER (O.S.)

This way.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Damian continues his closing arguments. He holds a pocket watch as it dangles back and forth. The Jury is nearly mesmerized.

DAMIAN

This case before you is very much
like my father's pocket watch. The
time my clients, Billy and Susie...

Damian gestures to the two children beside him. BILLY is dressed in dark suit. He is somber and understands the proceedings as best he can.

SUSIE is nicely dressed and she seems very small in contrast to the big chair she is sitting in as she looks around the room, apparently not understanding what is happening.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)

Will never spend with their
parents. The seemingly endless time
these children will spend alone,
afraid and in a cold and
treacherous sea of life, cast
adrift because of the senseless,
careless, and criminal negligence
of the defendants.

An older female juror wipes a tear from her eye with handkerchief. Damian turns to face the defense team and the defendant.

(CONTINUED)

We see TWO YOUNG MEN, one decently, but not well dressed, and the other motley type, along with their Plain Looking ATTORNEY.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)

When they snuffed out the lives of these children's parents by drinking and driving one tragic night on the Pacific Coast Highway.

Damian puts both hands on juror railing, looking intensely at each and every one of them.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)

You great ladies and gentlemen of the jury cannot bring John and Karen back home to little Billy and Susie; for they can never return; but today, you can do justice. You can, when you retire to deliberate, balance the scales of justice. And you must be guided, by G-d, when arriving at the money value of two wonderful and giving parents who perished in an automobile crushed head-on as it slowly burned in the hell fire set by the defendants.

INT. A.J.'S LAW OFFICE

AJ and Kanner stand at the doorway of a simply inexpensively decorated office. The walls are barren and the high floor view is obstructed. On the desk is state of the art telephone, dictaphone, speaker phone systems and small neatly piled stack of folders and materials.

KANNER

If you haven't already guessed, this is your office. You are Jack Damian's second litigation associate. The first has been with the firm going on four years. His name is Walter Kane. Both Mr. Damian and Mr. Kane are in court, otherwise I would have introduced you. A young lady by the name of Marjorie Lange will be your secretary.

Kanner pushes a button on speaker phone and his secretary MARJORIE LANGE chimes in.

(CONTINUED)

MARJORIE

Yes?

KANNER

Marjorie, please come into Mr. Barash's office.

MARJORIE

Mr. Barash, sir?

KANNER

I'm sorry, Marjorie, John Simon's old office.

Marjorie, a pleasant looking and amiable secretary enters the room.

MARJORIE

Yes, Mr. Kanner.

KANNER

Marjorie, I'd like you to meet Mr. Barash who has joined our firm and has been assigned to Mr. Damian. You will be his secretary.

AJ and Marjorie shake hands.

KANNER (CONT'D)

Mr. Barash, on your desk you will find the firm's Employee Policy Manual and your billing time sheet. Please familiarize yourself with this material and pay particular attention to the client billing procedure and our firm's fee structure... Welcome and good day.

Kanner exits and Marjorie turns to follow. As they both disappear out of sight, AJ calls out at his is new secretary.

A.J.

Ms. Lange.

Marjorie returns.

MARJORIE

Yes, Mr. Barash.

A.J. What happened to Damian's other associate?

(CONTINUED)

MARJORIE

You won't find this in your policy manual there, but there is an unwritten saying here: If you haven't made junior partner after four years with the firm, you won't; and there isn't much future here for an associate after that.

Marjorie nods and exits. AJ reaches for the materials in the front of his desk and then moves them aside as he settles into his office by putting his feet on the desk, his hands behind his head and sitting back in the chair.

Suddenly, a knock is heard and without warning WALTER KANE, a seasoned veteran associate in looks, clothing and style, enters the room. On the surface, he appears friendly and helpful as he extends and gives a vigorous handshake to a bit startled AJ.

KANE

Hello, AJ, I'm Walter Kane. We will be working together with Jack Damian. Kane takes a seat, making himself very comfortable as if at home on his own turf. So were you drafted or did you choose litigation?

A.J.

I always wanted to be a trial lawyer. Why, I'm not sure, but everybody said I was a real talker.

KANE

In that case, I guess it was either law or used car sales. So welcome to the Good Ship Hamilton, Miller, Hudson and Damian, where its sink or swim--Hell, Damian alone has had three associates in four years.

A.J.

What's the problem?

KANE

They either can't take the pressure or Damian can't take them.

A.J.

You've been here going on four years.

(CONTINUED)

KANE

Luck, I guess. Listen, I've got to get going. This conversation is in "NBT".

A.J.

NBT? Non-billable time. Today, the law is all business--Well, see you around.

Kane leaves the from and AJ begins to play with sophisticated toys on his desk. The phone buzzer startles AJ. After a few unsuccessful attempts to answer the call, Marjorie comes in and pushes one of the buttons showing AJ how it's done.

A.J.

I'm a lawyer, not a technician.

MARJORIE

Mr. Damian would like to see you.

INT. HALLWAY OF LAW OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

AJ is wandering about, looking for Damian's office. Ongoing office activity is occurring. AJ sees a door and is about to open it when BILL TRAITZ, a very well dressed junior partner, a few years older than AJ, stops him by grabbing AJ's arm.

TRAITZ

Excuse me, are you lost or do you want to use the little girls room?

AJ looks at sign on door and shakes his head with embarrassment.

TRAITZ

Rumor has it they hired a litigation recruit. AJ Barash, I presume?

A.J.

That's me. So you must be Sir Henry Stanley?

TRAITZ

Actually, I'm Bill Traitz. I sure hope you can find your way around a courtroom better than the office. But until then, where are you going?

(CONTINUED)

A.J.
Mr. Damian's office.

TRAITZ
It's right next to Walter Kane's
office. Have you met old Walter?

A.J.
Yeah, he just came by to say hello.

TRAITZ
And check out the competition.

AJ looks a little confused.

TRAITZ (CONT'D)
In high school you competed to get
into a good college, where you
competed to get into a better law
school, where you cut throats to
get into a law firm like this. Now,
what makes you think the
competition stops here?

Traitz puts his back up against the wall and, mocking a war
game, turns his head to AJ as if they were under fire.

TRAITZ (CONT'D)
I can get you to Mr. Damian's
office if you cover my ass from the
rear.

Bill leads the way for AJ to Damian's office nearby. They
stop at the outer office secretarial station where JEAN, Mr.
Damian's secretary, is efficiently working.

TRAITZ (CONT'D)
Jean, this is Mr. Barash.

JEAN
Hello, Mr. Damian is expecting you.
Go right in.

INT. DAMIAN'S LAW OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

AJ enters very distinguished, extremely spacious and
expensively appointed law office--which is everything you
would expect from the firm's top senior partner. Damian is
on the phone and motions AJ to come in. AJ, admiring the
office, and takes a seat.

(CONTINUED)

DAMIAN

(on the phone) I have read the legislative bill and I think it's a crock. Limiting malpractice jury awards is nothing more than a care package for doctors and I'm sick and tired of hearing those guys making two hundred fifty thousand dollars a year, whining about their medical malpractice insurance premiums. Personally and professionally, Governor, I think you should veto it; it's a bad law, and it's worse for the trial bar so tell the good ole boys in the legislature to keep their hands off our fees.

Damian hangs up.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)

Alright, give my best to Jacqueline and I'll see you at the Bar Association Convention. Now it's your turn to sleep through one of my speeches.

(To A.J.)

Another election year and the goddamn legislature is trying to take away our bread and butter. Enough of politics. Welcome.

Damian warmly shakes AJ's hand.

A.J.

Mr. Damian, I'm very much looking forward to working with you and learning from you.

Damian is looking at and referring to a letter-sized piece of paper on his desk.

DAMIAN

Let's see, A.J. Barash, age twenty-eight, 3.4 G.P.A. As an undergraduate, very good. I see your grades weren't so hot in law school after your second year, but you did excel in moot court, winning the state competition. Pretty impressive.

(CONTINUED)

AJ smiles and Damian continues--

DAMIAN (CONT'D)
Born Antonio Barashi; your father
and brother work in the concrete
business, subcontractors.

AJ begins to get a bit uncomfortable.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)
Your mother, Mary, is a housewife
and enjoys gardening and loves to
cook...

A.J.
What? That's not on my resume.
Where did you find...

DAMIAN
First lesson: Know your judges,
your colleagues, and always your
competition. In this business,
knowledge is power; but, don't ever
do as I have just done, and let
them know you know.

Damian winks. AJ is a bit overwhelmed, but absorbing all.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)
What do you know about Section
10(b) (5) of the Securities
and Exchange Commission Code?

A.J.
Well, that code provision makes
buying or selling stocks on inside
information illegal; and, moreover,
it's a crime if you have inside
information to tip or to pass it on
to others, thereby giving them an
unfair advantage in stock market
place.

DAMIAN
Excellent law school regurgitation.
Now, I'm expecting, momentarily, a
MR. Dean Payton of...

A.J.
The principal in the stock
brokerage firm?

(CONTINUED)

DAMIAN

Precisely

BUZZER SOUNDS. Damian pushes button on telephone equipment and we HEAR the voice of his secretary on the speaker phone.

JEAN

(Via speaker phone) Mr. Payton is here to see you.

DAMIAN

(to speaker phone) Make him comfortable. (to AJ) You never want to see a client, no matter how big, too quickly. Keep them waiting a bit. Remember, to them their lawyer has to walk on water... and their doctor is God. Apparently Payton's firm, along with a number of their brokers, has been charged by the S.E.C. With 10(b) (5) violations. He is here for a consultation.

Damian pushes button and speaks to speaker phone.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)

Jean, show Mr. Payton in.

A.J.

Don't they have in-house counsel?

DAMIAN

Yes.

Door opens, Jean escorts DEAN PAYTON into the office and he strides towards the desk. Damian and AJ rise and Damian and Payton shake hands.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)

Dean, I'd like you to meet AJ Barash. He recently joined our firm and will be assisting me...

PAYTON

While you're cutting some deal on the golf course.

Both Payton and Damian laugh, and AJ smiles. They sit.

(CONTINUED)

DAMIAN

After what I've read in the Wall Street Journal, it's a surprise you still have your sense of humor.

PAYTON

Shit, the S.E.C. is trying to take just about everything else. Jesus, I've got about ten associates working around the clock just complying with S.E.C. subpoenas; and because of the bad press, a lot of our good brokers are leaving.

Damian pushes button on speaker phone.

DAMIAN

Excuse me, Jean, would you get me Frumkes over at the S.E.C.
(to Payton)
What's the name of the S.E.C. attorney who is prosecuting?

PAYTON

Joel Aiken.

DAMIAN

And their special investigator?

PAYTON

Peter Hirschorn.

JEAN

(via speaker phone)
Go ahead, Mr. Damian.

Damian picks up the phone.

DAMIAN

Leonard, how are you?. I'm still recovering from your 21-17 clobbering on the racquet ball court... 21-13. You had to rub it in. Listen, Lenny, your dogs are barking up my client's tree. Yeah, Aiken and Hirschorn... That's right, the Payton firm... aha... Thanks, kiddo, but in the rematch, I'm playing right-handed. Good-bye.

Damian hangs up the phone and turns to Payton.

(CONTINUED)

DAMIAN

The investigation will be discreetly faded out in one week or so and then it will be history. The S.E.C. will issue an informal order that you all acted in good faith.

PAYTON

Jack, you are a miracle worker.

DAMIAN

It's just that Frumkes likes to win at racquet ball. So I let him.

PAYTON

What's it going to cost me?

Damian writes something on a piece of paper and slides it to Payton who looks at it with shock and then to Damian.

PAYTON (CONT'D)

Twenty-five thousand dollars for one minute on the phone?

DAMIAN

And I had to lose to Frumkes on the racquet ball court.

PAYTON

Be serious.

DAMIAN

Miracles aren't cheap. Anyway, what's the problem costing you?

PAYTON

I don't know, five thousand for legal and another three thousand or so for accounting every week. Hell, there's no way to put a price tag on it when you consider the bad press.

DAMIAN

Was the solution worth twenty-five grand?

PAYTON

You always win... unless of course you want to lose. (smiling and shaking his head a bit and looking at AJ) You got one hell of a mentor, kid.

(CONTINUED)

AJ looks astonished at all of this.

DAMIAN

Don't looked so shocked, AJ; you just have to forget everything they taught you at law school.

A.J.

Jesus, it took me three years to learn it.

DAMIAN

That was just to pay your dues to join the club; now that you're a member, say hello to the real practice of law and say good-bye to the ivory tower.

JEAN

(via speaker phone)

Mr. Damian, your daughter is here to see you. Should I have her wait outside. Before the communication is even completed -

Cheri walks into the office.

CHERI

Hi, Daddy.

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE - DAY

Cher and AJ sit at an outdoor cafe enjoying some time together in the LA sun.

CHERI

Lots of sunshine. Pretty and European ambiance; Cinzano umbrellas; a bottle of wine on the table; glasses half filled. Cheri and AJ seated. Light movement of customers and waitresses.

Cheri loosens AJ's tie and then looks down at his dress appearance.

CHERI

We're going to have to do something about this if you're going to work for my father. Boy, when I walked into his office.

(CONTINUED)

A.J.

You thought you had died and went to heaven.

CHERI

Well, I almost died.

A.J.

Do you always make unannounced entrances... and exits?

CHERI

I'm not going to apologize for that, AJ. At the time I was getting over a break-up with a guy. He's a lawyer, too; and I didn't need any more complications. And as far as Jack Damian is concerned, he is still Daddy to me.

A.J.

Are you over this...

CHERI

Michael?...

Cheri raises her wine glass, taking a deep breath of air.

CHERI (CONT'D)

Here's to that god ole L.A. sun.

Cheri smiles and blows AJ a kiss with her lips. AJ toasts.

A.J.

...and reunions. You know I almost caught pneumonia.

CHERI

Poor baby. How can I ever make it up to you?

A.J.

I'll think of something.

INT. CHERI'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Cheri is sitting up in bed on top of a feminine comforter in her bedroom. She is comely attired in a short skirt, legs crossed, heels on and anxiously and impatiently smoking a cigarette.

(CONTINUED)

CHERI
AJ, honey, when are you going to
come and tuck me in? AJ?
Sweetheart?

INT. CHERI'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

AJ is sitting on the sofa, law books, legal pads, open
briefcase and Chinese food containers with chopsticks strewn
about out. He

is working, reading and looking through materials with
pencil in his mouth.

 A.J.
Give me a few more minutes. I've
got a big hearing coming up
tomorrow in the Harris case.

INT. CHERI'S BEDROOM

Cheri lying flat on her back, taking a hit off her
cigarette.

 CHERI
You've been working on the Harris
case forever. What do you...

Cheri stops mid sentence as she sees AJ standing at door of
bedroom and lowers her voice level.

 CHERI (CONT'D)
Want more, the Harris case or me?

AJ moves towards bed and sits next to Cheri. He begins to
kiss Cheri.

 CHERI
I'll have a talk with Daddy about
your case load.

AJ stops kissing, sits back and looks her straight in the
eye.

 A.J.
Not one word. Up until now your Dad
has given me either cases that
couldn't be won; or cases nobody
could lose. The Harris case could
go either way and it's my first
chance to show what I'm made of.

(CONTINUED)

CHERI

No wonder he likes you, you sound
just like him: All law.

A.J.

Well, we love the same things.

INT. LAW FIRM LIBRARY - DAY

Open books, papers, legal pads on conference table. AJ is seen busily researching and writing. Walter Kane enters. He looks at

AJ and pulls a law book off the shelf, glancing at a case quickly. He is very much at ease in contrast to AJ's more hurried and anxious pace. Kane replaces the book at sits looking at AJ.

KANE

Has J.D. Got you arguing before the
Supreme Court already, or is his
daughter keeping you up late at
night?

A.J.

Look, Walter, I've got a big
hearing at 1:00 o'clock before
Judge Robinson in the Harris case;
and I really don't have and
"N.B.T." To spare. So if you don't
mind...

KANE

Hey, listen, we're part of the same
team, remember. We're not
adversaries. What's the problem,
perhaps I can help.

A.J.

Alright. We represent a chemical
company whose plant, upstate, is
spilling off sulfur into Lake
Tahoe. The plaintiff, citing
environmental impact, is trying to
shut us down.

KANE

How many jobs are at stake?

A.J.

A hundred, plus.

(CONTINUED)

Kane grabs a book from the shelf and doesn't find what he's looking for. Replaces it as AJ looks on. Kane takes volume from the shelf, finds the case he's looking for, and lays open book in front of AJ and smiles. AJ briefly reads the case and looks back up at Kane.

A.J. (CONT'D)

Copans v. United Sanitation.
Fantastic. Thanks, Walter, it's just the edge I need. How in the hell did you know about...

KANE

I just had a similar problem in a case except I was on the other side. Opposing counsel cited the United Sanitation case

KANE (CONT'D)

and blew me right out of the water. Live and learn.

A.J.

Walter, one more favor. My clerk, Lloyd, is out to lunch and I've got to be in court in ten minutes. Could you update the case for me. It's a 1979 decision-- and I want to be sure it's still good law today.

KANE

No need. I briefed the case six months ago and since then I've read every Supreme Court opinion-- Relax, Copans v. United Sanitation is still controlling precedent. So don't worry, with this case you'll surprise em.

Walter rises to leave.

A.J.

Walter, I owe you one.

INT. A.J.'S LAW OFFICE -- DAY

AJ is getting ready to leave office for the Harris hearing. He packs up his briefcase, takes jacket from chair and puts it on and is about to leave when the speaker phone BUZZER SOUNDS. AJ pushes button.

(CONTINUED)

MARJORIE
(over speaker)
Mr. Barash, someone is here to see
you.

A.J.
What?... I have no appointments
scheduled for this morning.

Marjorie (over speaker) Mr. Barash, I believe it is a
personal matter.

A.J.
Marge, I just don't have the... Who
is it?

Marjorie (over speaker) A Miss Pisani.

A.J.
Tell her that I'm... No, show her
in.

AJ puts briefcase back down as Gina Pisani enters with a
filled picnic basket, looking like she was dressed for
Easter.

GINA
Surprise.

AJ has a confused look as he glances at her picnic basket.

GINA (CONT'D)
Oh, I got your favorite. Let's
see... sausage and peppers,
tortellini, wine, and for
dessert...

A.J.
Wait, wait, wait. You came down her
to my law firm picnic for a...

GINA
We need to talk, AJ, and I thought
we'd go down to the park like the
old days when...

AJ now sits on edge of desk, running hands down his face in
frustration.

A.J.
Gina, I have to go down to court
for a hearing now.

(CONTINUED)

GINA
That's okay, I'll wait.

A.J.
(checks watch) I'm sorry, but
I can't...

GINA
... or won't.

A.J.
Your timing is bad... I'm late
and...

GINA
My timing. My timing. Do you call
me...

GINA (CONT'D)
No... So, I wait. He's busy, new
career, I say. I wait some mote. I
can't stand it so I try your
parents. They haven't seen or heard
from you in a month-- the big
shot's got his own apartment now,
uptown, they say.

A.J.
Gina, listen...

GINA
No, AJ You always did the talking;
now you listen. I call you at your
fancy, shmancy office here. He's in
conference; Mr. Barash is in court.
Mr. Esquire's busy. I know our
relationship wasn't so great
lately, but it was good. What is
it, AJ, not good enough. I don't
fit anymore, huh? Your plans don't
call fora girl like me who didn't
finish college and whose dream was
to get married, raise a family and
live happily...

Gina is crying and AJ moves to her, lifts her head up with
his finger, and looks softly at her.

A.J.
Gina, I can't talk now. Please go
home and I'll call you later.

Gina looks down again as AJ stoops a little to look at her
in the face--

(CONTINUED)

A.J. (CONT'D)

I promise.

AJ tries to give her a pet kiss on the lips. Gina turns her head and kisses her briefly on the cheek and exits.

Gina sobs in her hands, her basket on the floor beside her feet.

A.J. (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Marge, show Miss Paisani out.

INT. ELEVATOR -- DAY

One-half filled with business men and women. AJ at front. Doors open on ground floor. AJ sees his law clerk, Lloyd, who's younger and a bit nerdy, wearing white shirt and tie. People exiting elevator and others waiting to enter.

A.J.

Lloyd, listen carefully; I want you to update a 1979 court of appeals case to see if it's good law.

LLOYD

I'm working on that complaint in the...

A.J.

Later. The case of Copans v. United Sanitation. The citation is 610 P.2d 877 (1979). Got it?

The elevator is filling up with people and Lloyd nods affirmatively.

A.J. (CONT'D)

I'm going down to Robinson's courtroom in the Harris case. Give the information to Marjorie.

Elevator's doors begin to close. AJ stops doors from closing and nudges Lloyd in as the doors begin to close again.

A.J. (CONT'D)

Fifteen minutes, max.

EXT. COURTHOUSE STEPS -- DAY

AJ is briskly walking up the courthouse steps to the building.

INT. LAW FIRM AISLE WAY

Lloyd moving quickly with legal pad in hand to Marjorie's desk. She is typing and has dictation headset on.

LLOYD

Marjorie.

She doesn't hear him. He taps her on the shoulder.

LLOYD (CONT'D)

Marjorie.

MARJORIE (startled) Oh, Lloyd, you scared me.

Lloyd looks a bit sorry for having interrupted.

MARJORIE (CONT'D)

It's okay, Lloyd, I needed a break.
What is it?

LLOYD

(looking at legal pad) AJ
asked me to give you this
information.

Marjorie takes note as Lloyd speaks.

LLOYD (CONT'D)

The Copans v. United Sanitation
case was specifically overruled six
months ago by the California
Supreme Court in Frasier v AAA
Lumber Company, 926 P.2d 1142
(1984).

INT. COURTROOM HALLWAY

People in courthouse seen. We follow AJ moving quickly down the hall to entrance of courtroom. We see a sign out front: "JUDGE ROBINSON PRESIDING". AJ opens the door and we see the JUDGE sitting above and some OBSERVERS in the courtroom. ATTORNEYS are seated at the plaintiff's and defendant's tables. One attorney on feet is addressing the court. AJ takes the BAILIFF aside who is standing next to the door.

(CONTINUED)

A.J.
(whispering)
I'm here for the defendant in the
Harris v. Standard Chemical case.

Bailiff looks at note pad.

BAILIFF
Opposing counsel has already
checked in and your case will be
called next.

A.J.
DO I have time to call my office?

Bailiff shrugs shoulders -- He doesn't know. AJ bolts down
hall.

INT. COURTROOM HALLWAY -

PAY PHONE AJ quickly puts money in payphone, dials number.

A.J.
Hi, Barbara, Its AJ... Put me
through to Marge...

Two beats. A.J. nervously taps fingers.

A.J. (CONT'D)
Jesus Christ, where is the hell is
she?... You're kidding. Lloyd isn't
in either?

INT. JUDGE ROBINSON'S COURTROOM

Plaintiff and defendant's tables are empty. We see Judge and
Bailiff and some spectators sitting in the gallery.

BAILIFF
(standing)
Comes now in the Superior Court of
Orange County, Los Angeles, Harris
v. Standard Chemical. Warren
Spiegel for the Plaintiff and AJ
Barash for the Defense.

An older, distinguished lawyer comes forward, WARREN
SPIEGEL, and seats himself at the Plaintiff's table. He
opens briefcase and waits. Long, anxious moments pass until
we HEAR somebody entering the courtroom and --

(CONTINUED)

ANGLE ON AJ who enters and moves to Defendant's table and is about to sit when we --

ANGEL ON Judge Robinson and see a sign overhead: "HERE WE LABOR FOR TRUTH".

JUDGE ROBINSON
Trouble finding the courthouse, Mr Barash?

A.J.
No, Your Honor.

JUDGE ROBINSON
Then perhaps your case load is too heavy; and you would benefit from a rest... in jail for your contempt of this Court's own heavy docket. This isn't law school, young man.

A.J.
I apologize to the court for any unintended disrespect. AJ sits. Judge nods to Spiegel to proceed.

Spiegel stands and refers to notes occasionally

SPIEGEL
May it please the court, we are here on plaintiff's motion for injunctive relief.

SPIEGEL (CONT'D)
Specifically we seek to enjoin defendant from continuing to dump pollutants into the waters of this state, causing irreparable harm to our environment in violation of the Supreme Court's holding in Frazier v. AAA Lumber Company and general case law...

Spiegel hands judge copy of case and returns to seat and sits.

AJ stands.

JUDGE ROBINSON
Any rebuttal?

A.J.
Your honor, while learned counsel's reliance on general case law

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

A.J. (cont'd)
 principles is not entirely
 disingenuous--and I don't quarrel
 with the holdings we all recognize
 as black letter environmental
 law...

Judge Robinson's SECRETARY comes into the courtroom through the door near the judge and passes him a note. The judge looks at the note.

A.J. (CONT'D)
 When many jobs would be lost
 because of a shut-down, however,
 there was a judicially recognized
 exception formulated on equitable
 principles, found in the case of...

JUDGE ROBINSON
 It appears that it was not enough
 injury to keep this court waiting
 like and over-anxious courtier.
 Now, Mr. Barash, you insult me by
 using my courtroom and secretary as
 your answering service.

A.J. (confused) I'm sorry, I don't understand.

JUDGE ROBINSON
 Your office called and said there
 was an emergency; and for your
 sake, it had better be. The court
 stands in recess, and this matter
 is continued for two weeks.

Judge rises All rise.

EXT. TENNIS CLUB - DAY

We see Cheri and her pretty friend, MAGGIE, seated at a table outdoors in an exclusive tennis club, with courts in view. They are both fashionable dressed for tennis, but only look the part as they sip their pina coladas and look at the activities around them: tennis games, movement of players, waitresses. A very good looking tennis professional, GENE, with racquet in hand, approaches their table.

GENE
 Hi, girls... Anybody want to work
 on their backhand?...

No reply and not much response, although Maggie smiles.

(CONTINUED)

GENE (CONT'D)
Forehand... serve?

CHERI
Later, Gene.

Gene tries to exit gracefully.

MAGGIE
What a hunk.

CHERI
But no brains.

MAGGIE
Since when are you so particular? Anyway, I thought you gave up lawyers?

CHERI
I thought so, too, but ... he's different.

MAGGIE
I'll have to meet this guy, if he can make you settle down.

CHERI
You will.

EXT. PORSCHE CAR DEALERSHIP -- DAY

WIDE ANGLE on dealership and then ANGLE ON the brand new black Porsche 911 SC Cabriolet that AJ is seated in. We also see Cheri in the passenger seat and the car SALESMAN, a very good looking man, a couple of years older than AJ, standing on the driver's side.

The car top is down and both Cheri and AJ are casually attired. AJ is wearing his old sunglasses.

SALESMAN
(handing AJ the keys)
Congratulations, Mr. Barash. (to Cheri without AJ noticing as he puts keys in ignition) It's always a pleasure to do business with someone from the Damian firm.

Cheri exchanges quick glance of familiarity with salesman. AJ starts automobile and REVS UP engine. He places hand on gear shift and we see no enthusiasm as he is about to shift--

(CONTINUED)

CHERI
(excited and loud enough to overcome SOUND OF ENGINE) Not yet. Not yet.

Cheri is fumbling through purse and come up with a sunglasses case and, enthusiastically, hands it to AJ who looks at her; looks at the case, and opens case with very little interest.

CHERI (CONT'D)
C'mon, try em on.

AJ puts on great looking pair of sunglasses, removing his own.

CHERI
Now, you look the part. (She sits back and looks forward) Baby, lets blow this joint.

The car takes off--a MOVING SHOT of car racing down street; ENGINE RACING.

EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY -- DAY

MOVING SHOT of Porsche racing down a beautiful stretch of Pacific Coast Highway.

INT. PORSCHE

CHERI
You haven't said a word... What is it?

AJ neither replies nor looks at her.

CHERI (CONT'D)
A.J., if it's the payments you are worried about, look at it as an investment in your image. Don't think clients and the firm's partnership aren't checking out the car you drive, the place you live and if your tie is silk. A good lawyer's got to look the part. That's what Daddy always says; and (checking him out) Honey, you're looking great.

(CONTINUED)

AJ

This is all a game, isn't it?

CHERI

What are you talking about?

A.J.

My first day in the firm, Bill Traitz said, "What makes you think the competition stops here and to watch my ass." He was right; yesterday good ole Walter tried to burn me on the Harris case by feeding me bad law which, had I argued to the judge, would have had me laughed out of court--and the firm.

Cheri takes out cigarette and lights up.

CHERI

You're upstaging Walter and is jockeying for position.

A.J.

It's a damn good thing I saw it coming.

CHERI

Whether you like it or not, sweetie, it is a game; and you're a player just like everybody else.

They exchange glances and AJ takes a drag off of her cigarette, letting it out slowly.

CHERI (CONT'D)

And don't forget, a good loser is... a loser.

AJ guns it.

EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY -- DAY

Porsche races on.

INT. DOORWAY OF BILL TRAITZ OFFICE - DAY

AJ POV standing at open door. He sees Traitz dictating into mike. His office is much nicer than AJ's, but not nearly as sophisticated as Damian's office. We HEAR dictation, Traitz doesn't see AJ.

TRAITZ

Commence at the N.S. Corner of the east 3/4 of section 31; thence north 80o at right angles until 717 feet from the point of the circular curve and along the arc.

Traits spots AJ and stops dictating.

TRAITZ (CONT'D)

Well, it certainly seems you have learned your way around the office.

A.J.

((slapping his rear end)
Yep, and it's still intact.

TRAITZ

Among other parts of your anatomy--so rumor has it.

Bill winks and AJ smiles. AJ takes a seat.

TRAITZ

Also hear a lot of good things about you from our litigation people.

A.J.

You ought to know better than to believe anything another lawyer says.

TRAITZ

That's true. So what brings you to real estate?

A.J.

Just checking out the competition.

Both chuckle.

TRAITZ

Lunch?

(CONTINUED)

A.J.
Whadda ya have in mind?

TRAITZ
You like fettucini?

A.J.
Are you kidding?

Traitz gets up and walks over to AJ who also rises. Traits puts arm around AJ

TRAITZ
(as they walk out the door -
Part O.S.)
I know this great little Italian place down on the Boulevard with cute waitresses, and food isn't bad, either...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FRENCH RESTAURANT -- LUNCH TIME

We see expensive French restaurant with Cheri and Damian seated alone, glancing at their menus as WAITER in tux waits to take their order. Cheri looks up.

WAITER
Oui, mademoiselle.

CHERI
((she orders in pretty good French)
Quelle est la soupe du jour?

WAITER
La soup du jour est la soupe a l'onion.

CHERI
Bon, je voudrais une soupe a l'onion, ensuite, je prendrais une omelette lyonnaise, et comme dessert, j'aimerais quelque chose de leger, un flan au caramel, ser a parfait.

WAITER
Tres bien ... et monsieur?

(CONTINUED)

DAMIAN

I'll have a cup of vichysoise and
your seafood crepe.

CHERI

And bring us a bottle of Pouilly
Fuisse, please.

Waiter nods and exits.

DAMIAN

Well, it seems those years of
schooling at the Sorbonne have paid
off.

They exchange smiles.

CHERI

About the only time I get to use it
is when we eat in a French
restaurant. I wish we could have
lunch like this more often. I
hardly get a chance to see you
these days.

DAMIAN

I'm sorry, honey, it's not easy
being a good husband, father,
senior partner of a big law firm
and now soon to be the president of
the Bar Association... But, I try
my best, you know. Anyway, I hear
you're keeping yourself occupied
these days with one of my
associates.

Cheri smiles. Waiter comes over with wine, opens bottle and
pours sample for Damian.

DAMIAN

(sampling wine)

Well, don't do anything I wouldn't
do.

He nods to waiter "fine" and waiter pours Cheri and then
Damian's glass with wine.

CHERI

You mean, anything goes.

DAMIAN

(not too seriously)

You know what I mean, young lady,
I'm still your father.

(CONTINUED)

Cheri sips and smiles.

CHERI
I can take care of myself.

DAMIAN
I don't doubt that, it's A.J. I'm worried about.

Both chuckle.

CHERI
A.J. can take care of himself, too; I just hope he doesn't become another one of your casualties. You go through associates like I...

DAMIAN
Go through boyfriends.

CHERI
(raising her glass)
Touche.

DAMIAN
You know the law, and especially Hamilton, Miller, Hudson and Damian, are not for the faint-hearted. But I think A.J. will do alright, he's different.

CHERI
(sipping)
I think so too.

INT. MARJORIE'S SECRETARIAL STATION -- DAY

Marjorie is seated, going over some steno notes. A.J. arrives.

A.J.
Hi, Marge. Any messages?

MARJORIE
John Perkins of Intercontinental; Mary Devers called from Laughton and Chiles-- wants a reply to their office to settle.

A.J. turns towards office.

(CONTINUED)

MARJORIE

Oh, and your mother called too, and don't forget to prepare for the litigation meeting tomorrow night.

A.J (O.S.)

Would you get her on the phone for me?

INT. A.J.'S LAW OFFICE -- DAY

A.J. puts down briefcase and stares out window. He begins to take off his jacket and when he has gotten it half off, the buzzer sounds. A.J. pushes button with free hand.

A.J.

Yes, Marjorie?

SPEAKER PHONE

Your mother on three.

A.J. pushes another button, putting her on speaker phone.

A.J.

Hello, Mama. How are you?

MARY BARASHI

(on speaker)

A.J, where are you? You sound so far away.

A.J. picks up phone.

A.J.

Is that better? ... A device that allows me to talk without holding the phone to my ear... No, I don't think you'd be too dangerous with it... Sorry, Mama, I've been real busy lately... You're kidding, tomorrow night. You know I never remember birthdays... I can't, there's an important meeting at the firm tomorrow... It should break about 8:30... Don't change the subject... Her name is Cheri... Okay. Save me some cake. Yes, I'll ask her. Yes, she's a nice girl... Right, about 9:30.. I love you too.

INT. LAW FIRM CONFERENCE ROOM -- EARLY EVENING

Large conference room with long table and ten chairs, beautiful view of city lights against the dusk sky. Damian sitting at head of table. A.J. to left and Kane to right. Note pads in front of all, some papers and files. Coffee pots and cups on table.

Damian takes sip of coffee while glancing at note pad.

DAMIAN

Alright, gentlemen, we're almost finished. A.J., what's the status of Olan Lumber v. Grant Tower?

A.J.

There is a bench trial scheduled for sometime next month and the discovery is near completed.

DAMIAN

Foresee any problems?

A.J.

Not really. The defendant is claiming no statutory notice to owner to avoid the lien foreclosure; but the developer, who is a third party defendant, says otherwise. It boils down to a pissing contest.

DAMIAN

Uh huh. Was Colby the developer on that job?

A.J. nods.

DAMIAN

Than watch where you step, too. (To Kane)
Boyd Plastics, Ltd., v. St. Regis Electronics. That's your case, isn't it, Walter?

KANE

Yes, sir... J.D., that case is in limbo. We got a judgment for seven hundred fifty grand; the defendant turned around and filed Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

(CONTINUED)

DAMIAN

So our client's unsecured. What was your fee structure?

KANE

Two hundred dollars hourly with a ten thousand dollar retainer.

DAMIAN

What's Boyd into us for to date?

KANE

About 50,000, plus costs.

DAMIAN

We're a law firm, not a bank.
(To AJ)
Harris v...

A.J.

Plaintiff's motion for injunctive relief was continued last Monday for two weeks...
(Glancing at Kane, briefly)
due to an unexpected emergency. The law and the facts are not very favorable; but we got paid up front, so it's heads we win, tails we win.

DAMIAN

Excellent. That's just about it except for Massington v. St. Mary's Hospital-- My baby. I hate to give her up, too, since she's one of the biggest death cases in the state; but I have to to because I don't have enough time-- with all the demands of being president elect of the Bar Association-- To meet the dictates of the pretrial order. Hell, the discovery period closes in sixty days and there are at least ten doctors' depositions alone to be taken.

KANE

(eagerly)

No problem, J.D., I can handle it; and if I can give A.J. some of my less complicated...

(CONTINUED)

DAMIAN

(rising)

I want you and A.J. to work together on this case as co-counsel-- There's enough publicity in it for both of you, not to mention a possible ten million dollar verdict for the firm, if handled properly. I'll resolve any difference in substance or style that you two may encounter. That's all, gentlemen.

Kane and A.J. gather up papers. Kane is visually miffed and throws papers together. A.J., in control, follows slowly; when he reaches the door-

DAMIAN

A.J.

A.J. turns to Damian.

DAMIAN

Take good care of her.

A.J. looks a little confused.

DAMIAN

My baby.

Damian winks; A.J. smiles.

EXT. LAW FIRM PARKING GARAGE -- NIGHT

A.J. walks to his car. Kane is about to pull out of his parking space in a late model Volvo when A.J. comes up along the passenger window. Kane is tense and cold.

A.J.

(chuckles)

What's the matter, Walter, we're all part of the same team. Perhaps I can help.

A.J.'s chuckle turns into a laugh and grows LOUDER as Kane peels off.

EXT. CHERI'S TOWNHOUSE -- NIGHT

A.J.'s car pulls up in driveway behind Cheri's red Mercedes 380 SL. He gets out of his car, has a bottle of champagne under one arm, and is on top o the world. He rings her bell. No answer, rings again, no answer. He looks inside the door window; then he starts BANGING on the door LOUDER and LOUDER. Cheri opens the door wearing a plain robe and looking a bit disheveled.

CHERI

Shhh...

A.J. enters house, looks to the left and right as if he were expecting somebody sleeping that shouldn't be disturbed.

CHERI

(holding hands over ears)
My head.

Cheri turns back to A.J. and heads towards the bedroom. A.J. follows. Cheri enters and drops robe to floor revealing a sexy teddy and plops on the bed face up, exhausted.

CHERI

(moderately hung over)
What are you doing here? I wasn't expecting you tonight.

She takes a cigarette from pack on night stand and lights up.

A.J.

Your line's been busy.

He sees phone off the hook and places receiver back on phone. He sees a martini pitcher nearly empty on the night stand and two glasses, one has lipstick.

A.J.

(moving to side of bed,
visibly upset)
What the fuck's been going on?

No response and Cheri looks away from his piercing gaze.

A.J.

(grabbing her hair and forcing
her too look at him)
Answer me.

Cheri grabs A.J.'s hand away from her hair.

(CONTINUED)

CHERI

Nothing. An old girlfriend came over. We had a couple of drinks-- So what's the crime? I'm innocent until proven guilty, right?

A.J. is very upset and sits on the side of the bed looking away from her. Cheri begins to run hand through his hair.

CHERI

(playing with A.J.)

Ooh, I love it when you get mad. C'mon baby, don't you want to play? What's this?
(looking at bottle of champagne)
So you want to party instead. C'mon. Relax. You know you want to.

Cheri loosens his tie. A.J. puts bottle of champagne on night stand. He gets up to take off his suit jacket. Cheri takes bottle and prepares to open it. A.J. exits the bathroom and we hear running water and SPLASHING WATER on face.

A.J. (O.S.)

Your dad put me on the St. Mary's case with Kane because he doesn't have the time.

CHERI

I don't believe it-- St. Mary's?

SOUND of running WATER STOPS. A.J. exits bathroom, looking refreshed.

A.J.

Yep, Kane was livid. Livid. Thought he'd get it.

A.J. takes off his belt and shoes.

CHERI (O.S.)

I'd say that's a cause for celebration.

A.J. gets into bed and dims the lights. He takes off his glasses.

We HEAR a champagne bottle POP, RUSTLING SHEETS, bottle hit crystal glasses, SOUND of champagne POURING, LAUGHS, MOANS and GIGGLES.

(CONTINUED)

CHERI (O.S.)
Stop that... you're getting it all
over.

A.J. (O.S.)
I'll lick it off.

More KISSING and light MOANING gets heavier.

CHERI (O.S.)
Ooh, it turns me on to make it with
a junior partner.

Amorous sounds STOP. LIGHTS on.

A.J.
(getting out of bed)
Sounds like the voice of
experience.

CHERI (O.S.)
You lawyers, always reading into
things... A.J., what are you doing?

A.J.
(buttoning pants)
Get up and get decent. We've got
to go to my parents. It's Vinnie's
birthday and I promised Mama.

CHERI
(not terribly convincing)
Honey, I want to meet your
parents. I really do. But not
tonight, I'm a mess. You go
without me.

A.J.
Oh shit, it's 10:30 already. Give
me the phone.

EXT. BARASHI HOME -- DAY

Very modest and ordinary small home. A pickup in driveway
and old model Chevy in front. A.J. pulls up behind pickup
and gives a short HONK. A.J. and Cheri get out, both very
stylish in latest tennis dress. The car and outfits look
out of place. Vince and Mrs. Barashi come out of the house
and up to the car. Vince checks out car, overwhelmed, as
Mrs. Barashi gives A.J. a warm hug and kiss and then moves
to do the same to Cheri, who stops the gesture by politely
extending her hand for a handshake.

(CONTINUED)

CHERI

I'm Cheri. Hello, you must be Mrs. Barash.

MRS. BARASHI

(a little embarrassed at first)

Barashi. This is my other son, Vinnie. This is Sherry.

CHERI

Cheri. So you must be the birthday boy. Congratulations.

VINCE

I'm sorry you two couldn't make it last night.

CHERI

Well, my father is working A.J. very hard these days.

VINCE

I know that route.

CHERI

A.J could be the firm's youngest junior partner if he keeps it up.

MARY BARASHI

We're proud of him... both our boys. Come on, you'll meet Mr. Barashi.

She gathers up her flock.

MARY BARASHI

That's some car. The law's been good to you.

INT. BARASHI HOME

Mr. Barashi is seated with a beer, smoking a cigar in a Lazy-Boy watching football. Looks at group and then back to the game. Chatter of announcer throughout.

MARY BARASHI

You want some beers.

A.J. nods yes. Cheri's "yes" is so as not to offend. Mary Barashi goes to the kitchen.

(CONTINUED)

A.J. and Cheri sit on couch next to Sal. Vince takes up chair from the dinner table, sits across from couch.

AJ

Hi Pop. This is Cheri, my girl.

Mr. Barashi nods without interest and resumes watching the game. Mother comes in with beers, hands them to Vince, A.J. and Cheri. A.J. and Vince open cans and take swigs. Cheri tries to open hers with both hands extended out as if it were a grenade. A.J. takes it from her.

A.J.

It's not a grenade.

A.J. takes can, opens it and returns to Cheri. She sips, not enjoying it.

MARY BARASHI

You hungry?

A.J. shakes his head. Mary, undeterred, goes to kitchen, brings out plates of food. Everyone watches TV.

A.J.

(to father)

So what's new? How's business?

SOUNDS of CHEERING from TV set. Sal leans towards the TV.

SAL

(to Vince)

Jesus Christ, did you see that? You can kiss your five bucks goodbye.

He resumes watching the game.

VINCE

So A.J., dd you take up tennis or is it just...love?

A.J.

Very funny. Your jokes are getting worse in your old age. Happy Birthday, Vinnie. Next year we do it right.

VINNIE

(joking)

Next year you'll forget again.

A.J.
Older and wiser. Ahh, but now I
have a secretary to remind
me. Momma, come on over here.

Mother comes over and A.J. motions to Cheri to give him her
purse, which she does. A.J. takes out a watch box and hands
it to Vince.

A.J.
See, I didn't forget.

Vince is surprised.

A.J.
C'mon, open it. It won't bite.

Vince opens box and takes out a watch.

A.J.
It's Movado, and let's see...
(searches purse)
With a little help from my elf,
Cheri, Christmas is coming early
for the Barash--
(embarrassed)
I mean Barashi family. I have a
little something for you...

He hands his mother a ring box.

CHERI
It's a 2 karat topaz in a Tiffany
setting.

A.J.
And for you pop, a gold cigar
lighter from England.

Everybody looks at their gifts like they were white
elephants, except for Mr. Barashi who re-lights his cigar
with matches. Mrs. Barashi tries on the ring. It looks out
of place on her chubby, working woman's hands. Everybody
realizes.

A.J.
Well, don't everybody say thanks
all at once.

No immediate reply.

VINCE

Thanks, A.J., but what's a Movado.

A.J.

Were all of you expecting me to come down the chimney or what?

MARY BARASHI

So maybe you could pay us a visit more than once a year, eh?

A.J.

Sorry Momma.

CHERI

In that case, A.J. and I would like to invite you and your husband to see his new apartment and for dinner next week. You'll love it. There's a lot of space just like a New York Soho loft with wood floors.

SAL BARASHI

A.J. can take his goddamn Soho--

MARY BARASHI

We'd love to! Now come, I have some food.

Vince, A.J. and Cheri rise.

MARY BARASHI

Look at you, skin and bones. You'll eat.

A.J.

Momma, please. We can't because we're going sailing and there's another couple waiting at the dock. Another time, I promise.

A.J. gives his mother a big hug and kiss. She kisses Cheri, Vince kisses Cheri, shakes A.J.'s hand. A friendly parting.

VINCE

(lotto)

She's a real looker, but can she cook?

A.J.

I don't know... say goodbye to Mr. Personality.

(CONTINUED)

VINCE

He's got something up his ass. I don't know. He hasn't been himself lately. You two ought to have a real talk and blow it all off.

Cheri, walking to front with Mrs. Barashi, turns to A.J. and winks.

EXT. BARASHI HOME -- DAY

A.J. opens the car door for Cheri.

CHERI

Barashi?

A.J.

(closes door)

Barashi.

EXT. OPEN WATER - DAY

Gorgeous day. Waters calm. A.J. and Traitz lie on rafts side by side. A.J. wears sunglasses.

TRAITZ

My wife can't find out about this little...

A.J.

Don't worry.

CHERI (O.S.)

Come on, guys. Lunch is ready.

Angle on 34' sailboat anchored nearby with Cheri and Maggie. Both are waving, and very comely attired in their swimsuits.

A.J.

When you got all this, who needs money?

A.J. and Traitz laugh as Traitz turns A.J.'s raft over.

EXT. SAILBOAT COCKPIT -- DAY

Pedestal table out. Cheri and Maggie bringing up and serving food from galley below. A.J. and Traitz pleased with scene as they sit on opposite sides of the table and exchange glances and smiles. They begin to eat and while the girls are standing over them.

CHERI

While you two were soaking up the rays, we were slaving in the galley Now it's our turn.

TRAITZ

What are galley slaves for?

CHERI

(turning sexy derriere to both)

Come on, Maggie, lets go worship the sun before they figure out the answer.

Cheri and Maggie go to the forward deck.

TRAITZ

So who do you worship?

A.J.

I believe in God, but I worship judges.

TRAITZ

Hell, they are God.

A.J.

Or they think they are. What do you know about Walter Kane?

TRAITZ

What do you mean, what do I know? He's a good lawyer, ambitious, aggressive.

A.J.

So what else is new? I mean his personal life, likes and dislikes, vices, needs... who is he after he takes off the lawyer mask.

TRAITZ

This isn't idle gossip, A.J., what are you up to?

(CONTINUED)

A.J.
Just answer the question.

TRAITZ
Hell, A.J., I don't know. Walter manages to keep his private life pretty private.

A.J.
Then he must have something to hide.

CHERI (O.S.)
Have you figured out the answer yet?

MAGGIE
Need any help?

A.J. and Traitz smile at each other.

INT. COURTHOUSE -- GROUND FLOOR -- DAY

We see busy ground floor courthouse activity -- lawyers, court reporters, clients and other personnel and spectators. Some lawyers acknowledge A.J. and Kane with a pat hello or gesture as they make their way to the elevators, briefcases in hand.

One lawyer, ABE AIKEN, poorly dressed, cheap suit, A.J.'s age, accompanied by JAKE SPATZ (poorly, spottily dressed, smoking a big cigar) heads towards A.J.

ABE
A.J.!

A.J. looks, doesn't see Abe.

ABE
A.J.!!

A.J. sees Abe who is now just about at his site. Abe gives A.J. a pat on the back and a handshake

A.J.
Abe, how are you?

ABE
(Brooklyn accent)
You look like I'd like to feel. I've been meaning to thank you for that manslaughter

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ABE (cont'd)
referral. Really appreciate it and
I copped him a good plea.

A.J.
What are law school buddies
for? Anyway, we don't do any
criminal work.

ABE
Sure. You guys have a higher class
of scoundrel.

Kane is impatient and bored through this.

A.J.
Speaking of scoundrels, let me
introduce Walter Kane, a veteran
from my firm. This is Abe Aiken...
(to Spatz)
I don't believe I've had the
pleasure.

ABE
Jake Spatz. He's my private
investigator. Not much to look at,
but I wouldn't try a criminal or
messy divorce case without him.

A.J. looks at watch. The elevator arrives.

A.J.
(to Kane)
We've got ten minutes till the
hearing. Why don't you go up and
I'll see you in five.

KANE
Good idea.

Kane gladly moves on. A.J. throws an arm around Kane.

A.J.
(Brooklyn)
Abee, baby, how are you?

INT. PACKED COURTROOM -- DAY

A.J. and Kane whisper to each other. They are
disagreeing. We hear a moderately audible COLLOQUY between
opposing counsel IAN BAYER (40's, articulate, well groomed)
and the JUDGE.

(CONTINUED)

COURT

Let me hear from you Mr. Bayer for defendant.

BAYER

Your honor, we renew the motion to dismiss. The legislature of this state has spoken: hospitals owned and run by the church enjoy immunity from lawsuits. There is no cause of action for the medical malpractice lawsuit against St. Mary's Hospital in this case and they should be dismissed forthwith.

Focus on A.J. and Kane as they whisper.

A.J.

If the judge lets the hospital out now, we are up shit's creek with ten million dollars in damages and one defendant doctor's five hundred thousand malpractice policy.

KANE

You think I don't know that? Look, we've got a 50/50 chance the judge will find the statute unconstitutional and keep St. Mary's in the case.

A.J.

Bull, it's too hot. With judicial elections next month, every network waiting outside to see what the judge does and 50% of voters registered Catholics, we need more time.

JUDGE WARD

Does the plaintiff want to be heard?

Kane rises slowly, but A.J. is faster. He tactfully pauses Kane's shoulder down, forcing him to sit. A.J. takes pitcher on the table, fills a glass. His hand shakes, he wipes his brow.

A.J.

May it please the court... The legislature writes the laws. Indeed, that is their only function. But only the courts

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

A.J. (cont'd)
construe the written word, and only
this court can decide whether the
law...
(A.J. begins to falter)
Your Honor, may I be seated?

JUDGE
Of course. Are you alright,
sir? Do you want a recess?

A.J. shakes his head no. He sits.

A.J.
This court must determine the law's
constitutionality. That is your
province. California statute
718.304 ...
(A.J. gets weaker)
...giving blanket immunity from
lawsuits to religious institutions
violates constitutional doctrines
of equal protection and separation
of church and state.

A.J. falls to the floor. Packed courtroom is on its feet
and a LOUD RUMBLE is heard.

JUDGE
Get an ambulance! All non-court
personnel are to leave the
courtroom immediately.

Pandemonium is increasing. Kane looks down, sees that A.J.
has a barely perceptible smile on his face.

INT. A.J.'S APARTMENT -- DAY

A.J. is in his bathrobe. He gets a beer from the fridge,
there's nothing else in there.

CHERI
Come back to bed, you need your
rest.

A.J.
Any more rest and you'll kill me!

A.J. walks through his tastefully decorated loft apartment,
the culmination of his success and urge to impress.

INT. BEDROOM -- DAY

Cheri is in bed, under a sweat-soaked sheet that outlines her inviting shape. She pats the bed, inviting A.J. to join her.

A.J. picks up the phone, dials. He cradles the phone by his neck.

A.J.
 Yes, Barbara, I'm fine, thanks...
 Yeah, put me through. Marge,
 A.J. Minding the fort...

Cheri pulls A.J.'s robe off. He adjusts the phone.

A.J.
 Yeah, definitely, I'll be back
 tomorrow... I'm in good hands.

Cheri runs a nail down his back. A.J. jumps.

A.J.
 Stop that... no, not you
 Marge. I'll see you tomorrow.

He hangs up.

CHERI
 You should get sick more often.

INT. OLD OFFICE BUILDING -- EARLY EVENING

An office door with opaque glass and lettering:

"JAKE SPATZ - PRIVATE INVESTIGATION"

The doorknob turns. A man enters, A.J.'s height and build. He carries a briefcase. We only see him from the back.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A.J.'S LAW OFFICE -- NIGHT

We see indistinguishable head and shoulder of a man sitting from behind his back. A light package is plopped on the desk. Man moves forward to retrieve it. We hear it being opened.

It's an envelope. Photographs inside. The man tosses them onto the desk.

(CONTINUED)

We see A.J. at desk, Kane in seat. Expensive scotch on desk.

KANE

n

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

A.J. sips. He slides paper towards Kane. Kane has to reach for it. Kane reads, averts his eyes. A.J. slides a pen to Kane.

KANE

You're mad.

Kane hesitates, then takes the pen from A.J. A.J. takes a shot as Kane scratches a signature.

INT. DAMIAN'S OFFICE -- DAY

Damian reads a letter, tosses it on the desk. A.J. sits across from him.

DAMIAN

Kane resigning from the St. Mary's case. Very interesting... why would anyone as shrewd as him, who's being considered for partnership, pass up this opportunity?

A.J. offers no explanation.

DAMIAN

I think you have learned your lesson well... perhaps too well. With Kane out and my schedule... that leaves you.

A.J. smiles. He has won the game.

DAMIAN

Or we could farm the case out to a malpractice specialist and split the fee.

A.J.

(smile disappears)

And lose all the publicity. I've never met a fee I didn't like... have you?

(CONTINUED)

DAMIAN
I'm listening

A.J.
The key to this lawsuit is to get the judge to find the statute unconstitutional so we can keep St Mary's and their 10 million dollar liability in the case. But the law is against us.

DAMIAN
So argue the facts.

A.J.
But the facts are against us. But I want a shot at this... to win the case.

DAMIAN
This is only one other person that I know who could have pulled this off...

A.J.'s smile returns.

EXT. COURTHOUSE STEPS -- DAY

A.J makes his way down the steps, confident. He's surrounded by reporters and cameras.

FIRST MALE REPORTER
Will you comment on the St. Mary's ruling striking down the religious immunity statute?

A.J.
Judge Ward is a courageous judge, who, despite political and community pressures, has upheld the constitution of this state.

FEMALE REPORTER
Mr. Barash, was it just coincidence that the hearing was post-poned until after the judge's reelection.

A.J. doesn't comment.

THIRD MALE REPORTER
Is it true that the floodgates are now open to suits against churches and other religious institutions?

(CONTINUED)

A.J.

The ruling in this case means that the girl's family I represent, who is still grieving for the untimely and unnecessary loss of life because of the gross negligence of the St. Mary's staff, will have their day in court.

THIRD MALE REPORTER

What about the broader implications?

A.J.

Let 'em buy liability insurance like everyone else.

PRETTY REPORTER

That's pretty crass.

A.J.

I'm a Catholic and I was born at St. Mary's, but one must rise against parochial subjectivity. Sure, lawsuits can now be brought against religious schools and the like, but the benefits will outweigh any chilling effect on our religious institutions. Hell, why shouldn't they be sued if they screw up?
(More questions)
That's all, ladies and gentlemen.

EXT. CHERI'S GARDEN PATIO OF HOME -- MORNING

Cheri and A.J. are seated at the breakfast table. Her maid serves coffee, A.J. eats egg and toast with hearty appetite. Cheri looks at the paper, which has her interest. A.J wears a three-piece suit, she a negligee.

CHERI

What a month. Kane and now this.
(reading)
A.J. Barashi, the latter day dragon slayer, has taken on the legislature and St. Mary's Hospital, and with one swift blow, struck down a law considered by most jurists and politicians as sound as the institutions that it has so long immunized from liability and lawsuits.

(CONTINUED)

A.J. eats, loving the paper. Cheri puts it down.

CHERI

Nothing in there about your "let 'em buy insurance," remark. Jesus, the network news had a field day with that.

A.J.

It was damn good advice. I should bill them for services rendered.

They chuckle. A.J. rises, kisses her goodbye.

A.J.

Gotta go, more dragons are waiting.

CHERI

Just don't get burned.

INT. LAW FIRM -- DAY

A.J.'s law clerk, Lloyd, carries a carton of heavy books. BEN FLYNT (20's, handsome) enters, carrying a potted plant. They enter a nice office, pass Marjorie's nicer and bigger secretarial station.

INT. A.J.'S NEW LAW OFFICE -- DAY

A.J. stands at the window, looking out at the city skyline. He turns to Lloyd and Ben.

His new office is plush. He has arrived.

LLOYD

Thanks, Ben, I appreciate this.

A.J.

Put them over there, Lloyd. The plant goes in the corner.

Ben places the plant, approaches A.J.

BEN

Hello, Mr. Barash, I'm...

A.J.

(shakes hand)

Ben Flynt, the firm's new associate. Call me A.J. Welcome and thanks for the hand.

(CONTINUED)

A.J. ushers Ben out of the the office as Lloyd finishes with the books.

A.J.
Lloyd, have a seat.

They sit. A.J. passes Lloyd a legal pad, Lloyd takes out a pen.

A.J.
This St Mary's case is really heating up, and I need all the help I can get.

LLOYD
Sure thing, A.J.

Lloyd takes notes as A.J. speaks.

A.J.
Outline all of the witness depositions; prepare sample questions for experts, accept standard curriculum vitae. Catalog all the medical exhibits, records and bills, give me a proposed set of medical malpractice jury instructions. That should be all for now.

A.J. nods at Lloyd. Lloyd doesn't leave.

LLOYD
I, uh, aw you on television the other day.

A.J.
Along with a few million other people. So what?

LLOYD
Um...

A.J.
Spit it out, Lloyd.

LLOYD
It was... I was wondering..

A.J. squints like he doesn't believe this.

LLOYD

In law school, when we studied the professional code... it says that an attorney should make every effort to shun pretrial publicity.

A.J.

This isn't law school.

LLOYD

I don't mean anything by it, but--

A.J.

Lloyd... you're kidding. You're not serious are you?

A.J. begins to chuckle. Lloyd nervously joins in as A.J. laughs louder.

INT. RACQUETBALL CLUB LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

A.J. and Damien put on gym shoes. Other gym patrons move in and out.

A.J.

Thank for the new office, J.D.

DAMIAN

Now we can bill you out at \$250 an hour and get away with it... By the way, when I was at the meeting of Bar's Executive Committee in Sacramento the other day, I saw you on the tube after you won the St. Mary's hearing. Great press coverage statewide and quite a feather in your cap.

A.J.

Thanks. Couldn't have done it without your guidance. I owe you a lot.

Damian smiles like he knows something A.J. doesn't.

INT. GLASS-ENCLOSED RACQUETBALL COURT

Damian is about to serve. He and A.J. are intensely into the game.

(CONTINUED)

DAMIAN

Game point.

A.J. nods, Damian serves. They battle for the last point. Damian keeps the ball moving with less effort than A.J. Finally, Damian finesses a shot to win the point and the game.

A.J. shakes Damian's hand.

DAMIAN

Kid, you could still learn a few tricks from an old timer.

A.J.

Come on, Teach, I'll buy you a drink.

INT. RACQUETBALL RESTAURANT

A.J. and Damian, now wearing warm up jackets, sit at a table.

DAMIAN

How'd you pull it off before Judge Ward?

A.J.

I got the hearing set over until after the judge was re-elected. After that it was downhill. I argued the violation of church and state, and I guess he bought it.

DAMIAN

Interesting choice of words. Anyway, I did research as well... I think the judge erred and the statute is constitutional so the hospital will appeal an unfavorable jury verdict. The appeal will take about two years and they will file a supersedous bond in the interim. We won't see a cent.

A.J. deflates.

DAMIAN

And if the court of appeals reverses Judge Ward's ruling, you

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DAMIAN (cont'd)
can use any money judgment we get
to wipe your ass.

A.J. realizes Damian is right.

DAMIAN
On the other hand, St. Mary's and
the entire Catholic Church risk
losing a lot more than \$10 million
at stake in this one case. Because
if they do lose the appeal, they'll
face lawsuits up the ass... and
religion is big business.

A.J.
So what does it all mean?

DAMIAN
They'll settle with us for seven to
ten million, leaving the judge's
ruling without any precedential
value. In other words, it never
happened.

A.J.
(excited again)
So Ward's ruling will get us \$7 to
\$0 million in a settlement we might
not otherwise have gotten?

Damien nods.

DAMIAN
So you can see why that result was
well worth ensuring.

He pulls out a plain envelop, hands it to A.J.

DAMIAN
When you see the judge next week,
give it to him. He's expecting it.

A.J. opens the envelope. It's full of money.

DAMIAN
Fifty grand.

A.J. is speechless as Damian stares, feeling him out,
waiting for a reply.

A.J.

Hell, I don't know, J.D., I've done a few shady things I'm not too proud of, but bribe a judge?

DAMIAN

Hell, they have to make a living too. Listen, I remember it wasn't easy for me the first time either, but this is the major leagues, so play ball. I know you can do it.

A.J.

I guess it'll just take a little getting used to.

DAMIAN

I've got to run. See you and Cheri for dinner, Sunday. My wife is really looking forward to it, you're becoming a regular part of the family.

Close on A.J. and the envelope of money.

INT. A.J.'S BEDROOM -- DAY

A.J. packs a small overnight bag on his bed. Cheri, seated on bed, looks on.

CHERI

Why can't I go with you?
(no reply or response)
Talk to me.

A.J. takes a drag off her cigarette, then another.

CHERI

What's wrong? I've never seen you like this?

A.J.

Look, sweetheart. I need to see an old law school buddy and some time alone, but I'll be back in time for dinner tomorrow night. Alright?

CHERI

No, it's not all right unless you tell me what the hell is going on.

A.J. closes the suitcase. He sits next to Cheri.

(CONTINUED)

A.J.

(looking for an understanding)
Your old man wants me to pay off a
judge in the St. Mary's case.

CHERI

That's it? A little tit for tat
and you're falling apart? What are
you made of? Milk toast?

A.J.

I don't believe I'm hearing
this. A bribe to you is business
as usual

CHERI

I don't believe I'm hearing
this. A.J. the saint? I don't buy
it. You hypocrite, after what
you've done without any
encouragement at all from daddy.

A.J.

You're comparing apples and
oranges.

CHERI

Wrong, A.J.. It's fruit from the
same poisonous tree; and you've
already taken a bite from the
apple. There's no turning back
now.

A.J.

The law is sure no garden of Eden..
and you have to do what you have to
do.

Cheri unbuttons her blouse and it drops. She throws her
hair back. As she undoes her bra...

CHERI

Besides, baby, you've got too much
to lose to throw it all away now.

She runs her hands over A.J.'s body.

A.J.

You're a chip off the old block.

CHERI

Like father, like daughter.

INT. A.J.'S CAR -- DAY

A.J. drives down the Pacific Coast Highway.

A.J. smokes, drives fast. The shiny new Porsche doesn't look clean. The overnight bag is on the seat, by the dirty butts.

The car zips north.

SERIES OF SHOTS -- HASTINGS LAW SCHOOL

A.J. sits, meditative. A stark contrast between the compromised lawyer he's become and the serene ivory tower of law school.

Naive law students laugh and have fun

A.J walks by a cafe, hears conversation within.

A.J. walks past studious students in a law library. He touches old books, fondly.

A.J. walks down a corridor, turns out of sight.

INT. YALE GRANO'S OFFICE -- DAY

A.J. sits across from Yale. The desk is cramped, the office is modest. Yale clears books and papers to make more room.

YALE

It's good to see you.

A.J.

Figures. You always were the studier... and now an assistant professor? Not bad, Yale?

YALE

Yeh. And you're the one making all the money.

They both laugh.

YALE

So what brings you back to the alma mater?

A.J.

Nostalgia.

(CONTINUED)

YALE

Could have fooled me by the sound
of your call. Beer?

A.J. nods. Yale goes to a mini fridge. A.J. lights a
cigarette.

A.J.

I'm going with the senior partner's
daughter, who is the sexiest thing
on two legs. I got an office the
size of the law library; drive a
new Porsche, and am living in
Malibu.

YALE

Oh, I see... That's the problem.

A.J.

It's the price I pay. Lying,
stealing and cheating.

YALE

I always thought you were good at
it. You remember Professor Abel's
zealous vs. zealous distinction in
class. Where were you that day?

A.J. gives him a look. He look through a law book.

YALE

Anyway, forewarned is forearmed...
Being a lawyer is like being a cop
or a politician. You're always
being tempted by money and
power. Some have the courage to
say no, some don't.

ON THE BOOK: CODE OF ETHICS - CONFLICT OF INTEREST

A lawyer shall not... (the rest of the page's fine print is
obscured).

INT. LAW SCHOOL BUILDING - ENTRANCE TO CLASSROOM

A.J. walks down a corridor, passes a classroom door. He
stops. The door reads "Ethics - Professor Abel"

A.J. peeks in the classroom, which is empty. He enters,
slowly moves to his old seat. He sits.

(CONTINUED)

On the blackboard. That long ago writing appears: ZEALOUS BUT NOT OVERZEALOUS. He recalls the voices he's heard before.

PROFESSOR ABEL (V.O.)

Where do you draw the line? Unfortunately we can't teach you to act like a lawyer. Do forgive me, Mr. Barash, for trying.

CHERI (V.O.)

There's no turning back now. Besides, baby, you've got too much to throw it all away.

A.J. (V.O.)

What's wrong with wanting more than this? It's the American dream?

DAMIAN (V.O.)

I remember it wasn't easy for the first time either. I know you can do it.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DAMIAN'S HOUSE -- DUSK

A.J.'s Porsche pulls up the circular driveway, past the beautiful grounds and fountain. A gray Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud convertible and a black limo are parked out front.

INT. DAMIAN'S-- FOYER

A.J. is dressed in a sports coat and sport shirt. Cheri looks her best, as usual. They are greeted by Damian and his WIFE. She is beautiful and elegant, the perfect hostess.

WIFE

(kisses Cheri)

Good to see you honey. Wonderful to see you again, A.J..

A.J.

(kisses her hand)

You look lovely as usual.

WIFE

I'm so glad you could make it. We...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

WIFE (cont'd)
(glances at Cheri)
were worried you wouldn't get back
in time.

DAMIAN
No problem when you've got a
Porsche.

CHERI
And he wouldn't think of missing
the maid's cooking.

Chuckles.

DAMIAN
Come on in.
(To Cheri and Wife)
I'm sure you two have some catching
up to do while A.J. and I go in the
study.

We follow them in and see more of the elegant home and
furnishings. We pass a dining area where a maid and butler
put the finishing touches on the magnificent dining room
table and settings.

INT. DAMIAN'S HOME (STUDY)

Richly decorated with fireplace and wood floors. Despite
the opulence, A.J. is not impressed. Damian goes to the
bar.

DAMIAN
Bourbon?

A.J.
Fine.

A.J. looks at the framed photos on the wall. Damian comes
over with the drinks.

DAMIAN
There's Judge Robinson holding up
the swordfish he caught on our
yacht that day. And there's me and
Judge Ward at his hunting lodge in
the Carolinas. You've got to get
close to your judges.

They sit on the leather sofa.

(CONTINUED)

A.J.

Among other things.

DAMIAN

Next month I'm being sworn in as the new Bar Association President. The executive committee wants a young lawyer and a rising star on the dais as an introductory speaker. We all agreed that you'd be perfect.

A.J.

I'm flattered, I really am. I always wanted to follow in your footsteps. And I've even looked up to you like a father.

DAMIAN

Now I'm flattered.

A.J.

There's just one problem. I don't think you're fit to be a lawyer, much less President of the Bar.

A.J. takes out the envelope, rises to his feet. He throws it at Damian.

A.J.

Here, you give this to judge Ward. I quit.

INT. HALLWAY OF DAMIAN'S HOME

A.J. storms down the hall, stops at the entrance to the living room. Cheri and her mother look up, startled.

A.J.

I really thought I could do it, but I can't. Let's go home.=

CHERI

This is my home. Goodbye, A.J.

INT. A.J.'S LAW OFFICE -- DAY

A.J. dressed in jeans, packs up his things into a box. He looks relieved, at peace.

INT. LAW OFFICE HALLWAY.

A.J. carries out his belongings. He spots Cheri chatting with Benny Flynt, she's seductive. A.J. and Cheri make brief eye contact.

INT. A.J.'S APARTMENT -- DAY

A.J. sits at the kitchen table, sipping coffee in his bathrobe. The table is covered with resumes, circled classified ads. The phone rings.

A.J.

This is A.J. Barash... thank you for returning my call. Mr. Brooks, that's right. I am seeking a new position... I'm available immediately.

He checks his date book. Blank.

A.J.

I'm sorry, 9:30 AM on Wednesday is impossible, could we make it for lunch instead?Goodbye.

He hangs up, bites his donut.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

A crowded gallery; JUDGES, LAWYERS, shady looking clients. Sitting to the side of the judge is EARL, A.J.'s law school buddy.

A plaque: JUDGE EATON PRESIDING.

DEFENSE LAWYER

The Fourth Amendment forbids unreasonable searches and seizures. If the government, as in this case, becomes a lawbreaker, it breeds contempt for it's own laws. Therefore, the heroin must be suppressed, for it is a lesser evil that my client go free than to

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DEFENSE LAWYER (cont'd)
encourage scurrilous government
drug enforcement activity in the
name of the law.

The judge leans towards Earl to confer. He has tennis shoes on, his tennis bag by his feet.

JUDGE
I'll take it under advisement. You
can expect a ruling in one week.

The judge rises.

BAILIFF
All rise!

Everyone rises. The judge walks out, avoiding the crowd. Earl gathers his papers. A.J. approaches dressed casually, out of place.

A.J.
Earl.

EARL
What a surprise. What are you
doing in San Diego?

Earl heads to A.J.. A.J. stops him, gestures to the Judge's chair.

A.J.
Wait, sit there.

Earl gives A.J. a look, but sits in the Judge's seat.

A.J.
Looking good. Now I can report you
to the Bar for impersonating a
judge... unless you buy me lunch.

EARL
And I'll report you for making a
bribe.

They laugh.

INT. LUNCHEONETTE -- DAY

The place is packed with the lunch rush from the nearby offices. A.J. and Earl eat.

EARL

I can't believe he wanted you to bribe a judge.

A.J.

Not a word. To anyone.

EARL

A.J., that's the conspiracy of silence Professor Abel mentioned. Were you there that day?

A.J.

You been talking to Warren?
(off Earl's confusion)
Never mind. Anyway, Abel doesn't have to go before presiding judges and maintain a good working relationship with other lawyers.

EARL

Read it, A.J.. The Code of Ethics dictates that you report the judge and the lawyer to the Bar.

A.J.

I've got to be able to work in this community, too.

EARL

With your credentials and experience, law firms will line up to wine and dine you. The important thing is you've gotta shave your mug in the morning, and if we don't police our own, who will?

A.J.

Not me, buddy. I'm a lawyer, not a martyr or a cop.

INT. A.J.'S LIVING ROOM -- DAY

A.J. smokes on the couch in his underwear. He dials a number, gets no response, hangs up, dials another number.

A.J

Gina, it's A.J.... hey, better late than never. I'm sorry, listen, let me make it up to you. Remember that little Italian place...

(disappointed)

Oh, are you two serious? Maybe another time. Bye.

A.J. dials another number.

A.J.

Hi Vinnie, what's doing? How's Mama and Pop? That's good... Let's get together, I'll tell you all about it.

(disappointed again)

Oh...

(interested)

Sure, if he wouldn't mind... in the morning! Are you crazy... All right, but give me a wake up call.

EXT. SMALL FISHING BOAT -- DAWN

A.J., Vince and Mr. Barashi are seated in a modest boat with beer and a fish cooler. They're dressed in worn shirts, shorts, and sneakers. The lake is calm, we see the beauty of the water. The guys cast lines, rebaiting as necessary.

SAL BARASHI

A.J., listen, nobody said life was going to be easy.

A.J

Yeh, but nobody said it would be this difficult either.

SAL BARASHI

I did, but you weren't listening because you figured that being a lawyer with a WASPy name would spare you from the tough choices the rest of us have to make.

(CONTINUED)

A.J.

Even if I did turn them in, what difference would it make; another stinking judge and lawyer is like a fart in a windstorm.

SAL BARASHI

If you didn't give a damn, why'd you refuse to deliver the bribe?

A.J.

I didn't want to dirty my hands.

SAL BARASHI

Yeh, but can you have clean hands if you let it become a dirty profession?

A.J.

Pop, if you were me?

SAL BARASHI

When you were about nine years old you were playing ball with some kids outside the house. I cam home from work that day and the picture window as busted. I asked you what happened and you talked your way out of it. Even then you had a mouth. I didn't say anything, but I knew. Two days later, you came to me with your hands stretched out, holding your piggy bank. I was never more proud of you in my life... So whether you follow the code of ethics, your conscience, or if you say the hell with it all, the decision has to be yours alone.

A.J.

You're a big help.

SAL BARASHI

Son, find the A.J. you really are, and then I know you'll do what's right?

A.J.

(excited)

I got a hit.

All eyes turn to A.J. as he flicks his rod and begins to reel in.

(CONTINUED)

A.J.
Ooh, he's a fighter!

SAL BARASHI
Takes one to know one. Come on,
son. Not to fast now.. That's it.

Sal reaches over the side with the net and scoops up the fish.

SAL BARASHI
He's a beauty.

VINCE
You lucky S.O.B.. One fish in two
hours.

SAL
Good thing they weren't running
today. We had a lot that needed to
be said.

A.J. and his father embrace.

SAL BARASHI
So what are your plans now, son?

A.J.
A fish fry.

SAL BARASHI
Seriously.

A.J.
Well, I'm going to enjoy the slow
track for a few days while sending
out resumes.

SAL BARASHI
If you ever need a job, I can
always add an "S" and change the
name to Barashi and sons...

They all laugh.

INT. LAW OFFICE RECEPTION ROOM -- DAY

A.J. walks into a downscale reception area. He approaches the sliding window, talks to the motley receptionist.

(CONTINUED)

RECEPTIONIST

Yes?

A.J.

I'm A.J. Barash.

RECEPTIONIST

You selling something?

A.J.

No, I'm here to see Mr. J.B. Barranco.

She checks the calendar.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm sorry but I don't see anything here.

A.J.

Please check again. I have an appointment for 3 o'clock. It's a job interview.

RECEPTIONIST

Be seated.

She closes the window. A.J., miffed, takes a seat next to a FAT MAN in a neck brace.

FAT MAN

You hurt yourself too?

(A.J. doesn't answer)

Yep, Barranco will get you some bucks, Man. Yessirreee, he's the best.

RECEPTIONIST

Mr. Williams, come in please.

Fat man gets up, stretches his neck in all directions (apparently not restricted). A.J. shakes his head. Long moments pass. The receptionist calls to him.

RECEPTIONIST

C'mon in.

INT. J.B. BARRANCO'S OFFICE

Personal injury attorney's office with a skeleton, X-ray screen, blackboard, intersection and plastic cars, etc.

A.J. looks around as J.B. BARRANCO reviews his resume.

BARRANCO

Great resume, A.J. Too great. What are you doing here?

A.J.

I need a job. Since I left the Damian firm a couple months ago, frankly, they haven't been knocking my door down with offers.

BARRANCO

Why did you leave?

A.J.

Let's just say we had a conflict of interest.

BARRANCO

You know this firm pays half of what you were getting over there?

A.J.

Money isn't everything.

BARRANCO

I'll keep you in mind.

INT. A.J. BEDROOM -- LATE AFTERNOON

A.J. is sprawled on the bed, ignoring TV soaps. The place is a mess, ashtray overflowing. The phone rings.

A.J.

A.J. Barash residence. Oh shit, it's you. I was expecting a law firm to call after sending out a hundred resumes... no, not a nibble. I'll try not to, Vinnie. Yeh, later.

A.J. hangs up and pours himself a double. He's weary, increasingly desperate.

INT.BEDROOM -- NIGHT

A.J. is asleep in his darkened room. The phone rings four times before A.J.'s eyes open. He picks up the phone, upside down.

A.J.

Yeah?

He realizes his mistake, flips it around.

A.J

Damn you, I'm only two payments behind. I am looking. Don't you touch the car. You'll get your money.

A.J. (PRELAP)

I'll sue the bastards.

INT. A.J. BEDROOM -- MORNING

A.J. is sprawled out on bed in drunken sleep and degradation. He has hit the lowest point possible. A knock is heard, it gets increasingly LOUDER.

A.J.

(holding his head)

Stop... Stop it!

He staggers to the front door. The house is a pigsty. He opens the door, sees a POLICE OFFICER, papers in hand.

POLICE OFFICER

Are you Antonio Joseph Barashi,
also known as A.J. Barash?

A.J

(hung over)

SO I didn't pay a parking ticket,
or what?

POLICE OFFICER

You are hereby served with an order
to show cause before the Bar
Association, why you shouldn't be
disbarred for violating the code of
ethics.

A.J. grabs the papers, reads.

You are missing page 103... sorry.

(CONTINUED)

A.J.
Foreclosures on the courthouse
steps, Monday, 4:30.

TRAITZ
You always were the clever one.

A.J.
Were?

TRAITZ
You're in a heap of
trouble. Blacklisted by lawyers
and the bar wants to take your
license.

A.J.
You know?

TRAITZ
Everybody knows.

A.J.
What the fuck is going on?

TRAITZ
You went after the powers that
be. Should have let sleeping dogs
lie.

A.J.
Lie is right. Christ, my whole
world is coming down... what in
God's name am I going to do?

TRAITZ
Get yourself a good lawyer.

Traitz walks off. A.J. bows his head, dejected.

INT. COURTHOUSE -- OUTSIDE COURTROOM -- DAY

Abe Aiken, dressed a notch better than previously seen, is
conversing with another attorney, CARL.

ABE
Look, Carl. He's a first offender,
so gimme a break: a six month
suspension and a private reprimand.

(CONTINUED)

CARL
This one's political. They don't
want to deal.

ABE
Who are "they."

CARL
Let's go. The hearing is about to
start.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

A sign: BAR GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE

A.J. sits at the defense table with Abe.

ABE
They want your scalp. They
rejected our offer outright.

A.J.
Not even a counter?

Abe shakes his head.

BAILIFF
All rise.

THREE ROBED JUDGES walk to their seats situated above
all. The judges sit, all others follow suit.

BAILIFF
State of California Bar Association
v. Antonio Joseph Barashi.

CHIEF JUDGE
How do you plead?

ABE
Not guilty of unethical conduct to
the degree that would warrant
disbarring an attorney.

FEMALE JUDGE
Then you don't deny the factual
allegations as charged?

ABE
No, your honor, we do not, except
to characterize them as little more
than an office turf fight and a

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ABE (cont'd)
courtroom strategy that went a bit
too far.

CARL
A euphemism for extorting an
associate and gross
misrepresentation to a court by
feigning an illness.

CHIEF JUDGE
One attorney at a time, please. Am
I to understand from the pleadings
that your defense to these
proceedings is some form of
entrapment and malicious
prosecution?

MALE JUDGE
Frankly, I am puzzled by your
position as well.

A.J.
Your Honor, if you don't already
know they're going after me, not
because I betrayed the code--

Judge bangs gavel.

A.J.
But because I followed it.

CHIEF JUSTICE
From now on you will be silent and
proceed through your attorney.

ABE
(sotto, to A.J.)
The lawyer who acts as his own
attorney has a fool for a
client. Now sit.

A.J. sits.

You are missing page 107.

CARL (CONT'D)
Mr. Barash being disbarred.

CHIEF JUDGE
Inasmuch as the defense has
admitted the factual allegations
and proffered no case law in
support of...

(CONTINUED)

FEMALE JUDGE

(cutting in)

While I recognize the novelty of the defenses, I am not sure they are wholly without merit. I would feel more comfortable if this court would defer ruling pending further inquiry.

CHIEF JUDGE

In deference to you, Madam Justice, very well. The matter is continued, pending further notice.

BAILIFF

All rise.

Abe whispers to A.J. as the justices file out.

ABE

One judge out of three is a shot.

A.J.

Yeah, to my head.

ABE

You should have let me deny the allegations.

A.J.

(making gesture)

I've had it up to here with lying.

The judges are gone. Abe gathers papers.

ABE

But by making them prove their case, I could have cross examined Damian and company.

A.J.

Who would they believe? God's gift to the legal profession or me?

(Abe nods)

Nobody else would take this case. I'm really glad you did, whatever happens.

ABE

(a troubled smile)

What are law school buddies for?

INT. BAR -- EVE

A.J. drinks bourbon. The ashtray shows he's been there awhile. A pretty YOUNG WOMAN makes eyes at him, but A.J. doesn't react so she moves on.

The old bartender switches shifts with a new one.

BARTENDER
What'll it be?

A.J.
(boozed)
Same.

BARTENDER
Sorry, we changed shifts-- Hey,
aren't you A.J. Barash?

A.J.
Bourbon. Double.

The bartender pours. A.J. grabs the bottle.

A.J.
Leave it.

BARTENDER
I've seen you on TV. Remember me,
Mike Ollinger? We graduated
Hastings Law together.

A.J. glances, but is too drunk to remember.

BARTENDER
I haven't found a job yet. Tough
market. But boy, have you got it
made.

A.J. lowers his head in favor of his drink. The bartender moves on, irritated.

BARTENDER
(sotto)
He was always a shit...

A.J. downs his drink, sloppily pours another. He goes for his cigarettes, but he drops them to the floor. He puts them back in his pocket, lights one, looking pathetic.

GINA enters the restaurant with DATE. She's dressed nice, but unsophisticated. Her date, older, is similarly dressed, but waspy in contrast with her Italian appearance.

(CONTINUED)

A.J. barely manages to get to his feet. He goes to the table where Gina and her date have been seated by a hostess. He gets to their table.

A.J.
Gina... Gina...

She puts the menu down. She sees A.J. and is shocked.

A.J.
(waving bottle)
Can I buy you a drink? Come on, I owe you a drink.

DATE
Who is this guy?

A.J.
What, no introductions? My name is A.J. Barash, attorney at law. Can I buy you a drink.

He begins to pour a drink into an empty glass on the table, but knocks over a glass of water. Gina sops it up with a napkin.

GINA
A.J., what's the matter with you?

A.J.
What's the matter? What's the matter? Everything's the matter. But...
(re: bottle)
I've made a good friend, Bourbon and...

He looks at Date.

GINA
William

A.J.
What a lovely name. It's so...Ah, I know, un-Italian.

A.J. looks at the bottle, talks to it.

A.J.
You remember me?

He drinks straight from the bottle. He begins to cough and throw up, heaving.

GINA
I'm sorry, he's an old friend and
I've got to take him home. Call me
tomorrow.

INT. A.J. BEDROOM -- MORNING

A.J. sleeps in a well-made bed. The room is clean and orderly.

Gina watches vigil at A.J.'s side. He moans, then his eyes open.

A.J.
Where am I?

GINA
(jokingly)
Home, I just cleaned a bit.

A.J.
How'd you...

GINA
You passed out and I checked your
driver's license. The valet
remembered your car and here we
are...

A.J.
(in pain)
Oh. How long have I...

GINA
A day and a half.

A.J.
Jesus.

He props himself up. Gina moves to adjust his pillows. A.J. sticks out his tongue, touches it with his finger.

A.J.
Do you need to file your nails?

GINA
You're getting your sense of humor
back. That's a good sign. I'll be
right back.

(CONTINUED)

A.J.
Where are you going?

GINA
To get some nail polish, of course.

A.J.
And you haven't lost yours, either.

Gina comes back with a breakfast tray and a wet towel. She wipes his face, begins to feed him.

A.J.
What would I do without you?

GINA
You manage...

A.J.
To screw up. Where did you...

GINA
I went...

A.J.
Will you let me finish a sentence? Okay, go ahead.

GINA
I've been in and out of the apartment. Beer didn't give me much to work with. Besides, I enjoy driving your car.

A.J.
Yum, I love your cooking.

GINA
It wasn't enough, though. What happened to us, A.J.?

A.J.
What append to me. I wanted too much, too fast and I wanted the wrong things.

GINA
There's nothing wrong with wanting to better yourself.

A.J.
There's more to it. I completely lost sight of what's important,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

A.J. (cont'd)
like family and friends, right and
wrong. I saw that as a chain
holding me down.

GINA
I don't understand. I saw you on
TV and read about you in the paper
and it looked to me like you were
doing fine. You could use a maid,
but besides that...

A.J.
My senior partner wanted me to
bribe a judge that was on the
take. I refused and quit my job.

GINA
So? There's other jobs.

A.J.
But as an officer of the court, I
was obligated to report it to the
Bar. So I did.

GINA
That was the right thing to do.

A.J.
Don't you see? The legal
profession is not what it appears
to be.

GINA
What are you talking about?

A.J.
Because I did what I did, nobody
will give a job. Nobody. And I'm
being disbarred.

GINA
(embracing A.J.)
My god... what are you going to to?

A.J.
I'm not sure.

GINA
Maybe you could find some ethical
attorney who's willing to help.

A.J.
Easier said than done... what time
is it?

GINA
9:30.

A.J.
What day?

GINA
Wednesday, why?

A.J.
Today is the day the Bar is having
it's convention in San
Diego. There will be lawyers from
around the state. My name is Mud
in L.A., but maybe I can open doors
elsewhere.

A.J. rises, but his hangover is a killer.

GINA
You're in no condition to drive...
So I will. Come on, let's get you
cleaned up.

INT. A.J.'S CAR -- DAY

The car speeds down the freeway. Gina drives. The top is
down, music on. He and Gina exchange a friendly smile

EXT. CONVENTION CENTER -- DAY

The sign out front: WELCOME BAR ASSOCIATION

EXT. FREEWAY -- DAY

The car turns off the freeway via the San Diego exit.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER AUDITORIUM -- DAY

A packed hall, attorneys and their spouses. Lots of guys in
ties. They applaud.

On stage there's a table with six very distinguished
persons, four men, two women, two chairs empty. Judge wad
and Judge kane shake hands at the podium. Jack Damian
seated nearby.

EXT. CONVENTION CENTER PARKING LOT -- DAY

A.J. and Gina pull up, park, get out. They head to the door. Gina points out that he left his jacket, A.J shakes his head. He's perspiring from the underarms and forehead.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER ENTRANCE

A.J and Gina approach two hostesses. He flashes his bar card, gets in.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER AUDITORIUM -- DAY

A.J. and Gina sit in two empty seats, just forward of the middle.

Judge Ward is at the podium, delivering a speech.

WARD

During my 19 years on the bench and 14 years as a member of the bar, I have enjoyed many honors, but I would have to think long and hard to find one that compares to the privilege of knowing and working alongside Jack Damian. While many of you know his reputation as one of the state's finest trial attorneys, I have had the pleasure of working with him professionally over many years and while we don't always agree on matters of law...
(grins at Damian)
I am always right.

Laughter.

WARD

Because I am the law. Seriously, win or lose, Jack always evinces the highest degree of professionalism. He is truly a lawyer's lawyer and a wonderful, giving, loving family man. His lovely wife and daughter are with us today.

Cheri and Mrs. Damian stand, acknowledge mild applause. Benny Flynt sits next to Cheri.

(CONTINUED)

WARD

And without further ado, let me introduce our next speaker, and perhaps to be the finest Bar Association President we've ever had -- Mr. Jack Damian.

Damian takes the podium, to applause

DAMIAN

Thank you Judge Ward for your many accolades and praise... you are always right. Except for that one time you thought you were wrong, but were really right.

Laughter. Damian looks at the various luminaries.

DAMIAN

Governor, Congresswoman, Mayor and all the Brothers and Sisters of the the Great California Bar Association, thank you for taking the time to be here today... don't worry, if we break soon you can still get in 9 holes.

Laughter.

DAMIAN

Seriously, now... I, no, we, can no longer sit idly by as our profession continues to ignore the pressing problems facing us today. First, we must recognize these evils, and secondly,. aggressively and unselfishly address them, one by one, until we restore honor and dignity to the careers and lives that lawyers once enjoyed.

Applause.

DAMIAN

After all, lawyers are the guardians of the law. It is our biggest and over-riding obligation to to maintain and set the highest standards of ethical conduct.

On A.J. and Gina.

(CONTINUED)

A.J.
I don't believe I'm hearing this.

ON DAMIAN.

DAMIAN
And we must aspire to these
fundamental guidelines and have the
courage to judge the transgressors
of these principals. Each lawyer
must be guided by his own
conscience. We can permit no
compromise.

A.J. gets to his feet. Gina tries to stop him, but to no
avail. Damian sees A.J.. He and Judge Ward exchange
worried glances.

A.J.
This man is a fraud!

A.J. points at Damian. The audience is shocked.

A.J.
(re: Ward)
That man is on the take.

Damian whispers an instruction to a security man. A.J.
approaches the podium.

A.J.
This whole thing is a farce and a
circus and do you want to know why?

DAMIAN
(losing composure)
Stop him.

Security guards grab A.J.

A.J.
Don't you even care enough to want
to know why?

A.J. shakes off the guards.

A.J.
Jack Damian gave me \$50 thousand to
bribe Judge Ward in the St. Mary's
case who had agreed to the deal.

A.J. and Cheri quickly exchange contemptuous glances.

(CONTINUED)

DAMIAN

Get him out of here now.

Ian Bayer, seated at the table, rises.

IAN

I was on that case.

(To guards)

Wait, I, for one, want to hear this.

A series of different angles. A.J., audience, and dais. A part of A.J.'s monologue is off-screen.

A.J.

Can't you smell the stench in here from a profession gone rotten? The legal business lives of the miseries of other people - clients, ha -- who we won't help unless they have the bucks... and only then if we can fit them in between reading the Wall Street Journal or golf or cheating on our wives. Law school, what a joke - and we are the laughing stock. Cases aren't decided by applying well-reasoned legal principles to the facts, it's whether you play racquetball with a judge on Saturdays and lose for his ego, and if that doesn't work, you can slip him a plain envelope... the most persuadable argument of all, Money.

A.J. gestures.

A.J.

Inside every courtroom in the state it says "Here we labor for the truth." That's the biggest lie of all. Lawyers lie to each other, then to judges, even to ourselves, and it's gotten so we can't tell any more where the truth ends and the bullshit begins. It's all the same, nobody gives a damn; because if you do stand up and say enough is enough, you'll starve to death out there. Believe me, I know. Oh, if you're wondering about the ending, I refused to deliver the bribe, quit my job and

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

A.J. (cont'd)
reported the bastards to the bar
and now not one of you will give me
a job and they're taking my license
to practice law away. Well don't
bother, you can have it!

He takes bar card, rips it up, drops the pieces to the
floor. The room is dead silent for a beat.

DAMIAN

This is preposterous. He's
mad. Take him away.

The guards begin to usher A.J. away. He offers no
resistance. He passes Gina, they exchange touching glances,
like Christ carrying the cross, and A.J.'s head bows.

Gina begins to clap very slowly. Soon we hear another
person join in, and another and another until the whole
building is clapping loudly. Gina smiles.

Camera pans to audience.

Someone stands, then somebody else, and soon the entire
audience is giving a standing ovation.

Angle briefly on Professor Abel, standing and clapping.

Close on an exhausted but triumphant A.J., looking around
him, absorbing all. The guards are gone.

HOLD SHOT.