

ELI STONE

"PILOT"

WRITTEN BY

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NETWORK DRAFT

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OUR STORY BEGINS:

On a scenic countryside in the middle of nowhere. Little brown HUTS and wandering VILLAGERS dapple the meadow. In the distance are some of the most beautiful snowcapped mountains in the world. A title card reads: MUNDOLI VILLAGE, INDIA.

A WOODEN CART passes FRAME, REVEALING...

A MAN (mid-30s) dressed in a well-tailored HUGO BOSS SUIT, sitting on a five hundred year-old bench, surrounded by LUGGAGE, and looking nonplussed by the whole affair.

This is ELI STONE. You'll like him.

A pair of ANCIENT LOOKING SHERPAS tug three MULES into view. They stop in front of Eli. Waiting. He rises.

ELI

Are you my guides?

(no response, louder)

I'm Eli Stone.

(even louder)

E-LI STONE! I arranged a trek through the Ranikhet Travel Agency! I'm going to the base of the Panch Chuli peaks!

The Sherpas begin tossing Eli's luggage onto the mules.

ELI (cont'd)

That's a laptop so you might want to --

BANG. CLUNK. Eli winces, grabs a BACKPACK from one of the Sherpa's hands. A mini tug-of-war ensues.

ELI (cont'd)

I'll carry this one myself, thanks.

The Sherpa lets go. Eli turns and struggles to climb atop one of the mules. As he does:

ELI'S VOICE

Hello. You don't really know me, but that's okay. Until a few months ago, I didn't really know me, either. So let's start with the basics. My name is Eli Stone and I'm an attorney.

Eli FLIES OFF the other side of the mule, LANDS with a THUD. A beat and he POPS back INTO VIEW. Reassuring the Sherpas:

ELI

I'll just walk it for a while. I've been sitting for the last thirty-six hours.

The Sherpas pay him little mind as they begin their trek. MUSIC UP: Something cool and alternative that hasn't already been used on "Grey's Anatomy."

EXT. ANOTHER HILLSIDE. A LITTLE LATER.

Our THREE BRAVE JOURNEYMEN crest the hill (Eli tugging his mule to keep up).

ELI'S VOICE

For the last eight years, I've practiced at a firm in San Francisco: Wethersby, Posner and Klein. Unless you own a huge company that's screwed over a little guy, you probably haven't heard of us.

Eli gazes out over the SEA OF CLOUDS disrupted only by MOUNTAINTOPS. He turns to a Sherpa.

ELI

Could you take my picture?

Eli takes out one of those airport Kodaks.

ELI (cont'd)

(to Sherpa One, pointing)
Hold THIS BUTTON DOWN and the LIGHT will go on when it's READY TO FLASH. Then...

Eli's instructions DROWN OUT as the Sherpa turns to the other and SPEAKS in his native dialect.

SHERPA NUMBER ONE

(subtitles)

Like I've never used a disposable before?

SHERPA NUMBER TWO

(subtitles)

Some days it's hard to believe these guys are leading the free world.

Eli stands at the ridge. The peaks in full glory behind him.

ELI

What do you think? Sunglasses?

(takes them off)

No sunglasses.

SHERPA NUMBER TWO

(subtitles)

It's gonna be a long week.

ELI'S VOICE

Let's see... attorney, San Francisco... oh, did I mention I recently found out I could be a prophet?

The Sherpa SNAPS ELI'S SHOT (sans glasses). It FREEZES.

ELI'S VOICE (cont'd)

Yeah. I was shocked, too.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL GYM. DAY. (1984).

PAN across a paper sign that hangs loosely from the ceiling. It reads, in red marker: "DEBATE CLUB FINALS."

ELI'S VOICE

Sure, as a kid I had what you might call a certain "way with words." But no one ever called that way prophetic.

ON STAGE, Eli (age 12 and bespectacled) leads his RAGTAG TEAM against BLAZER-LADEN OPPONENTS from a private school. A group of JUDGES watch on as Eli speaks with conviction.

ELI AT TWELVE

Which is why our nation should begin now investing in renewable energy sources. At our current rate of consumption, in twenty years our entire foreign policy will be dictated by our addiction to oil. The only Americans sure to profit from all of this will be the fat, pasty white men who run the oil companies. The kind of unscrupulous ciphers whom my opposing team here will no doubt grow up to be.

Eli winces at the last part. Knows he's said too much.

ELI'S VOICE

And I wasn't raised religious...

INT. THE STONE FAMILY ROOM. LATER. (1984).

ON A DEBATE TROPHY as Eli places it on a shelf. He nurses a BLACK EYE with a BAG OF ICE in the other hand.

ELI'S VOICE

My mom was a non-practicing Jew. My dad was a practicing alcoholic. This, of course, did wonders for their marriage.

There's LOTS OF SHOUTING coming from the next room. Eli goes to the crack in the door, but the door is CLOSED IN HIS FACE by his older brother, DAVID (15).

DAVID

You shouldn't be listening, assmunch.

ELI AT TWELVE

What did he do this time?

DAVID

They found him in the park wasted and trying to set the ducks free.

ELI AT TWELVE

But the ducks are free.

DAVID
That's the point, buttwich.
(notices)
What happened to your eye?

ELI AT TWELVE
I got into a fight with the other team.

DAVID
You got beat up by a debate team? Man,
you're only gonna get laid, like, never.

More YELLING IN THE B.G. and a CRASH. Eli cringes.

ELI'S VOICE
In college, I thought I saw God once...

INT. ELI'S DORM ROOM. NIGHT. (1991).

ON a STANFORD PENNANT. PAN OFF and nearby...

ELI'S VOICE
But that coincided with the same night I
tried pot brownies and hooked up with
this totally hot girl from UCLA.

...to ELI AT NINETEEN (a little cuter, but still with those
awful glasses). He lies on a couch with said UCLA GIRL.

ELI AT NINETEEN
I know a lot of people think they're
gonna change the world. But I really am.
That's why I want to be a lawyer. The
entire mechanism of our society is built
on laws --

TOTALLY HOT UCLA GIRL
Are we gonna mess around? Because I'm
getting kinda tired...

INT. ELI'S DORM ROOM. THE NEXT MORNING. (1991).

Eli scribbles something. UCLA Girl checks her watch.

ELI AT NINETEEN
Here's my number and my address. Also, I
belong to Prodigy and if you join we can
write letters to each other over the
computer. It's called electronic mail.

TOTALLY HOT UCLA GIRL
(off a horn)
There's Steph's car. I'll call you.

And she's outta there.

ELI'S VOICE
Surprisingly, I never saw her again.

Eli drops back onto his bed. Depressed.

ELI'S VOICE (cont'd)
I guess for most of my life, God, Allah,
Yahweh and me had what's considered in
legal terms a "covenant not to interact."
He left me alone and I left him alone...

INT. ELI'S CRAPPY APARTMENT. (1996).

PAN across STACKS of BOOKS to a RINGING PHONE. The hand that
picks it up belongs to a full-grown Eli (24, his cutest yet
but still with the glasses). Into the phone:

ELI AT TWENTY-FOUR
Where are you guys? I've been waiting
for two hours. I have a life, you know.
Granted, most of it's spent in a law
library, but I do have one.

DAVID (OVER PHONE)
Eli... it's Dad.

ELI'S VOICE
Then God breached the contract.

ELI AT TWENTY-FOUR
What did he do this time?

INTERCUT David (now 27) on the other end. Looking somber.

DAVID
Drove his car into a building at the end
of Main Street. You have to come home.

ELI AT TWENTY-FOUR
I'm giving my law school's valedictory
address, I'm not coming home to help Dad
nurse a few broken bones. You're the
doctor, you do it.

DAVID
Eli... he's dead.
(a long beat)
This is the worst timing ever... but Mom
needs you, I need you. Don't be your
usual moronic self and do something
you'll regret the rest of your life.

ELI
Don't worry. I won't.

Eli hangs up the phone. As he takes it all in:

LAW SCHOOL DEAN (PRELAP)

It is with great honor that I introduce editor of the Stanford Law Review and a future graduate of the Stanford Law School Class of 1996... Elijah Stone.

EXT. GRADUATION CEREMONY. STANFORD LAW SCHOOL. DAY. (1996).

A SEA OF CAPS beneath the bright sunny sky. There's APPLAUSE as Eli takes the podium. He hides his heartbreak. Resolute.

ELI AT TWENTY-FOUR

Today we celebrate our beginning as the lawyers, politicians and thinkers who will reshape the 21st Century...

As Eli continues, the CAMERA PANS OFF HIM to the beautiful landscape of SAN FRANCISCO BAY and THE GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE.

ELI'S VOICE

After that day, I never talked to my dad, or God, again.

(beat)

Then six weeks ago, I heard the music.

PULL BACK to reveal it's the VIEW FROM INSIDE...

INT. A KICKASS SAN FRAN HIGH-RISE OFFICE. SIX WEEKS AGO.

A capacious office befitting one of the nation's largest and most prosperous firms. A confident ELI stands WITH HIS BACK TO US, staring out. He gives dictation into a microrecorder:

ELI

Insert caption. Opening paragraph. Defendant Westland Health Insurance, comma, Inc., I-N-C-period, comma space,

Somewhere, A TUNE PLAYS. Eli stops, listens, turns around. He's now the guy from the opening: more handsome than cute and, thanks to Lasik, no more glasses.

ELI (cont'd)

Open paren, hereinafter, quote, Westland, close quote, close paren, pursuant to Rules 26 and 33 of the Federal Rules of --

Again, the MUSIC PLAYS. Again, Eli stops. Listens.

ELI (cont'd)

Patti!

Enter PATTI (40, Latino), Eli's formidable assistant.

PATTI

There's an intercom, Brando. I swear, it's like we work in a dry cleaners.

ELI

Do you hear that music? It's been playing in my office all morning.

PATTI

What music?

They both listen. It's gone.

ELI

There was music playing. I was hoping maybe you could do something about it.

PATTI

You want me to do something about music I don't hear.

ELI

Forget it. Is my 2:30 here?

Eli puts on his suit jacket, looks for a file, etc.

PATTI

They're in the conference room. Also, your girlfriend called.

ELI

Tricia called? Why didn't you tell me?

PATTI

You told me not to bother you.

ELI

Since when does Tricia bother me?

PATTI

Oh, that's right. I was thinking of me.

ELI

Okay. That's it. From now on, there's a moratorium on discussion concerning my future fiancée. That includes e-mails...
(off her look)
And nasty facial expressions. And not telling me when she's on the phone --

PATTI

You take all the fun out of this job.

BEDRAGGLED ATTORNEY (PRELAP)

Sixty thousand? You've gotta be kidding.

INT. W.P.K. CONFERENCE ROOM. DAY.

An even more OBNOXIOUS VIEW than Eli's dwarfs BETH KELLER (early 30s) and her pudgy BEDRAGGLED ATTORNEY.

On the opposing side of the oak table sits: MATT DUNN (35), illegally attractive and a dick in Brioni.

BEDRAGGLED ATTORNEY
Sixty thousand?

MATT
 Saying the number twice doesn't double it, y'know.

Eli's a few seats away, doodling on his legal pad.

BEDRAGGLED ATTORNEY
 You're gonna have to add another zero.

MATT
 Okay. Sixty thousand plus zero equals... sixty thousand.

BEDRAGGLED ATTORNEY
 What about eighty--

BETH
 I need to talk with my lawyer.

MATT
 Fine. But he's gonna tell you to take the offer. He's gonna do that 'cause he knows you won't win this in court, hell, he's never even been in court, least not as an attorney, especially not as one with experience suing a multi-million-dollar insurance company, which is probably something he omitted from his Yellow Pages ad.

Beth looks to her attorney, her errant knight...

BEDRAGGLED ATTORNEY
 I've been in court.

BETH
 Sixty thousand is the tip of the iceberg which has sunk my family, Mr. Dunn. My son has autism. He needs Risperidone every day; he needs a speech therapist, a regular therapist; he needs a predictable schedule which limits the kinds of jobs that I, as a single mother, can take. And none of those jobs pay for his medical expenses which, alone, are close to sixty thousand per year.

AND THEN IT HAPPENS -- Eli's MUSIC RETURNS. It's CLEARER NOW... SOMETHING LIKE ORGAN MUSIC. Eli perks up.

ELI
 Does anyone else hear that?

Everyone turns to Eli. They'd almost forgotten he was here.

ELI (cont'd)

The music. It's like organ music or something...

But it's gone now. They look at Eli like he's nuts.

BEDRAGGLED ATTORNEY

My cell phone plays "Ode To Joy", but it's on vibrate.

MATT

Sixty thousand is our final offer. It's what these cases are typically worth.

BETH

Then the entire Internet must be lying.
(off a stack of papers)
Edwards vs. Lompoc Medical, 375,000.
Paulson vs. Lancaster Health, 456,000.
Bishop vs. Davis Insurance, Mrs. Bishop bought an island with her judgment.

ELI

It was a house.
(off Beth)
It was on an island, off the coast of South Carolina, I think, but it was just a house.

BETH

It's so nice to see you have something to offer, Mr. Stone. Apart from pointing out music that isn't there.

ELI

Ms. Keller, do you know the first thing I learned about litigation?

BETH

Clients won't know if you pad the bill?

ELI

Okay. The second thing. The only people who benefit from litigation are lawyers. Everyone else, the plaintiffs, the defendants, the clients, they lose time, pieces of their lives, to say nothing of attorneys' fees. We get our money now, but it'll be five years before you see Nickel One. Because if you win, we'll appeal. And if we lose on appeal, we'll appeal again. And each appellate court moves slower than the one before it.

(beat, empathetic)

We can go as high as ninety thousand. I sincerely recommend you take it and get on with your life.

Eli walks out of the room, with Matt less than a step behind.

MATT (PRELAP)
That. That was something else.

INT. W.P.K. OFFICE SUITES. RIGHT AFTER.

As Eli and Matt keep pace through the labyrinth of cubicles we get an even greater sense of the firm's mammoth size.

MATT
The way I played bad cop and you played schizo crack head with a heart of gold.

ELI
You really didn't hear that music?

MATT
The only thing I heard was you upping the offer because the opposing party recited us the plot from some Lifetime movie.

ELI
Ninety is still fifty grand south of what Westland would settle for.

MATT
I don't care if it's a billion dollars south. Their money is our money.
(stopping, smiles)
I like you Stone, not in a friend way or anything, but I like you. So I'm gonna let you off with a warning this time: You ever do something like that again without consulting me, and I'll toast you faster than a fuckin' pop tart. Got it?

ELI
The metaphor is lacking but I'm pretty sure I get the general sentiment.

Matt CHUCKLES a fratboy CHUCKLE and turns. As he goes,

MATT
My advice? Pop the question soon, buddy. I think the stress is getting to you.

And WE GO CLOSE ON: AN ENGAGEMENT RING. The kind women talk about days after they've seen it. REVEAL WE'RE:

INT. JARDINIERE RESTAURANT. NIGHT.

Eli awaits, along with THE RESTAURANT (including SOME WAITERS and a VIOLINIST), the answer of his life from TRICIA WETHERSBY (30). Think Nicole Kidman by way of Connecticut.

ELI
Trish. Any day now...

TRICIA
I'm thinking, Eli...

ELI
Thinking? You helped me pick out the ring. And the restaurant. You even made the reservation.

TRICIA
I know, but that was all theoretical. Now it's actually happening... Kids.

ELI
I don't want them. You know that. If you do, then we have to seriously --

TRICIA
Me? It's you I'm worried about. I want it in writing.

People start to look away. Going back to their meals.

ELI
You want a "no-kid" prenup?

TRICIA
A woman that says she doesn't want kids, says so in the face of countless baby showers, disappointed family members, and girlfriends who look at her like she's an alien. Guys say they don't want kids and it's half-expected. A remnant of their waning bachelorhood. Then, years later, when their testosterone levels decrease and the estrogen kicks in, some five-year-old holds their hand to cross the street and suddenly the condom just happened to have a hole in it.

Eli sighs. Then simultaneously, Eli and Tricia reach for cocktail napkins and start scribbling and talking fast...

ELI
"This Prenuptial Agreement shall be deemed effective by and between the signed Parties..."

TRICIA
...In consideration of the promises, undertakings and payments stated herein..."

ELI
...The Parties agree as follows: No dependents. Individual compliance to be left to the Parties' own discretion." We can insert the recitals later.

TRICIA
So you won't even consider a vasectomy?

ELI

The whole point of a prenup is to keep sharp objects away from my testicles.
"This Agreement has been made and entered into in the State of California..."

TRICIA

"...Signed under seal as of the date first written above."

(hands him the napkin)

Sign here.

He does. Passes the napkin back. As she signs, *Eli realizes everyone in the place is staring, slack-jawed.*

ELI

She, uh, said yes.

Tricia starts to cry as any Bride-To-Be would.

TRICIA

I'm just so... happy!

The VIOLINIST plays. A WAITER tentatively claps, prompting a smattering of APPLAUSE from the CONFUSED PATRONS.

ELI

(grabs the napkin)

Don't smear the ink, honey.

And then it happens AGAIN. Eli HEARS THE ORGANS. Then, OTHER INSTRUMENTS. It's the BEGINNING OF A FAMILIAR POP SONG. And we SMASH TO BLACK:

ELI (V.O.) (cont'd)

(winded)

The music?! Do you hear the music?!.

TRICIA (V.O.)

(more winded)

Yes! Yes I hear the music!

INT. ELI'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM, NIGHT.

A light FLIPS ON. Eli and Tricia were screwing. Eli hops out of bed. Pacing the room. Tricia is very confused. The MUSIC PLAYS ITS LOUDEST YET. Eli RECOGNIZES IT AS...

ELI

George Michael! It's George Michael!

TRICIA

George Michael?! What are you talking about, Eli?

Somewhere... "Cause you got to have faith, faith, faith..."

ELI

The guy from WHAM. His song, "Faith"!
It's playing! Don't you hear him?!

TRICIA

Are we role playing like in Miami? Do
you want me to get the feather duster?

ELI

You really don't hear the music?
It's coming from the living room!

He exits. Tricia calls after him:

TRICIA

I'm glad something's coming!

INT. ELI'S APARTMENT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Eli, wrapped in a sheet, enters the room to find,

GEORGE MICHAEL

standing on his coffee table. Finishing a chorus:

GEORGE MICHAEL

(singing)

Yes I got to have Faith, Faith, Faith --

And then, in a flash of an eye, George is gone.

Eli stares at the empty room. Blinks a few times. And
passes out. His head HITS the coffee table with A BANG.

SMASH TO BLACK.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWOFADE UP ON:

Eli's FACE. Uncomfortable. Claustrophobic. He's inside

INT. AN MRI MACHINE. DAY.

Eli waits impatiently as the machine WHIRS. A VOICE BOOMS:

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
If you build it. He will come.

ELI
Not funny, dickhead.

INT. DAVID'S DOCTOR'S OFFICE. LATER.

Eli's brother DAVID (now a tired-looking adult) studies the MRI of ELI'S BRAIN. Eli sits on a table, listening.

DAVID
Aside from the mild concussion you got from hitting the coffee table, you're what we call in medical terms, "fine."

ELI
I can't be fine.

DAVID
No, you're still a tool, but there's no surgery for that. Have you called Mom to tell her you're engaged yet?

ELI
I will.

David grabs his brother in a choke hold, noogeying his head.

DAVID
Say it like you mean it.

ELI
Okay, I'll call her! I'll call her!

David lets him go. Both reverting back to adulthood.

ELI (cont'd)
I can't be fine, David. GEORGE MICHAEL WAS IN MY LIVING ROOM. Isn't there anything else you should check for... what if I have some dormant STD that's causing a lesion on my brain?

DAVID

Stop watching HOUSE. There's nothing medically wrong with you. You just got engaged. You're under pressure at the firm. This is stress.

ELI

Stress gives you premature greys. It doesn't make legendary British popstars sing their greatest hits from your couch.

DAVID

You want my real opinion, this is typical Bonehead Eli. You're doing great at work, you finally decide who you're gonna spend the rest of your life with, and consciously or unconsciously, you don't feel like you deserve to have it all, so you take a dump all over it.

ELI

That is not true. And I'll stop watching HOUSE when you stop watching OPRAH.

David snatches the x-rays and exits. Eli calls after him:

ELI (cont'd)

What am I supposed to do if George Michael comes back?

DAVID (O.S.)

Get an autograph. And call Mom!

It's MUSIC that CARRIES us to...

INT. ELI'S OFFICE. DAY.

Eli's at his desk, wearing BOSE EARPHONES and listening to an IPOD (protection from George). Patti pauses his music.

PATTI

(hands a piece of paper)
That's the number for my acupuncturist. Dr. Chen. He's in Chinatown. He's a miracle worker. He cured my friend Viv of her tennis elbow and her constipation in one visit.

ELI

Good for Viv. But I don't believe in that stuff, which is a requirement since its only effect is placebo.

PATTI

For a guy with auditory hallucinations you're awfully judgmental.
(on her way out)
Your two o'clock is here.

ELI

I don't have a two--

He looks up to see that Patti's been replaced by BETH KELLER.

ELI (cont'd)

Don't say anything.

(to the door)

Patti!

(back to Beth)

Don't speak, it'd be an *ex parte* conversation. You're represented by counsel.

BETH

Not anymore. I fired him this morning.

ELI

Then have your new attorney contact me. In the meantime, have a nice day. Patti can validate your parking.

Eli holds the door open for Beth. She sits.

BETH

Your associate is an ass, but he was right. I need someone who's in the same league as Wethersby, Posner if I'm gonna win this. And I think I've found him.

(off Eli's look)

He graduated valedictorian at Stanford Law, clerked for Ginsburg, he's an eighth-year associate at a blue chip firm.

ELI

That's me. You're talking about me. Why are you talking about me?

BETH

I want you to take my case, Mr. Stone.

ELI

That's.... that's impossible! I can't sue my own client. There's, like, an entire canon of ethics prohibiting it, and I'm pretty sure they call it a canon because it can kill me.

BETH

Shapiro vs. Ryter, Overmyer vs. Fordes, an article from the 2003 Harvard Law Review...

ELI

You need to stay off the Internet, lady.

BETH

The firm sets up something called a "Chinese Wall," you can represent me --

ELI

That only works if the lawyer has no prior involvement in the case. That was me on the other side of the table, remember? Involved.

BETH

I can pay you.

ELI

For what we bill, you couldn't afford this conversation.

Beth studies him with a sweet, knowing look.

BETH

You're the first lawyer, the only lawyer, to react to my situation with even an ounce of sympathy.

ELI

Ms. Keller, the policy you signed leaves how to treat your son's condition up to the insurer, not you. If they want to deny coverage, that's their legal right. So even if I did want to help you, which I don't, your case is... unwinnable.

BETH

(a beat, discouraged)
Oh, well. I had to try, right?

Beth goes for her bag, sad and a little humiliated. Eli goes back to his work, pretending not to notice.

BETH (cont'd)

Good-bye, Eli.

Her tone gives him pause. Eli looks up to answer her... but she's gone. He's about to go back to his work when he hears:

GEORGE MICHAEL

(singing)
I got to have Faith, Faith, Faith.

GEORGE is as LOUD AS EVER. And coming from RIGHT OUTSIDE...

EXT. W.P.K. GENERAL OFFICE AREA. CONTINUOUS.

Eli's head POPS OUT. He can't believe what he sees.

REVERSE ANGLE -- Where Eli would typically find a sea of DESKS, ASSISTANTS and LEGAL AIDES, he now finds a GEORGE MICHAEL VIDEO in his office.

George is atop the center desk. The LEGAL AIDES and ASSISTANTS are, well, his DANCERS.

GEORGE MICHAEL

(singing)

*Before the river, there comes an ocean...
I need someone to hold me but I wait for
something more! Cause I gotta have
faith, faith, faith.*

And then, IN A SPLIT SECOND, it's ALL GONE. The dancers, the lights, everything... replaced with ELI'S BORING LAW OFFICE.

SMASH TO: ELI'S FACE with several ACUPUNCTURE NEEDLES. We're

INT. DR. CHEN'S ACUPUNCURIST. DUSK.

Dimly lit. Eli is prostrate on a table. In the corner, a SMALL ASIAN MAN works attentively. This is DR. CHEN (40s).

ELI

Your place is not that easy to locate.
I'm no marketer, but a little signage
would do you wonders.

DR. CHEN

People who need find Dr. Chen. Now,
relax. Close eye.

ELI

(beat, getting it)
Oh, relax. Close eyes.

DR. CHEN

You smart, must be good lawyer.

Chen approaches with the last few needles. As he applies:

DR. CHEN (cont'd)

George Michael has great meaning to you.

ELI

No.

DR. CHEN

Yes. You no remember.

ELI

I no remember because he doesn't.

DR. CHEN

Past no past. Past, present, future.
All the same. Understand?

ELI

I wasn't a fan of science in high school
and that was without needles in my face.

DR. CHEN
You must make peace George Michael.

ELI
(this is fucking crazy)
Any ideas how I'm supposed to do that?
Maybe I should call his publicist.

DR. CHEN
Shhh. Dr. Chen help you remember.

Dr. Chen places in one last needle and LIKE A FLASH, WE'RE...

INT. ELI'S COLLEGE DORM ROOM. 1991 (FLASHBACK).

SOUNDS of MACKING carry us to the double bunk bed where Eli
(at nineteen) awkwardly tries to remove UCLA GIRL'S sweater.

TOTALLY HOT UCLA GIRL
(as Eli struggles)
Is this your first time?

ELI AT NINETEEN
No. Of course not.
(then)
How do you define first time?

TOTALLY HOT UCLA GIRL
If you've never had sex before.

ELI AT NINETEEN
Oh... okay. Yeah, maybe it is.

TOTALLY HOT UCLA GIRL
I thought so. We need some music.

She hops off the bunk and over to his boom box.

TOTALLY HOT UCLA GIRL (cont'd)
(spots one, excited)
You have a George Michael CD. What are
you doing with a George Michael CD?

ELI AT NINETEEN
It's my roommate's. He's in theatre.

She goes to load the CD. Eli hops off the bed. Fretful.

ELI AT NINETEEN (cont'd)
Wait. I can't lose it to George Michael.

TOTALLY HOT UCLA GIRL
Then we can just make out.

ELI AT NINETEEN
Or it could make the whole experience
more memorable.

TOTALLY HOT UCLA GIRL
You're really cute, Eli. In a geeky,
late bloomer-ish sorta way.

ELI AT NINETEEN
I've bloomed.

Faith plays in the B.G. She pushes Eli back onto the bed.

TOTALLY HOT UCLA GIRL
Not yet you haven't. But you will. By
the time you're that lawyer changing the
world and stuff... you're gonna be hot.

ELI AT NINETEEN
Yeah? How do you know so much?

TOTALLY HOT UCLA GIRL
It's just obvious. Most of life is. We
all just pretend like it isn't.

As she KISSES HIM AGAIN and WE CUT TO: BETH KELLER'S FACE.

EXT/INT. BETH'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

She's just opened her front door to find ELI STANDING THERE.

ELI
UCLA, 1991! You were Lizzie then, not
Beth. You had a different last name
because you weren't married. You were a
blonde, not a brunette. And we had sex
to George Michael. It was fifteen years
ago. But it was you. I know it was you.

He studies Beth's face, waiting for a response.

BETH
I wasn't blonde. They were highlights.

ELI
Why didn't you say something?!

BETH
It's not like you remembered me. And I
didn't exactly ever call you back.

She heads inside, Eli follows.

ELI
Why didn't you ever call me?

BETH
Eli, it was fifteen years ago. I barely
remember it. You barely remember it. We
were both stoned on pot brownies and we
had a random college hook-up.

ELI
So you just use me for sex and then toss
me aside like --

BETH
Like most guys want?

ELI
I'm not most guys.

BETH
No, you're just most lawyers.
(scoffs)
You said you were gonna change the world.

ELI
I thought you barely remembered it. And
I am gonna change the world... I just
have to make partner first.

BETH
I'm sorry I didn't call you. I wish I
had. Maybe then my life wouldn't have
turned out as crappy as it did. Is that
what you came to hear?

ELI
(yes)
No.

Eli sees something in the other room. He moves off to...

INT. BETH'S LIVING ROOM. CONTINUOUS.

The CAMERA PANS a WALL of CHILDREN'S BLOCKS. The wall is
FOUR FEET HIGH and runs the LENGTH OF THE ROOM. The blocks
spell out DOZENS of RANDOM WORDS.

Constructing the wall, is Beth's eight-year-old autistic son,
WILLIAM. Eli approaches him, crouching down. William pays
Eli no mind. Even when he speaks, he never looks at Eli.

BETH
William, this is Eli.

William places another block. Still not looking up.

ELI
Hello, William. You like blocks?

WILLIAM
Words. There's over 500,000 in the
English language.

ELI
That's a lot. They should collect them
all in a book or something...

William doesn't smile. His autism doesn't permit it.

WILLIAM

That's not counting names. I'm counting them with names.

Eli rises. Looks at Beth, his heart breaking.

ELI

He's not... I'm not...

BETH

(ironically)

Yeah, I was pregnant for eight years.

ELI

Come by my office tomorrow. Ten o'clock.

BETH

You're taking the case?

ELI

No. I'll be getting fired because I'm gonna request to take the case.

BETH

Look. I want you to do this, but if you're just doing it out of pity or sympathy --

ELI

It's not sympathy... There's over 500,000 words in the English language. And that's not counting names.

Eli looks back toward the living room.

ELI (cont'd)

The blocks. Left side. Fourth row down.

Eli exits. Beth approaches her son and his wall of words. A curious look crosses her face as she reads.

And then we see what Beth sees... Left side. Fourth row down. The blocks read...

RAIN SALLY FIRE MAKE PEACE GEORGE MICHAEL

Off Beth, not quite understanding. But we do.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREEFADE UP ON:

NINE HUMOURLESS FACES (eight men and one woman). Of course, they must be ATTORNEYS. WIDEN to REVEAL, we're

INT. W.P.K. CONFERENCE ROOM. DAY.

Sitting opposite this firing squad, we find Eli and Matt. JORDAN WETHERSBY (60s), the smooth Senior Partner who built the practice and half of San Francisco, speaks first:

JORDAN WETHERSBY

I don't understand. Is there some kind of problem with the case?

ELI

No. The case is going great.

JORDAN WETHERSBY

The sole exception being, of course, that you wish to switch sides.

ELI

I like to think of it as bringing in a new client.

(Eli smiles, they don't)
Even though I'm completely aware my request might seem a little... unusual.

JORDAN WETHERSBY

"Unusual" was Mirick's sex change operation in '93.

(to the other partners)
Remember how inconvenient it was to get all his business cards reprinted?

Forced CHUCKLES to make the boss feel good. Eli presses on.

ELI

We represent clients with conflicting ~~JORDAN WETHERSBY~~ interests all the time.

JORDAN WETHERSBY

Is that the Japanese Wall you were talking about?

ELI

Um, Chinese.

MARCI KLEIN (50s), the only woman (barely), chimes in:

MARCI KLEIN

Whichever. In those situations, the clients can pay.

ELI
What happened to this firm's commitment
to pro bono work?

JORDAN WETHERBSY
We've found it conflicts with our
commitment to making money.

More CHUCKLES. And then, A DINGING SOUND. Like A BELL at
the START OF A BOXING MATCH. No one notices. Except Eli.

ELI
(eyes closing)
Oh no.

JORDAN WETHERBSY
Mr. Stone, are you okay?

ELI
Fine. Fine. Totally fine.

DING, DING, DING. "Casually," Eli tries to glance around --

JORDAN WETHERBSY
Mr. Dunn, you're atypically quiet.

MATT
Yeah. Sorry. I was just redecorating
Stone's office in my head.

Eli follows THE DINGING SOUND until he SPOTS PATTI escorting
BETH AND WILLIAM through the office.

MATT (cont'd)
This is all a big waste of time. No
judge in the known universe is going to
allow him to represent a woman who is
already suing one of our clients.

As Eli studies WILLIAM, THE DINGS SUDDENLY STOP.

JORDAN WETHERBSY
Mr. Stone... your rebuttal.

ELI
(an idea hitting)
He's right. No judge would allow me to
represent Beth Keller...

JORDAN WETHERBSY
In that case, we're done here --

ELI
So let me represent William Keller.

MATT
That's ridiculous. The kid didn't even
sign the policy.

ELI

But he's a beneficiary of it and therefore can assert a claim for promissory estoppel: Westland has an equitable obligation to provide him with the coverage he needs.

MATT

His mother signed a policy which --

ELI

The policy language isn't relevant to an estoppel claim. This is a new cause of action, a new case, one William's mother's not a party to. What she signed is no longer relevant.

MARCI KLEIN

Westland Insurance is one of our biggest clients. They're worth 1.3 million in billables annually.

JORDAN WETHERBSY

(correcting her)

1.6 million. Explain to me, Mr. Stone, the rationale for upsetting a client of that magnitude, on a case which is a complete and utter loser?

Eli is prepared for this part. Sliding files forward --

ELI

Battles vs. Millennium, Powell vs. Hampton, Levinson vs. DeVeau...

JORDAN WETHERBSY

(reading, confused)

These are judicial opinions that have no bearing on insurance law.

ELI

These are cases we've handled in the past. Specifically, you've handled, Mr. Wethersby. Cases you built this firm on.

(a tense beat)

This firm used to represent parties on the other side of the "v." It used to represent the little guy. You didn't always do it to win. My guess is, sir, you did it because it was the right thing to do. I'm not asking for any new dispensation here. I'm asking for this firm to honor its heritage and let me represent the kind of client that built our reputation, not our bank account.

A tense beat. Jordan smiles tightly, a little cornered.

JORDAN WETHERSBY
 Perhaps you're right. Perhaps this firm
 could benefit from the good P.R. that
 representing a lost cause might generate.

BETH (PRELAP)
 You want to represent my son?

INT. ELI'S OFFICE. MINUTES LATER.

Where Eli assures Beth,

ELI
 I can't represent you because you're
 already suing my other client.

BETH
 But wouldn't William be doing that?

ELI
 It's technical. If you want, go to law
 school and after three years and a bar
 exam we can have this chat or you can
 just take my word for it.

BETH
 The partners really said yes to this?

ELI
 Barely. But yeah, they said yes.

ANGLE WILLIAM playing with the paperclips on Eli's desk.

BETH
 He won't have to testify?

ELI
 No.

BETH
 And you think we have a better chance of
 winning this way?

ELI
 Not really, but the odds of me getting
 fired have significantly improved.

BETH
 (smiles, to William)
 What do you say, Willy? Wanna hire Eli?

William doesn't even look at his own mother as he talks.

WILLIAM
 It's 10:34. We have to go.

BETH
 (back to Eli, rising)
 That's a yes. We visit the parrots on Telegraph Hill a few times a week, it's best not to disrupt his routine.

ELI
 There's parrots in San Francisco? Like wild parrots?

BETH
 You really don't get out much, do you? I guess we'll see you in court.

They share a smile. As Beth and William exit, Patti enters.

ELI
 Don't say anything. What's that?
 Patti's just placed A PHOTO on Eli's desk.

PATTI
 My daughters, Blanca and Sophia. You remember them. Darling girls that are going to go hungry because their single mom is about to lose her job because her boss is having some kind of early mid-life crisis that compels him to commit career suicide instead of cheating on his fiancée, who I don't like very much.

And then, DING, DING, DING. Eli stops, excited.

ELI
 There it is again! The bell! The bell that told me to represent William!

PATTI
 A bell told you? Y'know, you have a lot of vacation days stored up. I hear Hawaii is beautiful this time of year.

But Eli's focused on THE BELL, which SOUNDS as if it's coming from OUTSIDE HIS OFFICE. Eli walks out...

INT. W.P.K. OUTER OFFICE AREA. DAY.

Eli enters, his eyes going as WIDE as WE'VE EVER SEEN.

REVERSE ANGLE -- smack in the middle of the SEA OF DESKS and BUSY EMPLOYEES is, well, um...

A SAN FRANCISCO TROLLEY CAR

It DINGS a FEW TIMES. The EMPLOYEES don't seem to notice or care. Eli walks toward the trolley. As he does, he hears:

A MALE VOICE
(calling from far away)
C'mon, Eli... Hurry up!

Eli walks steadily toward THE TROLLEY and begins TO CLIMB ABOARD when, IN A SPLIT SECOND... the TROLLEY IS GONE.

Eli LOOKS AROUND and sees PATTI looking at him with concern. Another glance reveals the ENTIRE OFFICE is STARING. That's when he realizes... he's STANDING on SOMEONE'S DESK.

ELI
(beat; points up)
This, uh, fluorescent's flickering a bit... Someone should get it replaced.

And we SMASH TO: ELI'S HAND KNOCKING FURIOUSLY ON A DOOR...

EXT. DR. CHEN'S OFFICE. CHINATOWN. DAY.

The door opens, DR. CHEN pops his head out.

DR. CHEN
I have patient, you come back half hour.

ELI
You were supposed to make me better. I'm trying to make peace George Michael and now I got trolley cars in my office!

DR. CHEN
You go regular doctor? Dr. Chen not MRI.

ELI
I got one. I'm fine...
(hears something, looks)
Why is your TV on if you're with a patient... You're watching soaps!

DR. CHEN
(busted)
This big week. Karen and Cisco finally get married.

INT. DR. CHEN'S ACUPUNCURIST. A LITTLE LATER.

Eli's back on the table. Chen hovers above, sticking away.

ELI
There was a voice this time. It was telling me to hurry up.
(beat)
I'm pretty sure it was my dead father.

DR. CHEN
Mmmmmmm.
(goes for something)
Dead parent different needle.

ELI

You don't understand. My father was an aimless drunk who ruined everything he ever touched. He's the last person I need to be hearing from right now.

DR. CHEN

No good hate dead people. Relah. Think good memory father. Dr. Chen help ungrateful son --

Dr. Chen places in one last needle and LIKE A FLASH, WE'RE...

EXT. A SAN FRANCISCO STREET. DUSK. 1984 (FLASHBACK).

CLOSE ON: A YOUNG BOY as he barrels out of a grocery store LOADED DOWN with BAGS. We recognize him as ELI AT TWELVE.

MR. STONE (O.S.)

C'mon, Eli... Hurry up!

Eli races to where his father, MR. STONE, boards a TROLLEY.

INT. TROLLEY CAR. MOVING. A LITTLE LATER. (FLASHBACK).

The father and son sit side-by-side. Eli looks nervous.

ELI AT TWELVE

I hate the trolley. It goes too fast down the hills.

MR. STONE

Think of it as an adventure.

ELI AT TWELVE

Adventures make my stomach sick.

MR. STONE

Your mother told me about your debate trophy. I'm sorry I couldn't come. I had work.

(Eli looks away)

So you're good at arguing with people, hunh? That, you get from your mother.

(then)

Here. A celebration present.

Eli's father produces a dog-eared POSTCARD. He lovingly straightens the corner and hands it to Eli, who studies it closely. The front's a PICTURE of MAJESTIC WHITE SLOPES.

MR. STONE (cont'd)

The Panch Chuli peaks. They're in India. Someday, we'll go.

Eli flips the card. Reading his father's handwriting aloud:

ELI AT TWELVE

"For Eli... So you'll remember."
(looks up)
Remember what?

MR. STONE

That you're meant to do great things.
You're gonna go to beautiful places and
speak inspiring words. You're gonna help
people and change lives.

There's pride in his voice. But also regret. These were his
dreams. Then, Mr. Stone's EYES SHUT. As though he's nursing
a really bad headache. He opens them again...

ELI AT TWELVE

Dad... you okay?

MR. STONE

Sure, kiddo. There's one last stop I
gotta make. Mr. Moller's having problems
with his set again. Tell your mother
I'll be home in a little bit.

The trolley slows. Mr. Stone hops off. Eli calls after:

ELI AT TWELVE

But I hate the trolley.

MR. STONE

Just hang on tight. You'll be fine.

A reassuring wink and Mr. Stone ducks into a LOCAL TAVERN. A
young, disappointed Eli fades into the distance...

INT. ELI'S LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Eli's head rises into frame. Brow gleaming with sweat.

ELI

I knew you wouldn't understand.

Tricia comes into frame. She's been holding Eli's ankles
while he does CRUNCHES. They switch positions,

TRICIA

My fiancée of less than three days tells
me he's taking on his own firm --

(crunch; breath)

-- and representing the girl he lost his
virginity to because George Michael
appeared to him twice --

(crunch; breath)

-- once in his living room when we were
in the middle of sex and another time on
a cable car.

ELI

It was a trolley and that was a different vision altogether.

A final crunch brings them face-to-face.

TRICIA

Is this like some weirdo last screw kind of thing? Because if it is, just sleep with her and get it over with --

ELI

I don't want to sleep with her.

TRICIA

Then I don't get it. What's wrong with you, Eli? Really?

ELI

Maybe nothing's wrong with me. Maybe something's finally right.

Eli crosses to the window, the city lights envelop him.

ELI (cont'd)

My father wanted to be a photographer. He wanted to travel the world and take pictures for Time magazine. But that's not the guy I knew. In 1966, he met my mom. She got pregnant with my brother, so he took a job fixing televisions to help pay the bills. Then they had me. Bit by bit the responsibilities of life wore him down until his dreams weren't dreams anymore... they were memories of what he wanted to do and never did.

TRICIA

You are a partnership-track associate who gets buzzed off light beer. Your dad was a TV repairman and an alcoholic. You're not your father.

ELI

Not yet, I'm not...

(points at a coffee table)

What do you see when you look at that?

TRICIA

You do see a coffee table?

ELI

Yes. I also see the bonus I got for working eight hundred hours on the Elcan Pharmaceutical trial.

(points to a plasma)

That plasma? That's the retainer I got for saving Merrick Shipping a few extra hundred million.

(MORE)

ELI (cont'd)
 (back to Tricia)
 I became a lawyer to change the world...
 instead I changed my apartment.

TRICIA
 Lawyers don't change the world, Eli, they
 help the people in it sue each other.

ELI
 What if I want the suing to be, I dunno,
 a little more meaningful?

TRICIA
 I'm pretty sure losing your job at the
 firm will impede that.

ELI
 I took precautions. The partners gave me
 their blessing to take the case.

TRICIA
 They may have given you permission to
 take the case, but they didn't give you
 permission to win it.
 (off Eli realizing this)
 Did you honestly think your firm would
 jeopardize one of its most important
 clients for some handicapped kid?

ELI
 (an ugly look)
 He's autistic.

TRICIA
 How dare you get all P.C. on my ass when
 my fiancée is in the middle of having
 some psychotic breakdown because he's not
 Erin Brockovich! I'm taking a shower...

ELI
 Tricia --

TRICIA
 I love you, Eli. If this is what you
 want, do it. But we have a good life
 together. One we've both worked very
 hard for. Please. Don't screw it up.

Tricia exits. Off Eli,

FADE-OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOURFADE UP ON:INT. COURTHOUSE. MORNING.

Eli walks Beth and Will up to the courtroom door. They're dressed for court, Will in a sportsjacket and tie.

ELI

So William... I got you a surprise.
Turns out, there is a book with all the
words in it.

Eli produces a DICTIONARY from his briefcase. Hands it over.
As always, William doesn't make eye contact --

WILLIAM

I have a dictionary. I have three.

ELI

Yeah, but this one's a lucky one.

BETH

A lucky dictionary?

ELI

They were out of the lucky thesaurus.

INT. FEDERAL COURT. DAY.

ON WILLIAM. He flips through the dictionary, his feet
dangling from the chair. CAMERA PANS OVER to...

BETH (O.S.)

William was a dream infant. He barely
ever cried or got fussy. Pulled himself
up at ten months, walked at twelve, but
at twenty months he still hadn't spoken.

MATT, who's sitting at a nearby table, flanked by ALAN COOKE
(50s, professorial warmth) and four WPK ASSOCIATES.

BETH (O.S.) (cont'd)

The pediatrician said he was speech
delayed. That's what he called it. But
I knew it was something more...

PAN TO Beth on the witness stand, testifying. Eli's before
her. JUDGE MARCIA PHELPS, middle-aged, robust, presides.

BETH (cont'd)

William was... cold. It wasn't just shy
behavior. At times, he would act as
though my husband and I weren't even
there. When I'd drop him at daycare, he
would never wave bye. It was the smallest
thing, but it used to break my heart.

Matt rises. With forced warmth and compassion:

MATT

Objection, Your Honor. We all agree Ms. Keller's story is deeply moving.

ELI

And relevant, Your Honor --

MATT

I could bring in twenty equally emotional testimonials from individuals who owe their lives to the good people of Westland. And I'm inclined to do so.

Matt smiles tightly at Eli, who smiles tightly back.

JUDGE PHELPS

There'll be no need for that, Mr. Dunn. Objection, sustained. Mr. Stone, please approach the bench.

Eli and Matt approach. The Judge looks at Matt. Sotto:

JUDGE PHELPS (cont'd)

Are you Mr. Stone?

MATT

I figured I could hear this --
 (off the Judge's glare)
 An overestimation on my part, no doubt.
 (the glare deepens)
 And now I'm walking away.

Matt pivots, leaving Eli and the Judge. Still sotto:

JUDGE PHELPS

If I have to sit through ten hours of testimony that I'm forced to let him call to the stand because you pulled on this jury's heartstrings --

ELI

Your Honor, we both know the only chance I have is for the jurors to identify with my client on an emotional level.

JUDGE PHELPS

Not my problem. My decision to let you represent William Keller in the first place should've come wrapped in a box with a ribbon on it. Do you understand?

ELI

You're drawing an analogy between your decision and a gift, Your Honor.
 (off the Judge's glare)
 And now I'm walking away.

Eli resumes with Beth --

ELI (cont'd)

How soon after you noticed William's symptoms was he diagnosed with autism?

BETH

It took months. There's no exact test for autism. There's still so much doctors don't understand about the condition. In the beginning, I'd spend hours online, looking for anything at all that would help my son.

ELI

And did you find anything?

BETH

The parent of an autistic girl kept a blog. She said she found a drug that worked wonders for her daughter, a drug called Risperidone.

ALAN COOKE (PRELAP)

Risperidone is a schizophrenia drug.

TIME CUT TO: LATER.

Alan Cooke is now on the stand, answering Matt's questions.

ALAN COOKE (cont'd)

It's not even FDA-approved for autism. I'm not going to deny it might have short-term benefits. But the drug is untested for children. To pay for this drug, thus taking money away from other kids who also need help, would be poor management of limited resources.

MATT

Limited, how?

ALAN COOKE

More than 1 in 200 kids are diagnosed with autism every year. That's twice as many as there were ten years ago. It's an insurance nightmare. And in spite of that, I'm proud to say Westland more than meets the industry standard in coverage.

RESUME BETH --

BETH

After a month on the drug, he actually smiled. He did it in the supermarket of all places. I started crying so hard I thought they were going to cart me away.

ELI

Is he still on the drug?

BETH

(shakes head)

I couldn't afford it. After William's father and I split up, I went back to work full time. But what I make doesn't even begin to pay for the drug's cost. And that's not including the trips to the behavior therapist and auditory training, both of which also aren't covered.

(fighting back emotion)

The level of treatment my son receives now profoundly affects the quality of the rest of his life. That's a fact. William needs more help. Not apologies. Not statistics telling me why they can't. My son is sick and he needs help.

Beth looks at Cooke, who averts his gaze.

ELI (PRELAP)

What's the most prescribed anti-psychotic medication in the United States today?

RESUME COOKE -- This time with Eli crossing --

ALAN COOKE

(beat)

Risperidone.

ELI

Sounds pretty "unproven" to me.

ALAN COOKE

For autism it is.

ELI

Convenient. If there's no FDA approval, there's no obligation to pay.

MATT

Objection. That's not even a question.

ALAN COOKE

Look, if I thought it was the responsible thing to do, I'd pay for the drug out of my own pocket.

Eli studies Mr. Cooke's hand. An idea occurs,

ELI

I see you have a wedding ring, sir. Are you married?

ALAN COOKE

I am.

ELI
Do you have a child?

MATT
Objection!

ELI
On what grounds?

MATT
On the grounds that I know where you're going with this. The witness's family life has nothing to do with this trial --

ELI
I believe that it does, Your Honor. Mr. Cooke generously offered to pay for William's treatment out of his own pocket. If William were his son, he would have to. I'm curious if Mr. Cooke, as William's parent, would be happy with the kind of insurance Westland provides?

JUDGE PHELPS
Overruled. The witness will answer.

Eli looks to Alan Cooke. Well?

ALAN COOKE
(sympathetic)
No. I would want more. And because of my income level, I could afford it. That's the sad reality of healthcare today. It's simply... unfair. But the world is an unfair place, Mr. Stone. That's why we provide insurance.

ELI
No further questions.

As Eli returns to his table, Matt rises.

MATT
The defense calls William Keller.

ELI
(irate)
The defense hasn't established William Keller is competent to testify. Besides that, he's a minor.

MATT
William Keller Senior.

Eli exchanges a look with Beth before they both turn to the back of the courtroom to see Beth's ex-husband...

WILLIAM KELLER, SR., standing calmly by the door.

ELI
Mr. Keller wasn't on the witness list.

MATT

Typo.

ELI

I want a recess.

JUDGE PHELPS

You get the night, counsel. This seems like a good place to stop for the day.

Off Beth, studying her husband with a baffled look.

BETH (PRELAP)

This just isn't like him.

INT. COURT HALLWAY, DAY.

Eli paces, Beth sits on a lone bench. William's nearby, tracing the lines of the tiled floor with his foot.

ELI

You said your ex-husband knew about the settlement. Are you sure he was okay with you going to trial?

BETH

He said he trusted my judgement. Will's always let me handle William's insurance and medical costs. He would never do anything to harm our son. I promise.

ELI

There's no bitterness between you from the divorce? No custody issues?

BETH

None that I can think of. Can't I just call and ask him?

ELI

No. I can't afford to take on your criminal trial when you're arrested for witness tampering. As it stands, I'm in danger of becoming the world's quickest un-fiancée.

Eli drops down next to her. He doesn't even register the disappointment on Beth's face, but we do.

BETH

I wondered if... I knew you weren't married but...

ELI

I've been dating a woman for two years. We got engaged last week.

BETH

How did you meet?

ELI

Tricia kicked my ass in a courtroom. She's a pretty amazing attorney... she's a pretty amazing everything. To be honest, it can be a little exhausting.

BETH

I know those women. I envy them. So strong, so together...

ELI

Beth, you're a divorced mom raising an autistic son on your own. You risked everything you have to pursue legal action against one of the largest insurance companies in the country. How much stronger could you possibly be?

BETH

You're the one who risked everything. Your job, your reputation. You risked it all on a case you said yourself you're never gonna win. Why?

ELI

If I said because it was the right thing to do?

BETH

I'd believe you, except you're a lawyer.

Eli smiles, considers whether or not share his secret. But something inside him wants to, needs to share it.

ELI

Lately, I've been hearing things, seeing things that aren't really there. I'm pretty sure anyone else would have themselves committed. But I don't think I'm losing my mind. I think they're... signs.

BETH

And these signs told you to help me? To help my son.

ELI

Yeah. They did.
(off Beth)
Crazy, I know...

BETH

No, not crazy... Beautiful.

As Eli and Beth sit together, watching William...

A CROWD (PRELAP)
SURPRISE!

INT. THE CARNELIAN ROOM. NIGHT.

ON the SHELL-SHOCKED FACES of ELI and TRICIA. REVEAL...

A FEW HUNDRED WELL WISHERS staring back at them.

It's a surprise ENGAGEMENT PARTY in a chic restaurant. An elegant BANNER with their names hangs above a stage where a BAND PLAYS. Dance floor in the center of the room.

ELI
(smiling, sotto)
Did you know anything about this?

TRICIA
(also smiling, sotto)
I'm going to kill my parents.

They step into the MASSES. Eli's brother DAVID and their mother, MRS. STONE (60s) approach Eli privately --

ELI
Hello, Mother.

MRS. STONE
Thanks for the call.
(off Eli's guilty look)
Imagine having to find out your youngest son got engaged from an Evite?

DAVID
I tried to warn you, douche.

JORDAN WETHERSBY (Eli's boss) breaks through the throng --

JORDAN WETHERSBY
Congratulations, Mr. Stone.

ELI
(introducing his family)
Jordan Wethersby, this is my brother,
David. And my mother, Lenore.

MRS. STONE
Mr. Wethersby...

JORDAN WETHERSBY
Jordan, please. You're almost like
family, isn't that right? --

TRICIA (O.S.)
Speaking of family...

They turn. Tricia kisses Jordan's cheek.

TRICIA (cont'd)
 Hey, Daddy. You didn't have to do all
 this. It's too much.

JORDAN WETHERSBY
 Sweetie, your mother did it all. I just
 paid for it. We're so happy for you.

As father and daughter hug and we put two-and-two together...

INT. THE CARNELIAN ROOM, LATER.

ON STAGE the BAND'S SINGER butchers a rendition of "FAITH."
 Eli watches from the bar, dumbfounded. To the BARTENDER:

ELI
 (points)
 You do see him, right?

THE BARTENDER
 The singer? Lanky guy. Very Clay Aiken.

ELI
 Just making sure.

JORDAN WETHERSBY (O.S.)
 You're doing well in court, I understand.

Eli turns to face San Fran's most respected attorney.

ELI
 Don't worry, sir. Not well enough.

JORDAN WETHERSBY
 In any case, you have the client
 concerned. Alan Cooke wants me there to
 backstop.

Something in Jordan's response is unsettling.

ELI
 I'm sorry if I've caused you or the firm
 any inconvenience. But seriously, it's a
 fairly insignificant trial --

JORDAN WETHERSBY
 Precisely. Consider the precedent set by
 Westland losing such an insignificant
 trial. The number of pile-on suits would
 be catastrophic to them financially and
 debilitating to the law firm unfortunate
 enough to represent them.

ELI
 If you felt this way why did you let me
 take the case in the first place?

JORDAN WETHERBSY

After your Jimmy Stewart routine, what were my options? I may be a heartless bastard, Eli, but I'm a closeted one.

ELI

No offense, sir, but not that closeted.

JORDAN WETHERBSY

Then what I'm about to tell you will come as no surprise: I don't want to be impressed with your performance for the remainder of the trial.

ELI

Are you asking me to --

JORDAN WETHERBSY

I'm not asking anything.

Jordan gives Eli a chilling look. Then turns, his eye catching Tricia across the room. With a proud smile,

JORDAN WETHERBSY

Beautiful, isn't she? Truth is, I always thought she deserved better than you... I was just hoping it would take you longer to prove me right.

Jordan exits. As David sidles up, Eli knocks back his drink.

ELI

(to the bartender)

Another.

DAVID

Slow down, champ. Is that like your fourth drink this year?

ELI

Fifth. And third tonight. My head is killing me. Do you have an aspirin?

Eli rubs his temple. His eyes closing. David notices.

DAVID

No.

ELI

You're a doctor.

DAVID

Yeah, not aisle six at Savon.

Eli closes his eyes again. But it's A RUMBLING that gets Eli to open them this time. Like AN EARTHQUAKE.

DAVID (cont'd)
Eli. You okay?

ELI'S P.O.V. OF THE ROOM --

The WALLS start to CRUMBLE. PIECES OF THE CEILING crack off and PLUMMET to the floor. But THE PARTY GUESTS continue to dance the night away. COMPLETELY OBLIVIOUS.

DAVID (cont'd)
Eli... what's going on?

WIND and SNOW WHIP into the room. The TEMPERATURE drops. Eli can see his own breath. Still, the PEOPLE DANCE.

ELI
I think... something.. is happening...

Just then, A CHANDELIER detaches from the ceiling. It's heading straight for a SIXTY-SOMETHING WOMAN. Eli reacts, racing toward her --

ELI (cont'd)
Fran, look out!

Eli dives, tackling the woman, and the CHANDELIER CRASHES behind them. As it does, IN A FLASH WE GO --

EXT. A MOUNTAINTOP. DAY.

Where The RUMBLING continues in the form of an AVALANCHE at the top of some PEAKS in the distance. We recognize them as THE PANCH CHULI PEAKS from Eli's postcard.

PAN DOWN to where ELI (now in winter garb) is standing, holding A COFFEE CAN. He looks over to see THE SHERPAS from Act One saying something. Eli shakes his head. Very odd.

Then A BIG GUST OF WIND blows, taking us back to...

INT. THE CARNELIAN ROOM. AS BEFORE.

Eli TACKLES the woman with a scream --

ELI
Fran, look out!

But there's NO EARTHQUAKE or FALLING CHANDELIER. Just Eli, a bruised woman and a few hundred CONFUSED GUESTS. What we've just witnessed REWINDS before REPEATING:

ELI (cont'd)
Fran, look out!

We've been WATCHING A VIDEO on the plasma in...

INT. ELI'S LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Eli, Tricia and Mrs. Stone watch from the couch. David is standing with the remote.

ELI
How many times are we gonna watch it?

DAVID
(studying the remote)
Does this thing do slow motion?

ELI
Look, I'm fine, she's fine, let's--

TRICIA
She's not fine! She threw out her back!
You threw out my mother's back!

ELI
Not intentionally.

TRICIA
Eli, you tackled her like she was a quarterback. A sixty-six-year-old quarterback with a history of sciatic nerve problems! It's like I don't even know you anymore! Do you have a drug problem?! Is that what this is?!

ELI
How could you even ask me that?

TRICIA
You're hallucinating George Michael, playing professional Russian roulette and now you're body-checking my mother!

MRS. STONE
Who's George Michael?

TRICIA
I can't do this. Not now. I have to go get my mother's Vicodin prescription renewed. I'll call you tomorrow.

She storms out. Beat.

MRS. STONE
Fiery. Like your aunt.

ELI
(to David)
You did the MRI yourself. You said there's nothing medically wrong. It's probably just stress --

David points to the plasma. The picture FREEZE-FRAMED.

DAVID

This is not stress, Eli. This is Dad.

Eli is defenseless. It's his worst nightmare come true.

DAVID (cont'd)

You were drinking more than normal --

ELI

I'm not an alcoholic, if that's what you're implying. I'm the exact opposite. I'm a... non-alcoholic.

DAVID

How often do you drink like that?

ELI

I just told you, David! *I don't drink!*

MRS. STONE

Neither did your father. Not at first.

The words land with nuclear impact. They turn toward her.

MRS. STONE (cont'd)

We'd been married five years when he started seeing things. He once swore Tony Bennett was in the basement. That was a joy... The doctors ran every test they could. They found nothing. Finally, he just learned to cope with his visions by drinking --

ELI

And you tell us this now! After all this time, you expect me to believe my father wasn't a drunk, but some paranoid schizophrenic who was self-medicating!

MRS. STONE

I never believed him myself. Not until tonight.

ELI

No, I'm sorry, but this is just another excuse for his failures as a person and as a father. And I'm not buying it.

But David's wheels are turning. A thought occurs --

DAVID

Eli... we have to run another test.

Off Eli, his face etched in worry,

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVEFADE UP ON:

A SERIES OF SHOTS of ELI being prepped for and having an angiogram. MUSIC and DIALOGUE accompanies:

DAVID (V.O.)

The MRI would never have picked it up, but the angiography did. It's located in the right middle cerebral artery. That's the main branch off the carotid artery, it supplies blood to the brain's temporal lobe. It's about 3 millimeters in size, which means it's relatively small...

ELI (V.O.)

The aneurysm?

SHOTS of DAVID examining the results with a PAIR OF DOCTORS.

DAVID (V.O.)

Yes. Now, the brain's right hemisphere is the area associated with creativity. The temporal lobe, religious experience. The disruption of blood flow to these places would explain any kind of hallucinations or delusions of grandeur.

ELI (V.O.)

A.K.A. George Michael and trolley cars.

INT. DAVID'S DOCTOR OFFICE. JUST AFTER.

David, Tricia and Eli. Grave expressions all around.

TRICIA

I still don't understand, what does this have to do with your father?

DAVID

Intracranial aneurysms can be hereditary. It's not uncommon for them to afflict the same area of the brain in a parent and a child. I've always associated our dad's episodes with alcohol. But it seems pretty clear he was, at least initially, suffering from the same thing... There was just no way to know it back then.

ELI

I couldn't get Dad's receding hairline, I had to get his brain?

(then, serious)

When do you take it out?

David pauses for a moment, now for the hard part...

DAVID

Because the aneurysm is located so deep in the cortex, according to the Chief neurosurgeon here, it's not amenable to surgical intervention.

TRICIA

(shaken)

You can't operate?

DAVID

There are avenues we can explore, such as radiosurgery. Also, there's a doctor in Detroit who's had some success with coils in this region. But it'll be hard to get him to take this case.

ELI

What if... what if it bursts, David?

DAVID

It might not. There are people with aneurysms who live totally normal lives and die of totally boring things.

ELI

If that's not me and it does burst...

David tries to stay calm, but his lip is quivering now.

DAVID

There's a fifty percent survival rate with a rupture. Of those fifty percent, I'd say about five percent go on to recuperate fully and --
(stops, stifling emotion)
I'm so sorry, Eli.

Tricia starts to cry. But not Eli. He stares blankly.

TRICIA

I don't get it, there's nothing he can do?! He's got a goddamn ticking bomb in his head and there's nothing he can do?!
(really losing it)
We just got engaged. We're gonna get married. This can't be happening!

DAVID

(rises)

I'm gonna leave you guys to talk...

ELI

Call Mom for me.

As David passes Eli, he leans down, kissing his brother's head. Eli closes his eyes. David exits. A beat,

ELI (cont'd)
 We should probably move the wedding up.
 Tonight's good for me. Work for you?

TRICIA
 This isn't funny. I'm not sure I can do
 this. The visions, the odd behavior, I
 could take that. But the thought of
 losing you at any moment --

It dawns on Eli what she's saying.

ELI
 Are you breaking up with me? 'Cause I
 was just diagnosed with a brain aneurysm
 and that would be really bad timing on
 your part.

TRICIA
 I'm just trying to process everything --

ELI
 You do that. You process this.
 (rising, hurt)
 I have court.

Eli exits, as the CAMERA PUSHES IN on Tricia:

WILLIAM KELLER, SR. (PRELAP)
 It was devastating.

INT. FEDERAL COURT. DAY.

Back in session. Jordan Wethersby now sits at the defense
 table. Matt has Will's father on the stand. Eli, clearly
 shell-shocked from the morning's news, listens.

WILLIAM KELLER, SR.
 You have all these hopes and dreams for
 your kid. Things he's gonna do. The
 kinda girl he's gonna marry. And a
 couple of words from a doctor erases all
 of that. I admit my wife-- my ex-wife--
 took it better than I did at first. She
 wasted no time making sure Willy got the
 right care. California offers all sorts
 of programs, she got him admitted to all
 of them. But she didn't stop there...
 she became obsessed with his condition.

ELI
 Objection to the use of the word
 "obsessed" --

JUDGE PHELPS
 Sustained. Mr. Dunn, you're a fan of
 questions, why don't you ask one.

MATT

Mr. Keller, you weren't subpoenaed to come here, you wanted to testify. Why?

WILLIAM KELLER, SR.

(simply)

Because I love my son. As much as my wife does. We just disagree on what's best for him. I don't think this lawsuit is best for him.

MATT

And what about the medication that your ex-wife says William needs?

WILLIAM KELLER, SR.

That's what she said about music therapy and holding therapy. Every month, she reads something new on the Internet and every month she's talking about some new miracle just around the corner.

Keller finds Beth sitting in the gallery. Looks at her --

WILLIAM KELLER, SR. (cont'd)

There isn't one, Beth. There's just Willy. And all the medicines and therapies aren't gonna change the fact that he's autistic. You need to stop fighting that and start accepting him for who and for what he is.

Matt returns to his table. A long beat. Eli stands.

JUDGE PHELPS

Mr. Stone? Cross?

Eli casts a glance over to Jordan. What will he do? Beat.

ELI

No questions, Your Honor.

Off Eli, sitting back down...

BETH (PRELAP)

"No questions, Your Honor"?

INT. ATTORNEY/CLIENT ROOM. MINUTES LATER.

Eli and Beth square off. William hangs in the corner.

BETH

Well, I've got a question! Why didn't you say something!

ELI

I didn't want the jury giving more weight to his testimony than they should.

BETH

So instead you let them think I'm to blame instead of Westland--

ELI

If I attacked him, we'd look desperate.

BETH

We are desperate! Isn't that what you told me? How we're going to lose, how we don't have a chance? I didn't realize the reason we don't have a chance is that my attorney isn't trying!

All the rage of the past six hours boils in Eli...

ELI

Need I remind you I put my entire career on the line for this dead-bang loser of a case! And I didn't ask your husband any questions, because he was right! You should've stopped fighting months ago. Anybody that told you otherwise didn't have the heart to tell you the truth!

BETH

When did you become an asshole? Twenty-four hours ago you were telling me about signs leading you to help me --

ELI

Twenty-four hours ago I didn't know I had a bulging artery in my head. Those signs? They were delusions. No more real than our shot at winning ever was.

Eli sinks into a chair. Beth isn't angry anymore, she looks at Eli with almost a loving concern.

BETH

I'm so sorry. Are you gonna be okay?

ELI

I don't know... Listen, I'm the one who's sorry. I never should have lost it just now. I'm kinda... spinning.

BETH

I can understand. I have some experience where medical curveballs are concerned.

(then, even)

You really think we'll lose?

ELI

Your husband isn't the last person the jury hears from. I am. I close tomorrow. I promise to do my best, but I doubt it'll make much of a difference.

BETH

Then it'll be what it'll be. For what it's worth though... I never heard things or saw things that weren't there, Eli. But I always believed in you. That was real. It still is.

She turns to leave. Then realizes William isn't following.

BETH (cont'd)

Willy. Let's go.

Instead, William walks in front of Eli and places the lucky dictionary on the table. Eli's heart breaks. Before he can respond, William exits with his mother.

The sadness of Eli's situation overtakes him. And then, in the solitude of the room, he dissolves into tears.

PRELAP the sound of KNOCKING...

EXT. DR. CHEN'S ACUPUNCURIST. DUSK.

Eli's rapping on the closed door --

ELI

I know you're in there. Turn off the soaps and answer the door.

DR. CHEN (O.S.)

You always show up no appointment. Dr. Chen not Jiffy Lube. Come back Friday.

ELI

I went back to the doctor, the real kind.
(beat)

You wouldn't happen to have any needles for an inoperable brain aneurysm that I inherited from my alcoholic father who I've wrongly hated for twenty years?

Chen opens the door, greeting Eli with an apologetic look.

DR. CHEN

(American accent)

Wow. That totally blows, bro.

Waitamminute. Eli looks more confused than we are --

ELI

What happened to your accent?

DR. CHEN

Long story. Want a beer?

EXT. ROOFTOP. MAGIC HOUR.

Eli and Dr. Chen sit on beach chairs, bottles of beer in hand. Dr. Chen's Zen pretense replaced by surfer drawl. The SOULFUL TUNES of BEN HARPER play on a portable CD player.

DR. CHEN

...grew up on a commune, if you can believe that. From there, UC Berkeley, philosophy major. But there's no future in Existentialist Ethics, so I got into acupuncture. Unfortunately, nobody wants an acupuncturist named Frank Lebakowski. They want incense, mystique, a foreign accent... they want Dr. Chen.

(then the big secret)

Dude, I'm not even Chinese. I'm half-Korean on my mother's side.

Eli looks considerably disappointed.

ELI

Great. Even my treatments were imaginary.

DR. CHEN

Hey, eight years of coursework in holistic medicine, two years in Beijing. Gimme some props. Now...

(cracks open a beer)

Tell me more about this latest vision.

ELI

(correcting him)

Hallucination.

DR. CHEN

I'll be the judge of that. You were on a mountaintop. Have you been there before?

ELI

No, and I don't exactly see myself booking an excursion any time soon. For one thing, I get altitude sickness.

DR. CHEN

And yet you had a vision of yourself going. A vision of the future, maybe?

ELI

I can't really see the future anymore than I really saw George Michael or public transportation in my office.

DR. CHEN

You said you were holding a coffee can, did you recognize it?

ELI

I don't think so... Look. This is pointless. None of it means anything. It's all just my defective brain playing tricks on me.

DR. CHEN

I don't believe that, Eli. And I don't think you do either...

(a beat)

Everything has two explanations: The scientific and the divine. It's up to us to choose which one we buy into. Science explains the enlarged vessel in your head, sure. But does it explain how the girl you lost your virginity to happened to be suing your law firm, how her son happened to spell a message to you with his blocks? Can it explain how your father suffered the exact same ailment as you and possibly foresaw the same destiny?

ELI

And what would your divine explanation for all of that be?

DR. CHEN

Jewish mystics claim there are 36 enlightened people on the planet at any given time. Hindus think it's seven. Whatever the count, almost all religions believe there are those who are sent to us to help us find our way. To wake us up from the pain and misery of our everyday existence. And to teach us how to build lives of greater meaning. Some people call them prophets --

ELI

A prophet? You think I'm a prophet. What, like... Moses?!

DR. CHEN

God told Moses he'd send a prophet to every generation. Why not a lawyer?

ELI

We bill by the hour.

DR. CHEN

The word "prophet" comes from ancient Greek. *Prophetes*. A "spokesman," a "delegate for another." Isn't that what lawyers are? And if God were trying to get a message out why not pick, say, a high profile attorney handling cases that got a lot of notoriety. That the world would read about?

ELI

But lawyers are... we're dicks.

DR. CHEN

You think Moses was the nicest guy ever?
Why do you think God told him he couldn't
enter Jerusalem?

ELI

Brain aneurysm, terminal diagnosis... If
there is a God, and he likes me, he's got
a very funny way of showing it.

DR. CHEN

Muhammad was persecuted. Joan of Arc
didn't make a lot of friends. There are
those who would add Abraham Lincoln and
Martin Luther King to that list and,
well, they didn't have it too easy.

ELI

The difference between those guys and me
is... I don't believe in God.

DR. CHEN

Sure you do. Take a look at that.

He's pointing to the sunset. Beautiful.

DR. CHEN (cont'd)

That, my friend, is a bitchin' sunset.

(beat)

You might not believe in some guy turning
water into wine or that there's nothing
wrong with eating a bacon cheeseburger,
but that doesn't mean you don't believe
in God. You believe in right and wrong.
You believe in justice, in fairness...
You believe in love. All those things,
they're God, Eli.

(points to the sunset)

And, that's God, too.

(beat)

And besides, even if you don't believe in
God, it doesn't matter. 'Cause he
believes in you.

And off the sky, set ablaze by the sun... a sign of divinity
if ever there were one, we,

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIXFADE IN:INT. FEDERAL COURT. DAY.

Back in session. All the usual suspects present. Matt is on his feet, finishing his closing with the confidence of man who's never lost anything in his life.

MATT

In law school, I dreamed of standing before a jury much like this one and making an impassioned argument on behalf of a client who was completely in the right with the law completely on their side. Then... I get this case. A case where I'm representing a big insurance company against a child. An autistic child. You think this was the kind of trial I dreamed about?

(a beat, dead-serious)

You bet it was.

(then)

Like I said, I dreamed of representing a client who was completely in the right with the law completely on their side. William Keller received every treatment he's entitled to under his policy. Every doctor. Every drug. Every dollar. Now, I know Westland's a deep pocket. I know a lot of juries would ignore the law and write William a check with as many zeroes on it as they could fit. Because, at the end of the day, helping William, helping an autistic child, would make us all feel better about ourselves. Right?

(then, genuine)

But Westland Insurance did help William. They honored their contract and provided him the maximum coverage under it.

William's own father agrees that Westland Insurance did their job. How could any jury punish them for that?

(looks at Beth, softly)

I sympathize with Ms. Keller, I do. I sympathize with William. Only the most heartless of us wouldn't.

(then back to the jury)

But the law is the law, folks. It's not about heart. It's not about what makes us feel good. It's about rules. If we all play by them, we all get a fair shake. Westland Insurance played by the rules. They did their job and made sure William got good, fair and impartial treatment. And now it's your job to make sure that they get the same thing.

Matt turns and sits. Eli wastes no time rising. He approaches the jury box, dropping all formality...

ELI

Let's talk for a moment, not about this case. Let's talk about... the world. With your verdict, you get to say something about the world we live in. So let's talk about that world for a minute.

Beth looks a little confused. Matt looks as though he might object. But Eli knows just what he's doing.

ELI (cont'd)

Mr. Cooke believes we live in a world of limited resources, where it's impossible to help all people, all of the time. My colleague, Mr. Dunn, believes in a world of rules, where our only obligation is to whatever contract we sign. William's own father wants William's mother to stop fighting, because he believes in a world where it's better to accept the reality of your situation than try and change it. These are all persuasive arguments. Not because they're right. But because we've all grown so used to hearing them.

(looks back at Beth)

I'm not any better. At first, I turned down Ms. Keller when she asked me for help. It wasn't that I didn't want to. I just didn't think I'd win.

(then, almost ashamed)

See, I believed in a world where the result mattered more than the effort. But I was wrong. The effort is all we have, it's the sum total of our entire existence, the effort is our life...

Eli grows wistful. No doubt thinking about his diagnosis... He turns away from Beth and back to the jury.

ELI (cont'd)

They say we can't know what it's like to be inside the mind of an autistic child. We may not understand it, but we can all relate to it. We can understand loneliness. We can understand isolation. Now imagine that feeling, then imagine that feeling twenty-four hours a day, and then imagine it's your child going through that. Would you have the strength, the resolution of purpose, to do anything, anything it took to help your son?

Eli points to Beth --

ELI (cont'd)

Beth Keller does. Because she doesn't believe in a world of limited resources, where we simply accept our reality and only fight when we think we can win. She believes in a world that's better than that, a world where the strong aren't just responsible for the weak, they're the most responsible. A world where the rich aren't just a little responsible for the poor, they're the most responsible. I know that's not the world we live in today, but I want to believe it's possible. I need to believe it's possible. Don't you?

Eli makes his way back toward the jury, growing quieter, more intense. His entire life has led up to this moment.

ELI (cont'd)

We're at the dawn of a new age. We can all sense it. There's a new sun rising whose light will illuminate the understanding and empathy that only exists presently in the darkest reaches of our hearts. Right now, this sun is barely a glimmer on the horizon. We can't see it, but we can feel its warmth. You don't have to wait for that sunrise. You can change the world right now, right here, with your verdict.

(a shrug)

As I said, that verdict will be a statement about our world. The higher the judgment, the louder the statement.

(beat)

For all of our sakes, make a statement so loud it echoes beyond the walls of this room, beyond the pillars of this courthouse, and reaches the hearts of everyone living outside of it.

Eli is finished. He walks over and sits beside Beth. The room is profoundly still. It's impossible to deny something important just happened here.

ELI (PRELAP) (cont'd)

What are you doing?

INT. ELI'S OFFICE. DAY.

Eli has just entered to find Patti loading up some boxes. Several other boxes are strewn around the room...

PATTI

Packing us up.

ELI
Patti, I haven't been fired yet. Did you get some memo I didn't get?

PATTI
I know how this place works. The day they axed Ed Shipman, they painted over his parking space by lunch.
(hands his messages)
Lady Voldemort called.

ELI
Tricia?

PATTI
She said you haven't called her back and she needs to talk. That's the most she's said to me in two years. Which means something big happened. What?

Eli realizes Patti has no idea about his diagnosis. He doesn't have the heart to tell her, not right now.

ELI
We're just having some problems.

PATTI
What does that mean?

ELI
I'm not sure. But I don't think we're gonna be sending out save-the-dates anytime soon.

PATTI
Well, I hope you work it out.
(off his look)
Really. I want you to be happy. I don't think Tricia's how you'll get there, but you do, so I hope you work it out.
(leaving)
I'm gonna go start on my desk.

Patti exits. Eli sits in his chair, staring out at his million dollar view for what could be the last time.

MRS. STONE (O.S.)
Eli...

Eli turns to find his mother there.

ELI
Mom? What are you doing here?

MRS. STONE
Your brother told me everything. I came to make sure you were okay.

ELI
I'm fine.

MRS. STONE
If there's anything I can --

ELI
I said I'm fine.

MRS. STONE
Eli... I know I was-- That you blame me
in some way for the man your father
became. And I know learning the truth
doesn't make you any less mad at me.

ELI
I'm not mad at you.
(then)
I'm mad at myself. I hated Dad for most
of my life. I didn't go to his funeral.

MRS. STONE
He understood.

ELI
You don't know that.

Mrs. Stone reaches into her large pocket book and takes
out... the COFFEE CAN from ELI'S VISION.

ELI (cont'd)
The coffee can! Where'd you get that?

MRS. STONE
It's your father. It's... his ashes.

ELI
What?! You kept Dad in a coffee can?

MRS. STONE
I transported him in one, I wasn't gonna
traipse a ten pound china urn across
town. He wanted you to have this... him.
(off Eli's confusion)
In his will he expressed a desire to be
cremated. He said one day you would know
what to do with the ashes. I assumed it
was the request of a crazy person. I
wasn't going to burden you with it...

Eli picks up the coffee can... oddly moved.

MRS. STONE (cont'd)
But now... I'm hoping you know what to do
with these, Eli.

ELI
 (quiet)
 I think I do.

Mrs. Stone smiles, some of the confusion and pain she's carried for years, finally lifting.

MRS. STONE
 This isn't all he wanted you to have.
 There's more, maybe you can make sense of
 some of it. I never could.
 (then)
 He would be proud of the man you've
 become.

ELI
 No, he wouldn't be. But I still have
 time to change that.

Patti interrupts the moment, pops her head in,

PATTI
 Court called. They're back.

ELI
 That quick? That's either really good or
 really bad.
 (grabs his jacket)
 Mom, I'll talk to you later. Leave Dad
 on the desk. Patti, make sure you don't
 pack my father.

PATTI
 I'm not even gonna pretend to understand
 that. Good luck.

ELI
 You never wish me luck.

PATTI
 I never cared if you won before.

ELI
 (smiling, as he exits)
 Me either.

JUDGE PHELPS (PRELAP)
 Has the jury reached a verdict?

INT. FEDERAL COURT. DAY.

The big moment. All parties present and laser-focused on the
 FOREPERSON standing in the jury box...

FOREPERSON
 We have, Your Honor.

Eli turns around and squeezes Beth's hand...

FOREPERSON (cont'd)

In the matter of William Keller Junior versus Westland Health Insurance Incorporated, as to the claim of breach of contract, we find in favor of... the defendant.

Beth tries to smile through her crushing disappointment...

FOREPERSON (cont'd)

As to the claim of promissory estoppel, we find in favor of the plaintiff...

Eli's eyes go wide as saucers.

FOREPERSON (cont'd)

...and order the defendant to pay the plaintiff compensatory damages in the amount of five-point-two million dollars.

Beth starts to cry. Eli turns to face her.

ELI

(to Beth; sotto)

You heard that, too, right? 'Cause I've been hearing some things lately...

But Beth is too busy embracing him to answer. Jordan calmly reassures Alan Cooke Off this --

MATT (PRELAP)

Okay, we all know what happens next...

INT. ATTORNEY/CLIENT ROOM. DAY.

Beth sits across the table from Matt and Jordan. Déjà vu from Act 1. But this time Eli (and William) are at her side.

MATT

We appeal, appeal the appeal of the appeal... basically run this thing out 'til William's eligible for Social Security.

(to Beth)

Eli already gave you this little preview back when he was on our side.

ELI

Yeah, but now that I'm on Beth's, I can give her the part I left out. Namely, that Westland can't risk an appeal because they can't risk the precedent.

JORDAN WETHERSBY

Which is why we're here. Two million. Sealed. No admission of liability and your client gets a check today.

BETH
(immediately)
Fine.

ELI
Beth, we could still --

BETH
I don't care. I want this over with and
two million is more than enough. But
there's one other condition...
(to Jordan)
Eli keeps his job.

JORDAN WETHERSBY
He just won a multi-million dollar jury
verdict. We'd be hard-pressed to explain
letting him go.

BETH
You'll understand if I want your
guarantee in writing.

JORDAN WETHERSBY
Shrewd. I'll have Mr. Dunn draft it up.

ELI
I'll draft it. But after I return from
the vacation the firm's sending me on.

JORDAN WETHERSBY
You're certainly in a luck-pushing mood
today, Eli.
(then, to Beth)
On behalf of the firm, congratulations,
Ms. Keller.

Jordan exits. Once he's safely out of the room --

MATT
Remember what I said about liking you? I
take it back.

ELI
I'd be hurt except I'm still basking in
the joy of kicking your ass.

And then Matt's gone as we,

ELI (PRELAP) (cont'd)
You didn't have to do that, y'know.

EXT. COURTHOUSE STEPS. RIGHT AFTER.

As Eli, Beth and William exit.

BETH
 Save your job? You're right, I didn't.
 That's what makes it a gesture. But are
 you sure you still want to stay there?

ELI
 As long as I get to keep representing
 people like you and William, I do.

BETH
 Are they gonna let you do that?

ELI
 They can't sue me for trying... well,
 maybe they could.

BETH
 If they do, I know a pretty great lawyer.

ELI
Pretty great?

WILLIAM
 (tugs at Beth's sleeve)
 It's 3:36.

ELI
 (to Beth)
 Time to feed the parrots?

BETH
 Time to feed the parrots.

With a farewell smile, Beth turns to leave when William asks:

WILLIAM
 Can Eli come?

Beth looks back to Eli. He smiles his happiest smile yet.

ELI
 That is the best invitation I've ever
 gotten from a millionaire.

And they head off into the warm afternoon sun. If we didn't
 know any better, we'd think they were a family. As the
 CAMERA CRANES UP, grabbing a view of SAN FRANCISCO...

ELI'S VOICE
 So that's my story. It's got sherpas and
 George Michael. It's got trolley cars
 and prophecies and mystical Chinese
 doctors who aren't really that mystical
 and aren't really that Chinese. And
 that's not even the best part. That's
 just the beginning...

INT. A TENT IN THE HIMALAYAS. DAY.

CLOSE ON the COFFEE CAN. PULL BACK to reveal Eli's sitting, talking to it. His entire narration was to his father's remains. The Sherpas stand off in the corner, listening.

ELI

...Anyway, I didn't think we'd ever get here together. It's not the way I expected it. But not much of life is. I'm gonna do what I can with whatever I have left of mine. I'm gonna be the person you said I'd be, Dad. I'm gonna go to beautiful places and speak inspiring words. I'm gonna help people and change lives. I promise.

One of the Sherpas wipes a tear away.

SHERPA NUMBER ONE

(subtitles)

I gotta call my father.

Eli puts on his winter parka. Heads for the flap.

ELI

Okay guys, I'm ready...

EXT. MOUNTAIN TOP. MOMENTS LATER.

Eli watches the AVALANCHE of a MOUNTAIN PEAK in the distance. Looks back at the Sherpas, then at the coffee can. It's his first prophecy come true (so what if it took a little help).

Eli lets the ashes go... They swirl up into the sky... The CAMERA PULLS AWAY until Eli himself is just a speck on the surface of the mountain. It's all just so... beautiful.

FADE OUT.

END OF PILOT