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"L.A. LAW"

Written

By

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and

Terry Louise Fisher

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CAST LIST

MICHAEL KUZAK
ARNOLD BECKER
LELAND MCKENZIE
JUDGE ALICE RATAKOWSKI
DOUGLAS BRACKMAN, JR.
ANN KELSEY
STUART MARKOWITZ
ABBY PERKINS
VICTOR SIFUENTES

IRIS "MOTHER" HUBBARD
LISA WESTON
BRUCE POLLACK
ROXANNE MELMAN
ANGELA SIPRIANO
GEORGIA BUCKNER
ANDREW TAYLOR
LESTER TUTTLE
JIM PERKINS
RALPH CAVANAUGH
D.A. MALCOLM GOLD
LYDIA GRAHAM
BARRY GRAHAM
JUSTIN PREGERSON
ADRIENNE MOORE
JUDGE SIDNEY SCHROEDER
SGT. MCKLOSKY
DETECTIVE DUQUETTE
NICK KLEIN
LESLIE AARON
LESTER MESTMAN
DR. JEROME MANDEL
MITCHELL GLAZER
JUDGE RICHARD ARMAND
CORONER
SAM (S.I.D.)
D.A. MARILYN DART
DICK HOBART
NITA
APRIL
MARTIN GARVER
POMERANTZ
EMANUEL GARCIA
WILLIAM DOLLAR
CLERK
CARLOS HERMOSILLO
BAILIFF
WAITER
WAITER/PROCESS SERVER
CLERK
BAILIFF
COMMANDER CHUCK

X

X

X

X

X

X

X

SET LIST

INTERIORS:

LAW FIRM:

CORRIDOR (AT ELEVATORS)
RECEPTION AREA
BECKER'S OFFICE AND OUTER OFFICE
CHANEY'S OFFICE AND OUTER OFFICE
CONFERENCE ROOM
BRACKMAN'S OUTER OFFICE
KELSEY'S OFFICE
KUZAK'S OFFICE
LADIES ROOM

X
X

HOLLYWOOD DIVISION POLICE STATION:

AT DESK
INTERROGATION ROOM

CRIMINAL COURTS BUILDING:

COURTROOM (JUDGE RATAKOWSKI)
COURTROOM (JUDGE SCHROEDER)
COURTROOM (JUDGE ARMAND)
RATAKOWSKI'S CHAMBERS
HOLDING AREA
PARKING GARAGE

X

MUTUAL LIFE AND CASUALTY INSURANCE:

RECEPTION AREA
MESTMAN'S OFFICE

X

X

LITTLE JOE'S RESTAURANT
L'ORANGERIE RESTAURANT
FRENCH RESTAURANT
MEMORIAL CHAPEL
PARKING GARAGE
COP BAR
MCKENZIE'S HOUSE
JEROME MANDEL'S OFFICE

X

X

EXTERIORS:

FREEWAY
L.A. COUNTRY CRIMINAL COURTS BLDG.
STREET

X

"L.A. LAW"

ACT ONE

OVER BLACK

The terrible din of morning rush hour, a helicopter hovering.
Cars HONKING. Brakes SCREECHING. Car RADIOS.

RICK DEES' VOICE

(radio)

Hi there. This is the Time Fairy.
It's twelve minutes past the hour
of seven...

And as the Time Fairy flutters away --

FADE IN

FREEWAY TRAFFIC JAM

1

Seen from the P.O.V. of a traffic helicopter, as we HEAR:

RICK DEES' VOICE

And for a traffic update, Commander Chuck
in Yellow Thunder.

INT. HELICOPTER - DAY - WITH COMMANDER CHUCK

1-A

COMMANDER CHUCK

It's a mess, Rick. There's an
overheated vehicle stalled on the
access ramp from the Hollywood
southbound to the Harbor...

CLOSE - STEAM

1-B

Pouring up out of a car radiator, through which we SEE:

INT. PORSCHE CONVERTIBLE - LICENSE PLATE - LITIG8R

2

Driven by Arnie Becker, mid to late thirties. Both hands on the
wheel. Driving gloves soft as a baby's ass. Impeccably dressed
in six hundred dollar summer weight grays. Boyish good looks,
twinkling blue eyes, a contagious smile, women love him. He's
a rat. OVER the radio --

RICK DEES' VOICE

(radio)

Pache, what'd you do over the
Labor Day weekend?

RACHEL'S VOICE

(radio)

I hate driving on holiday weekends,
so I spent three days by the pool,
sunbathing. In the nude.

2762 As Dees gurgles into his sleazoid Willard routine, Arnie notes --

A FOX IN A 318i

3

trapped in the adjacent lane, using the time to apply lip gloss to a pair of full puckered beauties. As she checks them in the rearview mirror, her radar registers --

BECKER

4

staring at her, enraptured, the little boy smile inviting all sorts of mischief. As she turns, glistening lips curling into a reciprocal smile --

A HUGE SEMI

5

looms up behind Becker, blasting its air horn.

ANGLE - PORSCHE

6

Becker guns the car onto the off ramp, flipping the truck driver a leather-sheathed pinky, as we --

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

7

Becker and Roxanne Melman exit the elevator. She's his secretary, 41, divorced, coupla kids. She adores and protects Becker, would probably chew off her own arm to marry him. As they move briskly toward the double glass door announcing --

MCKENZIE, BRACKMAN, CHANEY & KUZAK
A Law Corporation

ON the move --

ROXANNE

(all business)

Staff meeting'll probably go past one, so I pushed your deposition with Margulies to Thursday.

(as she unlocks
doors)

And don't forget your two o'clock with Lydia Graham.

BECKER

(no idea)

Who?

ROXANNE

Friend of Julia Lippencott. You're supposed to look over her settlement agreement.

BECKER

Oh, yeah.

As they enter --

INT. OFFICE COMPLEX - DAY

8

The phone is already RINGING. Becker wrinkles his nose in disgust.

Cont.

BECKER

Great smell.
 (heads towards Roxanne's
 desk, starts to rummage)
 Rox, you got any spray stuff? God,
 I hate these buildings -- air
 conditioning goes down, place smells
 like the inside of a garbage disposal.

Under which, Roxanne has grabbed the phone.

ROXANNE

McKenzie, Brackman, Chaney & Kuzak.
 Arnold Becker...One moment,
 Mrs. Swayze, I'll see if he's available.

Puts the call on hold as Becker heads into --

HIS OFFICE

9

Nice desk, nice plants, nice furniture, nice view.

BECKER

(disgusted)
 Available. It's seven-thirty
 Tuesday morning. Available...
 (punches up phone;
 conciliatory)
 ...Margaret. How was the long weekend?
 (serious ball busting
 on the other end)
 Well, I'd have to go back over the
 agreement, but he's got them for
 holiday weekends --
 (winces at the
 decibel level)
 -- Maybe it was malicious -- but
 getting an injunction --

More SHRIEKING, as Roxanne comes in and Lysols the atmosphere.

BECKER

I know it's the first day of school
 -- I don't blame you for worrying --
 he absolutely should've had 'em home
 by six -- but to go to court -- look
 if that's what you want --

Another phone has gently begun to RING -- Roxanne picks up the
 coffee table extension.

Cont.

ROXANNE

McKenzie, Brackman, Chaney --
Good morning, Mrs. Cox...Let
me see if he's available...

X

She puts Mrs. Cox on hold, under which --

BECKER

Margaret, sweetheart -- let me call
his lawyer first. If that doesn't
work, we'll slap him with an injunction.

Off one last abusive tirade of nuclear proportion, the line
goes dead.

ROXANNE

Shirley Cox.

A deep sigh, punches her up as Roxanne exits, leaving one last
spray lingering in the air.

BECKER

Shirley. G'morning. Shirley, gimme
a break. It's seven-thirty A.M. --
Shirl -- the reason there's no answer
at my house is I'm here -- no I'm not
avoiding you -- what'd he do this time?
(winces)

I know he's a fat brown loaf, Shirl,
but even a fat brown loaf deserves a
sex life -- I agree -- not in front of
your nine-year-old son --

Under which, a well-dressed, nice-looking man has entered Becker's
office, closed the door, and pointed a pistol at him. His name
is Dick Hobart.

BECKER

(eyes widening a bit)
Shirl -- Shirley -- I'm gonna put
you on hold a minute, sweetheart --
(which he does)
-- Dick, this is not smart.

HOBART

(wild-eyed with anger)
Don't dick me! Not after that
settlement you rammed down my
throat!

BECKER

A settlement you agreed to --

Cont.

HOBART

A settlement I was blackmailed into!
You took everything I hold dear,
Becker: my house, my kids, my coin
collection, I have to sell my boat --

By now Becker's backed into his desk chair, eyes wide with fear.

BECKER

What about the Ferarri? I specifically
excluded it from community property
because I know how much you love that
car and we both know Louise doesn't
know a dipstick from a garter belt.

HOBART

You excluded it because it's leased,
you crud --

He pulls back the hammer on the pistol.

BECKER

(choked)

Dick -- don't do this -- you're
gonna regret it.

HOBART

If I spend twenty years in jail with
my pants down around my ankles I
won't regret it.

With which, he pulls the trigger. The gun BARKS viciously, and
in the frozen aftermath, it takes Becker a moment to realize
he's not dead, at which time he commences convulsive gulping of
air, as Hobart chucks the starter pistol on Becker's desk.

HOBART

If you want to call the cops, you
know where to find me.

He moves for the door, exits past a terrified Roxanne.

ROXANNE

I'm calling the police.

BECKER

(inspecting the weapon)

Don't. It's only a starter's gun.
Let it go.

ROXANNE

Not about him. About the smell.

Cont.

BECKER

What smell?

X

OFF which --

CUT TO:

INT. CHANEY'S OFFICE - DAY

10

The door opens cautiously, REVEALING Becker and Roxanne, stunned at the sight -- and smell -- of --

NORMAN CHANEY

11

slumped over his desk, face down on a moldy plastic plate of hardened franks and beans, clutching, in death, a volume of the tax code.

RESUME - BECKER AND ROXANNE

12

in the doorway.

ROXANNE

Mr. Chaney...I didn't actually touch him, but I'm pretty sure he's dead.

X

BECKER

If he is, I got dibs on his office.

SMASH CUT TO:

MAIN TITLES

FADE IN

INT. CHANEY'S OFFICE - COPS, CORNERS, ETC. - DAY

13

Going about their business. A uniform at the door bars lawyers, officer workers, etc. from getting too close a look at the deceased.

INT. OUTER OFFICE - DAY

14

Roxanne being questioned in b.g. along with Becker. Chaney's X sobbing secretary, Hilda, is being consoled by a stunned associate, Stuart Markowitz. In f.g., the senior -- and founding -- partner of the firm, Leland McKenzie, is talking to a Detective Duquette.

DUQUETTE

Coroner says he's been dead over forty-eight hours. Coulda been an embolism, maybe heart.

Cont.

MCKENZIE

To my knowledge, Norman had no history...

As the Coroner exits Chaney's office --

DUQUETTE

Girl who found him says he's some
sorta tax expert?

MCKENZIE

That's right.

INCLUDE DOUGLAS BRACKMAN, JR.

15

A cold, humorless attorney, early forties, son of the late
Douglas Brackman, Sr., one of the founding partners.

BRACKMAN

(to McKenzie)

This is great. Have you got any
idea how you want to handle the
Lewis audit?

MCKENZIE

(upset)

I haven't thought about it yet.

Under which, McKenzie's secretary, Iris Hubbard, an elegant,
tight-assed woman in her early 50's, approaches McKenzie.

IRIS

(quietly)

It's John Pregerson.

MCKENZIE

I'll call him back.

IRIS

(quietly persistent)

His son's been arrested again.

MCKENZIE

(a beat)

Is Kuzak in yet?

IRIS

No.

MCKENZIE

Find him.

And he heads for his office, crossing --

THE CORONER

16

exiting Chaney's office. To Duquette --

CORONER

You through? I wanna get him
downtown.

DUQUETTE

(to a passing
S.I.D. guy)

Sam?

SAM

All yours.

CORONER

I could use a hand. Guy's stiff
as a board. We're gonna have to
take him out chair and all.

They head back into Chaney's office, past --

GEORGIA BUCKNER

17

Late 20's, long, leggy, an exotic beauty. She's just entered,
seems a bit confused amidst all the commotion. Bruce Pollack,
24 years old, superstar summer law clerk, is standing with
Andrew Taylor (distinguished-looking young Black associate).
Pollack spots Georgia and moves in.

POLLACK

Tragic, isn't it?

GEORGIA

What?

POLLACK

One minute you're hip deep in the
tax code, the next -- pffft. Muerte.

GEORGIA

Who?

POLLACK

Norman Chaney. One of the senior
partners. Makes you wanna stop
and sniff the daisies.

(off her genuine
shock)

You all right?

GEORGIA

If you could just find Mr. Brackman
for me...

ANGLE - BRACKMAN

18

approaching from his deserted secretary's station.

BRACKMAN
Are you Miss Buckner? X

GEORGIA
(still absorbing
the shock)
Yessir.

BRACKMAN
Your predecessor was fired for tardiness. X

GEORGIA
I'm sorry. The police kept us in
the lobby.

BRACKMAN
In my office. I'll explain your
duties.

As she moves off after Brackman, Pollack goes back to where Taylor is still standing, admires Georgia from the rear.

POLLACK
Be still my heart.

ANGLE - ANN KELSEY 19

Briefcase in hand, moves through, a handsome, sexy attorney in her early thirties.

KELSEY
(to Roxanne)
What's going on?

ROXANNE
Mr. Chaney's dead.

KELSEY
Oh, my God.

ROXANNE
(bragging)
I found him.

As, under, several cops are trying to wheel Chaney through his office door. Completely stiff, rigor mortised in the position he'd died in, the remnants of his coagulated franks and beans stuck to his face, they're having a helluva time fitting him through the door.

DUQUETTE
Turn him! Turn him! No -- the
other way -- watch it --

Cont.

As they misjudge the opening and slam him into the wall --

DUQUETTE

Watch it! You're losing it --
catch him!

Hands reach out, grasping -- too late -- Chaney slides out of the chair, a rigid sculpture slamming to the floor with a sickening thud. OFF a fresh and even more exuberant burst of sobbing -- X

POLLACK

20

turns away, guffaws into his fist, as we -- X

CUT TO:

INT. HOLLYWOOD DIVISION - WITH VICTOR SIFUENTES - DAY 21

A good-looking Latino attorney around thirty. ON the CUT, he's impatiently tapping his wristwatch for the Desk Sergeant's benefit.

SIFUENTES

Sergeant. The little hand is on the nine. The big hand is on the twelve. I gotta be downtown in thirty minutes.

MCKLOSKEY

Soon as your client's through with breakfast. Meantime, whyn't you let the officer pat you down.

SIFUENTES

What's the matter? You guys don't get enough at home?

MCKLOSKEY

I'm gettin' tired of your mouth, Jose.

SIFUENTES

(flaring)

Show some respect. The name is Victor Sifuentes.

Under which --

MICHAEL KUZAK

22

has entered. Early forties, his off-center good looks betraying every year of it. He's got ex-jock size (which he was), a lousy back which could probably benefit from a fitness regimen he hasn't stuck to in ten years, and a chronic squint from eyes beginning to go on him. He moves toward the escalating beef between Sifuentes and McKloskey, who has come around the desk to put his face in Sifuentes'.

MCKLOSKEY

I don't care if your freakin' name
is Pancho freakin' Villa, you don't
see your client without you get
searched. Now assume the freakin'
position!

SIFUENTES

You lay a hand on me, I'll kick
your fat butt!

MCKLOSKEY

(livid; grabs him
by the coat)

That's it! You're outa here!

And steers him past Kuzak toward the exit.

SIFUENTES

Leggo my arm!

(in Spanish)

You swine! You son of a pooched
out pig!

As McKloskey almost throws him out the door --

SIFUENTES

You'll be hearing more about this,
McKloskey!

MCKLOSKEY

I can't freakin' wait.

And huffs back to the desk, where --

KUZAK

Michael Kuzak, attorney representing
Justin Pregerson. I'd like to talk
to the investigating officer.

MCKLOSKEY

(pulling it together)

Which that would be Detective Tuttle.

INCLUDE TUTTLE

23

hanging up a nearby phone and approaching, even as we speak.
He's a Black man, tough as shit. Probably spends more than he
can afford on his clothes.

TUTTLE

(handing Kuzak
paper work)

Lester to his friends.

KUZAK

What was all the excitement?

TUTTLE

Memo out of Division. We gotta search all attorneys before they go in. Lawyer brought a gun into South Central, his client tried to shoot his way out. Speaking of which:

(indicates paperwork
Kuzak is browsing)

Your client's a real citizen, Counselor. This time we got him on rape, assault, oral cop, sodomy, not to mention he's violated his probation six different ways.

X

KUZAK

(flat)

Presumption of innocence, Lester.

X

TUTTLE

Victim I.D.'d the kid's Mercedes, picked him and two accomplices out of a lineup -- let's see his daddy buy him out of this one.

KUZAK

Where is he?

TUTTLE

Upstairs.

KUZAK

Did he get Miranda?

TUTTLE

(for the first time
exposing a little
emotion)

Mike -- don't get cute on this one -- your client oughta have his head screwed onto a pole in the middle of Hollywood Boulevard.

KUZAK

(a tight grin)

This is America, Detective.

X

Tuttle begins to pat Kuzak down. Kuzak tolerates it.

TUTTLE

(the kicker)

So you know -- the woman he raped --

Cont.

KUZAK

Alleged to have raped.

TUTTLE

-- has leukemia.

OFF Kuzak's wince --

CUT TO:

A SMALL INTERROGATION ROOM

24

Steel mesh on the windows, a table, a couple of chairs, fluorescent tube lighting. ON the CUT:

JUSTIN PREGERSON

25

A blonde, handsome, cold-eyed twenty year old with a chronic coke nose, telling Kuzak --

PREGERSON

This is totally bogus.

KUZAK

(matter-of-fact,
off the sheet)

Says here she was beaten, raped and when her wig came off during the assault --

Pregerson can't help a smirk at the recollection.

KUZAK

-- she was tossed into a dumpster. . She I.D.'d you, she I.D.'d your running mates, she I.D.'d your Corvette.

X

PREGERSON

Hey -- I hook up with these guys in a bar. We have a few drinks, the bar closes, we go cruisin'. We stop at one of these all night places for a coupla six packs, she's in there. She follows me out, says she'll do three of us for fifty bucks. We figured what the hell, we go around the corner into the alley...it wasn't exactly Romeo and Juliet, but it wasn't rape either.

KUZAK

(off paper)

Victim alleges she begged you to stop -- said she was sick --

Cont.

PREGERSON

Oh, she was beggin' all right. But it wasn't to stop.

KUZAK

(referring to papers)

Says here as well she was treated at Hollywood Presbyterian for severe facial cuts and bruises.

PREGERSON

Look, there's some very crazy people out there. Maybe the next guy uses her for a punching bag, so she goes to the cops. She remembers my car, she figures she can work something out.

(brightens)

You talk to my father yet? For a thousand bucks she'll fold like a deck chair.

X
X

KUZAK

It's doubtful. I'm told she's got acute leukemia.

PREGERSON

(a beat)

That's too bad...Look -- when can I get out of here?

KUZAK

Not 'til they set bail.

PREGERSON

When's that?

KUZAK

Tomorrow's arraignment.

PREGERSON

(edgy)

Forget that. Find Judge Sorenson. He knows my father. He'll sign a writ today.

KUZAK

(packing folder)

I'll see what I can do.

Cont.

PREGERSON

My father's worth a million bucks
a year to your firm. You do that.

Kuzak moves to the door.

PREGERSON

That true about the cancer?

KUZAK

Yes.

PREGERSON

Acute leukemia. Is that contagious?

Off Kuzak's look, one might gather he hopes so. As he exits,
we --

CUT TO:

INT: CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

26

A very elegant room. All the law clerks, associates and partners
(except for Kuzak) are seated around the high gloss conference
table eating a deli lunch. Iris Hubbard takes the minutes.

MCKENZIE

(feeling genuine loss)

I hardly know what to say regarding
the untimely death of Norman Chaney,
our good friend and respected colleague,
except that we will greatly miss him.

BRACKMAN

Plus which his passing leaves a serious
void in an extremely lucrative area in
our practice.

MCKENZIE

(annoyed)

We can discuss that aspect later,
Douglas.

Cont.

BRACKMAN

Fine, and what about the Lewis tax audit? You think either George Lewis or the I.R.S. are going to say we can discuss that later?

MCKENZIE

(a sudden burst of
intimidating anger)

I said this is not the time!

Stuart Markowitz takes a swallow of celery tonic and clears his throat twice before talking.

MARKOWITZ

Uh, excuse me, Douglas, Leland... with all due respect... I uh, you know I uh, was personally fairly familiar with the Lewis file. By which I mean, you could, uh, fill the slot in-house, so to speak.

BRACKMAN

Thank you, Stuart. Leland and I will certainly take that under advisement.

MCKENZIE

In any event, I've spent the last forty-five minutes going through Norman's personal papers and per his last instructions there will be a simple cremation, with a memorial service preceding, at which those of you desiring may pay your last respects...

Under which, at the sideboard, Becker, standing next to Lisa Weston, has a different agenda for this meeting. As McKenzie continues in the b.g. --

BECKER

(sotto; flipping
open a celery tonic)

Lisa, pass me a roast beef.

She hands him a sandwich. He looks at it.

BECKER

This is tongue, honey. You trying to tell me something?

She just smiles, a come hither smile. Iris Hubbard expresses her annoyance at Becker.

IRIS

Sshhh...

MCKENZIE

(finishing up)

Now if you all don't mind, I'll
excuse myself.

And as he exits, Iris pulls out a yellow pad.

IRIS

(brightly)

I'll start a sign-up sheet for
eulogies,

She starts it around the table, as --

BECKER

(returning to his seat)

Is this for extra credit, Mom?
How about two extra billable hours?

BRACKMAN

Would you show some respect, Arnold?

BECKER

Why? 'Cause he's dead? Let's face
it, the guy was weird. Never left
his office. In five years I never
even saw him go to the men's room.

(beat)

Could be that's what did him in.

During which, the door has flung open, Kuzak entering, on the run.

IRIS

The minutes will reflect that
Mr. Kuzak arrived late for the
meeting.

KUZAK

Yeah, well Mr. Kuzak was having
such a good time chatting up
Justin Pregerson in the Hollywood
jail about how he and his
running mates raped and beat up
this twenty-year-old leukemia
victim, he just couldn't bear to
pull himself away.

BRACKMAN

He confessed?

Cont.

KUZAK

Oh sure. Filled with remorse. Look
-- you've been promising me a body.
I want it now.

BRACKMAN

Bring us a list of possible
candidates and we'll review it.

POLLACK

Excuse me, but how will this impact
on the summer law clerks?

TAYLOR

Not to mention the current associates.

BRACKMAN

Mr. Pollack, you may rest assured that
this firm has a commitment to hire at
least one full-time associate in
addition to Mr. Kuzak's criminal
lawyer and any possible replacement in
our tax department.

(colder)

Mr. Taylor -- associate review will
proceed at the appropriate time...
Now, as the hour is growing late, let
us lazer through our summary of pending
cases. Status unchanged on the
divestiture. Discovery Motion on
Rohner vs. Gradinger. Pending trial
on Merton vs. Merton. A new matter --
(wrinkles his brow)
-- Leon Kroner, a Medical Corporation
vs. Celia Robinson. Whose case is this?

ABBY

Mine, Sir.

BRACKMAN

What type of matter?

ABBY

A doctor is suing our client for his
\$750 bill.

BRACKMAN

A collection matter?

ABBY

It's a little more complicated.
For nine months her insurance company
has been giving her the runaround.
That's why the bill's not paid.

BRACKMAN

Ms. Perkins, undoubtedly, you've seen those ads on television? Lawyers in polyester suits soliciting for clients?

X

ABBY

Yes Sir.

BRACKMAN

Those lawyers handle \$750 collection cases. McKenzie, Brackman, Chaney, et al. does not handle \$750 collection cases.

KELSEY

Douglas, would you get off it. This is a referral from Morley Saperstein. I asked Abby to help me with it.

BRACKMAN

As your time is usually billed at \$135 an hour, Miss Kelsey, how much exactly do you intend to charge this client for whatever heroics you might perform on this \$750 matter?

KELSEY

What I intend is to charge her nothing.

BRACKMAN

Is it your belief then that we are running a welfare state here?

KELSEY

Absolutely not. It is my belief that this firm is an example of the capitalist system at its very finest. Management getting fat off the sweat and blood of the workers. Take me for example. You bill my time at \$135 an hour, 1600 hours a year for a total of \$216,000 into the bulging coffers of this firm. Of that amount, I, who generated the income, get \$52,800. You're damned straight this isn't a welfare state, Douglas, and if I want to make a couple of phone calls to an insurance company to keep some poor working woman from being screwed over by the system, then I'll do it!

There's a long awkward moment.

Cont.

BRACKMAN

(attempting to
save face)

Well...Due to the tragedy we suffered today it would appear that everyone is unusually testy, fractious and argumentative. Accordingly, this meeting is hereby adjourned.

As they stand up -- Iris leaps in.

IRIS

I'd like to remind everyone that the annual firm dinner dance will be held a week from next Friday, the twentieth at Mr. McKenzie's home. All partners, associates and summer law clerks are invited to attend along with a husband, wife or suitable escort.

KUZAK

(all innocence)

No secretaries?

IRIS

That's what we have firm picnics for, Mr. Kuzak.

As the meeting breaks up, Roxanne approaches Becker.

ROXANNE

Arnie -- Lydia Graham is here.

BECKER

Give me five minutes.

Roxanne spots Abby then.

ROXANNE

Abby, your husband's out in the reception room.

ON Abby's reception --

CUT TO:

INT. RECEPTION AREA

27

Lydia Graham (late 30's, very cool, attractive and well dressed) is seated on a sofa. Abby's husband Jim, a good-looking thirty year old, dressed in a suit and tie, stands, pacing back and forth.

Roxanne goes over to Lydia.

ROXANNE

Mr. Becker will be right with you.

Abby, a bit apprehensively, approaches her husband. She leads him to a more private corner.

ABBY

(very chirpy)

Hi. How did it go?

JIM

(belligerent)

I didn't get it.

ABBY

I'm sorry.

JIM

I bet.

It's obvious to Abby that Jim has had a few.

ABBY

I hope you didn't go in there smelling like you do now.

JIM

Save your mothering for your child. Okay? If I want to have a couple of beers it's my business.

ABBY

You have to pick Eric up after school.

JIM

Give me ten bucks.

ABBY

What for?

JIM

So I don't pick up this chair and throw it through this window, that's what for!

Abby opens her purse. She gives him ten dollars. He leaves. OFF her pain and fear --

FADE OUT

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN

INT. ARNIE BECKER'S OFFICE - DAY

28

Becker is seated across the desk from Lydia Graham. On the CUT --

LYDIA

My husband and I have already worked out all the terms of our settlement. I'm perfectly happy with it, but Julia wouldn't leave me alone until I agreed to let you take a look at it.

BECKER

(smiling)

Julia can be very persuasive.

LYDIA

I just don't want it to turn into one of those ugly pitched battles with name calling and recriminations.

BECKER

I respect that feeling entirely.

LYDIA

Barry and I may not want to be married to each other any longer, but we're still parents to our children and we're still civilized adults. I won't get down in the dirt and grub over who gets the dishes.

X

BECKER

I wish all my clients were as reasonable as you.

(starts back
to desk)

But, as long as you're here, let me jot down a few notes. When did you and your husband actually separate? The exact date if you remember.

LYDIA

He moved out of the house on December 21st.

BECKER

And was that at your suggestion?

Cont.

LYDIA

No. Not really.

BECKER

So it was his idea.

LYDIA

Well we had discussed it. That we weren't terribly happy...

BECKER

So four days before Christmas -- he really picks his spots, doesn't he -- he walks out on you.

LYDIA

It wasn't like that.

BECKER

(beat)

Is he living with her now?

LYDIA

With who?

BECKER

The other woman.

LYDIA

Barry did not leave me for another woman. That's not what this is about.

X

BECKER

Men are creatures of habit and comfort, Lydia. In twelve years I have never once seen a man initiate a divorce, and certainly not four days before Christmas, unless he had another woman to replace the one he was leaving.

LYDIA

My husband and I are individuals. We're not statistics.

BECKER

(sighs; then)

I'm sorry. I really am. And maybe I'm a little sensitive to this, because it was no more than six hours ago a woman came in here, waving this gun at me...

Cont.

BECKER (Cont.)

(demonstrates)

...A nice woman. A woman so nice she totally 100% refused to let me, as she put it, 'drag it through the mud.' So now she's found out her husband has another woman and they're living in Bel Air while my client's in Van Nuys and she's waving the gun at me because, and I quote, 'you should have forced me to face facts' she said.

LYDIA

You're deliberately trying to turn this into something ugly.

BECKER

What I'm deliberately trying to do is to protect your rights under the law. Let me be blunt here. For your husband, divorce is a fiscal inconvenience. But for you, it could be the most important financial decision you'll ever make in your life. I personally, as well as professionally, do not think such a decision should be made casually. Do you?

LYDIA

(almost a whisper)

I suppose not...

BECKER

What I'm going to do, out of friendship to Julia and admiration for your principles, is look over this settlement agreement at no charge or obligation to you. On Thursday, I'd like to take you to lunch and give you my thoughts on the matter. And then, it's completely your choice. You can take it or leave it. But at least you'll be making an informed decision. Sound fair?

Cont.

LYDIA
 (a little shell shocked)
 Well, yes. I guess. Thank you.

Becker stands. Guides Lydia to the door.

BECKER
 Roxanne'll phone you to confirm
 lunch. Do you like L'Orangerie?

X

LYDIA
 That's fine.

He opens the door into --

RECEPTION AREA

29

BECKER
 It was a great pleasure meeting
 you and I'll see you on Thursday.

Becker shakes her hand. As she exits, he drops his
 sympathetic smile, and we --

CUT TO:

INT. KELSEY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

30

Kelsey is eating Chinese food out of a carton as she pours
 over a mountain of law books and files. There's a KNOCK on the
 door.

KELSEY
 Enter.

Abby, carrying her briefcase and wearing her coat, comes in.

KELSEY
 Szechwan. Want some?

ABBY
 (shakes her head)
 No thanks. I was going to go
 home now, unless you had something
 pressing.

KELSEY
 (looks at watch)
 No. I didn't realize it was so
 late. Go...

But Abby lingers, looking at the food.

Cont.

ABBY

Is that the real spicy kind?

KELSEY

Medium, if you watch out for the
chilies.

X

She holds out the carton. But Abby shakes her head.

ABBY

I'm almost finished with the Points
and Authorities on Petramco.

KELSEY

Anytime this week. After 4½ years,
it's not going anywhere. It's
eight o'clock. Stop being an
attorney. Go home. Be a wife.
Be a mother.

ABBY

You sound like my husband.

KELSEY

Sorry. You're right. It's none
of my business.

Clearly troubled, Abby sits down on a chair. Finally stabs
some chopsticks into Kelsey's food.

ABBY

Oh, and Celia Robinson came in with
her file. Real nice lady. Incredible
guts. After her divorce, two kids
to support, she went to work as a
maid until she could save enough
to start a catering business. She
did Morley Saperstein's son's
bar mitzvah.

KELSEY

He told me. Creole-Cajun food.

ABBY

At a bar mitzvah?

Kelsey shrugs.

ABBY

Anyway, she's got copies of
everything. Even a renewal statement
and bill the insurance company sent
her two weeks ago.

Cont.

KELSEY

Sounds like a winner for us.

ABBY

Let's hope so. It's not exactly helping her migraines any, having that doctor bill hanging over her.

X

KELSEY

Migraines?

ABBY

That's why she went to the doctor in the first place. He wanted to run tests, but when the insurance refused to pay, she couldn't go back... Anyway, she's got an appointment with Morley Saperstein's personal physician tomorrow.

KELSEY

What did the company say?

ABBY

It was like talking to that chair.
(robot voice)

'Our records indicate that our insured Mr. Robinson had his ex-wife, Mrs. Robinson removed from his policy at the time of their divorce.' I told him they got two separate policies as part of the divorce settlement. I told him she has a copy of it.

KELSEY

And?

ABBY

He said they'll have to look into it.

KELSEY

Did you ask him if she's not covered why they sent her a renewal statement.

ABBY

Uh huh. And he says they'll have to look into it.

Cont.

KELSEY

Send him a threatening letter instead.
Copy his superiors. Use buzz words
like 'bad faith.' That oughta get
their attention.

ABBY

I already did.

KELSEY

Good.

Abby nods. A beat. Finally --

KELSEY

Look -- Abigail -- it really isn't
any of my business -- but if you need
to talk -- I was married once, myself.
About fifty years ago.

ABBY

Thanks. It'll be okay. Soon as
he gets a job. And quits drinking.
And starts --

(thinks better of it)

-- Never mind.

(gets up, grabs her
briefcase, betrays
her anxiety with)

Tell me the truth, you think there's
any chance I'll be asked to stay on
here as an associate?

KELSEY

It's not up to me. I'm not a voting
partner.

ABBY

If you were?

KELSEY

You're a good lawyer and a very hard
worker.

ABBY

But not a superstar like Pollack.
Or a sex bomb like Lisa.

(a beat)

Sorry. I'm being a jerk. G'night.
And thanks again.

She beats it out of Kelsey's office before she starts to cry.
OFF Kelsey --

CUT TO:

Kuzak hustles into the building. This place is a second home to him. Lots of familiar faces -- cops, P.D.'s and D.A.'s whom he greets on the run.

INT. DIVISION 35 - DAY

32

Judge Sidney Schroeder is on the bench. A Jewish grandfather, with a nice beard and little bifocal glasses on his nose, Judge Schroeder is bored, tremendously bored presiding over the bargain bazaar otherwise known as criminal arraignment court.

Kuzak is in the courtroom, in front of the railing where the attorneys sit, separated from their scuzzy-looking clients who sit on the benches in the rear of the court.

A sad-looking Black man and his Public Defender Nick Klein (30, flashily dressed) stand in front of the Judge. At the other end of the table is Leslie Aaron (27, attractive, dressed for success Deputy D.A.). During the following, Justin Pregerson, decked out in approximately \$2,000 worth of outre Melrose Avenue clothing, enters the courtroom and walks over to Kuzak. X

KLEIN

I'd ask that my client Mr. Jones be released on his own recognizance at this time.

PREGERSON

(whispering)
What's happening man?

Aaron leaps to her feet.

AARON

Is the Public Defender having a small jest at the expense of this court, or is he perhaps suffering from the same alleged addiction as his client?

KUZAK

(whispering)
We're up next. Go sit down.

Pregerson shrugs. Goes over to a bench. Sits down.

KLEIN

I have witnesses to that slanderous remark, Ms. Aaron.

(to reporter)

Accordingly, let the record reflect that I am not on drugs of any kind.

Cont.

SCHROEDER

Your client, Mr. Klein, has a sheet here so heavy I can barely lift it. Accordingly, your motion for O.R. will be denied. Ditto as to any motion for bail reduction. Preliminary hearing set for September 10 in Division 135. Next...

The Clerk stands.

CLERK

People v. Pregerson, Garcia and Dollar.

Kuzak nods to Pregerson who walks forward. The Bailiff goes to the jury box where Emanuel Garcia and William Dollar (two unsavory-looking characters in their early 20's) sit along with the other custody defendants, dressed in prison blues.

Pregerson takes his place at the counsel table next to Kuzak. Dollar and Garcia sit down next to Klein. Aaron is at the other end. Kuzak rises to his feet.

KUZAK

(standing)

Michael Kuzak representing defendant Pregerson, your Honor.

SCHROEDER

Waive reading of rights and complaint?

KUZAK

So waived.

SCHROEDER

How does your client plead?

KUZAK

Not guilty.

KLEIN

Nicholas Klein, representing defendants Garcia and Dollar. As there would appear to be a possible conflict of interest the Public Defenders Office would ask to be relieved of representation with respect to defendant Dollar.

X

SCHROEDER

Mr. Dollar, please rise. Do you have the funds to hire an attorney, Mr. Dollar?

DOLLAR

I'm broke, Judge.

SCHROEDER

An attorney will be appointed for
Mr. Dollar.

(to Clerk)

Let me see the list.

The Clerk hands him a list.

SCHROEDER

I see Mr. Cavanaugh in the courtroom.
Would you be interested in a court
appointment on this matter?

Ralph Cavanaugh walks forward to the counsel table. X

CAVANAUGH

Yes. I think I can squeeze that
in. Thank you your Honor.

SCHROEDER

Any motions while Mr. Cavanaugh
acquaints himself with this matter?

KLEIN

Yes your Honor. At this time I
would ask that Mr. Garcia be
released on his own recognizance.

AARON

Your Honor, I'm sorry, but Mr. Klein
is once again insulting the
intelligence of this Court. May
I point out Mr. Garcia's five
previous arrests, two felony priors
and now an extremely aggravated
assault rape.

KLEIN

And let me point out that Mr. Garcia
has always faithfully appeared for
all previous court appearances, in
addition to which he is sole support
of an aged mother who relies on him
for weekly transportation to and
from the clinic.

SCHROEDER

Usually in a stolen car, according to
his rap sheet.

Cont.

AARON

My office will agree to Mr. Garcia's release from custody.

(off Klein's smile)

On the condition that he be released in the care and custody of Mr. Klein. Take him home with you, Mr. Public Defender, you think he's such a sweet guy.

KLEIN

(pissed)

Your Honor --

SCHROEDER

(sighs)

Attorneys approach the bench.

Klein, Aaron, Kuzak and Cavanaugh approach.

SCHROEDER

(to reporter)

Off the record.

(then)

Ms. Aaron. Mr. Klein. I would not normally be so presumptuous as to delve into the personal lives of my court personnel. But as this courtroom is beginning to resemble a daytime soap opera I feel I am well within my rights in inquiring -- are you two hot for each other or what?

Aaron snorts derisively.

KLEIN

I took her out three times, your Honor.

AARON

OUT! I made dinner twice and the third time you brought in a pizza.

X

KLEIN

You're mad 'cause I said I'd call.

AARON

I'm mad because I lowered my standards.

KLEIN

Yeah. Along with your skirt.

Meanwhile, Kuzak is trying to maintain a straight face, while Cavanaugh has finished reading the file.

CAVANAUGH

(very businesslike)

Your Honor, at this time I would ask that Mr. Dollar's bail in this matter be reduced to a thousand dollars.

AARON

The man has four priors.

CAVANAUGH

Two as a juvenile.

AARON

(to reporter)

On the record. The D.A.'s office is unilaterally opposed to any bail reduction with respect to either defendant Garcia or defendant Dollar.

SCHROEDER

Bail to remain set in the amount of \$25,000 on both defendants. Bail to stand on defendant Pregerson. Preliminary hearing set for September 6 in Division 135.

(standing)

Off the record. I need a potty break. We'll take a twenty minute recess during which time I suggest the P.D. and the D.A. clean up their act.

The Judge leaves the bench. The two defendants are led back to custody. Aaron goes over to the counsel table. Reads her next file.

PREGERSON

(to Kuzak)

I'm out of here.

KUZAK

Wear a suit for the prelim.

Klein turns to Kuzak and Cavanaugh.

KLEIN

When're you guys free to schmooze?

Cont.

KUZAK

I'm good for this afternoon.

CAVANAUGH

Yeah, okay.

KUZAK

Four o'clock at Little Joes.

CUT TO:

INT. COURT CORRIDOR - DAY - WITH KUZAK

32-A

As he hustles past Klein to catch up with Leslie Aaron.

KUZAK

Leslie -- who's good in the P.D.'s office?

AARON

(loud enough for
Klein to hear)
Legally or sexually?

KUZAK

Legal. I'm looking to take on a body.

AARON

How about mine?

KUZAK

You're more body than I can handle.
Besides, I think I need someone of
the defense persuasion.

AARON

Someone who could love a guy like
Pregerson.

KUZAK

Or at least not lose his lunch.

AARON

You're right. Not me.

(thinks)

Number One fast charger in the
P.D.'s office right now's a guy
named Victor Sifuentes.

KUZAK

Sifuentes? Kid with the earring?

AARON

Yeah. Real smart.

KUZAK

I don't know. If it's the same guy, I saw him strut his stuff at Hollywood jail.

AARON

You asked my opinion. But check it out yourself. He's in Division 33.

CUT TO:

INT. DIVISION 33 - DAY

33

The Honorable Richard Armand (Black, 40 years old) presiding.

Victor Sifuentes is at the counsel table with Manuel Hermosillo, 35, a hype, dressed in prison blues. At the opposite end of the table is the D.A., Marilyn Dart. We should note Kuzak entering and sitting in the spectator's section, under --

SIFUENTES

Victor Sifuentes of the Public Defenders Office representing Carlos Hermosillo.

X

ARMAND

Waive reading?

SIFUENTES

So waived.

ARMAND

How does your client plead?

SIFUENTES

Mr. Hermosillo is unable to enter a plea at this time.

ARMAND

And why is that, Mr. Sifuentes?

SIFUENTES

Mr. Hermosillo has been denied his constitutional right to an attorney.

ARMAND

I thought that you were his attorney, Mr. Sifuentes.

SIFUENTES

This is true, Your honor. But I was denied access to my client by the police department.

ARMAND

Under what circumstances?

SIFUENTES

I went to the Hollywood Station to interview my client. At such time Sergeant McKloskey of the LAPD made rude and insulting remarks to me regarding my ethnicity. When I took umbrage at said remarks, the Sergeant refused to let me speak to my client and then went so far as to have me bodily removed from the station.

ARMAND

So you never conferred with Mr. Hermosillo regarding his defense.

SIFUENTES

No, your Honor.

ARMAND

I would say a continuance would be appropriate at this time.

DART

No objection.

SIFUENTES

Excuse me, your Honor. But my client is in custody. Any such continuance would deny him his constitutional right to a timely arraignment and speedy trial. Accordingly I would move the case against him be dismissed due to the State's outrageous conduct in denying him his constitutional right to representation.

DART

Mr. Sifuentes can talk to him now, your Honor. In the hall.

SIFUENTES

Such a slipshod representation would be tantamount to no representation.

ARMAND

I would have to agree with Mr. Sifuentes that if the relationship between attorney and client has been abrogated due to outrageous police conduct, then this case should be dismissed.

Cont.

DART
A big 'if,' your Honor.

KUZAK
S'cuse me, your Honor? X

ARMAND
Mr. Kuzak? X

KUZAK
I happened to be present at the
Hollywood Division at the time of
the alleged incident.

ARMAND
Would you corroborate counsel's
description of the events in question? X

KUZAK
Totally, your Honor.

ARMAND
Case dismissed.

DART
But your Honor...

ARMAND
(interrupting)
If the D.A.'s office sees fit
they are of course free to refile
charges as double jeopardy has not
attached...We're in recess.

The Judge walks off the bench.

SIFUENTES
(to Herмосillo)
They'll process you out of here,
then you can go home.

HERMOSILLO
Okay.

SIFUENTES
And stay away from the cura. Stuff'll
kill you, man.

The Bailiff takes Herмосillo away. Kuzak approaches
Sifuentes. Hands him a business card.

KUZAK

Michael Kuzak. I'm with --

SIFUENTES

McKenzie Brachman Chaney et cetera.
I know. I've seen you around.
Thanks for the testimonial.

KUZAK

Very fancy footwork.

Sifuentes shrugs.

SIFUENTES

Guy's a hype. Wife. Four kids
to support. Police set him up on
a sale. What the hell good would
it do anyone to send him to the
joint.

KUZAK

They'll probably refile the case.

SIFUENTES

And they probably won't find him.
He's going to a drug program in
Arizona.

KUZAK

Free for lunch sometime?

SIFUENTES

What's the agenda?

KUZAK

We'd like to talk to you about
a job.

SIFUENTES

I got a job.

X

KUZAK

We'd still want to take you to lunch.

SIFUENTES

(a smile)

You pay?

X

KUZAK

I'll call your office.

CUT TO:

Kuzak, Klein and Cavanaugh drinking beers. On the CUT --

KUZAK

(hoping against
hope)

If we want to deal this thing,
it's going to have to be all three
of 'em.

KLEIN

Speaking for myself, I'm disinclined
to negotiate. I see no case here.
The D.A. is sucking wind. X

KUZAK

An unshakable I.D. by the world's
most sympathetic victim is not
sucking wind. X

CAVANAUGH

Unless you argue consent. Dying
woman out for a good time before
they plant her in the ground.

KUZAK

Moments like this make me proud
to be a member of such a noble
fraternity.

CAVANAUGH

Aren't we fastidious.

KLEIN

Could we stop jerking ourselves
around here and go one step at a
time. We know she's got cancer.
But we don't know the prognosis.
So let's find out, 'cause the way
I figure it, with a little luck
and half a dozen continuances,
she'll either quit or die before
we even have to worry about a trial.

(off Kuzak's
stoney silence) X

Hey, I know it sounds a little
cold. But this is not the
Red Cross here, so unless you've
got a better idea...

KUZAK

(wishing he did)

No.

Cont.

Kuzak throws his money on top of the check and walks as
we --

FADE OUT

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN

INT. BRACKMAN'S OUTER OFFICE - DAY
WITH GEORGIA BUCKNER

35

the new secretary, busy typing up a brief, her bright red nails clattering sharply on her IBM, as --

POLLACK

36

approaches, two cups of coffee in hand.

POLLACK
(proffering)
Coffee?

GEORGIA
Thank you.

POLLACK
How's it going? Getting acclimated?

GEORGIA
I think so.

POLLACK
(confidential)
Brackman's a carp. Don't let him intimidate you.

GEORGIA
(grateful)
I won't.

POLLACK
So maybe how about lunch? You like dim sum?

Under which, Brackman's door has opened and McKenzie has exited, heading for his office past --

POLLACK
'Morning, Sir.

MCKENZIE
Good morning, Bruce.

And continues on, crossing paths with --

KUZAK

37

hurrying from his office, trying to slide into his jacket and stuff papers into his briefcase at the same time. To his secretary --

KUZAK

Elizabeth -- Would you check with the clerk in 123 -- make sure the discovery motions were filed -- tell Pollack I need points and authorities on Womack --

X

MCKENZIE

Michael -- where do we stand with Justin Pregerson?

KUZAK

I'm on my way to the prelim even as we speak.

MCKENZIE

His father's all over my call sheet. What should I tell him?

KUZAK

...Tell him his punk son deserves to go away for ten years.

McKenzie nudges Kuzak back into --

X

INT. KUZAK'S OFFICE

37-A

X

closes the door under --

X

MCKENZIE

He's one of our more important clients. What would you have us do? Refer him to another firm?

KUZAK

Don't patronize me. Just get me a body so I don't have to deal personally with this kind of crap.

MCKENZIE

Have you got someone in mind?

KUZAK

As a matter of fact, yes.

MCKENZIE

Set up lunch.

KUZAK

I already did. It's on your calendar. Day after tomorrow.

Cont.

KUZAK (Cont.)

(lowers his voice)

By the way. I know how much you
cared about Norm Chaney. I know
how carefully you guarded his privacy.

(off McKenzie's
questioning look)

When I was a kid with the D.A.'s office,
Norman Chaney was busted for solicitation
in the men's room at Union Station.
The paperwork got lost. Rumor had it,
at your request.

X

MCKENZIE

(deadpan)

You're late for court. If you
mess up, don't come back.

KUZAK

Don't tempt me.

OFF his exit --

X

OMIT 38

CUT TO:

INT. LADIES' ROOM - DAY

38-A

X

Kelsey is washing her hands, as Abby enters, words tumbling
out of Abby's mouth.

X

ABBY

The doctor she went to?

KELSEY

Who? Celia Robinson?

ABBY

He wants to put her into the
hospital immediately for neurological
testing, but they won't let her
in because when they called her
insurance company, they said she
wasn't covered.

KELSEY

What happened when you called?

ABBY

They put me on hold.

Cont.

Kelsey stands up.

KELSEY

Let's go.

CUT TO:

INT. MUTUAL LIFE & CASUALTY INSURANCE COMPANY 39
CLAIMS DEPARTMENT - DAY

A secretary, Nita, sits outside the closed executive offices. Kelsey walks over, hands Nita her business card. Abby hangs back half a step.

KELSEY

Attorneys Ann Kelsey and
Abigail Perkins to see Lester Mestman.

Before Nita can say anything, Kelsey spots the door with a nameplate: LESTER MESTMAN - SUPERVISOR, CLAIMS DEPARTMENT. As Kelsey starts toward it --

NITA

Wait -- do you have an appointment?

KELSEY

Absolutely not.

Kelsey flings open the door. Nita is right on her heels and Abby behind her.

INT. LESTER MESTMAN'S OFFICE - DAY 40

A nondescript, middle manager's office -- Lester Mestman, a nondescript middle manager, has the kind of arrogance endemic to bureaucrats with a soupcon of power. On the CUT, Kelsey flings open the door. Nita is right on her heels and Abby behind her.

NITA

(handing him
Kelsey's card)

I'm sorry, Mr. Mestman, she
barged in without an appointment.

KELSEY

(over her)

At this moment my client,
Celia Robinson, is at St. Anthony's
trying to check in for a CAT scan, only
they won't let her because your
insurance company is still refusing
to admit that she's got coverage.
So don't talk to me about appointments.

Cont.

MESTMAN
(flustered)

My dear Miss...

He looks at her card.

KELSEY

(interrupting)

I'm not your dear Miss anything.
And you had better be praying
she doesn't have a brain tumor,
because if she does, and if this
tumor was exacerbated by the
systematic bad faith of your
company, then you had better be
prepared to write a check with a
lot of zeros behind it.

MESTMAN

(rattled)

I need to discuss this matter
with my superiors.

KELSEY

You've had nine months to discuss
this with your superiors! If she
does have a tumor, every minute
you stall, it's getting bigger
and more dangerous. That means
more zeros on the check. Am I
coming through?

(off his hesitation)

Pick up the phone, Mr. Mestman.

(reading from
a paper)

St. Anthony's Hospital.

X

He sighs. Picks up the phone, as we --

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

41

Judge Alice Ratakowski presiding. Fair-skinned, light brown
hair, green eyes behind clear-rimmed glasses, a beauty in her
early 30's. More than one officer of the court has wiled away
a boring afternoon imagining Ratakowski's naked body under those
gently rustling black robes. On the CUT --

Cont.

RATAKOWSKI
 (exasperated; quickly
 browsing the
 paperwork)
 Are we ready to proceed,
 gentlemen?

X

GOLD
 People are, your Honor.

RATAKOWSKI
 Defendants' counsel?

Cavanaugh half rises.

X

CAVANAUGH
 It would appear, Mr. Kuzak's been
 unavoidably detained, your
 Honor. Under the circumstances,
 move for continuance --

X

During the last of which --

OMIT 42

KUZAK

43

comes barreling into court, hurrying to the defense table
 with --

KUZAK
 Michael Kuzak, your Honor.

RATAKOWSKI
 Tick tock, Counselor.

KUZAK
 I apologize for the delay.

RATAKOWSKI
 Any reason I shouldn't hold you
 in contempt?

KUZAK
 Approach, your Honor?

RATAKOWSKI
 (waving him up)
 That better be a note from your
 mother.

Cont.

KUZAK

It's a citation, your Honor. I'm doing thrity-five -- tops forty -- when this cop who doesn't even shave yet pulls me over for an unsafe lane change. I explain to him that I'm late for court. I further explain --

RATAKOWSKI

Let me take a look at that.

KUZAK

That's all right, your Honor. I wouldn't presume to ask this court for any favors.

RATAKOWSKI

And this court wouldn't presume to offer any.

KUZAK

Truthfully, I think we've already consumed enough of this court's time with my personal concerns.

She gives him a look. Holds her hand out for it. Reluctantly he gives it to her. She browses it.

RATAKOWSKI

For the record, Mr. Kuzak has just handed me a pink piece of paper which appears to be, in fact, neither a laundry list nor even his pocket copy of the Canon of Ethics but rather a legitimate L.A.P.D. traffic citation.

She hands it to the clerk with the tiniest hint of a smile --
Kuzak is not thrilled.

X

X

RATAKOWSKI

(all business)

The People may proceed.

GOLD

Call Ms. Adrienne Moore, your Honor.

X

As she rises, approaches the witness box, past the three defendants -- choir boys --

CUT TO:

wrapping up with the victim, Adrienne Moore, in her late twenties, very thin, haggard, with the kind of dark, hollow eyes common to advanced cancer patients.

X

GOLD

One last question, Ms. Moore. Did Officer Fiebelkorn take you to an Emergency Hospital?

MOORE

Yes. Hollywood Presbyterian.

GOLD

Did she wait there while you were examined?

MOORE

Yes, then she took me home.

GOLD

Thank you, Ms. Moore. I have no further questions.

RATAKOWSKI

Mr. Cavanaugh -- cross.

Cavanaugh rises, carrying with him a bunch of notes he periodically shuffles.

CAVANAUGH

Ms. Moore, on direct examination you testified that on the date in question, you purchased a soft drink.

MOORE

Yes.

CAVANAUGH

At a convenience store?

MOORE

And some eggs and milk.

CAVANAUGH

And it was approximately what time that you left your house to get this soft drink?

Cont.

MOORE

Two.

CAVANAUGH

In the morning.

MOORE

Yes.

CAVANAUGH

Do you often get a craving at two in the morning for sugary soft drinks?

MOORE

(shrugs)

Sometimes.

CAVANAUGH

Especially when you've been drinking heavily -- mouth gets all woolly.

GOLD

Objection.

Before the Judge can rule, Moore answers the question.

MOORE

I wasn't drinking.

GOLD

Withdraw the objection.

CAVANAUGH

Were you smoking dope?

GOLD

Objection -- irrelevant.

CAVANAUGH

This would be directly relevant as to the issue of consent.

RATAKOWSKI

Overruled.

CAVANAUGH

Had you been smoking a green leafy substance commonly referred to as marijuana that evening?

She doesn't answer for a moment. Finally --

Cont.

MOORE

Yes. A little. You see the chemotherapy makes me nauseated and the marijuana helps to --

CAVANAUGH

(over her)

Objection. Non-responsive. I would ask that everything after the witness' answer that yes she had been smoking marijuana be stricken from the record.

RATAKOWSKI

Objection sustained. The reporter will strike everything after the word 'yes.'

MOORE

(upset, feeling
bullied; to Ratakowski)

I don't understand. Why can't I explain?

CAVANAUGH

Please Miss Moore, if you will just answer the questions as they're asked of you. Now -- you were alone when this alleged incident occurred?

MOORE

Yes.

CAVANAUGH

Had you been alone all night?

MOORE

Yes. I was home watching T.V.

CAVANAUGH

Alone all night smoking dope by yourself and watching T.V.

GOLD

Objection. Asked and answered.

Under which, a Bailiff has emerged from a side door and quietly placed some papers before her.

RATAKOWSKI

Sustained. Move on please.

And quickly scans them as --

CAVANAUGH

Thank you. But just to set the scene, there you are, having a joint or two, watching the tube, maybe feeling a little lonely.

MOORE

I'm used to being alone.

CAVANAUGH

But sometimes it's nice to have a little human contact. So you get the idea to go to the all night market, to see a human face. Maybe have someone to talk to.

MOORE

I didn't talk to anyone. I bought my food and left and then these animals dragged me...

CAVANAUGH

(interrupting)

Objection! Non-responsive! Motion to strike.

X

X

RATAKOWSKI

Objection sustained.

CAVANAUGH

(conversational)

Miss Moore, how is your health?

MOORE

I have leukemia.

CAVANAUGH

I'm very sorry, Miss Moore, and I hope you'll forgive my insensitivity when I ask what your prognosis for recovery is.

MOORE

Lousy. I'm going to die.

CAVANAUGH

Have the doctors told you when?

D.A.

Objection. Mr. Cavanaugh seems to be on a fishing expedition.

CAVANAUGH

Your Honor, if I could ask the court's indulgence and latitude as this is a matter of some delicacy.

RATAKOWSKI

Ms. Moore, no one regrets more than I any pain this line of questioning may cause you.

(to Cavanaugh)

I'll give you a little more room, Counselor, but get on with it please.

CAVANAUGH

Thank you...How much longer have you got, Miss Moore?

MOORE

Less than six months.

CAVANAUGH

Now I imagine Miss Moore, there've got to be a great many things you always wanted to do but may never get a chance to do now.

MOORE

I suppose.

KUZAK

45

sees it coming. Wishes he were anywhere else.

RESUME

46

As --

CAVANAUGH

I know if it were me, I'd be trying to cram all these things into the short time I had left. Even if these things weren't the kind of things I might have done before.

MOORE

I don't understand.

CAVANAUGH

Well, like recreational drugs. Marijuana.

MOORE

I told you it was for the side effects of the chemotherapy.

CAVANAUGH

(over her)

Right. You pull up to a convenience mart, a little high on weed, you see three good-looking, young guys in a hot car --

Cont.

MOORE

You've got to be kidding.

CAVANAUGH

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Miss Moore?

MOORE

(getting sick feeling)

What does that mean?

CAVANAUGH

A literary allusion. It suggests
that if you only have six months to
live, you may as well have a good
time before you go.

MOORE

This is sick.

CAVANAUGH

Isn't it true you solicited my
client to have sex with you?

MOORE

No!

CAVANAUGH

And isn't it true that when my client
expressed some initial reluctance
you went over to him and pressed
against him and fondled him?

MOORE

(in a fury)

No! Your Honor, please --

CAVANAUGH

Isn't it true you said to him,
quote -- 'I've never taken on three
guys. I want you to do it to me
and I want you to do it rough.'

MOORE

(loses it)

You despicable bastard!

CAVANAUGH

Your Honor, I ask that the witness
be admonished.

RATAKOWSKI

Miss Moore --

MOORE

(on her feet --
in a fury)

This is perversion! I want to
know who's on trial here?

X

CAVANAUGH
Your Honor, please!

RATAKOWSKI
(gavelling)
Any further outbursts,
Miss Moore, and I'll hold
you in contempt.

MOORE
(over the edge)
The feeling is mutual!

CAVANAUGH
Your Honor, under the circumstances,
may we request a continuance until
such time as --

MOORE
(overriding)
Until such time as what? I die?
Is that the tactic? Accuse me,
wear me down, go for continuances
'til I quit -- or die --

RATAKOWSKI
I'm warning you --

MOORE
I'm warning you. This door swings
both ways!
(stabbing an
accusatory finger
toward defendants)
If I can't get justice here, I'll
get a gun and do it myself!

RATAKOWSKI
That's enough -- you're in
contempt!

PREGERSON
Hey, Your Honor -- she's
threatening us!

MOORE
You think I won't. What've I
got to lose? I'll be dead before
you can ever get me to trial.

RATAKOWSKI
Bailiff -- escort Miss Moore to
the basement holding facility
until such time as she wishes to
apologize to this court!

As the Bailiff takes her by the arm, leads her off --

Cont.

RATAKOWSKI

Court is adjourned.

(as she rises)

Mr. Kuzak -- a moment of your
time in chambers.

And she vacates the bench, leaving a stunned and shaken team of
lawyers and defendants in contemplation of Adrienne Moore's threat. X

CUT TO:

INT. RATAKOWSKI'S CHAMBERS - DAY

47

The subtle touches of femininity at odds with Ratakowski's cold
-- almost hostile -- attitude towards Kuzak. Off in the corner,
a Bailiff -- part of the woodwork -- as on the CUT --

RATAKOWSKI

(referencing a printout)

Mr. Kuzak. Are you aware of the fact
that you have a substantial number of
outstanding warrants?

KUZAK

(sheepish)

My recollection, Your Honor, is
we're talking a couple of parking
tickets at most.

RATAKOWSKI

(brandishing the
printout)

We're talking forty-two hundred
dollars worth of citations over a
two year period.

KUZAK

(stunned)

Forty-two hundred? That's gotta
be a mistake.

RATAKOWSKI

Didn't Officer --

(squints at citation)

-- Marinell -- run you through
the computer?

KUZAK

As I was already late, Your
Honor, and having identified
myself as a former Deputy D.A., he
was kind enough to write me up
without the usual formalities. X

RATAKOWSKI

Mr. Kuzak, you bring fresh meaning
to the word scofflaw. Bailiff,
take Mr. Kuzak into custody.

She turns her back.

KUZAK

Your Honor, hold it a minute...if
I could ask your indulgence, here --

RATAKOWSKI

(curt)

Forty-two hundred dollars, Counselor.
Put up or shut up.

KUZAK

Who's got forty-two hundred dollars?

RATAKOWSKI

You've got one phone call. I suggest
you use it to find out.

KUZAK

Your Honor -- with all due respect --
aren't you overreacting a little bit?

RATAKOWSKI

Escort him downstairs, Bailiff.

As the Bailiff grabs Kuzak by the arm --

CUT TO:

INT. HOLDING AREA - DAY

48

A small, dank room beneath the County Court Building, containing
two mesh-wire bullpens with scarred benches around the perimeter,
and a plain metal desk and a phone near the elevator from which,
on the CUT --

KUZAK

49

emerges in the bailiff's custody. As he is steered toward the
cages --

KUZAK

(grumbling)

Believe it? Coupla lousy
parking tickets...

Cont.

BAILIFF
 (loves it)
 Life's a bitch, Counselor.

OFF which, Kuzak has spotted --

ADRIENNE MOORE

50 X

sitting in the corner of one of the bullpens, cold, frightened, very frail. The awesome rage animating her spirit in court is spent. The Bailiff, meanwhile has locked Kuzak in the adjacent pen. Kuzak watches Miss Moore for a few moments before finally approaching the common mesh wall of their two cells.

KUZAK
 Miss Moore...

She looks up. Doesn't readily recognize him.

KUZAK
 I'm Michael Kuzak. Justin Pregerson's Attorney.

(off her silence)
 Look -- I don't suppose you care -- but I'm deeply sorry about what happened in court.

MOORE
 That's very big of you. I can tell you were morally outraged.

KUZAK
 That I may have been doesn't change the fact my client's got a right to the best legal representation he can obtain.

MOORE
 What about my rights! I was raped and beaten and thrown into a dumpster, but for all that, I was the one accused up there, not that piece of garbage you're representing!

KUZAK
 I represent the system as well as the client, Miss Moore. I may not always believe in the client, but I have to believe in the system.

MOORE
 And what about me? What am I supposed to believe in?

X

Under which, in b.g., the Bailiff hangs up phone, heads their way.

BAILIFF

Judge'll see you now, ma'am.

MOORE

You win, Mr. Kuzak. I'm going up there, I'm apologizing, and then I'm withdrawing my complaint.

KUZAK

I'm afraid it's not that easy.

MOORE

(gets up)

I'm not going to spend the last six months of my life in that courtroom...I've been raped once. I won't let it happen again.

X

The Bailiff has unlocked the cage.

KUZAK

(an uncomfortable
silence; finally)

For whatever it's worth -- and as a purely personal observation -- if you were to get a gun and blow 'em away, I wouldn't lose any sleep over it.

MOORE

That's the difference between us, Mr. Kuzak, I would.

A long beat, then without another word, she exits the cage. OFF
Kuzak's anguish --

FADE OUT

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN

INT. LAW OFFICES - ANOTHER DAY - WITH BRACKMAN

51

At Georgia's desk, dictating.

BRACKMAN

...as office will be closed for business at three p.m., anyone not in attendance at said memorial service will be docked commensurately ...See that it's distributed right away to all personnel.

(spots Kelsey coming in)

Ah, Ms. Kelsey, how kind of you to grace us with your presence this morning.

KELSEY

Do you want something, Douglas?

BRACKMAN

The Petramco interrogatories. Apparently you've been too occupied with your \$750 collection matter to bother with a trifling twelve million dollar suit.

KELSEY

I'll have them for you tomorrow.

X

BRACKMAN

I'm afraid that won't do.

KELSEY

You want to tell me what the big rush is? At the rate we're going, I'll be in menopause doing Petramco.

BRACKMAN

Spare me your personal problems, Ms. Kelsey. Just be aware, if you have even the slightest thought of ever being a partner in this firm, those interrogatories had better be on my desk by five o'clock today.

Cont.

And he slams into his office. Behind which TRACK Kuzak into the office. He is in a lousy mood, as he passes --

ANGELA SIPRIANO

52

She's in her late 20's, great looking, really built, impatiently browsing an issue of American Lawyer. She's an ex-cop, current body builder, and a first-rate private detective.

SIPRIANO

(to Roxanne; impatient)

You want to tell Arnie I don't like cooling my heels?

X

KUZAK

(on the pass)

Slide a piece of cheese under his door. That'll get his attention.

And he continues on towards his office past the sobbing Hilda, as we --

X

OMIT

53

CUT TO:

INT. BECKER'S OFFICE - DAY - CLOSE ON PHOTO

54

of Barry Graham, through a telephoto lens, unlocking the front door of his house. Over --

X

SIPRIANO'S VOICE

Barry Graham. Residing at 11275 La Mer Road. Shares the dwelling with --

X

CLOSE - COMPOSITE - VALERIE RENAULT

55

X

SIPRIANO'S VOICE

Miss Valerie Renault, actress-model. Member in good standing, Screen Extras Guild.

X

ANGLE - ANGELA SIPRIANO AND ARNIE BECKER

56

Opening her briefcase. Pulling a document.

SIPRIANO

The rental agreement listing Valerie as principal occupant was signed by Barry four months prior to leaving his wife. Here's a copy.

X

Cont.

She hands it to Becker, who scans it quickly, pleased.

SIPRIANO

Mr. Graham owns Exotic Body Parts
and Auto Repair, Inc. in Van Nuys.

BECKER

Lots of insurance work. Lots of
cash transactions.

SIPRIANO

Here's his tax returns for the last
three years. Lots of creative bookkeeping.

X

She removes a packet of 8X10 photos in milky paper baggies,
hands one over.

BECKER

(re photo)

Nice house.

SIPRIANO

South of Ventura Boulevard on
a cul-de-sac...

X

X

Becker grabs for more photos.

X

SIPRIANO

Watch it -- I just got 'em from
the lab -- they may be a little tacky.

X

Becker takes them by the corner, one at a time.

SIPRIANO

Here's one they're both nude,
smoking a joint.

BECKER

(of the
first one)

Tacky indeed...

SIPRIANO

(hands him another)

Here's another, they're doing
some serious necking in the hot
tub. And here's the piece de
resistance... Barry and his honey
poolside on the chaise lounge
engaged in a sex act usually
described by a two digit number.

X

Cont.

This one has really got Becker's attention.

BECKER

Barry...you total degenerate. X

(to Sipriano)

This is going to be a lunch
Mrs. Graham will not soon forget.

SIPRIANO

(as he slides
photos back in
their sleeves)

I swear I don't understand you,
Arnie. You take this poor woman
to some snitzy restaurant, you
slap these on the table, she goes
into the ladies' room and ralphs
fifty bucks worth of lunch all
over the velvet wallpaper -- what's
the point?

BECKER

If I take the meeting here in the
office, she goes berserk, makes a
scene, maybe even goes for my eyes.
At best, it takes a coupla hours to
get rid of her 'cause you can't
throw a crying woman into the street.
So, instead I take her out. She sees
half a dozen of her best friends. X
They see her. Coupla glasses of
Chardonnay, a little salad Nicoise,
then I hit her with the slide show.
She doesn't say a word because she'd
rather die than embarrass herself
in front of her friends. Plus,
later, I bill her for the lunch.

SIPRIANO

(shakes her head;
can't help grinning)

Lawyers.

BECKER

(disarming grin)

Hey. It's a jungle out there. X

SIPRIANO

Enjoy lunch, sweetie.

And she exits. X

CUT TO:

INT. L'ORANGERIE - WITH ARNIE BECKER AND LYDIA GRAHAM 57 X

at one of the gallery tables. ON THE CUT, Becker offers a toast to --

BECKER

The future.

LYDIA

Such as it is.

BECKER

You don't sound too optimistic.

LYDIA

Why should I be? I'm almost forty, I have two children, a failed marriage, I can't wear a bikini --

BECKER

I think you'd look great in -- or out -- of a bikini.

LYDIA

(embarrassed)

Buttering up the client?

BECKER

Divorce is a growth industry, Lydia. I don't need the business.

LYDIA

Good. Because I've thought seriously about it and I've decided to accept the settlement as is.

BECKER

C'est la vie. Mind telling me why?

LYDIA

In the long run, there are more important things than money. I've seen too many divorces get ugly.

BECKER

You really are quite a rare woman. Okay. What I'll do then is, I'll put the investigation on hold.

LYDIA

Investigation?

Becker indicates the brown manilla envelope sitting on the table, unopened.

Cont.

BECKER

I had one of our private investigators look into a few of your husband's affairs, financial and otherwise. At no cost to you, of course.

(he pats it)

I'll just keep this on file, and if you ever change your mind...

The envelope sits there, ominous.

LYDIA

Does it obligate me to look at it?

BECKER

In no way.

A beat. With an urgency impossible to deny, Lydia takes the envelope in hand, opens it.

BECKER

It could be painful.

She pulls out the photos, looks at every single one of them. Finally she puts them back, places the envelope on the table.

LYDIA

(shakey voice)

Excuse me. I have to powder my nose.

Becker half rises as she gets up from the table, moves off. X
Becker sits, watches her go, signals for the nearby waiter. X

BECKER X

What've you got for dessert?

CUT TO:

INT. MEMORIAL CHAPEL - DAY

58

Not exactly SRO for Norman Chaney. The appropriate array of flowers surround the casket. On the CUT, Leland McKenzie is addressing the small gathering.

Cont.

MCKENZIE

I'll always remember Norman Chaney as a gifted lawyer, of course, but more importantly as a good and loyal friend...Norman Chaney left more than just his name on the letterhead of this firm. He left a standard of quality and character that we can only hope to emulate as we mourn his loss. I'll miss you, Norman.

(a beat, then)

Our colleague, Stuart Markowitz has asked to say a few words. After he has spoken, anyone wishing to contribute their own remembrances is most welcome to. Stuart?

X

ANGLE - MARKOWITZ

59

sliding from his pew and moving to the microphone. He clears his throat, shifting his weight back and forth as he reads from 3X5 cards.

MARKOWITZ

(clearly nervous)

What can I say about Norman Chaney... Norman Chaney knew everything there was to know about tax law. Shelters? Call Norman. Foreign tax treaties? Call Norman. Ad Velorum?...

ANGLE - BRACKMAN

60

BRACKMAN

(sotto voice;
along with
Markowitz)

Call Norman.

During which --

VARIOUS CUTS

61

of Kelsey, Abby, Kuzak, Pollack, etc., yawning, dozing, choking back giggles -- Chaney's secretary, Hilda, sobbing -- X

MARKOWITZ

resumes.

MARKOWITZ

During the sweeping '82 revisions, one man stood as a beacon in the deep fog of tax code confusion. That man was my friend and mentor -- a giant in the mine field of tax law and its ever changing fiscal implications -- a man for whom no tax complexity was too... complex, if you will.

Under which, we locate --

BECKER AND LISA

63

She is sitting close, her thigh pressed firmly against his.

LISA

(husky whisper)

I've got a first draft of that memo you asked me for.

(off his look)

The implications of Chapter 11 on Division of Community Assets...

BECKER

Good.

LISA

I could give it to you tomorrow or we could go over it tonight.

BECKER

Up to you.

LISA

I'm sort of anxious for your opinion.

BECKER

Tonight then.

LISA

I've got to warn you, it's kind of rough. You may not be able to read my scribbles.

BECKER

You can give it to me orally if you wish.

OFF which --

MARKOWITZ

(pressing forward)

I for one will miss this man,
and I'd like to say, in conclusion,
if I had but one word with which
to characterize Norman Chaney,
it would be: fiduciary. Good-bye,
Norman. My good friend. My
fiduciary.

Markowitz moves back to his seat. No one else rises to speak.
The assemblage stirs nervously, embarrassed. Finally --

GEORGIA BUCKNER

65

slides out of a pew. In her tailored black suit, pointy heels,
glistening black hair severely moussed, she's a stunner. On her
way to the microphone she passes --

BRUCE POLLACK

66

sitting in between Kuzak and Andrew Taylor, hand over heart.

POLLACK

(wistfully to
Kuzak)

The Carribean. Miles of deserted
white sand beach. Her and me,
alone. Completely nude.

GEORGIA

67

settles in, adjusts the microphone. There's a touch of
anticipation. This exotic beauty about to eulogize Norman Chaney.

GEORGIA

Norman Chaney was the best friend
I ever had. I loved him dearly.
Most of you knew him, if at all,
as a shy man, brilliant in his
field, a workaholic with little
or no personal life. But I
knew him as a warm and loving man,
deeply in touch with the caring,
sensitive, gentle, feminine side
most men are too frightened to
express.

ANGLE - LELAND MCKENZIE

68

senses what's coming. He shoots a sideways glance at Kuzak, whose
radar is also beginning to register a tremor in the force.

RESUME - GEORGIA

GEORGIA

And because none of you really knew him, I can't let this man's true compassion go unmentioned here today. I met Norman in a gay bar. My name is not Georgia Buckner. It's George.

CLOSE - POLLACK

stunned and disbelieving.

KUZAK

(leans in, whispers
in his ear)

You and George. Completely alone. Nude.

As we --

RESUME - GEORGIA

GEORGIA

He took me home. He was the gentlest man I had ever met. I poured my heart out to him. I told him I wasn't gay, but transsexual -- a woman trapped in a man's body. Norman encouraged me to face myself, he supported me morally and financially through several years of deep analysis. And finally he even offered to pay for my surgery. And when the hospital said I had to live and work for eighteen months as a woman before they'd perform the surgery, he got me a job.

X

A titter is heard; another, a few shushes. Under which --

BRACKMAN

rises angrily and exits.

RESUME - GEORGIA

GEORGIA

I guess most of you never knew Norman was gay. Hell -- most of you never knew Norman at all. He was a deeply complicated man, never really comfortable with his sexual orientation. I think his

GEORGIA (Cont.)

support of me in my struggle was his way of reckoning with his own ambivalence. I'll miss you Norman. Your guidance, your wisdom, your love and support. You gave me the courage to heal myself. I'll miss you and love you always.

Finished, she moves off, head held high. You could HEAR a pin drop. A few ISOLATED COUGHS. Someone CLEARS his THROAT. No one moves.

FADE OUT

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN

INT. DR. JEROME MANDEL'S OFFICE - THE NEXT DAY

74

X

Kelsey and Abby sit on Italian designer pull-up chairs in the posh Beverly Hills office of Richard Mandel, M.D. Mandel is 45, nice-looking, basically a good, dedicated doctor. On the CUT, Mandel is showing them a skull X-ray, as Kelsey takes notes on a yellow legal pad.

MANDEL

Mrs. Robinson's tumor is approximately eight centimeters in diameter, in the right occipital lobe.

KELSEY

(while writing)

And do you suspect a malignancy, Doctor.

MANDEL

It's a possibility.

KELSEY

If it is cancer, then what?

MANDEL

Dr. Wesley Turner will surgically remove the tumor and we'll bring in an oncology team to discuss radiation and/or chemotherapy.

KELSEY

Is this a terminal condition?

MANDEL

It's hard to predict.

KELSEY

Try.

MANDEL

(sighs)

Let's say I'm hoping it's benign.

KELSEY

As a result of the surgery, will she lose intellectual capacity? Motor function?

Cont.

MANDEL

There's a possibility. At the least, there's also the possibility that she may lose the eye.

KELSEY

Doctor...if Mrs. Robinson had received treatment nine months ago, would her prognosis be better today?

MANDEL

I can't answer that question with absolute certainty.

KELSEY

I'm asking for your opinion.

MANDEL

There's some possibility.

KELSEY

You sure you want to go that far out on a limb?

MANDEL

Don't get sarcastic with me, Miss Kelsey. Medicine isn't that black and white.

KELSEY

I've got a very sick woman here, Doctor, and while you're looking after her health, someone has to look out for her rights.

MANDEL

With all due respect, you don't measure a patient's rights by the size of a law suit.

KELSEY

Unfortunately, in the real world, that's exactly how you measure them...

(she smiles)

...as I'm sure your own premiums will attest.

Cont.

MANDEL

(grins; gives up)

Next time I decide to sue somebody,
I'm calling you.

KELSEY

It'll be my pleasure. Now, Doctor
-- in your expert opinion, would
Celia Robinson's prognosis be
better today if she had received
prompt medical treatment nine
months ago?

Mandel sighs. Then finally --

MANDEL

Yes, Miss Kelsey, it is my expert
opinion that this very unfortunate
woman should've had treatment
nine months ago, and I just hope
to God it's not too late to save
her now.

Kelsey nods as she writes. As she closes her pad --

CUT TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

75

Early morning staff meeting. Croissants and coffee. All of the
associates, partners, clerks and Iris Hubbard, seated around
the conference table, with the exception of Abby and Kelsey.

MCKENZIE

I'd like to thank all of you for
participating in Norman Chaney's
memorial service. It was, to say
the least, an unusual service.
But then, Norman was an unusual
man with a wry sense of humor
concerning the human condition.
I think it would've tickled him...

Under which, Abby and Kelsey enter hurriedly.

KELSEY

Sorry we're late.

Cont.

MCKENZIE

(as they
take seats)

That's all right.

(looks at
his watch)

How long do we have?

X

IRIS

Mr. Kuzak's got a court appearance
at eleven in the Pregerson case,
and you're lunching with a
potential new associate.

X

X

TAYLOR

If I might ask -- who is it?

MCKENZIE

He's from the P.D.'s office.
Victor Sifuentes.

TAYLOR

A Chicano?

MCKENZIE

I believe so.

This news does not sit well with Taylor, but before he can
respond Becker jumps into it.

BECKER

Okay. Kuzak's getting his body,
I want Chaney's office.

BRACKMAN

Not until we make a decision on
hiring a tax specialist. If we
bring in some big rainmaker at
a senior partner level, he'll
demand the office in his perk
package.

BECKER

Don't take me for granted, Douglas.
Who makes more rain here than I do?

BRACKMAN

I, for one.

Cont.

BECKER

Sure. Clients come in thinking you're the genuine original Brackman, not some cheap second generation knockoff.

BRACKMAN

(livid)

How dare you insult --

MCKENZIE

(very firm)

Gentlemen. Settle your differences outside of this room and on your own time. Now if we could press on with our summary of pending cases.

X

BRACKMAN

(one last pissy
glance at Becker)

All right, but my list isn't as current as it should be due to my secretary's departure from this firm.

BECKER

What happened to her?

BRACKMAN

I fired him!

KUZAK

(innocence itself)

How come?

BRACKMAN

Because I do not want that freak of nature sitting outside my office representing me.

BECKER

Homophobic, Douglas?

MCKENZIE

Arnold, knock it off. I mean it. Let's start with the Lewis tax audit. Stuart?

MARKOWITZ

I'm uh, fully prepared.

Cont.

MCKENZIE

Good. Douglas, could you continue down your list, please?

BRACKMAN

(looking at his list; smug)

New business: I'm pleased to say I brought in Nathan Electronics on retainer, and RT&O Industries on a corporate acquisition and anti-trust matter. Old business: The divestiture I assume is status quo. Merton is still pending trial, as is U.S. versus Gratini...What about Rohner versus Gradinger?

X

KUZAK

I'm drafting a motion for summary judgment.

BRACKMAN

Summary judgment.

KUZAK

Pollack suggested it to me. It's a long shot, but a damned good idea.

BRACKMAN

Very nice, Bruce. I appreciate aggressive lawyering. Now Petramco. Ms. Kelsey, I am still waiting for the interrogatories on Petramco.

KELSEY

They've been on your desk since yesterday evening.

BRACKMAN

And how is your little pro bono case? Is the crusading lady lawyer going to get the big bad insurance company to pay the \$750 or not?

KELSEY

They're going to pay all right. Only it's going to be a hell of a lot more than \$750. She's got a brain tumor.

BRACKMAN

(starting to get excited)

Can you prove a causal connection with the insurance company's bad faith?

KELSEY

I believe so.

BRACKMAN

Is there a possibility she could die?

(off Kelsey's
cold silence)

Just in case, why don't you and Markowitz start working on the actuarials. Cover all the contingencies. Even if she doesn't die, we could still be looking at a six figure fee.

KELSEY

(rises in a
cold fury)

In deference to the fact that you are a partner in this firm, I'm going to leave before I say something I might regret later.

And she's out the door. McKenzie shoots Brackman a look, stands and follows.

CUT TO:

INT. KELSEY'S OFFICE - DAY - WITH KELSEY AND MCKENZIE 76

On the CUT --

KELSEY

(still hot)

He's a pig! We're talking about a woman who could die, and all he can see are dollar signs, so if you're going to ask me to apologize, forget it!

MCKENZIE

Without legal representation all the same terrible things would have happened to her, excepting the very real possibility that she would never have received medical treatment at all. And while yes it's possible our firm may profit from her problems, so will her children. And perhaps just as importantly the insurance company will think long and hard before they do it to anyone else.

Cont.

KELSEY

I'm not against earning a buck,
Leland, as long as we don't sell
off our humanity in the process.

MCKENZIE

I grant you, in the hands of a
Douglas Brackman the law may not
be pretty, though it can be
effective. But in the hands of
Anne Kelsey, it can be uplifting
and life affirming and we can
all be proud of that.

KELSEY

(a small grin;
she sorta likes it)
You're handling me.

MCKENZIE

True. But I'll also handle
Douglas. It's your case, you
run with it as you see fit.

KELSEY

(genuinely appreciative)
Thank you.

OFF which --

CUT TO:

INT. RATAKOWSKI'S COURTROOM - DAY

77

D.A. Gold with Lester Tuttle as his investigating officer on
one side of the counsel table. The three defense lawyers and
their clients on the other. Adrienne Moore is on the stand. X

RATAKOWSKI

Let the record reflect that the
alleged victim in this matter,
Adrienne Moore, has formally apologized X
to this court and accordingly the
contempt is discharged. Mr. Cavanaugh,
you may pick up from where you left
off on your cross-examination.

Cavanaugh rises.

Cont.

CAVANAUGH

Thank you, your Honor. Now Ms. Moore. Drawing your attention once again to the evening in question, as you came out of the convenience store carrying your purchases, did you put the package in your car first, or did you approach my client while still carrying it?

GOLD

(rising)

Objection, Your Honor, to that sleazy trick question.

CAVANAUGH

And I object to your inference.

RATAKOWSKI

Sit. Both of you. Miss Moore, what did you do immediately after leaving the convenience store?

MOORE

I'm sorry. I don't remember.

This answer is not what anyone was expecting.

RATAKOWSKI

Did you go to your car? Did you go to the defendants' car? Did they come to you? What?

MOORE

I don't remember. I just don't remember.

RATAKOWSKI

Two days ago in this courtroom, I don't recall your having any such memory problems.

MOORE

Your Honor, due to my situation, I'm on extensive medication: Vincristine, Prednisone, Codeine, Dalmane...

CAVANAUGH

(seizing opportunity)

With the Court's permission, would you explain to us what these drugs are?

Cont.

MOORE

Predisone and Vincristine are chemotherapy drugs, Codeine is for pain, and Dalmane is a tranquilizer.

CAVANAUGH

Forgive my ignorance. Might any of these drugs cause drowsiness, impaired memory, perhaps occasional confusion?

MOORE

Yes, they would and they do.

CAVANAUGH

Is it possible then that some of these drugs could render unreliable your prior testimony?

MOORE

Yes. I'm just not as clear on the events of that evening as I thought I was.

RATAKOWSKI

(suspicious)

If this sudden loss of memory is your way of refusing to testify, then I must warn you that you're once again in contempt of this court.

MOORE

(without affect of any kind)

I'm sorry...

GOLD

(upset)

I move for a continuance. I want to confer with my witness!

X

MOORE

It's not going to help.

X

CAVANAUGH

Approach the bench, your Honor?

RATAKOWSKI

(knows what's coming)

Approach.

The three defense attorneys and the D.A. approach.

RATAKOWSKI

Motions?

CAVANAUGH

Motion to dismiss, your Honor, due to the unreliability of the complaining witness.

GOLD

Objection, Your Honor. She's clearly feigning the memory loss to avoid testifying.

RATAKOWSKI

There's that possibility, Mr. Gold. But whichever the case, you're not going to be able to make this case stick with an uncooperative witness. I see no choice but to dismiss. If the D.A. can talk to the witness and urge her cooperation, the People are of course then free to refile charges at that time.

CAVANAUGH AND P.D.

(smiling)

Thank you, Your Honor.

RATAKOWSKI

(pissed)

There is no cause for smiling here, Counselor. Step back.

(to the court)

Defendants will not be held to answer due to insufficiency of evidence. Case dismissed.

She abruptly gets up from the bench. Walks toward her chambers.

AT THE COUNSEL TABLE

78

Confusion. Lawyers are pleased with themselves, Garcia and Dollar slap palms, Pregerson is freaked.

PREGERSON

What's happening?

KUZAK

It's over. There's no case. Go home.

PREGERSON

(loud)

What about her threats?! Hey -- Judge -- she said she was gonna blow us away!

INCLUDE RATAKOWSKI

79

Near the door to her chambers. Hesitates, decides not to comment, exits, as --

Passes Pregerson on her way out of court.

MOORE

(low; intense)

You deserve to die.

And she's gone. Pregerson's freaked.

PREGERSON

You hear that? That's a threat!
Somebody oughta arrest her for
that!

And as lawyers pack their briefcases and scatter, including
Kuzak:

CUT TO:

INT. FRENCH RESTAURANT - DAY

81

Lunch time. Cool brick floors, hanging potted plants,
tightly wrapped waiters gliding by on ball-bearing buns.
If a bomb went off, two studios and a network would be out
of business.

ANGLE - TABLE

82

at which are seated McKenzie, Brackman, Kuzak and...Sifuentes...
dressed in stark contrast to the other three, like a refugee
from Miami Vice: a shiny gray contempo jacket, sleeves pushed
up, a green pastel shirt, loose black pants, skinny white
leather tie, and one tasteful diamond earring. On the CUT, the
waiter is running specials, each word aimed like a wet
projectile in Sifuentes' direction.

WAITER

(heavily accented)

...and finally we 'ave ze turbot,
a delicate white fish from France,
wizout ze bones, and wiz a light
dijon sauce...

MCKENZIE

I think we can order. Douglas?

BRACKMAN

I'll have the cold asparagus,
and the warm lobster for my entree.

WAITER

(to Kuzak)

Monsieur?

Cont.

KUZAK

Cold chicken plate, nothing to start.

WAITER

(to Sifuentes)

Monsieur?

SIFUENTES

(to McKenzie; finishing
off a drink)

You go first.

MCKENZIE

I'll have the turbot, sauce on
the side, nothing to start.

WAITER

Very good.

(to Sifuentes)

Monsieur?

SIFUENTES

How much is that warm lobster?

WAITER

Sixteen dollars.

SIFUENTES

And the pasta?

WAITER

Eleven dollars.

Brackman's starting to sigh.

SIFUENTES

Okay. Gimme both.

(to Kuzak)

That's twenty-seven bucks.

That okay?

(off Kuzak's wave)

X

BRACKMAN

You seem concerned with the cost
of lunch, Mr. Sifuentes.

SIFUENTES

Well, you see, Doug, I figure with
the wine and all, this lunch's gotta
go two-fifty, three hundred bucks.
Which ain't a lot compared to what
you probably paid for your suit
until you figure the suit'll last
you a couple years, maybe more,
but by tomorrow the lunch is
sewage. You get my point, Doug?

BRACKMAN

(furious)

I'm afraid it escapes me.

MCKENZIE

(can't help liking
Sifuentes)

I think Victor's curious about the
value we'd place on his services,
relative to food and clothing.

BRACKMAN

Assuming he's invited to join.

SIFUENTES

Right. Assuming that.

MCKENZIE

It's negotiable, of course, based
on experience, background, et cetera.
But if you came to work with us,
I think you'd be looking at a
starting salary between forty
and fifty thousand dollars.

SIFUENTES

Which is about what I get now.

Under which, the Waiter has brought their starters.

X

MCKENZIE

Tell us about your background,
Victor.

SIFUENTES

Local boy, East L.A., high school,
coupla years in the army, Cal State
Northridge, Glendale College of Law
in Glendale, four years with the
P.D.'s office.

MCKENZIE

And why law?

SIFUENTES

Lotsa reasons. Make a living.
Give somethin' back. Do a little
good for the people.

Kuzak's been waiting for an opening.

KUZAK

Is that what you were doing in court
the other day with that mambo about
being denied access to your client?

SIFUENTES

(grins)

Hey, man -- you do what you have to. Bottom line is, the dude's not gonna do time, he's gonna go in a program.

KUZAK

(matter-of-fact)

The dude's a hype and twenty bucks says he's gonna wind up dead in an alley with a needle sticking out of his arm.

SIFUENTES

(stung)

You don't know that.

KUZAK

You're a game player, Sifuentes. You ran your game with that desk sergeant, you ran it with the judge, you're running it with us.

MCKENZIE

(quickly)

If you could do any kind of law -- what kind would it be?

SIFUENTES

Pro bono stuff -- class actions -- immigration stuff -- Indian affairs -- like that.

MCKENZIE

If you join us -- assuming Mike wants you -- we'll do all we can to accommodate your needs.

X

KUZAK

You've been in the P.D.'s office a long time. Maybe you want to stretch a little.

X

SIFUENTES

Y'mean like you did with the Pregerson kid?

X

KUZAK

Cheap shot.

X

SIFUENTES

Oh, yeah? The fact is, you're not looking for me to do pro bono, and

Cont.

SIFUENTES (Cont.)

you sure ain't looking for a little
third world color to brighten up
your office decor. What I do think
is, you're tired of pickin' up the
snails yourself, so you're callin'
in the Mexican gardener to do it
for you.

He's right. Kuzak and McKenzie, at least, know it.

BRACKMAN

Well I think you've made your position
quite clear.

SIFUENTES

I guess I have.

And he pushes away from the table, drops his napkin on his
uneaten pasta, and exits, OFF which --

X

FADE OUT

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

FADE IN

INT. KELSEY'S OFFICE - THE SAME DAY

83

Kelsey and Abby and Lester Mestman. He is very jolly -- hail fellow well met.

MESTMAN

Nice offices you ladies have here.
Very nice.

KELSEY

Thank you, Mr. Mestman.

He picks up a throw pillow from the sofa.

MESTMAN

Nice. Nice touch. Very feminine.

KELSEY

I don't mean to be rude, but you said on the phone you had an offer to propose.

MESTMAN

Yes, well, I've discussed this matter with my superiors, and of course, without admitting or even implying any liability on our part, but merely in recognition of the potential litigiousness of this matter, we feel a settlement might be appropriate at this time.

KELSEY

I frankly think any settlement would be premature until after Mrs. Robinson undergoes surgery tomorrow, but I'm willing to listen.

MESTMAN

Let me add that this offer also in no way admits or infers any causal connection between Mrs. Robinson's failing to seek treatment nine months ago and her condition today.

Kelsey indicates to Abby who writes in a pad.

KELSEY

Your reservations are duly noted,
Mr. Mestman. Now what's the
number you had in mind?

MESTMAN

Twenty-five thousand.

Abby writes it down. Kelsey just looks at him.

MESTMAN

(smiling)

Plus reasonable hospital, surgical
and medical bills, of course.

She smiles back, a small derisive smile.

MESTMAN

(between you
and me)

We might be willing to go fifty
if she dies.

She just stares at him.

MESTMAN

Well?

KELSEY

(very flat)

My law clerk has made a notation
of your offer in the file. Thank
you and good day.

MESTMAN

Wait a minute. What kind of
number did you have in mind?

KELSEY

One with at least two more zeros
at the end.

MESTMAN

This is a Black woman. A
domestic.

Cont.

KELSEY

She's a caterer. And I don't know what her color has to do with it.

MESTMAN

I'm offering more money than she probably makes in an entire year. Before you turn up your nose, I'd advise you to think twice.

KELSEY

Once was more than sufficient. Good day.

She stands up. Opens the door for him.

MESTMAN

You think you're so smart with your fancy law degree. Well, we'll see how smart you are when you have to take this to a jury. Trust me, juries don't like bulldozing, chopbusting butch lady lawyers any better than I do.

KELSEY

(very flat)

Thank you for sharing that insight with me, Mr. Mestman. Once again I must decline your offer though we do appreciate your coming in. Have a nice day.

He exits in a huff. Abby is wide-eyed.

ABBY

God, how did you stay so cool? I wanted to crush him like a bug.

KELSEY

(smiles)

Oh, we will, Abby. We will.

CUT TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

84

Lydia Graham and Arnie Becker at one end of the table, and Barry Graham with his attorney -- Mitchell Blazer -- at the other. On the CUT, a lot more than the length of the conference table separates the combatants.

X

Cont.

GLAZER

I'd be less than honest if I didn't tell you for the record how deeply disappointed my client is that after hammering out this settlement in good faith, we find ourselves in such a clearly adversarial proceeding.

BECKER

(who's been drumming his pencil on the polished table top throughout)

It was hammered out all right, we're just not sure about the good faith part.

GLAZER

(referencing the settlement document)

We offered alimony for six years at fifteen hundred dollars per month, and child support in a like amount. Further, after sale of their jointly owned home, one half of the net proceeds. Plus all the furniture, silver and art --

X

BECKER

(dismissive)

I've read the menu, Sir. Don't kid a kidder. This woman -- the mother of Mr. Graham's two young children -- has been deceived. This woman did you no harm, Sir. She was true to her vows --

X

GLAZER

(righteously)

As was Mr. Graham --

LYDIA

(unable to contain her bitterness)

Oh, please --

Cont.

And gets up, moving to the window and staring out.

BECKER
(the coup de grace)
You might want to browse these.

He slides the photos the length of the table to Glazer and Graham.

X

GRAHAM
(angered)
How did you get these?

LYDIA
(losing her
composure)
You miserable -- you lying scum!
You said there was no one else!

GLAZER
Counselor, now who's shooting
who through the grease? This
is California. The fact that
Mr. Graham has a lady friend
is of no relevance whatsoever.

GRAHAM
(veins popping
in his neck;
re photos)
This is what it's about, isn't it?
The fact that I have a loving and
close relationship --

LYDIA
Close? You ought to be sued for
practicing medicine without a
license!

GRAHAM
-- and you won't be happy 'til
you've made me pay.

LYDIA
I'm the one who's being made
to pay here, you degenerate
low life!

Cont.

With which, she physically attacks him, pummeling at him as he sits in his chair, trying to ward off her blows, while Glazer and Becker -- who has rushed the length of the table -- try to break it up. Finally, Becker pulls her away, leads her, sobbing, back to their end of the table.

GRAHAM

(from the safety
of his chair)

You punishing bitch. You can't stand it that I could be happy with another woman, can you?

Sobbing, she pulls Kleenex from a box on the table. Under which --

GLAZER

(re photos)

Forgetting momentarily the invasion of privacy issue -- what is the point of this ugliness...

He stares momentarily, fixated on one of the photos, then breaks away.

GLAZER

...other than to unnecessarily enflame an already overheated situation?

BECKER

Mr. Graham has lied to his wife. We have reason to believe he's lied about other matters -- of a financial nature -- as well.

X

GRAHAM

You're spraying!

X

X

BECKER

We're prepared to subpoena your records if we have to.

X

Cont.

GRAHAM

Go ahead! But while we're burying each other in paper, what's she gonna do to support herself, get a job? She couldn't get paid for the only thing she's qualified to do -- she's not good enough at it!

LYDIA

(renewed sobbing)

You filth!

As she grabs fresh tissue --

BECKER

We have reason to believe, Mr. Graham, that you are daily in violation of the criminal code.

(this gets their attention)

...that you deal in stolen auto parts; that you regularly engage in insurance fraud; that you do not declare cash transactions --

GLAZER

(throws down his pencil)

You'd better be prepared to defend yourself in a slander suit, Sir!

BECKER

(unfazed)

As I recall, truth is a complete defense. I have here a signed and notarized affidavit from one of our private investigators --

Ms. Angela Sipriano -- stating that on such and such a date, blah blah blah, she drove onto your premises to discuss repair of her badly damaged automobile. At which time, after carefully inspecting said damage, Mr. Barry Graham personally proposed, in exchange for a cash payment --

X

GLAZER

(angrily)

Let's see that!

Cont.

Becker shoves the affidavit back into its manilla envelope and slides it the length of the table to Glazer, who opens it, scans quickly.

GLAZER

If you can prove any of this,
why don't you go to the police --

GRAHAM

(to Glazer)

Hold it a minute.

(to Becker; subdued)

What're we talking about here?

BECKER

We're talking about grief,
Mr. Graham. Yours, your wife's,
your children's. We're talking
about fairness. But mainly,
Mr. Graham, we're talking about
money.

GRAHAM

How much money?

This time Becker hand delivers a piece of paper to Graham and X
Glazer. They look at it.

CLOSE - LYDIA

85

Hating her own inability to hold back one last salvo --

LYDIA

Chew on those numbers, you
impotent piece of snot.

CUT TO:

INT. BECKER'S OFFICE - LATER

86

Becker conferring with Roxanne, while Lydia sits on the couch,
blowing her nose with what's left of a tattered Kleenex.

BECKER

Type this up, and let's messenger
it to Glazer for his and Mr. Graham's
signature.

ROXANNE

Right away.

(solicitous;
to Lydia)

Can I get you anything, Mrs. Graham?
A glass of wine? Coffee? A new tissue?

LYDIA

I'm fine. Thank you.

Roxanne exits, closes the door. Becker loosens his tie. Lydia takes a deep, ragged breath.

BECKER

Well -- I guess we socked it to 'em pretty good.

LYDIA

I think what you did was despicable. I'll never be able to look at him again with any affection or respect.

BECKER

(used to this kind of aftermath)

Oh, come on. You came into this office looking for someone to do your dirty laundry. What did you expect?

LYDIA

Well, it stinks.

BECKER

Dirty laundry usually does. It's messy, it's nasty, it churns up a lotta goo, but it's a helluva lot more civilized and a helluva lot more lucrative than putting a bullet between his ears.

LYDIA

Lawyers. It's all so easy for you. Sock it to him. Get the money...I lost my life. My children lost a family. There's not enough money in the world to compensate for that.

BECKER

You gonna give it back?
(off her miserable silence)

I got a hot flash for you, Lydia -- Maybe you hate me today. ---that's understandable -- but in two weeks you'll recommend me to a friend -- and in two months you'll be inviting me over for dinner.

X

It's true. They both know it. And as she blows her nose into the kleenex --

CUT TO:

INT. PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

87

Kelsey, Abby, Kuzak and a couple other employees exiting the elevator.

KELSEY

...I think I'd rather face four hours of root canal.

ABBY

What are you supposed to wear to this party? I've got a simple little blue silk.

KELSEY

Fine.

ABBY

Suit and tie for Jim?

KUZAK

Think of it as a funeral. You can't go wrong.

The women walk off in one direction. Kuzak in the other.

KELSEY

See you tonight.

KUZAK

Yeah.

As Kuzak crosses toward his car --

JUSTIN PREGERSON

88

exits his own car, and intercepts him. He's wired very tight, his eyes are wide and watery. He's nuts with paranoia and cocaine.

PREGERSON

I need money.

KUZAK

Go talk to your father.

PREGERSON

You talk to him. He cancelled my credit cards, my bank account -- Fat slob -- who the hell's he think he is?

KUZAK

I can't help you. Sorry.

PREGERSON

I need money! I gotta get out of L.A.

KUZAK

You leave, they'll violate your probation.

PREGERSON

(grabbing him)

Then fix it with my probation officer!

KUZAK

Take your hands off me.

PREGERSON

(lets go)

Look -- I'm a little strung out --

(nervous laugh)

-- I'm a lot strung out.

Pregerson's pulled a pearl-handled .38 out of his jacket. X

PREGERSON

You gotta fix this for me, or someone's going to get hurt.

KUZAK

That's not too smart.

PREGERSON

Not smart? 'You deserve to die.'
You heard it. 'You deserve to die.'
That crazy broad is looking to kill me.

KUZAK

The gun also violates probation.

PREGERSON

Beats being dead...How much, money've you got?

KUZAK

Not the kind you need.

PREGERSON

Give me what you got. I'll pay you back.

Kuzak reaches into his pocket, pulls out some money. Counts out a hundred and a half, holding it out.

KUZAK

How about give me the gun?

Cont.

PREGERSON
 (takes the money)
 How about fix things with my
 probation officer?

And with that, he pockets Kuzak's money, jumps into his car, and roars out of the garage. A beat, then --

CUT TO:

INT. COP BAR -- NIGHT -- WITH KUZAK 89

Squinting into the harsh, hazy light, finally spotting --

LESTER TUTTLE 90

At the bar, brooding into a beer and a shot. Kuzak slides onto the adjacent stool, signals the bartender for two more.

KUZAK
 'Evening, Lester.

TUTTLE
 Go 'way. I'm drinkin' alone.

KUZAK
 Quit pouting. It's not your most attractive trait.

TUTTLE
 You real proud of yourself tonight?

KUZAK
 C'mon, Lester. You did your job, I did mine. That's how the system works.

TUTTLE
 The system's down. You got citizens behind locked doors and the wise guys own the street.

The bartender sets down the drinks, runs the tab, as --

TUTTLE
 What went on in that courtroom was a joke. Those animals did it, and they walked...I wish she would blow 'em away...Hell, I'd buy her the gun.

Cont.

KUZAK

(drinks up)

You're a real drag, Lester. I'm going.

TUTTLE

Good. I don't want to be seen hanging out with you.

KUZAK

(casual)

By the way -- you wouldn't happen to know offhand if Justin Pregerson's got a carry permit for a pearl-handled .38 revolver, would you?

TUTTLE

(interest peaked)

Why?

KUZAK

Curious is all...G'night, Lester.

Kuzak throws a couple of bills on the bar, heads for the door.

AT THE EXIT

91

he stops, looks back at --

TUTTLE

92

who's slid off the stool and gone to the pay phone.

KUZAK

93

satisfied, exits, as we --

FADE OUT

END OF ACT SIX

ACT SEVEN

FADE IN

INT. MCKENZIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

94

A sumptuous, gracious, old money house in Pasadena. Guests (associates, partners, clerks and big clients) spill out of the living room and into the beautifully landscaped backyard.
ON the CUT --

BECKER

95

is talking to his date, April, a stunning, blank-eyed actress/model.

BECKER

As soon as everyone's seen my face,
we can get out of here. Maybe go
get a little pasta. X

APRIL

This is okay...Is anyone here in
the business?

Becker points to a very old guy.

BECKER

George Lucas.

APRIL

Come on.

And others --

BECKER

Francis Ford Coppola. There's
Steven Spielberg.

APRIL

Get outa here.

Becker's smile freezes as he notices --

LISA WESTON

96

looking at him angrily from across the room.

BECKER

Honey, grab yourself a drink and
work the room. I'll catch up to you.

Becker pats her discreetly on the fanny and heads out to --

LISA

97

glaring at him. If looks could kill...

BECKER
What's your problem?

LISA
(indicating April)
Very classy. I hope you asked
her for a medical certificate.

BECKER
If you want to be an associate
in this firm, you and I cannot
be seen on dates together.
(the big smile)
C'mon. Don't pout. After I dump
her off I'll come by your place.

LISA
(semi-pouting)
What time?

BECKER
Early as I can. Leave the door
open. I promise to wake you.

And he moves off toward --

THE BAR

98

Where Taylor picks up a couple of drinks for him and his stunning
Black date. Kelsey and Markowitz are sharing a drink. Kelsey's
already had a few.

KELSEY
You've got great leverage over them
with the Lewis tax audit.

MARKOWITZ
To hold them up for a partnership,
you mean.

KELSEY
You're damned right. They'll keep
you a backroom mole 'til you're
eighty if you let them get away
with it.

MARKOWITZ
I don't know. I'm not unhappy with
things the way they are.

Kelsey notices Abby, approaching.

KELSEY
Hi.

ABBY

Sorry to interrupt, but I just got off the phone with Celia Robinson. I told her we were pulling for her and that I'd be there tomorrow when she comes out of surgery.

Under which, Abby's husband -- conspicuous in a sport coat and no tie -- has moved to them, drink in hand. He's clearly bagged.

JIM

(enunciating carefully)

Right at her bedside. Isn't that just awe inspiring? I bet if she spent half as much time in bed with me as she does with this damned client, we might even have a marriage.

ABBY

(embarrassed)

Ann Kelsey, Stuart Markowitz -- my husband, Jim.

JIM

Res ipsa loquitor.

MARKOWITZ

Beg your pardon?

JIM

I thought that's how you lawyer types talk. 'Course I wouldn't know, being I'm a mere unemployed house husband.

ABBY

Jim, you're embarrassing me. Stop it.

JIM

That wasn't embarrassing...This is embarrassing.

He throws a drink in her face. The room is momentarily silent. Everyone is staring. Jim storms off.

ABBY

I'm sorry. He's just had a little too much to drink.

And she goes after him. A beat, as the room comes back to life.

Cont.

MARKOWITZ

(brightly)

Celia Robinson. That's your bad faith case, isn't it?

KELSEY

Can we please not talk business?

MARKOWITZ

Okay...

KELSEY

Celia Robinson is thirty-five years old and she's going into surgery tomorrow and she may not come out of it and I'm thirty-five years old and maybe I'll live past tomorrow, but let's face it, none of us get out of here alive.

MARKOWITZ

You're being a little morbid, aren't you?

KELSEY

Yes I'm being a little morbid. You know how many of these damned annuals I've been to -- five!

MARKOWITZ

This is my sixth.

KELSEY

Exactly. You and I, we spend our lives -- every day, of every week of every year -- doing this crap -- and I keep feeling like some day my real life is going to start. Only this is it, and damn it, bottom line, I'm not happy. Are you happy, Stuart?

MARKOWITZ

I'm not unhappy.

KELSEY

That's not good enough. When was the last time you made love to a woman?

MARKOWITZ

God, Ann, isn't that kind of personal?

KELSEY

Yes. When?

Cont.

MARKOWITZ

It's not something you go down to the supermarket and buy with your T.V. dinner.

KELSEY

When?

MARKOWITZ

Look at me. I am what I am. I'm short. I don't go to Nautilus. I'm not eloquent or sexy. I bruise easy and I don't like getting turned down.

KELSEY

Good. So you're safe. We're all so damned safe here.

She leans over, whispers in his ear. Stuart all but blushes.

MARKOWITZ

What?

KELSEY

You heard me.

X

MARKOWITZ

You must be bombed.

X

KELSEY

Don't sell yourself short. I've had a few, but I'm not bombed.

(a husky whisper)

Will you?

MARKOWITZ

If you think about it, this is not a good idea.

KELSEY

Thinking is the last thing I want to do. Come home with me.

MARKOWITZ

I don't know what to say.

KELSEY

Don't say anything.

And she takes him by the hand. Leads him past --

BRACKMAN, MCKENZIE, AND BECKER

99

standing in a semicircle with a client, Martin Garver.

BRACKMAN

We've got 'em on the run, Martin.
I think it's time to explore a
settlement again.

MCKENZIE

And Mike Kuzak, of course, is
prepared to take it to trial if
we can't get what we're looking
for.

BRACKMAN

Where is Kuzak?

Under which, a uniformed Waiter walks up to the group.

WAITER

Mr. Brackman?

BRACKMAN

Yes?

WAITER

May I serve you?

BRACKMAN

Perrier with lime.

The Waiter whips out a blue-backed summons from inside his
jacket. Slaps it into Brackman's hand.

BRACKMAN

What the hell is this?

WAITER

Consider yourself served.

MCKENZIE

I want you out of here.

WAITER

Going.

The Waiter splits as a furious Brackman eyeballs the summons.

BRACKMAN

She's suing me!

BECKER

Who?

Cont.

BRACKMAN
He/she/it. That thing. That secretary
is suing me.

GARVER
(puzzled)
For what?

BRACKMAN
Sex discrimination.

BECKER
(deep amusement)
Which sex, Douglas?

OFF which --

CUT TO:

INT. KUZAK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

100

Sifuentes knocks on the open door. Kuzak is working at his desk. The office is dark, save for the pool of light spread over the desk top by his green tinted desk lamp.

KUZAK
(looking up; a
little grin)
Hey.

And waves him in. Sifuentes enters.

SIFUENTES
I didn't think you high-paid types
worked this late.

KUZAK
I'm expecting a call from a client
who's about to get arrested. Is
this a social visit?

SIFUENTES
I always pay off my bets.

He reaches into his pocket, peels off a twenty, drops it on the desk.

KUZAK
What's this for?

SIFUENTES
My hype. They found him in an
alley two hours ago with a needle
stuck in his arm.

Kuzak pockets the dough.

SIFUENTES

Plus I owe you an apology. I was
way outa line at lunch.

KUZAK

Forget it.

SIFUENTES

Where I come from -- guys like you
were always the enemy. And somehow,
just even having the lunch was like
selling out.

X

KUZAK

The job's still there if you want
it.

SIFUENTES

(grins)

I can't see me runnin' around here
in no gray suit.

KUZAK

(enjoying the thought)

Neither can I.

SIFUENTES

You guys weren't blowin' smoke about
doin' some pro bono?

KUZAK

Lawyers? Blow smoke?

SIFUENTES

Seriously, man.

KUZAK

Make a deal with you. Try it for
six weeks. Full associate status. If

Cont.

KUZAK (Cont.)

you don't like it -- whatever the reason -- take a bus, no questions asked.

SIFUENTES

It would hafta be a two-way street. Six weeks, I ain't cuttin' it, you'd have a right to kick my butt out the door.

KUZAK

That's fair.
(puts out
his hand)

Deal?

SIFUENTES

Oh, mama.
(he grasps
Kuzak's hand)

Deal.

The phone RINGS.

KUZAK

Ten to one, the aforementioned client.

(picks up)

Kuzak.

OFF which --

CUT TO:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT - ON JUSTIN PREGERSON 101

More scared than angry. ON the CUT --

PREGERSON

What've they got?

INCLUDE KUZAK

102

reading off the sheet.

Cont.

KUZAK .

Lotta junk charges. In your serious category, we have resisting, assaulting a police officer, possession of narcotics, to wit a white powdery substance resembling cocaine, and possession of a concealed weapon.

X

PREGERSON

It was a total setup.

KUZAK

We'll certainly point that out to the District Attorney.

PREGERSON

Most of those charges are bogus. They use 'em for bargaining purposes.

KUZAK

(shakes his head)

You're automatically violated on the coke possession. You'll go away on that alone.

PREGERSON

(angrily)

Hey -- either we're pullin' on the same oar or get the hell outa the boat!

Kuzak heads for the door, opens it.

PREGERSON

Just hold it, would ya'?

Kuzak closes the door.

PREGERSON

What am I lookin' at, here?

KUZAK

Six to eight, minimum.

PREGERSON

(this sinks in)

Maybe offer 'em a deal.

KUZAK

You've got nothing to offer.

PREGERSON

What about Dollar and Garcia?

Cont.

KUZAK

What about 'em?

PREGERSON

They did the rape. I'll testify to it if they drop all this other stuff.

KUZAK

You did the rape, too?

PREGERSON

Sure. Yeah. The three of us. But it was their idea.

KUZAK

Are you prepared to do time on that charge?

PREGERSON

Depends. See what kinda deal they're willing to cut.

KUZAK

(a beat)

I'll be back to you.

And he exits, as we --

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

103

Judge Armand on the bench. The three defendants, their lawyers, X D.D. Gold, Court Reporter, Adrienne Moore, Lester Tuttle, etc.

ARMAND

Let the record reflect that a conference was held in chambers earlier this afternoon amongst and between the three defendants, their attorneys and the representative from the D.A.'s office. Based on my understanding of the facts in this matter and the apparent problems of proof, it is appropriate to reach a pretrial disposition. Gentlemen... stand.

The defendants and their counsel stand.

ARMAND

Mr. Pregerson, do you wish to waive your constitutional right and enter a plea of guilty at this time to Penal Code Section 245?

He looks at Kuzak. Kuzak whispers to him.

PREGERSON

Yeah. Guilty.

ARMAND

Mr. Dollar.

DOLLAR

Guilty.

ARMAND

Mr. Garcia.

GARCIA

Guilty.

ARMAND

Waive probation and sentencing hearing?

KUZAK, CAVANAUGH & D.A.

So waived.

ARMAND

Defendants' plea of guilty is accepted and they are hereby sentenced to 18 months in the State Prison facility at Vacaville. This court is adjourned.

Armand exits the bench as the defendants are led out --

X

ADRIENNE MOORE

104

watching them go.

KUZAK

105

quickly stuffs papers into his briefcase and moves to her.

KUZAK

I know as things go, eighteen months isn't a very long time.

X

MOORE

As things go, it's a lot better than nothing.

KUZAK

(gives her his card)

Look -- here's my card --

Cont.

MOORE
 (the first smile
 we've seen)
 If you ever need a lawyer?

KUZAK
 If you need a friend. Please
 don't hesitate to call. For
 anything.

He holds her eyes a moment, then exits, as we --

CUT TO:

INT. RATAKOWSKI'S COURT - DAY

106

ON the CUT --

Pomerantz, a bargain basement looking lawyer, argues for his client, a zoned-out wreck of a guy.

POMERANTZ
 And so your Honor, I would argue
 this case should be dismissed,
 there being no probable cause for
 the police to stop and question
 my client in the first place.

RATAKOWSKI
 He was walking naked down
 Hollywood Boulevard.

POMERANTZ
 Freedom of Expression, your Honor.
 The First Amendment -- the backbone
 of the personal freedoms our
 Constitution holds so dear.

RATAKOWSKI
 So noted, Mr. Pomerantz, but it's
 not your client's backbone that's
 the particular bone of contention
 here...

ANGLE - KUZAK

107

at the back of the house. Biting the side of his tongue to
 avoid laughing.

BACK TO SCENE

108

RATAKOWSKI
 There being sufficient and probable
 cause to believe a felony has been
 committed, Defendant will be held to
 answer. Trial set in Department 137,
 September 17, 9 a.m.

Pomerantz gathers up his stuff and departs with his client as does the N.D.D.A.

RATAKOWSKI

(to Clerk)

Is that it?

CLERK

That's it.

RATAKOWSKI

How many on the docket for tomorrow?

CLERK

Eleven.

RATAKOWSKI

(wearily)

Great. Another easy one...Have a good evening Chuck.

CLERK

Thanks Judge. You too.

And he exits, as Ratakowski collects her papers, grabs her purse from under the bench, gets up and only then notices --

KUZAK

109

standing by the door at the back of the courtroom.

INCLUDE RATAKOWSKI

110

surprised.

RATAKOWSKI

Mr. Kuzak. To what do I owe the pleasure?

KUZAK

I was in the neighborhood. Thought I'd drop by.

RATAKOWSKI

If you're trying to get a ticket fixed, forget it.

Cont.

KUZAK

I've been rehabilitated, your Honor...
actually, I thought maybe you'd want
to know -- Pregerson, Dollar and
Garcia copped a plea.

X

RATAKOWSKI

I heard...Eighteen months.

X

KUZAK

I suspect my client's going to find
out more about the crime of rape
in these eighteen months than he
bargained for.

RATAKOWSKI

I suspect you're right...
(a beat)
...Rumor has it you were doing
the Prosecution's job.

X

KUZAK

I let the cops know my client was a
ticking bomb -- they did the rest.

RATAKOWSKI

Sounds like a pretty thin line,
ethics-wise.

KUZAK

If I stepped over it -- which by the
way I don't think I did -- I'll live
with it.

RATAKOWSKI

Well if it's any consolation, Counselor,
I might argue your ethics in this case,
but I admire your conscience.

Kuzak smiles his thanks for the compliment. A momentary
tension between them, broken by --

RATAKOWSKI

Well -- I better clear out of here
before they rope me into doing another
shift.

She slips out of her robe. Kuzak momentarily appreciates. OFF
which --

OMIT 110-A

CUT TO:

INT. COURT PARKING GARAGE - DAY

As Kuzak walks Ratakowski to her Mercedes 380 SL, past sign proclaiming the area restricted to court personnel.

KUZAK

So look -- I don't know how you feel about stuff like this -- but if we promise not to talk about work, would you like to get some dinner?

RATAKOWSKI

I have three rules, Mr. Kuzak, two of which being I never date lawyers and I never date anyone I work with.

KUZAK

What's number three?

RATAKOWSKI

You already disqualify on one and two.

She gets into her car, as --

KUZAK

Here's a hypothetical: if you and I were to take separate cars and meet up at Musso and Frank, would that constitute a date?

RATAKOWSKI

Yes. Definitely.

She turns the key. The engine barely groans.

KUZAK

Okay, what about this. You and I. Separate cars. Musso and Frank. Dutch. Is that a date?

RATAKOWSKI

A cheap date.

KUZAK

I go over to Musso and Frank, grab a seat at the counter. I'm eating my lamb chops when you happen to fall by for a chiffonade salad to go. Quelle surprise. Nice to see ya. Sit down, take a load off... Now you can't tell me that's a date.

Cont.

RATAKOWSKI

(smiles)

No. Not to the strict letter of
the law.

And she tries to fire the engine again. This time it just clicks.

RATAKOWSKI

Damn. Mr. Kuzak, can you give me
a lift?

KUZAK

Absolutely.

RATAKOWSKI

It's a short in my alarm system,
Third time this month.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

110-C

As Kuzak swipes the fresh parking ticket off the windshield of his eight-year-old silvers Olds convertible (top down, parked in the red) and opens the door for Ratakowski. He comes around the other side, gets in, as a prison bus pulls momentarily abreast. A prisoner appreciates Ratakowski's thighs.

PRISONER

Yo, mama.

KUZAK

(disregarding)

So. Have you got a date tonight?

RATAKOWSKI

No.

KUZAK

You gotta eat.

RATAKOWSKI

I thought I'd grab a salad or
something at Musso and Frank.

KUZAK

Nice place. I go there myself now
and again.

He flips open the glove box. A couple of dozen parking tickets spill onto Ratakowski's lap. He stuffs them back in, along with the new one, snaps it closed. Ratakowski grins, says nothing, as Kuzak starts the car. It fires on the first try. As Kuzak waits for a break in the traffic --

KUZAK
So are you gonna tell me?

RATAKOWSKI
What?

KUZAK
Rule number three.

RATAKOWSKI
Rule number three...
(turns to him;
matter-of-fact)
...I never sleep with a man on
the first date.

OFF --

KUZAK

Totally smitten -- pulling away from the curb --

FADE OUT

THE END