

ACCUSED: Helen's Story

by Alice Nutter and Jimmy McGovern

HELEN

You know why we have law?
I can speak to you like this
because I've learned so much.
I'm an expert. I've paid the
highest tuition fees in the world,
you see: the death of my son.
We have law because it's a route
to justice. But what if law blocks
off that route, denies you justice,
what then?

12th May 2010
RSJ FILMS

3/1 **INT. HOLDING CELL - DAY 18 1130**

3/1

Helen Ryland sits on a bench. She is reading a travel book. It's about Ibiza.

She hears a metal door swinging open, slamming shut.

She is suddenly alert, nervous...

Approaching footsteps - steel-tipped boots on a stone floor.

Those boots getting louder and louder and, now, they stop right outside her cell.

Could this be it? Could this be it? Yes, a key is rattling in the lock and her cell door swings open. A prison officer...

PRISON OFFICER

They're starting again.

Helen stands and leaves the cell. A female Prison Officer handcuffs herself to Helen.

They walk on, passing the other holding cells with other prisoners in them. They shout encouragement to Helen as she goes.

She starts to climb the long staircase leading to the crown court.

CUT TO:

3/2 **INT. CROWN COURT - DAY 18 1140**

3/2

Helen enters the witness box.

COURT CLERK

(Quiet aside)

Would you like to take the oath on the bible or by affirmation?

HELEN

(Equally quiet)

Affirmation.

(Pause)

I don't believe in God anymore...

Helen affirms. She turns to the jury.

HELEN (CONT'D)

You'll notice I no longer have anyone representing me. I told my lawyer I was going to take the stand and say to you, "Yes, I did it. And here's why." She said if I did that she'd quit. And she has.

(MORE)

HELEN (CONT'D)

(Pause)
Yes, I did it. And here's why.

CUT TO:

3/3 THIS SCENE IS NOW CUT 3/3

3/4 THIS SCENE IS NOW CUT 3/4

3/5 THIS SCENE IS NOW CUT 3/5

3/6 THIS SCENE IS NOW CUT 3/6

3/7 INT. MAXFIELD'S WHOLESALERS - DAY 1 0930 3/7

A busy warehouse. The rumble of fork lift trucks, a radio crackling away and the reverse warning beeps of vehicles.

Dave Price stands on the foot plate of a fork-lift. Rob and Michael watch. Rob offers Michael some chewing gum.

Dave pushes the steering lever away from himself.

DAVE PRICE

Forward.

The fork-lift motors forward. He pulls the lever back. It reverses.

DAVE PRICE (CONT'D)

Reverse.

(Pause)

No brakes so you reverse to lose speed.

Alan Maxfield (the owner) waves from across the warehouse, shouts something that can't be heard above the chaos and din, signals for Dave to come over.

DAVE PRICE (CONT'D)

(Shouting)

Two minutes!

Dave Price speeds up, gestures at the panels on the truck's engine.

DAVE PRICE (CONT'D)

Big round button cuts the power.

Dave Price takes his hands off the steering.

DAVE PRICE (CONT'D)

(Points at arrows)

Up, down. It'll raise by about...

But Alan Maxfield has loomed up.

MAXFIELD

I need you. Now.

And Alan Maxfield, a man under pressure, is moving off, confident that Dave Price will follow.

DAVE PRICE

(Rushing)

Right, there's this...

(Points at another
fork-lift)

And that there. Ten minutes
practice and you start order
picking.

Dave Price goes after the boss.

CUT TO:

3/8

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY 1 1000

3/8

Helen finishes drawing a basic diagram of our solar system on the whiteboard. Siobhan, her teaching assistant, is getting things ready for the next lesson (Art).

Helen turns back to the class of nine-year olds.

HELEN

What do the other planets revolve
round?

Hands go up, several kids shout 'The Sun.'

HELEN (CONT'D)

That's right but one at a time
please.

(Pause)

How old do you think our solar
system is?

Hands go up. She points to a kid at the back.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Tegan.

TEGAN

Really old, like a 156 million
years, Miss.

HELEN

Good guess, Tegan... but it's much
older.

TEGAN

A million million!

HELEN

Not quite that... It's 4.6 billion years old.

(Pause)

Now if you think how long human life has been on earth... about 200,000 years... and we live to about seventy years of age, well, that's not much, is it, compared to the age of the solar system?

CUT TO:

3/9

THIS SCENE IS NOW CUT - YELLOW 28.06.10

3/9

3/10

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY 1 1201

3/10

Lunch break. Helen and Siobhan eating packed lunches. The noise from the playground. Helen finishes punching a number into her mobile.

HELEN

If it's on answer, I'll kill him.

CUT TO:

3/11 **THIS SCENE IS NOW CUT - YELLOW 28.06.10** 3/11

3/12 **INT. MAXFIELD'S WHOLESALERS - DAY 1 1202** 3/12

A mobile phone is ringing. A paramedic closes Rob's eyes. He is dead. His body is half buried in debris from the accident. Another paramedic stands by.

Michael watches, traumatised. Alan Maxfield watches.

Two uniformed police officers also watch. Other workers stand further off, stunned.

The paramedic takes the ringing phone from Rob's body - his top overalls pocket. He looks at the display: Mum.

He puts it into a plastic bag held out to him by one of the policemen. The policeman puts it to one side.

Alan Maxfield stares at the phone still ringing in the plastic bag, still displaying Mum..

Alan Maxfield's reaction...

CUT TO:

3/13 **INT. CLASSROOM - DAY 1 1203** 3/13

Helen listens to her mobile and watches the kids in the playground. She bangs on the glass to separate two boys. Rob's ansaphone kicks in.

HELEN

(Into phone)

Sioban's eating your sandwiches.
What's the point of making them if
you're always going to leave them?
I'm not thick, I know you do it on
purpose.

(Pause)

Don't just have chips!

CUT TO:

3/14 **INT. HELEN'S KITCHEN - DAY 1 1855** 3/14

Helen pushes the food around her plate. Frank - her husband - eats dry, over-cooked shepherd's pie.

HELEN

It was nice an hour ago.

(Pause)

He should have been back for six.

FRANK

He'll have gone for a pint.

Helen's reaction: a bone of contention, this, between her and Frank.

HELEN

He won't have done that.

FRANK

First day. It's only natural.

CUT TO:

3/15

INT. HELEN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY 1 2015

3/15

Frank watches football on TV. Helen paces with the phone.

HELEN

(Down phone)

And he's not answered?

(Shakes her head at

Frank)

Have you a number for Michael?

Helen spots something out of the window and freezes.

HELEN (CONT'D)

(Into phone)

Can I call you back in a minute?

She cuts the call, moves the curtain: a police car draws up outside.

Two officers get out and start checking house numbers.

Stepping back as they pass - as if not being seen will send them elsewhere - she loses sight of them. Waits rigid as the seconds tick, tick, tick away...

CUT TO:

3/16

INT. CROWN COURT - DAY 18 1145

3/16

HELEN

I hid. Don't ask me why but I hid.

I'm out of view. They're out of

view. Maybe they're next door.

Nothing to do with me, nothing to

do with Rob, it's next door. As

long as the bell doesn't ring.

Please God, do not let that bell

ring.

CUT TO:

3/17 INT. HELEN'S HOUSE - DAY 1 2017

3/17

BRRRRR. Helen's body jars as the bell RINGS again.

FRANK (O.S.)

Bloody hell! We're in extra time!

(Pause)

Helen...

(get that)

She moves for the door, opens it on two uniformed cops.

COP 1

Mrs Ryland?

Helen nods, her throat too dry to speak.

COP 1 (CONT'D)

Are you in on your own?

Silence. Finally...

HELEN

Frank...

Only the noise of the TV.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Frank!

The edge in her voice pulls him away from the match. He appears in the hall.

FRANK

What is it?

COP 1

Can we come in?

She shakes her head as if this will somehow keep bad news at bay.

FRANK

Come in.

Frank heads towards the living room and everybody follows. He picks up the remote and switches the TV off.

Silence.

The cops exchange an awkward look as Frank and Helen wait for an explanation.

COP 1

We've come to inform you that your son, Robert, was fatally injured at Maxfield's Wholesalers this morning.

Helen's brain refuses to take it in.

HELEN

Injured... Where is he? Is he in hospital?

FRANK

Helen...
(Pause)
He's dead.

The couple stare blankly at each other. Finally...

FRANK (CONT'D)

What happened?

The cops are eager to get away.

COP 1

I'm afraid we don't have any more information. You'll have to call the station for more details.

Cop 1 gets out a pen, writes a number down.

COP 1 (CONT'D)

If you ring this number... and quote this reference.

Without knowing what she's doing, Helen takes the paper. The cops move towards the door.

COP 1 (CONT'D)

You'll need to phone the Coroner's office in the morning. No point ringing now, there'll be nobody there... and ring before half twelve tomorrow because he only does a half day.

Helen and Frank blink, hardly able to process this.

CUT TO:

Helen holds the phone as it rings and rings down the line. Frank watches, agitated. Finally, someone answers.

HELEN

(Down phone)

Two officers have just been. They told me my son... my son's been killed. They said I should...

POLICE OPERATOR (V.O.)

Have you got a reference number?

Helen's hands shake as she tries to read off the paper.

HELEN

(Down phone)

DOA...

Her stomach folds as she grasps what this means.

HELEN (CONT'D)

DOA 9461.

POLICE OPERATOR (V.O.)

Just hold on a minute, please.

Piped musak begins to play down the line. Finally the line clicks again.

POLICE OPERATOR (V.O.)(CONT'D)

I've no record of that. I'll have to call you back... What's your number?

CUT TO:

3/19

INT. HELEN'S HOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY 1 2150

3/19

Helen and Frank sit, the phone in-between them. More seconds tick away as she wills it to ring. Frank reaches for the receiver. Helen stops him.

HELEN

They said they'd ring back.

The phone rings. She snatches it up.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Hello.

POLICE OPERATOR (V.O.)

Sorry to keep you waiting, Mrs Ryland. The accident happened at 10 o'clock this morning.

A robotic Helen... She glances at the clock. Twelve hours have passed.

HELEN

What sort of accident?

"ACCUSED" - 'HELEN'S STORY'
3/19 CONTINUED:

LILAC

As at: 20.07.10

P 9A.

3/19

POLICE OPERATOR (V.O.)
I'm afraid I haven't got specific
details.

CUT TO:

3/20

THIS SCENE IS NOW CUT - BLUE 05.07.10

3/20

3/21 **THIS SCENE IS NOW CUT** 3/21

3/22 **INT. HOSPITAL CHAPEL OF REST - DAY 2 1145** 3/22

Rob's body is laid out. His head and neck are heavily bandaged and the rest of him appears to be covered by a sheet and a blanket.

Helen is holding a plastic bag containing Rob's effects - his phone, hiw wallet, a few coins, watch and chewing gum. She puts it down to stroke Rob's face.

Frank stands beside her, his face wet with tears.

HELEN

Mum's here.

She wants to hold his hand. Gently, she moves the sheet and blanket only to discover that he's in a body bag which has been peeled back just enough to reveal his face and shoulders.

And Frank's energy just drains away at this point...

Helen fighting against tears, seeking refuge in matters-of-fact.

HELEN (CONT'D)

You did a post mortem.

MORTUARY ATTENDANT

(defensive)

Yes.

HELEN

Did you use anything?

MORTUARY ATTENDANT

Sorry?

HELEN

Did you use any of his organs?

MORTUARY ATTENDANT

No, I promise you we didn't take anything. He's...

She can't bring herself to say "intact"

HELEN

Is it too late to use them now? He wanted to be a donor, you see. In the event of something like this, he wanted his organs used.

MORTUARY ATTENDANT

It IS too late, I'm sorry. We needed to know at the time of death.

HELEN

But nobody told us he WAS dead.

MORTUARY ATTENDANT

That's a shame: everything was really healthy.

FRANK

Fat lot of good it did him.

A flicker of disapproval crosses Helen's face. Gone again as she picks up the plastic bag and leads Frank away.

CUT TO:

3/23 **THIS SCENE IS NOW CUT (MOVED TO SC.3/22)**

3/23

3/24 **INT. HELEN'S HOUSE - DAY 2 1415**

3/24

Helen, in shock, alone in the empty house.

She takes the mobile phone from the plastic bag. She sees there are two unplayed messages. She plays the first. A girl's voice.

GIRL (V.O.)

You gorgeous, gorgeous, gorgeous, gorgeous hunk. I can't wait to see you again, you gorgeous, gorgeous hunk.

Helen's reaction. She plays the second.

HELEN (V.O.)

Siobhan's eating your sandwiches. What's the point of making them if you're always going to leave them? I'm not thick, I know you do it on purpose.

Perhaps she cuts it short..

Frank enters - with a carrier bag.

Helen watches as he takes out a bottle of whisky and pours.

Helen's disgust. It gets to him.

FRANK

You cope your way. I'll cope mine.

CUT TO:

3/25 **EXT/INT. MAXFIELD'S WHOLESALERS - DAY 3 0940** 3/25

Helen's car pulls to a halt. Alan Maxfield, Dave Price and a man in a suit (Stephen Sullivan) approach.

MAXFIELD

You're Rob's Mother?

HELEN

Helen.

MAXFIELD

(handshakes, etc)

Alan. Alan Maxfield. Good to meet you.

HELEN

And you. This is his dad, Frank.

FRANK

How d'you do?

MAXFIELD

How d'you do? Dave Price, general foreman.

(Handshakes)

And Stephen Sullivan.

Again they shake hands.

MAXFIELD (CONT'D)

Shall we?

He gestures: go inside. They head into the warehouse.

CUT TO:

3/26

INT. MAXFIELD'S WHOLESALERS - DAY 3 0941

3/26

They're walking.

MAXFIELD

I spoke to Rob.

HELEN

Did you?

MAXFIELD

And his mate.

HELEN

Michael.

MAXFIELD

Michael, yeah. Good lads. I said to Dave, "How come two lads like that are doing agency work while we've got full timers not a patch on them?"

Dave Price's reaction. He said no such thing.

MAXFIELD (CONT'D)

He was a credit to you. A credit to you both.

HELEN

Thanks.

Frank can only nod his thanks.

MAXFIELD

It was here. He hit this section.
And the whole lot came down.

HELEN

How?

MAXFIELD

He lost control of the truck.

Helen looks around. She sees the CCTV cameras.

MAXFIELD (CONT'D)

We're checking the cameras.
I want to say that if there's
anything we can do, we'll do it.
Nothing like this has ever
happened to us before, you see. We
put the well being of our workers
above everything else. The boy he
was with... Sorry...

HELEN

Michael.

MAXFIELD

Michael. He'll tell you they did
all the Health and Safety stuff
and did it conscientiously but if
you've any questions or any
problems, just shout.

It just so happens that Helen has a question but she's
finding it difficult.

FRANK

Thanks.

MAXFIELD

(to Helen)
Have you got a question?

HELEN

Did he suffer?

SULLIVAN

(In immediately)
No.

Too sudden. Too, too sudden and everyone knows it.

MAXFIELD

From what I've heard it was almost instantaneous.

HELEN

Thanks.

MAXFIELD

(to Sullivan)

I'll walk Frank and Helen back to the car.

CUT TO:

3/27

EXT. MAXFIELD'S WHOLESALERS - DAY 3 0945

3/27

Frank, Helen and Maxfield walking...

MAXFIELD

You rang him.

HELEN

Sorry?

MAXFIELD

Rob. You rang him that morning.

(Pause)

I was right by his phone...

Helen's stunned.

HELEN

You could've answered it?

MAXFIELD

Yeah.

HELEN

He'd have been a donor but he couldn't... because nobody told me he was dead until it was too late. I'm sorry to be so...

MAXFIELD

I understand. I've got a daughter his age. I was thinking how I'd feel if it was my daughter lying there. I knew not knowing would be awful for you but I thought knowing would be even worse.

(Pause)

Can you forgive me for that?

Helen's heart goes out to him...

HELEN

Yes.

MAXFIELD

Thank you.

Helen embraces Maxfield and says goodbye. Frank shakes his hand. They get into the car and move off.

Maxfield watches them go.

HELEN

Poor man.

FRANK

Yeah.

CUT TO:

3/28

EXT. MICHAEL'S STREET - DAY 3 1625

3/28

A house number hangs upside down. Helen hesitates at the Beware Of The Dog sign, knocks. Leanne opens the door with a toddler on her hip.

LEANNE

Hello.

Leanne hesitates, wants to close the door on Helen.

HELEN

Is Michael in?

LEANNE

He's at work.

HELEN

Can I come in?

Leanne thinks about saying no. And Helen knows it.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Please.

And Leanne can't refuse her now....

CUT TO:

3/29

INT. MICHAEL'S HOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY 3 1626

3/29

Leanne moves around the cold, tiny room, picking up clothes etc. Helen perches on the edge of the sofa.

LEANNE

I'm sorry about...

Helen nods, distracted.

HELEN

Did Michael say what -
(happened?)

LEANNE

Ryan, what have you got?

Leanne takes a toy off the child.

LEANNE (CONT'D)

Ugh, dirty! Don't put things in
your mouth!

(Pause)

He's probably going to be ages.
Leave your number. I'll get him to
ring you.

HELEN

If it's alright with you, I'd
rather wait.

(Pause)

Where's the dog?

LEANNE

We haven't got one. The sign's
just to keep the smack heads at
bay.

(Pause)

Michael might have called in at
his Mum's, he could be -
(hours)

Leanne starts at the noise of a key in the lock. She concentrates on the door handle as if that will keep it from turning. The door opens. Michael enters, in work gear, nods at Helen, unable to make eye contact.

LEANNE (CONT'D)

Say hello to Daddy!

Leanne passes the child to him to use as a shield.

HELEN

That agency still getting you
work?

LEANNE

Ryan didn't want to be left at
nursery today. Kicked up a real
fuss, felt awful.

MICHAEL

(Mumbling)

Been lucky enough to get a full
time job.

HELEN

Michael, you were there... You
were with him...

He nods. Helen feels a closeness on the basis that he was
the last one to see her son alive. He gives the child
back. She goes to him.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Did he suffer?

Michael shakes his head.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Are you sure?

He tucks his chin into his chest, grieved. She puts her
arms around him, tries to comfort him.

HELEN (CONT'D)

I know... I know...

Michael stares miserably over Helen's shoulder at Leanne.
She looks away.

CUT TO:

3/30

INT. HELEN'S HOUSE - DAY 4 1500

3/30

Helen pacing, phone in hand.

HELEN

No, this is the fourth time and he
still hasn't got back to me.
"Problem"? Well it's a bit more
than a problem...

Frank has entered and he is angrily erecting - or trying
to erect - the ironing board.

HELEN (CONT'D)

I've arranged my son's funeral for
next Thursday, and I've been told
to cancel it because I haven't got
Alan Maxfield's permission. It's
Angela, isn't it? That's my
problem, Angela, I need your
boss's permission to bury my son.
That's my problem.

(at Frank re ironing
board)

I will do it. Right? Just leave...

FRANK

I need a shirt...

HELEN

...the bloody thing alone for
God's sake.

FRANK

I need a fucking shirt!

HELEN

(down phone)

Could you give me his mobile
number then, please?

(refused)

I'm coming round.

She heads for the door. A parting shot at Frank.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Don't burn the place down again.

CUT TO:

3/31

EXT. MAXFIELD'S WHOLESALERS - DAY 4 1515

3/31

Helen's old car drives through the gates and into a
parking space. She gets out and heads towards reception.

CUT TO:

3/32

INT. MAXFIELD'S WHOLESALERS RECEPTION - DAY 4 1517

3/32

A security guard sits, bored, behind a tiny glass window.
Helen watches the locked door that separates reception
from the warehouse. A buzzing sound as the high security
door opens. Dave Price enters, stretches out a hand.

DAVE PRICE

Good to see you again.

HELEN

Good to see you.

DAVE PRICE

Alan's out on business or he'd be
talking to you himself.

She knows he's lying.

HELEN

I've been waiting eleven days for
permission to bury my son. Eleven
days.

(MORE)

HELEN (CONT'D)

I can't believe for one moment that Alan Maxfield knows about this because he would not treat a grieving mother in such an appalling fashion. So, please, bring him here.

DAVE PRICE

I can't.

HELEN

Right. I'll wait.

Perhaps she sits. She'll wait for years if necessary and Dave Price realises it.

HELEN (CONT'D)

I need to bury my son, you see.

CUT TO:

3/33

INT MAXFIELD'S WHOLESALERS RECEPTION - DAY 4 1530

3/33

Alan Maxfield and Stephen Sullivan walking, coming through the security door. Maxfield embracing Helen.

MAXFIELD

Helen, I'm so sorry. I knew absolutely nothing about this. I'm gonna get on to everybody right now and it'll all go ahead on Thursday as planned. I'm...

HELEN

Thank you...

SULLIVAN

My fault.

MAXFIELD

...absolutely fuming about this, Helen. It should never have happened. I'm so so sorry.

HELEN

Thank you.

SULLIVAN

All my fault. I objected without consulting Alan.

HELEN

You objected?

SULLIVAN

Yes.

HELEN

I'm sorry to be rude. I really don't mean to be rude but what's my son's funeral got to do with you?

SULLIVAN

I'm Alan's lawyer.

Helen looks at Sullivan, looks at Alan Maxfield, looks at Dave Price. Something has changed...

CUT TO:

3/34

INT. MAXFIELD'S WHOLESALERS RECEPTION - DAY 4 1532

3/34

Helen walking back towards her car. She meets Michael. She's pleased. He's embarrassed.

HELEN

Michael!

MICHAEL

Hi.

HELEN

You're working here?

MICHAEL

Yeah.

HELEN

Full time?

MICHAEL

Yeah.

HELEN

Permanent?

MICHAEL

Yeah. Well, six months probation and then permanent, yeah.

HELEN

He said you impressed him, you both impressed him.

MICHAEL

Did he?

HELEN

The funeral's Thursday. Two o'clock.

MICHAEL

Right.

She picks up on something in his tone of voice...

HELEN

You'll be there?

MICHAEL

Can't make it.

HELEN

What?

MICHAEL

I'm working.

HELEN

You'll get time off. He died in there, Michael, they'll give you time off.

MICHAEL

Sorry.

Michael escapes. Helen, bemused, watches him go.

CUT TO:

3/35 **THIS SCENE IS NOW CUT**

3/35

3/36 **INT. HELEN'S HOUSE - DAY 4 1830**

3/36

Helen eating. Across the table, Frank sips whisky, his food hardly touched..

She forks some food on Frank's plate, puts it to Frank's mouth.

HELEN

That girl he brought home. The Goth.

The slightest of smiles from Frank. He eats the food.

She forks some food into her own mouth.

Now she again forks some food towards Frank's mouth.

HELEN (CONT'D)

The cling-film over the toilet.

Again, a slight smile. He eats a mouthful. Now she too eats a mouthful...

She forks towards Frank again.

HELEN (CONT'D)

That last morning. Winding you up
over the cricket...

CUT TO:

3/37

EXT. MICHAEL'S HOUSE - DAY 5 1720

3/37

Helen knocks. No response. She knocks again. She pushes
her eye against the spy hole: movement. Nabbed, Leanne
opens the door.

HELEN

Is Michael in?

LEANNE

No.

(Pause)

He's working late.

HELEN

Can I come in and wait?

LEANNE

It's not convenient.

(Pause)

I'm giving Ryan a bath.

HELEN

He's in the bath now?

Leanne nods.

HELEN (CONT'D)

(Pause)

You're telling me you've left a
toddler upstairs in the bath...

(Pause)

On his own?

They both know that Michael is upstairs with the kid.

LEANNE

I'm sorry.

Leanne tries to shut the door. Helen stops her.

HELEN

(loud)

Michael, I asked you if Rob
suffered and you said no but I
think you lied. I know why you
lied.

LEANNE

I'm shutting the door.

HELEN

I know why you lied. I know you
did it for me...

LEANNE

I don't want to hurt you but...

HELEN

...to spare my feelings, but I
need to talk to you about...

Leanne manages to shut the door.

CUT TO:

3/38 **THIS SCENE IS NOW CUT**

3/38

3/39 **INT. HELEN'S HOUSE KITCHEN - DAY 5 1910**

3/39

Frank is drinking whisky and wallowing in grief. Helen's leaving an ansaphone message.

HELEN

You were his friend, Michael, so please ring me.

Helen cuts the call.

FRANK

How many's that?

Helen shrugs, too many to admit.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Lads I served my time with... we stuck together.

He drinks. Helen hates him drinking.

HELEN

I need you to come with me tomorrow.

FRANK

Should've let him join the navy. He'd have learned a trade in the navy. Talk about ironic: keeping him out the armed forces 'cause it's dangerous and sending him to...

He stops. But he has hurt her badly.

HELEN

You're blaming me?

FRANK

No.

HELEN

You are. I made him go to that place so you're blaming me.

FRANK

I'm not.

A pause. Helen recovering, steeling herself...

HELEN

I'm going to the police station tomorrow. I don't want to go there on my own. Will you come with me please?

FRANK

You're wasting your...

HELEN

Will you come with me please?

CUT TO:

3/40

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY 6 1015

3/40

Helen and Frank sit across from a non uniformed officer. A sign on the desk reads: Derek Moorhouse, Police Liaison Officer.

HELEN

Just you?

MOORHOUSE

Yes. It's a Health and Safety issue really. So, yes, just me.

Frank is losing patience with this copper.

HELEN

Did you look at the CCT film?

MOORHOUSE

No.

HELEN

No?

MOORHOUSE

The cameras weren't working that day.

HELEN

They told you that?

MOORHOUSE

Yes.

HELEN

And you believed them?

MOORHOUSE

Why not?

FRANK

(Standing)
For God's sake, you prick.
(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

(Leaving)

Sorry!

Frank has gone. Helen takes a breath and tries again...

HELEN

He was with his friend. Michael.
He must've seen everything.

MOORHOUSE

We got a statement from him. It
absolves the company of all blame.
He says it was all your son's
fault, Mrs Ryland.

CUT TO:

3/41

EXT. STREET - DAY 6 1035

3/41

Helen and Frank walking, tense, angry.

HELEN

What good has that done, calling
him a prick? No good at all. In
fact it's done us harm. Use the
language of the gutter, it means
we come from the gutter. It means
Rob came from the gutter and why
should they bother over a boy who
belonged in the gutter? Rob would
be ashamed of you.

Frank stares at her, bitter. He sets off in the opposite
direction. She's gone too far and she knows it.

CUT TO:

3/42

INT. CROWN COURT - DAY 18 1150

3/42

HELEN

I know something stinks. CCT
cameras not working. Alan Maxfield
frightened to open his mouth
unless his lawyer's there. Michael
too ashamed to look me in the eye.

(Pause)

I was run over once when I was a
kid, I lay there for a couple of
minutes wondering if I was dead...
Then someone tried to move me and
the pain came flooding in. That's
what it was like when I realised
that Rob's death was suspicious:
everything hurt.

(MORE)

HELEN (CONT'D)

(Pause)

But I was alive again.

CUT TO:

3/43 **EXT. HELEN'S HOUSE - DAY 7 1345** 3/43

The coffin is taken from the house and born aloft (by lads in footie shirts) into the hearse. Helen and Frank follow it.

An attractive young woman is also just behind them.

Suddenly Helen is looking at Alan Maxfield.

HELEN

You're here so you can say, "I even attended the boy's funeral, your honour."

Pause...

MAXFIELD

I swear that's not why I'm here.

HELEN

You lied to me. You told me he didn't suffer. Michael lied too but he lied for good reasons. You lied for bad reasons, money reasons, legal reasons, god-knows-what-reasons. And you'll pay for it. Now please go.

Alan Maxfield is devastated.

Helen and Frank walk behind the hearse as it slowly moves off.

Behind them come other mourners, including another group of lads in footie shirts. And every single footie shirt has Rob 9 on the back.

People are holding each other up, sobbing...

CUT TO:

3/44 **INT. HELEN'S HOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY 7 1930** 3/44

Still in his funeral suit, Frank sits in the gathering darkness, smoking and drinking, but stone-cold, grief-stricken sober.

He can hear Helen banging around in the kitchen. She enters and attempts to change his ashtray for a clean one. An act of aggression.

FRANK

Leave it, I'll clean up before I
go to bed!

HELEN

It stinks. And if I don't do it
now, it will still be here in the
morning!

FRANK

I said I'd sort it. I'm capable of
moving an ashtray!

Helen picks up the three quarters empty bottle of whisky,
eyes it, eyes Frank.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Yes!

She fails to understand. He explains...

FRANK (CONT'D)

Yes! "Have you drunk all this?"
Yes! And don't even think about
bollocking me, Helen. Today of all
days, don't even think about it
'cause I've got a few home truths
for you. It's about time...

HELEN

I'm listening...

FRANK

...you heard a few home truths.

HELEN

I'm listening.

FRANK

First, nobody gives a shit that
Rob is dead. Shove your decorum up
your arse, shove your dignity up
your arse, 'cause nobody gives a
shit. Whether he comes from the
gutter or not, whether we swear at
coppers or not, nobody gives a
shit. Second, I am sick of you
looking down your nose at me. I am
sick of you treating me like a
child. What you see here is grief.
This is acceptance of grief. A
mature and adult acceptance of
grief....

HELEN

Adult!

FRANK

That's not what I see when I look at you. When I look at you I see a woman running round like a blue arsed fly 'cause she's too scared, too bloody immature, to face the fact that our son is dead. ROBBIE IS DEAD. And all this Sherlock...

HELEN

You're immature, you're a big kid! When has binge drinking been - (mature?)

FRANK

Holmes stuff, all this detective shite, is not gonna change that fact. No, you listen to me...

HELEN

When has binge drinking been the answer to anything...

FRANK

...Time for me to do a bit of spouting, a bit of pontificating...

The row continues (see appendix) but over it we hear Helen.

HELEN (V.O.)

Sometimes when an ape dies the other animals withdraw, stare into space, refuse to interact with each other. We were worse than animals, we turned on each other.

CUT TO:

3/45

INT. HELEN'S HOUSE BEDROOM - NIGHT 7 2345

3/45

They're in bed, silent, wide awake.

FRANK

(Eventually)

Sorry.

They touch/cuddle/hold or whatever.

FRANK (CONT'D)

All those things we did with him before he was, say, five, I resented them. I knew he wouldn't remember them, see.

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

But after five, traipsing round
Alton Towers and Disney and the
fishing and the footie, he'd
remember them. And fifty, sixty
years after us going, he'd still
remember them. But he's gone
before us. And so are all those
memories. And I feel so...
cheated.

Moments pass.

HELEN

Sing to me.

FRANK

Can't.

HELEN

Sing to me.

He sings softly into her ear.

CUT TO:

All rise as the Coroner enters. All sit as the coroner
sits.

COLDBURN

This is an inquest into the death
of Robert Ryland...

We focus on Helen who's looking at...

Maxfield and Sullivan...

COLDBURN (CONT'D)

Now this may be a little confusing
to you but I'm opening and
adjourning this inquest...

The Coroner spelling it out.

COLDBURN (CONT'D)

...because the Crown Prosecution
Service might bring a manslaughter
charge in connection with Robert's
death. And they might not of
course.

(Pause)

We'll reopen when they've
decided.

CUT TO:

3/47 THIS SCENE IS NOW CUT

3/47

3/48 INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY 9 0905

3/48

Helen comes into the classroom as the kids settle down. Siobhan is gathering teaching materials together. Siobhan turns and sees Helen. They embrace. Helen has to recover from the embrace. She goes to her desk..

HELEN

Good Morning, 5R.

General chorus of: Good Morning, Miss.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Now if you could all get out your planners and turn to the week starting -

Tegan has her hand up.

TEGAN

Miss.

HELEN

Yes, Tegan?

TEGAN

Miss, we got you something... the class... We all got it.

Siobhan watches as Tegan lifts a large plant pot from under her desk and carries it carefully to the front. Inside is a small tree.

TEGAN (CONT'D)

It's to plant for your son.

Helen looks away, swallows back the emotions.

TEGAN (CONT'D)

It's an oak tree... so it lasts a long time.

The class wait in silence. Tegan puts the pot on Helen's desk, waits.

TEGAN (CONT'D)

Is that alright, Miss?

Helen nods, too upset to speak.

HELEN

(Struggles to regain control)

(MORE)

HELEN (CONT'D)

Now if you can all get out your
planners...

CUT TO:

3/49 **EXT. HELEN'S HOUSE BACK GARDEN - DAY 10 1130** 3/49

A shovel digs a border of earth. Helen removes the
sapling from the pot. She plants the oak tree carefully,
determined to see it survive.

Frank is watching her from the upstairs bedroom.

CUT TO:

3/50 **INT. SOLICITORS' OFFICE - DAY 11 1210** 3/50

A stack of papers being taken from a briefcase. A lawyer,
KAREN BRYANT, is with Helen and Frank. Karen hands over a
document to Helen.

KAREN

I'm sorry, Helen, but the Crown
Prosecution Service is not going
to bring charges.

Frank drained...

Helen's scanning the document..

HELEN

And that's it?

KAREN

Yes, I'm sorry.

CUT TO:

3/51 **INT CROWN COURT - DAY 18 1155** 3/51

HELEN

So my son is killed and no one
held to account, no one asked to
explain. Would you accept that?

CUT TO:

3/52 **EXT. MICHAEL'S STREET - DAY 11 1645** 3/52

Leanne pushes the pram towards the house. Michael carries
shopping bags. Both of them falter when they see Helen
sitting on their doorstep.

She stands as the family approach.

HELEN

Michael...

He fumbles for his keys, avoiding eye contact.

MICHAEL

Sorry.

He puts the key in the door.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I don't know anything.

Helen turns to Leanne, imploring. Leanne busies herself getting the pram into the house and they close the door behind them.

Helen sits back down on the step. The curtains twitch.

MICHAEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

She's sat down. Tell her to go.

No answer.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Tell her to go.

Still no answer.

Now the shouting begins. Helen picks up snatches.

MICHAEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Do you wanna move? -

LISA (O.S.)

If it had been you -

MICHAEL (O.S.)

Always going on at me that you're desperate to get out of this dump!-

LEANNE (O.S.)

Imagine it's me left like that.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

Do you want Ryan to be the only kid that gets walked to school in the morning cause...

LEANNE (O.S.)

Imagine it's your mother...

MICHAEL (O.S.)

...all the other Mums are too out of it? Too off their heads to....

We're on Helen throughout...

LEANNE (O.S.)

If it was your mother would you
leave her out there?

MICHAEL (O.S.)

...walk their own bloody kids to
school. I don't want that and this
is the price...

LEANNE (O.S.)

She needs to know... Don't just
leave her in limbo... it's cruel,
and you're a lot of things,
Michael... but you're not
cruel...

MICHAEL (O.S.)

...we pay. You don't wanna stay
here, do you? No. If we want Ryan
to go to a decent school in a
decent area this is what it costs!

A long silence. Finally Michael opens the door.

HELEN

Will you help me, Michael?

MICHAEL

Yeah.

CUT TO:

Helen, Frank and Michael sit across from Karen Bryant.

MICHAEL

I've never had a job, well not a
proper one with regular money.

(Pause)

And we need to get out of that
house... We've been robbed twice
this year and there's little kids
playing out on our street, kids
younger than our Ryan. I'm ashamed
of what I did but I did it for
Leanne and for Ryan.

(Pause)

On the day Rob died Alan Maxfield
offered me a permanent contract.
All I had to say was we'd been
trained to use that fork-lift
truck... but we weren't. We had a
five minute demonstration, that's
all, and that's not training.

(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

And I said in my statement that
we'd had a full Health and Safety
rundown but we hadn't.

Karen Bryant weighing things up.

KAREN

We could use Michael's statement
to go for Review - review of the
decision not to prosecute. But
it's risky and expensive.

(Pause)

Your costs could be fifteen grand -

FRANK

Fifteen grand!

KAREN

And if we lose -

HELEN

We won't lose. -

FRANK

Fifteen grand!

KAREN (CONT'D)

But if we did, you'd have to pay
the other side's costs too. Could
you manage that?

HELEN

If we win, they prosecute Alan
Maxfield?

KAREN

Yes.

HELEN

We'll get a second mortgage.

FRANK

We can't afford the first
mortgage, never mind a second.

HELEN

We can.

Awkward.. Karen gestures to Michael that they should
leave.

KAREN

I'll leave you to talk.

FRANK

(to a disappearing
Karen)

No, you're leaving her to talk.
You're leaving me to listen.

Pause.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Who are you doing it for anyway?
It's not for Rob. It's not gonna
bring him back.

HELEN

I know.

FRANK

And d'you think he'd want it?
D'you think he'd want us to get up
to our eyes in debt just to prove
a point?

HELEN

(Quietly)
How dare you?

She turns away from him.

Frank has been married for far too long to see anything
other than defeat. It is inevitable.

FRANK

The fitted kitchen moment. Man
slices his dick off at work.
Surgeon says: you're gonna get
forty grand comp. You can have the
four inch penis for twenty grand,
the six inch for 30 or you can
have the big eight inch penis for
the full forty! He fancies the
eight inch but his wife's there so
teh surgeon says - as our lawyer
has just said - I'll leave you to
talk. Five minutes later he's
back. Have you decided what you're
having? The man nods. We're
having a fitted kitchen.

Helen turns round to him. They embrace.

CUT TO:

3/54	<u>THIS SCENE IS NOW CUT - CREAM 12.07.10</u>	3/54
3/55	<u>THIS SCENE IS NOW CUT</u>	3/55
3/56	<u>THIS SCENE IS NOW CUT</u>	3/56
3/57	<u>THIS SCENE IS NOW CUT</u>	3/57

3/58 **INT. HIGH COURT - DAY 13 1030**

3/58

More law...

Helen and Frank are there with Karen Bryant and their barrister. The CPS are represented by a civil servant and their barrister.

Three judges file in. Tremendous tension.

SENIOR JUDGE

I'm afraid we won't reach a decision today but we'll meet again tomorrow..

CUT TO:

3/59 **INT. HELEN'S HOUSE KITCHEN - DAY 13 1845**

3/59

Old crap flies out of a broom cupboard as Helen 'cleans'.

She thrusts a cricket bat into a plastic bag. She's almost manic. Frank enters.

FRANK

What are you doing?

HELEN

Oxfam.

FRANK

I use them.

Helen chucks cricket stumps into the bin bag too.

HELEN

No you don't. When did you last play cricket? You don't play anything anymore. You don't do anything anymore. You just sit in front of the telly and drink and smoke and rot.

CUT TO:

3/60 **EXT. STREET - DAY 13 1846**

3/60

Seething, Frank struggles into his coat as he heads up the street. He wants to be the sort of man who can take on the world but he can't even get his arm in his sleeve. He stops, fights back tears... feeling absolutely ineffectual.

CUT TO:

3/61 **INT. HELEN'S HOUSE ROB'S ROOM - NIGHT 13 2200** 3/61

Everything is as it was the morning Rob left, except the bed's made. Helen picks up a book from beside the bed, a bookmark marking a page halfway through.

She sits on the bed, turns back to the beginning, starts to read (about Ibiza).

CUT TO:

3/62 **INT. HELEN'S HOUSE ROB'S ROOM - NIGHT 13 2230** 3/62

Weary with life and booze, Frank makes his way upstairs. Light comes from the open door to Rob's room. He pauses.

Fully clothed, Helen lies asleep on the bed. He enters, picks up Rob's duvet off the floor and covers her.

CUT TO:

3/63 **INT. HIGH COURT - DAY 14 1430** 3/63

The court stands as the Judges enter. Helen takes in the formal, civil robes... a garb that speaks of hundreds of years worth of law. She stares hopefully at the lead Judge.

Everyone sits.

SENIOR JUDGE

Thank you for your patience.

Helen tries to read his facial expression as the court settles.

SENIOR JUDGE (CONT'D)

I realise that we've been
deliberating for what may seem an
inordinate amount of time...

(Pause)

But we felt it was crucial to give
this case proper consideration...

Helen nods confidently at Frank: see, it's looking good!
Despite himself, Frank hopes so too.

CUT TO:

3/64 **EXT. SCHOOL CAR PARK - DAY 15 0854** 3/64

Late, Helen hurries out of the car, grabs her bag off the back seat and heads for the entrance.

3/64 CONTINUED:

3/64

In front of her, a few last minute parents and kids. A mother moves in to kiss her small son goodbye and he dodges. It reminds Helen of her and Rob.

It's almost the final straw...

The school bell rings.

CUT TO:

3/65

INT. SCHOOL - DAY 15 0855

3/65

The bell rings. Kids spill into the corridors, a mass of energy and noise rushing towards classrooms. And through it comes Helen, the walking wounded. A kid holds open the class room door, waits for Helen to go through but she just keeps on walking...

SENIOR JUDGE(V.O.)

...however Michael Lang did not seem to us to be a sufficiently believable witness. In view of this we feel that a successful prosecution would be very difficult. With that in mind...

(Pause)

We uphold the Crown Prosecution Service's decision NOT to prosecute.

Down the corridor, past the front office where a printer cranks out high speed copies. The receptionist nods, concerned, but Helen just keeps going...

Past the staff room and through the fire door and into the yard.

And she walks across the now empty playground and sits on a bench. Kids are staring out of the windows.

Siobhan comes across the yard and sits beside her, shivers with the cold. Siobhan puts an arm around her.

SIOBHAN

It's a fucker.

A pause

SIOBHAN (CONT'D)

Tonight, I'm getting you pissed and laid.

HELEN

I've been married 20 years.

SIOBHAN

You'll be used to doing it in that order then.

CUT TO:

3/66

INT. KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT 15 2150

3/66

It's Siobhan's local. Loud, busy. Somebody murdering a Tom Jones number. Siobhan shimmies as she carries a tray of drinks across to Helen.

SIOBHAN

Beer and...

She gestures at the salt and lemons sitting next to a couple of slammers.

SIOBHAN (CONT'D)

(Accent)

Tequila!

HELEN

I'm only staying an hour, Siobhan.

SIOBHAN

You're not!

(Pause)

My tight bastard of a husband goes to me last night, Get your coat on.

I says, Why, where you taking me? He says, Nowhere, I'm turning the bloody leccy off.

(Pause)

If you go home I'll have to as well.

(Pleads)

So, c'mon...

Helen puts her right hand out and Siobhan fills the dent between thumb and forefinger with salt. She hands Helen the slammer, then repeats the action for herself. They raise their glasses.

SIOBHAN (CONT'D)

Like there's...

SIOBHAN (CONT'D)

No fucking tomorrow! -

HELEN

No tomorrow!

They clink and down, reaching for the lemons and pulling faces. Helen shakes her hips and does a little tequila inspired mambo.

SIOBHAN (CONT'D)

I've got me mate back.

(Pause)

We're having another!

CUT TO:

3/67

INT. KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT 15 2220

3/67

Siobhan holding the microphone as a man tries to find her song on the karaoke machine.

SIOBHAN

(Over the mike)

I could sing my own version but it would empty the pub.

Shouts of "Sing it" etc. We're on Helen throughout most of this...

SIOBHAN (CONT'D)

It's a bit rude even by my standards.

(As she's waiting)

'Ey I went to the doctor's this morning. Had a bit of lettuce sticking out my arse. He said it could be the tip of the iceberg.

Helen laughing... Everyone's laughing... The karaoke man is giving up the search.

SIOBHAN (CONT'D)

Not gonna find it, John, no? I'll sing mine then, yeah?

She launches into it.

SIOBHAN (CONT'D)

A pair of knickers with a stain between them. A spot of petrol where you tried to clean them. A brothel sign that swings. These foolish things remind me of you. Some sweaty socks beside an old French letter. A dose of syphilis that won't get better. Oh how the ointment stings. These foolish things remind me of you.

Helen laughing...

CUT TO:

3/68 INT/EXT. CAB - NIGHT 15 2330

3/68

The cab crawls through the late night mayhem.

The pain floods back...

CUT TO:

3/69 INT. CORONER'S COURT - DAY 16 1045

3/69

More law...

COLDBURN

Good Morning... You may remember that last time we met I adjourned the inquest into Robert Ryland's death pending the Crown Prosecution Service's decision on whether or not to prosecute. That matter is now settled and so I'm now reopening this inquest.

CUT TO:

3/70 INT. CROWN COURT DAY 18 1205

3/70

HELEN

Time and time again the law had failed us but I clung to the idea that the inquest would right everything, that the truth would come out, that Maxfield would be held responsible for my son's death. After all those courtrooms, all those knock backs, I still had hope.

(Pause)

I was like a battered wife - getting hurt all the time but thinking: one last go, this time will be different.

CUT TO:

3/71 INT. CORONER'S COURT - DAY 16 1050

3/71

COLDBURN

I'd like to hear from the family first. Mrs Ryland, would that be agreeable to you?

Helen nods. A moment's hesitation and she gets up and moves towards the stand.

CORONERS COURT CLERK
(Quiet aside)
Would you like to take the oath on
the bible, or by affirmation.

HELEN
(Equally quiet)
Affirmation.

CUT TO:

3/72

INT. CORONER'S COURT - DAY 16 1120

3/72

Helen's on the stand. Frank watching, really tense...

SULLIVAN
Did Robert go out the night before
he died?

HELEN
There was a match on Sky.
(Pause)
He watched it in the pub.

SULLIVAN
Where he had several drinks?

HELEN
He didn't come home drunk. So if
you're trying to infer that Rob
was drunk the next morning, forget
it. He went out with a tenner, a
tenner that I gave him. He came
back with five pounds forty after
spending four pound sixty on two
pints of lager. I know this
because there was five pound forty
in a plastic bag along with his
wallet and phone and other
(Pause)
Effects.

CUT TO:

3/73

INT. CORONER'S COURT - DAY 16 1215

3/73

Alan Maxfield is on the stand. Helen searches his face
but he blanks her. Frank too...

ALAN MAXFIELD
Michael Lang is mistaken. Both
boys were given detailed
instructions on operating the fork-
lift and they had two or three
hours training.
(MORE)

ALAN MAXFIELD (CONT'D)

They're expensive bits of machinery so purely on economic grounds you wouldn't just let them loose, never mind Health and Safety and whatnot.

(Pause)

Now whether they listened, whether they paid enough attention... I know when they were outside my office, Ryland seemed to be cracking jokes all the time.

(Pause)

The door was open and I found it distracting.

(Pause)

Other witnesses thought he was on one as well -

CUT TO:

3/74

INT. CORONER'S COURT - DAY 16 1545

3/74

COLDBURN

The verdict is accidental death.

It is devastating for Helen - and Frank...

COLDBURN (CONT'D)

(To family)

I'd just like to express my deepest sympathies. I know how hard it must be for you but I hope this verdict helps. I hope you find some comfort in the fact that no one was to blame for your son's death.

Hollow words. Helen looks around. People are packing up, beginning to chat.

Frank and Helen slump, all the fight kicked out of them.

Helen sees Sullivan catching Coldburn as he leaves. They share an aside. Coldburn laughs...

And it drains Helen even more.

CUT TO:

3/75

INT. CORONER'S COURT - DAY 16 1600

3/75

The court is empty save for Helen - with Frank waiting for her.

HELEN (V.O.)

Blood drains. You hear people say that all the time.

Helen walks out. Frank calls after her but she just keeps going.

HELEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
"The blood drained from him."
Well, when you get told your son
is dead, the blood really does
drain.

CUT TO:

3/76 INT. CROWN COURT - DAY 18 1210 3/76

HELEN
You feel it drain. You feel your
veins widen and the blood just
drop. And it drained again when
the coroner said no one was
responsible for my son's death.
Someone was to blame. Alan
Maxfield.

CUT TO:

3/77 THIS SCENE IS NOW CUT 3/77

3/78 EXT. HELEN'S HOUSE - DAY 17 1630 3/78

Helen screeches to a halt outside the house. Key in hand,
she runs to the front door. Opens it.

CUT TO:

3/79 INT. HELEN'S HOUSE - DAY 17 1631 3/79

Leaving the front door wide open, Helen runs up the
stairs and into her bedroom. She grabs the drawer on her
bedside cabinet. She tips the drawer's contents on the
floor.

And there it is, the clear plastic bag with Rob's
possessions. She retrieves the pass card. She runs back
out of the house slamming the door.

CUT TO:

3/80 THIS SCENE IS NOW CUT 3/80

3/81 INT. MAXFIELD'S WHOLESALERS RECEPTION - DAY 17 1632 3/81

Swiping Rob's pass card, Helen enters by the workers' entrance.

CUT TO:

3/82 THIS SCENE IS NOW CUT 3/82

3/83 INT. MAXFIELD'S WHOLESALERS MAXFIELD'S OFFICE - DAY 17 1633 3/83

As the door opens, Maxfield continues typing/staring at the screen. He's a busy man, used to making people wait.

HELEN

Have you ever been to Ibiza?

Maxfield raises his eyes, surprised.

HELEN (CONT'D)

The Carthaginians founded it, lived there till the Romans wiped them out. Then the Arabs went and settled there for 500 years, till the Catalans laid siege... tore down the mosques and built churches.

Maxfield's surprise has turned to total confusion.

MAXFIELD

How did you get in?

HELEN

The Bohemians arrived in the 60's and 70's, turned it into a party island.

(Pause)

Rob was saving up to go there. -

MAXFIELD

How did you get in here?

HELEN

His swipe card. It was in the plastic bag. Another of his effects. All his mates knew about Ibiza was clubbing but Rob was different... Yeah, he'd stay up all night dancing but the day after he'd be wandering around the house with a book in his hand.

(Pause)

(MORE)

HELEN (CONT'D)

And after he died I found this book on Ibiza beside his bed. He was halfway through it... never got to finish it.

MAXFIELD

What do you want, Mrs Ryland?

HELEN

Mrs Ryland? I want you to say that you're sorry Rob never got to Ibiza, that he never made his 21st.

(Pause)

Or even finished his book.

(Pause)

Say he didn't need to die in your warehouse.

(Pause)

That you coated him in so much..., so much shit, there was none left to stick to you ...

(Pause)

I want you to say you're sorry for all that. And when you have, then I'll go away and get on with my life.

MAXFIELD

It was an accident...

HELEN

No-one here but me and you.

(Pause)

This is just between us. I need to hear it.

Silence. Helen waits and waits.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Just say I'm sorry. People say it all the time. They bump into each other in supermarkets and they say it automatically, instinctively "I'm sorry." Even when it's not their fault: "I'm sorry."

MAXFIELD

(Eventually)

My lawyer won't let me.

She walks away.

CUT TO:

3/85 **EXT. MAXFIELD'S WHOLESALERS - NIGHT 17 2210** 3/85

The boot opening. Helen pulls out the petrol.

She slams the boot and heads into the darkness carrying the petrol. It spills as she walks.

CUT TO:

3/86 **INT. MAXFIELD'S WHOLESALERS - NIGHT 17 2220** 3/86

She sloshes the petrol around, deliberately sets off a fire alarm.

CUT TO:

3/87 **EXT. MAXFIELD'S WHOLESALERS - NIGHT 17 2225** 3/87

Helen leans against the car bonnet, watching, waiting.

In the reflected windscreen the night explodes...

And settles into flames reflected in the glass.

The warehouse is ablaze.

She hears sirens.

And now Alan Maxfield is here, furious.

MAXFIELD

You know who killed your son?
Shall I tell you who killed your son, you stupid bitch? A billion Chinese. Half a billion Indians. All working for a pound a day. I'm paying fifty a day and I'm supposed to compete. That's what killed your son, you stupid, mad bitch.

CUT TO:

3/88 **THIS SCENE IS NOW CUT** 3/88

3/89 **INT. POLICE STATION CELL - NIGHT 17 2300** 3/89

A police woman waits while Helen slips her belt off and hands it to her. She motions at the laces in Helen's shoes. Helen pulls them out and passes them over.

CUT TO:

3/90 **INT. HOLDING CELLS - DAY 18 0945**

3/90

Heated...

KAREN BYRANT

I will resign. If you try to justify what you did, the jury will convict you, the judge'll throw everything at you and you'll go down for years.

HELEN

I appreciate your advice, Karen, I really do. But ever since Rob died, I've used this...

(The brain)

...and it's never worked. So I hope you don't mind but I'm going to try this.

(Heart and soul)

CUT TO:

3/91 **INT. HELEN'S HOUSE BATHROOM - DAY 18 0946**

3/91

A fogged mirror. A hand wipes the condensation from the glass and a freshly shaved and showered Frank takes a long, hard look at himself.

HELEN (V.O.)

When you lose someone you love it hurts. Of course it hurts...

CUT TO:

3/92 **INT. HELEN'S HOUSE BATHROOM - DAY 18 0947**

3/92

Finally, Frank picks up a stick of grease paint and begins to paint his face white.

HELEN (V.O.)

But imagine losing them over and over.

CUT TO:

3/93 **INT CROWN COURT - DAY 18 1215**

3/93

Helen addressing the jury. (NB - Before this point we should not see that Sullivan and Maxfield are in the court room listening to Helen.)

HELEN

Every time the law let me down,
Rob died all over again. Every
time the law let me down, I let
Rob down.

CUT TO:

3/94

INT. HELEN'S HOUSE BATHROOM - DAY 18 0948

3/94

Frank draws a huge red smile over his own unsmiling
mouth.

HELEN (V.O.)

There's only so many times you can
take that.

CUT TO:

3/95

INT. CROWN COURT - DAY 18 1217

3/95

Helen addresses the Jury. Maxfield and Sullivan watch.

HELEN

I teach, I'm used to being lied
to. But the difference between
Maxfield and a child is that when
you confront a nine-year old child
with the fact that they're
lying...

(Pause)

They own up... they say sorry.

(Pause)

And when you've lost your child an
apology isn't all that much to
ask.

(Pause)

I wouldn't be here talking to you
now if Maxfield had just said
'sorry.'

Helen can't go on, she has to gather herself, find the
courage to continue.

HELEN (CONT'D)

My lawyer said speaking to you
like this was stupid, that you'd
throw the book at me.

(Pause)

Well, fine, throw that book.

(MORE)

HELEN (CONT'D)

The law's hit me so many times,
I'm numb, I won't feel it.

CUT TO:

3/96

EXT. STREET - DAY 18 1218

3/96

The sounds of traffic. Two enormous red clown shoes flip flop their way along the pavement. Frank's in full clown outfit now.

Pedestrians stop and stare and car horns honk but Frank's oblivious as he marches on.

CUT TO:

3/97

INT. CROWN COURT - DAY 18 1220

3/97

Helen looks directly into the faces of the Jury.

HELEN

You know why we have law? I can speak to you like this because I've learned so much. I'm an expert. I've paid the highest tuition fees in the world, you see: the death of my son. We have law because it's a route to justice. But what if law blocks off that route, denies you justice, what then?

She pauses... overcome by the hopelessness of the situation.

HELEN (CONT'D)

When you go away and consider what I've done, I'm asking you to reach a verdict based not on law but on something I've been thirsting for... something that Rob deserved and never got... something that I'm scared might no longer exist: justice.

(Pause)

I'm asking you to give me justice.

CUT TO:

3/98

INT. CROWN COURT - DAY 18 1225

3/98

The Judge addresses the Jury.

JUDGE

However sympathetic you may feel,
Helen Ryland stands accused of a
very serious crime.

(Pause)

You must put all emotion aside and
decide purely and simply on the
basis of the evidence...

Sudden commotion. Frank has entered, dressed as a
clown...

JUDGE (CONT'D)

What's going on here? Who are you
please?

FRANK

Frank Ryland, husband of the
accused. And, yes, this is to show
my contempt for this court, my
contempt for any court, my
contempt for anything to do with
the law.

JUDGE

Mr Ryland -

FRANK

My wife said the law was a
joke, and I argued... not
because I thought she was
wrong but -

JUDGE

Mr Ryland -

FRANK

But because I didn't have
her courage -

FRANK (CONT'D)

If I'd half the guts she has, it'd
be me in that dock...

Frank turns to Helen, opens his arms, clown suit in full
effect.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I'm sorry...

JUDGE

Mr Ryland, have you finished?

Frank nods.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

I'm going to call an officer of
the court. I'll deal with you when
this case is finished. Do you
understand?

FRANK

Yes.

The Judge waits a second before continuing. Helen can't take her eyes off Frank. His gesture has almost finished her off. She fights to regain composure.

JUDGE

By her own admission, she set fire to that warehouse and showed total disregard for human life. I am not going to direct you to return a guilty verdict but all the evidence points to her guilt and she herself has admitted it. Off you go.

CUT TO:

3/99 INT FRANK'S HOLDING CELL DAY 18 1400

3/99

Frank, in his clown's outfit, is singing.

CUT TO:

3/100 INT HOLDING CELL DAY 18 1401

3/100

He is singing to Helen in an adjacent cell.

As at the start of this story a distant metal door groans open and Helen is suddenly alert.

It slams shut. Footsteps.

A key in the lock. The door opens. A prison officer...

PRISON OFFICER

Jury's coming back.

CUT TO:

3/101 INT HOLDING CELL AREA - DAY 18 1402

3/101

Helen looking through the viewing hole at Frank.

Frank's fingers touch the glass.

Helen's fingers respond.

CUT TO:

3/102 INT STEPS TO THE CROWN COURT - DAY 18 1403

3/102

Helen and officers climbing the steps to the court.

CUT TO:

3/103 INT CROWN COURT - DAY 18 1405

3/103

Helen enters.

Members of the jury filing through their benches.

Huge tension. Maxfield and Sullivan are there. Siobhan is there. Michael is there.

COURT CLERK

Members of the jury, are you agreed upon a verdict?

FOREMAN

We are.

COURT CLERK

Do you find the defendant guilty or not guilty of arson and wilful destruction of property?

The foreman makes the briefest eye contact with Helen. Her supporters prepare for the worst.

FOREMAN

Not guilty.

A communal gasp as the room takes this in. The Judge is disbelieving.

COURT CLERK

And is that the verdict of you all?

FOREMAN

Yes, it's unanimous.

Silent tears roll down Helen's cheeks. She lets out a sob. Her supporters - friends, footballers, kids from school, fellow-teachers - begin to clap and cheer. The dam breaks and she's sobbing, sobbing, sobbing.

Incredulous, the Judge stares at the Jury.

JUDGE

Did you say not guilty?..

Helen nods, sobbing, sobbing, sobbing. The Jury are smiling at her now.

She tries to wipe away her tears to say the words she needs to say to them. But the tears keep coming. She addresses the Jury for the last time...

HELEN

Thank you,
(Through tears)
Thank you.

CUT TO:

3/104

INT STAIRCASE/HOLDING CELL AREA/FRANK'S HOLDING CELL 3/104
DAY 18 1410

Officers leading Helen down the stone staircase, the officers' steel tipped boots echoing, echoing...

Frank hears them approaching, hears, too, Helen's sobs. He assumes she's been found guilty.

Everything stops right outside the Frank's holding cell.

The key in the lock. The door swings open. Frank and Helen look at each other.

FRANK

Guilty?

HELEN

(in tears)
Not guilty.

FRANK

What?

HELEN

Not guilty.

Frank is in tears now.

They embrace.

THE END

APPENDIX

SCENE 44

Frank and Helen's row continues...

CONTINUED:

HELEN

You're a drunk...

FRANK

I'm nowhere near as drunk as I'm
going to be -

HELEN

Where's your self-respect?

FRANK

Self-respect? There isn't a man
alive who could live with you and
survive with his respect intact!

(Pause)

You go on about your school's anti
bullying policy? Take a look at
yourself... you're a bloody bully,
you want your own way in
everything!

HELEN

All you want is a bloody drink!
You talk about grief, you don't
know what grief is... you're too
sozzled to feel it! We'd all like
to be numb but some of us have to
keep going, keep coping!