

CANTERBURY'S LAW

Pilot

teleplay by

Dave Erickson

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

ON ELIZABETH CANTERBURY

reflected in a mirror as she fixes a pair of dangling earrings. She's stunning -- seductive and savage in turns. She's got a huge heart, but hides it. Compassion has little upside.

ELIZABETH

Justice is blind. The presumption  
of innocence is sacrosanct. Bullshit.  
Bullshit on both counts. That reads  
nice in lit class, but Atticus Finch  
was as rabid as the dog he shot.  
Our courts are not the great  
levellers...  
(a breath)  
...I am.

She turns abruptly on the heel of a re-soled Manolo and --

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

INT. TRINITY AVENUE APARTMENTS - PROVIDENCE, R.I. -- MORNING

The big bay window overlooks grey Naragansett Bay, the watery heart of the city. Dirty morning light filters through the airy, *feng shui-ed* room.

ELIZABETH

What's the verdict on the earrings?

FRANK

I love watching you get ready for  
work. You're like a warrior.

A lanky man lounges shirtless on the sill, sipping a homemade latte, watching Elizabeth dress. She frowns --

ELIZABETH

Frank? Please. My earrings?

He stands. FRANK ANGSTROM towers over Elizabeth -- ten inches taller, ten years younger, swimmer's build.

FRANK

Gorgeous. Lovely. Perfect.

ELIZABETH

I look like hell...

She's staring at her reflection. Elizabeth sheds her tailored shirt, studies ensemble options strewn across the bed --

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

I went to many law schools and passed the bar in many states... and became a goddamn vaudeville act...

FRANK

You're gonna do fine, angel. Relax.

He kisses the nape of her neck, runs his hands over her arms. She turns into him, dressing, whispering between kisses...

ELIZABETH

...dance for the judge... drown juries in minutiae... twist DNA into a corkscrew until they all go cock-eyed in their ignorance...

FRANK

Isn't DNA already in a corkscrew?

She laughs and Frank kisses her a final time, lets it linger before Elizabeth escapes, blowing out a breath --

ELIZABETH

I need ignorant juries. I need them worried -- "I didn't get a word those guys said... but that lawyer sure had honest eyes..."

(flutters her lashes)

...and that comes down to which shirt brings out my baby blues...

Frank works the buttons up the one she's wearing, dressing her delicately, and --

INT. PROVIDENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE - COURTROOM -- LATER

Her game face is on now. Elizabeth paces slowly in front of twelve jurors, cuts a fine figure in her suit, low heels softly syncopating...

ELIZABETH

...Max Spencer is a bully. He went to a Pawsox game on the fifteenth of August with friends. He drank. He got loud. The language he used was offensive, so my client stood up to the bully. He asked Max Spencer to quiet down. Simple, right...?

She lays her hands lightly on the rail, runs her steady gaze over the jurors. The shirt does bring out her eyes.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

...when Mr. Spencer threw a punch,  
my client defended himself. He sent  
Max Spencer to the emergency room...

(she smiles)

...of course my client didn't know  
that Max Spencer was an off-duty cop  
with rage issues, a cop with eleven  
excessive force complaints, a cop  
who couldn't possibly lose a fight  
to a civilian at a ball game. And  
rather than swallow his pride Max  
Spencer played on his contacts, he  
trumped up charges, called in favors  
and did through the courts what he  
couldn't do with his fists...

We move over the faces of the jurors -- they're captivated  
by Elizabeth, eating from the palm of her hand...

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

...my client is a gentleman who did  
the right thing. He stopped a bully.

(beat)

Stop him again.

She smiles -- warm, honest -- returns to the defense table  
where we reveal, finally, her client... Frank Angstrom.

FRANK

On second thought, Liz, the earrings  
might be a bit much --

CUT TO:

MAIN TITLE CREDITS

FADE IN:

INT. PROVIDENCE COUNTY JAIL - CATACOMBS -- MORNING

Two men sit in a grey room, steel table bolted between them.  
ETHAN FOSTER is shrunken and pale, mouse-brown eyes darting.  
Slouching in oversized, orange coveralls, he whines --

ETHAN

I write the checks to Mrs. Canterbury.

RUSSELL

Your Mom writes the checks, Ethan.

RUSSELL CROSS wears a cheap suit bought off the rack. He's  
handsome but haggard and has long since lost patience with  
the client before him.

ETHAN

You being here. Her not. Means you have bad news.

RUSSELL

Liz is closing another case.

ETHAN

You have good news?

RUSSELL

DA wants to know where the body is...

He's braced for an explosion, but Ethan shrinks, sinks in his chair, shaking his head --

ETHAN

How? How would I know that...?

RUSSELL

You have an option here outside trial -- if you help the state, if you help the boy's family --

ETHAN

It reflects well.

RUSSELL

It does. If it's in your power, it helps you...

ETHAN

It's not in my power -- I told you --

RUSSELL

I know, I'm not saying it is, I just --

ETHAN

You just doubt me -- you're supposed to believe me, but you don't -- you doubt me, you-you-you --

Tears spill from his eyes. He trembles as he stands, paces --

ETHAN (cont'd)

-- do you have any idea what they do to me here -- the things they think I did --

RUSSELL

This is the child of a rich family and the --

ETHAN

-- these things I did not do.

RUSSELL

-- the cadaver dogs will stay out on  
their dime until they find the body.

ETHAN

And you think I know where it is?

RUSSELL

They think you do -- I'm the messenger --  
they want you to do the right thing.

ETHAN

I haven't done anything -- tell them  
to do the right thing! Tell them...

He faces the corner, presses his palms into his eyes. Ethan  
collects himself, then whispers --

ETHAN (cont'd)

...tell them maybe he's not in R.I.

RUSSELL

Ethan, don't waste my time --

ETHAN

What? No, you want a confession...  
(a bitter edge)  
...I'm such an arch-criminal. They  
should phone FedEx... or was it UPS?

RUSSELL

Stop it.

ETHAN

The details blur. What alias did I  
use, where did I ship him... and in  
how many pieces...?  
(glances up, melts)  
...look at me, Mr. Cross. Please.  
Do you think I could do that? Do  
you? Help me.

INT. NELLIE'S DINER - DOWNTOWN PROVIDENCE -- LATER

The place is bustling -- grill hissing, hustling waitresses,  
short order cook shouting for pick-ups. This is a courthouse  
hang -- DAs and PDs, bailiffs and bondsmen.

RUSSELL

He'd have been convinced if we double-  
teamed him. You should've come.

Russell tosses his briefcase into a booth. Elizabeth is there,  
spooning fruit and granola in non-fat milk. She eyes him --

ELIZABETH

It was a fool's errand, Russell -- I told you that.

RUSSELL

He has to weigh his options --

ELIZABETH

You want Ethan to deal on a murder he didn't commit --

RUSSELL

This isn't just about making deals.

ELIZABETH

What's it all about, counselor?

RUSSELL

It's about the Jasper family's grief.

ELIZABETH

Mr. Jasper shouldn't have killed his son, he didn't want to grieve.

Russell shakes his head as some wise-ass street urchin bangs the window, sing-songs, "Guil-ty, guil-ty, you're going to heeeelll!" Liz nods, smiles, flips the guy off, and --

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

What did Ethan say to rile you?

RUSSELL

...he says he cut up the body, shipped the pieces all over the country.

ELIZABETH

Hogwash. He's pissed off, petrified, his meds are all screwed up, he's got you on his back --

RUSSELL

The guy seemed harmless when we took the case -- I liked him.

ELIZABETH

You'll like him again when he's free.

EXT. NELLIE'S DINER -- MOMENTS LATER

Elizabeth long-strides out like she's breaking from the gate. Russell holds the door open for a woman with a stroller, jogs to catch up --

RUSSELL

Liz, let's use the tunnel today.

ELIZABETH

Tunnel's for cops, crooks and cowards.

RUSSELL

Lawyers who want to dodge the press.

ELIZABETH

Any lawyer dodges a sound bite should be disbarred.

RUSSELL

There's a gag order, Liz -- you can't speak anyway.

ELIZABETH

My presence speaks volumes. I radiate.

RUSSELL

I'm taking the tunnel.

ELIZABETH

Godspeed, Russell Cross --

RUSSELL

Oh, come on! It's two blocks to the police department -- the tunnel goes under Satellite City, practically comes out in Stanley's chambers --

The white-noise-din of a crowd rises in the distance and --

EXT. SATELLITE CITY/PROVIDENCE COURTHOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

It hits like a wave. The street's been cordoned off for the press hordes, dishes beaming coverage skyward. This is Elizabeth's element, but she stops, squints --

ELIZABETH

What... what the hell...?

Reporters circle a silent COUPLE on the courthouse steps --

INT. HALLMARK STORE -- CONTINUOUS

An electronic chime ding-dongs as Elizabeth shoves Russell in, the store empty save the shopkeeper and her well-stocked wares. She smiles, mouths her "Good morning".

RUSSELL

What? What is it?

ELIZABETH

The Jaspers. The kid's parents are just... waiting there...

She peeks out. HELEN JASPER is skeletal, reduced by grief. Her husband has fared better -- SCOTT JASPER is a mountain of a man, bulk left over from a failed football career.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

...it's like they knew I was coming.  
How do they know I'm not in court?

RUSSELL

You never take the tunnel.

ELIZABETH

No, this was a plot, this was plotted --

RUSSELL

Tough to "radiate" in the same frame  
as the victim's family.

ELIZABETH

Shut up. Russell, you're not --  
(eyes him, teasing)  
-- you're not passing notes to your  
old DA pals -- ?

RUSSELL

Oh, stop it -- you're paranoid.

ELIZABETH

That doesn't mean you're not out to  
get me, you're always texting...

RUSSELL

Tunnel's looking pretty sweet, huh?

INT. PROVIDENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE - JUDGE'S CHAMBERS -- DAY

Elizabeth is annoyed. The desk before her is stacked with bent-spined legal text, a black-wrinkled robe draped over a bust of Patrick Henry. A massive crucifix looms over --

JUDGE STANLEY

I don't care what she said. I'm not  
buying a boat, I don't need a dock --

The suffering Christ hovers over suffering JUDGE JOE STANLEY. His body has caved in, crushed by the burden of constant judgment. He's on the phone --

JUDGE STANLEY (cont'd)

No! Don't-don't put her on for, I --  
heeeeey, honey, I didn't know you  
were on site today...

Russell relaxes on the couch with Providence District Attorney ZACH WILLIAMS. Williams sits ruler-straight, officious and efficient, training the rim of his fedora.

JUDGE STANLEY (cont'd)  
...but honey, honey but -- this isn't  
Club Med for every mooching cousin --

Elizabeth leans forward suddenly and disconnects the judge's  
call. Stanley blinks at her, stunned. She smiles --

ELIZABETH  
You're gonna build the dock. You're  
gonna buy the boat. Whatever Mrs.  
Judge wants, Mrs. Judge gets.

Russell covers his mouth, waits for the explosion. Williams  
smiles, smiles every time Elizabeth hangs herself, but --

JUDGE STANLEY  
I'd hold you in contempt, Canterbury --  
were I not eternally grateful. So --  
(claps his hands)  
-- we have a last minute motion.

ELIZABETH  
Judge, Scott Jasper has been dropped  
from the state's witness list. We'd  
like to subpoena him as a defense  
witness, but --

DA WILLIAMS  
Mr. Jasper is coordinating the search  
for his son's body --

ELIZABETH  
He can take a day off --

DA WILLIAMS  
Subpoena power is predicated on some  
reasonable expectation that testimony  
provided by the subject of said  
subpoena will be relevant --

RUSSELL  
Alternate theory of the crime, judge --  
there was abuse in the Jasper home.

DA WILLIAMS  
You have rumors run amuck. I see no --

ELIZABETH  
We have the boy's medical history --

DA WILLIAMS  
-- no exception to the hearsay rule.

JUDGE STANLEY  
I agree.

ELIZABETH

Level the playing field here -- you're allowing the testimony of the prison shrink who treated my client ten years ago --

DA WILLIAMS

Testimony that establishes motive -- Ethan Foster was, is and will continue to be a sexual predator --

ELIZABETH

It's prejudicial, it's inflammatory --

DA WILLIAMS

I'm quite agile -- I can address the sessions' substance without directly mentioning the rape conviction.

RUSSELL

Statutory rape. Sex was consensual.

JUDGE STANLEY

The girl's parents disagreed.

ELIZABETH

Judge, I'm beginning to worry you're playing favorites --

JUDGE STANLEY

Save it. You're lucky to have the boy's medical records --

ELIZABETH

But I can't question Scott Jasper as to why those records are rife with breaks, sprains, contusions --

JUDGE STANLEY

You can question Helen Jasper about the boy's medical history --

DA WILLIAMS

She would have witnessed the abuse.

RUSSELL

She lived with the abuse. She won't testify against her husband --

Stanley is shaking his head, smiling, eyeing Elizabeth as he ignores Russell Cross --

JUDGE STANLEY

Find a witness, Canterbury, or leave Scott Jasper alone.

INT./EXT. PROVIDENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER

Elizabeth and Russell move down the hall, stride-for-stride, DA Williams hot on their heels, black overcoat on, fixing his dark fedora over his brow --

DA WILLIAMS  
Counselor? Elizabeth!

ELIZABETH  
Sorry, I-Spy, we're in the midst of  
a privileged conversation --

She lets the heavy exit door fly back into the DA's face as she and Russell step outside.

RUSSELL  
Must you antagonize? Must you?

ELIZABETH  
You saw his hat. You have to ask?

RUSSELL  
What if we have to negotiate --

ELIZABETH  
We play good attorney, bad attorney.  
He's your old boss. Feel him up  
while I play hard to get.

RUSSELL  
When do you ever play hard to get?

ELIZABETH  
Cute. Wrangle Molly and Chester. I  
need soldiers on the street. I need  
a witness who puts Scott Jasper on  
the stand --

She shuts up as they run the press gauntlet, swallowed by cable and mics, hairspray and pancake, and --

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. PROVIDENCE DANCE ACADEMY -- EVENING

Elizabeth watches through the window as a parade of ballroom DANCERS spin and glide. A handsome, bearish man tangoes with a female DANCE INSTRUCTOR, laughing out loud...

INT. PROVIDENCE DANCE ACADEMY -- MOMENTS LATER

She stashes her briefcase and coat, weaves between the dancers until she reaches MATT CANTERBURY. Her husband is steady and strong, warm and welcoming --

ELIZABETH

May I cut in?

The instructor sways away without a word and Elizabeth picks up where she left off, Matt speaking low in her ear --

MATT

This was your idea, Beth. "This or therapy" -- your words.

ELIZABETH

The judge kept us late. I'm sorry.

The tango ends, the instructor announcing a waltz. As they begin to one-two-three --

MATT

I called the office today. I could only get voice-mail.

ELIZABETH

Yeah, I gotta fire the girl.

MATT

Don't. Janet's my conduit into your life. I talk to her more than you.

ELIZABETH

She's a secretary who doesn't answer the damn phone, Matt -- and you can't spy on me if she doesn't answer the phone, can you? No, so --

MATT

I won't apologize for keeping tabs.

ELIZABETH

I can recommend some private dicks --

MATT

Oh, boy, I'm sure you can.

ELIZABETH

That was low and unnecessary --

MATT

You're getting hate mail, Beth --

ELIZABETH

When don't I get hate mail, Matthew --  
this is new? It's just a case --

MATT

This case resonates outside the court-  
room -- don't pretend it doesn't --

ELIZABETH

It upsets the delicate sensibilities  
of your ivory tower colleagues --

MATT

It upsets me. You defend this guy --  
charged with what he's charged with --  
when there's even a chance he --

ELIZABETH

Ethan was the village bogeyman. The  
cops railroaded him. Explain that  
to the law school faculty.

MATT

Other lawyers could have repped him --

ELIZABETH

Yeah, headline seeking hacks.

MATT

And you don't care about the press?

ELIZABETH

Ethan's innocent. I care about that.

MATT

You know? You know he's innocent?

ELIZABETH

I know when someone's lying to me.

MATT

Yeah... yeah, not a skill I possess.

ELIZABETH

If you knew, Matt, every time someone  
lied to your face... it'd kill you.

MATT

That would depend, Elizabeth, on who was telling the lie...

They go quiet, stare off as the other couples one-two-three, one-two-three around them, and --

INT. THE COMPOST BUILDING - CANTERBURY & ASSOCIATES -- NIGHT

After hours. The space is modest. Fresh flowers in cheap K-Mart vases, post-Impressionist prints in plastic frames. A sullen RECEPTIONIST surfs for gigs on CraigsList.

RUSSELL

Janet, do we know where she is?

JANET

Let me check my GPS tracker --

She stares at Russell as her nails chatter over the keyboard. JANET FANTICOLA is pretty and pugnacious --

JANET (cont'd)

Sorry, Mr. Cross, she must have cut off her ankle bracelet.

Russell turns back to the associates -- an exhausted pair of twenty-something attorneys with better places to be.

CHESTER

I have morning arraignments -- three clients with whom I've spent a grand total of thirty seconds...

IPod wired to his head, CHESTER FIELDS is gorgeous, but awkward -- caught between an inherited ego and a nagging guilt known by those of privileged birth. He studies a police report...

CHESTER (cont'd)

...I'm giving her five minutes.

MOLLY

You said that a half hour ago.

She works her PDA. MOLLY MCCONNELL is striking, hair bundled between her shoulder-blades. She has her Irish father's fire and the features of her Mohawk mom.

CHESTER

Fine. I'll give her ten more minutes and then I'm gonna --

ELIZABETH

You just said five, Chester -- you're negotiating against yourself. No wonder the ADAs love you so.

Elizabeth nicks Chester's iPod as she rolls smiling into the room. He jumps up, legal files spilling off his lap.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

Nice suit, Molly -- you been raiding my wardrobe?

Molly says nothing but it does look like she takes her fashion cues from Elizabeth. They all follow her into --

INT. CANTERBURY & ASSOCIATES - CONFERENCE ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

There are two identical file boxes, each with an associate's name on top. Chester and Molly move to their boxes, Russell perching on the edge of the table, as --

ELIZABETH

I need your help with Ethan Foster.

MOLLY

We have cases pending, Liz, we --

CHESTER

What can we do, Elizabeth?

Molly rolls her eyes as Chester offers a white-bleached smile. Elizabeth samples his iPod, voice rising over the music --

ELIZABETH

What cases you have, Molly, you owe to your association with me, you --

(peers at the iPod screen)

-- oh, that's catchy --

(then)

-- you're scared and I get that, I can appreciate it --

MOLLY

Scared of what? Of you?

ELIZABETH

I know you're scared of me -- that's why you wear the chip on your shoulder -- but I was referring to Ethan Foster.

CHESTER

We don't know the guy to be afraid --

ELIZABETH

You're afraid of what he represents, cherry, both of you --

(nods at Molly)

You play pissed off and self-righteous to hide your fear and you...

(MORE)

ELIZABETH (cont'd)  
 (eye to Chester)  
 ...you play the sycophant.

CHESTER  
 Hey --

ELIZABETH  
 It is scary. You're representing an  
 alleged child killer. Get captured  
 in the same frame as Ethan Foster,  
 your name is uttered in the same  
 breath --  
 (shivers for effect)  
 -- whoa, boy -- your family, friends,  
 your gray-haired granny -- they're  
 suddenly a whole hell of a lot less  
 proud of that law degree. Strangers  
 stop you in the street, attack you  
 in ways unimagined because of your  
 association with your client...

She circles them, moves slowly through the room, working her  
 associates like she works her juries --

ELIZABETH (cont'd)  
 Am I wrong? What do you think, Russ?

RUSSELL  
 There's no such thing as an anonymous  
 defense attorney.

ELIZABETH  
 Anonymous defense attorneys are called  
 public defenders. They're underpaid  
 and overworked and they die young.

MOLLY  
 They can sleep at night.

ELIZABETH  
 That's what pharmacies are for --  
 (eyes them)  
 You're ready. And I need you.

And on that she goes, brushes lint off her shoulder, leaves  
 the room still until --

CHESTER  
 What does she want us to do?

RUSSELL  
 We need an eyewitness who saw Scott  
 Jasper beat his son.

INT. TRINITY AVENUE APARTMENTS - LOBBY -- NIGHT

Elizabeth paces, waits for a DOORMAN to get the okay from upstairs. He nods her towards the elevator and --

INT. TRINITY AVENUE APARTMENTS - FRANK'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Frank opens the door. He's in wrinkled pajamas, pillow-eyed. Elizabeth autopilots into the living room.

FRANK

You thirsty? You want a drink?

Elizabeth shakes her head, eyes drawn to the plasma over the fireplace -- she and Russell on the screen, no-commenting past the courthouse press...

FRANK (cont'd)

You televise beautifully --

ELIZABETH

Don't lie.

FRANK

I was flattering you, Liz. The least I can do is flatter you, feed you grapes...

(a breath)

Tired? You want to go to bed?

ELIZABETH

I'm not here for sex.

FRANK

I have to work off my legal fees --

ELIZABETH

It's not a barter system, Frankie.

FRANK

You saved me. This was no speeding ticket we beat today, Liz --

ELIZABETH

I came to say goodbye.

FRANK

Oh. Oh, this is another in a series of good riddance visits where you swear never to darken my door...

Elizabeth crosses the room, parts the drapes to see the lights on the Bay. Frank follows her, tries to find her eyes --

FRANK (cont'd)  
 ...that it? You feel guilty cheating  
 on Matt?

ELIZABETH  
 You don't get to say his name, Frank --  
 that rule still stands.

FRANK  
 You're quitting me, Liz -- there are  
 no rules.

ELIZABETH  
 He's worried about me. He thinks I  
 took this case to punish myself...

She fights it, shakes her head, but her eyes are wet, tears  
 welling. Frank relents, his voice low...

FRANK  
 ...did you? Liz?

ELIZABETH  
 Penance for my sins... I'm not coming  
 back, Frank. I can't.

FRANK  
 Okay... okay... okay...

...he repeats as he kisses her cheek, her neck, her breast,  
 sinks from frame. Elizabeth stands statuesque, sighs --

ELIZABETH  
 I have to go home...

-- but she doesn't move. She lets the drapes fall closed as  
 she closes her eyes as we --

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. PROVIDENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE - COURTROOM 909 -- MORNING

The state's first witness is eager and amiable and overjoyed to be the prosecution's key witness. DETECTIVE GEORGE MCKEE is jovial, squat and shaped like a beer keg.

DA WILLIAMS

...Detective, why didn't you question Ethan Foster when you saw him in the woods that night?

DA Williams stands in front of a colorfully illustrated time-line display, marking the night Tommy Jasper disappeared.

DETECTIVE MCKEE

I wasn't suspicious -- he was walking. He only lives a few miles off.

DA WILLIAMS

And you saw Ethan at what time?

DETECTIVE MCKEE

Eleven-forty -- give or take.

DA WILLIAMS

The same time Tommy Jasper vanished from his home --

He points out the time on the display, then stares at Ethan --

DA WILLIAMS (cont'd)

And did you return to the crime scene?

ELIZABETH

Objection, please. There is no body, there is no crime scene --

DA WILLIAMS

Did you return to the area where you had seen Mr. Foster?

DETECTIVE MCKEE

I walked the woods behind the Jasper home that morning. I looked down and saw something in the leaves.

DA WILLIAMS

What was it?

DETECTIVE MCKEE

A Bridgewater High School class ring. Ethan later identified it as his.

DA WILLIAMS

Thank you, Detective. Your witness.

Elizabeth stares, smiles skeptically at McKee. A rough cough erupts in the jury box, JUROR NUMBER SEVEN covering her face.

ELIZABETH

How much do you weigh, Detective?

DA WILLIAMS

Your honor -- ?

DETECTIVE MCKEE

It's okay, it's okay --

(chuckles)

I'm a solid two-fifty, I guess.

ELIZABETH

And were you two-hundred-fifty pounds the night you saw Ethan Foster?

DETECTIVE MCKEE

Give or take.

Elizabeth crosses the room, places a pack of tissues on the rail in front of Juror Number Seven, offers a warm smile --

ELIZABETH

You were two-fifty, but you weren't yet a detective, correct?

DETECTIVE MCKEE

I got my shield three months after.

ELIZABETH

Why?

DETECTIVE MCKEE

I was due.

ELIZABETH

Interesting... you saw Ethan at the scene, you found the evidence that corroborated his presence there, you established the time-line -- and then you got your promotion?

DETECTIVE MCKEE

I was due. Overdue you ask me.

ELIZABETH

I didn't, but okay -- so, sir, you're walking the woods the next day, you look down, you see the class ring -- Judge, I'd ask if the Officer --

DA WILLIAMS

Detective --

ELIZABETH

-- I would ask if the Detective could demonstrate how he saw the ring?

There's no objection -- Williams doesn't see the harm -- and Detective McKee lumbers off the stand --

DETECTIVE MCKEE

I was walking the woods. I stopped to wind my watch. I looked down.

ELIZABETH

And where was the ring -- a few feet off, right at your feet?

DETECTIVE MCKEE

It was at my feet.

ELIZABETH

I don't mean to be indelicate -- but what color are your shoes, sir?

DETECTIVE MCKEE

Sorry?

DA WILLIAMS

Judge, she's ridiculing the witness --

ELIZABETH

It's a legitimate question. How did the detective see a ring at his feet when he can't see past his belly to see his shoes -- ?

JUDGE STANLEY

That's it. You're excused, Detective, with the court's apologies --

ELIZABETH

-- were mirrors involved?

JUDGE STANLEY

Enough, Mrs. Canterbury.

Detective McKee's almost out the door, off the hook, when --

ELIZABETH

Detective, do you have the time -- ?

DETECTIVE MCKEE

Yeah...

(off his watch)

It's ten-twenty -- give or take.

ELIZABETH  
Give or take how much, exactly...?

DA WILLIAMS  
Your honor, the witness was excused --  
and there's a clock on the wall --

ELIZABETH  
Which says ten-forty. Your watch is  
slow, Detective -- you must have  
forgotten to wind it --

DA WILLIAMS  
Judge, please --

JUDGE STANLEY  
You're still under oath, Detective.

ELIZABETH  
I hope that doesn't happen too often  
since the DA's time-line does hinge  
on you and your watch --

DETECTIVE MCKEE  
It was my grandfather's --

ELIZABETH  
An antique! This gets better and  
better -- so, sir, if we believe you  
saw Ethan in the forest that night --  
which the defense adamantly denies --  
according to the prosecution's fancy  
display and your timepiece -- faulty  
as it is -- you actually saw Ethan  
after the boy vanished -- maybe here,  
maybe here, maybe here --

She ruthlessly Sharpies the DA's time-line display, slicing  
lines later and later and later --

ELIZABETH (cont'd)  
You testified Ethan was alone when  
you saw him, correct -- ?

McKee's stumped. He looks to Williams, the prosecutor stunned  
by the sudden rabbit punch, as Elizabeth demands --

ELIZABETH (cont'd)  
-- where was Tommy Jasper?

EXT. BRIDGEWATER TOWN GREEN/MEDICAL CLINIC -- DAY

The town sits right on the Massachusetts border, wooded and  
bucolic and backwoods charming. Chester and Molly exit the  
medical clinic, the former complaining --

CHESTER

This is futile -- why would someone talk to us when they wouldn't talk to Elizabeth?

MOLLY

Offer money -- people will blab until New Years, you flash some green.

CHESTER

Now you're being insulting. Telling me to flash cash is like me telling you to show more leg. You'd call that sexist and you'd be right --

He slows as they pass an idling pick-up truck, a five-point buck strapped to the hood, tongue lolling.

MOLLY

Chester --

CHESTER

Huh -- ?

MOLLY

Chester --

She hits him, nods across the green as two BRIDGEWATER COPS march by a white-latticed gazebo, advancing --

MOLLY (cont'd)

Is there a problem, Officers?

CHESTER

Hike up your skirt --

BRIDGEWATER COP

We were just debating what to charge you two with -- criminal trespass or harassment --

CHESTER

Sir, I doubt you can meet the legal threshold to charge us with --

MOLLY

He doesn't care, Chester --

CHESTER

We're just asking questions, officer --

BRIDGEWATER COP

People don't want to talk anymore -- we're all talked out, okay?

MOLLY

Do you know Scott Jasper?

BRIDGEWATER COP

...I know the Jaspers. I know the Fosters, too. I know something tragic happened between the families, but this is a good town. Go home.

He's said his piece. He turns to leave. Chester touches Molly's arm, but she won't leave it alone --

MOLLY

Did you ever respond to a domestic disturbance at the Jasper house?

The cop turns back, takes a moment -- torn, perhaps, between talking or attacking, confessing or arresting...

BRIDGEWATER COP

...if I get one complaint, I swear to God I'll haul you both in.

INT. HOLDING ROOM - PROVIDENCE COUNTY JAIL -- AFTERNOON

Scattered remains of take-out Chinese. Russell paces in the background. Elizabeth sits with Ethan, rubbing his back, his face pressed to the metal table...

ETHAN

I spoke to Mom last night. She said she thought they might make it today. She said...

(a shaky breath)

...I guess I shouldn't expect Dad to come all the way here though... he can't even come to the phone.

ELIZABETH

They're old, Ethan, sick. It's hard.

ETHAN

It would help if they were in court.

RUSSELL

It wouldn't hurt.

ELIZABETH

They don't have to be here physically. We have their affidavits. They put you home in bed at the time --

ETHAN

Can you talk to them again...?

It's clear from Elizabeth and Russell's silence -- they reached out to Ethan's parents, but failed. Ethan just nods --

ETHAN (cont'd)  
I'm an embarrassment. I hurt them...

RUSSELL  
Is that why they won't come... or is it something stronger?

ELIZABETH  
Russell --

RUSSELL  
Ethan, if you could lead -- I'm not saying you can, but --

ELIZABETH  
Then shut up --

RUSSELL  
-- but if you could lead them to the body, you could get out someday.

ELIZABETH  
When he's a hundred -- !

Ethan braces himself, slowly looks at Russell, eyes wet --

ETHAN  
I can't say where the boy's corpse is if I never set eyes on it.

INT. COUNTY COURTHOUSE - MEN'S ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Russell steps into the bathroom, Elizabeth marching in after him. A pudgy PUBLIC DEFENDER's at the urinal, resting his head against the wall. Elizabeth nods --

ELIZABETH  
Hey. How's it goin'?

The PD zips up fast, nearly catches his dick in his fly as he runs out. Elizabeth grins, then turns to Russell --

ELIZABETH (cont'd)  
What the hell was that?

RUSSELL  
What the hell was what? He needs to know his options, that's our duty as his lawyers -- excuse me.

He locks the stall door behind him. Elizabeth clicks out a rhythm on the tile floor --

ELIZABETH

Do you really think he'd be alive if he was guilty? He would have killed himself before arraignment -- he's been to prison, he won't go back.

RUSSELL

Elizabeth, I can't do this --

ELIZABETH

The case?

RUSSELL

No, pee. I can't pee if you're gonna keep babbling --

ELIZABETH

Oh, sorry. I'll run water --

She twists on the faucets, peeks through a crack in the stall --

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

Oceans, rivers, streams, oceans -- you think Ethan's guilty?

RUSSELL

I think Bundy was beguiling, Manson was magnetic. Ethan has his manic-depressive thing worked out --

He abandons the stall, scrubs his hands at the sink like a surgeon prepping for open heart --

RUSSELL (cont'd)

Where are his folks? They stay away like they know something we don't... you can cut a deal. Consider it.

ELIZABETH

We have nothing to deal with -- you heard Ethan, never saw the kid.

RUSSELL

No, that's not what he said... Ethan said he never saw the corpse.

He hits the hand dryer. Elizabeth has no quick comeback.

INT. PROVIDENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE - COURTROOM 909 -- LATER

The associates enter into the gallery, weighed down low with police reports and case law. Williams quietly questions the victim's mother, Helen Jasper --

HELEN

I woke up around midnight and I had...  
this horrible feeling in my stomach,  
so I checked on Tommy...

She looks to the gallery, tears in her eyes -- Scott Jasper  
sits behind the DA, nodding support to his wife.

HELEN (cont'd)

...he wasn't in bed. It was freezing.  
The back door was open and it was so  
cold out that night, it...

DA WILLIAMS

Did Tommy know the code to the alarm?

HELEN

No, but it wasn't on... it was broken.  
They fixed it one day too late.

DA WILLIAMS

Thank you. I know how hard this is.

Elizabeth eyes the jury. Juror Number Seven presses a tissue  
to her nose. She's not crying -- she's stuffed up -- but  
others are dabbing at their eyes...

ELIZABETH

Hi, Mrs. Jasper. I'm sorry you have  
to do this, so sorry, but...  
(stands)  
...I'd never claim to know how hard  
this is for you, how you feel.

HELEN

No, you can't really understand what  
it feels like --

ELIZABETH

We can empathize --

HELEN

-- not unless you've lost a child.

That stops Elizabeth cold like it holds personal resonance --  
Molly sees it in Elizabeth's face, Russell tenses, but...

ELIZABETH

No, we don't feel what you feel. We  
rise every day because the sun's up.  
We don't wake seeking vengeance.

HELEN

I want justice for my child.

ELIZABETH

So do I, I...

(recovers)

Let me ask you -- what if I told you  
I knew who took your son?

HELEN

You should -- you represent him.

ELIZABETH

You know in your heart it was Ethan?

HELEN

I don't know why anyone else would --

ELIZABETH

Why would he? Bridgewater is a small  
town. Ethan thought of you and your  
family as friends, he --

HELEN

Ethan raped his underage girlfriend --  
I'm sure he was very fond of her.

An ugly tone enters Helen's voice. It's not much, but it's  
an opening for Elizabeth to ask --

ELIZABETH

Today's the first day I've seen your  
husband in court. Where's he been?

HELEN

Scott commands the volunteer search.

ELIZABETH

He commands it -- "commands" -- is  
that your husband's word?

She smiles at Jasper in the gallery. Helen sits up straighter --

HELEN

-- I know what you're attempting to  
do, the rumors you've started. My  
husband is a good man. He is a  
leader in the community, he --

ELIZABETH

What happens when you don't follow --  
-- how does Mr. Jasper react?

HELEN

I don't understand the question --

ELIZABETH

Does he ever hit you, ma'am?

DA WILLIAMS

Objection --

ELIZABETH

Was your son a good soldier?

JUDGE STANLEY

Sustained --

DA WILLIAMS

Side-bar, your honor -- !

Judge Stanley mutes the microphone as Williams and Elizabeth approach, the DA whispering fiercely --

DA WILLIAMS (cont'd)

The defense was instructed to question Mrs. Jasper specific to Tommy Jasper's medical history -- not swing in the dark hoping to hit Scott Jasper --

ELIZABETH

Oh, boo-hoo. You coached your witness into mentioning Ethan's conviction which was once out of bounds --

DA WILLIAMS

I resent the insinuation -- I don't coach my witnesses --

ELIZABETH

It was an accusation, Zach, it --

JUDGE STANLEY

Hush. I'll instruct the jury to ignore both statements, how's that --  
(to Helen)  
You're excused, Mrs. Jasper.

ELIZABETH

Judge?

JUDGE STANLEY

What? You were done, weren't you?

Elizabeth watches Helen walk to her husband, finds him staring back at her, fury in his eyes, pent-up rage seeking escape...

INT. PROVIDENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE - THE TUNNEL -- LATER

Connecting courthouse to jailhouse the tunnel is cold concrete and fluorescent light. Elizabeth and Russell have entered the passage, Molly and Chester a few paces ahead, when --

SCOTT JASPER

Get back here you heartless bitch -- !

Russell's not a big man, but he steps right in Scott Jasper's path, protecting Elizabeth -

RUSSELL

I don't know how you got down here,  
sir, but I suggest you turn --

That's as far as he gets -- Jasper grabs Russell by the arms and shoves him into the wall, advances on Elizabeth --

SCOTT JASPER

What kind of woman are you -- what  
kind of human being -- ?!

He backhands her, knocks Elizabeth to her knees. Molly and Chester run to defend her as two tardy deputies appear --

RUSSELL

Hold him, officers. We'll be pressing --

ELIZABETH

No, we won't, no -- take him -- get  
some fresh air, Mr. Jasper, go...

Russell and the associates stare, stunned, as the officers walk Jasper away. Elizabeth stands, spits blood --

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

That stupid, hick son of a bitch...

RUSSELL

I'm sorry, Liz, he had no right --

ELIZABETH

He had every right! I wanted him to  
do that in court, I wanted the jury  
to see that, I -- Jesus -- pick up  
your cues, jerk-off -- !

Her shout echoes back and Elizabeth suddenly loses her legs, sinks to the floor, as we --

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. THE CANTERBURY TOWNHOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Eleven o'clock news is muted on the big screen. Matt watches the front door from the dimly lit living room, listens as Elizabeth makes her stealthy way into the house...

ELIZABETH

Oh, you're up...

She freezes in the doorway, spots Matt on the couch, grading essays, legal tomes spread-eagled on the coffee table.

MATT

I'm up. You can't sleep when I snore,  
so I can't fall asleep before you.

ELIZABETH

I could sleep in the guest room.

MATT

Our bed's too big without you.

ELIZABETH

You'll snore, I'll kick you --

MATT

I'm willing to suffer.

ELIZABETH

There's a massive understatement...

(an awkward beat,  
then)

So, how fares the future of American  
jurisprudence?

MATT

My students give you high marks.

ELIZABETH

I thought you didn't discuss my trials  
in class...

(frowns)

...I thought that was verboten.

MATT

The kids read the papers. They like  
discussing "real" law --

ELIZABETH

Ah, I'm a teaching opportunity --

She enters the circle of lamp-light, exhaling into a love-seat, and Matt stops short, staring at her --

MATT

What the hell happened to your face?

ELIZABETH

Nothing a slab of raw meat won't fix.

Matt hurries to the kitchen, calls over his shoulder --

MATT

Jesus, Beth -- your client do that?

ELIZABETH

Father of the kid. I think he bribed a deputy for access to the tunnel...

MATT (O.S.)

You pressing charges?

ELIZABETH

I kind of admire his resourcefulness.

Matt returns, ice cubes swaddled in a dish towel. He puts the compress to her face. She cringes at the cold --

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

I don't want Jasper in jail. I want him on the stand.

INT. PROVIDENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE - LOBBY -- MORNING

Russell stirs non-dairy creamer into his Dunkin Donuts coffee, staring out at Satellite City. Williams appears behind him, spinning his fedora --

DA WILLIAMS

Is there a deal on the table yet?

RUSSELL

Ask Elizabeth. I'm second chair.

DA WILLIAMS

We're just talking, Russ, back-channel chatter like we've been doing.

RUSSELL

It's between you and the queen bee...

He nods out the window where --

EXT. SATELLITE CITY/PROVIDENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE -- MORNING

Elizabeth sits on the courthouse steps, nibbles at a bagel, teasing an impatient PRESS CORPS with her presence.

CUSTER DOUGLAS  
Gag order sucks, huh, Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH  
No, not for me -- I revel in silence --  
how you doing, Custer?

CUSTER DOUGLAS  
Bored to death -- all this to shoot  
people we can't talk to.

He's handsome and smart -- smart and handsome enough to make  
anchor -- but CUSTER DOUGLAS is trapped as a trial jackal.

CUSTER DOUGLAS (cont'd)  
I want to do a piece on you. You've  
been counted out so many times, but  
you keep turning up.

ELIZABETH  
Yeah. I'm a bad penny.

CUSTER DOUGLAS  
You've been vilified, Liz. Unjustly.

ELIZABETH  
...the public views me as an immoral,  
headline-seeking glory-hound...  
(smiles)  
...the public said exactly the same  
thing about Clarence Darrow during  
Leopold and Loeb.

CUSTER DOUGLAS  
That's awesome. Can I quote you?

ELIZABETH  
I didn't say it for my health, Custer.  
(nods down the street)  
Look sharp, you'll miss your spot on  
the chow line.

The Jaspers are making their slow way toward the courthouse,  
quickly cocooned in booms, microphones, snaking cables...

INT. PROVIDENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE - LOBBY -- CONTINUOUS

Williams and Russell see the press activity, watch Elizabeth  
slowly gather her trash. Williams' voice goes stern --

DA WILLIAMS  
I've known you a long time, Russell --  
I know you hate this case --

RUSSELL  
The man deserves a defense, Zach --

DA WILLIAMS  
That family deserves a burial. Foster  
can give it to them... Russell.

Russell looks away, hesitates, and --

INT. PROVIDENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE - COURTROOM -- DAY

ELIZABETH  
Objection -- !

Elizabeth's up on her feet. DA Williams is trying to question  
his witness, DR. BRUCE HAK. (He pronounces it Hawk.)

ELIZABETH (cont'd)  
-- your honor, I have to object again  
and for the record and for my sanity --  
this testimony is grossly prejudicial  
and inflammatory and privileged --

JUDGE STANLEY  
Your objection's been noted -- please,  
Doctor Hak, continue...

DR. HAK  
Well, Ethan was one of the most honest  
offenders we had. He always shared.

DA WILLIAMS  
He discussed his crimes?

ELIZABETH  
Objection, please, your honor. We're  
discussing one crime. Singular.

DA WILLIAMS  
He discussed his crime?

ELIZABETH  
Leading.

DA WILLIAMS  
(bites his tongue)  
What did Mr. Foster discuss in group?

DR. HAK  
His "fantasies." He swore they were  
stories he invented.

Elizabeth squeezes Ethan's arm, gently reassuring him, as she  
whispers urgently in Russell's ear --

ELIZABETH  
Object.

RUSSELL

On what grounds?

DA WILLIAMS (O.S.)

Did you believe him, Dr. Hak?

ELIZABETH

Make it up -- speculation, leading,  
cheap suit --

DR. HAK

Sexual predators' fantasies tend to  
be detailed, meticulously so, and  
they're often one of two things...

ELIZABETH

Object.

RUSSELL

Why me?

DR. HAK

One, descriptions of past crimes...

ELIZABETH

Because it's your goddamn turn --

DR. HAK

Two, plans for future acts --

Elizabeth gooses him, sends Russell to his feet, shouting --

RUSSELL

Objection! Objection. This entire  
line of questioning is speculative  
at best. Is the good doctor --

ELIZABETH

(under her breath)  
Bad doctor, bad doctor.

RUSSELL

-- is the doctor a mind-reader?

DA WILLIAMS

Ask him yourself. Your witness.

Elizabeth leans way forward, pushes herself out of the seat  
like the pull of gravity weighs greater on her.

ELIZABETH

So, Doctor. Doctor Hak.

DR. HAK

It's pronounced Hawk. Like a raptor.

ELIZABETH

It's spelled H-A-K Hak, though, right?  
Sorry, that must be hard on you...

(smiles)

Would you please meticulously detail  
one of Ethan's fantasies?

DR. HAK

I'm sorry -- detail it?

ELIZABETH

Meticulously so. Spin for us one of  
these deviant narratives Ethan so  
eagerly spun for you.

DR. HAK

They're somewhat disturbing, I...

He rifles through his files, panic rising. Williams throws  
him a line --

DA WILLIAMS

Judge, since we're so close to lunch  
I'd like to request a recess --

JUDGE STANLEY

No. Your witness testified that the  
defendant shared lurid fantasies but  
seems short on specific recall --

DR. HAK

I remember Ethan, judge, but I treated  
hundreds of prisoners before him and  
thousands after --

ELIZABETH

And you sometimes get befuddled --

DR. HAK

I remember the essence of his stories,  
but it was ten years ago -- !

ELIZABETH

Excuses? Doctor, you do seem to be  
living up to your name...

INT. PROVIDENCE COUNTY JAIL - HOLDING ROOM -- LATER

Ethan is back in his orange county coveralls. A guard opens  
the door, lets in Elizabeth and Russell... Chester and Molly  
follow. Ethan musters a sad smile --

ETHAN

Time to meet the monster, huh?

Molly stays stony. Chester smiles, liberal guilt overriding good judgment. Russell nods to the associates --

RUSSELL

You guys have the floor.

MOLLY

We're trawling Bridgewater for anyone who may have witnessed the abuse --

ETHAN

But no one's talking...

CHESTER

The people who talk say the injuries were sports related. That's it.

ETHAN

Mr. Jasper was the athlete --

CHESTER

Until he blew out his knee.

MOLLY

Then what caused the boy's injuries?

CHESTER

Sons like to please their fathers.

ELIZABETH

What happens when they don't?

MOLLY

Can you suggest anyone who'll talk?

Ethan glances up at her, then away. He wrings his hands and shakes his head. Elizabeth touches his arm --

ELIZABETH

We'll keep shaking the tree, it's --

ETHAN

Why? What's the point? I... I don't want to do this anymore...

The room goes quiet. This isn't Ethan. He's deflated, empty. There's no manic guile, no sarcastic games.

ETHAN (cont'd)

I listened to Mrs. Jasper. I watched the jury. They cry. Juror number seven cries all the time --

ELIZABETH

She has allergies, Ethan -- it came up in *voir dire* -- I love seven --

ETHAN

They've made up their minds.

ELIZABETH

No, Ethan, you're wrong. You don't see what I see, you --

RUSSELL

Are you willing to make a deal?

ELIZABETH

Shut up, Russell --

ETHAN

I'll be gone before the verdict.

ELIZABETH

Ethan, look at me. Ethan.

ETHAN

Your skin is like a sunset...

He looks at Molly like a condemned man spying a lost love as he ascends the gallows. He knocks for the guard.

ELIZABETH

We're winning, Ethan, we are --

Ethan says no more, slips out at the turn of the guard's key --

INT. THE COMPOST BUILDING - CANTERBURY & ASSOCIATES -- NIGHT

The crew pretends not to listen. Elizabeth is on the phone in the conference room, pacing barefoot on the table --

ELIZABETH

-- no, he made no outward threats of --  
 (bites her tongue)  
 -- the chemical cocktail you've got him on is making him worse. If you don't put him on suicide watch and he hurts himself I will sue the state, the county -- I will sue you! You'll lose your pick-up, your gun rack, your deer-heads and your stained Hanes wife-beaters -- !

She slams the phone down, growls. The gang is spread across the office, pouring over depositions and police reports.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

I convince myself Ethan's innocent, I can't goddamn convince Ethan.

RUSSELL

Maybe he knows he's not.

ELIZABETH

Russell, is the DA blowing you?

CHESTER

Things aren't that bleak -- you killed McKee on the stand and Doctor Hak --

ELIZABETH

Not enough.

CHESTER

You've established reasonable doubt --

ELIZABETH

Stop kissing my ass, please, Chester --

CHESTER

I'm not! The state's case is totally circumstantial. All they've got are their witnesses -- each of whom you eviscerated -- !

ELIZABETH

Not enough. Criminal cases are about old testament vengeance -- talk about justice until you're blue -- I gotta give those jurors someone to exact vengeance upon.

MOLLY

So, you convince the jury that maybe Scott Jasper did it and maybe you eke out an acquittal --

ELIZABETH

That's the play, Miss Molly --

MOLLY

You don't know Scott Jasper did this any more than you know Ethan Foster didn't -- you're guessing.

ELIZABETH

You saw Jasper in the tunnel -- I'm wearing more make-up than Liza!

CHESTER

You had just accused him of killing his only child --

ELIZABETH

Oh, you're on Molly's side now? You spineless, pasty piece of --

CHESTER

I'm just saying --

MOLLY

We talked to dozens of people on top of the dozens you interviewed on top of the dozens your investigators questioned -- every last person in that town -- and no one offered an unkind word about Scott Jasper. No one ever saw him raise a hand to anyone, let alone his son!

RUSSELL

Abusers work behind closed doors --

CHESTER

You've seen his medical records --

MOLLY

Which tells me he was an active kid! He fell down, he -- my God, guys -- you -- we -- defame a family based on nothing as Russell dickers with the prosecution just --

ELIZABETH

I fear he's doing more than that --

MOLLY

-- just in case we need to deal!

ELIZABETH

There will be no deal -- if Ethan is sentenced he'll kill himself -- end of story. He might be doing it right now while we quibble. He could be sucking down his bed sheet as we engage in this titanic circle-jerk of wasted time, this pointless -- !

The phone rings. No one speaks. No one moves. The phone drones. Russell finally lifts the receiver --

RUSSELL

Canterbury and Associates...

He sinks into a chair, runs a clawed hand through his hair, hangs up without saying another word...

ELIZABETH

What? What is it? Come on!

RUSSELL

They found remains.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

EXT. THE WOODS - BRIDGEWATER, R.I. -- NIGHT

Klieg lights burn off gennies, crime scene tape wrapped round trees. Elizabeth and Russell dog DA Williams. He fixes his hat on his head, shoulders bunched against the weather --

DA WILLIAMS  
Medical Examiner says it's a femur.

ELIZABETH  
Is it the boy?

DA WILLIAMS  
The length is consistent with a child.

RUSSELL  
Kid broke his leg when he was nine.

DA WILLIAMS  
Yeah. There was a healed fracture.

ELIZABETH  
So, you guys have been searching in the wrong place for six months.

DA WILLIAMS  
We have part of the victim -- every piece we find is one less for your client to bargain with.

ELIZABETH  
Did you just reduce body parts to betting chips? You did. Scandal.

RUSSELL  
Who found the bone?

DA WILLIAMS  
A couple deer hunters.

ELIZABETH  
What're we, Zach, maybe a mile from the Jasper home? Less -- ?

RUSSELL  
Liz, don't -- it's not the time to be a smart-ass --

ELIZABETH  
Hell, I could hit their house with a stone and I throw like a girl --

INT. PROVIDENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE/JUDGE'S CHAMBERS -- MORNING

DA WILLIAMS

This is a bad man, your honor --

ELIZABETH

Bad man -- I'm as bad as Ethan and  
no one wants to lock me up...

Everyone in the room stares at Elizabeth, a clear consensus  
in their silence. She plows on --

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

Here's the new theory. On the night  
in question Mr. Jasper hits his boy  
which we all know he did --

DA WILLIAMS

Rumors, hearsay, inadmissible -- why  
are we still talking about this?

ELIZABETH

The kid hits the floor, but this time  
he doesn't pop back up. Jasper panics,  
buries him in the woods --

DA WILLIAMS

We would have found him, we --

ELIZABETH

You didn't look! You sunk your teeth  
into Ethan and his car and the river  
inside twelve hours based on the  
word of one yahoo cop bucking for  
promotion and that --

DA WILLIAMS

Where's the rest of the remains? If  
he's out there, where --

ELIZABETH

You have decomp, animals, weather --

DA WILLIAMS

It's one bone! I have it on excellent  
authority that there are other places,  
overnight destinations, where we'd  
look if your client cooperated -- !

Elizabeth takes that like a shot to the kidneys. It's all  
she can do not to cast an accusing eye towards Russell --

ELIZABETH

The jury has to hear this.

(MORE)

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

The state always insisted that Tommy Jasper was dumped up-river. Why are there remains in his backyard? The bone torpedoed the entire construct of the prosecution's case, they --

JUDGE STANLEY

I'll decide what the jury hears --

ELIZABETH

-- they must hear it!

DA WILLIAMS

I move for the bone's exclusion until we have DNA confirming it actually belongs to Tommy Jasper.

JUDGE STANLEY

I agree --

ELIZABETH

It's new evidence -- it's exculpatory!

JUDGE STANLEY

If the bone belongs to the deceased --

ELIZABETH

Sir, who else could it belong to?

JUDGE STANLEY

-- if it does, it'll be entered.

RUSSELL

The state crime lab has a DNA backlog at least a month long. We'd like to request a continuance --

ELIZABETH

No.

RUSSELL

Elizabeth --

ELIZABETH

No. Give us a section of the bone -- we'll run it independently.

JUDGE STANLEY

Ask for a continuance, I'll grant it --

ELIZABETH

Please, let me present this, please.

Stanley smiles, smug and satisfied. He's reduced Elizabeth to begging... and he likes it.

JUDGE STANLEY

Pending DNA results, the bone's out.

INT. PROVIDENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE - HALLWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

Elizabeth marches down the corridor, eyes burning, pushing people aside. They pass the associates as Russell rushes to catch up --

RUSSELL

Elizabeth -- Liz, let me -- I had to hint at the FedEx thing, I --

She spins on him like she may knock him on his ass, but --

INT. PROVIDENCE COUNTY JAIL - CATACOMBS -- LATER

Elizabeth works up a smile for Ethan. You'd never know that moments ago she was this close to putting her fist through a wall. Russell waits quietly in the corner.

ELIZABETH

You survived the night. I'm glad.

ETHAN

They changed my meds. I feel like I'm swimming on the equator...  
(eyes his attorneys)  
...something happened. What's wrong?

ELIZABETH

They found a bone last night. About a mile behind the Jasper house.

RUSSELL

We have to wait on the DNA, but --

ELIZABETH

This is a good thing, Ethan, this is physical evidence --

ETHAN

They said I went upriver in my car...  
(frowns, puzzling)  
...how could I be in two places?

ELIZABETH

You couldn't. That's the point. We can torpedo the prosecution's case.

RUSSELL

Maybe. It's a roll of the dice.

ELIZABETH

I roll loaded or not at all.

RUSSELL

The search moves to the woods now --  
they will find the rest of him.

INT. PROVIDENCE COUNTY JAIL - MEN'S ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

As Russell is shoved into the room. The same pudgy PUBLIC DEFENDER is there, slicking his hair at the sink, but --

ELIZABETH

Get out! Out!

-- the guy runs. Elizabeth's face is red, eyes bulging white.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

I'm trying to protect our client --

RUSSELL

I'm trying to protect you! I said what I had to say, maybe saved you getting disbarred in yet another state -- back off!

ELIZABETH

Why you sanctimonious, self-righteous shit -- you compromised the firm, you compromised your client --

RUSSELL

You pay me to stay tight with my old colleagues --

ELIZABETH

You screwed up, admit it --

RUSSELL

-- I have to actually say things to them, Liz --

ELIZABETH

-- admit you screwed up --

RUSSELL

-- I have to speak for them to justify talking back!

ELIZABETH

-- you screwed up!

RUSSELL

You left me no choice! You're losing this case and you refuse to cut your losses. That damages Ethan, it could damage you -- I want to prevent that!

He shouts the last line and spins away, pacing the room...

RUSSELL (cont'd)  
Liz... I know juries. Ethan's right.  
You've lost this one.

ELIZABETH  
I disagree.

RUSSELL  
Take a continuance, wait on the DNA.

ELIZABETH  
Ethan can't wait --

RUSSELL  
It's a month, maybe less -- !

ELIZABETH  
It won't be a month. We get shoved  
to the back of the line -- it'll be  
two, three, six, a year -- and you  
know that, Russell!

RUSSELL  
Let Ethan tell his story then -- put  
him on the stand and show --

ELIZABETH  
Are you nuts? No. He's too fragile --

RUSSELL  
So, let the jury see that. Show them  
how fragile he is, demonstrate why  
you think Ethan's innocent --

ELIZABETH  
It'll hurt him and earn us nothing.

RUSSELL  
Then -- Jesus, Liz, I don't know --  
(throws up his hands)  
-- work a damn plea. Sit down with  
Williams -- Ethan will listen to you --  
stop thinking about Nancy Grace and  
TV movie deals and salvage what you  
can.

ELIZABETH  
First of all, I'm a van Susteren girl.  
Second, I...  
(she exhales, exhausted)  
...I have contingencies. More than  
that, I have faith. I have faith in  
our system. I trust in it. I believe  
in innocent until proven guilty...  
(beat)  
...and then some.

EXT. THE CANTERBURY TOWNHOUSE - FRONT PORCH -- EVENING

Elizabeth's on the step, wrapped in a cardigan, staring into some middle-distance like there are answers on the air. She's washed by headlights as Matt pulls up...

MATT

Boy, you look serious. What are you thinking about?

He comes up the walk -- overcoat and briefcase -- brushes by Elizabeth on his way to the door. She frowns --

ELIZABETH

I am thinking that jury selection is a crap shoot. I am thinking that reading a jury requires ESP.

MATT

You can tell when someone's lying --

ELIZABETH

-- but I cannot read their minds.

Matt hesitates in the doorway, studies his wife. She's losing her case and losing control and she knows it. He relents...

MATT

Beth, the reasons you took the case, they haven't changed...

(beat)

...focus on those reasons. Forget the jury. Just make your case.

Elizabeth nods, listens as Matt steps inside, as the door thuds solid in the frame. She whispers...

ELIZABETH

I can't make my case if I don't know what they're thinking. Okay --

Her hand emerges from the cardigan sleeve, cell phone ready. She speed-dials and...

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

Frank. It's me. I need you.

INT. D'ANGELO SUB SHOP -- NIGHT

Juror Number Seven is alone at a table amongst the dwindling late night crowd. She's barely touched her food, sipping off her Robitussin bottle...

JUROR SEVEN

Oh... just shoot me...

She looks like death, wading through a backlog of work from the day-job the trial's forced her to neglect.

FRANK

Hey, you just broke my heart...

He's dressed down -- sub in hand -- sarcastic edge gone from his voice, his look and accent spot on rural New England.

FRANK (cont'd)

...you okay? I'm Mark.

He smiles. And Juror Number Seven smiles back, says a silent prayer of thanks, as we --

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

FADE IN:

EXT./INT. TRINITY AVENUE APARTMENTS/ELIZABETH'S VW -- DAWN

A phone is ringing. The sun peeks over the horizon, hitting the Bay. Elizabeth idles in her car, cell to her ear as --

FRANK (O.S.)

You want to come up...?

Elizabeth glances up, spots Frank shirtless in his bay window, a look in her eye like she'd like to go to him, disappear --

ELIZABETH

No, I -- just tell me what happened.

FRANK

If they were deliberating today they'd convict him.

ELIZABETH

That I could guess.

FRANK

They think you're pretty sharp --

ELIZABETH

That I know. Come on, Frank, give me something I can fix, I --

FRANK

They don't believe Ethan's alibi.

ELIZABETH

Come again?

FRANK

His parents' affidavit, that he was home in bed -- it doesn't fly.

INT. THE COMPOST BUILDING - CANTERBURY & ASSOCIATES -- MORNING

Chester snores on the waiting room sofa, iPod speakers jammed into his ears. Elizabeth moves towards the light in the conference room --

INT. CANTERBURY & ASSOCIATES - CONFERENCE ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

ELIZABETH

You know, when I hired you guys, I assumed you had homes...

Molly leans on the conference table, files and police reports and photographs laid out neatly before her.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

What are you working on...?

Molly holds up a black and white pic of twelve-year-old TOMMY JASPER, smile beaming as he lifts a trophy over his head.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

Oh, shit, Molly, don't do this --

MOLLY

He won the county science fair last year. He was some kind of genius.

ELIZABETH

Sympathize with the victim's family -- you can't not -- don't personalize.

MOLLY

You do. Helen Jasper said you could only understand her if you had lost a child...

(pointed)

You looked like you were gonna cry.

ELIZABETH

Yeah. That was called acting...

Her present performance is lacking. She stalls, falls silent. Molly has done the impossible -- she's shut Elizabeth up.

MOLLY

We usually say "the boy." You notice? "The kid." We avoid his name.

ELIZABETH

When you do the devil's work, it's best not to speak of angels...

Elizabeth studies Tommy's photograph, stares at his eyes as something turns behind her own...

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

Wait... what did he win for?

INT. PROVIDENCE COUNTY JAIL - CATACOMBS -- MORNING

Ethan's dressed for court, Russell waiting with him when the deputy buzzes Elizabeth in. She brushes by Russell, ignores him, tossing a tie at Ethan --

ELIZABETH

Wear this one, Ethan, it brings out your eyes. Go ahead.

Ethan obeys, tugging off his brown trial tie. Russell frowns at the wardrobe change, curious, until Elizabeth says --

ELIZABETH (cont'd)  
I'm putting you on the stand today.

ETHAN  
Is that a good idea?

ELIZABETH  
If you keep the theatrics to a minimum.

RUSSELL  
When did you make this decision?

ELIZABETH  
I need a moment alone with our client.

RUSSELL  
Why? What are you doing?

ELIZABETH  
Taking your advice. Get out. Go.

Russell thinks on it for a moment, looks from Elizabeth to Ethan, then knocks to be released. He exits.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)  
Pretend you're testifying --

ETHAN  
Right now?

ELIZABETH  
You're on the stand. I say, "Ethan, were you in the forest the night Tommy Jasper disappeared?"

ETHAN  
I was in bed. What? It's the truth.

ELIZABETH  
It's time to sell something better.

She stares at him, brow raised, and asks once more --

ELIZABETH (cont'd)  
Ethan... were you in the forest the night Tommy Jasper disappeared?

INT. PROVIDENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE - COURTROOM 909 -- MORNING

ETHAN  
Yes, I was...

Russell's jaw drops. An excited murmur courses through the gallery. Even Judge Stanley lifts a laconic brow.

ELIZABETH

And what did you see?

She stands still, drawing Ethan's eyes to the jurors. He's nervous but his words come out evenly, answers clear --

ETHAN

I was walking the forest behind the Jasper house. I saw inside. I saw...  
(it hurts to say)  
Mr. Jasper hit Tommy with his fists.

ELIZABETH

Thank you, Ethan. Nothing further.

DA Williams is up and attacking, damn near snarling, before Elizabeth sits down --

DA WILLIAMS

When did you lie -- then or now?

ETHAN

I'm telling the truth.

DA WILLIAMS

The police said you were in the woods that night, you said you were asleep in your bed. Your own parents swore to that -- did they lie, too?

ETHAN

They said what they thought was true, but this -- this is the truth. I'm telling the truth now.

DA WILLIAMS

Why didn't you tell the truth then?

ETHAN

Ten years ago I told police the truth and my life was ruined. I went to jail for something I didn't do --

DA WILLIAMS

You raped a sixteen year old girl --

ETHAN

We were in love, we -- I loved her --

DA WILLIAMS

You lied because you were afraid the police would discover what you did to Tommy, right -- ?

ETHAN

I was afraid how it would look if I was out there. With my record.

DA WILLIAMS

You knew you'd look guilty --

ETHAN

I knew I would be made to look guilty, I mean, I was -- they did -- that's why I'm here. I was convenient.

DA WILLIAMS

You knew you would look guilty because you are guilty, Mr. Foster.

ETHAN

I swear I never hurt Tommy.

There's something in Ethan's innocent expression, the lack of inflection in his voice. He's not acting...

DA WILLIAMS

Your honor...

He struggles to read the jury -- do they believe Ethan? He glances at Elizabeth -- her poker face is immaculate.

DA WILLIAMS (cont'd)

...your honor, at this time the state needs to call Scott Jasper as a rebuttal witness.

Russell watches Elizabeth suppress her Mona Lisa smile and --

INT. PROVIDENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE - COURTROOM 909 -- AFTERNOON

There's nothing dangerous about him. He's clean-cut, pale, rings round his eyes. He's soft-spoken, hands in his lap --

SCOTT JASPER

I was out -- early on -- I went out searching for Tommy. I dive. I'm a certified diver. I volunteered. I had to be out there. It's like...

(tears up)

...oh, I'm sorry, it's like I could hear him calling me.

DA WILLIAMS

Mr. Jasper, sir, did you ever lay a hand on your son Tommy?

SCOTT JASPER

Of course not. No. He was my life.

Williams retreats. Elizabeth stares hard at Jasper, pissed off and bolstered now by Ethan's testimony --

ELIZABETH

How early on was that, Mr. Jasper?

SCOTT JASPER

Sorry?

ELIZABETH

Well, when you start searching coastal waters, dragging rivers, you're looking for a body, no?

SCOTT JASPER

Yes.

ELIZABETH

How soon after your son disappeared was it before you hit the water?

SCOTT JASPER

I don't remember.

ELIZABETH

Six days. According to news reports.  
(locks eyes)  
How did you know your son was dead?

Jasper looks to DA Williams, but gets nothing back. Williams wants to give Elizabeth just enough rope to hang herself.

SCOTT JASPER

I didn't. Ethan Foster was in custody by then and he wasn't cooperating and I just wanted to save...

He wipes at his eyes, breath staggered. Helen Jasper sobs in the gallery. Some of the jurors tear up. Shit.

ELIZABETH

Are you a strict disciplinarian?

DA WILLIAMS

Objection. Haven't we covered this?

JUDGE STANLEY

Sustained. Move along.

Shit. Elizabeth needs a phantom punch, something unsuspected, but exculpatory. She locks eyes with Molly, turns back --

ELIZABETH

Your boy was precocious, wasn't he?

SCOTT JASPER

He was. He was in the gifted program at school. He skipped a grade.

ELIZABETH

What were his favorite subjects?

SCOTT JASPER

Science mostly. Math. Tommy loved things I didn't understand.

ELIZABETH

Yeah. Did he ever do experiments?

SCOTT JASPER

He took first prize in the science fair last year. Blue ribbon.

ELIZABETH

What was his experiment?

SCOTT JASPER

It was electrical -- something about the flow of currents. Too technical for me...

He smiles wistfully. There's sympathetic laughter, the mood lifting with each softball question, until --

ELIZABETH

The day after your son disappeared, a technician fixed your home alarm.

SCOTT JASPER

Yes... a ground wire had frayed.

ELIZABETH

Or been cut. The police report stated that as a possibility, too --

SCOTT JASPER

Yes.

ELIZABETH

It was easy for someone to break in --

SCOTT JASPER

Yes.

ELIZABETH

-- or break out.

DA WILLIAMS

Objection -- !

ELIZABETH

I'm no scientist, but were electric currents interrupted or --

SCOTT JASPER

No. No, Tommy did not do that --

ELIZABETH

Of course not. Why would he -- ?

SCOTT JASPER

-- he was in his bed asleep --

DA WILLIAMS

Your Honor, I object -- !

ELIZABETH

Why would Tommy sabotage your security system -- why not punch in the code?

SCOTT JASPER

-- that monster stole him -- !

ELIZABETH

Oh, that's right -- he didn't know the code -- he was trapped!

SCOTT JASPER

-- it was him!

ELIZABETH

Why would Tommy run away, Scott --

DA WILLIAMS

Judge, stop this -- !

ELIZABETH

-- what could he have been running away from?

She's in his face, railing at him with all she's got, urging a reaction, when Jasper's hand clamps down on hers --

SCOTT JASPER

How dare you, how dare you say that to me -- goddamn you -- !

He yices her hand -- something snaps -- and Elizabeth cries out. He's this close to hitting her, but --

JUDGE STANLEY

Deputy -- restrain the witness -- !

Jasper remembers where he is, goes still. Elizabeth watches the rage ebb... and so does the jury.

DA WILLIAMS (O.S.)  
 Defense counsel provoked the witness --

ELIZABETH  
 Like Tommy provoked you the night he  
 died, right, Scott?

Jasper stares at her, Elizabeth's hand held loosely now in  
 his. He can barely get the words out...

SCOTT JASPER  
 I'm a good father. I loved my son...

ELIZABETH  
 I know. You just lost yourself for  
 a moment, just for a moment...

SCOTT JASPER  
 ...he ran away, he ran from me...

He implores her, his eyes lost and searching, but he doesn't  
 deny her allegation. Elizabeth cradles her mangled hand --

ELIZABETH  
 The defense rests.

INT. THE COMPOST BUILDING - CANTERBURY & ASSOCIATES -- NIGHT

Alt rock plays in the conference room. Chester's dining on  
 Thai food with Janet the acerbic receptionist. Molly's at  
 the front desk, lit by the computer screen's glow...

CHESTER (O.S.)  
 ...she just -- how did she do that? --  
 He's got her hand in this vice-grip  
 and she just takes it. Man -- !

JANET (O.S.)  
 She's bionic.

Russell enters the office quietly, pauses when he sees Molly  
 at reception, musing --

RUSSELL  
 You been demoted?

MOLLY  
 I'm checking out Elizabeth's CourtTV  
 buzz... she's a rock star.

RUSSELL  
 They hate her when she takes a case,  
 they love her when she wins. She's  
 good for ratings...  
 (then)  
 ...you talk to her?

Molly glances towards Elizabeth's office, the light on under her closed door. Russell's heading that way, but --

MOLLY  
Russell... tell her congratulations for me, please. Okay?

RUSSELL  
Tell her yourself. Come on.

MOLLY  
No, I... I tried. Earlier.

RUSSELL  
And?

MOLLY  
She threw a book at me.

RUSSELL  
Yeah, Molly... you and Elizabeth rub each other the wrong way because you're a lot alike, you --

MOLLY  
No, I disagree. We couldn't be more --

RUSSELL  
Hey. Settle. She's a great attorney -- one of the best cross-examiners I've ever seen. Being like her, it ain't a bad thing. You're smart like her, you're stubborn as hell, you have a huge heart -- don't fight it. Next time she throws a book at you --  
(grins)  
-- throw it back.

He leaves Molly sitting there, thinking in the dim light...

INT. ELIZABETH'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Elizabeth's muted on the flat-screen, arm over the exonerated Ethan, smiling. She's at her desk, staring not at the TV, but a framed photo on her blotter --

RUSSELL  
You're not joining the party?

He peeks in. Elizabeth lays a second photo quickly over the first -- Tommy Jasper at the science fair.

ELIZABETH  
I'm celebrating. Vodka and vicodin --

She raises a glass of Absolut in her splinted hand.

RUSSELL

You plan on going home any time soon?

ELIZABETH

Uh-huh. Very, very soon.

RUSSELL

After you know Matt's fallen asleep?

ELIZABETH

Not your place, counselor.

RUSSELL

You plan on calling a cab?

ELIZABETH

I'll ask one of the kids. Or Janet.  
Janet loves me.

RUSSELL

I'll drive you. You don't want them  
to see you wasted. They're all high  
on your superhuman exploits.

ELIZABETH

That is exactly why they should see  
me wasted. They should suffer no  
delusions. I am flawed...

RUSSELL

Illusions, Liz. Illusions.

ELIZABETH

Exactly. I'm coming. Beautiful...

She waits for him to leave... lifts Tommy's photo. The hidden  
picture was taken on some sun-washed SoCal beach, Matt and  
Elizabeth, tanned and in their twenties...

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

...beautiful...

...and a boy cuddled between them, a perfect child with Matt's  
curls and Elizabeth's brilliant eyes.

EXT./INT. THE CANTERBURY TOWNHOUSE - PROVIDENCE -- NIGHT

Russell's Bronco rumbles into the drive, Elizabeth silent in  
the passenger seat, briefcase in her lap. Russell shifts  
into reverse, foot on the brake --

RUSSELL

You're home.

ELIZABETH

Are you going to ask me what I did?

RUSSELL

Ethan was innocent. Jasper was guilty.

ELIZABETH

We don't know Jasper killed him. We don't know exactly what...

RUSSELL

He beat Tommy. He drove his own son into the woods. What happened out there... cops actually have to do their job now. You won.

ELIZABETH

I suborned perjury, Russell --

RUSSELL

You saved Ethan's life.

ELIZABETH

You won't rat me out to Williams?

RUSSELL

You forget, Liz, I quit the DA because Zach Williams is a much bigger asshole than you are. By far.

ELIZABETH

It's the hat, isn't it?

Russell smiles, nods at the house. The front door is open now and Matt stands in the frame, a hand raised...

RUSSELL

Go to your husband, Elizabeth...

He watches her from the warmth of the Bronco, watches as Matt takes Elizabeth in his arms, leads her inside...

RUSSELL (cont'd)

...you're home.

FADE TO BLACK:

END OF SHOW