

ADVOCATE AND GUARDIAN

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. A COURTROOM

But not like any courtroom we've seen. This one is dark, bathed in shadow. Harsh lights from above illuminate the people here: the JURY; DREA BETHONCOURT, the Prosecutor; HAROLD DINKS, the Defendant; and ROSE BERLINER, Dinks' attorney.

There are others here, but the gliding camera takes little notice of them, except in passing.

Rose holds up a sugar cube.

ROSE

(to the Jury)

Five grams. That's how much this sugar cube weighs. It's worth a lot -- five years in federal prison. That's three hundred sixty-five days for each gram. Five grams of meth. Five years.

She sets the cube down on a small table in front of the jury.

ROSE

You've now heard all the facts -- that the Salem police stopped Harold Peter Dinks at twelve thirty a.m. on March the third. That he panicked and fled. That a short chase ensued, which Mister Dinks himself put to an end when he pulled over on his own power. If not for his mistake of fleeing, the police would not have searched him and would not have found these five grams.

Rose points to the sugar cube.

ROSE

Meth is a terrible thing. It's highly addictive, induces psychosis and degrades the body. I'm not here to defend Mister Dinks' habit or condone his actions. But this amount is clearly for his own personal use, as he has testified. Harold Peter Dinks is not a drug dealer.

(MORE)

ROSE (CONT'D)

He is an addict, and rather than prison, he needs rehabilitation. I can only speculate as to why the U.S. Attorney has chosen to charge Harold Dinks as a drug kingpin. I only know that if you send this man away for five years, he will not get help. He will not get justice. We will not get a supposed drug lord off the street. We will only get revenge.

Rose walks away from the jury. With a CLUNK, the house lights come on. We are in a small THEATER. The Courtroom is a minimal set, with folding chairs and flats forming the jury box, the dock, the bench.

WENDY LYONS emerges from offstage and hands out pieces of paper to the The Members of the Jury. She is followed close behind by ANNETTE McKERN, handing out pens.

WENDY

(to the Jury)

Thank you for your time again. Now that you've heard the facts, we need you to fill out this questionnaire. It's anonymous, so please be honest.

ROSE

And please remember the NDAs you signed. Everything you see here is confidential. Don't tell your kids, your spouse, don't even tell your dog.

CUT TO:

INT. THEATRE (COURTROOM SET) - TWENTY MINUTES LATER

Rose, Wendy, Drea, and Annette read through the surveys while Dinks paces nervously.

Rose reads the last one and SIGHS audibly.

DINKS

That don't sound good.

ROSE

Eight guilty, three not guilty, one undecided.

DINKS

Eight people?! How can they think that? There's no evidence!

ANNETTE

(reading a survey)  
"He shouldn't have fled. That points to a guilty conscience."

DINKS

Damn right I had a guilty conscience. I had illegal drugs on me! But I ain't no dealer!

DREA

(reading)  
"If the police say it, I believe it. I trust their word more than a ne'er-do-well addict."

ROSE

Please tell me they didn't actually say "ne'er-do-well"!

WENDY

(reading)  
"The actual evidence wasn't that strong. But I look at Defendant and I see a drug dealer. He is exactly the type of person I expect to be a drug dealer."

DINKS

The "type of person"?

WENDY

Black, Harold. She means you're black.

DINKS

Oh, shit.

He sits down and starts to cry. Rose sits down next to him and puts her arm around him.

DINKS

Everyone's against me. No one's on my side.

ROSE

We are, Harold. We're on your side.

FADE TO BLACK. ROLL TITLES.

## INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM

Rose lectures to a small night class of UNDERGRADS. The owner and principal of the Compass Law Firm speaks with intensity and a fast, New York clip.

ROSE

Everything is psychology. All your life, no one pays attention to you. Go to your job, raise your family, society generally tends to leave you alone. No one even cares what you write on social media -- sorry to burst your bubble.

## INT. COMPASS LAW FIRM - DREA'S DESK

Drea Bethoncourt, 26 and the firm's young and fair part-time junior associate, poises her fingers over her keyboard, ready to schedule a CLIENT'S visit at Rose's direction.

The Client is a heavysset woman in her 50s wearing what seems like too many layers of clothes. Her eyes are fixed on her smartphone -- she barely pays Drea any attention.

DREA

Thursday at three?

No response except for the tapping of typing fingers.

ROSE

(louder)

Thursday at three?

CLIENT

Can't do Thursday.

DREA

Monday morning, any time from eight to ten?

CLIENT

Can't do that.

DREA

How about a weekend? We can do any time Saturday or Sunday afternoon.

CLIENT

Don't have time on the weekend.

ROSE  
 (frustrated)  
 You realize we're trying to keep  
 you out of jail. Maybe you should  
 make the time.

INT. CLASSROOM

Rose continues her lecture.

ROSE  
 The moment you're accused of a  
 crime, bring a lawsuit, even accuse  
 someone else of a crime against  
 you, then suddenly everyone is  
 interested in you -- your  
 character, your history, what brand  
 of beer you drink.

INT. COMPASS LAW FIRM - CONFERENCE ROOM

Annette McKern, in her early thirties and the firm's  
 paralegal, meets with a TEENAGER, a Guardian ad Litem case.

ANNETTE  
 Do either of your parents abuse  
 drugs or alcohol?

The Teen shakes his head, looking bored.

TEENAGER  
 How long is this gonna take?

ANNETTE  
 You got somewhere you have to be?

TEENAGER  
 This whole thing is taking forever.  
 I just wanna be done.

ANNETTE  
 You want your parents divorced?

The Teen nods sullenly.

ANNETTE (CONT'D)  
 (putting down her pen)  
 Why do you want your parents  
 divorced?

TEENAGER  
 So I can get my divorce presents.

ANNETTE  
Divorce presents?

TEENAGER  
Everybody gets divorce presents. My friend got a Mustang. I think I can score the new iPhone at least.

INT. CLASSROOM

Rose is still delivering her lecture. The STUDENTS are riveted by her passionate oration.

ROSE  
Juries and even judges don't care much about the facts of the case. What interests them is you -- your psychology. You want life to be all about you, get yourself charged with a crime.

INT. COURTROOM (A REAL ONE)

Rose stands next to a young PRISONER, also in an orange jumpsuit, as the JUDGE reprimands him and his PARENTS sternly.

JUDGE (O.S.)  
...and you understand this would be your third strike. That means I would be constrained by state guidelines to sentence you to ten years in prison. You wouldn't get out until you were well into your thirties.

The Prisoner can't stop himself from crying openly. Rose puts her hand on his shoulder.

JUDGE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Your attorney has somehow convinced me to give you a pass on the vandalism. That leaves the petit larceny, which is a misdemeanor. That's less than a year in jail and probation. Do you understand the opportunity you've been given?

The Prisoner doesn't respond. He's still crying.

INT. WENDY'S OFFICE

WENDY LYONS, an iconoclastic attorney with red hair in her 40s, meets with RACHEL, a Kenyan immigrant, and her children.

[Rachel to tell a story here, either a true one or one drawn from her experience. Wendy reacts.]

INT. ROSE'S OFFICE

Rose watches a video on a tablet as ANNETTE IVY "AL" HINSON stands behind her. The former police detective is in her 50s, dressed comfortably in jeans, a turtleneck and a fleece vest.

The video shows a man (SCOTT OBERMANN) racing his mountain bike down a steep hill.

ROSE  
What am I watching?

AL  
Your workers' comp case.

AL (V.O.)  
(on video)  
Go, Scott!

Obermann turns to the camera right as he passes, his face clear.

ROSE  
Is that Obermann?

AL  
Yup.

ROSE  
This is before the accident?

AL  
Nope. Shot it yesterday.

Rose throws her glasses down on the desk.

ROSE  
What is this?! You're my  
investigator, which means you're  
supposed to be investigating the  
employer, not the plaintiff! Do you  
know how much money we're bleeding  
on this case?!



AL

Which is why I'm showing this to you now. If SiteWork's lawyers don't know about this, they will. I just saved us a shitload of wasted hours, maybe even a malpractice suit against you.

ROSE

Al, I --

Rose only holds her head GROWLS in frustration.

AL

You're welcome.

INT. COMPASS LAW OFFICE - ANNETTE'S DESK

Annette, who is not only the firm's paralegal, but also receptionist and general errand girl, has the desk by the door. On it are pictures of her family: husband PATRICK and her three CHILDREN.

Annette entertains Rachel's CHILDREN while their mother is in consultation.

One of the child grabs an orange from a fruit basket by the water cooler. When he has trouble peeling it, Annette flicks open a folding knife and helps him with it.

A man enters -- LEO STOUTAMIRE, around 60, brusque and wearing a perpetual scowl.

ANNETTE

Can I help you?

LEO

Is this a day care? It says Law Office.

ANNETTE

This is the Compass Law Office.

LEO

I'm looking for Rose Berliner.

ANNETTE

And this is regarding?

LEO

I want to retain her services.

At that moment, Rose and Al exit her office. Rose looks like she has the mother of all migraines.

AL  
 (noticing the coupe parked  
 outside)  
 BMW Eight Series. Ninety-six?

LEO  
 Ninety-five.

AL  
 Sweet.

Al makes her exit.

ANNETTE  
 Rose, this is -- I'm sorry, I  
 haven't gotten around to your name.

LEO  
 Leo M. Stoutamire.

ANNETTE  
 Mister Stoutamire would like to  
 talk about legal services.

Wendy's office door opens. Wendy and Rachel come into the main area. Wendy hands Annette a sheaf of papers.

WENDY  
 Here's Rachel's paperwork. Is there  
 any way we can get this to  
 Immigration Services today?

ANNETTE  
 I'm submitting it now. Hold on.

Annette takes a small digital camera from her desk.

ANNETTE  
 (to Rachel and Kids)  
 Say Welcome to America!

Rachel and her Children mug for Annette, who snaps their picture.

RACHEL  
 Thank you so much, Wendy. I won't  
 go anywhere until I hear from you.

WENDY

That might be best, considering the current climate. But if you have any trouble, call me immediately.

RACHEL

I will. (To kids) Come on, children. Let's make America great!

INT. ROSE'S OFFICE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Rose ushers Leo into her office. He is well-dressed in a heavy weight dress shirt, khakis, and Italian shoes.

ROSE

(handing him a handful of business cards)  
My card. In fact, take a bunch. Give them to your friends.

LEO

Thank you. I see you're a Yankee.

Rose turns around. Leo has noticed her NYU Law School diploma.

ROSE

Forest Hills, Queens, born and bred.

LEO

How'd you end up our way?

ROSE

I did a summer internship at Moore Rosenthal, then made the mistake of marrying one of the other summer interns.

LEO

Divorced? Me, too. I'm also a Yankee. Wayne, New Jersey.

ROSE

I figured North Jersey. So what kind of legal services do you need?

LEO

I'm interested in forming a nonprofit corporation.

ROSE

We can help you with that. Is this for the purpose of forming a five-oh-one c-three?

LEO

More like a c-four.

ROSE

A political organization? What's your cause?

Leo shows Rose the Roanoke Times. The headline reads: STONEWALL JACKSON SCHOOL DEBATE ERUPTS, TWO ARRESTED.

LEO

See that? They're renaming the school, and now they're talking about tearing down his statue across the street.

ROSE

I hope they do.

LEO

Erase history just like that?

ROSE

They're not erasing history. They're adjusting who we choose to honor.

LEO

So we put up Bill Ayres or a Black Panther instead? It's social justice virtue signaling.

ROSE

Mister Stoutamire, based on your goals, I'm not interested in helping you form your corporation.

LEO

You're denying me legal services?

ROSE

I'm choosing my clients, which is my right. We help people here, not defend relics of Jim Crow.

Leo pulls up a website on his phone. He shows it to Rose -- her travel blog, with a photo of the Fremont Lenin Statue.

LEO

(reading)

"He leans forward, pushing against the gale winds of the past. Like a newly-forged colossus, he seems to be emerging from a furnace of concrete flames..." Wow, that's Pulitzer material there. (resuming) "He strides forth with confidence, oblivious to all controversy, all opposition, all judgment. He knows he is the future.?"

ROSE

That's a work of art, not a commemoration.

LEO

According to your own blog, it was built as a commemoration.

ROSE

And then rejected by the people he oppressed. If you want to save Stonewall Jackson, call Russia and have them put him up in Red Square. I think this meeting is over.

LEO

If you defend a Lenin statue in Seattle, you can defend a statue of an actual American here.

ROSE

Mister Stoutamire, I don't have to defend anything. You asked for my help, and I've said no. Now please leave.

LEO

I won't leave. This is a First Amendment issue. Everyone who wants Barack Obama Middle School gets to have their say. What about those of us who don't want to change? We're gonna have our say.

ROSE

Sir, you are now trespassing, and if you don't leave, I will be forced to call the police.

Leo rises, slowly and deliberately.

LEO

On the door, it says "civil rights," but not all of them, I guess.

He leaves. Rose waits a moment, then walks out to the main area and throws the deadbolt on the front door.

ANNETTE

Something wrong?

ROSE

Everything's fine. Is Al still around?

ANNETTE

No.

ROSE

Are you going to be here?

ANNETTE

I have to get my kids at two.

A WOMAN tries the door, but finds it locked. Rose opens it for her.

ROSE

Good morning. Can we help you.

WOMAN

You're lawyers?

ROSE

Yes, this is the Compass Law Firm. I'm Rose. How can I help you?

WOMAN

I lent some money to somebody at work. He said he would pay me back when he got paid. Anyway, I come to work last week and he's gone. Hasn't been back since. I need to know how I can get my money back.

ROSE

You know your co-worker's name and address?

WOMAN

Yeah, but I went by his place and he's no longer there.

ROSE

I hate to tell you this, but unless it was a large amount of money, it won't be worth it to engage a lawyer.

WOMAN

It was a thousand dollars!

ROSE

(surprised)

Did you know this person well?

WOMAN

No, but he said he needed it. I'm on temporary assistance and my next check doesn't come for another week.

ANNETTE

(disbelief)

You're on welfare and you lent someone a thousand dollars?

WOMAN

(distress growing)

My check doesn't come 'til next week. I need my thousand dollars back!

ROSE

Annette, why don't you see what's in petty cash?

WOMAN

I don't want a handout. I want my money back.

ROSE

Ma'am, a lawsuit would take months. And even if we won a judgment, you'd be responsible for collecting your own money.

ANNETTE

Thirty-three dollars and change.  
(to Woman) I'm sorry, it's all we have.

## INT. WENDY'S OFFICE

The door is open, so Rose walks in. The office is a mess of document boxes and file folders piled like fortress walls around Wendy.

ROSE

When did our petty cash get so low?

WENDY

Since we stopped serving corporate clients and people with money -- oh right, we never did that!

ANNETTE

(entering)

I had to take fifty out of it to cover your bar dues.

## INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

Rose is browsing when she spots the STAFF setting up a table and a sign that reads: BOOK SIGNING WITH LOCAL AUTHOR JOHN WILLIAMS, AUTHOR OF FULL COURT PRESS: BEHIND THE SCENES OF VIRGINIA v. NICKSON.

JOHN

I hear it's pretty good.

Rose turns around and hugs JOHN WILLIAMS, a sharp, handsome attorney who looks much younger than his 50 years.

ROSE

You cut your hair. I like it, but I miss the vaguely shaggy look.

JOHN

The more shag, the less gray you see. This is more distinguished.

ROSE

If you're a man. Gray on women is just old.

JOHN

There oughta be a law.

ROSE

Congratulations on Pervis Chemical. And the book.

JOHN

Thanks. How are the huddled masses?



As Rose answers, a YOUNG WOMAN accosts John, holding out a copy of his book. He signs it as the Woman runs off, practically giggling.

ROSE

I had a big claim evaporate.  
Worker's comp fraud, apparently.

JOHN

I do hate it when that happens. We should get lunch if you can spare an hour away from the Augean Stables.

INT. COMPASS LAW FIRM

Rose enters to find Wendy and Annette watching the news on TV: the riot in Montrose Park.

WENDY

Did you see this?

ROSE

See what?

WENDY

I thought you were near Montrose Park. There was a riot there. A bunch of neo-Nazis opened fire on counterprotestors.

ROSE

For real?

ANNETTE

This is horrible. They're saying at least one person is dead.

ROSE

Holy crap.

Wendy slings her purse on her shoulder. Annette blocks her path.

ANNETTE

Wendy, stop.

WENDY

(agitated)  
Fucking Nazis in our own city!  
Someone needs to go down there and take them out.

ANNETTE

What would that accomplish?

WENDY

One or two less Nazis.

ANNETTE

And two more orphans.

ROSE

Geez, Wendy. Calm down. At the very least, you'll be pepper sprayed by the cops. Take it from me, you don't want that.

WENDY

(less heated)

The cops are part of the problem.

The phone RINGS, halting Wendy's tirade.

ANNETTE

(answering)

Compass Law Firm... May I tell her who's calling? (to Rose) Leo Stoutamire.

ROSE

(after a moment's thought)

I'll take it in my office.

INT. ROSE'S OFFICE

Rose closes the door and takes the call.

ROSE

Rose Berliner.

INT. MAGISTRATE COURTROOM - BAIL HEARING

Leo stands silently beside Rose as KELLY JORDAN, an Assistant Commonwealth Attorney, makes her case before the MAGISTRATE JUDGE.

JORDAN

Leo Stoutamire is accused of murder in the first degree. He is a danger to the public at large.

MAGISTRATE JUDGE

Accused is different than indicted.

JORDAN

The Commonwealth Attorney's office is confident the grand jury will indict. Mister Stoutamire's admitted views make him --

MAGISTRATE JUDGE

(interrupting)

His views?

JORDAN

The prisoner is an avowed white supremacist. He is a terrorist, your Honor.

MAGISTRATE JUDGE

Then why hasn't your office charged him with terrorism?

JORDAN

That's a federal statute, your --

MAGISTRATE JUDGE

I'm just playing with you, Ms. Jordan. Ms. Berliner?

ROSE

My client has some esoteric views, to which he is entitled by the First Amendment.

MAGISTRATE JUDGE

Unless the views become action.

ROSE

He's not on trial for his views, which, by the way, are similar to most white men's his age.

MAGISTRATE JUDGE

Careful there.

ROSE

I'm just playing with you, your Honor. Leo is not a flight risk. He has zero criminal history and he's well established in the community.

JORDAN

Things are different now. Tensions are at a breaking point. The prisoner would be in grave personal danger from an angry public if allowed to roam about.

MAGISTRATE JUDGE  
So who's the danger? Mister  
Stoutamire or the public?

JORDAN  
(quickly recovering)  
It's both-and, your honor.

MAGISTRATE JUDGE  
A for effort, Ms. Jordan. Bail is  
set at five-hundred thousand  
dollars. And Ms. Berliner, given  
your usual clientele, I assume this  
is a passion project for you. I,  
not the court, hold you personally  
responsible for Mister Stoutamire's  
conduct.

He BANGS HIS GAVEL.

INT. COMPASS LAW OFFICE - SUNDAY MORNING

Drea and Wendy happen upon each other at the door, Drea  
toting a large Starbucks coffee.

WENDY  
Hey, woman, not sleeping in this  
fine Sunday morning?

DREA  
Aren't you in on this staff  
meeting?

WENDY  
Yeah, I'm just being -- never mind,  
drink your coffee.

DREA  
Sorry, my sarcasm detector hasn't  
booted up yet.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

Wendy and Drea enter to find Rose and Annette seated at the  
table across from Leo. Al stands off to one side.

Leo is dressed sharply in a designer shirt. He wears his  
Breitling Navitimer military style (watch face facing down).

WENDY  
Hey, it's special guest day! I'm  
Wendy.

LEO  
 (rising to shake her hand)  
 Leo. Howya doing?

WENDY  
 Have I seen you before? Which firm  
 are you with?

LEO  
 No firm.

DREA  
 I'm Drea.

LEO  
 (shaking her hand)  
 It's a pleasure to meet you both.

Wendy and Drea take their seats, making small talk with the  
 other women, catching up, joking, etc.

ROSE  
 (after everyone's settled  
 down)  
 Okay, everyone, thank you for  
 coming in so early. Annette, I  
 apologize for asking you to miss  
 church, but this is the only time I  
 could arrange everyone to be here.

Rose shifts some papers around, then starts without preamble:

ROSE  
 As you all know, on Thursday, there  
 was a rally in Montrose Park. A  
 group calling themselves White  
 Squall gathered to protest the  
 renaming of Stonewall Jackson  
 Middle School and the proposed  
 removal of the Stonewall Jackson  
 statue in the park. A group of  
 counterprotestors gathered. Fights  
 broke out, and at some point,  
 someone fired a forty-five caliber  
 jacketed hollow point round, which  
 struck thirty-two year old Lily  
 Carlisle in the lower abdomen. The  
 bullet lodged in her spine and  
 caused massive internal trauma. At  
 eight forty-two that night, Lily  
 Carlisle was pronounced dead at  
 Roanoke Memorial Hospital.  
 (MORE)

ROSE (CONT'D)

Mister Leo Stoutamire was arrested and charged with murder. I have agreed to defend him.

Everyone visibly recoils, partly from revulsion, mostly from confusion.

ROSE

The purpose of this meeting is to get some preliminary questions out of the way and walk Mister Stoutamire through the next few weeks. Annette, please start a new case file.

Annette, as gobsmacked as everyone else, recovers her wits and opens her laptop.

ROSE

Mister Stoutamire, you understand everything said in this room falls under attorney-client privilege. We can help you best when we know the truth. Why were you in Montrose Park on October tenth, two-thousand eighteen?

LEO

I was there to protest the removal of the Stonewall Jackson statue and the leftist virtue signaling --

ROSE

(interrupting)

Are you a member of White Squall?

LEO

No. But I know people who are.

ROSE

And you know what their agenda is.

LEO

Yes.

ROSE

Would you please tell us?

LEO

They're fighting back against the notion that if you're a white male, you should be ashamed, that you should pay for things your ancestors did.

ROSE

Would you characterize this as a neo-Nazi group?

LEO

No. Some of the members are a little too lenient on Hitler, but I'm not. He was pure evil. My grandfather fought in the European theater.

ROSE

You said you're not a member.

LEO

That's correct.

ROSE

Why not?

LEO

I'm not much of a joiner.

Rose makes a note.

ROSE

Tell me what you saw the day of the rally.

LEO

Like I told you, I was there with some friends. I believed what the city was doing was wrong, trying to erase history. History isn't always pretty, but you take the bad with the good. But I guess in the days of trigger warnings and safe spaces, we can't have any reminders of --

ROSE

Please stick to the events of that day.

LEO

Sorry, it's just -- I was there. I wasn't shouting or raising my fist or holding a sign or anything. I was just there to show my support for Stonewall Jackson. You know he educated his own slaves? Taught them to read and write? That was against the law. So much for being the devil.

(MORE)

LEO (CONT'D)

Anyway, suddenly, there was an eruption of chaos. I saw people surging toward me.

ROSE

Who?

LEO

It was mixed. I could tell there were some protestors, but I also saw some people with bandanas over their faces. I knew they weren't with us. I didn't want to get mixed up with them, so I left the park and went back to my car.

ROSE

Where was your car parked?

LEO

On Wilson.

ROSE

You didn't make it off Wilson.

LEO

No, by then, I saw people running and blocking the road. By the time I could get through, the police were there. They stopped me.

ROSE

Mister Stoutamire, were you armed?

LEO

Yes. I have a concealed handgun permit, but that day I was carrying openly, which is legal without a permit. It's also why the police detained me, because they saw the gun. I would never have consented to a search.

ROSE

At any point that day, did you draw your gun?

LEO

No.

ROSE

You never took your gun from its holster?



LEO

No.

ROSE

Never put your hand on it as if to draw?

LEO

No.

ROSE

Where is the gun now?

LEO

They confiscated it for evidence after they arrested me.

ROSE

Why did they arrest you?

LEO

Because I'm a white male, why else? They were rounding up all of us who had a permit to peaceably assemble and have our voices heard. Did they arrest any of those Antifa people?

ROSE

Why did they charge you?

Leo doesn't answer.

ROSE

Your gun had powder residue on the muzzle, indicating it had been recently fired.

LEO

I was at the range the day before.

ROSE

It also had six cartridges in the seven-round magazine, which means you were short one round.

LEO

It's a new magazine and the springs are tight. I have arthritis and can only get six rounds in.

ROSE

What kind of gun were you carrying?

LEO  
An Ed Brown Custom nineteen-eleven.

ROSE  
Forty-five caliber?

LEO  
Only proper caliber for a nineteen-eleven.

ROSE  
One last question. At any point, did you see Lily Carlisle?

LEO  
I did not.

ROSE  
Any other questions for Mister Stoutamire?

Rose looks around the room. No one says a word.

ROSE  
The next step is a preliminary hearing, where the Commonwealth Attorney must present the evidence to the judge, who will then determine if they can proceed.

LEO  
So during this preliminary hearing, we'll say I'm innocent.

ROSE  
During the preliminary hearing, we'll say nothing. The state must lay out their case before the court, but we don't. This is our best chance -- maybe our only chance -- to discover what evidence they have.

LEO  
Why don't we know what evidence they have? I mean, they think they have the murder weapon.

ROSE  
The state is only compelled to share any evidence with us that is scientific, such as ballistics, or exculpatory, which means evidence that exonerates you.

(MORE)

ROSE (CONT'D)

Anything else, like witness testimony or the results of police investigations, we are not entitled to hear until the trial.

LEO

What? That's insane!

WENDY

Welcome to our world.

ROSE

The Commonwealth Attorney is a good man. He's fair and he's also a friend. Generally, he has an open file policy, so I don't expect any resistance from him.

LEO

Better not. It's bad enough I was arrested like a criminal. Do I look like a criminal to any of you?

WENDY

Do you know what a criminal looks like?

LEO

I have a good idea, and it's not me.

ROSE

Very well. Mister Stoutamire, would you please excuse us?

Leo gets up without another word and walks out of the room. He closes the door quietly, but it may as well be a clap of thunder.

WENDY

What just happened?

ROSE

All right. Just so it's clear. The Compass Law Firm is defending Leo M. Stoutamire, who the state is accusing of killing Lily Carlisle.

WENDY

(her eyes popping)  
That's the man?!

DREA  
Didn't you hear him introduce  
himself?

AL  
(to Rose)  
You did it. You pulled a John  
Williams.

ROSE  
I have no idea what you mean.

ANNETTE  
That was the man who was in here --  
the day before the protest.

WENDY  
What was he in here for?!

ROSE  
He wanted to me to help him form a  
five-oh-one c four to fight the  
statue removal.

WENDY  
And you agreed to help him?

ROSE  
No, I sent him away.

WENDY  
Oh, good. Wouldn't want to help  
form an evil nonprofit. Killing  
schoolteachers, though -- that's  
cool.

DREA  
He is innocent until proven guilty.

ROSE  
Thank you, Drea. Look, everyone. I  
know he's not our typical client.  
But he's entitled to an impassioned  
defense.

WENDY  
From us?

ROSE  
Why not us? We've represented all  
kinds of people.

WENDY

No. I refuse to represent a white supremacist. There's no way.

ROSE

First, Wendy, don't believe everything you read on Slate. You heard what he said. He doesn't brook Nazis. Second, you know as well as anyone that representing Leo does not mean we represent every little thing he stands for.

ANNETTE

Can I add something? Our case load is at its maximum. I don't think we have the bandwidth for a capital murder case.

WENDY

I agree.

ROSE

It's not a capital murder case.

AL

Yet.

WENDY

Annette's right. We're going to devote thousands of hours to helping a wealthy white neo-Nazi -- sorry, a neo-Klansman -- get off while poor women of color get twenty-five to life for their boyfriends' drug crimes.

ROSE

Wendy, that's unfair and you know it. Just about every case we've taken for years has been court appointed or referred over from legal aid. And we are not "getting him off." I can't believe I'm hearing this, people. When Leo called me, he sounded as scared and confused as any of our other criminal clients. And like our clients, he won't get a fair hearing unless someone steps up as his advocate. Why not us?

Discomfort at Rose's admonition.

INT. COURTOOM - PRELIMINARY HEARING

Rose and Drea listen as Commonwealth Attorney ED KIPLINGER lays out the case against Leo to JUDGE FISHMAN. Assistant Commonwealth Attorney KELLY JORDAN sits at the state's table as well.

KIPLINGER

The Commonwealth will demonstrate that Leo Stoutamire was present at the rally at the time of the shooting, that he had in his possession a handgun which had been recently fired and in the same caliber as the bullet that killed Lily Carlisle. We have an eyewitness which places Stoutamire at the location of the shooting with his gun drawn and pointing at the victim, Lily Carlisle. Let me repeat that -- another witness saw the prisoner pointing his gun at Lily Carlisle.

Drea makes a note of that as Rose whispers to her.

JUDGE FISHMAN

It's still a reach to premeditated.

KIPLINGER

Leo Stoutamire didn't just happen upon Lily Carlisle. He planned to be in Montrose Park that day for the purpose of threatening and intimidating the City of Roanoke and its people.

JUDGE FISHMAN

You can prove this?

KIPLINGER

Absolutely. The aims of White Squall are clearly stated on their website and in public statements they've made. The Commonwealth of Virginia is very cognizant of its role in history. We were the capital of the Confederacy and the home of its most notorious leaders. More than one hundred and fifty years after its defeat, we still fight against the remnant of --

JUDGE FISHMAN

(interrupting)

Virtue noted, Mister Kiplinger.  
Does the defense have anything to  
add?

ROSE

(rising)

Not at this time, your Honor.

EXT. COMPASS LAW FIRM - MORNING

Annette arrives early. As she pulls up to the curb, she sees a small group of four PROTESTORS holding up signs urging JUSTICE FOR LILY CARLISLE, NO DEFENSE FOR KKK, and PUNCH A NAZI.

Annette says a quick prayer before she gets out...

ANNETTE

Lord, help me to be cool.

...and runs the gauntlet.

As soon as she puts the key in the lock, she's assaulted by the Protestors. They SHOUT and get up in Annette's face. The paralegal does her best to ignore the threats and locks the door behind her.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

Rose, Al, Drea, and Annette meet to summarize the case. Annette writes on the whiteboard: EVIDENCE, GUN, and WITNESS???

ROSE

Okay, people, let's talk strategy.

AL

Plead guilty.

ROSE

Good for a laugh, as always. You met Leo. You think he'll plead to anything short of complete exoneration? The arraignment is a done deal. The grand jury, too. It'll be a miracle if they return anything but an indictment.

ANNETTE

Even if they do, ten to one  
Kiplinger will still bring charges.

DREA

Can he do that without a bill to  
indict?

ROSE

He can charge a kosher brisket on  
rye if he wants. I don't agree with  
Annette, but as I said, the grand  
jury is a formality at this point.  
So what do we have at this point?

DREA

We have the gun and a witness whose  
testimony contradicts Leo's.

ANNETTE

And not just in details. She saw  
Leo draw and point the gun at Lily  
Carlisle, where Leo said he never  
encountered her.

ROSE

Why do you think the witness is a  
woman?

ANNETTE

I don't know. Something Kiplinger  
said.

AL

I got that, too. He said "another  
witness." I felt he was going to  
say "another woman." I could be  
wrong.

DREA

If he's being cagey, does that mean  
we won't get the witness statement  
before trial?

ROSE

We'll get it. Ed will come through  
for us. Okay, Al, tell me about the  
gun.

Al slides an 8x10 photo of the Ed Brown Custom to Annette,  
who tapes it to the board.



AL

Ed Brown Custom nineteen-eleven,  
caliber forty-five ACP. That's a  
three-thousand dollar sidearm,  
folks.

DREA

Do most guns cost that much?

AL

(shaking her head)  
That there is what you call a  
barbecue gun -- something you show  
off to other people at a barbecue.

ROSE

How does that work in our favor?

ANNETTE

That's not his everyday carry gun.  
If he was planning to get into a  
firefight, he would have brought  
his workhorse gun, the one he  
wouldn't mind losing.

AL

That's a good point.

DREA

So you think he carries a gun every  
day? That just makes him look  
paranoid or like someone looking  
for trouble.

ANNETTE

Do you wear your seatbelt every  
day?

DREA

Of course.

ANNETTE

Are you looking to get into a  
crash?

ROSE

Drea, your point is solid. The jury  
pool is Roanoke City, solid blue.  
We may get a few NRA members, but  
they won't survive voir dire.  
Annette, Al, what about the  
magazine spring? Is Leo telling the  
truth about it being tight?

AL

Without trying it, I can't say, but he is right that new magazines can be tight. Loading minus one is not uncommon.

ROSE

And the powder residue?

AL

It all depends. Fire a few hundred rounds and yeah, most people would strip and clean the gun. Fifty or less, probably not.

DREA

But this is his showpiece gun. Even if he only shot a few rounds, wouldn't he want to -- whatever you do, clean it, polish it, get it back to pristine condition?

Al and Annette see her point.

ROSE

This is good. We need to anticipate everything the state will throw at us.

AL

Or we could just ask Leo why he didn't clean his gun.

ROSE

We will, and we'll also get the ballistics test results.

AL

Putting a lot of faith in your homeboy Ed.

ROSE

That's scientific evidence, so yes, absolutely. We will get that.

ANNETTE

Rose, when was that picture taken?

ROSE

When the gun was entered into evidence, during booking, I don't know. Why?

Annette rifles through the arrest report.

ROSE  
What are you looking for?

ANNETTE  
It's in condition three.

AL  
I'm not sure that's going to help.  
The arresting officer could have  
cleared the gun.

ANNETTE  
And was there a round in the  
chamber?

DREA  
Should I be concerned you two know  
so much about guns?

ROSE  
Al was a police detective for eight  
years. Annette and Patrick watch a  
lot of Walking Dead. But I'm with  
Drea. What is "condition three"?

AL  
This type of gun can be carried two  
ways. Condition one and condition  
three.

ROSE  
Still not following you.

Al casually pulls out her double action pistol, causing Drea  
to jump up from the table.

AL  
Relax.

ROSE  
(nervously)  
Just... point it over there.

Al clears the gun, dropping the magazine, racking the slide,  
and ejecting the chambered round.

AL  
Okay, the gun is clear. I put the  
loaded magazine in and drop the  
hammer.

Al thumbs the hammer down.

AL

The gun is now in "condition three." A gun like Leo's can't fire in this state. To make it ready, I have to rack the slide, chambering a round.

Which she does.

AL

Now the hammer is back and a round is in the chamber. I flick the safety on, the gun is now in "condition one."

DREA

Should I ask where "condition two" went?

ROSE

So how does this help us?

ANNETTE

When a semiautomatic pistol fires, the force of the bullet forces the slide and hammer back.

AL

Boom.

She mimics firing the gun, pulling the slide back.

AL

That action loads a new round as well.

ANNETTE

(pointing to the picture)  
If Leo had fired, the gun could not look like that.

ROSE

It would be in condition one.

ANNETTE

Close enough.

AL

The police have two competing interests: preserving evidence and maintaining public safety. Ideally, someone would have noted the condition of the gun as found and photographed it.

(MORE)

AL (CONT'D)

But with a riot going on, it's possible the arresting officer felt clearing the gun was more important.

DREA

Or he may have been so preoccupied, he didn't take time to clear the gun.

ROSE

So if the chamber was empty, either the gun hadn't been fired or else the chain of evidence was broken. Either one is cause for dismissal. Nice work, ladies.

INT. MOORE ROSENTHAL LAW FIRM - DREA'S OFFICE - THE NEXT DAY

Drea works busily at her desk when TOM, one of the partners, pokes his head in.

TOM

Drea, could I talk to you?

DREA

Sure. What's up?

Tom closes the door, which puts Drea on alert.

TOM

It's nothing bad, I swear. You like working with Herman and his practice group?

DREA

Sure.

TOM

I know construction law wasn't your first choice. We may have something soon in the labor and employment group.

DREA

I'll go wherever you need me.

TOM

Good to hear. Okay, so I know we gave you the green light to work with Rose Berliner for your pro bono hours.

DREA

But.

TOM

But you're not working on Stoutamire, are you?

DREA

Actually, I am.

TOM

Not any more.

DREA

Rose is the lead attorney. My name won't appear on any filings.

TOM

Still, we can't risk a picture of you two standing together. You and Stoutamire, I mean.

DREA

Doesn't he deserve a defense?

TOM

Of course. Just not from a junior associate of Moore Rosenthal.

INT. HOTEL ROANOKE - BALLROOM

Rose sits by herself at a table near the edge of the ballroom. Ed Kiplinger addresses the crowd. The slide on the screen reads:

ED KIPLINGER, COMMONWEALTH ATTORNEY, ROANOKE BAR ASSOCIATION LUNCH AND LEARN

KIPLINGER

(Matt can improvise this speech)

INT. HOTEL ROANOKE - LATER

Rose stands in the midst of the mingling, a plate of hors d'oeuvres in her hand. She waves and smiles at some of the other attorneys, who acknowledge her and move on.

INT. ROANOKE COLLEGE - CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Rose teaches a small class of twelve students. The whiteboard behind her reads LAW AND SOCIETY IN 20TH CENTURY AMERICA.

ROSE

During the Warren court, we have an incredible flurry of opinions that shaped our modern understanding of criminal procedure. Brady v. Maryland, Gideon v. Wainwright, Miranda v. Arizona. The Miranda warning -- "you have the right to remain silent..." -- has become such a part of our culture, that Chief Justice Rehnquist cited its familiarity as a reason to uphold --

STUDENT PROTESTORS burst into the classroom, CHANTING and disrupting the class.

PROTESTORS

No Nazis! No Klan! Justice for Lily Carlisle!

ROSE

Excuse me! I'm teaching a class!

PROTESTORS

No Nazis! No Klan! Justice for Lily Carlisle!

INT. ROANOKE COLLEGE - DEPARTMENT OFFICE

The DEPARTMENT CHAIR speaks with Rose.

ROSE

What does "take a break" mean? If this college buckles under every time a handful of students protest -

DEPARTMENT CHAIR

Without students, though, you don't have a class.

ROSE

I haven't lost a single one since I took the case. Maybe those protestors should join the discussion. They could use an education in ideas.

DEPARTMENT CHAIR

It's not the ideas they object to. There's the feeling you're not really woke.

ROSE

A feeling? Well, how am I supposed to argue with that?

DEPARTMENT CHAIR

I think the idea is you're not.

INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS

Rose speaks with JUDGE FISHMAN, the trial judge and a stern legal titan.

FISHMAN

Motion to withdraw from representation due to an inseparable ethical conflict. I'm going to need you to explain further.

ROSE

As you know, I represent quite a few racial and ethnic minorities, immigrants --

FISHMAN

I hope that's not the crux of your petition. Leaving Mister Stoutamire without counsel at this juncture would be highly unethical and unfair to him.

ROSE

Other attorneys are straining at the bit to take him on.

FISHMAN

But he called you. And you said yes.

ROSE

I did.

FISHMAN

Second thoughts are not a reason to withdraw.

ROSE

(half-heartedly)  
Even if he's a Nazi, your honor?



FISHMAN

You've represented gang members and drug dealers. A Nazi should be right up your alley.

EXT. COMPASS LAW OFFICE - MORNING

Wendy parks and loads up her arms with documents. As she approaches the office, she steels herself for the encounter with the Protestors.

PROTESTOR #1

No defense for racists!

WENDY

I'm not working on the case!

PROTESTOR #2

You defend racists, you are racist!

PROTESTOR #3

How would you like me to violate you, Nazi?!

The Protestor grabs Wendy's arm.

WENDY

Get off me!

Suddenly, Annette appears. Her speed catches the Protestor off guard as she separates him from Wendy. Annette practically pushes Wendy into the office and locks the door.

Wendy runs to her office and SLAMS the door. Annette sits down at her desk by the front door, the Protestors SHOUTING at her through the glass. She tries her best to ignore them.

A POLICE SIREN BLOOPS as a black-and-white rolls on to the scene. The Protestors move off.

Annette realizes her hand is shaking. She sets her purse down, letting go of the revolver inside. She was gripping it so tightly her hand is white.

INT. WENDY'S OFFICE

Wendy drops her document stack on the desk. She sits down and cradles her head, shaking with rage, anxiety and disbelief.

A KNOCK at the door causes Wendy to jump.

WENDY

Yes?

Rose pokes her head in, oblivious to Wendy's trauma.

ROSE

Can you come to the conference room?

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

Wendy enters to find Leo sitting at the table.

WENDY

Where's Annette?

ROSE

I sent her out to get coffee. Would you mind taking notes?

Wendy can barely conceal her disgust as she sits down and readies her legal pad.

ROSE

Okay, Leo, you now know everything we know about the state's case. Anything you want to say?

LEO

Yeah. Who is this so-called witness?

ROSE

I've asked Kiplinger for the statement. We should get it before the trial.

LEO

Should? Why don't we have all the information he has?

ROSE

Because that's not the way the system works.

LEO

All the time or just when the accused is a white male?

Wendy SNORTS.

ROSE

Leo, we're on your side.

LEO

Is that why you had me come in the back like I'm the maid?

ROSE

You know why I had you enter through the alley.

LEO

I'm not afraid of protestors.

ROSE

I know and that's what I'm afraid of. I'd like to make it to trial without any provocations.

LEO

Like what?

ROSE

Like "the system persecutes straight white males."

LEO

Since when did the truth become illegal?

Wendy MUTTERS loudly and contemptuously.

LEO

(to Wendy)

What's your name? How come I never see you?

ROSE

Wendy has a full case load.

LEO

I'm on the hook for murder. I should get priority.

WENDY

What you should do is check your privilege.

LEO

My white man's privilege, right? To be discriminated for things I didn't do.

ROSE

Okay, everyone. That's enough.

Wendy shoots out of her chair and storms out of the conference room.

INT. COMPASS LAW OFFICE - MAIN AREA

Wendy busies herself with looking for case files in a cabinet when Leo stalks in.

LEO

Why am I so objectionable to you?  
You got self-hate issues?

ROSE

(following)  
Leave her alone, Leo.

LEO

I'm just curious as to what her problem is. You all do a lot of criminal defense. You must get the occasional white guy in with the homeboys and the cholos.

WENDY

For your information, we have a lot of white clients. I don't have a problem with white.

LEO

You have a problem with people who love America.

WENDY

You don't love America! You love some twisted idea of what America used to be!

ROSE

Wendy, you don't need to go there.

LEO

What America used to be was full of people who held their heads up high and beamed with pride. People who risked everything to come here so they could be Americans, not European or Canadian or citizens of the world. You can't hold your own head high, so you take it out on everyone around you who's different!

WENDY

I'm the one who doesn't like  
different?

LEO

Exactly. How many Republicans do  
you know?

ROSE

Leo, this isn't helping. She's on  
your side.

WENDY

I don't think I am.

LEO

See? She's the hater here. Because  
she hates herself. I can tell just  
by looking at her. No wonder  
there's no ring on that finger.

That's the last straw. Wendy hurls her files at Leo, hitting  
him square in the face.

EXT. ALLEY

Rose lays into Wendy.

ROSE

You cannot assault our client! You  
can't!

WENDY

He's not my client and I didn't  
assault him!

ROSE

You know the legal definition, and  
so does Leo!

WENDY

Did you hear what he said?! That's  
Chaplinsky versus New Hampshire  
right there!

ROSE

I agree! But you can't let him get  
to you. Come on! We've had guys ten  
times as disagreeable as Leo!

WENDY

He is not disagreeable! He's --  
evil! He's why our country is so  
fucked up!

ROSE

When did you become so patriotic?  
You're making this global when it's  
personal.

WENDY

Yes, it's personal! And you're on  
his side!

ROSE

We have an obligation to him!  
(seeing Wendy's glare) Fine! I have  
an obligation to him.

Rose stalks around while Wendy cools down.

WENDY

Why him? Why this case? Why now?!  
We've always been about justice and  
the underserved. Leo is the  
antithesis of that! Trump-voting  
traitors like him are the reason  
our clients are in the state  
they're in!

ROSE

You know that's not true.

WENDY

Yes they are! And you invited one  
of them into our house! You  
actually feel energized standing on  
his side!

ROSE

Don't start down that path!

WENDY

What path?

ROSE

The "you're either for us or  
against us" path. None of your  
bullying is going to make me  
withdraw -- and believe me, I  
tried.

WENDY

I'm bullying? Who killed Lily Carlisle?

ROSE

We don't know!

WENDY

You're buying into his lies!

Wendy sits down hard on the ground holds her head.

ROSE

What are we going to do? You're my friend, Wendy. I need you.

INT. RESTAURANT

Rose has lunch with John Williams.

ROSE

Civil or criminal?

JOHN

That's a tough one. Both have high stakes. Civil pays better.

ROSE

If you're you. And wrote a best-selling book.

JOHN

Don't be too impressed. The publisher probably bought all the copies. I wouldn't choose one over the other. I'm called to do whatever helps people in trouble.

ROSE

I would say the same.

JOHN

And you're one to talk about high stakes. Took the bull by the horns this time.

ROSE

Don't compliment me yet. I lost two of my attorneys --

JOHN

Wendy quit?!

ROSE

No, she's just taking some time off. And Tom Willoughby ordered Drea off the case.

JOHN

Tough break.

ROSE

I'm not Williams and Associates. My little outfit has limited resources. My paralegal works part-time and my two attorneys aren't working on this case. Plus while I'm defending Stoutamire, I've got a backlog of landlord-tenant disputes, petit theft, and social security claims.

JOHN

I would say something, but you're usually not this indirect.

ROSE

I don't know what you mean.

JOHN

I can't say what I think you want me to say because I refuse to shoehorn myself into this.

ROSE

I can't say what you think I'm saying because I have no idea what you think I'm saying.

JOHN

If you're seeking co-counsel, you need to do the asking.

ROSE

Co-counsel? He should have gone to you instead of calling me.

JOHN

I hope you said that because I'm a glory hound and a masochist and not because of my politics.

ROSE

I've never had a client I completely don't understand. Maybe you --



JOHN

Whoa. Let me stop you there. They may call themselves Unite the Right, but white supremacy is not cool with me or anyone I know. I'm not blind, I know their kind has influence in Republican circles, but don't think that most of us "understand" them. Besides, why do you need to understand him? You just need to defend him.

ROSE

I know. I'm sorry if I insinuated anything.

JOHN

Good if-pology. But "I regret if anyone was offended by my comment" works better.

John grins. Everything's cool.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I was having dinner at Nico's with Michelle when this woman came up to me and threw water in my face. She told me I was a despicable person for getting Mannheim off, as she put it, "on a technicality."

ROSE

Is that what they call an illegal search?

JOHN

To you and me, it was a Constitutional violation. But that woman, all she saw was a child-killer going free.

ROSE

If we don't defend accused murderers against illegal searches, then the Fourth Amendment means nothing for any of us. Cops can kick in your door or set up roadblocks at will.

JOHN

That's the professor in you talking.

ROSE

Yeah, the professor that's on permanent sabbatical. You got water thrown in your face. I lost my adjunct teaching job.

JOHN

It's all part of the mission. On TV, the scrappy defense lawyer is always the hero, but in real life, people think we're the bottom feeders.

ROSE

I thought that was ambulance chasers.

JOHN

If you're a defense lawyer and a plaintiff's attorney, like we are, you're the parasite on the belly of the bottom feeder.

ROSE

(pushing her fish away)  
Thanks.

INT. COURTHOUSE

Rose works while waiting outside the courtroom. John Williams strides up with AMARA VIA a junior associate in tow. Amara is an eager 20-something African-American racing to keep up with the energetic John.

ROSE

And the co-counsel brings co-co-counsel.

JOHN

Rose, this is Amara. Washington and Lee, first in her class.

Amara glares at John.

JOHN (CONT'D)

What? It's why I hired you.

ROSE

(shaking Amara's hand)  
We're so glad to have you aboard.

JOHN

Sorry I never connected with you before this.

ROSE

No worries. You and I can both do pretrial motions in our sleep. Did you decide to argue the statements Leo made are unfairly prejudicial or simply irrelevant? I have no idea why Kiplinger insists on entering them.

JOHN

I'm not arguing anything. This is your motion.

ROSE

You're playing second chair?

JOHN

Amara's playing second chair. I'm playing third chair. (seeing Rose's reaction) Everything okay?

ROSE

Sure.

INT. COURTROOM

In CLOSE-UP, Rose listens to Judge Fishman's decision. Behind her, in soft focus, sit Amara and John.

FISHMAN (O.S.)

...and while I agree the statements the defendant made don't apply directly to the complaint at hand, they speak to his motive for being at the rally, which in turn informs his state of mind at the moment the crime occurred. Motion in limine is denied.

The gavel BANGS.

INT. COURTHOUSE

Rose, John, and Amara leave the courtroom.

ROSE

That could have gone better.

JOHN

Sorry if I caught you unawares. I know I'm usually the marquee, but this really is your case.

ROSE

Let's get one thing clear, John. I only care about one thing and that's mounting a defense for Leo Stoutamire. If you think you're doing me a favor by taking the backseat, you can stuff it. I don't need your charity.

Amara steps back, waiting to see what transpires.

JOHN

I have no charitable thoughts toward you, I swear.

ROSE

Better not.

They resume their walk. They pass the Woman whose book John signed in the bookstore. She appears to be waiting.

John smiles at her. She hurls the book at him, hitting John in the face.

She runs off before anyone can react.

INT. COMPASS LAW OFFICE - ALLEY DOOR

Rose leads Amara in through the back.

ROSE

I am so sorry about the people out front. I should have told you to come in through the back. Are you sure you don't want to keep your office at Williams and Associates?

AMARA

John thinks it's best if I stick with you all, and I agree. Besides, John keeps the office way too cold.

ROSE

Typical. (handing Amara a key)  
Here's the key to the back. Again, I'm sorry about the protestors. I hope they didn't harass you too much.

AMARA

No worries. I wonder if this is how Ruby Bridges felt. (beat) Man, that is a weird thought.

INT. WENDY'S OFFICE

Rose shows Amara into Wendy's office, avoiding the stacks of boxes and files.

ROSE

This is where you'll be working. Excuse the mess. Unfortunately, you'll have to leave everything where it is.

AMARA

Is this someone's office?

ROSE

It is, but she's working from home for a while.

AMARA

I hate to take her office.

ROSE

Don't apologize. It's better for her. I'm the one who's sorry you have to work in this pigsty.

DREA

(entering)  
Hey!

AMARA

Drea!

The two young lawyers hug enthusiastically.

AMARA (CONT'D)

I thought you were still at Moore Rosenthal.

DREA

I am. This is my white hat job. So you're with John Williams?

AMARA

I'm with your firm for the Stoutamire case. John seconded me over here.

DREA  
 (to Rose)  
 Is Wendy not here any more?

ROSE  
 Let's just say she's taking a  
 mental health break.

Rose turns to leave.

AMARA  
 Ms. Berliner, it's not charity.

Rose stops.

AMARA (CONT'D)  
 John said you have more conviction  
 than all the lawyers in Roanoke put  
 together. That's why we're playing  
 second chair.

ROSE  
 (to herself)  
 For the love of -- (to Amara)  
 Amara, let's get one thing  
 straight. In this office, it's  
 Rose. Only judges and opposing  
 counsel call me Ms. Berliner.

AMARA  
 Got it. Rose.

INT. WENDY'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Wendy's home office is just as cluttered and disorganized  
 looking as her Compass office. Wendy types out a brief as  
 noise from a distant part of the house intrudes.

EVAN (O.S.)  
 You played for two hours! Lex is  
 logged on now!

FRANCIS (O.S.)  
 It's my game. You don't like it,  
 buy your own.

EVAN (O.S.)  
 Mom said you had to share!

FRANCIS (O.S.)  
 Go away. Don't you have a date with  
 a box of crayons?

EVAN (O.S.)  
Better than a date with Olivia  
Shackled-on.

FRANCIS (O.S.)  
Real funny, you dumb butt.

EVAN (O.S.)  
Olivia! Oh, Olivia!

FRANCIS (O.S.)  
Shut up or I'll put your head in a  
blender!

EVAN (O.S.)  
Ow! Mom!

WENDY  
Working!

FRANCIS (O.S.)  
Shut your yap, you faker!

INT. GAME ROOM

Wendy tromps into the kids' game room, looking pissed. Evan (12) is grabbing at Francis's controller. As Wendy walks in, Francis (15) tackles Evan to the floor.

WENDY  
Francis!

FRANCIS  
I didn't touch him! This just  
happened!

EVAN  
Francis dislocated my arm!

FRANCIS  
(to Wendy)  
Oh sure, you walk in on the one  
thing I do!

EVAN  
I'm suffering emotional distress!

WENDY  
Damn it! I am trying to finish a  
brief! I can't have your juvenile  
distractions!

EVAN  
Why don't you go into the office?

WENDY  
(almost yelling)  
I don't have an office!

Wendy is a mixed bag of fury, distress, and tears now. Evan backs off, knowing he crossed a line.

FRANCIS  
You're working too hard, mom.

WENDY  
No. I'm not working hard enough.  
You don't understand. I have people  
who are depending on me.

EVAN  
We're depending on you.

Wendy bursts into sobs. Francis glares at Evan, who shrugs:  
"What?"

INT. DREA AND DAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

DAN BEVRIDGE, Drea's boyfriend and housemate, SNORES on the couch, an Xbox controller on his chest. Drea enters, still dressed in her suit.

DREA  
(shaking Dan)  
Wake up, Sleeping Beauty.

She starts doffing her coat, scarf, gloves, purse...

DAN  
(looking at the clock)  
Dang. You burned all your midnight  
oil, woman. You're working on next  
morning's supply.

DREA  
Make yourself useful. Pour me a  
glass of something.

Dan gets up and goes into the kitchen.

DAN (O.S.)  
Chardonnay, Petit Syrah, or Scotch?

DREA  
Chardonnay.



Drea settles on the couch while Dan pours. He hands her the glass, then makes for the stairs.

DREA (CONT'D)  
Where are you going?

DAN  
It's late.

DREA  
(patting the couch)  
It's only nine. Make yourself  
useful.

Dan GROANS and sits down on the couch. Drea puts her feet up on Dan's lap and he half-heartedly rubs them.

DAN  
Aren't you sitting down all day?

DREA  
Just rub. What did you do with  
yourself?

DAN  
Put a new sway bar on a sixty-six  
Mustang.

DREA  
I have no idea what that is.

Drea sips the Chardonnay, makes a face.

DAN  
It means I can finally sell it.  
Probably clear a couple hundred,  
all told. (seeing Drea's  
expression) It's actually pretty  
good.

DREA  
The wine tastes funny.

Dan takes a sip.

DAN  
Tastes like wine to me. I thought  
you weren't working on that big  
Lily Carlisle case.

DREA  
I'm not, but I'm taking over a  
bunch of other cases from Rose as a  
result.

DAN

I don't know why. Your firm said you couldn't work on the case. You shouldn't feel bad.

DREA

Well, I do. Annette's out the door every day at two, Wendy refuses to touch it, so that leaves just Rose and Amara.

DAN

That's not your real job. The firm pays down your law school debt.

DREA

True. I'm not going to pay it down with your car hobby.

DAN

It's not a hobby! It's a business!

DREA

Then show me your incorporation papers. Show me your client list.

DAN

Are we gonna talk about this again? If I got a job, it would be a disaster for us.

DREA

Because why?

DAN

Look at when you get home. Who'd do the shopping and clean the bathrooms?

Drea's phone RINGS.

DREA

You never clean the bathrooms.  
(answering) Hello?

DAN

(correcting himself)  
Who'd do the shopping?

DREA

Hey, Amara... I've got a drink, thanks to Dan, although it's not really doing it.

DAN  
Tastes like always. Hi, Amara!

DREA  
(still talking)  
Now? It's after nine.

DAN  
Let's go. I've been cooped up all day.

DREA  
(to Dan)  
Shut up! (into phone) Do I have to bring him?

EXT. MCKERN HOUSE - NIGHT

A nice suburban house. The picture of American domestic tranquility. In the driveway is a minivan sporting McCain-Palin and Romney-Ryan stickers, plus a Christ-fish decal.

INT. MCKERN HOUSE - GIRLS' BEDROOM

Annette says bedtime prayers with her ten-year-old daughter Ilsa and eight-year-old Tasha.

ANNETTE  
...and please forgive us for all the people we have been unkind to today. Rest us in Jesus' name. Amen.

ILSA  
And we pray for mommy's special client.

ANNETTE  
Which one is that?

ILSA  
The one you've been working so much on. He must be important if you're working so hard for him.

INT. MCKERN HOUSE - DINING ROOM

Annette comes down the stairs holding a Nintendo 2DS. She tosses it in a basket with other game devices.

She collapses into a dinette chair opposite her husband PATRICK, who is working on a laptop.

PATRICK  
How were prayers?

ANNETTE  
I caught Liam sneaking his games in bed, that kid. I'm about to snap that stupid thing in half.

PATRICK  
Thanks for taking care of that. I really have to finish up this report.

ANNETTE  
I should work tonight, too. Now that our motion got tossed out, we're throwing spaghetti at the wall.

PATRICK  
Or we could go make another kid.

ANNETTE  
What happened to the report?

PATRICK  
It's just a weekly activity report. It won't take me all night.

Annette throws a pillow at Patrick.

ANNETTE  
How can you think about sex while doing timesheets?

PATRICK  
You don't?

ANNETTE  
No. And certainly not when I've got Stoutamire on the brain.

PATRICK  
I think you should forget Leo Stoutamire tonight.

ANNETTE  
I can't do that. It's a capital case. He could get the needle.

PATRICK  
Would that be so terrible?

ANNETTE  
(shocked)  
How can you say that?

PATRICK  
What? You actually think he's  
innocent?

ANNETTE  
I'm defending him!

PATRICK  
What possible reason is there to  
kill over a statue? I don't think  
they need to rename the school, but  
I'd never shoot someone over  
Stonewall Jackson.

ANNETTE  
And who says he did?

PATRICK  
I know you're in your own little  
world, but pretty much everyone  
does.

ANNETTE  
Then thank God we don't execute  
people based on popular opinion.

Patrick closes his laptop.

PATRICK  
Maybe not, but popular opinion is  
wrecking our life.

ANNETTE  
How?

PATRICK  
You're in danger every time you go  
to work! Do you know how much I  
worry about you?

ANNETTE  
I always carry.

PATRICK  
Oh great. You being on trial for  
aggravated manslaughter would make  
our lives so much better --

ANNETTE  
 (overlapping)  
 There's no such thing as aggravated  
 manslaughter.

PATRICK  
 (continuing)  
 You can't sleep because you're  
 always thinking about the case. You  
 already resent being the divorce  
 and custody person in the firm --

ANNETTE  
 (overlapping)  
 It's because I believe in marriage  
 Rose made me the family law go-to!

PATRICK  
 (continuing)  
 I'm in the middle of busy season,  
 so I can't help pick up the kids --

ANNETTE  
 (overlapping)  
 I don't need you to pick up the  
 kids. That's why I work part time.

PATRICK  
 (continuing)  
 And now a lousy white supremacist  
 is determining the size of our  
 family.

Beat.

ANNETTE  
 You resent Stoutamire because he's  
 keeping you from gettin' some!

PATRICK  
 What? No!

ANNETTE  
 How long have I been doing this  
 job? You know how I feel. An  
 impassioned defense is the bedrock  
 of our legal system!

PATRICK  
 I know, I know.

ANNETTE

It's bad enough no one but Rose and I are working on this case -- and I'm part time!

PATRICK

Okay fine. I support you and all that.

Annette glares, but it's only half-serious.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

What? I said I support you.

ANNETTE

Ilsa wanted to pray for Leo. Why haven't we? We pray for my other clients.

PATRICK

What should we pray for? That he gets another BMW?

ANNETTE

He's a person, made in God's image. He joins these groups because he feels attacked. You've never felt frustrated?

PATRICK

Because I'm white? No.

ANNETTE

What if you were black?

PATRICK

(confused)  
He thinks he's black?

ANNETTE

Yes, in a way, he does. He feels everyone's against him.

PATRICK

Who?

ANNETTE

I don't know. Institutions. The media.

PATRICK

Well, they are. So what? News flash: life's not fair.

(MORE)

PATRICK (CONT'D)

I had to work full-time at college while everyone else was partying. If I had a richer family, I wouldn't have had to do that. I'd probably have a better job.

ANNETTE

You've got a perfectly good job.

PATRICK

It could always be better. If I made more, you could stop working. Then you'd have no guilt about leaving early or working at night instead of being with the kids.

ANNETTE

Or not giving you sex?

PATRICK

I said nothing.

EXT. RURAL HOUSE - DUSK

Wendy, Francis, and Evan are parked in a car on the road. Up a hill, at the end of a long driveway, they can see a large country home. As the sunlight fades, orange light glows from within, exuding pastoral warmth and peace.

FRANCIS

Creepy stalkers. That's what we are.

WENDY

We're on a public right of way.

FRANCIS

You think these people even use the built-in bunk beds? They're old.

WENDY

Maybe they have grandkids. They would love them.

EVAN

Yeah, right.

FRANCIS

I miss the pond. Dad taught us to fish there. I remember catching that ten pound trout with just my bamboo rod.



WENDY

What about you, Evan? What's your favorite memory?

EVAN

Whittling with dad on the back porch.

WENDY

It's so quiet here. (beat) So can I ask you boys a question? Would you be okay if I invited Dede over for Christmas?

EVAN

Why?

FRANCIS

Because she's mom's girlfriend, butt.

WENDY

Because she doesn't have anyone else.

EVAN

She doesn't have anyone because she's weird. She told me I'm the reincarnation of her ferret.

FRANCIS

You do look like a weasel.

WENDY

She has some issues. I appreciate you being nice to her.

EVAN

And she's not your girlfriend, mom.

WENDY

Why not?

EVAN

You know why.

WENDY

Maybe you should tell me.

EVAN

Because you haven't had sex.

FRANCIS

Ah! Evan, shut up!

EVAN  
Well, it's true.

WENDY  
Evan, there are parts of mom's life that I don't share with you, but regardless, sex doesn't have to be involved to love someone.

FRANCIS  
Can we talk about something else?

EVAN  
(to Wendy)  
You always bring weird people over on Christmas. I think Dede's just another one of your cases.

WENDY  
She's more than that.

Evan sulks in his seat. He's not happy.

FRANCIS  
We'd love to have Dede over.

WENDY  
Thank you, Francis.

EVAN  
So we have to be gluten-free again?

At that moment, the house lights up with bright white Christmas lights. The home looks magical.

FRANCIS  
Wow, look at that. We never decked the house out like that.

WENDY  
Your dad didn't like ladders.

EVAN  
(still sulking)  
Yeah, he didn't like mom's Christmas guests, either.

WENDY  
He tolerated them.

FRANCIS  
(lowering his voice)  
"That's the last time you bring some weird homeless person here!"  
(MORE)

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

This is a respectable house! Not a pound for stray dogs!"

Everybody laughs, a moment of mirth. Wendy wipes some tears away, trying to hold it together.

Evan picks up on this and starts crying. Francis puts his arm around his brother as he, too, tries unsuccessfully to stifle tears.

INT. COMPASS LAW FIRM - CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

Rose plows through the document boxes. She writes on a sticky note: CONDITION?, then attaches it to the photo of the gun.

Rose rubs her eyes and looks at the whiteboard. On it is a diagram of Montrose Park, marked with the locations of the STONEWALL JACKSON STATUE, SHOOTING, LEO START, LEO ARREST, and LEO'S CAR on Wilson Street.

She opens a file folder marked SHIKU, Rachel's immigration case file. Inside is the picture Annette took of the mother and children, smiling for the camera.

Rose goes up to the whiteboard and takes it off its hooks. Tacked to the wall behind it are PHOTOS -- snapshots of past CLIENTS. Rose finds a spot and tacks Rachel's picture up.

INT. ROSE'S OFFICE

Rose goes into her office and closes the door. She opens her desk and reaches deep inside. Out comes a pack of cigarettes, unwrapped.

Rose makes to open them twice, each time putting them back in the drawer. Finally, she unwraps them and takes one out.

She puts the cigarette between her lips with easy familiarity. One last hesitation, then she lights up.

The nicotine courses through her. Rose relaxes. She leans back in her chair and calls up REBECCA on her phone. She dials.

REBECCA (V.O.)

Hi! This is Rebecca. I can't pick up now, so text me!

ROSE

This is your mom. You know I can't text you with my dumb phone.

(MORE)

ROSE (CONT'D)

I know you don't check your voicemail, but you should -- oh, never mind.

Rose hangs up and types out a text laboriously on her dumb phone:

JUST CHKING IN. CASE KLLING ME. U MADE PLANS FOR XMAS? SEEING DAD? DON'T FORGET MOM.

A BANG startles Rose. There's a MAN outside the window dressed as SANTA CLAUS. He waves cheerily at Rose.

SANTA CLAUS

Ho ho ho!

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Amara, Drea, and their friend JOHANNA enjoy company and cocktails.

AMARA

I can't talk about the case!

DREA

Oh come on! I'm a member of the firm!

AMARA

Yeah, but Johanna's not.

JOHANNA

I can leave.

AMARA

No! I didn't call you all to discuss the case. I wanted to forget the case for an hour.

JOHANNA

Then let's forget. No Leo Stoutamire, no Bill, and no Dan!

DREA

Hear hear!

They clink glasses.

AMARA

Someone sounded a little salty with her man on the phone.

DREA

Oh my gosh! He says he feels  
"cooped up". I wish I got to fiddle  
around with antique cars all day.

JOHANNA

There's this thing called a job.

AMARA

Why should he get a job? Drea pays  
the bills. (seeing Drea's reaction)  
It's true!

DREA

Then he's too tired to listen to  
me, but when someone invites us  
out, suddenly he has energy. Ugh.

AMARA

We'll listen.

DREA

No shop talk!

JOHANNA

I'm interested.

DREA

No you're not. Construction law is  
nothing but filing forms and  
getting permits and dealing with  
general contractors who look at you  
like you don't know anything  
because you wear a skirt. How does  
John Williams treat you?

AMARA

I've never had a complaint. I guess  
that's good.

JOHANNA

Yeah, for a Republican.

AMARA

John's great. I get to run my own  
cases for the most part.

DREA

I can't wait to be done with big  
firm life. Only ten more years of  
student loans.

JOHANNA

By then, Dan will be ready to get a job and maybe even propose.

DREA

No rush. Seriously. At least about the second part.

JOHANNA

(to Amara)

So I have to ask a question, but you don't have to answer, especially if it's confidential.

DREA

I thought we weren't talking about work.

JOHANNA

Why did John put you on this case?

AMARA

You really want to know?

JOHANNA

Yes.

AMARA

I asked.

DREA

I did not know that.

JOHANNA

(surprised)

Why?

AMARA

Because it seemed like a challenge and a slam dunk. The evidence is paper thin.

JOHANNA

But he's a horrible racist!

AMARA

He's not on trial for that.

JOHANNA

But he is. His bigotry led him to shoot Lily Carlisle!

AMARA

The Commonwealth has to prove that beyond a reasonable doubt.

JOHANNA

There's no doubt in my mind. He's exactly the type of person I can see doing that.

AMARA

You mean a retrograde white supremacist.

JOHANNA

Yes!

AMARA

But did he do it? Did Leo M. Stoutamire do it?

JOHANNA

Isn't that what I said?

AMARA

You said he's the type of person who would do this.

JOHANNA

You're pulling lawyer tricks on me. You know what I meant.

AMARA

Yes, and there are thousands of disgusting racist white supremacists who don't ever kill people. Should they go to prison because they're the right type?

JOHANNA

Maybe they should. I stopped having Thanksgiving with my family because they don't support Black Lives Matter. How can you sit at the same table with Leo Stoutamire every day?

AMARA

I did say it was a challenge.

EXT. MONTROSE PARK

JUSTICE FOR LILY! cry numerous placards. A RALLY is under way, with dozens of angry PROTESTORS holding signs, SHOUTING, and raising fists.

Other signs denounce VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN and SEGREGATION. One bears a photo of the mangled body of Emmett Till, asking HOW MANY MORE? Inexplicably, one out-of-place sign decries ISRAEL WAR CRIMES.

Someone carries in an effigy of Leo. Quickly, a noose is placed around its neck, and "Leo" is hoisted up a convenient tree. Protestors bat at it like a piñata.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

Rose, Amara, Al, and Annette comb through boxes and boxes of documents.

ANNETTE

(checking her watch)

Rose, it's two. What can I take home?

ROSE

Nothing, I'm afraid. Kiplinger gave us too much stuff, and I don't want it to get disorganized.

AL

I found some more videos of the rally. I'll send you the links so you can look at them at home. Not family friendly.

ANNETTE

Nazis and violence. Just how I want to spend my evening.

She scoops up a stack of folders and departs.

AMARA

Is there anything in here about the witness? A deposition?

ROSE

There should be.

AL

It's not here, Rose. Kiplinger fucked us.



ROSE  
 (snapping)  
 Well, what have you done? Isn't it  
 your job to track her down?

AL  
 Not when you tell me your BFF's  
 gonna hand it over in a gift box.

ROSE  
 Well, go find her.

Tension.

ROSE  
 Al, I'm sorry. I just expected  
 better from Ed.

AL  
 That's the problem. Sure, I'll get  
 you a witness. Maybe a milkshake,  
 while I'm at it.

AMARA  
 There were hundreds of people  
 there. Shouldn't there be more than  
 one witness to the shooting?

ROSE  
 There should be, but apparently  
 there's only one the state finds  
 credible.

Rose throws down her glasses.

ROSE  
 In the Torah, you needed two  
 witnesses to put someone to death.  
 Now, one will do.

AMARA  
 Where are our witnesses?

AL  
 Which White Squall member do you  
 want to put up on the stand?

AMARA  
 There must have been a  
 counterprotestor whose testimony  
 contradicts this witness. We impugn  
 the first witness's version of  
 events, and we have reasonable  
 doubt.

ROSE

Just because we agree with them, we can't assume a counterprotestor will come off as more sympathetic. Second, in this climate, I doubt we'll find anyone on that side who will put their neck on the line for Leo.

AMARA

Even if it's the truth?

ROSE

The truth doesn't set you free. It only gets your name splashed on CNN and The Daily Beast. You'll be savaged on Twitter, harassed on Facebook. You'll have to move to Alaska to get away from the death threats. Look at what's happening outside our office. Anyone who gets Leo off the hook will get ten times what we're getting.

A sober Amara returns to discovery.

INT. ROSE'S OFFICE - THE NEXT DAY

Rose runs in and slams the door, panicked. She opens her laptop and dials JOHN WILLIAMS on Skype. John's wife MICHELLE answers, her face filling the screen.

ROSE

Michelle, I just heard! Is John okay?

MICHELLE

He's fine. It was touch and go for a while, but he's --

JOHN (O.S.)

I can talk to her!

MICHELLE

No! You're not working while you're recovering.

JOHN (O.S.)

It's not work. Give me the phone!

Rose's screen fills with BLURS, then John's face appears. He is in a hospital gown in a bed.

JOHN

Hey, Rose.

ROSE

I can't believe it! Did someone really try to poison you?!

JOHN

I know, right? Millions in judgments against corporations and none of them tried to kill me.

ROSE

Dammit, John! This is serious!

JOHN

The docs can't say conclusively it was actually poison. It could be botulism.

ROSE

Who did this?

MICHELLE

(poking her head in)

The police are investigating Trevi and Thirty-nine Main -- I'd stay away from them. Metropolitan actually threw him out.

ROSE

I know Mirielle! She wouldn't do that!

JOHN

She did, and in doing so saved herself a visit from the police. You and I know they won't find anything. I eat out ten times a week. For all I know, some sous chef just didn't wash his hands.

MICHELLE

Pleasant.

JOHN

Stop worrying about me, Rose. Considering how many medical malpractice suits I've won against this hospital, I should be more worried about them than some assassin.

Rose sits down.

ROSE

I can't believe this. What are we coming to?

JOHN

All part of being a local celebrity. Now I know why you wanted me as co-counsel. Decoy.

MICHELLE

What do you think about Kiplinger?

ROSE

What about him?

MICHELLE

You haven't seen the news? He's formed an exploratory committee. He wants to be Attorney General.

EXT. COMMONWEALTH ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Rose catches Kiplinger and Jordan as they exit the building, heading to lunch.

ROSE

Don't you dare, Ed! Don't you dare use my client to leverage your way to Richmond!

KIPLINGER

Never occurred to me.

ROSE

Now that's the biggest cow pie you've dropped yet. How could it not occur to you?

KIPLINGER

(to Jordan)

Why don't you go on ahead? I'll catch up.

JORDAN

I'll stay.

KIPLINGER

I don't need a security detail, Kelly. Be right there.

Jordan moves on, casting a sideways glance at Rose.

KIPLINGER

I'll only talk to you if you keep it civil.

ROSE

How can I do that when you want to ride Leo Stoutamire's corpse to the Attorney General's office?

KIPLINGER

Plead out then.

ROSE

Plead what? You haven't put anything on the table.

KIPLINGER

Neither have you.

ROSE

I'm waiting to see who this supposed witness is.

KIPLINGER

Let's walk.

ROSE

You're not going to give me the witness. Why the hell not, Ed?

KIPLINGER

She's already in fear of retribution from White Squall. The last thing she wants is to be badgered and put under a microscope.

ROSE

That's my job! And yours too. Has your office investigated her allegations? How about that ballistics test? When am I going to see that?

KIPLINGER

You'll get it when we get it.

He starts away. Rose doesn't follow.

ROSE

Is there Brady evidence I'm not seeing?

KIPLINGER

No.

ROSE

Have a nice lunch.

Rose walks away.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF COMPASS LAW OFFICE

LEO, parked a block away, watches the Protestors march and SHOUT outside the firm. He watches them, stone-faced.

A pickup truck flying a REBEL FLAG drives by, the DRIVER HOOTING at the Protestors. As a group, the Protestors run after the truck and throw any missiles they can grab -- sign pickets, glass bottles, even a shoe. Unfazed, the truck drives away.

Leo gets out of his BMW and heads straight for the Protestors.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

Leo meets with Rose.

ROSE

I trusted Kiplinger to get us the witness testimony, but we're just going to have to wait until trial. I screwed up, Leo. Now, if you know anyone who can corroborate your version of events --

LEO

I want to change my plea.

Rose rubs her temples -- from relief?

ROSE

What do you want to change it to?

LEO

Self-defense.

ROSE

That's not a plea.

LEO

I want to argue self-defense.

ROSE  
You can't argue self-defense if you  
didn't fire your gun.

LEO  
I did fire my gun.

ROSE  
(exhausted)  
No, you didn't. We've been arguing  
this whole time you never drew your  
weapon. And self defense requires  
the reasonable fear of imminent and  
grave bodily harm.

LEO  
I fired my gun because I was in  
fear for my life. The  
counterprotestors were boxing us  
in, threatening to kill us. I was  
outnumbered. So I drew my firearm.

ROSE  
Leo, think hard before you --

LEO  
You want to test my theory, step  
outside. I tried to come in through  
the front door, they descended on  
me like a pack of wolves. That's  
who they are.

ROSE  
(voice rising)  
This is not about them, this is  
about you and Lily Carlisle!

LEO  
You want proof? I recorded the  
whole thing. Show that to Ed  
Kiplinger.

ROSE  
I'm not showing any of your cell  
phone video to Kiplinger and I'm  
not changing your plea.

LEO  
Well, you're gonna have to, 'cause  
I already told them.

ROSE  
Told who?

LEO  
The crowd outside.

Rose processes this, then throws her glasses down on the table so hard, they break into pieces.

ROSE  
Why?! Why can I not get through your head that you are on trial for murder?! That your life is on the line?! WHY?!

LEO  
My life is on the line because of their bias! (pointing outside) They've already condemned me! The media has already condemned me! I'm not getting a fair trial anyway, so I'm gonna expose them for what they are! They say they want peace and justice. They only want one thing -- violence against anyone who disagrees with them!

ROSE  
They are not the ones on trial!

LEO  
That's the problem! I'm in here because I dared to defend history!

ROSE  
You're in here because a woman is dead!

That shuts Leo up momentarily.

ROSE  
What do you think we've been doing this whole time? Attacking the state's case against you, poking holes in their assertions. Facts, Leo! Now you come along and piss it all away! Now, I can exclude anything the protestors report as hearsay, but you are not to talk to anyone else about this case. No social media, no emails, no text, no fucking smoke signals!

LEO  
Don't you think I have the right to be heard?



ROSE  
 If you want to keep subverting my  
 defense of you, you need to seek  
 other counsel.

INT. MCKERN HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Annette makes dinner while Patrick chases Ilsa, Tasha, and  
 Liam around. General rowdiness.

PATRICK  
 I'm gonna bust your heads!

Ilsa and Tasha SQUEAL as they blow by Annette in the kitchen.

ANNETTE  
 Hot stove, people!

They vacate the kitchen, but soon:

LIAM (O.S.)  
 Mommy, your work is on TV!

ANNETTE  
 What?

PATRICK (O.S.)  
 Your office is on the news!

Annette runs into the living room.

ANNETTE  
 Did we get bombed?

She grabs the remote and unmutes the TV as the newscast shows  
 CELL PHONE VIDEO taken by the protestors of Leo.

LEO  
 (on TV, approaching  
 camera)  
 You got nothing better to do than  
 harass people?

PROTESTOR (O.S.)  
 You killed Lily Carlisle!

LEO  
 (on TV)  
 So what're you gonna do about it?

ANNETTE  
 Oh shit.

REACTION: CHILDREN

INT. WENDY'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

Wendy watches the news with equal horror -- maybe some amusement.

PROTESTOR (O.S.)  
You're gonna fry, you racist fuck!

Overlapping SHOUTS AND SCREAMS.

INT. AL'S CAR - SAME TIME

Al is watching the news live streaming on her phone.

LEO  
(on screen)  
If the courts are gonna hang me,  
why are you here?

PROTESTOR (O.S.)  
Justice delayed is justice denied!

The owner of the phone PUNCHES Leo, if the weak assault can be called a punch. Another Protestor, a MAN, takes the cue and swings at Leo's head.

AL  
(laughing to herself)  
We are so screwed.

INT. COMPASS LAW OFFICE - ROSE'S OFFICE

Rose is working in her office when Amara opens the door breathlessly.

AMARA  
It's on the news!

ROSE  
What's on the news?

Rose follows Amara out to the main area to see the confrontation on the six o'clock news.

Leo pushes the Man back, prompting more SHOUTING from the Protestors.

MAN

(on TV)

Did you see that?! He assaulted me!

LEO

(on TV)

It was self-defense! I shot in self-defense! You all started it and I was in fear for my life!

ROSE

Do you carry a gun?

AMARA

No. Why?

ROSE

Because someone has to put me out of my misery.

Her MOBILE PHONE RINGS. Rose scoots to her office to answer.

ROSE

Rose Berliner.

INT. COMMONWEALTH ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

The TV news is also on in Ed Kiplinger's office.

KIPLINGER

Rose, what's going on?

INTERCUT WITH ROSE

ROSE

I don't know what you're talking about.

KIPLINGER

Did you stage this?

ROSE

What if I did stage this? What do you care?

KIPLINGER

What do you hope to accomplish? This is going to backfire.

ROSE

The only ones it will backfire on are those protestors. How about bringing assault charges?

KIPLINGER

No one cares about what a bunch of self-important SJWs do. All they're going to see is Leo getting rough with people. It points to a violent temperament.

ROSE

You're concern is touching.

KIPLINGER

If you're changing your defense, that's your prerogative, but if Leo's saying this, you can't have him testify he never drew his gun. That's suborning perjury and a violation of ethics.

ROSE

You've got a lot of nerve calling me out on ethics.

Rose hangs up.

Then HURLS HER PHONE OUT THE DOOR. It whizzes past Amara, smashing to pieces on the wall.

INT. MOBILE PHONE STORE

In LONG SHOT, we see Rose speaking with a MOBILE SALES ASSOCIATE. The Associate shows Rose a smartphone, walking her through the features.

INT. ROSE'S HOME - NIGHT

Rose reads the instructions to her new smartphone. She powers up the device. The animated startup screen greets her:

HELLO. I'M JUSTINE. ASK ME ANYTHING. I'M HERE TO HELP.

ROSE

(into phone)

Justine, how do I dump my racist client?

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

Annette listens patiently (not) as a HUSBAND and WIFE argue over custody.

WIFE

You can't have the week. Do you even care about Brian's schooling?

HUSBAND

Fine, whatever, you have the week.

WIFE

So you get all the fun while I get all the running around?

ANNETTE

(to Wife)

What do you want?

HUSBAND

You know what she wants? She wants someone who works all the time, but is always there. She wants to have a fulfilling career, but always be available for Brian.

WIFE

What's wrong with that?

ANNETTE

It's unrealistic. You can have it all. You just can't have it all at the same time.

WIFE

I had expectations when we got married, and he isn't meeting them. He's not involved in his son's activities. He got laid off from his job.

ANNETTE

That's not his fault.

HUSBAND

At least I didn't gain fifty pounds.

ANNETTE

(to Husband)

Apologize.

Husband ignores Annette, so she repeats herself more loudly.

ANNETTE

Apologize!

HUSBAND

Sorry.

ANNETTE

Now first, I don't know how you all can afford two households with your economic situation. Second, without any infidelity or abuse, I don't believe your case rises to the level of separation. And you have Brian to think of. Have you seen a clergyman or marriage counselor?

WIFE

No. I just want to be done.

HUSBAND

So do I. Let's make this happen.

EXT. ALLEY

Rose has it out with Annette.

ROSE

You can't refuse to help them!  
They're our clients!

ANNETTE

They can't afford to divorce!

ROSE

That's why we're helping them! The poor need legal representation, too. You don't get to pick your cases.

ANNETTE

Wendy does. She refuses to work on Leo. Why should I have to help families split up?

INT. WENDY'S HOUSE

Wendy pours Rose a cup of herbal tea at the kitchen table.

WENDY

Annette has a point.

ROSE

If I give in to her rebellion, I won't have anyone left.

(MORE)

ROSE (CONT'D)

Maybe you should take over the family law cases.

WENDY

Yeah, right. I have enough bickering in my own life.

ROSE

How are you holding up?

WENDY

The twentieth was hard. The boys didn't want to go to the gravesite this year.

ROSE

Not even Francis?

WENDY

I wonder if he's struggling more inside than he lets on.

ROSE

He knows he's the man of the house now.

WENDY

That's what I'm afraid of.

Rose takes a sip of tea. She tries not to make a face.

WENDY (CONT'D)

(seeing Rose's reaction)  
Dandelion tea. It's supposed to be good for your liver.

ROSE

I think I'd rather get cirrhosis.

WENDY

I gave up caffeine -- it was making me edgy. I saw John Williams was poisoned.

ROSE

It may have not been deliberate. But you know John. Sensationalism clings to him like fleas on a dog. What do I do about Leo?

WENDY

You're the one who took him on. Don't ask me what to do about him.

ROSE

I'm asking as a friend.

WENDY

Dump him. Or at least shut the case down, plead out, whatever.

ROSE

Wendy, I need you back. I need all hands on deck on Stoutamire.

WENDY

No way.

ROSE

Put aside your personal feelings for a moment!

WENDY

How should I do that? You don't do it. Annette's not doing it.

ROSE

An impassioned defense --

WENDY

Don't give me that speech! No one understands or cares about the rights of the accused but us! My friends, my kids -- they don't understand! They just see me standing up for racism! I have people at my church who marched on Washington. People look up to them. What do I get? The man who killed Lily Carlisle!

ROSE

Did he? Where's the evidence?

WENDY

He associates with neo-Nazis. He was at a rally to perpetuate the Lost Cause of slavery. I've had it up to here with white men who think they're above it all! Who cares about evidence?

ROSE

I do! And so do you! Without evidence, the real killer, the person who actually shot Lily Carlisle will get off free.

(MORE)



ROSE (CONT'D)

He'll go about his life with a smug smile on his face feeling untouchable. That's what's going to happen if we let Leo swing. Is that justice? Can you live with that?

Wendy betrays no emotion, her face a stone.

INT. COMMONWEALTH ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

Rose and Amara meet with Kiplinger and Jordan in his office. On the desk between them is a printout of a social media posting and a photo of a Glock 30.

KIPLINGER

(reading)

"We were there. We were armed. Next time it's you, Nazis." You expect me to take this Facebook post as a confession?

ROSE

I expect you to recognize reasonable doubt when you see it.

KIPLINGER

No reasonable person would accept this as an alternative theory.

ROSE

Then prove me wrong. Go find these people and while you're at it, do a forensic examination of the gun.

KIPLINGER

If I charged every troll who made a claim on social media, grand juries would be all I did. This is beneath you, Rose. It's a desperation play.

ROSE

It's what desperate people do. You are charging my client with murder in the first degree -- willful and premeditated with malice aforethought. That carries a possible death penalty.

KIPLINGER

We can talk about the --

ROSE

I'm not finished! My client has never committed a crime in his life and now he's in jeopardy of losing his. You've buried me under mountains of discovery, ninety percent of which pertains to rioters and The Marxist Front and Daughters of the Confederacy and people with whom my client has no association! I have one job and that's speaking for Leo Stoutamire. Your job is to see that justice is served -- for the people, for Lily Carlisle, even for Leo Stoutamire.

KIPLINGER

That's a nice speech. But it's an adversarial system, Rose. I've got to come out swinging, on behalf of the people. Your client is a member of White Squall, a group that came to Montrose Park armed and looking for a fight.

ROSE

Bearing arms is not a crime. Neither is freely associating with a heinous hate group. I don't need to tell you that.

KIPLINGER

No, but you need to convince the jury, which in the City of Roanoke will be half African-American and all Democrat.

AMARA

As an African-American Democrat, I find that insulting. Those black Democrat juries convicted a lot of our black Democrat clients.

KIPLINGER

They didn't convict O.J.

JORDAN

Ed, stop.

KIPLINGER

Voluntary manslaughter. We'll call it a bar fight.

ROSE  
Sentencing?

KIPLINGER  
I'll have to push for the maximum.  
Fifteen years. He can do it at  
Morgantown and work on his  
backhand.

ROSE  
Fifteen years is a lot for someone  
who's not guilty.

KIPLINGER  
Once the cameras are turned off, he  
can get out on work release, maybe  
do five with good behavior.

ROSE  
That's still a lot to swallow.

KIPLINGER  
Convince him.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Rose talks with Al at a table. Both nurse large mugs of black  
joe.

ROSE  
(sliding the Glock photo  
back to Al)  
It was worth a shot, but Ed didn't  
bite. Good find.

AL  
Annette found it. She just sent it  
to me.

ROSE  
Is Annette not talking to me, too?

AL  
What did you do this time?

ROSE  
What makes you think it was me?  
Annette wants out of all family law  
cases.

AL

But you told her she had to, the poor have a right to representation, et cetera?

ROSE

It's not me. The law is a harsh mistress.

AL

Yeah, but in the end it's all about people. Isn't that why you keep that wall of pictures? Annette's a person, too. So's Wendy.

DREA

Hey!

Drea happens on to the scene, two large to-go cups in hand.

DREA

Working late?

ROSE

You know it. You too?

DREA

(holding up the two cups)  
I've been meaning to tell you, I'll have to leave early from the open house. The zoning board is meeting that day and Herman wants me to present.

ROSE

Have a seat.

Drea happily complies.

ROSE

We're not having our Christmas open house.

DREA

Why?

ROSE

Thanks to Stoutamire, we don't have the time and frankly, we don't have the money.

DREA

But we have to. Our clients look forward to it.

WENDY

(appearing with tea in  
hand)

Lawyers? Working late with coffee?  
Can't be.

AL

Impromptu staff meeting, looks  
like.

WENDY

Great. Let's move it to a bar!

ROSE

Don't tempt me. I was just telling  
Drea I'm cancelling our open house.

WENDY

We can't do that.

ROSE

Then you all can take up a  
collection. Sorry, girls. I've got  
nothing but bad news today.

DREA

I have some news.

ROSE

What? You're pregnant?

Drea doesn't know how to respond. Rose realizes she nailed  
it. She gets up and hugs Drea.

ROSE

Congratulations! Oh, I'm so sorry I  
stole your thunder!

DREA

I was going to tell you, but it  
never seemed to be the right time.

Al stands and hugs Drea.

AL

You'll make an awesome mom.

DREA

I hope so. It's kind of scary.

It's Wendy's turn. She embraces Drea, but with a perfunctory  
air.

WENDY

How much time will you take off?

DREA

I don't know. I haven't thought about it.

WENDY

Nine months isn't that far off.

DREA

Some of it depends on Dan's job search. Um, we got married.

ROSE

What?! Girl!

Another round of standing and hugging.

DREA

It was just in Judge Pan's office. You'll all be invited when we have the real ceremony. Believe it or not, it was Dan's idea. Figured I'd better jump before he changed his mind.

WENDY

So now that you're Mrs. Dan Bevridge, he's the boss?

DREA

Right!

WENDY

You finally cracked the construction group and now you're jumping off, right? No partner track for you.

DREA

I didn't say that.

ROSE

(to Wendy)

It's her choice. What's up with you?

WENDY

This always happens. We get married, we get pregnant, we quit working. We say we want to be treated equally, but then we fall back on our bourgeois values.

ROSE  
Shit, Wendy. What in --

WENDY  
(to Drea)  
All I'm asking is that you think  
about this before throwing  
everything away.

DREA  
I could have an abortion.

ROSE AND AL  
God no! No one's saying that!

WENDY  
Just forget it.

DREA  
Believe it or not, I did think  
about it. I thought: what do most  
of our clients have in common? They  
have kids. They're not married.  
They don't think two steps ahead of  
today. I refuse. I refuse to let  
that happen to my family. So  
bourgeois values, bring them on.

Drea rises from the table.

DREA  
I have a presentation to finish.  
I'll give Dan your congratulations.

She leaves.

AL  
(to Wendy)  
Winner winner chicken dinner.

ROSE  
Mother of Jesus, Wendy.

WENDY  
It needed to be said.

ROSE  
Because you feel guilty not staying  
on the partner track? Why does  
everything have to be about you?

INT. COURTHOUSE - INTAKE

Rose paces impatiently, waiting for someone. A Man, DEVON'S DAD, pushes open the courthouse door.

ROSE  
Where's Devon?

DEVON'S DAD  
He's coming.

ROSE  
Judge Kelty gets crabby when his  
schedule's pushed back.

DEVON, a surly-looking 16-year-old black youth enters. The first thing Rose notices is his BLACK LIVES MATTER T-shirt.

ROSE (CONT'D)  
Not the best apparel choice, Devon.

DEVON  
What're they gonna do? Shoot me?

ROSE  
It's comments like that that get  
you in trouble. Come on.

She waves Devon and his Dad to the security line. As Devon walks through the metal detector, Rose sees the SHERIFF'S DEPUTIES screwing their faces up at Devon.

When the young man finishes his security check, Rose spins him around. The back of his shirt reads FUCK THA PIGS above a cartoon drawing of a pig wearing a police uniform.

ROSE (CONT'D)  
(to Devon's Dad)  
You let him come to court in this?

DEVON'S DAD  
I don't pick out his clothes.

ROSE  
What kind of message do you think  
this sends to the judge?

The Dad looks confused, as if there's no problem.

DEVON  
It sends the message that young,  
black men are the victims of police  
brutality.



ROSE  
It sends the message you belong in  
juvenile detention! (to Dad) Give  
him your shirt!

DEVON'S DAD  
What?

DEVON  
I have a right to be heard!

ROSE  
(losing it)  
You want to screw up your life? Do  
it when you're eighteen! Until  
then, you're going to take off that  
shirt and keep your mouth shut in  
there!

Devon is momentarily stunned by Rose's outburst. Then he  
wiggles out of his shirt.

DEVON  
Always silencing the black man.

INT. COMPASS LAW FIRM - EVENING

Rose stomps in and throws down her litigation bag. The office  
is empty, so she takes a moment to collect herself.

WENDY (O.S.)  
What is all this?

Rose, startled, SCREAMS and jumps a foot.

ROSE  
Don't do that!

WENDY  
There's a bunch of crap in my  
office.

ROSE  
It's Amara's stuff. She's using  
your office while she's working on  
Stoutamire.

WENDY  
You gave my office away?

ROSE

Be fair, Wendy. You're the one who stormed out. What are you doing here now?

WENDY

I bring you glad tidings, only they're really bad tidings.

ROSE

You don't sugarcoat anything, do you?

WENDY

(holding up her phone)  
A friend tipped me off on something relating to Stoutamire.

ROSE

One, I thought you refused to touch the case. Two, unless it's video of someone else shooting Lily Carlisle, I don't want it.

WENDY

Really?

ROSE

(resigned)  
What do you got?

Wendy hands her the phone with a pair of earbuds. Rose puts the earbuds in and listens to a file Wendy plays her.

LEO (V.O.)

...they came there to incite violence. It's what they do. Who was wearing the masks? We weren't.

ROSE

What is this?

WENDY

It's an alt-right podcast.

HOST (V.O.)

But you were the one arrested. Not these Antifa people.

LEO (V.O.)

Yeah, because it was one of theirs who got shot.

(MORE)

LEO (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Believe me, if it was one of ours, there would be radio silence. We would've "deserved" it, right?

ROSE

Damn it. When did he do this?

WENDY

It just dropped yesterday.

HOST (V.O.)

It's ironic that it's now a crime to be white and male in America, a country founded by European white men. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and even Stonewall Jackson.

LEO (V.O.)

It's also ironic that on the left, it's considered a virtue just to be black or brown -- or a woman or gay. Stuff you have no control of.

HOST (V.O.)

That's right.

LEO (V.O.)

It's ironic because when you look at history, it's Europeans who have shown the most virtue. Look at Africa today, or the Caribbean or the Middle East. You got crime, corruption, no industry.

HOST (V.O.)

You have oil in the Middle East.

LEO (V.O.)

Developed by Americans. These countries need Europe and America. If not for us, they would be even worse shitholes than they are already. I know it's not politically correct to say, but I question whether you can call these people human.

Rose rips out the earbuds. She slides her key ring to Wendy.

ROSE

Yellow key. Bottom drawer, Annette's desk.

Rose gets up and goes to her office as Wendy opens the drawer.

WENDY  
 (searching)  
 What am I -- oh.

She pulls out an unopened bottle of reserve small batch bourbon. Rose emerges from her office with two shot glasses.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
 I'm concerned you have barware in your office.

Rose cracks open the bourbon. She pours two shots of bourbon.

ROSE  
 (raising glass)  
 To the Sixth Amendment. You have the right to an attorney! If you cannot afford one or you're a complete ass, Rose Berliner and the Compass Law Firm will represent you!

She slams back her shot. Wendy follows. Rose refills the glasses.

WENDY  
 Do you think this is a good idea?

ROSE  
 (toasting again)  
 To shithole countries!

WENDY  
 To shit--

At that moment, Annette walks in, a shopping bag in hand.

ANNETTE  
 Oh, hey. I have the decorations for the Christmas open house.

ROSE  
 We're not having one.

ANNETTE  
 We always have one.

ROSE  
 Can't afford it. Out of money and out of cheer.

ANNETTE

That's why we need to have a party.  
What are you all listening to?

WENDY

Oh, you've got to hear this.

She hands Annette the earbuds. The paralegal listens to the podcast while Rose and Wendy contemplate the shots.

WENDY (CONT'D)

You really think it's wise to do  
this many shots?

ROSE

About as wise as taking this case.  
(raising glass) To Drea, Dan, and  
baby.

Rose and Wendy drink to that. Rose pours two more.

WENDY

I have to drive home.

ROSE

This is the good stuff. (Nodding  
toward the phone) Does it get  
worse?

Annette rips the earbuds out. She takes one shot and tosses it back. Then the next.

INT. THEATRE (COURTROOM SET)

Leo enters to the empty theater. House lights are on, revealing the minimal "courtroom" set.

LEO

Hello?

Rose appears from the wings.

ROSE

Glad you could make it.

LEO

Why are we in a theater?

ROSE

I'm in a community theater group. They help me stage trials so I can rehearse statements and test my arguments. I also prep people for testifying in open court.

LEO

I'm no actor.

ROSE

Then maybe you should take the deal Kiplinger offered.

LEO

What deal?

ROSE

You plead to involuntary manslaughter. You do five to fifteen in a minimum security prison, get out with a felony record, lose your voting rights and your gun rights.

LEO

Are you joking? No way.

ROSE

You still want to claim self defense like you did on Bart Johnson's podcast?

LEO

How did you hear that? It's supposed to be secure.

ROSE

And you're supposed to not talk about the case.

LEO

They're pretty clever. They don't come at you with knives and guns, at least not yet. They chip away at you with lies and selective reporting. Then they gaslight you, and if that doesn't work, they'll just call you a bad person and chase you out of the workplace, then the polls. You fight back, it's you who started it. Do I want to claim self defense? Hell yes.

(MORE)

LEO (CONT'D)

Someone's got to. We have the right to be heard.

ROSE

Okay then.

The house lights go dark. The stage lights up with a CLUNK. Annette, Wendy, Drea, Amara, and Al file out onto the stage, along with ACTORS playing Kiplinger, the Bailiff, and Judge Fishman. We are now in the world of the play.

"JUDGE"

Will the bailiff please seat the jury?

The JURY files out and takes their places. Leo sees what can't be missed -- half the jury is black. Rachel plays one of the jurors.

ROSE

(to Leo)

Would you please take the stand?

LEO

I thought you didn't want to put me on the stand.

ROSE

You have the right to be heard.

Leo calmly takes the chair on the "witness stand." "Kiplinger" shuffles his papers as Wendy, wearing a black wig and playing Kelly Jordan, sits sedately beside him.

Amara, acting as a sort of Greek Chorus, rises and addresses the room:

AMARA

The defendant has pleaded he acted in self-defense. The Commonwealth of Virginia recognizes the validity of self-defense provided certain conditions are met. The defender must be wholly innocent -- he or she cannot have started the conflict. The threat must be imminent -- happening at the moment. The response must be proportional -- deadly force can only be used against an equally serious threat, what we call the fear of grave bodily harm.

(MORE)

AMARA (CONT'D)

If any of these conditions are not met, you must reject the defendant's claims of self-defense.

Wendy/"Kelly Jordan" shoots up and addresses Leo.

WENDY

Mister Stoutamire, based on this information, do you persist in your claim of self-defense?

LEO

Absolutely.

WENDY

Let's start with the first point. Did you start the conflict?

LEO

Hell no!

"Judge Fishman" BANGS his gavel.

LEO

No, Counselor. We had a right to be there. We had a permit and everything. It was them who came to silence us!

WENDY

You brought a gun. You were expecting trouble.

LEO

I was prepared, yes.

WENDY

Several of the White Squall protestors were wearing body armor and military gear.

ROSE

Objection. They're not on trial.

WENDY

Withdrawn. The White Squall website claims one its missions is to, quote, "fight back against the slaughter of European culture." What does "fight back" mean to you?

ROSE

Again, objection. He's not a member of this group.



WENDY

They organized this event, and by attending, Leo Stoutamire aligned himself with their philosophy and objectives. (to Leo) Do you disavow them?

ROSE

My client doesn't have to answer one way or another. His views are not on trial here, unless we throw out the First Amendment.

"JUDGE"

Ms. Jordan, please stick to the case at hand.

WENDY

So Lily Carlisle attacked you?

LEO

What?

WENDY

Was Lily Carlisle an imminent threat to you? No threat, no self defense.

LEO

A mass of people came toward me. Some of them had black bandanas over their faces, some had gas masks. That's the uniform of the left -- too cowardly to show their faces.

WENDY

And Lily Carlisle was one of those who attacked you?

LEO

Obviously.

WENDY

You're sure?

LEO

One hundred percent.

WENDY

Was she masked?

Leo looks to Rose.

WENDY

I'm not asking your attorney.

LEO

I don't remember. It was a blur. I was in fear for my life.

WENDY

From Lily Carlisle, a one hundred twenty pound schoolteacher? Was she armed?

LEO

I don't know.

WENDY

Did you know her to have special training? Krav Maga? Brazilian Jiu Jitsu?

LEO

How was I supposed to know that?

WENDY

Would you please step down from the stand?

Leo complies. Drea walks onto the stage and stands next to him. He dwarves her petite form, as is apparent to the Jury.

WENDY

Drea here is about the same size as Lily Carlisle. Would you consider her a credible threat to you?

LEO

There were others there! There was a man with a can of bug spray and a lighter!

WENDY

With Lily Carlisle?

LEO

Look on YouTube! He was there!

WENDY

If he wasn't pointing that can at you, he's irrelevant to your claim of self-defense!

LEO

No, he's not. The same type of people were there with Lily Carlisle. They had sticks, they had bats. One guy had a pipe, okay? You want me to wait to get my head bashed in to draw my gun?

WENDY

So you drew your gun because you felt threatened by someone next to Lily Carlisle?

LEO

Now you're catching on!

WENDY

What happened next?

LEO

I racked the slide of my gun.

WENDY

Why did you do that?

LEO

To chamber a round.

WENDY

You don't carry with a round in the chamber?

LEO

It's called Israeli carry. I like the effect of racking the slide.

WENDY

Was anyone you were with armed?

LEO

Of course. A lot of us were exercising our Second Amendment rights.

WENDY

Did any of them draw their weapons?

LEO

Yes, in the video of the guy with the flamethrower --

WENDY

Did anyone who was standing near you draw his weapon?

(MORE)

WENDY (CONT'D)

Could you see anyone to your left  
or to your right with his gun out?

LEO

I don't know.

WENDY

Did you see anyone fire his gun?

LEO

They may have.

WENDY

If, as you claim, the attacking  
crowd was shoulder to shoulder,  
closing in on you like an angry  
mob, how could anyone else have  
fired and hit no one?

LEO

Maybe no one fired.

WENDY

If no one fired, then no one except  
for you perceived an imminent  
threat! Would you agree with that?

LEO

I don't know what they were  
thinking. A lot of these guys are  
young hotheads. No military  
service, no training, they bring  
guns, but don't know how to use  
them. A lot of them didn't even  
have holsters.

WENDY

You did?

LEO

I don't Mexican carry.

WENDY

Israeli carry, Mexican carry -- for  
someone who hates nonwhites, you  
sure take a lot of cues from them.

ROSE

Objection.

WENDY

I take it back.

LEO

Why do that? You think I'm a racist, just say so. Someone doesn't like affirmative action, they're a racist. I didn't vote for Obama, I'm a racist. I don't agree with tearing down statues, racist racist racist. You throw that word around so much, why should we aspire to anything better?

WENDY

You aspire to be a racist?

LEO

I aspire to be an American.

WENDY

Aren't we all Americans?

LEO

No. Once upon a time, everyone you met was an American. We thought the same, we had the same values. Now everyone just wants to tear us down. They want to tear America down. I took an oath once to protect this country against all enemies foreign and domestic. Who would take that oath now?

WENDY

Is that why you shot Lily Carlisle? Was she an enemy?

ROSE

Don't answer that.

WENDY

Was Lily Carlisle the enemy? Did you kill her, a five-foot-five elementary school teacher?

LEO

Of course! I'm white. I'm male, so I must be a killer, right?! Fine! I'll be that! Even though I've never been arrested! Never done anything violent in my life! But because I'm white, I'm evil. I'm a violent example of toxic, racist masculinity!

ROSE  
(shooting up)  
Did you shoot Lily Carlisle?!

LEO  
No!

ROSE  
Did you shoot anyone?!

LEO  
No!

ROSE  
Did you fire up in the air? At the  
ground?

LEO  
No!

ROSE  
Did you draw your gun?

LEO  
No!

ROSE  
Then why are you pleading self-  
defense?!

No response. Leo's searching for words when Rose speaks:

ROSE  
Thank you, everyone.

Everyone except for Leo and the members of the Compass Law Firm exit the stage quietly.

ROSE  
Involuntary manslaughter. You don't  
have a record, so five years in  
minimum security with good  
behavior.

LEO  
(more subdued)  
You think I should plead?

ROSE  
Ninety percent of my cases plead  
out.

LEO

So I should too? Why should I be brought down to their level?

Rose approaches Leo.

ROSE

Exactly. Why should you? Why should any of my poor minority clients plead out?

LEO

Probably because they're guilty. I'm not.

ROSE

Until they plead, neither are they. Sure, you know you're innocent. You know why you know? Because you have money and you are white.

Before Leo can protest, Rose takes the evidence photo of the gun and shows it to Leo.

ROSE

You just said right now you don't carry with a round in the chamber. Condition three, is that right?

LEO

It doesn't matter. They have a witness who swears I shot that woman.

ROSE

If you didn't draw your gun, then she is lying.

AMARA

Why? Why would she lie?

AL

She saw someone who looked like Leo.

ANNETTE

Or she became convinced the more she read about it in the news.

ROSE

You all assume she's not lying on purpose.

DREA

What would she have to gain from that?

ROSE

Everything is psychology. She gets fame. She gets guest spots on friendly talk shows. She gets to be a hero.

LEO

At my expense.

ROSE

Isn't that what you want? To be a hero for your side?

LEO

From what you all are saying, all I get to be is a martyr.

WENDY

Maybe not.

Everyone turns to Wendy, who has been silent and thinking.

WENDY

We move for a bench trial.

DREA

(incredulous)

Waive Leo's right to be heard by a jury?

WENDY

With a bench trial, you won't have any cameras. You won't have a gallery. It'll just be Judge Fishman. We'll see how sure the witness is then.

ROSE

It's risky, but I like it.

LEO

I don't. Sounds like some secret tribunal. Don't I get to have my say?

ROSE

No, you don't. And you don't get to be a hero. But maybe you get to go free.



EXT. STREET OUTSIDE THE COURTHOUSE - DAY

We're in the middle of a press conference. Rose speaks to REPORTERS and PROTESTORS. Al stands next to her.

REPORTER #1

Why did you waive the right to trial by jury?

ROSE

We felt this was the best way to have all the facts come to the forefront.

REPORTER #2

After the podcast, are you worried about your client perjuring himself?

ROSE

I'm glad you asked that question. Perjury under oath is a serious crime which carries a maximum penalty of ten years in prison. I'm sure the Commonwealth's Attorney will ensure that anyone testifying in this trial makes only honest and verifiable statements. And so will the defense.

REPORTER #3

Isn't this move unfair to the people of Roanoke?

ROSE

There are many on both sides who worry this trial will turn into a circus. I don't want that. I want justice for Lily Carlisle just like everybody here.

At that the PROTESTORS ERUPT IN SHOUTS AND SCREAMS.

ROSE

(continuing, more loudly)  
I love our city. It breaks my heart to watch it tearing itself apart. I've always worked for justice!

A PROTESTOR runs forward, charging Rose.

PROTESTOR

You don't want justice! You want white supremacy!

Al firmly pushes the Protestor back. But the fuse is now lit. The Crowd gets more heated. Rose tries to continue, but Al hustles her away as the Protestors HECKLE HER.

INT. COMPASS LAW OFFICE - NIGHT

Rose wanders into Wendy's office. The light is on, but she can't tell if the cluttered office is occupied.

ROSE  
Amara?

Amara pokes her head over a stack of document boxes.

AMARA  
Yes?

ROSE  
What are you still doing here?

AMARA  
Going through the cross examination questions again.

ROSE  
Don't you have a life?

AMARA  
I'm doing it.

ROSE  
Well, stop doing it and go do something else. We'll be fine.

Rose's PHONE RINGS in the distance. She goes to her half-dark office and answers.

ROSE  
Rose Berliner.

She listens for a while, then sits down, a weight lifting.

ROSE  
No, I'll let you make the announcement... Ed, have a merry Christmas.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

Rose mediates between Devon and his victim, an Egyptian immigrant named KHALED. Devon's Father sits beside his son.

DEVON  
Can I say something?

ROSE  
You can say whatever you want,  
Devon. Just be sure it's helpful.

DEVON  
This is bullshit.

Khaled shifts in his seat, uncomfortable.

ROSE  
You would rather be in juvenile  
detention? Mister Khaled and the  
judge have agreed to this mediation  
to keep you out of jail.

DEVON  
It's always up to someone else,  
isn't it?

KHALED  
You didn't have to vandalize my  
store.

Rose puts her hand on Khaled's arm to quiet him.

DEVON  
It's unjust that I'm sitting here  
being punished while cops are  
running around killing black men.

KHALED  
I'm not killing black men.

Devon doesn't have any response to that.

DEVON'S DAD  
It doesn't matter. We can't pay  
restitution.

ROSE  
Then Devon will join all the other  
young black men in prison.

A deep silence hangs over the room as Devon and his father  
digest this.

KHALED  
I don't want you to go to prison. I  
will manage. All I ask is that you  
apologize for what you did.

Hold on Devon. We don't know what he's going to say.

INT. COMPASS LAW OFFICE - A WEEK LATER

The holiday open house. Everyone is there -- Rachel, her children, the Actors, John and Michelle, Amara, and the Compass Women and their Families: Patrick and Kids, Francis and Evan, and Al's husband MIKE, to whom Dan talks with great energy.

DAN

Really? What year is your Stingray?

MIKE

Seventy-three, and it's my brother's. He's had it rusting in his barn for years.

DAN

Maybe not if it still has the original fiberglass floor panels. I could take a look at it.

He hands Mike a business card.

DAN

Have him give me a call. If he's not interested in restoring it, I could line up a buyer, do a consignment deal.

Drea walks by, listening to her husband's spiel.

WENDY

How much business has he drummed up here?

DREA

I think he's got his elevator pitch down.

Wendy hands Drea a book -- a well-thumbed copy of What to Expect When You're Expecting.

WENDY

Merry Christmas. Sorry I didn't wrap it.

DREA

Thank you. This means a lot.

WENDY

You'll make a great mom, whatever  
you decide to do.

Elsewhere, Annette hands Rose a wrapped box.

ANNETTE

Merry Christmas -- or is it Happy  
Holidays?

ROSE

Christmas is fine.

Rose unwraps the box -- it's a bottle of small batch bourbon.  
She hugs Annette.

ANNETTE

A replacement for the bottle I  
drank up.

ROSE

We drank up. Let's just hope this  
one sits unopened forever.

John, Michelle, Amara, and Al talk among themselves.

AMARA

"Selma Envy." Isn't that what you  
call it?

JOHN

It's not my term. I read it  
somewhere.

AL

What's "Selma Envy"?

AMARA

The need of some people --

JOHN

White people.

AMARA

-- some people to insert themselves  
into the Civil Rights narrative to  
feel good about themselves.

AL

And you think that's what motivated  
this witness?

JOHN

Amara is friends with Kelly Jordan.  
I know she knows.

AMARA

Whatever she tells me is protected  
by strict friend confidentiality.

Leo enters, seemingly unnoticed in the hubbub. He pours himself a cup of punch and stands off in the corner to himself.

Except he's not unnoticed. Rose, Wendy, and Annette see him.

ROSE

You don't have to talk to him,  
Wendy.

WENDY

Wasn't going to.

Annette decides to walk over. Patrick beats her to Leo.

PATRICK

(introducing himself)  
Patrick McKern. I'm Annette's  
husband.

LEO

Leo.

PATRICK

Yeah, I know.

FLASH. Annette has snapped a picture of Leo with her camera.

ANNETTE

(to Leo)  
What have you been up to?

LEO

Interestingly, I've been talking to  
some lawyers.

ANNETTE

Really? What about?

LEO

Suing the Commonwealth's Attorney  
office for wrongful imprisonment.

ANNETTE

What do your attorneys say?

LEO  
They say I have a case.

ANNETTE  
Would you like some advice? Don't do it. Go be with your family this Christmas.

LEO  
I don't have a family. My batshit ex-wife took my daughter to Paris. Now I never get to see her.

PATRICK  
I'm sorry. You don't have anywhere to go for Christmas?

Annette shakes her head, hoping only Patrick sees her.

LEO  
I got a brother who moved to Vegas. I probably should go see him.

In a corner, Francis and Evan both watch over Annette's Children as they play on the floor with toys.

Rose comes over to Wendy, watching the kids play, and puts her arm around her friend and associate.

ROSE  
Doing okay?

WENDY  
No. But I'll muddle through. Is Rebecca coming home?

ROSE  
Haven't heard yet.

WENDY  
You're welcome to join us for Christmas.

ROSE  
I haven't told anyone, but I don't do Christmas any more.

WENDY  
Since when?

ROSE  
Since Paul and I split up.

WENDY

What's all this then?

ROSE

This is for you guys. Tell you what, if Rebecca doesn't come back, I'll stop by for egg nog.

Devon's Dad walks in. Rose turns to greet him.

ROSE

Glad you could make it. Where's Devon?

DEVON'S DAD

He's with his mom. I just came by to bring you this.

He hands Rose a photo of much younger Devon.

ROSE

How old is he in this picture?

DEVON'S DAD

Eight. I don't have anything more recent of him.

ROSE

He's so cute.

DEVON'S DAD

I know. I miss those days. I don't know what to do with him now.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

Rose turns on the lights. She takes the whiteboard down, revealing her WALL OF PHOTOS. She pins the cherubic Devon up next to Rachel and her Children.

It's then she notices the photo of LEO tacked up amidst the others, looking surprised at having his picture taken, his face washed out by the flash.

INT. ROSE'S OFFICE

Rose sits down at her computer. She opens her browser, briefly revealing her travel blog and the picture of the Lenin statue that started all this. Rose opens a new window.

CUT TO:



CLOSE ON AN INKJET PRINTER, SLOWLY PRODUCING A PICTURE LINE BY LINE.

Rose takes the paper from the tray and looks it over.

CUT TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - THE WALL OF PHOTOS

As the CHATTER OF THE OPEN HOUSE continue outside, Rose tacks up one more picture in the center of her wall. She leaves to rejoin the party as we push in on the most recently added photo:

LILY CARLISLE.

FADE OUT.