

A TWISTED VENGEANCE

Negligent Retribution

Written by

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Based on a true story

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INT. CLAIRE BIANCHI ESTATE - COLORADO - LIVING ROOM - DAY

DR. ELIANA "ELLIE" BIANCHI, retired Psychologist and a refined, alert, and mild-mannered woman in her late seventies with silver hair styled in a perfect up-do, and BOB DRAKE, former businessman in his mid-fifties with dark and stormy eyes and an aggressive nature, are in the middle of an argument. He looks unkempt and reeks of alcohol. Bob grabs a nearby vase and tosses it against the wall, shattering it into millions of pieces. Ellie is frightened and jumps. Bob looks at her triumphantly with a deranged smile on his face. Ellie speaks in her native Italian accent.

ELLIE

Bob, what are you doing?! Claire has a restraining order against you! How did you get in here?

BOB

Don't worry about how I got in here! You should worry about what I'm gonna do to you!

ELLIE

What are you talking about?

BOB

Oh don't act like you don't know. You ruined my life!

ELLIE

What?!

BOB

You were listening to my private conversation like some nosey old bird. You told Claire everything. I always knew you hated me. And because of you, Claire divorced me and I can't see my son. I lost everything! My business, my reputation. Well guess what? You're gonna have to pay the price.

Ellie steps back and swallows hard, fear in her eyes.

ELLIE

Bob please...you're scaring me.

Bob takes an intimidating step closer to Ellie. She puts her hands up for protection to block his advance.

ELLIE

(voice trembling)

Bob, listen to me. I am not the reason for your divorce. Take responsibility and own your actions. Claire tried to be a good wife to you--

BOB

Of course you'd take your precious daughter's side. You always do.

ELLIE

It's not about taking sides. Bob, you need help. This is not normal behavior. You have trouble seeing reality and admitting the truth. You blame others when in fact, you are the problem. Now you should leave.

Bob laughs mockingly.

BOB

(imitating Ellie)

Oh, this isn't normal behavior Bob. You need help Bob. Don't tell me what I fucking need. Spare me the psycho-babble.

Ellie turns to walk away from Bob but he grabs her by the arm.

BOB

Actually Ms. Therapist, do you know what I need? Revenge. Yeah. Sweet revenge.

ELLIE

Let go of me and get out of this house!

Bob pulls Ellie towards the staircase. Ellie stumbles and screams, trying to fight Bob off.

INT. CLAIRE BIANCHI ESTATE - STAIRCASE AND UPSTAIRS - DAY

Ellie falls hard to the floor when they reach the landing.

BOB

(mockingly)

Oh come on Ellie, what happened?! Did you fall, old girl?

CUT TO:

EXT. CLAIRE BIANCHI ESTATE - DAY

Sloping, lush green lawn with blossoming flowers, carefully pruned hedges, and a serene, picturesque front façade make CLAIRE BIANCHI'S home a garden oasis. She is a beautiful woman in her early forties with short brown hair and refined features. She tends to her garden, singing softly and admiring the flowers thriving under her care. Her Italian accent can be heard as she speaks lovingly to the flowers. Claire gently pats down the soil around the freshly planted sunflowers while on her hands and knees. FRANKIE DRAKE, Bob and Claire's seven-year-old son, is playing about 20 feet away from Claire in the front yard. He has mom's brown hair and dad's dark-colored eyes. But Frankie's eyes are kind and innocent. He calls out to his mother to watch him while he throws a ball up in the air and catches it with his catcher's mitt. She smiles and waves at her son. A landscaper mows the neighbor's grass, with the sound of the motor blaring nearby. The landscaper cuts off the engine as he finishes. Just then, a loud bloodcurdling scream pierces the air from the balcony and interrupts the peace of the summer morning. In an instant, Claire jumps to her feet, drops her gardening tools, and looks upward.

CLAIRE
Mama?! Dio Mio!

Frankie runs towards his mother.

FRANKIE
Mommy! I think I heard Grandma
scream!

Claire grabs Frankie's hand and they run together into the mansion through the French doors of the main entrance.

INT. CLAIRE BIANCHI ESTATE - DAY

Claire and Frankie follow the sound of Ellie's pleading voice. With tears in her eyes, Claire lifts Frankie's small body and carries him up the stairs in haste.

BACK TO:

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - DAY

To Claire and Frankie's extreme horror, they witness a wild-looking Bob lifting Ellie into the air, trying to throw her over the balcony. Ellie is screaming, resisting fiercely and wriggling to get out of Bob's clutches. Claire puts Frankie down and lunges towards Bob with fury.

CLAIRE
(frightened and enraged)
Stop it Bob! Leave her alone!

Bob turns his head towards Claire, surprised to see her, momentarily distracted from his assault on Ellie. Claire tries to grab her mother away from Bob in a swift, determined movement. Bob looks at Claire with all of the hatred and venom in his eyes, and shoves her hard away from him. Claire falls backwards, knocking into Frankie who is close behind her. They both scream. Bob goes back to assaulting Ellie.

ELLIE
Claire! Run! Take Frankie! You have
to get out of here!

Claire stood frozen, not sure what to do.

CLAIRE
But Mama...

ELLIE
Claire Francesca Bianchi! Do as I
say! Go! NOW!

Shaking her head no and crying uncontrollably, Claire grabs her son and runs out of the bedroom with him in her arms. She takes him down to the basement.

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

The cellar is built with slabs of concrete. Cobwebs everywhere. Claire and Frankie step down the old staircase, creaking under their feet. Frankie clings to his mother and whimpers at the sight of the webs, shadows, and shivers from the cold air of the cellar. She puts her arms around her child tightly and bolts the door securely behind them.

FRANKIE
Mom, I'm scared.

CLAIRE
I know baby. We'll be ok.

FRANKIE
Why is daddy hurting Grandma?

CLAIRE
I don't know sweetie. But we'll get
help. Grandma will be fine, you'll
see.

Claire pulls the chain to turn on the lightbulb hanging from the ceiling and remembers her mobile phone in her pocket. Hands trembling, she dials 9-1-1 and sits in a far corner of the basement, with her arm tightly around Frankie.

EMERGENCY OPERATOR (V.O.)
9-1-1, what's your emergency?

CLAIRE
(nervously)
My name is Claire Drake Bianchi.
I'm at 207 Crenshaw Way. My ex-husband Robert Drake broke in and is trying to kill my mother! Please come quick!

Frankie is crying, with his head buried into his mother's body.

CUT TO:

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - DAY

Bob pushes Ellie down to the floor, standing over her and yelling. Ellie covers her head and ears. The bruises he left on her arms from his grip are red. Her nose is bleeding. Face is swollen from crying. Long hair undone and tangled.

ELLIE
Bob...you don't have to do this...

BOB
Shut up! Don't you move!

BACK TO:

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

Tears stream down Claire's cheeks as she continues speaking with the 9-1-1 Operator. She is in a cold sweat.

EMERGENCY OPERATOR (V.O.)
Stay on the line, Ma'am. Help is on the way. Is anyone else in the house with you?

CLAIRE
Yes, my son.

EMERGENCY DISPATCHER (V.O.)
Is he hurt?

CLAIRE

No, he's fine. He's right here with me in the basement. With the door locked. Look--how long is this going to take?!

EMERGENCY OPERATOR (V.O.)

Ma'am I'm going to need you to calm down.

CLAIRE

Don't you dare tell me to calm down, dammit! SEND HELP NOW!

EMERGENCY DISPATCHER (V.O.)

Ok ma'am. We've dispatched the police and ambulance. They're within seconds of your home. Their sirens are off to not alert the suspect. When you hear the doorbell ring 3 short times, you will know the police are here. What is the victim's location?

CLAIRE

Upstairs bedroom, first one on the right. Please, save my mother.

Claire ends the call and grabs Frankie close, stroking his hair softly and consoling him.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Two police cars weave swiftly through traffic with lights flashing and sirens wailing. Cars move out of the way. When they enter Claire's neighborhood, they turn the sirens off and go stealth.

INT. CLAIRE BIANCHI ESTATE - SIDE ENTRANCE - DAY

Four officers silently discover an unlocked side door and enter. They hear Ellie's screams upstairs. OFFICER 1 signals for the other two policemen to go down to the basement. OFFICER 2 follows his superior upstairs.

INT. BASEMENT DOOR - DAY

OFFICER 3 speaks through the closed basement door. OFFICER 4 stands guard looking towards the upstairs, weapon deployed.

OFFICER 3

Ma'am it's the police. Are you and your son in there alone?

Relieved, Claire stands up.

CLAIRE

Yes! Yes officer, it's just my son and I. The door is locked though.

OFFICER 3

I'm gonna need you to step away from the door and stay where you are. We're kicking it in.

The officers kick the basement door with all of their strength. The old door blasts open, the lock breaks and falls to the floor. Guns drawn, the officers holster them immediately when they confirm that Claire and Frankie are alone. The mother and son are shaking but glad to see the cops.

CLAIRE

Where's my mother? Do you have her?

OFFICER 3

Two officers are headed upstairs right now.

OFFICER 4

Yeah, and we gotta get you two out of the house. Come on.

EXT. CLAIRE BIANCHI ESTATE - DAY

The officers escort Claire and Frankie outside of the mansion safely. Neighbors converge outside, watching, whispering, wondering. The officers sit Claire and Frankie inside one of the patrol cars and offer them bottled water. They drink them gratefully.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY

Officers 1 and 2 slowly and quietly creep down the hall towards the bedroom where Bob and Ellie are. Stun guns drawn, they stop in the doorway and see Bob with his back turned towards them. He has his hands around Ellie's throat. He didn't know they were behind him.

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - DAY

OFFICER 1

FREEZE! LET HER GO! NOW!

Bob looks up, smiles, and shakes his head, not turning around. He continues to squeeze Ellie's neck until her face begins to darken with asphyxia.

BOB

Let go of her or what, Officer Do-
Right?

OFFICER 2

Put your hands up now or we'll stun
the shit out of you, sir.

Bob starts squeezing Ellie's neck even tighter. She's beginning to fade. Officer 1 deploys his stun gun and shoots Bob in the back. He jerks hard, lets out an agonized groan, and falls face first onto the floor like a bag of wet cement. Officer 2 runs over to Ellie lying motionless on the floor and radios the paramedics to bring a stretcher up STAT. The medics are in the bedroom within seconds, rendering aide to Ellie. The officers handcuff Bob's wrists and drag his limp body down the stairs.

EXT. CLAIRE BIANCHI ESTATE - DAY

Officers 1 and 2 push Bob out on the lawn for all of the neighborhood to see. He sits up looking dazed and confused. Claire and Frankie are watching from the squad car, dismayed. The paramedics carry Ellie out on a stretcher and put her into the ambulance. The mother and son shout for Ellie as they see her being carried out. The officers stand Bob up and shove him unceremoniously into the back of the police car. The car Bob is in speeds away to the booking station. The car Claire and Frankie are in head in a different direction, following Ellie in the ambulance to the hospital. The neighbors look on.

FLASHBACK:

INT. AIRPORT - DAY - THREE YEARS PRIOR

A private jet slowly descends onto the runway and lands. Claire steps off of the jet from her business trip, looking confident and poised. Her assistants carry her luggage through the airport. Onlookers recognize Claire, staring and pointing in awe.

INT. LIMO - DAY

Claire sits in the back of a limousine with all of its comforts at her disposal. She looks at the passing scenery as the driver takes her to her residence. She's calm with a slight smile on her face.

EXT. BOB AND CLAIRE DRAKE'S NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Picturesque and serene community. Children laughing and playing outside. Birds chirping.

EXT. BOB AND CLAIRE DRAKE'S ESTATE - DAY

The limo arrives at Claire's mansion, parks in the circular driveway in front of the large home. She steps out of the car. The driver carries her bags to the door for her. She tips the driver and he leaves.

INT. DRAKE ESTATE - FOYER - DAY

Claire opens one of the French doors of the main entrance to an opulent foyer.

CLAIRE
I'm home! Bob? Frankie?

She rolls her suitcases into the lobby and stands them up. Bob comes down the grand staircase. He smiles at his wife.

BOB
Ah, there's the love of my life.

Bob walks toward Claire and embraces her. Kisses her passionately. Claire melts in his arms.

CLAIRE
You've always given me the world's best greetings.

BOB
That's because you're the world's best wife.

Frankie, 4 years old, runs into the lobby to greet his mother.

FRANKIE
Mommy!

Claire scoops Frankie into her arms and lifts him high into the air, kissing his face all over. He squirms and laughs.

CLAIRE
There's my prince charming! Were you a good boy for daddy and Grandma?

FRANKIE
Yup! I ate all my vegetables and daddy showed me how to make this! For you!

Frankie hands Claire a small toy made out of wooden beads. It has black yarn glued to its head for hair. Claire smiles and gasps in delight.

CLAIRE
It's marvelous honey, thank you!
What's his name?

FRANKIE
Beadle Boy!

CLAIRE
Oh, like The Beatles?

FRANKIE
Who are The Beatles?

Bob and Claire laugh and shake their heads. Bob musses Frankie's hair and he runs towards the kitchen.

FRANKIE
Grandma! Mommy's home!

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Ellie wipes her hands on her apron and hugs Claire, greeting each other. They chat about Claire's business trip and catch up.

CLAIRE
Something smells really good, Mama!

ELLIE
Oh it's just your favorite--salmon
and asparagus over wild rice.

Ellie plates the food and pours her daughter a glass of white wine.

CLAIRE
(eating)
Mmmm, gosh, I think I need to go
out of town more often! I get
kisses and Beadle Boys and
delicious food too?!

ELLIE
Well it's easy to spoil you, mia
cara.

Claire smiles gratefully at her mother.

CLAIRE
Ah Mama...you are so good to me.
Thank you. Glad to be home.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NEXT EVENING

Frankie is playing on the floor with his books and toys. Claire sits on the couch typing on her laptop wearing glasses. Room is dimly lit. The tv is on, and a show called "Rising Stars" is playing. Claire looks up from her laptop every few minutes to watch the show, smiling and reacting. Frankie looks too and laughs with his mother. Bob walks in. Sharply dressed in a designer suit. Handsome. He throws his briefcase on the sofa. It lands beside Claire.

BOB
I'm home. What a day.

CLAIR
Hi sweetie pie!

Claire turns the tv off and stands up to kiss Bob. They embrace.

BOB
Hi my love. Hey buddy! How's my guy?

FRANKIE
Good!

Bob leans down to tickle Frankie who laughs gleefully.

CLAIRE
What happened at work today?

Bob looks at her, disappointed. Ellie walks into the room.

ELLIE
Hi Bob.

BOB
Ellie.

ELLIE
Come on, piccolo mio! Time to get ready for bed.

FRANKIE
I'm a pickle Grandma?

ELLIE
(laughs)
No no. Piccolo mio means my little one. Come!

Ellie starts gathering Frankie's toys and carries him away in her arms, tickling him as they leave the living room.

He wiggles and laughs. Bob walks into his office. Claire follows him and closes the door behind herself.

INT. BOB'S HOME OFFICE - EVENING

Bob sits down hard and leans back in his executive swivel chair and sighs. He looks up at the ceiling. Claire sits across from him in an arm chair, concerned.

BOB

You ever get the feeling you're spinning your wheels but not really going anywhere?

CLAIRE

Um...only when I'm in my Miata and the tires are sliding on ice, but...

BOB

(snorts)

No Claire. Never mind. I knew you wouldn't get it.

CLAIRE

Oh, I'm sorry honey! I wasn't trying to make a joke.

She gets up and stands behind him, massaging his shoulders. He leans his head back and closes his eyes.

BOB

I just...I feel like I'm in a rut. Just not fulfilled anymore, ya know? Oh hell, look who I'm talking to. You don't know.

CLAIRE

Hey! I take offense to that! I do know what you mean.

BOB

(laughs)

Babe, no. I'm not talking about being disappointed that the pink fabric you ordered isn't *sparkly* enough.

Claire stops massaging him and steps around to face him.

CLAIRE

Bob, I really don't like your tone here. I am trying to understand and be here for you.

BOB

I'm sorry. You're right. I'm being a jerk. Had a bad day. It's not your fault that I'm a loser.

CLAIRE

Bob, just stop right there! You are NOT a loser. You are my handsome, successful, wealthy husband who is the father of our beautiful son. You are my everything.

Claire sits in his lap in the executive chair and they kiss.

BOB

Oh yeah? Show me.

CLAIRE

What, you mean here? In your office?

BOB

Well if you don't want me...

CLAIRE

Of course I do! You know I want you.

Bob and Claire make love in his office.

INT. CLAIRE'S OFFICE AT DRAKE'S DESIGNS - NEXT DAY

Claire works busily at her desk talking on the phone, approving designs being placed in front of her--a flurry of activity. Her assistant LISA rushes into her office excited. Lisa is in her early twenties--efficient, energetic, bubbly, and fiercely loyal to her boss Claire.

LISA

Boss Lady, guess what? Our spring collection was a *huge* success! We sold out the entire stock!

CLAIRE

Wow, really? That's great! I was a bit concerned about that collection with the off-color of the season. But apparently the people want it! We need to keep our upscale clientele satisfied. Call our distribution team in here.

LISA
(enthusiastically)
You got it!

CUT TO:

INT. BOB'S MARKETING FIRM'S OFFICE - DAY

Bob is in his office, pacing back and forth while talking on the phone.

BOB
(frustrated)
Listen, Rick. We've been partners for years, but I just can't work with you anymore. Your products are faulty, and nobody's buying them. I'm losing money every day here.

The person he's talking to responds.

BOB
What did you say? Wait, let me get this straight. You just said the reason your products aren't selling is because I'm not doing a good enough job advertising them?! Oh that's *real good*, Rick. You know what? We're done here.

Bob slams the phone down and rubs his forehead, stressed.

INT. CLAIRE'S OFFICE AT DRAKE'S DESIGNS - DAY

Lisa hangs up her desk phone and happily bounces over to Claire's desk.

LISA
It's me again, here to deliver yet another awesome announcement!

Claire looks up and removes her glasses.

CLAIRE
More?

LISA
Yes! I just got off the phone with the director of that show "Rising Stars" you like so much. He wants you to make a cameo appearance and talk about your designs!

(MORE)

LISA (CONT'D)

In exchange, he has agreed to purchase our entire fall clothing line, thanks to my brilliant negotiation skills, if I may say so myself! Just take a look at what he's willing to pay for it...

Lisa shows Claire the contract and figures. Claire's eyes widen in surprise.

CLAIRE

Lisa, this is amazing!

Lisa nods her head yes enthusiastically. Claire reads the rest of the show's contract details and is satisfied. She signs it. The ladies celebrate with smiles and high fives.

INT. BOB AND CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - THAT EVENING

Bob and Claire are sitting up in bed next to each other. He's reading The Wall Street Journal. She's reading a book. She closes the book and looks at him.

CLAIRE

Honey, guess what?

BOB

What?

CLAIRE

I've been offered a cameo role on the show "Rising Stars"--and I accepted it!

Bob turns his head to look at her, silent.

CLAIRE

Did you hear me?

BOB

Yeah, I heard you.

CLAIRE

Well...what do you think?!

BOB

Oh--NOW you want to know what I think?

He closes the newspaper, turns his bedside lamp off, and lays back on his pillow. Claire looks surprised at his reaction.

CLAIRE

Well, I thought you'd be happy for me, Bob. You know that's my favorite tv show and Wallace the director is a dear friend of ours--

BOB

He's your dear friend, not mine. I guess that's why you didn't bother talking to me about this first?

Claire looks remorseful.

CLAIRE

Oh, I'm sorry...I thought...

BOB

No, you *didn't think* Claire. I mean, how long will you be gone for this tv show anyway? What about Frankie? What about--oh forget it. I don't even know why I'm trying to reason with you. Good night Superstar go have fun, whatever.

Bob sinks down into his pillow and closes his eyes. Claire sits stunned. Sad.

INT. CLAIRE'S OFFICE AT DRAKE'S DESIGNS - NEXT DAY

Claire closes her office door and picks up the phone. She calls her director friend WALLACE DARROW. He answers, sitting in his office puffing a cigar.

WALLACE

Wallace Darrow here.

CLAIRE

Wallace hi! It's Claire.

WALLACE

Well if it isn't our lovely new star! How are you my dear?

CLAIRE

I'm fine, thanks for asking. Listen Wallace, I personally wanted to thank you for our deal and having me on your show.

WALLACE

You are more than welcome. It's win-win for everybody, right?

CLAIRE
Well...maybe not everyone...

WALLACE
What do you mean?

CLAIRE
It's Bob...he--

WALLACE
Let me guess--he's complaining
about how he doesn't like this and
doesn't want that, am I right?

CLAIRE
How did you know?

WALLACE
Claire...look I've known you for a
long time. And I've known Bob even
longer. I knew he'd have something
shitty to say about it.

CLAIRE
Gosh, is it that obvious to
everyone? I had no idea...

WALLACE
Well, it is to the people who've
known you the longest. Look. You
just let me know how I can make
this a little easier for you. We'll
shoot around your schedule and have
you off the set and home by 6pm,
compliments of my driver--straight
to your door. And hey--you can even
bring your little guy on the set,
What's his name?

CLAIRE
Frankie.

WALLACE
Yeah, Frankie! Cute kid! He'd love
it!

CLAIRE
Wallace, you're a gem. I really
appreciate this. Thank you for
understanding.

WALLACE

Ah, think nothing of it. I'll send you the Call Sheet so you can see the filming dates we have planned. We'll get it figured out, Claire Bear.

CLAIRE

laughs) You still call me that, huh? Wallace, you're a good man.

INT. DRAKE ESTATE - DINING ROOM - THAT EVENING

Bob, Claire, Frankie, and Ellie are eating a quiet dinner in the formal dining room. Italian instrumental music plays softly in the background. Claire is not speaking to Bob.

BOB

Dinner is delicious Ellie.

ELLIE

Thank you Bob. Glad you're enjoying it. How was work today?

Bob pauses and looks over at Claire.

BOB

Not great. It never is these days. But Claire is doing great though, huh Claire? With the big acting gig on that show--what is it again? Falling Stars? Failing Stars?

Bob laughs mockingly. Claire eats silently and refuses to look at him. Ellie glances at them back and forth, sensing the trouble.

FRANKIE

It's Rising Stars, daddy! That's because Mommy is a real star!

Bob's eyes are affixed to Claire while he chews his food.

CLAIRE

Thank you Frankie. That's very nice of you to say.

Ellie looks nervously at Bob and her daughter.

ELLIE

Um--Bob, I heard you recently closed a deal with a partner.

Bob looks at Ellie, finally breaking his gaze at Claire.

BOB

Oh? You mean fucked it up? Not closed the deal but fucked it up. Right?

FRANKIE

Oooh, daddy said a bad word!

CLAIRE

Bob, please do not speak that way in front of Frankie or my mother.

BOB

Oh yes, anything for The Queen, I forgot. Is there anything else you want me to do or not do, Your Majesty?

Claire rolls her eyes at Bob. He reciprocates and chews.

ELLIE

I...heard from our former gardener today. He asked if you need him to come do any side work. He's willing to for free. He just loves being helpful. Should I schedule him to come by?

Bob doesn't respond, just chews. His silence gets Frankie's attention. He looks up at his father and grandmother. Claire is becoming more agitated as the moments go on.

ELLIE

Well, it's alright. I'll tell him to hold off--

BOB

I don't give a damn what you tell him Ellie.

Claire becomes furious now. Frankie's eyes widen and he stops eating.

CLAIRE

Bob, either you will be respectful around our family or you can leave the table.

Bob looks at his son who is visibly uncomfortable. His heart softens for just a few seconds.

BOB

Sorry Frankie. And sorry Ellie. You can have the gardener come whenever he wants to.

ELLIE

Ok. I'll call him in the morning.

Worried Ellie looks over at Claire who is now staring down at her plate, not eating.

CLAIRE

I'm sorry, Mama, Frankie--I'm feeling a bit strange. I think I need to go lie down for awhile. Mama, thanks for dinner as always.

ELLIE

Ok darling, let me know if you need anything. I'll bring Frankie in to say goodnight to you later.

Claire kisses Frankie on the top of his head. She strides past Bob without looking at him and goes upstairs to their bedroom, tears in her eyes. Bob continues eating his dinner. Ellie smiles at Frankie trying to comfort him. She reaches down and picks up a teddy bear off the floor and gives it to Frankie to play with. He pretends to feed the bear.

BOB

Actually Ellie, since Claire has decided to ignore me, I'll tell you this news. I've decided to quit the marketing firm. I want to try something new.

Ellie stops in mid sip of her wine, eyebrows raised. Frankie is preoccupied with his teddy bear, not listening to the adults.

ELLIE

What did you say?

BOB

I'm quitting the firm. I had my mind made up for awhile about it.

ELLIE

That's a big step. What are you going to do next?

BOB

It's a surprise. Don't tell Claire about this, ok? More details to come soon.

ELLIE

So, Claire has no idea?

BOB

No.

ELLIE

No? I mean this is a huge decision that effects the entire family, and--

BOB

Did she consult with me before taking that acting gig?

ELLIE

No, but that's different Bob. It's one role on a TV show. Not a whole career change.

BOB

There's no difference, Ellie. She should've told me first. So if she's going to move in secret then so will I.

Ellie sips her wine, pensively.

INT. CLAIRE'S OFFICE AT DRAKE'S DESIGNS - DAY - THREE DAYS LATER -

Lisa rushes into Claire's office frazzled holding reams of fabric of all colors.

LISA

Boss Lady, we have a problem. The manufacturer sent us a bunch of defective fabric. Look at this. We can't use any of this! The patterns aren't aligned, it's permanently creased in some spots. And smell it! It smells like fish, what the hell?

Claire takes a whiff of the textiles and grimaces.

CLAIRE

Ok. Let's call an emergency meeting with the manufacturers and get this sorted out.

INT. DRAKE ESTATE - DINING ROOM - THAT EVENING

The family of four eats dinner.

BOB

(excitedly)

Well, guess what everybody? I have an announcement to make. After careful consideration I have officially decided to leave the marketing firm to start my own brewery business!

Claire drops her fork with a clang against the fine china.

CLAIRE

You WHAT?!

BOB

Yeah isn't it great? I thought all this through. We'll brew our own beer and sell it across the state. I've already pitched the plan to investors, and they're on board.

Claire looks at her mother wide-eyed then glares at Bob.

CLAIRE

Bob, how could you make a decision like that without---

BOB

Consulting you first? Yeah, right. Anyway, it's a done deal. I already quit the firm. So guess what Frankie? Daddy will be home with you every day for--well, forever!

FRANKIE

(excited)

YAY! Daddy's gonna play with me every day!

BOB

That's right, buddy! We'll go fishing and to museums and the park. We're gonna have fun, right champ?

FRANKIE

Yeah! I can't wait, daddy!

Bob looks at Claire deviously. She looks like she will faint. Ellie hangs her head down looking guilty.

CLAIRE

Mama, can you take Frankie and finish dinner in the den with him? I need to talk to Bob.

ELLIE

Yes, of course. Come on piccolo. Get your cup of milk. We'll go watch Blues Clues ok?

FRANKIE

Ok Grandma!

Ellie gets up from the table gathering plates of food and drinks. They leave the dining room.

CLAIRE

Bob...I know you've been upset that I agreed to doing the show without speaking with you first. And I'm sorry about that. But for you to throw away your career as the CEO of your firm to start an entirely new business is irresponsible, reckless, and quite frankly it's cruel to me.

BOB

(defiantly)

Well I'm sorry you feel that way. But it's too late to turn back now. I've already made all the plans. It'll work out. Look--we have millions in the bank and investments. This won't effect your life at all. You'll still have everything you've always had--all the cars, the clothes, the jewelry.

CLAIRE

This is not about money and jewels Bob. It's the fact that we're not on the same page anymore.

BOB

Well, Ellie didn't seem to mind the idea.

CLAIRE
My mother knew about this?!

BOB
Oh don't get all dramatic. I told her not to say anything and that this was a surprise.

CLAIRE
Yeah, I'm surprised alright.

BOB
There's a lot of money in the brewery business. What--you don't trust me?

CLAIRE
I think you're missing the point.

BOB
And I think you're wrong. Did you see how happy Frankie was? He'll have his dad around every day. That way, your mother doesn't have to be here...all the time...day in and day out.

Claire pauses. Bob sips his wine.

CLAIRE
Wait--is this to get rid of my mother? So you can take over and shove her out?

BOB
No, not at all. Ellie's great with Frankie. But now that I'll be home with him more, she can go do other things with her life. She's been retired for at least 10 years now. She should be taking trips, meeting a man, chasing her tail, whatever rich old ladies do.

Claire looks annoyed by every word Bob says.

CLAIRE
She's not a cat so she doesn't need to "chase her tail" as you put it. She's fine right here with Frankie, which is what we agreed on when he was born.

BOB

Yeah that was 4 years ago. It's time I bonded more with my son. Unless for some reason you don't want me to.

He takes another sip of wine.

CLAIRE

God, you are so manipulative!

BOB

You sound like your mother. Always with that psycho-garbage--

CLAIRE

I've had enough of you insulting my mother, so just--be quiet!

BOB

And **you** are overly emotional. You need to relax before you stroke out one day, hot blood.

CLAIRE

Don't tell me to relax! Bob, what is happening to us? Can't we talk about this? Bob?

She holds back tears. He didn't answer her. Instead he chews on a roll and looks away from her.

CLAIRE

Let me tell you something. I don't want anything to do with your beer-making business. Don't sign my name to it. No corporates shares, no LLC partnership--none of it. It's all yours. Go make your beer and--go to hell!

Claire abruptly stands up from the table leaving her dinner, and runs upstairs crying. Bob continues to eat, unfazed by Claire's reaction.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM AT DRAKE'S DESIGNS - DAY - TWO DAYS LATER

Claire and Lisa chat before their meeting with the manufacturer's representatives arrive to discuss the bad fabrics.

CLAIRE

You want to know the worst part about all this, Lisa?

LISA

What's that, Boss Lady?

CLAIRE

Because of this huge mess with the fabric, we're going to miss the deadline to have those dresses ready for one of our biggest clients. Which means, I can't do the "Rising Stars" show.

LISA

Oh no! You were so excited about it too. I'm sorry Boss Lady. That sucks.

CLAIRE

Yeah. I'll have to call Wallace and cancel my appearance.

LISA

Well maybe he can get you on another show.

CLAIRE

I doubt it. This was sort of a once in a lifetime thing.

After about 10 minutes, Claire and Lisa sit across from the manufacturer's representatives in their large conference room.

CLAIRE

(firmly)

I must say that we're both surprised and disappointed by this order. You've always been one of our best suppliers. We simply cannot accept these defective materials. As a result, we've missed the deadline of a major client and I missed my--well anyway...we will have to take our business elsewhere because this is unacceptable. As of right now, our contract with you has been cancelled.

The manufacturer's representatives glance at each other nervously but silently nod their heads yes.

INT. OUTSIDE OF BOB'S HOME OFFICE - HALLWAY - THAT EVENING

Claire went to bed early. Bob is talking to someone in hushed tones on the phone in his office. His door is partly open. Ellie walks by on her way upstairs and stops when she hears Bob whispering.

BOB

(slyly)

Don't worry, I have everything under control. Yeah. I've got the money from the investors, no sweat. I told you I would. I even used some to pay off those little numbskulls at the fabric distributor. Why? To send Claire the shittiest fabrics they could find! Come on dude, keep up. Oh man, one of those little lackeys poured rotten milk all over the material and let it dry. They did all kinds of things. You'd throw up if I told you, dude. So then I made a call to their boss and convinced him that Claire always hated his crappy fabric and couldn't wait to end their partnership. Couldn't believe he fell for it! He was glad she terminated their contract after that. But get this--now he's one of MY top investors. That's right. The fun is just beginning.

Ellie clutches her chest and leans against the wall, devastated to hear what Bob said.

EXT. BACKYARD OF DRAKE ESTATE - NEXT MORNING

Claire weeds a small patch of grass. Frankie plays with a neighborhood friend. Ellie walks out to the backyard and sits on a bench next to Claire. Claire looks up.

CLAIRE

Hey Mama.

ELLIE

Hi Claire. Listen darling. Can we talk?

Ellie proceeds to tell her daughter every single word Bob said the previous night on the phone. Claire listens intensely, all color draining from her face.

INT. DRAKE ESTATE - KITCHEN - EVENING - ONE MONTH LATER

Bob is sitting at the kitchen island reading the newspaper. Claire walks in and places a folder in front of him. He looks down at it and back up at her.

CLAIRE

I know all about the fabric. And how you destroyed my relationship with my manufacturer and how they invested in your business as a result. How you deliberately sabotaged me and my dreams...Therefore, I want a divorce. It's over Bob.

He sits silent and stunned. Claire turns around and walks out.

EXT. CLAIRE'S CAR - DAY - THREE DAYS LATER

Claire and Ellie are taking Frankie to the doctor for a checkup. Frankie is watching cartoons with his headphones on.

ELLIE

So where is Bob now?

CLAIRE

I'm not entirely sure. After I gave him the divorce papers the other night, he left. His overnight things are gone so he's probably at a hotel.

ELLIE

Has he responded about the paperwork?

CLAIRE

(speaking quietly)

Not yet. I think I know where to find him. I bet he's at that beer-making plant he opened. I saw the address written in his planner. I just need him to sign the papers as soon as possible and get this over with. I tried Mama. I really tried with Bob. We've gone to marriage counseling and he stopped going. You even tried to schedule him to see one of your colleagues and he refuses to go. I don't know what to do with Bob anymore, Mama.

(MORE)

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
He's turned so cold to me. This
time he crossed the line. And I
want nothing to do with him.

EXT. PARKING LOT OF BOB'S BREWERY - NEXT DAY

Claire meets Bob at the brewery where he's supervising a shipment. Divorce papers in hand, she strides confidently over to him. A few truckers and plant workers stare at her as she passes by. One whistles at her. Bob turns to see what has all of the men's attention. He sees Claire walking towards him and looks up at the sky in frustration.

BOB
What the hell are you doing here?

CLAIRE
You left me no forwarding
information or a phone number so I
had to find you here. I need you to
sign these divorce papers right now
Bob. Do you understand?

Bob begins to walk away from Claire.

CLAIRE
The sooner we get this over with is
the sooner we can move on with our
lives, Bob. It's not like you love
me anymore so this should be easy.

BOB
Who says I don't love you?

CLAIRE
It doesn't matter anymore. Now
please sign these so I can leave
you to your beer-making experiment.

BOB
Don't you think you're being a bit
rash about this?

Claire considered his words. Then shook her head no.

CLAIRE
Bob...you have changed over the
last month or two to someone I no
longer recognize. There is no trust
between us anymore. I've played
this balancing act with you our
entire marriage. Always afraid to
disappoint you.

(MORE)

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Walking on eggshells around you. Placating you any chance I think you might be offended about something. Making excuses for your behavior and cleaning up the aftermath of your awful comments and inappropriate jokes at parties. Putting my dreams on hold so you can pursue yours. Being taken through every failed business idea you've had over the years and losing money behind it. Disrespecting me in front of our child. And you really don't like my mother--let's be honest.

BOB

You mean the one who eavesdropped on my phone call and ratted me out to you, therefore destroying my marriage?

CLAIRE

You see? That's it right there, Bob. Your biggest problem is that you don't ever take responsibility for your own actions and you're quick to blame someone else. You refuse to look at yourself.

BOB

I'm so fucking tired of hearing that from you.

Bob snatches the papers out of Claire's hand. Takes a pen out of his pocket and places the papers on the hood of a delivery truck. He angrily scribbles his signature on the divorce papers.

BOB

From this point on, you are DEAD to me Claire. Anything you need to say, you can call Zachary, my attorney. Now get lost. I've got work to do.

CLAIRE

Yeah. I'm dead to you but we have a son together in case you forgot. If I'm dead to you, so is he.

Claire begins to walk away. Bob steps aggressively towards her and grabs her arm. He pulls her around the corner out of sight from his entire crew watching them.

CLAIRE

Let me go!

She tries to pull away from him but his grip is too strong.

BOB

Now you listen to me Claire--don't even begin to sound like you're planning to take my son away from me, or I swear I will--

CLAIRE

Do not threaten me Robert Drake.

BOB

Then don't screw with me, Claire. Zachary will be in touch with you. Now push on.

CLAIRE

There's nothing to discuss. Frankie is my son and he stays with me.

Bob is enraged.

BOB

Get off my property before I throw your ass out of here!

Bob shoves Claire's shoulder as he says this and points in a direction away from him.

CLAIRE

Don't you ever put your hands on me again!

She storms away from Bob, gets in her car and speeds off.

INT. FAMILY COURT - DAY - FOUR WEEKS LATER

The Family Court Judge, Bob, Claire, and their attorneys are in the large conference room. Tension in the air is thick. Claire will not make eye contact with Bob. She looks worried and tired. Bob and his attorney ZACHARY FINNEGAN whisper and look over documents. Zachary is in his late twenties--young, good looking hot-shot lawyer. Claire and her attorney JILL BRACKENSTOCK also look over documents together. Jill is blonde, mid-thirties, naturally pretty without makeup, athletic, and tough. The Judge, older white man in his 60's presides.

FAMILY COURT JUDGE

I'm going to review The Division of Assets and Property requests from both Robert and Claire Drake at this time. Mrs. Drake requests to remain at her current residence and be given 100% ownership of it, removing Mr. Drake's name from the title with no further financial gains or responsibilities therein. Mrs. Drake requests child support to be placed in a living trust for their minor child Francesco Drake in the amount of \$6,000 per month. Mrs. Drake willingly waives her right to spousal support. Mrs. Drake requests to remove the marital surname Drake from all documentation, including the current business name, Drake's Designs LLC. Mrs. Drake has filed to have this current business in her name only, removing Mr. Drake from any financial gains or losses therein. Mr. Drake requests that Mrs. Drake have no financial interest in his new venture, Bob's Brewery. Does Counsel wish to modify this order before I ratify it?

ZACHARY

Yes, Your honor. My client Robert Drake petitions the court for the full custody of Francesco Drake.

CLAIRE

No! No Bob, what are you doing?! We never discussed that!

FAMILY COURT JUDGE

(bangs gavel)

Order in the court! Mrs. Drake, please.

Jill tries to console Claire.

JILL

You're Honor, that was not part of the initial custody agreement. My client wishes to share custody with Mr. Drake and alternate holidays and weekends, as outlined in Paragraph 79.

ZACHARY

But You're Honor, Mr. Drake does not feel that Mrs. Drake can handle full-time custody of their son due to being emotionally unstable.

CLAIRE

What?!

FAMILY COURT JUDGE

Ms. Brackenstock, please advise your client that if she makes one more outburst, she will be held in contempt of this court. Is that clear?

Bob looks over at Claire with a satisfied smirk on his face.

JILL

Yes, Your Honor.

FAMILY COURT JUDGE

Mr. Finnegan, do you have any evidence to show that Mrs. Drake is somehow unfit to raise her son due to emotional impairment?

ZACHARY

Aside from her uncontrollable outbursts here, Your Honor? That clearly shows a lack of control and someone who is emotionally imbalanced--

JILL

Objection! Move to strike.

FAMILY COURT JUDGE

Sustained. Mr. Finnegan, you cannot use that as admissible evidence. You need to provide something more concrete. Again--do you or your client have that at this time?

ZACHARY

No, Your Honor.

FAMILY COURT JUDGE

Then let's proceed. I'll deliberate and return with my final judgement. Court is in recess.

The Judge bangs his gavel and exits the courtroom. After a 30 minute break, the Judge comes back.

FAMILY COURT JUDGE

Members of the court, on this day, the Judgement of Absolute Divorce is granted to Ms. Claire Bianchi formerly Drake. Her requests for the division of property and assets are so ordered. To the matter of custody of their minor child Francesco Drake, Ms. Bianchi shall maintain full custody until the child is 18 years of age. Mr. Drake is required to adhere to the visitation schedule outlined by Ms. Bianchi. Attorney Finnegan is to contact Attorney Brackenstock directly if Mr. Drake is unable to fulfill the visitation schedule. That is my ruling. Court is adjourned. Good day folks.

The Judge bangs the gavel. Claire is relieved. Bob angrily storms out of the courtroom.

INT. CLAIRE BIANCHI ESTATE - FOYER - TWO MONTHS LATER - DAY

The movers take the last of Bob's belongings out of their formerly shared home. Claire looks on. She signs the invoice, pays the movers, and closes the door behind them. She takes a deep breath.

INT. CLAIRE BIANCHI ESTATE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Claire picks up the phone to call Jill.

JILL

Jill speaking.

CLAIRE

Jill, hi it's Claire.

JILL

Claire, how are you? Everything go ok with the move-out?

CLAIRE

Yes, the movers just packed up Bob's remaining items.

JILL

Good, good. Do you know where he's staying?

CLAIRE

He's renting a condo in the next town. Says he wants to remain in the area for Frankie. I've taken him over there a few times to see his father. It's a nice place. And Bob has been oddly cooperative with the visitation schedule so far.

JILL

Ah, I see. Is Frankie with you right now?

CLAIRE

No, I asked my mother to take him into town for the day.

JILL

It's so great that your mother is there for you and Frankie.

CLAIRE

God, yes. I don't know what I would've done without her. She's doing a great job helping me stay calm and making Frankie as happy as possible. She set up a pre-school in the den to get Frankie ready for Kindergarten. She's amazing.

JILL

Oh that's great! Way to go, grandma!

CLAIRE

Yeah she's incredible. He's already learning so much from her. So that's during the day. At night, Frankie sleeps with me in the bed sometimes. He now understands that his daddy isn't coming back.

JILL

Awww...I understand. As we know, divorce is always hard on children. So what can I do for you today, Claire?

CLAIRE

I want to take Frankie on a trip out of town next month to visit Bob's parents in Boston. It will be good for him. They've been asking to see him, too.

(MORE)

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

It sort of disrupts the visitation schedule so I want to clear that with Bob's attorney before confirming any plans. What should I do?

JILL

Ok. Well first of all, what is Bob's relationship with his parents? This is an important factor to consider.

CLAIRE

Oh--well it's civil. Bob's parents are devoutly religious. Church every Sunday. Bible study. Bob doesn't share their beliefs. God does not exist to him. And that has always bothered them. So they... tolerate him.

JILL

Ah, I see. I'm guessing they know about the divorce and custody?

CLAIRE

Yes. I called and told them myself. I thought Bob did, but apparently, he decided to keep them in the dark. They're really nice people though. His dad Mark is great and totally understands my reasons for divorcing his son.

JILL

Good to know. Here's what we'll do. You need to write a letter to Bob and send it to him and his attorney, clearly defining the dates of travel, where you're going, and how long you plan to be gone. Be friendly but direct in the letter, and stay away from any accusatory language. Avoid talking about your marriage or what went wrong. Keep it all business, ok?

CLAIRE

Yes ma'am.

JILL

Draft a copy of the letter, send it to me for review, sign the final copy, and we'll send it off to them asap. We need to get ahead of this now to give Bob plenty of time to stall, change his mind, and just be his usual Bob self, right?

CLAIRE

laughs) Right. Sounds like a great plan, Jill. Thank you. I'll work on the letter right now and email you the draft.

The ladies say goodbye and hang up the call. Claire grabs her laptop on the coffee table and begins to type the letter.

Bob,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to formally request that you give me permission to take Frankie out of town to visit your parents. They haven't seen him in a long time, and asked if they could be with him for his 5th birthday coming up. Your parents said I can bring him there anytime, and to just let them know when. I would like to fly him out on Monday, March 3rd and take a cab to their home. I will drop him off with them, stay overnight, and fly back the next morning. He is to be there for 14 days. After that, I will fly to Boston, pick him up, and bring him home to my residence. The dates of the trip overlap your visitation schedule so I want to be sure you're okay with this. You have all of my contact information, so I hope that you will agree to this request. I need you and your attorney to please respond within 5 days of the receipt of this letter with both of your signatures either agreeing to my request, or declining.

Sincerely,

Claire Bianchi

Claire emails the draft to Jill. Jill emails Claire saying it's approved.

EXT. BOB'S CONDO - DAY - THREE DAYS LATER

Bob goes outside to retrieve his mail from the box. He thumbs through the stack of letters and sees an envelope from Claire. He pauses, jaws clenched. Walks back inside.

INT. BOB'S CONDO - KITCHEN - DAY

Bob sits at his kitchen table and tears open the letter from Claire. He reads it. Looks up in the distance. Slow smile spreads across his face. Intentions are unclear based on his expression.

INT. CLAIRE BIANCHI ESTATE - LIVING ROOM - DAY - TWO DAYS LATER

Ellie goes outside to get the mail, walking down the long walkway towards the street. Frankie plays with his toys on the couch next to Claire who is writing in her notepad.

FRANKIE

Whatcha doin' Mommy?

CLAIRE

Oh, I'm preparing notes for a Buyer's Conference.

FRANKIE

A buyer's confiss?

CLAIRE

(laughs)

No, my love. The word is "conference".

FRANKIE

What's that?

CLAIRE

Oh it's this really big meeting for fashion designers who will get to see all kinds of pretty fabrics from around the world! From China, France, Persia, Africa--everywhere!

FRANKIE

Wow! That sounds cool!

CLAIRE

Oh it's cool alright!

Frankie runs into the kitchen to get a snack. Ellie walks back into the mansion with a pile of mail and hands it to Claire. Claire immediately sees the return address from Zachary's law office. She rips the letter open quickly.

ELLIE

Expecting something?

CLAIRE

Yup!

Claire reads silently to herself and smiles.

ELLIE

Good news, I hope?

CLAIRE

GREAT news! Bob has agreed to allow me to take Frankie out of town!

ELLIE

Oh that's great. It's interesting how Bob has been so cooperative lately...

CLAIRE

Yes, that's true. Maybe this divorce has changed him. Maybe he realizes how problematic he was and wants to be a better person...

Ellie hesitates.

ELLIE

Well...just stay alert, dear. Be ready for anything. But that's good. Frankie will be so pleased!

INT. MOVIE THEATRE - THAT EVENING

Claire takes Frankie to the movies. They happily stand in the concession line.

CLAIRE

So do you want extra butter on your popcorn or just medium butter?

FRANKIE

Extra butter! And a hot dog! And a fruit punch! And a...

CLAIRE

Whoa there, little partner! People will think I don't feed you!

Suddenly, an older woman in a suit carrying a briefcase approaches Claire and Frankie while they're in line.

CASE WORKER

Excuse me, Mrs. Drake?

Claire looks at the woman.

CLAIRE
Ms. Bianchi, but yes?

CASE WORKER
I'm Janine Young, Case Worker with
the Department of Social Services.

The Case Worker quickly flashes her ID. Claire looks confused.

CLAIRE
Ok...hello...how did you know I was
here?

CASE WORKER
You told Mr. Drake that you would
take your son to the movies on this
date. So we knew to find you here.

CLAIRE
Oh...right. But how did you know
what time we would be--

CASE WORKER
(cuts Claire off)
By special instructions of the
Child Welfare Department, and
authorized by Mr. Drake's attorney,
we would like to ask you and your
son a few questions.

Case Worker smiles a forced grin. Claire bristles.

CLAIRE
Well this really isn't a good time.
We're in line about to get snacks
and watch a movie.

CASE WORKER
Oh this won't take long. As a
formality, I need to see your ID
please.

CLAIRE
Why? You know who I am.

CASE WORKER
Just a formality, Ms. Bianchi.

Claire hesitates and digs in her purse to take her ID out of her wallet. Case Worker looks at it, looks at Claire and nods her head yes.

CASE WORKER

Thank you. And who might you be,
young man?!

Case Worker kneels down smiling at Frankie. Frankie grabs his mother's pants leg and hides behind her, visibly distrustful of Ms. Young. Afraid of her. Claire speaks gently to Frankie.

CLAIRE

Honey, it's alright. Tell her your
name.

FRANKIE

(small quiet voice)
Frankie Drake.

CASE WORKER

Ah of course! Nice to meet you
Frankie Drake. And who is this nice
lady you're standing here with?

Frankie looks up at his mother, confused by her strange question. Claire nods her head to let him know it's ok to answer. They inch forward in the line.

FRANKIE

She's my Mommy.

CASE WORKER

Of course she is! How old are you
Frankie?

FRANKIE

4. But I'm gonna be 5 soon. See?

Frankie holds up four little fingers and bends another finger on his other hand to show it's not fully 5 fingers.

CASE WORKER

Oh you're a big boy! Hey Frankie--
do you like spending time with your
mommy?

FRANKIE

Yeah! She's the best Mom in the
whole world! We do a lot of fun
things together. We go on trips,
she takes me to the movies, and
teaches me stuff about buyer's
confisses.

Case Worker smiles. Claire smiles proudly at her son. They move towards the checkout counter again.

CASE WORKER

Well, that all sounds great!

FRANKIE

She even named me after her. Her middle name is Francesca. My name is Francesco. With a "o" on the end. "O" is for orange. And octopus! My Grandma taught me that!

Case Worker laughs. Claire puts her arm around her son's shoulders, charmed by his cuteness.

FRANKIE

But people call me Frankie because they don't know how to say Francesco. Fran-chess-ko. See it's easy!

CASE WORKER

Ah! I understand. You're such a smart boy Francesco! Will you be going on any trips with your mommy soon?

Frankie stops to look up at Claire before answering. Claire nods her head yes.

FRANKIE

Yeah, I'm going to see my daddy's parents for my birthday. I can't wait!

CASE WORKER

That sounds wonderful! Ms. Bianchi, do you have written permission to take your son on this trip?

CLAIRE

Of course I do. Signed by Bob and his attorney.

CASE WORKER

Ok good, good. Have there ever been any concerns for Frankie's safety in your care or the care of his relatives?

CLAIRE

Absolutely not. Frankie's grandparents and I take the very best care of him.

CASE WORKER

Frankie, is your mommy right about that or wrong about that?

FRANKIE

My Mommy is right! My Grandma Ellie is the best! And my Daddy's parents are really nice and fun. I call them Mammam and Pappap.

CASE WORKER

Isn't that special? Ok well, I won't keep you any longer. Just wanted to make the initial introduction and see if everything is alright.

CLAIRE

Well thank you Ms. Young.

CASE WORKER

Thank you Ms. Bianchi. Bye Frankie! Enjoy your movie!

They wave goodbye to the Case Worker as she walks away. They are now at the checkout counter to get their snacks before showtime, excited and happy.

INT. CLAIRE BIANCHI ESTATE - ONE MONTH LATER - DAY

Claire carries Frankie's bags down to the foyer, getting him ready for his trip to visit Bob's parents. Ellie stands in the foyer.

CLAIRE

(calling upstairs)

Are you all ready to go, sweetie?

FRANKIE

(from upstairs)

Yeah. Did you pack my teddy and Beadle Boy?

CLAIRE

Yes, I packed them in your blue bag so you can have them with you on the airplane.

FRANKIE

Ok!

CLAIRE

Mama, are you ready for your trip too?

ELLIE

Oh yes dear. I'm all set. The driver will be here later to pick me up.

CLAIRE

Are you sure I can't take you to the airport?

ELLIE

Oh it's alright darling. I don't want you and Frankie to miss your flight.

CLAIRE

Ok well, only if you're sure. I know you've been planning this trip home to Italy for years! You circled the date on the kitchen calendar and everything. You must be so excited!

ELLIE

Yes, I am! I figured this would be a good time to go, since you and Frankie won't be here. Oh I'm going to miss you both!

CLAIRE

We're going to miss you, Mama.

Claire and Ellie hug. Frankie comes downstairs. Ellie lifts Frankie and hugs him, kissing his face all over. He laughs and squirms. They all say their goodbyes. Ellie stands in the doorway watching Claire and Frankie walk out to the chauffeured car waiting outside. They get in. It slowly drives off. Frankie waves goodbye at Ellie from inside the car. She blows him kisses.

INT. AIRPLANE - THAT EVENING

The cabin is quiet. Frankie nestles next to Claire watching cartoons from the plane's monitors on the backs of the seats in front of them. Frankie takes his headphones off.

FRANKIE

I'm sleepy Mommy.

CLAIRE

Ok. Come here. Close your eyes and sleep. We'll be there in a few hours.

Frankie nestles down even deeper onto Claire. She covers him with his favorite blanket and he drifts off to sleep. Claire changes the aircraft's tv channel and watches a comedy movie. She laughs to herself at the action on screen.

INT. COLORADO AIRPORT - THAT EVENING

Bob runs down the busy corridor of the airport, frantically. Airport security takes notice but they don't stop him. He runs up to the Departure Counter, seemingly out of breath.

BOB
Did flight 540 leave for Boston yet?

AIRPORT WORKER
Yes sir. It left an hour ago.

BOB
Damn!

AIRPORT WORKER
What seems to be the trouble sir?

BOB
I need to call the police!

AIRPORT WORKER
Sir, we can get you airport security.

BOB
No it's too late. Never mind.

Bob nonchalantly walks back down the corridor. Airport security notices.

INT. BOB'S CONDO - THAT EVENING

Bob picks up his cell phone. Dials 9-1-1.

EMERGENCY DISPATCHER
9-1-1. What's your emergency?

BOB
Yes hello. This is Robert Drake on Riverside Way. I'd like to report a kidnapping.

EMERGENCY DISPATCHER
A kidnapping sir? What is the victim's name?

BOB
Frankie Drake. He's my son.

EMERGENCY DISPATCHER
Do you know who the possible
suspect is sir?

Bob pauses.

BOB
Yes. My ex-wife. Claire Drake
Bianchi.

EXT. BOB'S PARENT'S HOUSE - BOSTON, MA - LATE THAT EVENING

The taxi pulls up at the modest brick home of Bob's parents. They step outside to greet Claire and the sleeping Frankie. Claire carries him and Frankie's little suitcases in her arms while Bob's parents embrace them. All very happy to see each other. They walk into the house and close the door.

INT. BOB'S CONDO - LIVING ROOM - LATE EVENING

The police and an INVESTIGATOR arrive at Bob's condo. He sits rather calmly on the couch as the detective questions him. He notices the police eyeing him carefully so he suddenly fakes tears.

BOB
I don't know what happened,
Detective. I tried to do everything
I could to cooperate with Claire. I
told her anytime she needed to take
Frankie somewhere, just let me
know. I'd be ok with it. I only
said to not take him across state
lines, that's all. But she did it
anyway! I can't believe it!

Bob hangs his head, shaking his shoulders in an act. The two policeman look at him suspiciously.

INVESTIGATOR
We'll do everything we can for you
Mr. Drake. First of all, do you
think you know where Mrs. Drake
might've taken your son?

BOB
I think she might've taken him back
east where my parents live.

INVESTIGATOR

Do you have a court-ordered custody agreement in place?

BOB

Yes. We share custody of Frankie. This was supposed to be MY weekend with him. When I noticed that she didn't show up here like she was supposed to, I got worried. I called her all day long. No answer. I even went by the house. No one was home.

INVESTIGATOR

Does she live with anyone else in the home?

BOB

Just her mother Ellie.

INVESTIGATOR

Do you know Ellie's whereabouts?

BOB

No idea.

INVESTIGATOR

Do you think your son might be in any immediate danger?

BOB

I don't know. Claire sort of...

INVESTIGATOR

Claire sort of what?

BOB

She gets into these emotional fits. Rages. She's a hot-blooded Italian. You know how they are. When she thinks she's being cornered, she could do something--crazy. So we have to be smart about this. Don't surprise her or she might run. AND I'LL NEVER SEE MY SON AGAIN!

More crocodile tears from Bob. Policeman watch his actions and look at each other and back at Bob.

INT. BOB'S PARENT'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

It's Frankie's 5th birthday. Balloons and festive party decorations are everywhere.

DOREEN DRAKE, Bob's mother, is in the kitchen cooking a large breakfast. Doreen is in her 80's but still energetic and a bit high-strung--a fussy worrying type. Claire walks into the kitchen rubbing her eyes and yawns. She inhales deeply.

CLAIRE

Are those your famous biscuits I smell, Doreen?

Doreen smiles. Claire walks over and kisses her on the cheek as Doreen leans towards Claire as she stirs a bowl.

DOREEN

Why of course it is! Just for you and Frankie!

CLAIRE

Ah! Grazie!

DOREEN

Here! Have one!

Doreen puts a small biscuit in Claire's mouth. She eats it whole and they laugh. MARK DRAKE, Bob's father, walks into the kitchen carrying Frankie in his arms. They are both wearing captain hats.

MARK

Ladies, flying in all the way from Colorado is The Birthday Boy and Pilot Frankie Drake and his trusty Co-pilot Mark Drake! Yay! Whoohoo!

Mark also in his 80's has a youthful and friendly spirit. He flies Frankie high in the air making swooshing sounds like an airplane. Frankie giggles.

FRANKIE

Hi Mommy! Mammam look! I'm flying!

CLAIRE

I see! Happy Birthday my love! You're the Big 5 today, huh?

FRANKIE

Yeah! I'm big!

The family laughs. Mark carries Frankie over to his mother and Doreen to get birthday kisses. Just then, Claire's cell phone rings. It's her next door neighbor MR. TAYLOR.

CLAIRE

Hi, this is Claire.

MR. TAYLOR
 Claire, hi. It's Taylor.

CLAIRE
 Oh hello Taylor! How are you?

MR. TAYLOR
 Um...Claire, have you watched the news?

CLAIRE
 No, why?

MR. TAYLOR
 Claire, I hate to tell you this but apparently there's a warrant out for your arrest!

CLAIRE
 WHAT???!!!

Frankie, Mark, and Doreen all stop to look at Claire, wide-eyed.

MR. TAYLOR
 Yes, they said you're being charged with kidnapping your son!

Claire drops her cell phone and starts fainting. Mark puts Frankie down and rushes to catch Claire. Mr. Taylor's voice can be heard asking Claire if she's alright.

CUT TO:

INT. BOSTON POLICE STATION - NEXT DAY

A clerk prints a police report and hands it to the SHERIFF. He reads it and signals for his Deputy to follow him down the hall and out of the precinct.

BACK TO:

INT. BOB'S PARENT'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Claire is beside herself crying into Mark's chest. Mark holds her in his arms, sitting beside her on the couch. Doreen hold Frankie in her arms.

CLAIRE
 Why would someone say this about me? Kidnapping my own child? I've never broken the law in my life!

FRANKIE
Don't cry Mommy...

Claire looks up at her son and tries to smile through her pain. But she can't. Claire's phone rings. Mark answers Claire's phone.

MARK
Hello, Mark Drake here.

JILL
Hi, this is attorney Jill
Brackenstock calling for Claire
Bianchi please.

MARK
Oh yes, of course. One moment.
Claire, it's your attorney Jill.

Claire breathes a sigh of relief and grabs the phone, crying even more. Mark, Doreen, and Frankie are all watching, worried.

CLAIRE
Jill, what is happening?!

JILL
I don't know yet. This is insane. I
turned on the news this morning and
your face was on every channel!

CLAIRE
Dio Mio!

JILL
Where are you?

CLAIRE
I'm at Bob's parents house.

JILL
Oh yes, that's right. Frankie's
with you?

CLAIRE
Yes, he's here.

JILL
Ok listen. We don't have a lot of
time. You need to tell me who knew
you were taking Frankie out of
town.

CLAIRE

There are a lot of people, Jill!
Everybody knew! Oh my God...

Doreen takes Frankie's hand and walks him out of the room. Frankie turns around to look at his mother, concerned. Mark remains beside Claire, watching her as she talks to Jill.

JILL

It's ok, we're going to narrow this down. Start naming people, I'm going to write this down. Everybody.

Claire snuffles. Mark hands her a tissue from an end table to blow her nose.

CLAIRE

Well, there's my mother Ellie, and Mr. Taylor my neighbor, and Lisa my assistant, and of course Mark and Doreen here. Then there was the Case Worker who talked to Frankie and I at the movie theatre some time ago.

JILL

Hang on--who? What Case Worker?

CLAIRE

Her name was um...Young. Oh--Janine Young with the Department of Social Services.

JILL

Claire--what did you say to her?

CLAIRE

She asked Frankie and I questions about how he feels about my care and if he's ever been in any danger with his caretakers. Things like that.

JILL

Did she happen to ask you about your travel plans back East?

CLAIRE

Yes, she did.

JILL

Oh no. Did she show her ID?

CLAIRE
Briefly, but I didn't look...I--oh
no...

JILL
Geez Claire, I *told* you to never
answer questions from random people
without my representation!

Claire groans and smacks her forehead with her hand.

JILL
Alright, let me do some checking
ok? Did you name everyone who knew
you were leaving town?

CLAIRE
Yes, I think so. Well, there's Bob
of course.

Jill sat silently on the phone.

CLAIRE
Jill, are you there?

JILL
Yes...I'm here. Are his parents
near you? Just say yes or no.

CLAIRE
Yes.

JILL
Claire, this has Bob written all
over it. I immediately thought that
when I saw the news story. He
hasn't made a public statement
though. If Bob is behind this, the
local police know exactly where you
are, right now. Because HE knows.
I'm catching a flight out there
tonight, red eye. I have the
feeling you might need me.

CLAIRE
Thank you Jill!

JILL
Of course. And Claire--I don't want
to scare you, but should the police
show up at your in-laws house, do
not say a word. Know your rights.
I'll call as soon as I get into
town.

(MORE)

JILL (CONT'D)

Give me your in-laws' phone number too. We'll be in touch, ok? Keep me posted should anything change.

CLAIRE

Ok. Thank you Jill.

Claire hangs up the phone. Doreen comes back into the living room. Claire stares into space, dazed.

CLAIRE

The police might know where I am. They might come here.

MARK AND DOREEN

How? Why?

CLAIRE

My lawyer Jill thinks Bob might've done this. To set me up.

DOREEN

What?! Of for heaven's sake. I know Bob and he can be difficult but he would never go this far. This is just evil and I didn't raise an evil son.

Mark stays quiet. Doreen looks at Mark.

DOREEN

Mark, what do you think? Mark, say something, Anything!

MARK

Could be true, dear.

Doreen looks shocked.

DOREEN

Mark, you can't mean that!

MARK

Doreen...have you actually met Bob?

Doreen scoffs and looks away, folding her arms.

MARK

Listen dear. We've always known that Robert can be a problem. Been that way all his life. He's not like his sister Kathy.

DOREEN

Yes, but to deliberately ruin
 Claire's life, and put Frankie in
 the middle of this? And us? That's
 just so spiteful and insensitive!

MARK

Yes, yes, and yes.

Doreen looks at Claire whose head was down in her hands. She
 is trembling. Her heart breaks for Claire.

DOREEN

Claire...for a long time, I
 defended Bob and coddled him. I
 always made excuses for his
 behavior and...ignored things...I'm
 so sorry. I hate to admit this,
 but...oh I can't even say it!

Doreen covers her face with her hands and starts to cry.
 Mark goes over to console her.

MARK

You know, a wise person once told
 me that men marry women just like
 their mothers or completely
 opposite. Bob married a beautiful,
 gentle, loving, forgiving, and
 patient woman. Just like his
 mother.

Claire gets up and group-hugs with Mark and Doreen, all
 holding each other.

DOREEN

So, what happens now?

CLAIRE

My lawyer is on her way to town as
 we speak. We just wait and hope for
 the best.

DOREEN

We can do better than hope. We can
 pray. Let's bow our heads. Dear
 Gracious Father in Heaven, please
 help us at our hour of need. Employ
 your Angels to watch over Claire
 and deliver her from peril and
 danger, no matter what may happen.
 Bless us all Lord. Bless Frankie
 and insulate him from this madness.

(MORE)

DOREEN (CONT'D)
Shine Your light of truth in this
awful situation. Amen.

CLAIRE AND MARK
Amen.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF BOB'S PARENTS HOUSE - THAT EVENING

THE SHERIFF, burly, barrel-chested and square-headed, is staked outside of the house, sitting in a squad car with his DEPUTY, who is physically unattractive, boney, and inexperienced. They're hidden in the dark and slightly around the corner out of sight.

DEPUTY
When are we going to go in and bust
that bitch?

SHERIFF
Not yet. We'll wait here and see
what she does next. We've got all
night.

Just then, The Chief gets a call on his cell phone.

SHERIFF
Crandall here.

BOB
Officer Crandall, this is Bob
Drake.

SHERIFF
Mr. Drake. What can I do for you?

BOB
So I was told by the Chief in my
town to contact you. I think it
would be best if you arrest Claire
when she leaves my parent's house
and tries to board the plane. I
don't want you guys rushing in
there and scaring my son or giving
my mother a heart attack.

SHERIFF
Ah. Good thinking. You're a good
man.

BOB
Well thanks. So just keep an eye on
her every move.

(MORE)

BOB (CONT'D)

She's supposed to be heading back home tomorrow. Don't let her get on that plane.

SHERIFF

You got it Mr. Drake. She can't leave the state anyway. So far we haven't seen anything out of the ordinary. Looks like everyone has gone to bed.

BOB

Ok. Thanks for letting me know.

SHERIFF

You got it. I'll be in touch.

They hang up the call.

DEPUTY

No action tonight?

SHERIFF

No. Drake wants us to hold off until the Mrs. tries to make a run for it. We'll be on her tail. Might even toy with her a little bit and follow her all the way to the airport.

DEPUTY

Yeah, we'll make her think she's getting away. And then we'll take her down! I hate women like her. Those uppity types with money and looks who think the world is their oyster.

SHERIFF

That's probably because you could never GET a girl like that. Rich, successful, and hot. Not exactly your speed, my friend.

The Sheriff laughs loud and harsh. Deputy scoffs and continues looking out the window at the house.

INT. BOB'S PARENT'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

Mark and Doreen are eating a quiet breakfast, speaking in hushed tones.

MARK

I must've called Robert at least 12 times last night. The calls just dump to voicemail every time. I just want to ask him why he did this to Claire.

DOREEN

Well, we still don't know 100% if he did.

MARK

Yes we do.

Frankie walks into the kitchen, rubbing his eyes.

MARK

There's our sleepyhead! How are you champ?

FRANKIE

Hi Pappap. Hi Mammam. Is Mommy up yet?

DOREEN

I'm not sure. I'll go check.

INT. BOB'S PARENT'S HOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM - DAY

Doreen goes down the hall to the guest bedroom. She knocks on the door.

DOREEN

Claire? Are you in there, dear heart?

CLAIRE

Come in Doreen.

Doreen slowly opens the door to see Claire sitting up in bed, not looking well. Her skin is gray and ashen. Her eyes are hollow with dark circles under them. Her short hair is disheveled. Doreen gasps.

DOREEN

Oh my...how long have you been awake?

CLAIRE

I never slept.

DOREEN

Oh you poor dear.

CLAIRE

I called my mother in Italy and told her what was going on. She is absolutely devastated. She booked a flight home. I told her not to bother. I might already be in jail by then.

DOREEN

Oh don't you say that!

CLAIRE

It's true. My attorney just checked into her hotel not far from here.

DOREEN

So, what are you going to do?

CLAIRE

I'm going to meet with Jill and head back home. She says to stay put but it's worth the risk. I can't stay here. I especially don't want them coming here and breaking down the door so that Frankie can have nightmares for the rest of his life, seeing the police arrest his mother.

DOREEN

Let's not think that way.

CLAIRE

I've thought about all kinds of scenarios, Doreen. I'm being realistic. This is the safest place for Frankie to be. The longer I stay, the worse it might get for you all here. It's better if he stays with you for now, if that's alright.

DOREEN

Frankie can stay with us as long as you need him to.

CLAIRE

Thanks, Doreen. My assistant Lisa and everyone back home has been ringing my phone off the hook all night. I can't take their calls right now. I've just got to go back home. I booked the flight.

(MORE)

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

They haven't arrested me yet, so I'm going to try. Can you tell Frankie to come in here?

DOREEN

Yes of course! I'll go get him right now.

Doreen leaves the room. Moments later, Frankie comes into the guestroom, carefully carrying a muffin and a glass of orange juice for his mother. Claire's heart breaks. She extends her arms to her child. Frankie climbs into bed and cuddles down with his mother. She rubs his soft brown hair.

CLAIRE

Oh my boy. My brave boy, I love you so much. I'm so sorry for messing up your birthday.

FRANKIE

It's ok. Did daddy do something bad to you?

Claire paused.

CLAIRE

Well, we're not sure yet. But one thing IS for sure. You are safe. So are Mammam and Pappap. And Grandma Ellie too. Everyone you love is safe.

FRANKIE

Are you safe Mommy?

Claire was taken aback by this question.

CLAIRE

You are the smartest little fella I have ever met, you know? I'll be ok. I have to head home today though.

FRANKIE

Oh ok. Hey! I know! I have something to make you happy Mommy!

CLAIRE

Okay son.

Frankie jumps up and runs out of the room. He comes back with his favorite teddy bear.

FRANKIE

I named her Claire Bear. Like that
TV show man calls you. Keep it.

Claire's eyes immediately fill with tears. She takes the
bear and hugs her child tight.

INT. BOB'S PARENT'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - THAT DAY

Claire prepares to leave. She hugs her family for a long
time.

MARK

Are you sure you're making the
right decision by leaving, Claire?

CLAIRE

I have to. Jill and I arranged to
meet at the airport in case
I'm...detained.

MARK

Do call us if anything should
happen ok?

DOREEN

Yes, please call us. Jill has our
number too?

CLAIRE

Yes, she has everything. Well, my
taxi's almost here. I better go
outside and wait.

Mark, Doreen, and Frankie walk to the front door with
Claire. The taxi pulls up in front of the house, seen from
the living room window.

EXT. BOB'S PARENT'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Claire picks up her overnight bag and opens the front door
cautiously. Wearing a satin headscarf, she steps outside
into the sunlight and lowers her dark sunglasses from on top
of her head to put them on her face. She looks back and
forth to see if any police are waiting to descend on her and
gets into the taxi. She waves and blows kisses to Frankie
and her in-laws. They wave from inside the doorway.

DEPUTY

Well looky here! Miss Priss has
decided to grace us with her
presence. Did you see the kid?

SHERIFF

Yeah, I saw him. Sit tight. Let the cab drive off a few feet. We'll follow behind. Stay out of sight.

DEPUTY

You got it.

EXT. TAXI CAB - STREET - DAY

Claire looks nervously around, trying to spot any police cars in pursuit. Still doesn't see any. She calls Jill.

CLAIRE

I'm almost at the airport. About 5 minutes away.

JILL

Good. I'll meet you at the main arrival entrance. See you soon.

INT. BOSTON AIRPORT - DAY

Claire enters the airport nervously looking around for Jill. She spots Jill walking towards her and is relieved. The ladies hug and quickly find a seat out of sight of onlookers.

JILL

So listen, I brought along a few things we may need depending on how things go. Your travel letter, divorce decree, custody agreement, bank records showing division of assets, everything.

CLAIRE

This is why you're my attorney Jill. I owe you my life.

JILL

I'm here for you, Claire. Come on-- let's go see if we can inch you towards the Departures. You haven't been served with a warrant yet, so there's still time to get the hell out of this town before it happens.

INT. BOSTON AIRPORT CORRIDOR - DAY

The airport is getting crowded now with travelers bustling about as Claire and Jill quickly but carefully make their way to the Departure counters. Jill gets a phone call and takes it while they're walking.

JILL

Jill Brackenstock. What?? I knew it. Thanks for checking it out.

She puts her phone in its holster.

CLAIRE

What was that about?

JILL

It was about your mysterious Case Worker, Janine Young. I had a friend do some digging. No Janine Young worked at the Department of Social Services in that area or within 100 miles of it. She was just there to confirm your travel plans. She was a phony!

Claire's heart dropped.

Just then, the SHERIFF comes around the corner with his gun pointed at Claire. His partner shouts for the entire airport to hear.

DEPUTY

FREEZE! GET ON THE GROUND, GET ON THE GROUND!

Claire spins around terrified. Jill steps back with her hands up. Claire is seeing the events unfold in slow motion.

DEPUTY

I SAID GET ON THE GROUND, NOW!! DO YOU UNDERSTAND ENGLISH?!

Claire falls to the floor, face down. Her sunglasses break. Her headscarf slips off. She is exposed to the world. The Deputy presses his foot into her back. The Sheriff cuffs her wrists. Claire cries out in pain.

SHERIFF

Mrs. Claire Drake, you are under arrest for the kidnapping of your son Francesco Drake. You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law...

DEPUTY

(mocking tone)

Yeah and that's Francesco, spelled with an "o" on the end, you know, like orange or octopus, right Mommy Dearest? Ha!

Claire cries inaudible tears on the floor face down while the Deputy's foot is still lodged into her back. Onlookers stop and gather, taking cell phone pictures of Claire. Jill still has her hands up.

JILL

Officer, I'm Jill Brackenstock, Claire Bianchi's attorney. Don't ask her anything, just talk to me only.

DEPUTY

Oh geez it's like these types of girls keep multiplying!

JILL

Yes, we all come from some magical place where the smart girls are pretty and they all hate you. Now get your damn foot off my client's back before I sue your ugly ass for excessive force.

The Deputy is humiliated and takes his foot off of Claire. A few people in the crowd laugh at him. Sheriff stands Claire to her feet and escorts her through the terminal and out of the airport, with Jill following closely behind. Everyone in the airport is pointing, talking, and recording Claire's arrest on their phones.

INT. BOSTON POLICE STATION - DAY

Claire is still cuffed, hands behind her back and seated on a bench. She hangs her head in defeat. Jill remains by her side. The arresting Deputy walks over to Claire.

DEPUTY

Looks like we're going to have a little sleep-over, Princess! You're staying with us for the night in the holding cell. Do you want a plate of spaghetti for dinner tonight, Ms. Italiano? Too bad, we don't have any of that here, kidnapper.

The Deputy laughs and walks away. Claire looks at Jill, frightened and exhausted.

INT. LIVING ROOM OF AN APARTMENT - EVENING

A man with dark hair, olive skin, and a trimmed beard sits watching the evening news in his dimly lit living room. RUSSELL FERNANDO, an author in his early forties, shakes his head in disbelief as he sees images of Claire being arrested and the charges filed. He stands up quickly and walks out of the room with purpose.

INT. BOSTON POLICE STATION - NEXT DAY

The next morning, Jill marches into the precinct. Briefcase in hand and a stern look on her face. She approaches the DESK CLERK.

JILL

Jill Brackenstock, Attorney at Law.
I'm here to escort my client Claire
Bianchi back to her home state of
Colorado today.

DESK CLERK

Yes ma'am, let me get the Sheriff.

The Clerk calls The Sheriff's extension. He slowly emerges from his office after a few minutes, eating a large ham sandwich.

SHERIFF

Ms. Brackenstock! What can I do
for you on this fine morning?

JILL

You can prepare my client to fly
back to Colorado today. Can you
confirm the departure time please?

SHERIFF

(asks the clerk)
Hey when's departure time?

CLERK

JPATS says 11am this morning.

The Sheriff takes another impossibly large bite of his sandwich. Jill makes a disgusted face. A guard stands nearby.

SHERIFF
(mouth full)
Uh, guard, go get Inmate Drake in
408A and bring her up here.

INT. BOSTON POLICE STATION - DAY

The guards hand Claire her personal effects. She and Jill sign out. They start walking them out to the squad car.

EXT. JPATS AIRPORT - DAY

Claire, Jill, 10 guards, and a few other shackled inmates with their lawyers board the plane bound for the prison in Colorado.

INT. JPATS AIRPLANE - DAY

Claire and Jill sit next to each other talking softly, looking over documents.

CLAIRE
I talked to my mother yesterday.
They allowed me one phone call so
she was the one. She sounded so
sad. Scared for me.

JILL
I'm sure she is. How are things on
the homefront, by the way?

CLAIRE
She said a few reporters showed up
asking her for statements. She
won't talk to them though.

JILL
Good for Mom.

CLAIRE
Yeah. I had her call Bob's parents
to tell them to keep Frankie away
from the TV news while he's there.
I don't want him seeing anything.

JILL
Another smart idea. And they still
haven't heard from Bob, huh?

CLAIRE

No. My mother said his parents called him a thousand times and it just continues going to his voicemail.

JILL

Hmmmm...Listen Claire. I know this is the worst thing that has ever happened to you. I get it. But there is light at the end of the tunnel. When this all goes to trial, I'm gonna mop the floor with Bob's attorney and witnesses. I've already begun preparing character witness testimonials from people in your circle who will vouch for you. We will win this.

INT. COLORADO WOMEN'S PRISON - EVENING

6 hours later, the female guards lead Claire and the other inmates into the prison while their attorneys are made to wait in the lobby before entering through the secured doors. The prisoners stand in a line getting visually inspected, wanded, and registered one by one. During booking, Claire is fingerprinted, tagged, and photographed. The prisoners are assigned their cell numbers. A guard wands each attorney and opens their briefcases to check them. It's Jill's turn to be examined. The guard checks her and allows Jill to walk over to Claire in the line to say goodbye.

JILL

Ok, so I'm going to have to leave now.

CLAIRE

Jill I'm scared, I don't belong in a place like this!

JILL

(whispering)

I know. I've asked the court for a Case Management Conference. This is the first part of getting a trial. Apparently Bob's attorney hasn't done this yet because they're so confident that they'll win and you'll be in prison forever. They're in for a big surprise. Just stay strong and be prepared for a fight.

Jill pats Claire's shoulder and turns to walk out of the prison. Two guards look slyly at each other and wait to see that Jill is out of sight. The guards grab Claire by the arms and roughly push her down the hall towards the Interrogation Room.

INT. COLORADO WOMEN'S PRISON - INTERROGATION ROOM - EVENING

Feet in shackles, Claire is shoved hard by the female prison guards into the interrogation room. They close the door and lock it. The same investigator that took Bob's statement is sitting at a metal table in the room. Claire is petrified, shaking.

INVESTIGATOR

Ah ha! Pleasure to meet you Mrs. Drake. Kidnap any kids lately?

CLAIRE

I am not a kidnapper! Please let me out of here!

The investigator motions with his head towards the two guards with a nod, and they suddenly descend onto Claire, beating her viciously with batons. Claire screams and falls to her knees. The investigator snaps his fingers and the guards stand up and move back from Claire like two trained dogs.

INVESTIGATOR

So we did that to show you what will happen if you lie to me. Just a little warning. Now, it says here that you violated the custody agreement by taking your child out of the state. Is that right?

CLAIRE

That's not true.

INVESTIGATOR

...and not only that but didn't you tell your husband you would never take the child across state lines?

CLAIRE

No! That's a lie!

INVESTIGATOR

...and that you carry illegal substances...

CLAIRE

No. NO! NOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!

The investigator motions towards the guards again and they begin beating Claire mercilessly with their batons. He snaps his fingers and they stop.

INVESTIGATOR
And speaking of illegal substances,
I think we should search you. Take
off your clothes.

Claire cowers in the corner of the room, shivering.

CLAIRE
N-no...

INVESTIGATOR
You don't learn very well, do you?
All you foreigners are alike.

CLAIRE
(crying)
How can I take off my clothes when
you have me chained like an
animal?!

INVESTIGATOR
She finally admits she's an animal!
Now we're getting somewhere.
Guards, take her shackles off.

The guards roughly stand Claire up and remove her restraints.

INVESTIGATOR
Off with the clothes. NOW.

Claire unzips the loose-fitting orange jumper she's wearing and lets it drop to her feet. She stands in her bra and panties. The guards raise their batons at her and she ducks down in submission with her hands up.

INVESTIGATOR
(angrily)
Everything!

Claire removes her undergarments and stands completely naked, trembling and trying to cover herself with her hands. The investigator looks her up and down and smiles with a sneer. The guards walk around Claire, examining her body. They look at the investigator and shake their heads no.

INVESTIGATOR
Lucky for you, you're in the clear,
Binkie or Bianchi or whatever your
damn name is.
(MORE)

INVESTIGATOR (CONT'D)
 Put your clothes back on. Guards,
 take this foreigner to her cell.

The guards grab Claire aggressively and push her towards the door and down the hall to her cell. She's crying.

INT. CLAIRE'S PRISON CELL - LATER THAT EVENING

Claire has not eaten that entire day. Her stomach growls. She looks at her bruised wrists from the handcuffs. She climbs into the hard cot positioned on one side of the room and covers herself with the prison-issued blanket. Loud and gritty sounds of prison life echo in her ears. Exhaustion takes over, and she closes her eyes and sleeps.

INT. CLAIRE'S PRISON CELL - NEXT DAY

Day One of Prison: Jill quickly walks down the hall to Claire's cell. She is horrified to see a swollen and bruised Claire, curled up on her cot. A guard unlocks the cell door and lets Jill in. She rushes over to her.

JILL
 Oh my God, Claire! What happened?

Jill tries to touch a bruise on the side of Claire's face and she winces away in pain.

CLAIRE
 The people in here don't seem to
 like Italians that much.

JILL
 The guards did this to you?

Claire nods her head yes, starting to cry.

CLAIRE
 Jill, please get me out of here.

JILL
 I will Claire. I promise you. I put
 the request in to have a trial as
 soon as possible.

CLAIRE
 Jill...

JILL
 Yes?

CLAIRE

Can I try to call Bob to post my bail?

JILL

(shocked)

Can you what?! Are you insane, Claire?! It's his fault that you're in here. He did this to you. Why would he help you? Besides that, you're not even supposed to talk to him anyway, being in litigation.

CLAIRE

I'm desperate.

JILL

Yeah, but don't let desperation cause bad decisions Claire.

CLAIRE

Has anyone heard from him?

JILL

From what I was told, he went on vacation.

CLAIRE

He's on vacation and I'm in here.

JILL

That's because he's a monster. See if you can get the names of the officers who did this to you. When this goes to trial, we're going to bring them up on charges of police brutality. Ok?

CLAIRE

Ok. Jill, please call my mother and have her tell Frankie that I'm on a long business trip and I'll call him as soon as I can, ok?

JILL

Ok, I will. I'll be in touch. I've got quite a case to prepare. Hang in there, ok?

CLAIRE

I'll try.

Guards are watching Claire and Jill on the cameras, listening to every word.

INT. COLORADO WOMEN'S PRISON - SECURITY OFFICE - THAT EVENING

A GUARD and a COUNTY SHERIFF are discussing something in low voices, holding a cassette tape and a recorder.

GUARD

Are you sure this is a good idea?

COUNTY SHERIFF

We just wanna have a little fun with our Kidnapping Queen in here. I hate these damn rich immigrants. They come over here and think they're entitled to everything because they have money. Bring the recorder and the tape. Come on.

INT. CLAIRE'S PRISON CELL - EVENING

Claire is lying on her cot, beginning to hallucinate from being weak with hunger and stress. Just then, she hears Frankie's voice. Shocked, she stands up and stumbles to find out where he is.

CLAIRE

Frankie?! Dio mio, Frankie?! Where are you baby?

A recording of a little boy's voice can be heard in the distance.

BOY'S RECORDED VOICE

Mommy?! Are you in here? Mommy?!

CLAIRE

Frankie! Baby, I'm here!

BOY'S RECORDED VOICE

Why did you and daddy split up? Why did you do this Mommy? Why? Why? Why?!

The voice of the boy distorts into a deep, loud, demonic growl. Claire screams in terror and cries, covering her ears to block the loud growl of recorded "Frankie". She bangs on the cell bars, screaming to be let out. She falls to the floor in anguish. The guard and county sheriff watch her from the security office, laughing at her.

INT. CLAIRE'S PRISON CELL - NEXT DAY

Day Two of Prison: Claire is asleep on her cot when loud music suddenly blasts over the PA to wake the prisoners up.

She jolts awake. A guard bangs on her cell door and slips a tray of gray food through the slot. She gets up from the cot, looks at the food in disgust, and pushes it away.

INT. CLAIRE'S PRISON CELL - NEXT MORNING (EARLY)

Day Three of Prison: Claire is asleep. Guards barge into her cell and startle her awake by grabbing her and picking her up. They cover her mouth to silence her cries. One guard covers Claire's head with a linen bag. The other guard sits Claire down hard in an old metal chair. The first guard tightens the bag around Claire's neck and holds her down. The other one pours water onto Claire's head, causing her to choke and sputter. They punch her in the face and stomach, and she screams and cries but no one comes to help. The other inmates watch in silence.

EXT. PRISON YARD - NEXT DAY

Day Four of Prison: Claire is outside with the other prisoners. She is pale, tired, bruised, and drained. Her voice is hoarse. A fellow inmate sitting on a bench across from Claire stares at her.

FELLOW INMATE

Hey...aren't you Claire Drake?

CLAIRE

I used to be. I don't know who I am anymore.

FELLOW INMATE

Well I think you're awesome.

CLAIRE

I sure don't feel awesome right now. But thank you. Hey, can you do me a favor?

FELLOW INMATE

Sure! Anything for you Ms. Drake!

CLAIRE

Do you see that bowl of water over there? Can you bring it to me? I haven't bathed or washed my hair in days.

The inmate quickly jumps up and brings the bowl of water to Claire. The inmate reaches into her jumpsuit pocket and hands Claire a small bar of soap.

FELLOW INMATE

They never let you stay clean in this place, so I carry these in my pocket.

Claire gratefully takes the little soap and goes to a corner of the prison yard. She takes the bowl of water, leans over, pours it onto her head, rubbing the soap on her hair and massaging her scalp with her fingers. The smell of the clean suds and lather make her smile slightly. She rinses her hair and face with the rest of the clean water and shakes her head to dry. She sighs, feeling a bit of relief.

INT. CLAIRE'S PRISON CELL - THAT DAY

Claire is laying on her cot when she hears the sound of a guard's baton rattling against the prison bars. The guard stops at Claire's cell and unlocks it, roughly shoving a heavily-tattooed girl in her late teens into the cell with Claire. She's bone-thin like an addict. The girl protests and flinches away. The guard slams the door and walks off. The inmate sits down on the cot across from where Claire is. She takes out a joint and lighter she hid in her tangled, matted hair. She lights up and starts smoking it, leaning back on her cot and staring up at the industrial ceiling of the cell. Claire continues to silently watch this inmate's blatant actions.

TATOED INMATE

What--you ain't never seen a girl with tattoos before?

CLAIRE

You shouldn't...smoke that in here. You'll get us into trouble.

TATOED INMATE

Ah, relax. I do this all the time. The guards don't care as long as we don't cause a scene.

The girl scratches her dirty scalp. Debris falls from her hair. Claire grimaces in disgust. She hears her LAWYER and a large female guard approaching and quickly snuffs the joint and hides it under her shoe. She puts the lighter back in her hair. The guard takes one whiff, unlocks the cell, lets her lawyer in, walks straight over to the girl and turns her upside down, shaking her like a container of salt. She screams and tries to get down. The lighter falls out of her hair. The guard places the girl down on the cot, immediately confiscates the lighter, and throws the joint in the cell's dirty toilet and flushes it away.

TATOED INMATE'S LAWYER
 Jackie, how many times have I got
 to tell you to NOT bring contraband
 in here? You're only making things
 worse for yourself!

Jackie sucks her teeth and breathes heavily in frustration. She and her lawyer exchange a few more words, and the lawyer leaves. Jackie turns to look at Claire and gets up to walk over to her. Claire looks away.

JACKIE (TATOED INMATE)
 So! What's a fine ass lady like you
 doing in a place like this?

CLAIRE
 (muttering)
 Great--they put a smelly drug
 addict in here with me, just to
 torture me.

JACKIE
 What?

CLAIRE
 Look, just leave me alone ok?

JACKIE
 Oh come on. Can't we be friends?

Jackie puts her hand on Claire's leg and begins to rub it slowly up and down. Claire slaps Jackie's hand away and tries to get up. Jackie firmly grips Claire's shoulder.

CLAIRE
 Don't touch me.

JACKIE
 Just relax...

CLAIRE
 No! Guard?! Get away from me!

JACKIE
 Fine, fine, don't get all crazy.
 Hey--wanna smoke? I've got another
 blunt hidden in my secret place. Do
 you wanna guess where it is? I know
 you'll like it...

CLAIRE
 No! I don't know you or what you
 did to get in here, but I don't
 want you anywhere near me!

Claire feels brave for the first time in days, staring Jackie down in resolve. Jackie steps away from Claire and slinks back to her cot in the shadows like a lizard.

INT. COLORADO WOMEN'S PRISON - TELEPHONE ROOM - THAT EVENING

A guard walks Claire to the large phone bank room. There are other inmates sitting on one side of the glass partition, talking to their visitors on the phones.

CLAIRE
(hoarse voice)
Who's here to see me?

The guard did not answer.

Just then, Russell Fernando takes a seat in front of Claire. She is completely shocked and covers her mouth in surprise. He looks at her and smiles. His eyes are warm and caring. He picks up the phone. She does also.

CLAIRE
(she stammers)
R-Russell?!

RUSSELL
Hi Claire. It's been a long time.

His voice is reassuring. He speaks with a Hispanic accent.

CLAIRE
Yes...yes it has. How have you been? How did you find me here? Well, I guess everyone knows where I am now, huh?

RUSSELL
I had been planning to contact you even before all of this. I was wondering what happened to you. I'm...so sorry about everything Claire. I had to see you.

CLAIRE
Thank you Russell. I must look like a real mess. I'm losing my voice, too.

Claire clears her throat and modestly smooths her hair.

RUSSELL
None of that matters to me, Claire. You're pretty no matter what.

Claire blushes deeply.

CLAIRE

You came all the way from Boston to see me?

RUSSELL

Yes. I'm currently working on another book and trying to figure out if I'm staying in the U.S., or moving back home to Spain.

CLAIRE

Oh well congratulations on your writing career, that's great. Glad to hear that your dreams of being a writer are coming true.

RUSSELL

Yeah, finally. Thanks. Yours too, with fashion design an all. You're a huge success in the industry. Remember how we met in college?

CLAIRE

Like it was yesterday! You were this long-haired guy with glasses walking down the hall reading a book and you ran right into me. My sewing kit went flying! My scissors, my beads...

RUSSELL

(laughs)

Yeah, they went everywhere. Those little spools of thread rolled away so fast.

CLAIRE

They sure did! But you were so sweet though. You helped me pick everything up.

RUSSELL

Those were good times, Claire.

CLAIRE

Yes, they were.

They watched each other silently through the glass.

RUSSELL

So when are you getting out of here?

CLAIRE

I wish I knew. My wonderful attorney Jill is setting up a trial conference to move things forward. I'll have to be in here for a bit while that gets arranged. But I'll survive.

RUSSELL

Wow, look at how tough you've become. What changed?

CLAIRE

All of this. The trauma I've experienced. And realizing who's for me and who's against me. Being very sure of who I open myself up to and who I shouldn't.

RUSSELL

That's good. I like how you're looking at this. Sorry for asking but...are you and Bob officially divorced? I read some things online but you never know what's true.

CLAIRE

Oh yes--we are divorced. It's over. It was actually over before it began but I didn't see the red flags.

RUSSELL

Tell me about those red flags.

CLAIRE

Well when we first started out, I noticed odd things about him. He wasn't stable. He had bad credit. He got thrown out of a couple places where he lived for not paying his rent. He used to drink really heavy. He would always be late paying his bills. But I was there to help him get on his feet and do better in life. He moved in with me and, we got married after that.

RUSSELL

So you weren't actually his girlfriend, you were more like his nurse, therapist, credit repair specialist, landlord...

CLAIRE

Exactly! I guess I didn't see it. Everyone else did but me. Me and maybe his Mom Doreen. She always made excuses for him. So he grew up feeling entitled to fail, make messes, and not care how it effected other people. She finally admitted it, after all this happened.

RUSSELL

That's a shame. So how's your baby boy, Little Frankie? How old his he now?

CLAIRE

He's 5 now. About to start Kindergarten in the Fall. He's actually doing well in spite of his mother's long "business trips" that we're telling him I'm on. He's staying with Bob's parents while I'm in here. No one knows where Bob is.

RUSSELL

Hmmmm, I see. You know, I can't say I'm surprised about Bob though.

CLAIRE

Yeah?

RUSSELL

Yeah. I saw the warning signs too. But you seemed happy and you didn't like me or my long hair anyway, so I stepped out of your way.

CLAIRE

Is...that how it happened?

RUSSELL

Well yeah. Kind of. I mean, I knew you wanted more of a business-type of guy with a future. I wasn't that at the time. I thought Bob was--I didn't know he was living off of you. He would always go around talking all big and bad like he was gonna do this and gonna do that. This business, that venture, that deal...I thought he was just the mover and shaker type you liked.

(MORE)

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Not some no-name amateur author like me, living in a basement apartment eating Top Ramen noodles for breakfast, lunch, dinner, dessert...

Claire laughs out loud and covers her mouth.

RUSSELL

...with a pet goldfish that I couldn't afford to feed so I ate him with the Ramen...

Claire laughs even louder. A nearby guard looks at her and frowns.

RUSSELL

I love seeing you laugh, Claire.

CLAIRE

How can you make me laugh out loud in jail? Only you, Russell.

The guard walks over to Claire and signals it's time to go.

CLAIRE

I think our visit is finished.

RUSSELL

Oh, ok sure. It was really great catching up with you, Claire.

CLAIRE

You too.

He takes a small piece of paper out of his pocket and writes down his address and phone number. He asks a guard to go around and give it to Claire.

RUSSELL

Here's how you can reach me. Call me whenever you can. I'm here for you Claire. Hopefully now that I finally got a hair cut, you'll give me the time of day.

CLAIRE

(smiles)

Thanks Russell. I can really use a friend right now--someone who knew me before all this. Thanks for making me laugh today. God knows I need it.

They say their goodbyes. A guard walks over to Claire and hands her the small piece of paper Russell wrote on. Along with his address and phone number, Russell drew a small picture of a bowl of noodles with a fish on top of it. Claire smiles, her eyes filling with tears. She carefully places the paper in the pocket of her jumpsuit.

INT. CLAIRE'S PRISON CELL - NEXT MORNING

Jill arrives to speak to Claire. She notices Claire looks generally unwell and winces in pain whenever she moves.

JILL

Claire, has a doctor come to see you yet?

CLAIRE

No.

JILL

We need to get you to the Emergency Room. Not the infirmary here. I do have some good news though. We have a trial date. But let's get you out of here and to a hospital. I'll need to remain with you at all times, or I'm in violation. Ok?

CLAIRE

I'm getting out of here? Today?

JILL

Yes, for now. Let's get ready to go. I'll get a guard to let us out.

INT. JILL'S CAR - DAY

Jill drives Claire to the emergency room with a police car following behind them.

CLAIRE

Do they have to follow us here?

JILL

You're lucky I was able to talk them into not having you wear handcuffs to the hospital!

INT. LOCAL EMERGENCY ROOM LOBBY - DAY

Jill helps to check Claire in at the front desk. Claire's legs are a bit shaky. An officer looms nearby watching. Within minutes, they call Claire into the patient area. Jill follows her, and the officer walks behind them.

Suddenly, Claire passes out cold. Jill, an orderly, and the policeman rush to pick her up and place her in a wheelchair. The orderly wheels Claire to the triage area. Jill and the officer follow.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - RECOVERY ROOM - DAY - TWO DAYS LATER

Claire lies in bed as her doctor stands at the foot of it holding a clipboard. She begins to open her eyes, blinking. An I-V is hooked into her arm.

DOCTOR

Hello Claire. How are we today?

She looks around, not remembering what happened. Her voice is still raspy and hoarse. She's surprised to see the I-V in her arm.

CLAIRE

What happened? How long was I out?

DOCTOR

For a couple of days.

CLAIRE

A couple of days? Wh--what's wrong with my eyes? I can't see straight. They burn...

Claire touches her fingers to her eyes.

DOCTOR

Claire, you suffered from severe dehydration,, malnourishment, exhaustion, blunt force trauma, and apparently strained vocal chords from yelling or screaming. Being in prison was very tough on your body.

Claire sighs and closes her eyes, leaning her head back on the pillow. A nurse comes in with medication and a pitcher of water. She fills a small paper cup of water and hands it to Claire with 2 pills on a tissue. Claire looks at the pills and hesitates.

DOCTOR

The pills will help restore your body, reduce pain, and help you rest. You'll need to be in here for a few weeks, but you're healing nicely.

The nurse hands the pills to Claire again, encouraging her to take them.

NURSE
(smiles)
Sorry, just doing my job.

CLAIRE
It's ok...I'd rather be here than
in prison.

Claire pops the pills into her mouth, sips the water, and swallows them.

DOCTOR
Take two of them per day for 15
days. Finish all of the medication.
You should feel better very soon.
Ok?

CLAIRE
Ok. Thank you doctor.

INT. COURT HOUSE - DAY - TWENTY DAYS LATER

Day One of the trial: Bob and Zachary are seated on the right side of the courtroom facing the Judge's bench, whispering and looking at notes. Ellie, Lisa, and Russell are sitting in the spectator's area among many other people. The jury box is filled with twelve citizens. The Bailiff and stenographer are ready. Everyone turns to watch Jill walk into the courtroom, as confident and self-assured as anyone can get. Except for Claire, who matches Jill's resolve. Dressed in one of her impeccably-tailored power suits that Claire designed herself, with her hair done and makeup expertly applied, Claire is ready for business. She looks healthy and strong. Everyone stares at her--she's breathtaking. She strides past Bob without looking at him. Bob looks at her like he's seeing a ghost. Russell has a satisfied smile on his face, glad to see Claire. The DISTRICT COURT JUDGE walks in--an African American woman in her early 50's.

BAILIFF
All rise!

Everyone in the courtroom stands up.

BAILIFF
Good morning, Your Honor. This is
Case Number 61259-G: Robert Anthony
Drake vs. Claire Francesca Bianchi
in the matter of the alleged
kidnapping of their minor son,
Francesco Drake.
(MORE)

BAILIFF (CONT'D)

All parties have been sworn in,
Your Honor. Everyone may be seated.

Everyone sits down and listens quietly.

DISTRICT COURT JUDGE

Thank you. We will begin with opening and closing statements from both sides. The Plaintiff's Attorney will go first. Please state your name and approach the bench.

ZACHARY

Good morning Your Honor and members of the court. My name is Zachary Finnegan, Attorney for Plaintiff Robert Drake. Ladies and gentlemen, this should be an easy case. We have here Robert Anthony Drake: A devoted father, a loyal son, a dedicated businessman, and at one period in time, a loving husband to the former Mrs. Claire Drake. Why do I say this is an "easy" case? Well, let's review the facts.

Number 1. Mr. Drake did not agree to have his ex-wife and the mother of their son Francesco, travel out of state. In fact, the weekend the child went missing was the weekend Mr. Drake was supposed to take his son fishing.

Number 2. Mr. Drake tried numerous times to contact Mrs. Drake Bianchi when she and their son had not arrived at his residence. She did not return his calls. When he saw they still had not arrived, he became worried. He even rushed to the airport to see if maybe he could try to find his wife and son. When he couldn't, he called the authorities. He was distraught. A broken man, Your Honor.

Number 3. Mr. Drake has always been concerned for Mrs. Drake Bianchi's mental and emotional state, and became alarmed that she might've harmed Francesco.

(MORE)

ZACHARY (CONT'D)

He wanted to give the mother of his child the benefit of the doubt as he always had, but this time, he trusted his instincts and called the authorities.

Number 4. Mrs. Drake has been seen and heard on a number of occasions screaming, yelling, and behaving in unusual ways in public settings. This kind of behavior is cause for great alarm, and such a person could be a danger to a child.

Number 5. When she was apprehended at the airport after leaving the child at the residence of Mr. Drake's parents, she did not resist arrest or say a word. That is a clear admission of guilt.

Number 6. A Case Worker interviewed Mrs. Drake Bianchi and her son while out at a movie theatre, and the child appeared upset, malnourished, and tired. And when he was questioned, he tried to kick the nice Case Worker in her shin and yelled at his mother that he didn't want to travel with her and only wanted to see his father. I have the Case Worker's statement right here.

And finally Number 7. It has been documented that Mrs. Drake Bianchi might be using illegal drugs and was seen smoking marijuana in her prison cell.

Claire does her level best not to react to the allegations. She grips the arms of the chair until her knuckles turn white. Jill pats her arm.

ZACHARY

So in closing Your Honor, I have laid out all of the evidence to prove that Claire Bianchi Drake deliberately took her son across state lines willfully, causing great distress to his father, Mr. Drake. This case is for the best interest of the child, and not only do I stand by the charges of kidnapping, but will re-submit an order for Mr. Drake's full custody of minor child Francesco Drake.

JILL

Objection Your Honor. Counsel is mixing two cases in one. This is district court, not family court.

DISTRICT COURT JUDGE

Sustained. Attorney Finnegan, one case and one jurisdiction at a time, please. Anything further?

ZACHARY

No, Your Honor.

DISTRICT COURT JUDGE

Thank you. Defendant's Counsel, please state your name and approach the bench.

JILL

Good morning Judge, thank you. My name is Jill Brackenstock, Attorney at Law for Ms. Claire Bianchi, formerly Drake. Your Honor, may I refer to my client as Ms. Bianchi from this point on?

DISTRICT COURT JUDGE

Yes you may.

JILL

Thank you, Your Honor. Members of the court, Attorney Finnegan just outlined how utterly "easy" this case is going to be for you to decide that my client is a reckless, dangerous, drug-addled kidnapper. However--what he has managed to do, is make my job as the Defendant's Counsel even easier. I had notes prepared and everything but all I have to do now is answer to each claim he just made this morning. So, thank you Counsel.

Jill looks over at Zachary who rolls his eyes at her and looks away.

JILL

First, let's start with the obvious. Mr. Drake signed and dated this letter from Ms.

(MORE)

JILL (CONT'D)

Bianchi that I advised her to write, requesting to take their son out of town for his 5th birthday. The child was to stay with Mr. Drake's parents, as agreed. Shown here is Mr. Drake's signature, along with Mr. Finnegan's, Ms. Bianchi's, and mine. I present Exhibit A to the Court.

Jill hands the document to the Bailiff. The Judge studies it and allows the Bailiff to show the Jury made up of 6 men and 6 women.

JILL

Next order of business. I pulled Ms. Bianchi's home and cell phone records from the day before she and her son left town to fly east, until the day she was arrested. NO INCOMING CALLS from Mr. Drake were found from any of his phone numbers. Why is that? It's because Mr. Drake knew where his ex-wife was, and where his son was. And why was that? Because she didn't kidnap the boy, Your Honor. Exhibit B.

Thirdly, as the daughter of a Clinical Psychologist, Ms. Bianchi understands and appreciates anything related to mental and emotional health. Now, that's a matter of opinion of course--and opinions don't matter in a Court of Law unless it's from a character witness. So here are the facts. I pulled Ms. Bianchi's medical records dating back 10 years up until 2 months ago and all of them show that she is not only in excellent mental and emotional health, but physical health as well. Ms. Bianchi only takes over-the-counter Vitamin B supplements and extra strength Ibuprofen for menstrual cramps and headaches. No prescription meds to treat any internal conditions, except for her recent hospital stay due to being brutalized in prison. Exhibit C.

(MORE)

JILL (CONT'D)

Oh and let me please add that when it is time to call character witnesses, they will be able to attest to Ms. Bianchi's rational demeanor if that's necessary, Your Honor. However, Mr. Drake's medical records show something different. Exhibit C-1.

Jill gives the Bailiff the evidence for the Judge.

JILL

Fourth point. When my client was arrested at the airport, she was immediately given her Miranda Rights by the arresting officer which means Do Not Speak. I was there to witness her arrest Your Honor, and I would've told her as well to not speak. Being silent during an arrest is not an admission of guilt. Plus it's kind of hard to talk when you're on your face and an officer's boot is digging into your back. Moving on, though. This next one is mystery of the ages. Ms. Bianchi told me that she and her son were approached by a Case Worker at the movie theatre while they were in line, happily about to watch a movie and load up on popcorn--with extra butter.

Jill turns around, winks and smiles at Claire who smiles back.

JILL

Anyway, this so-called Case Worker briefly flashed her badge and identified herself as one Ms. Janine Young of the Department of Social Services Child Welfare Division. She said Attorney Finnegan authorized her unscheduled interview with Ms. Bianchi and her son. Unfortunately, my client did not practice her due diligence and allowed this person to ask her and her son questions about their upcoming travel plans. This demonstrates Ms. Bianchi's trusting nature and how she has a tendency to get bitten by **snakes**.

Jill spins around and looks Bob directly in his eyes when she says "snakes".

ZACHARY

Objection, Your Honor.

DISTRICT COURT JUDGE

Sustained.

JILL

Sorry, Your Honor. I'll continue. So, Claire talks to this person and she told me a few weeks later about this. I was quite concerned. Horrified was more like it. So, I did my favorite thing again--some digging. And it has been confirmed that there was *never anyone by the name of Janine Young* who has been employed by The Department of Social Services within 100 miles of the city. Further, I collected witness testimonials from the movie theatre who remember Ms. Bianchi and her son's visit, since she's a recognizable public figure. The witnesses attested to how cute and happy her child was, ready for the movie. One even said the bucket of popcorn was bigger than he was. But that's hearsay, so you can strike that. Anyway, the mystery woman claiming to be Janine Young has not been found. However, according to surveillance video at Bob Drake's beer-making establishment, a woman who looks similar to Imposter Janine based on witness accounts was seen leaving his business after hours, around 11:25pm one night. The only two cars in the large parking lot was his Cadillac Escalade SUV and her late model Ford Fusion, shown in these photos. Exhibits D and E.

She hands the Bailiff the evidence.

JILL

Action Item Number 6: We already spoke about the lack of illegal drugs used by Ms. Bianchi as evidenced her by her physical over the last ten years.

(MORE)

JILL (CONT'D)

Now in terms her smoking weed in her jail cell, I actually have a written statement here. I didn't think I would even need it, but here we are. One day, a young female inmate named Jackie was shoved into Claire's cell. This inmate hid a joint and lighter in her hair, and began to smoke it. Jackie's lawyer and a guard caught Jackie smoking it. The guard managed to extricate the paraphernalia from the inmate in a rather unorthodox manner. It fell out onto the floor, and her lawyer scolded the inmate for being irresponsible. So it was not Ms. Bianchi who smokes a joint. It was the female inmate in the cell with us. See, this is exactly why I didn't like having roommates in college. You always get implicated in things you had nothing to do with. I digress. I have a signed and notarized statement from inmate Jackie's attorney who attested that Ms. Bianchi was not the one smoking drugs in the cell. Exhibit F.

The Bailiff receives the document from Jill.

JILL

Your Honor, In closing, I need to remind the court that Ms. Bianchi did not take her son to an undisclosed location. She took him to Mr. Drake's parent's house, where he was safely in their care. Mr. Drake agreed to it, in writing. Kidnappers are people on the run. They don't come in town, stay overnight, get a great night's sleep in the guest room and have coffee and biscuits with grandma in the morning. I've been able to answer to every false allegation made by opposing counsel. Ms. Claire Bianchi is no kidnapper.

(MORE)

JILL (CONT'D)

She's a hardworking mother who loves her child and did the right thing by mailing a certified letter to her ex-husband asking for his permission to take their son out of town during his scheduled weekend. AND HE SIGNED AND DATED IT. I ask that you consider these facts, and see through the lies coming in droves from the Plaintiff's table over there. That concludes my statement, Your Honor.

Claire sits as proud as can be of Jill. Claire turns around to see her mother, Lisa, Russell, and a few other familiar and friendly faces in the crowd, and smiles. They all smile at her and nod yes. Jill collects her documents from the podium and walks by Zachary, still seated. She leans towards him.

JILL

See? Easy.

INT. COURT HOUSE - NEXT MORNING (CONTINUOUS)

Day Two of the trial. More arguments from counsel are presented. Day Three, Jill files a countersuit to charge Bob with Defamation, Conspiracy, Reckless Endangerment, and Perjury. Day Four is the final day of deliberation for the Jury. All parties are in attendance. Jill and Claire hold hands. Bob and Zachary look smug and sure.

COURT CLERK

Madam Foreperson, have you reached a verdict in this case?

JURY FOREPERSON

Yes, we have Madam Clerk.

COURT CLERK

Please state your verdict at this time.

JURY FOREPERSON

We the Jury find Ms. Claire Bianchi--NOT GUILTY in the crime of kidnapping. We the Jury find Robert Drake--GUILTY of Defamation, Conspiracy, and Perjury.

Bob and Zachary don't react. Everyone else applauds. Claire is excited and relieved. She hugs Jill. Ellie, Lisa, and Russell stand up, clapping.

Claire turns around and looks at them, waving, smiling, and crying. The Judge allows the brief celebration before banging the gavel.

DISTRICT COURT JUDGE

Order in the Court please.
On this day, Ms. Claire Bianchi, you are free and clear to go. The case against you is dismissed. Mr. Drake, you are ordered to pay Ms. Bianchi the sum of one million dollars plus another \$600,000 for the pain and suffering she endured when she was wrongfully detained as a result of your falsehoods. You will be sentenced up to 24 months in prison for perjury. Bail is set for two million dollars. Is that clear?

Bob shakes his head yes.

DISTRICT COURT JUDGE

Excuse me sir?! In my Court Room, you speak up when The Judge addresses you. Do not ever waste the Court's time and resources again with your ridiculous lies or I will personally see to it that you are held in contempt. Do you understand?

Claire and others look satisfied to see Bob getting reprimanded publicly.

BOB

Yes, Your Honor.

DISTRICT COURT JUDGE

That is the order of this Court. Bailiff, take Mr. Drake into custody. Jury, you are dismissed, thank you for your excellent service. Ms. Bianchi, all the best to you and your family. Court is adjourned.

The Judge bangs the gavel.

CLAIRE

Thank you, Your Honor!

JILL
 (smiles)
 Well. We did it. Told you we'd be
 ok.

CLAIRE
 You did it, Jill. You are the best!

JILL
 Tell that to my boss at the firm. I
 hope to be made District Attorney
 some day.

CLAIRE
 Oh, it's going to happen. You saved
 my life. Frankie's life. How can I
 thank you?

JILL
 Say you won't go talking to any
 weird Case Workers from now on.

They laugh. A guard tells family and friends they are
 allowed to join the Defendant up front. Ellie, Lisa, and
 Russell all hurried over to Claire with hugs, joy, and
 relief.

INT. CLAIRE BIANCHI ESTATE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING - A WEEK
 LATER

Frankie is now back at home with his mother and grandmother,
 happier than ever.

INT. CLAIRE'S OFFICE AT THE FORMER DRAKE'S DESIGNS - NEXT
 MORNING

Claire returns to work. When she opens the door, her entire
 staff yells surprise. Balloons, flowers, presents, and
 cards are everywhere at the party. A giant Welcome Back cake
 is on the conference table. There is a huge banner hanging
 on the wall that says "BIANCHI'S DESIGN HOUSE". Claire is
 thrilled.

INT. FINE RESTAURANT - EVENING - THREE DAYS LATER

Claire and Russell are enjoying a quiet dinner holding hands
 across the table.

CLAIRE
 You know, my mother always liked
 you, Russell. She was sort of
 hoping I chose you instead of Bob.
 That's between us, ok?

RUSSELL

Seriously? Ms. Ellie liked me and my broke rock star looks, huh? Wow. Do you know she told me one day after the trial that she was a big fan of the band Queen? I couldn't believe it! I told her they're my favorite band of all time too. Ms. Ellie is so great.

CLAIRE

(laughs)

Oh yeah, don't let my mother's prim and proper looks fool you. She was a real rocker chick back in her heyday.

RUSSELL

Yeah? Oh man that's awesome!

CLAIRE

Yes! Oh, speaking of rock and roll, I remembered you're waiting on news from your publisher right?

RUSSELL

Oh, you mean this?

Russell slides an envelope over to Claire. She opens it and reads the letter out loud.

CLAIRE

Dear Mr. Fernando, we are pleased to inform you that your book "Legends of Rock and Roll" has been accepted for publishing and will pay you an advance of---oh my gosh! Russell that's amazing!! That is a lot of money!

Russell smiles proudly and nods yes.

RUSSELL

Hey--we should go away for the weekend. To the beach in Boston. We'll take Frankie and your mother.

CLAIRE

That sounds like a marvelous idea!

RUSSELL

Good. Let's have a toast. Here's to fulfilled dreams and miracles happening for both of us.

CLAIRE
I'll drink to that!

They raise their glasses in a toast and tap them together.

EXT. THE BEACH IN BOSTON - DAY - ONE WEEK LATER

Claire and Russell sit on a blanket watching Frankie as he runs back and forth, making up a new game. Sunny day, mild breeze.

CLAIRE
Feels so good to be back at home on the beach here. Just like when I was a little girl.

RUSSELL
That's good honey. I knew coming here would be a good idea. You know what Frankie needs?

CLAIRE
Let me guess - a dog right?

RUSSELL
How did you know?

CLAIRE
What boy doesn't want a dog? Oh, except for--never mind.

RUSSELL
What?

CLAIRE
I was going to say that Bob was the only guy I knew that didn't like dogs. Frankie would be so sad when he would ask Bob for a puppy and he'd flatly say NO.

RUSSELL
Yeah I had a feeling Bob was like that. Well maybe one day we can change that for Frankie.

FRANKIE
(from a short distance)
Hey Mom, hey Mr. Russell, watch this!

Frankie throws a small boomerang toy that floats back to him and he catches it in mid air. They clap for him.

RUSSELL

Claire, I'm not trying to replace his dad, ok? I'm your friend, and I care about Frankie and would never do anything to harm him. He's been through enough.

CLAIRE

I know Russell. And I value that so much. Thank you. I just hope Bob stays in prison for the maximum term.

RUSSELL

Right. Get a restraining order against him just in case. And a dog. And maybe a new house too.

CLAIRE

Right. Where?

RUSSELL

Here in Boston, in a beach town like this. Anyway Claire, I sort of have another surprise for you.

CLAIRE

Oh really? I don't know if I can take anymore surprises!

RUSSELL

No, no--this is a good one. Any surprise coming from me are nice. Put it this way--there's a reason we re-connected. And you're a fascinating person. And that's all I'm gonna say!

Claire smiles and looks at Russell with a coy expression. He jumps up and joins Frankie to play the boomerang game. Frankie is leaping and laughing. Russell falls in the sand. Frankie is overjoyed by it.

INT. GYM - DAY - ONE YEAR LATER

Jill is working out and gets a notification on her phone. She stares at the screen, alarmed.

JILL

Oh no. Oh shit.

She immediately calls Claire.

INT. BIANCHI'S DESIGN HOUSE - DAY

Claire is talking with a designer about their new line. Her cell phone rings. She sees Jill's name on the screen and excuses herself.

CLAIRE
Hi Jill!

JILL
Don't panic but I have some bad news.

CLAIRE
What's wrong?

JILL
It's Bob. Someone paid his bail.
He's a free man, as of today.

Claire walks a few feet away from the designer, whispering.

CLAIRE
You've got to be kidding me.

JILL
I wish I was. Time to file those Restraining Order documents. I'm already on it. I'll expedite them to his attorney's office immediately. Gotta get your signature. Watch your email ok?

CLAIRE
Ok thanks for letting me know.

JILL
You bet. Talk to you soon.

The ladies hang up.

CLAIRE
(to the designer)
Would you excuse me for a moment?

The designer nods yes. Claire calls Russell.

INT. RUSSELL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Russell is putting away his groceries. His cell phone rings and he answers.

RUSSELL
Hey baby.

CLAIRE
Hi. Bob is out on bail. Today.

RUSSELL
Seriously?

CLAIRE
Yes. So listen, I'm stuck in a meeting and can't leave. I need you to go by my house and check on Mom and Frankie.

RUSSELL
You got it. I'll be there in about 30 minutes.

CLAIRE
Thanks honey.

RUSSELL
Anytime, babe.

CLAIRE
I'll call Mom in the meantime to let her know you're on the way.

RUSSELL
Ok. Don't worry. I'll let you know if anything's happening.

CLAIRE
Ok, talk to you soon.

They hang up. Claire takes a deep breath and goes back to her meeting with the designer.

EXT. CLAIRE BIANCHI ESTATE - DAY

Russell pulls up to the mansion and parks in the circular driveway. He cases the house's exterior to check for trouble. He sees nothing. He walks to the front door and knocks. Ellie answers.

ELLIE
Russell, come in! It's so good to see you!

They hug.

RUSSELL
You too, Ellie. Everything ok?

ELLIE

Yes, so far. I called our locksmith who should be here in about an hour. And the security system's password was already changed a month ago.

RUSSELL

Good, good. All doors and windows are locked?

ELLIE

I think so. I'll go around and check.

RUSSELL

How's Frankie?

ELLIE

He's fine, he's taking a nap for a few minutes. He has fitful nights sometimes.

RUSSELL

Poor guy. I know this has all been hard for him, finding out that his father did bad things and he won't get to see him for awhile.

ELLIE

Yes, it is. But Claire and I and his other grandparents are doing our best to fill his life with activities and love and everything he needs.

RUSSELL

You guys are the best. Let me call Claire and tell her all is well and the guy is on his way over to change the locks.

ELLIE

Ok. I'll go check on Frankie to see if he's awake yet.

INT. BIANCHI'S DESIGN HOUSE - DAY

Lisa prints out the Restraining Order for Claire. She signs it. Lisa sends it to Jill.

INT. ZACHARY FINNEGAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Bob is sitting in Zachary's office. He looks completely unlike his former self. Unshaven, messy hair, wrinkled clothes.

ZACHARY

So I made this month's rent on your condo from your account, so you can keep your place. I know you didn't want to move out, since your business stuff is tied to that address. I also went by and made sure everything was in order for your return home.

BOB

Good. Thanks. But remember, I don't have a business anymore after getting thrown in jail.

ZACHARY

Well Bob--that's the reality of it. You gotta examine your choices, man.

BOB

Not you too, with the life advice. I have had enough of that from my parents, Claire, and that psychoanalyst mother of hers.

ZACHARY

It wouldn't hurt to listen to one of them, don't you think?

Bob stares at Zachary coldly.

ZACHARY

Anyway, that Restraining Order is about to be faxed over right now. You need to sign it and Bob, I'm telling you dude--if you want any chance of *remaining* free, you need to stay the hell away from Claire and that house forever, you got it? No funny business this time. No altering documents like you did with the permission letter Claire had you sign. Look--they already want to disbar me for your stunts. I'm up for partner and you're gonna ruin it for me.

Bob stands up and looks out of the window.

BOB
Whatever you say.

The fax comes in. Bob signs the Order. Zachary also signs it and faxes it back to Jill's office.

INT. BOB'S CONDO - LIVING ROOM - THAT EVENING

A taxi drops Bob off at his condo. It's bleak, sparse, cold inside. He tosses his personal effects in a chair and immediately pours himself a scotch from a bottle on the console table by the front door. He stares at himself in the mirror for a long time and begins to seethe with anger, breathing hard. Chest heaving. Jaws pulsating.

INT. CLAIRE BIANCHI'S ESTATE - DAY - TWO DAYS LATER

With suitcases in the foyer, Claire, Russell, Ellie, and Frankie are ready for their trip to Boston. The day is bright and sunny and the mood is high.

CLAIRE
Jill, are you sure you don't mind house sitting for us while we're gone?

JILL
Absolutely! I'd take this place over my cramped little apartment any day!

CLAIRE
(laughs)
My house is yours. Whatever you need is right here. Just keep everything locked and don't lose the security password.

JILL
Aye-aye captain.

Claire's personal driver arrives at the mansion and comes in to help Russell carry their luggage out to the car. The family says goodbye to Jill as they walk out to the car and head off to the airport.

INT. BOB'S CONDO - DAY - TWO DAYS LATER

Bob sits hunched over at the coffee table looking for a job.

BOB

Uh yes hello. My name is Robert Drake. I'm calling about the job you were offering. You've already hired someone? Ok thank you.

He makes another call.

BOB

Yes hi, I'm Robert Drake. I'm calling about--what do you mean am I **THAT** Robert Drake?! Screw you!

He angrily slams the handset down and makes another call.

BOB

Hello, I'm Robert Drake. Are you still hiring for the--hello?

He yanks the telephone out of the wall and hurls it across the room. It smashes in a loud clang and hits the floor. He picks up a bottle of scotch on the table and downs the entire bottle.

INT. BIANCHI'S DESIGN HOUSE - NEXT DAY

Lisa and Claire are having lunch.

LISA

So how was your trip home to Boston?

CLAIRE

It was wonderful!

LISA

That's great! And how are things with you and Russell???

Claire blushes.

LISA

Oooh, Boss Lady is blushing, what??

CLAIRE

(laughs)

Things are great. He surprised me with the most lovely garden dinner the other night. Candles, fairy lights. It was so romantic! Russell has always understood me and what I like.

LISA
Hmrrrrrr...I wish I could find a love
like that.

Lisa stares dreamily off into space, hand under her chin.

CLAIRE
Oh you will. You're very sweet and
kind and generous, Lisa. As cute as
a button, too. Just stay away from
narcissistic guys like Bob, ok?

LISA
Thanks, but...how can you tell if a
guy's a narcissist?

CLAIRE
Well you might want to write this
down. You're young enough to be my
daughter so I owe it to you to tell
you this.

Lisa grabs a pad and pen.

LISA
Ok, ready!

CLAIRE
Here's what I've learned.
Narcissism, as my mother taught me
and from what I've experienced,
often starts in childhood. Look for
some kind of faulty relationship at
home when he was a boy. And it has
a lot to do with the mother for
some reason. I don't know why.
Either the mother is dismissive,
abusive, OR on the flip side, she
coddles the hell out of him as if
he can do no wrong. It's never
balanced--it's either or.

Lisa busily writes. Claire continues.

CLAIRE
Boys change a lot in their teens so
we can't really count what they do
then, unless they're killing
animals--or hates dogs and other
pets for no good reason. It's
because they don't know how to love
anything other than themselves. And
they don't even really love
themselves, either. It's weird.

LISA

Wow, ok.

CLAIRE

So the real proof is in the pudding when he becomes a full-on adult. Does he have a stable life? Is he supporting himself? Good friends? Good relationships with his family? Do people generally like him? Does he care about how he appears to the world? Does he care about what he says or does? How does he treat you? Does he make you feel bad about everything? Ignore you one minute and want sex the next? Do you find that your goals and dreams end up dying or being robbed because of his problems, issues, bad decisions, and constant drama he adds to your otherwise normal life? Does he blame you for everything, won't see his wrongdoing, and won't apologize? Does he seem jealous of your accomplishments and doesn't support your dreams? These are all signs.

Lisa writes furiously, pausing every now and then to look up at her boss while she takes in this new information.

CLAIRE

My dear, if I can spare you years of heartache, then this little teaching session here was worth it.

LISA

Absolutely! I'm going to type this in an Excel spreadsheet and carry it with me the next time I date someone long-term!

CLAIRE

Good girl.

LISA

So if you don't mind me asking, didn't your Mom know Bob was like that? She's like--trained to know, right?

CLAIRE

She did know, and tried to warn me about him a thousand times.

(MORE)

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
I just wouldn't listen. I was so dumb. I was fooled by his good looks and "potential".

LISA
Yeah. Mr. Drake is rather hot, I must say. Oh--sorry.

CLAIRE
(laughs)
It's ok. It's true. Good looking on the outside.

LISA
But a HOT MESS on the inside!

CLAIRE
You got that right. So last words here: Don't waste too much of your life on a *grown man* who has "potential". Potential's great and all, but make sure he's already where he needs to be in life before he destroys yours.

LISA
You said it, sister!

The ladies laugh and high five each other.

INT. COURT HOUSE - DAY - PRESENT DAY

Claire, Ellie, Frankie, Russell, Bob's parents, Lisa, Mr. Taylor, Wallace, and many others are in the courtroom. The twelve-member Jury made up of 7 men and 5 women are seated. The mood is somber and tense. Bob and Zachary are now on the other side of the Judge's bench--as Defendants. Jill is the Prosecuting Attorney.

DISTRICT COURT JUDGE
Attorney Brackenstock, please call your first witness.

JILL
Thank you, your honor. I call Ms. Claire Bianchi to the stand.

Claire is sworn in and takes the stand.

JILL
Ms. Bianchi, tell me in your own words what happened on the day in question.

CLAIRE

I was outside gardening when I heard my mother Ellie scream. My son Frankie was outside playing in the front yard. I grabbed Frankie, we ran into the house and went upstairs. And that's when I saw Bob trying to--trying to throw my mother over the balcony of the home we shared...

Claire gets choked up. Bob watches Claire, eyes piercing her. She looks away from him quickly.

JILL

And then what happened?

CLAIRE

I told Bob to get away from her and leave her alone. But he wouldn't. So I ran towards him and he pushed me back. I fell into my son, who was behind me. My mother told me to go and don't try to save her, just go. I froze--I just couldn't leave her. I wanted to help her but she told Frankie and I to run. So, we did...it was the hardest thing I've ever had to do. To leave her like that.

JILL

And then?

CLAIRE

I took Frankie down to the basement and called the police. And they came and got us. They rescued my mother and took her to the hospital and we rode in the squad car following the ambulance.

JILL

How was she when you saw her?

CLAIRE

She was bruised. In pain. Bloody nose. I had never seen her that way in my life and never want to again.

JILL

Ms. Bianchi, thank you for your testimony. I know that was difficult.

(MORE)

JILL (CONT'D)

But we see that Dr. Bianchi is
alive and well today.

People in the courtroom turn to look at a poised and regal
Ellie, sitting in the pews. She nods her head in
acknowledgement of the recognition.

CLAIRE

Yes, she is. And I don't know what
I would've done without her.

JILL

Indeed. No further questions, Your
Honor.

DISTRICT COURT JUDGE

Thank you. Attorney Finnegan, do
you wish to cross?

Zachary hesitates, not looking like his usual hot-shot
lawyer self.

ZACHARY

Not at this time, Your Honor.

More testimonies as the day wears on. Jill calls Ellie to
testify. She calls Bob's arresting officers and a few
others. Every time the judge would ask Zachary if he wants
to cross examine Jill's witnesses, he refuses. The trial
goes on for a few days.

INT. COURT HOUSE - DAY

Zachary and Bob are conferring. Jill talks to a few
character witnesses on Claire's side.

BOB

Why aren't you cross-examining any
of those jokers? What the hell are
you doing?

ZACHARY

Don't question me.

BOB

Then do your damn job and make me
look good, Sport.

ZACHARY

Then why don't you testify like I
asked you to?

BOB

You're the lawyer, it's your job to defend me. I don't need to defend myself. Now get me out of this mess like you said you would. Earn the money I'm starting to regret paying you.

INT. COURT HOUSE - DAY

Day 8: Last day of the trial.

DISTRICT COURT JUDGE

Attorney Finnegan, please approach the bench for your closing statement.

Zachary stands up and walks to the bench.

ZACHARY

Thank you Your Honor and members of the Court. I call my client Robert Drake to the witness stand.

Everyone gasps and looks at Bob who sat wide-eyed. He shook his head no at Zachary.

ZACHARY

Perhaps he didn't hear me. Robert Drake, please approach the witness stand.

Bob refuses and sits still. Everyone in the court room begins whispering and reacting. Judge bangs the gavel.

DISTRICT COURT JUDGE

Order in the court, please.

The look on Bob's face at Zachary was confusion and rage.

ZACHARY

Your Honor, I'm sorry. I think my client is a bit nervous. You see, he didn't prepare a statement today. But sometimes, it's better that way.

The entire court room is glued to Zachary.

DISTRICT COURT JUDGE

Proceed, Counsel.

ZACHARY

You know, when I was a boy, my mother used to tell me I was going to be great some day. And my dad, well, he didn't pay much attention to me when he was around. It was mainly my mom who did it all. Oh man, she was great. She made the best fried chicken. I was sort of a knucklehead kid so she did this mix of punishments and rewards--she wasn't too hard on me, and not too soft either. I used to call her my "Just Right Pillow" you know--not too hard or soft.

The court laughs softly.

ZACHARY

So anyway, she raised me to be a good guy. To help others. Clean my room, say no to drugs, wash my hands, get good grades, and go to law school. So I went to law school, passed the bar, and got my first job as a really green lawyer. I was so excited when I started winning cases, you know. Defending the innocent was personally rewarding, not to mention financially. Well, sad to say, my mother passed away a few years ago.

The court remains silently fixated on Zachary.

ZACHARY

Worst time in my life. But there was one thing she told me before she died. She said "Zackie?" She'd call me Zackie as she rubbed my head. She'd say "Zackie, when you stop loving what you do, stop doing it." Now that might not seem like the most profound advice, but it stuck with me. I can still hear her saying that. So I had to ask myself: "Do you still love what you do Zackie?"

He pauses. The court, even the Judge is fully invested in his story.

ZACHARY

Sadly, I have to say no. But why? Why Zackie? You make all this money. You drive 2 different sports cars--one for work, and one for play. You go on the best vacations and have every Brookes Brothers suit ever made. Italian shoes, a big house and a guest cabin for my buddies to stay in when they come to town. Everything a young lawyer could ever want. Why the hell aren't you happy?

The court listens.

ZACHARY

Because sometimes, I don't get to defend innocent moms, dads, and kids who have been used and abused. I have to defend the guilty. I took an oath to do that, I get it. But...

He points to Frankie, who was paying attention to every word Zachary said.

ZACHARY

...when I see that kid sitting there...when I look at Frankie Drake, I see myself. And his mother, Ms. Bianchi, reminds me a lot of my own mom...

Claire and others gasp with emotion. A lady in the Jury box begins to weep softly.

ZACHARY

...I've seen Frankie's face as he tries to look over and get his dad's attention every day in this courtroom and be ignored by him, just like my dad used to ignore me. And when I look at my client, Robert Drake, I see my dad...

The court gasps again, the room is buzzing with whispers. The Judge forgets to yell "order". She picks up her gavel and half-heartedly bangs it one soft time, chin resting in her hand.

DISTRICT COURT JUDGE

Continue, Counsel...

Everyone quiets down until a pin drop can be heard.

ZACHARY

(voice trembling)

Your Honor, members of this court, I've said all of this to say that I'm going to make my mom proud today, being the 4th anniversary of her death. I can no longer defend a lying, greedy, violent scum of the earth like Robert Drake. I quit the case, I am quitting law, and I'm going into Civil Service to be one of the good guys.

The court reacts loudly and uncontrollably. Applause, shouts, disbelieving looks. Claire and Jill sit with their jaws dropped and look at each other. Bob suddenly stands up and lunges at Zachary from the table. The guards ascend on Bob, forcing him down to the floor. They cuff him. The courtroom is blazing with shouts and strong reactions. Bob's mother cries. Bob's father turns her away from seeing their son roughly apprehended. The Judge bangs her gavel furiously.

DISTRICT COURT JUDGE

Order! Order in this court I say!
Guards, remand Mr. Drake into custody now! Attorneys Finnegan and Brackenstock, see me in my Chambers right now. Court is in recess.

A Guard quickly escorts Jill and Zachary to the Judge's chambers. Bob, being hauled away looks over his shoulder at Claire then at Frankie. His face is demonic. Ellie grabs Frankie who hugs his grandmother and doesn't want to look at his father anymore. Bob and Russell make eye contact for a brief moment. Russell smiles broadly and mouths "Bye bye" at Bob and waves at him. Bob is shoved aggressively out of the room.

INT. COURT HOUSE - DAY

An hour later, court is back in session. Bob is brought back into the room, hands and feet shackled, jump-suited, and seated. Jill comes back in and sits next to Claire. Zachary didn't return.

CLAIRE

What happened? What's going on?

JILL

You'll see.

The Bailiff walks to the front and center of the courtroom.

BAILIFF

All rise!

Everyone stands. The Judge walks in and takes her seat. The Bailiff tells everyone to be seated.

DISTRICT COURT JUDGE

Ladies and gentlemen of this court, it has been an interesting morning to say the least. Attorney--well, former Attorney Zachary Finnegan is no longer practicing law. As you all heard, this decision was his own. In light of the evidence presented over the last 8 days and my discussion with the Plaintiff's and Defendant's attorneys today, I am ready to make a ruling. Clerk of the Court, please address the Members of the Jury at this time.

COURT CLERK

Mr. Foreperson, have you reached a verdict in this case?

JURY FOREPERSON

Yes, we have Madam Clerk.

COURT CLERK

Please state your verdict at this time.

JURY FOREPERSON

We the Jury find Defendant Robert Anthony Drake--GUILTY of violating the Restraining Order. We find the Defendant GUILTY of breaking and entering. We find the Defendant GUILTY of the assault and attempted murder of Eliana Maria Bianchi.

The court erupts in loud cheers. Claire shouts in victory and cries. The family claps. Bob's mother runs out of the room crying. Mark goes after her. Judge bangs the gavel.

DISTRICT COURT JUDGE

Order! Guards, bring the Defendant up here please.

A hush falls over the crowd in the court. The guards bring Bob over to face the Judge. He hangs his head down and won't look at her.

DISTRICT COURT JUDGE
Look at me.

Bob doesn't comply.

DISTRICT COURT JUDGE
(bangs gavel hard)
I said look at me, Mr. Drake!

Bob looks up at her slowly with malice in his eyes.

DISTRICT COURT JUDGE
Didn't I tell you not to come back up in here? You just don't learn, do you? I don't know what went wrong in your history to turn you into this I see before me, but we have to keep people like you off the streets and out of people's lives. You have shown absolutely no remorse for what you've caused your family. You didn't see your mother crying and heartbroken while you were down there struggling on the floor after trying to attack your attorney. The way she ran up out of here today, in tears. Let's not even talk about the look on your son's face during this trial. I see that what I'm saying isn't registering with you, based on your perpetual look of self-righteous pomposity. So, let's not waste anymore of this court's time. You did that when you perjured yourself, remember? Robert Drake, I am hereby sentencing you to 35 years in our maximum security facility reserved for people like you who show no remorse for their crimes. And guess what? This time, there will be no bail. We don't want to see you anymore and I'm sorry your child had to deal with this. Ms. Bianchi and family, best wishes to you all. Mr. Drake will be away for a long time. You all are free to go. Mr. Drake you are not. Guards, get him out of here please. Thank you Attorney Brackenstock and members of the Jury. Court is adjourned.

The Judge bangs the gavel. The courtroom cheers. Claire waves at the Judge and mouths the words "thank you so much" to her. The Judge nods her head yes and smiles as she leaves the courtroom. Russell walks over to Claire.

RUSSELL

It's over. You did it. You stayed strong until the end.

They embrace and kiss. Frankie comes over.

FRANKIE

Mom, are we gonna be ok now?

CLAIRE

Yes, honey. Yes we are. No more bad dreams?

FRANKIE

Nope! I think I'll be able to sleep a lot better now. In my own bed.

CLAIRE

That's my good boy. And it's ok, I won't be too lonely, you know why?

FRANKIE

Why?

Claire reaches into her purse and pulls out Claire Bear. Frankie's eyes light up and he hugs his mother.

FRANKIE

You kept her?!

CLAIRE

Of course I did. She's been with me every day on those strange business trips I had gone on.

FRANKIE

And now I know you weren't on any trips. Daddy got you in trouble and they took you to jail. I'm sorry Mommy. It's all my fault.

Frankie begins to cry. Russell walks away to give them privacy.

CLAIRE

Hey--bambino. Look at me. Don't ever blame yourself for any of this ok?

(MORE)

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

You did not cause your father to make bad decisions and to be mean to Mommy. He did that all on his own, okay?

Frankie snuffles and wipes his nose on his sleeve.

FRANKIE

Ok, Mom. I love you. Mr. Zackie loves his mom too.

CLAIRE

He sure does. And I love you, my brave little guy.

They hug. Ellie and everyone else forms a crowd around Claire, Jill, and Frankie. Talking, embracing, laughing.

LISA

Hey Boss Lady, there's a reporter outside who wants a statement. What should I tell them?

CLAIRE

I think I see a news crew outside. Tell them I'll be out shortly.

JILL

Yeah they've been there all morning. Just keep your statements short and sweet, ok Claire? And no statements from Frankie, our future Attorney at Law, right?

CLAIRE AND FRANKIE

Right!

INT. COURT HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Lisa goes to the exit door of the courtroom and tells the reporter Claire will be out in a few minutes. Zachary is coming out of the men's room, drying his hands on a paper towel. He looks up and sees Lisa. She sees him. When their eyes meet, sparks fly and their instant chemistry is strong.

INT. GRAND BALL ROOM OF A LUXURY HOTEL - EVENING - ONE MONTH LATER

Russell and Claire are at a Writers Reception by exclusive invite as honored guests. Claire is elegantly dressed in the most gorgeous gown in the room that she designed herself. Russell is in a black tuxedo, looking dapper and very expensive.

RUSSELL

Can you get any more radiant?

CLAIRE

Why, thank you. Not so bad yourself there, handsome.

He kisses her hand and they walk arm in arm to their table. Friends and colleagues of Russell's are there. Paparazzi snap photos of them and wave at her to get her attention. She smiles demurely at everyone. After a few introductions and speeches, the host asks Russell to come up and say a few words. Claire and the crowd applaud as he stands up and approaches the lectern.

RUSSELL

Good evening, and thank you all. I'm both honored and humbled to be chosen as your special guest honoree of the evening. So--two things. For one, I'd like to thank Park Street Publishing for signing me for my first book called "Legends of Rock and Roll". I'm very proud to announce that it made The Best Sellers List.

Everyone applauds.

RUSSELL

The other thing is the success of this book has allowed me to be approved for another book about someone very special in my life who inspires me. Claire could you come up here please?

Claire gasps wide-eyed and looks around at everyone, shocked. Cameras flash. The dinner guests applaud. She slowly stands up and climbs the stage to join Russell. He looks into her eyes and faces her.

RUSSELL

Claire. You are a survivor. For everything you've been through publicly and privately, you have handled it all with grace, dignity, and determination. And because of that, I've been working on a special project for at least 10 years. It's the first draft of my manuscript: The Claire Bianchi Story. It's all about you--from college to now.

(MORE)

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

You fascinate me Claire. And the world needs to hear your story.

Russell picks up the manuscript for her and all to see. Cameras flash. Claire is shocked, smiling. Tears in her eyes. The crowd applauds and cheers.

RUSSELL

But wait, there's more.

Russell puts the manuscript on the lectern and faces Claire, holding her hands.

RUSSELL

Claire, ever since we met, I knew I was not the one for you.

Audience laughs.

RUSSELL

Ok, no--I mean I knew I wasn't your type. A girl like you deserved a guy who had it all together. I wanted to give you the world. So I waited. I think I finally have things together now.

Russell bends down on one knee and takes a small box out of his pocket. More flashing cameras. The audience gasps. So does Claire, blushing deeply.

CLAIRE

Oh no!

RUSSELL

She's saying 'oh no' already and I haven't even said anything yet.

Audience laughs loudly. The ladies in the crowd are cooing at the romance unfolding before their eyes.

RUSSELL

Claire Francesca Bianchi. Will you marry me?

CLAIRE

Yes! Yes Russell!

Russell takes out the ring and slips it onto Claire's manicured finger. They embrace and kiss, as Russell lifts Claire off of her feet. The audience gives them a standing ovation. Later, the newly-engaged couple joyfully celebrates and dances the night away.

EXT. JILL BRACKENSTOCK ESTATE (FORMERLY CLAIRE BIANCHI'S ESTATE) - DAY - ONE MONTH LATER

The movers load the last of Claire's, Frankie's and Ellie's belongings into the moving trucks. Russell talks with the transporters and pays them.

ELLIE

Are you excited to move into our new house in Boston, Frankie?

FRANKIE

I sure am Grandma, I can't wait! Mom, when are we leaving?

CLAIRE

Just as soon as Jill gets here.

ELLIE

Claire, I think it's wonderful that you sold the house to Jill.

CLAIRE

Well she told me how much she liked it when she was housesitting that time. So I figured it would make sense. And Mama, you will love our new house. It's right on the water in a quiet seaside town.

ELLIE

Sounds beautiful, carina.

Jill pulls up in the driveway with music thumping from her car. She has a few friends with her. They hop out of the car and go over to Claire, hugging and saying hello.

CLAIRE

All ready for your move-in?

JILL

Yup! Just wanted to be here to say goodbye to you. I'll really miss you Claire.

CLAIRE

Thanks Jill. I'm so proud of you for being promoted to District Attorney.

JILL

Thanks. I bet you're glad Bob's out of your life now, huh? He's under the jail where he belongs.

Claire looks lovingly over at Russell, her mother, and son.

CLAIRE

I am. I actually had to forgive Bob though, you know? To let my heart heal. Now I can move on and have a truly peaceful life.

After more chatting, Russell hands Jill the keys to her new house. The friends say goodbye. The family gets into Russell's SUV for their road trip to Boston.

EXT. RUSSELL AND CLAIRE'S HOUSE - BOSTON - DRIVEWAY - DAY - FIVE DAYS LATER

When the family arrives at their large new home, they see the moving trucks already parked in front of the house. They also see a car in the driveway. Russell pulls up and parks behind it.

FRANKIE

Who's at our house, mom?

CLAIRE

I don't know. Russell are we expecting someone today?

RUSSELL

(smiles)

Nope! That's your car.

CLAIRE

What?! Russell! Why are you so good to me?

RUSSELL

You deserve to be spoiled and pampered, my darling. Your last car was from Bob. I want to give you something to start clean with. This is your new life, Mrs. Bianchi-Fernando.

CLAIRE

Oh honey, I love it! And I love you. Thank you so much!

RUSSELL

And I love you.

They hug and kiss. Frankie and Ellie smile excitedly and they all get out of the SUV to look at Claire's new sports car.

EXT. BEACH - RUSSELL AND CLAIRE'S WEDDING - DAY - 6 MONTHS LATER

The weather is warm and the breeze is mild. Many guests are in attendance. Jill, Mark and Doreen, their daughter Kathy, Russell's family, and several others are there. Lisa and Zachary are there together, holding hands. Frankie is the Ring Bearer. The ceremony is beautiful. Claire is absolutely stunning in her white wedding gown designed by a high-end Parisian friend of hers. Russell is handsome in his linen suit. They exchange vows and seal their union with a kiss. The wedding guests clap and cheer for the brand new couple. At the large tented reception, Russell later surprises Frankie with a beagle puppy. Frankie is overjoyed, cradling the pup as it wiggles, wags, and licks his face while Frankie sheds tears.

EXT. LUXURY LINER CRUISE SHIP - NEXT DAY

The brand new couple sip champagne on the deck during their week-long honeymoon; a European cruise. Romantic and festive atmosphere.

EXT. RUSSELL AND CLAIRE'S BOAT DOCK - ONE WEEK LATER - EVENING

Claire and Russell sit on their mini yacht, fishing and enjoying the beautiful sunset on the horizon. They both have fishing rods in hand, and are waiting patiently for a bite.

RUSSELL

(pensive)

You think we'll catch anything tonight?

CLAIRE

(smiling, hopeful)

I have a good feeling.

Suddenly, there's a tug on Russell's line. He starts to reel it in, and the water erupts as a large fish jumps out. Claire puts down her rod, clapping excitedly.

RUSSELL

Got one!

CLAIRE

(laughing)

That's what I'm talking about!

They're thrilled and laugh like teenagers. As the night progresses, they catch more fish and have a couple of drinks. They sit back and enjoy the star-filled night sky.

The couple is peaceful and content, appreciating the quietness of the placid waters and scenery of their property.

RUSSELL

This is the life, huh baby?

CLAIRE

(sighing)

Yes, my darling. I could do this every night. I love you, Russell.

RUSSELL

I love you too. You were worth waiting for all these years. You're a wonderful woman. My wife.

CLAIRE

Thank you, sweetheart. Just look at these twinkling stars!

RUSSELL

I'll twinkle your stars, Mrs. Fernando. Come here.

CLAIRE

(laughs)

Ah...yes, my lover. I'm all yours. Forever.

The couple goes inside the boat's cabin to spend a passion-filled night together.

THE END