

THE JUDGE

Story by
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Screenplay by
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EXT. COOK COUNTY COURTHOUSE (CHICAGO) - DAY

A nine-story slab of grey granite. An architectural threat. The fast clip of wing-tips tap-tap marble.

INT. COOK COUNTY COURTHOUSE-CORRIDOR - DAY

MIKE KATTAN, 40s, veteran prosecutor, strides, heated.

INT. COOK COUNTY COURTHOUSE-MEN'S BATHROOM - DAY

Empty save for a SUIT at a urinal, back to us. Urine tickles porcelain, he exhales. Hums.

The door bangs open, Kattan charges in, loud.

KATTAN

Palmer, you lying motherfu--

A strong arc of PISS strafes Kattan across the knees. Kattan brakes, gapes at the stain, then to--

HANK PALMER, 40s, top criminal defense attorney, considers the wet streak, Kattan. Returns to the urinal.

KATTAN

You meant to do that.

HANK

(urine flows)

No. I don't think I did.

Kattan rips handfuls of paper towels, dabs at his pants.

KATTAN

This wasn't some West Englewood drug sweep! The search was good. No chance Meyers tosses it.

HANK

That's why we call this an "evidentiary" hearing.

KATTAN

So you can smear me? Imply I invented a phantom witness?

Hank smiles, heads for a sink, begins to wash up. His silence baits Kattan.

KATTAN

The jaded lawyer with no respect
for the law. Original.

HANK

I respect the law. I'm just not
in awe of it.

Kattan gives up, eyes the piss-rags, disgusted.

KATTAN

You were a solid, respected
prosecutor. The hell happened to
you--

HANK

Do your job, Kattan. If the great
state of Illinois can't meet its
burden of proof, it's on you if I
walk with a guilty client. Now
what's the cliché you followed me
in to the pisser to unload?
Involve my reflection? Maybe
sleeping at night, how I do it?
(his phone rings)

In a perfect Highland Park home
next to a loving wife with the ass
of a high school volley-baller.

Hank checks caller I.D., frowns. Heads out.

KATTAN

How does it feel, Hank? Really?
Knowing every person you represent
is good for it?

HANK

Christ, I hope so. Innocent
people scare the shit out of me.

INT. COOK COUNTY COURTROOM - DAY (MOMENTS LATER)

Hank and another KENNER-BLOOM LAWYER, 30s, at the defense
table. The client; an antsy Insurance Company CEO, 50s.

KENNER-BLOOM LAWYER

A thousand says he doesn't bite.

Kattan sits across the aisle, a FEMALE PROSECUTOR
whispers to him, glances at the defense. Hank's
Blackberry vibrates on the table.

CEO

If I lose, I'm going to prison.
For a very long time. Stop
gambling with my life.

HANK

Mr. Stipe, Judge Meyers is about
to walk in, take a seat, and ask
if there is anything either side
would like to add before he rules
on my motion to suppress the files
found on your home computer. A
motion he will deny--

(CEO's face falls)

Meyers is elected, not appointed.

CEO

He's still a judge.

HANK

And you're the CEO of a Fortune
500 insurance company charged with
strategically denying coverage to
terminally ill policy holders.
Fraud, corruption, manslaughter...
You're an election year attack ad.

Hank keys his voicemail, listens.

HANK

But the prosecution isn't the
judge of character I am. He's
indecisive, worried. Wet. Any
second now that chippie will
hustle upstairs where his
informant -- in my opinion your
former mistress -- is sitting in a
spare office reading old *InStyles*.
A mistress I need him to identify
so I can disembowel her at trial.

The three watch Kattan's assistant stand, hurry out.
CEO, Lawyer turn as CHICAGO JUDGE enters. Hank frozen.

CHICAGO JUDGE

Before I rule on the defense
motion, is there anything either
of you would care to add?

KATTAN

Yes, your honor...

KENNER-BLOOM LAWYER

We didn't shake on that.

Loss, disbelief on Hank's face. He rises, unfocused.

KATTAN

We'd like to remove any doubt as to the validity of our search and reveal the identity of our inform--

HANK

Approach, your honor?

Chicago Judge waves Hank in, Kattan joins him.

HANK

I need a continuance--

KATTAN

Absolutely not--

HANK

Three, four days tops.

CHICAGO JUDGE

Grounds?

HANK

My mother died this morning.

KATTAN

(exasperated)

My ass.

EXT. HANK'S HOME - DAY

Upper middle class. Hank's Jaguar askew in the driveway.

INT. HANK'S HOME-GARAGE - DAY

Next to a Mercedes SUV, piles of men's clothes lie draped atop packed boxes. Somebody moving in, more likely out.

EXT. HANK'S HOME-BACK YARD - DAY

Hank drags a sputtering hose to wilting hydrangeas. His daughter, LAUREN, 6, wrestles with the kinked hose.

HANK

(into Blackberry)

Does anybody really look at prayer cards, Glen? Pick a saint, any--

(points to hose)

(MORE)

HANK (CONT'D)

Un-kink it, Sweetie. No, twist.

(back to Glen)

So we're all staying at the house,
right? If I get there and find
out it's just me and the Judge, I
will spray the place with shit...
Look, I'll see you guys tomorrow.

Hank disconnects. Lauren grabs the flowing hose.

LAUREN

You have a potty mouth.

HANK

Tell me about it.

LAUREN

Why can't I go with you?

HANK

Maybe next time.

LAUREN

Grandpa Palmer's your daddy?

HANK

He is.

LAUREN

Why do you call him the Judge?

HANK

That's who he is.

LAUREN

Are you sad over Grandma Palmer?

He gently pushes her hands down, waters the roots.

HANK

Yes, Lauren. I am.

LAUREN

I should go with you then.

She grins, yields the hose, pats his trouser pocket.

HANK

Looking for something?

(she nods)

How do we ask?

LAUREN

You got my Bit O'honey, old man?

Hank pulls the candy out, she snaps it up, both happy.

HANK

Hey. Who loves you?

LAUREN

You do, daddy.

INT. HANK'S HOME-BEDROOM - DAY

Hank packs a suitcase, ignores his hovering soon-to-be-ex LISA, 30s. Her best days de-flowered by Hank.

LISA

Can I do something? They're my in-laws, we should all--

HANK

I got your idiot lawyer's letter.

LISA

Hank, come on--

HANK

What'd I tell you?

LISA

You work seventy hours a week...

HANK

You poor thing; your soon to be ex-husband has a strong work ethic.

LISA

You'll get her ready for school? Make sure she has clean clothes? That match? Fix breakfast, pick her up, take her to dance, Brownies, soccer? Get her homework done every night, her reading? You never so much as changed one diaper when she--

(voice cracks)

Did I screw up? Absolutely. Do I wish I could turn back the clock? Every day. But I won't let you punish her for it, Hank, I won't.

HANK

"Let" doesn't figure in this. When I find a place, we're gone.

LISA

Hank--

HANK

And while I'm providing our daughter with incidentals like food, clothing, shelter, you can surf Facebook, friend another college boyfriend, have lunch, reconnect. Ball your brains out.

Lisa quick-checks the open door for little ears.

HANK

Focus. You don't want to go head to head with me in court. I. Don't. Lose. Think that's going to change when it's my daughter on the line? Whatever else you may be, you're not stupid, Lisa. Lean on that.

(zips suitcase)

Still want to know if you can do something? For me?

She wipes her tears as he picks up the suitcase.

HANK

Water. The fucking. Hydrangeas.

INT./EXT. HANK'S IMPALA (MOVING) - DAY

Rural Indiana interstate. Hank's rental blows past --

Oceans of knee-high corn... grain silos and farm houses. Red-tailed hawks perch on power lines, wait, watch.

On a TWO-LANE... Faded Bible verse signs nailed to cattle fences. A weathered DOT sign: "Carlinville 5 miles."

Trapped behind a huge sluggish tractor. Hank slaloms back, forth, considers the shoulder.

HANK

(into phone)

The local zealot kept cell towers five miles out of town, if I lose you-- so, Suze, whatta we got?

He jerks the car back as a pick-up blurs by. Close.

AIR HORN blares as a semi jumps him from behind. HOGS peer at him from between slats of the passing trailer.

HANK

Get Cammaratta to continue Howe.
If they piss and moan, just set it
for trial. What else?

He guns it by the tractor.

HANK

Wonderful. Patch him through.
Hello? Arthur? Suzanne?

Dropped. He no-look passes the phone into the backseat.

EXT. COUNTRY LAKE - DAY

Hank ducks a tree limb, signal hunting.

HANK

(into Blackberry)
No, docket's clear... I know it's
a fucking Fortune 500 company.
Are you really reminding me how
big this is, Arthur? Me?

He scoops a flat stone from the Earth. Rubs dirt off it.

HANK

No, they're "our" billable hours
and "my" reputation. I'll see you
Monday.
(disconnects; sotto)
Forty-eight hours. In. Out. Let
it all just slide off your back.

Hank glances about. This place has meaning to him. A past. He side-arm whips the stone. SPLOOSH. No skip.

INT./EXT. HANK'S IMPALA (MOVING) - DAY

Main Street Carlinville... Store-front businesses, pedestrians. Hank reclines, slings his right arm across the seat back.

A pick-up rumbles in the opposite direction, the driver raises one index finger off the wheel "hello."

Hank lifts a finger in reply. Instantly disgusted with himself, he plants both hands on the wheel, straightens.

INT. FUNERAL HOME-LOBBY - DAY

Hank focuses on... A small sign, magnetic letters: Rose Room, 5:00-8:00 p.m. MARY PALMER.

Hank unable to move.

INT. FUNERAL HOME-ROSE ROOM - DAY

Flowers. Alone, Hank crosses... Open casket. His eyes settle on the body of MARY PALMER, 70s, hands folded. His breath catches.

He strokes her fingers. On the edge of undone. VIDEO POV: Hank struggles, his back to us.

DALE (O.S.)

Hey, Hank.

Hank wipes wet eyes, turns, accepts what he sees.

HANK

Hey, Dale.

POV shaky, Hank and his younger brother DALE, 30s, hug. POV ends. Dale lowers his camera, appears a tad disheveled, handsome-ish, "off."

DALE

You look a touch outta round.
(gives a second hug)
Her heart just kinda turned off.

Hank's throat lumps. Dale has prayer cards, offers one.

DALE

St. Francis. I picked. He was her favorite. Friend to the birds, like mom. Gotta remember to put food out for them. 'Specially in the winter. He's gentle, like mom used to be.

Hank pretends to study St. Francis, fights tears--

DALE

Ran the snakes out of Indiana.

HANK

Again?

DALE

St. Francis. He scared the snakes
outta Indiana. Don't ask me how.

HANK

Ireland. Out of Ireland.

DALE

Busy guy.

HANK

No. Snakes are your constant.
But St. Patrick, not Francis. And
Ireland. Not Indiana.

DALE

(displays a card)

That's French Lick.

HANK

It's Italy, Dale, he's Italian.
(eyes prayer card)
Nothing. Trust me, nobody's
dispersing reptiles in Indiana.

They face their mom for a beat, Hank knows it's coming--

DALE

Were you there?

HANK

(smirks; loving)

I was *not* there.

GLEN (O.S.)

I don't know whether to shit or go
blind...

Hank's older brother GLEN, 40s, ex-athlete faded to soft,
tired eyes, crosses the room. FUNERAL DIRECTOR trails.

GLEN

Hank Palmer in Carlinville.

HANK

Christ, Glen, what's she feeding
you? Can you still climb a
pitcher's mound?

Glen with a weight-of-the-world sigh, shakes Hank's hand.

DALE

Glen.

Dale extends a hand to Glen, who one-pumps it, annoyed.

GLEN
I see you everyday, Dale.
(to Hank)
Where's the family?

HANK
Couldn't make it, school and all.

GLEN
Kids in Chicago go to school in
the summer do they?

Hank ignores the question, telegraphs his answer.

FUNERAL DIRECTOR
Hank, my condolences. So, fellas--
(hesitates)
Your mother seems to have passed
without funeral insurance--

GLEN HANK
We'll figure it out, Jerry. What's the damage?

FUNERAL DIRECTOR
Just north of fourteen thousand.

Hank produces a black AMEX. Glen chafes, subordinated.

HANK
We can settle up later.

DALE
Not with me. Thanks Hank.

HANK
Where is he anyway?

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY (ESTABLISHING)

1800s era. A silver dome. Roman columns. Majestic.

DEADBEAT DAD (PRE-LAP V.O.)
Whatta ya want to hear? Nobody's
hiring, you can't get spinach from
a turnip. Get whoever did *that* to
her to pay child support.

INT. COURTHOUSE-COURT ROOM BALCONY - DAY

Hank slides down in a seat, feet up, looks out over--

The JUDGE, JOSEPH PALMER, 70s, robed, at the bench. The COURT STENOGRAPHER types, an old BAILIFF stands in the wings. Knots of people in a mostly empty gallery.

Before the Judge stands a red-haired DEADBEAT DAD. Across the aisle, the Deadbeat's very pregnant EX, her lawyer, C.P KENNEDY, 30s, and a carrot-top TODDLER.

DEADBEAT

Truth be told, Judge, I'm not
entirely convinced he's mine.

INT. COURTHOUSE-COURT ROOM

Everyone looks at the toddler: Deadbeat's SPITTING IMAGE.

INTERCUT BALCONY (HANK) AND COURT ROOM (JUDGE)

Judge picks at callouses on his hands, not fully engaged.

C.P clears his throat, catches the Judge's eye. Hands low, C.P mimics steering a steering wheel.

THE JUDGE

That your new truck out front?

DEADBEAT

Yeah.

C.P winces. Amused menace radiates from the Judge.

HANK

"Yeah" is not an
affirmation a man uses in
court. Try again.

THE JUDGE (O.S.)

"Yeah" is not an
affirmation a man uses in
court. Try again.

DEADBEAT

(snotty)

Yes, sir, Judge, your hon--

THE JUDGE

Keys.

DEADBEAT

Keys? Wh--?

THE JUDGE

Focus! Truck keys, c'mon, c'mon.
Pitch 'em.

Rattled, Deadbeat tosses the keys to the Bailiff.

THE JUDGE

Title in the glove box?

DEADBEAT

Well. Yeah but--
(catches himself)
Yes, yes, sir, it's in--

Deadbeat flustered, confused. The Judge stares at the Bailiff. A question. C.P sees it, patient.

Hank notices something is not right with the Judge.

BAILIFF

(gentle reminder)
Augustus, Ju--

THE JUDGE

Gus, give those to Mr. Williams'
ex-wife, please. Then escort Mr.
Williams to his ex-truck...

Bailiff starts to the Ex. Deadbeat's objection cut off--

THE JUDGE

You. Are going to sign that
vehicle over to her.
(to ex-wife)
And you, ma'am, are going to go
down to DeVaney Motors, ask for
Mike DeVaney, the father not the
nimwit son, and sell your new
truck back to him for whatever the
"turnip" there put down on it.
(dismissive)
That oughtta keep the cable on.

DEADBEAT

This ain't fair! How'm I suppose--

BAM! The Judge slaps the bench, the room flinches. Not Hank, at the receiving end of this temper for years.

THE JUDGE

One more word. Go on. Close your
eyes, reach into my bag of tricks
and see if you pull out "fair."

Deadbeat decides otherwise, lets Bailiff lead him out.
Deadbeat's Ex and her son clear their seats.

EX

Thank you very much, judge.

THE JUDGE

(points to her belly)

Want me to tell you what causes
that, ma'am?

Her face burns. She turns, half drags the boy behind
her. He squints back at the Judge who bangs his gavel.

THE JUDGE

Next! C.P, you're up again.

EXT. JUDGE'S HOME - NIGHT (ESTABLISHING)

Light spills through the windows of the two-story.

EXT. JUDGE'S HOME-BACK YARD - NIGHT

Hank and Glen at a picnic table, Dale delivers bottles of
beer. Hank looks around, unaccustomed to the old yard.

DALE

How many people was that?

GLEN

Eight hundred signed the book.

HANK

Think of the tally if the Hemmings
crew could read and write.

Hank watches Dale break into a wide smile, his payoff.

GLEN

Why do you have to do that?

HANK

Do what? What did I do now, Glen?

The screen door creaks, the Judge shuffles to his boys.

THE JUDGE

I'm going to shower up and hit the
rack. Glen, make sure you hold my
boys together tomorrow. They were
close to their grandmother.

GLEN

Will do, Judge.

THE JUDGE

(to Dale; gentle)

I have to worry about you?

Dale's eyes shine, he smiles, shakes his head.

THE JUDGE

Hank. Do me a favor. Back your car into the driveway for the duration. Easy to move that way.

The Judge leaves. Hank watches him go, no love lost.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-JUDGE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hank wanders the space; neat, familiar. A tightly made bed, a sewing machine on a tiny desk. Chest of drawers; family photos slid beneath its protective glass top.

He picks up perfume, sniffs; the smell of his mom.

THE JUDGE (O.S.)

Panties and bras two drawers down.

The Judge enters. Hank awkwardly replaces the perfume.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-HANK'S ROOM - NIGHT (LATE)

30-year old tattered *Batman*, *Avengers*, *Teen Titans* comics on a nightstand. Hank lies awake in his old single bed.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-KITCHEN - NIGHT

Saran-wrapped sympathy food covers every flat surface. Hank forks apple pie onto a plate. He schleps to the dated fridge, jerks open the sticky freezer door.

An envelope slides from freezer to pie... then, a stiff cascade of frozen bills, junk mail. A newspaper thuds.

Hank picks up the completed *Times* crossword puzzle. WTF?

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-GARAGE - NIGHT

Hank selects a screwdriver from a tool-filled pegboard. Behind him, a pristine '82 slant-back Cadillac Seville.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Dark. A flashlight between his teeth, Hank expertly picks a liquor cabinet lock with the screwdriver. Pops it. He checks a bottle of Jack. Half-empty.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MORNING

Hank, dark suit, damp hair, looks into empty bedrooms.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-STAIRWELL - MORNING

Hank hustles down, checks his watch, head on a swivel.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-GARAGE - MORNING

Hank stares at the empty, oil-stained space.

INT. HANK'S IMPALA - MORNING

Hank drives down Main, feelings hurt. He double-takes. Parked in front of a diner... the Judge's '82 Seville.

INT. FLYING DEER DINER - MORNING

Busy. The Judge, Glen, Dale at the counter, scraps on plates. Hank takes a stool, furthest from his father.

DALE

Hey, Hank. You want breakfast?

GLEN

You better hustle.

HANK

Alerting me to your departure might have been a reasonable thing to do.

THE JUDGE

A lawyer's favorite word.

HANK

(to Waitress)

Can I get some coffee here?

JUDGE

I didn't think this place would be
your brand of bourbon.

HANK

You would know.

JUDGE

Pass that to your brother.

The Judge hands Dale a folded check. Glen almost hides
his satisfaction. The Judge stands, lays down cash.

WAITRESS

On the house, Judge.

THE JUDGE

Albert's college fund, Bea.

The Judge exits, Glen, Dale follow. Hank eyes the
Judge's check for \$14,100.

SAM (O.S.)

Still letting him wind you up.

SAM, 40-ish, fills his coffee mug. Long hair, second-
shift-sexy, apron over a funeral-ready black number.

SAM

Kept your hair obviously. All
that worry for nothing.

HANK

(thrown)
Samantha.

INT. DINER - MORNING (MOMENTS LATER)

Hank eats an omelette, Sam sits next to him.

HANK

Surprised you still work here.
(foot in mouth)
In the way people are when
discovering a person they know has
had the same job for twenty years.

SAM

You remind me of someone else.

HANK

You only remind me of you.

She flips his tie over a shoulder, avoiding spills.

SAM

I'm reverse-aging. Skin's tighter, I see better. Wake up and my ass is higher than it was the day before.

They smile, have history, a spark.

SAM

I'm sorry about your mom. After you left, Mary and I stayed close for quite a while.

She climbs off the stool, unties her apron.

SAM

You comin'?

He glances into the kitchen.

SAM

The boss knows. You think I dress like this every day?

EXT. CEMETERY-PARKING LOT - DAY

Grey. Mourners pull out of the lot.

Hank and Dale follow Glen, his wife AMY, 40s, solid, and their TEEN SONS to their cars. Dale slides into Hank's rental, numb, cried out.

A TORNADO SIREN begins to moan, builds. Hank eyes about.

DALE

Tornado warning. First Wednesday of the month.

Hank leans his forearms against the Impala. His POV:

EXT. CEMETERY-GRAVE SIDE - DAY

The Judge sits by the coffin, alone. Siren ebbs, stops.

THE JUDGE

What do you think? Not so far from folks you'll be alone, not so close you'll be crowded.

(looks around)

(MORE)

THE JUDGE (CONT'D)

Dale will like that sycamore there
won't he? Used to put his little
face up against the smooth sides.
Glen would put a tree house up
there. Hank'd burn it down.

(stands; emotional)

I'm afraid to leave, Mary. I know
you're not in there, but... Once I
do they'll start with the shovels.

(switching gears)

Forty-five years. Who does that
anymore? Just you and me. No
kids, no courthouse. Just that
little place over on Spruce.
How I used to make you laugh.
I'll be back tomorrow.

(kisses the coffin)

And every day after that.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-FAMILY ROOM - DAY

Post-funeral. Dale and Glen slump on the couch. Hank in
the E-Z chair, reads Blackberry e-mails, feigns interest--

HANK

Either of your boys throw like
their old man?

DALE

He can't throw, Hank, you broke--

GLEN

Joe can really whip it. Alex, not
so much.

HANK

You two might want to keep an eye
out. I think he's drinking again.

GLEN

What? Bullshit. He's been sober
twenty-eight years.

HANK

I was at the courthouse, he forgot
Gus' name. Gus. I found mail.
In the freezer. Look at the man,
he's thin as a rail. You probably
don't notice because you're around
him all the time.

GLEN
What would we do without you?

Message delivered, Hank shrugs.

GLEN
Time's your flight tomorrow?

HANK
Not soon enough.

The Judge appears, comment heard.

THE JUDGE
I'm going for groceries.

DALE
Want me to drive?

THE JUDGE
I don't know, Dale, does being
widowed make me a lousy Goddamn
driver?

(Dale cowed)
Hank, if I don't see you before
you leave, thanks for coming.
Your mother would have appreciated
it.

The Judge departs. Glen, Dale stink-eye Hank.

INT. FLYING DEER TAVERN - NIGHT

Country music. Video camera POV: close-up scan of Hank's
eyes, then hairline, a small pale crescent scar located.

DALE (O.S.)
Readers Digest?

HANK (O.S.)
TV Guide, Fall preview 1982.

POV zooms out: seated at the bar, Glen nurses a beer,
Hank mainlines Scotch.

GLEN
He threw to get our attention, not
draw blood.

HANK
He talked to us like dogs to get
our attention.

(MORE)

HANK (CONT'D)

He launched periodicals for sport.
Come. Go. Quiet. Sit. Speak.

GLEN

Hey, John Ford, give it a rest.

Video POV ends, Dale lowers the camera.

Hank watches a gorgeous woman (CARLA), 20-ish, tight skirt, join two women and three REDNECKS at a table.

GLEN

It wasn't all bad. Remember when
we'd go fishing as kids?

DALE

The Zenith radio. Paul Harvey.

HANK

Paul-fuckin-Harvey.

REDNECK 1 (O.S.)

Hey, man...

DALE

We'd stay out all day... until
everybody had their fish.

GLEN

Even if he had to hook it. Hand
us the pole, act surprised.

Rednecks and their dates eyeball the Palmers.

REDNECK 1

Hey, scuze me. I know you.

(to Glen)

Don't you run the tire and rim
shop over on State? Palmer?

GLEN

That's me.

REDNECK 3

(points to Dale)

I know you too. You're the wet
head always with the video camera.

(to Hank)

Don't know you.

REDNECK 2

Judge Palmer's your old man?

Glen takes a drink, knows where this is going.

REDNECK 1

Your dad's an asshole.

The Rednecks, women laugh. Carla abandons her friends, takes a stool one down from Hank.

REDNECK 2

(to Carla; laughing)
Oh, c'mon, Carla.

CARLA

It gets so old, Tommy.

GLEN

Maybe you three would like to discuss my father outside.

Dale jets up, grabs his bottle by the neck, weapon-ready.

HANK

(to his brothers)

Whoa, whoa, whoa, what are we the Cartwrights? I'm not rolling around in a parking lot... Calm down. I know all these guys.

Rednecks confused. Hank swivels, leans back, faces them.

HANK

They're angry for a reason. So, who has the DWI? Plural? Pled it out? Suspended license? Ah, no insurance; employment options are even more limited than your lack of marketable skills would normally dictate. I'm guessing there's probably a domestic violence, assault, couple failures to appear in there. At least two resisting arrests and without a doubt an indecent exposure--

(Redneck eyes dart)

Which sounds creepy, but only means somebody's tiny bladder got tired of standing in the porta-potty line at the Dogwood Festival and whipped it out around a cop.

(to the two women)

I know you, too. Reverse cowgirl good looks betrayed by poor skin and muffin tops. All evidence of a local diet rich in Marlboros, Mountain Dew and semen.

Carla claps, laughs at her slack-jawed friends. Chair legs scrape the floor, Rednecks rise. Glen stands, Hank puts a hand on his brother.

HANK

Relax. Probation's revoked as soon as a punch is thrown. Which means if this three man circle jerk wants to stay on the outside, they're going to have to swallow my abuse. Open wide boys.

Redneck 1 feints a punch, Hank doesn't flinch. Rednecks leave, insults over shoulders.

Glen and Dale look at Hank, impressed, a bit intimidated.

CARLA

How 'bout me, Houdini? Y'know me?

HANK

Movie star good looks. Personality plus. Strong teeth, class act. You'll go far.

INT. TAVERN - NIGHT

Their faces scrunched, Glen and Dale drink at the bar, watch a distasteful scene. Their view...

At a table, Carla on Hank's lap. Kissing. Deep.

EXT. JUDGE'S HOME-DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Dale burps beside a drunk Hank, Glen reverses the Impala.

HANK

(to Glen)

Back it, back, back, back...

CRUNCH. Glen crumples the garage door.

HANK

Stop.

GLEN

Dammit, you did that on purpose.

HANK

No. I don't think I did.

GLEN

You bang it out, smart ass.

Glen and Dale head inside, Hank looks at the dent.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-JUDGE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Hank leans in, scans, all clear. He beelines for the bureau, pockets his mother's perfume.

INT. HANK'S IMPALA - MORNING (PARKED)

Hank throws it in drive, glances to the rearview. Shit.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-GARAGE - MORNING

Hank slams a kick into the bulge in the garage door. Nothing. He gives up, passes the Seville. Freezes... The front quarter panel dented, the grill cracked, stained. He touches it. Sticky. Blood?

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-GARAGE - MORNING (MOMENTS LATER)

Hank, Glen, Dale stare at the Caddy.

GLEN

Oh, shit.

DALE

Oh, shit.

Hank opens the Seville's driver's door, slides in. His brothers reduced to anxious children watching for dad.

GLEN

The hell are you doing? We can see fine in here.

Hank fires up the Caddy. Classical music. He switches the radio station: rockabilly. Cranks it.

DALE

Shh! Hank, c'mon, man.

Hank adjusts the seat, back, forth, up, down... just so.

GLEN

Out! Now.

HANK

You two have Stockholm Syndrome.

He slams the door shut, peels out.

EXT. JUDGE'S HOME-DRIVE WAY - MORNING

The brothers squat, inspect the grill.

GLEN

That's gotta be a deer. Right?

The front door opens. They stand, see-- The Judge. He advances, sees his car, sons. The damage...

THE JUDGE

Which one of you peckerwoods
fucked up my car?

HANK

Since I'm exactly the type to say
"I told you so..."

THE JUDGE

Who did this? Answer me!

HANK

I told you so.

HANK

You did. You fell off the wagon,
went to the grocery store and
banged up the Caddy.

THE JUDGE

(confused; angry)
Glen, where are the boys?

HANK

Don't you even...

GLEN

Dad, they wouldn't drive--

HANK

This isn't complicated. It's your
huge, throbbing, tumescent ego at
work.

DALE

Hank, please stop.

Glen grabs at Hank, he shakes him off, closes on his dad.

HANK

You're human. Your wife died.
The great adjudicator lost control
and got drunk. It happens. Deal.

GLEN

Knock it off!

THE JUDGE

Like your marriage?
 (Hank surprised)
 She was my wife long before she
 was your mother. Tell your
 brothers you're getting a divorce?
 Lisa played hide the pickle with
 someone else.

HANK

Shut your mouth.

THE JUDGE

And who could blame her? You were
 a self-centered punk when you were
 a kid. You're an ego-maniac punk
 now. Surprised it took her this
 long.

Dale's eyes dart, Glen out of his depth.

HANK

I won't be back.

THE JUDGE

Happy trails.

INT. JET-AISLE - DAY (PARKED ON TARMAC)

Hank settles into his seat. Closes his eyes. Forget it.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT (V.O.)

...asks that at this time you turn
 off all electronic devices.

His mobile chirps... I.D.: Glen. Turn it off. Don't
 answer. Do not answer.

HANK

(into phone)
 Yep?

GLEN (V.O.)

(over phone; worried)
 I need you to come back right
 away. We've got a real problem.

HANK

Whatever it is, it's your problem.

Holds the cell at arm's length. Don't ask. Do not ask.

HANK

What is it, Glen?

GLEN (V.O.)

Dad's been called down to the police station. They want to question him.

(hesitates)

They found a body.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Hank boils in, raises a hand, silences his seated brothers. He stops at the old-style perimeter bannister.

THE JUDGE (O.S.)

"Judge, you sayin' I can milk her, kill her, cook her, eat her even--

SIX COPS overflow the Sheriff's office. SHERIFF WHITE, 50s, grins at the Judge sitting in his chair, at his desk, sipping coffee, holding court.

THE JUDGE

"...but *that's* illegal?"

Laughter. Hank white-knuckles the bannister. DEPUTY HANSON, 40s, not a local, on task, redirects.

DEPUTY HANSON

Mr. Palmer--

SHERIFF WHITE

Judge Palmer, Deputy Hanson.

DEPUTY HANSON

Sir, did anyone other than you have access to your vehicle?

HANK (O.S.)

(loud)

No, no, no, no, no...

The wall of cops turn, the Judge sees Hank, stiffens.

Hank swings the bannister gate open, enters on full gunslinger. More Jack Wilson than Shane.

HANK

If you're gonna nail his pompous ass, do it right for Christ sake.

Glen, Dale rise, worried... Hank capable of anything.

HANK

It's not enough to put his vehicle
at the scene, any strip mall
lawyer spins that into a stolen
car and reasonable doubt. No, you
need him behind the wheel.

Cop 1, 40s, closes on Hank, a shut-him-down expression.

COP 1

Hank, let's go bud--

HANK

(to Cop 1; quick)

Graduation night. The quarry.
"Both-Ways-Bobby" and your
Ranchero. Back it up, Kevin.

Cop 1 shrinks, Hank toxic. Hank downshifts--

HANK

Ask him if he was driving that
night. Where he went, the route
he took.

THE JUDGE

I've nothing to hide, I told them
I went to the convenience store.

HANK

Of course he did! Every word out
of his mouth limits his options.
What about liquor? Eighty percent
of all hit and runs involve
liquor. His wife just died, why
wouldn't he take a sip, I would,
you might. But it doesn't matter
what we'd do, you need an
admission from him. Keep stroking
his ego. Prime that pump of a
mouth. I got it--

(snaps fingers)

Ask Oliver Wendell Holmes how he
kept Wal Mart and Starbucks out of
town, he loves telling that story.

The Judge rises, furious, rounds the desk, cops give way.

THE JUDGE

You do not belong here.

HANK

So lets recap, we've got a dead male, car damage and, presumably, an eyewitness who puts an '82 slant back Cadillac Seville at the scene, the approximate time of the accident. Good news, we're halfway to manslaughter!

"Eyewitness" cools the Judge. A glance at Sheriff White.

HANK

Held on to that, huh? Smart. Because up to now he's too arrogant to exercise his right to counsel and hasn't learned what every second year law student already knows; "if you don't talk, you walk."

(head of steam)

But whatever you do, don't let this become a custodial interview because then you'll have to Mirandize him and maybe, just maybe, he'll realize the laws of legal physics also apply to him and he'll shut up. Officers, good luck and good Goddamn day to you!

Hank bangs out the gate, past Glen, Dale, exits.

SHERIFF WHITE

Hank your lawyer Judge?

THE JUDGE

No.

DEPUTY HANSON

Sir, we're going to need to impound your vehicle.

INT. HANK'S IMPALA (MOVING) - DAY

Hank drives, the Judge shotgun. Silence dominates until--

THE JUDGE

I don't remember.

HANK

Because you were drunk.

THE JUDGE

I was not drunk.

HANK

Beautiful. Tell me what happened.

THE JUDGE

I don't remember.

HANK

Because you were drunk.

THE JUDGE

(detonates)

Because I can't remember, you self-important little prick! Don't you think I want to remember? I can't! For all I know, I didn't hit anyone. Go home. Now. I don't want you here. You need a please? Please. Go home.

Hank rocked by the violence of the outburst, grows angry.

HANK

I was in the liquor cabinet.

The Judge pantomimes SHOCK.

HANK

What kind of recovered alcoholic keeps a stocked liquor cabinet?

THE JUDGE

It's a reminder. That I'm stronger. It holds no power over me. I wouldn't expect you to understand self-discipline.

Hank accelerates, ready to chew his own arm off.

HANK

Right now that cop Hanson's on his way to the Minit Mart to ask some scared shitless high school clerk with half a joint in his front pocket if you had the odor of alcohol on you--

THE JUDGE

No!

HANK
Bloodshot eyes!

THE JUDGE
No!

HANK
Slurred speech!

No reply. Great. Hank slides to a stop. Reverses, laying rubber up the driveway. Brakes hard. Hank wills composure, trying his level best.

HANK
If this goes south you're going to want to say with some semblance of a straight face that you haven't had a drop in twenty-eight years. What's done is done; if you hit somebody, they weaved in front of you. I strongly suggest you dry out and practice that narrative.

THE JUDGE
(flipping the bird)
Narrate this.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-KITCHEN - DAY

At the table, Dale watches Hank dig into a HUGE plate of cake. Worried, Glen rifles through the freezer mail.

HANK
If he hit him, leaving the scene's a felony. If they can establish he was inebriated... manslaughter.

GLEN
Look, no offense, Dale, but--

DALE
None taken.

HANK
You've got to wait till he offends you. Go ahead Glen, be yourself.

GLEN
Freezer mail's a Dale move. And why do you stretch to be such a jerk? You're outta here--

HANK

When?

GLEN

Soon. And don't tell me there's not a part of you that doesn't enjoy this.

HANK

Yeah, it's been a real Disneyland-dick-skinner of a trip home, Glen.

GLEN

The expert. The savior. Then you'll be gone and we'll be here, like always, driving to doctor appointments, filling the water softener, answering the endless computer questions--

Hank grabs a freezer-burn newspaper.

HANK

Times crossword puzzle, completed.

Dale shakes his head, not him, a smug look at Glen.

DALE

That's *not* my move.

GLEN

He's seventy-two, he just lost his wife. It's stress. He's sober twenty-eight years. Besides, if he were drinking again, could he do that whole puzzle? In pen?

DALE

And he plays chess every Wednesday with Doc Morris.

HANK

We know these are right?

The boys lean in, study the puzzle, miss the Judge strut by the doorway, NAKED but for black socks, wing-tips.

DALE

(reads)

Forty-seven across: "It turns into a different story."

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-FAMILY ROOM - DAY

Glen's teen sons slouch on the couch, watch T.V.

Their jaws slacken as the Judge enters, naked, grabs the remote. The Judge in an edgy fog.

THE JUDGE

Cronkite's a Pollyanna. We watch
Chancellor in this house.

The Judge flips channels to *Jeopardy*.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-KITCHEN - DAY

Hank explains the clue to Dale, maybe Glen.

HANK

A spiral staircase. See, it turns
into another story. Turns--

Hank notices the Judge walk by, scratching his balls.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-STAIRWELL

Still eating cake, Hank watches a naked Judge slowly ascend the stairs. Glen and Dale join him, dumbfounded.

HANK

Yeah, he's fine.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-FRONT YARD - MORNING

Hank on his Blackberry, connection poor. He frowns at the feel of dew on bare feet, picks up the newspaper.

HANK

(into phone)

The discovery's not close to done,
push the deposition to-- hold on--

(switches lines)

Yeah... Lauren? Hey, punkin'
lemme call you back...

(pained)

One more day... yep, I'll bring
you a surprise...

Hank observes a police car roll up, stop at the house.

HANK

Daddy's working now. Bye baby.

Hank disconnects, work call forgotten. Sheriff White and Deputy Hanson shuffle up the drive.

SHERIFF WHITE

Hank, the blood matches.

DEPUTY HANSON

Manslaughter one.

HANK

One? Seize a meth lab lately?
Inhale a little anhydrous ammonia?

SHERIFF WHITE

That's not the whole of it,
son--

HANK

Are you out of your fucking
minds?

DEPUTY HANSON

Victim is Mark Blackwell.

Hank at a rare loss for words, knows the name well.

DEPUTY HANSON

Pretty amazing coincidence don't
you think? Blackwell?

HANK

"Amazing?" To inspire awe,
admiration, or wonder? He's been
a judge for over forty years. If
you screwed up in that time frame,
you stood in front of him. I'd
find it more worthy of wonder if
he hit somebody he didn't judge.

DEPUTY HANSON

I think you're in denial about
your father.

HANK

I think you're the law enforcement
equivalent of a monkey fucking a
milk jug.

Hanson's eyes dart left, Hank follows. The Judge exits the house, absorbs his son's expression.

INT. POLICE STATION - MORNING (SERIES OF SHOTS)

The Judge wipes a hand, stares at ink-stained fingers.

The Judge holds a sign, straightens for a mug shot.

Hank signs a bond form, \$25k. Produces his black AMEX.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Hank and the Judge stroll out. Dale, Glen trail.

BLACKWELL'S MOM (O.S.)

You killed him!

BLACKWELL'S MOM, 60s, rushes the Palmers. A small hard snarl of a woman. Her son, BLACKWELL'S BROTHER, follows.

BLACKWELL'S MOM

You ran my boy down like an animal!

The Judge stalls, Hank moves him to Glen's Minivan. Glen, Dale shield their father from the Blackwells.

DALE

Lady, my dad didn't--

BLACKWELL'S BROTHER

(shoulder bumps Dale)

Do somethin', retard.

GLEN

Don't touch him--

HANK

Glen! In the car! Now!

Glen and Dale climb in. Mom raps knuckles on a window.

BLACKWELL'S MOM

When my lawyer's done with you,
we'll be livin' in your house.

Hank empties his face, addresses her across the car roof.

HANK

Sorry for your loss, ma'am.

BLACKWELL'S MOM

You will be. And you can shove
that "ma'am" shit.

(MORE)

BLACKWELL'S MOM (CONT'D)

I recognize you. You're no altar boy.

(with venom)

By the way, your mother? Bitch.

INT. GLEN'S CHRYSLER MINIVAN - DAY

The Judge flinches as spit hits his window. Glen pulls away, drives in silence.

DALE

Mark Blackwell. He hurt that girl, didn't he?

Hank stares out his window, knows the story.

HANK

Hope Stevens.

THE JUDGE

Named after her favorite aunt. She was sixteen. He was seventeen, two years older than Glen when it happened. They dated six months. Blackwell took a .38 to her bedroom, shot the place up. He stood in court and wept like a lost child. Said he was drunk, would never do it again. I believed him.

Hank turns, his dad's leniency unexpected. Irritating.

THE JUDGE

Gave him one month juvenile detention plus probation. He was released at noon on a summer day just like this one. Glen and I were in the backyard working on his breaking ball. It was beautiful; the bottom would just fall out of it. While we did that...

(with remorse)

Hope Elizabeth Stevens was dying in a mosquito infested spill pond not fifty yards from her home. He drug her there, kneeled on her chest. In two and a half feet of water, he drowned her.

(hardens)

Stop the car.

Glen checks his dad in the rearview mirror, uncertain.

THE JUDGE

Shitforbrains. Am I speaking
Korean? Stop the Goddamn car.

Glen obliges, the Judge pops his door. Crawls out.

THE JUDGE

I need my walk. Nothing's changed
here. The truth will out.

HANK

Everything's changed; leaving the
scene, blood evidence, motive... I
could convict you over coffee.

THE JUDGE

If the blood matches and I've no
reason to doubt it does, I hit
him. I don't remember--

HANK

The "I don't remember what
happened" defense doesn't fly with
a corpse. We need to establish--

THE JUDGE

There's no "we" here, Henry. This
was an accident. Period. A
decent lawyer can argue this
easily, and by decent I mean
honest. I retained one of that
breed this morning. For slightly
less than five hundred an hour.

(sincere)

I wish I liked you more.

The Judge wipes the spittle from the window, walks.

INT. FLYING DEER TAVERN - DAY

Hank takes a seat at the bar, scans the room, searching.

SAM (O.S.)

Who you looking for, tough guy?

He swivels back, Sam works the bar, slides him a beer.

HANK

(muted surprise)

You.

SAM

You're a lousy liar.

HANK

I am a blue-ribbon liar.

SAM

Heard the Judge took out
Blackwell. Nice.

HANK

The state of Indiana's less
impressed.

SAM

What are you going to do?

HANK

Leave. It's not my business.

SAM

You're a lawyer, he's your father.
How is it not your business?

HANK

He doesn't want me as a lawyer. I
don't want him as a client. We
can barely stand the sight of each
other. How's that?

SAM

Being a bit of a baby aren't you?

Uphill. He slugs his beer.

SAM

He doesn't like you. Accept it.
I was always fond of him, but who
doesn't like somebody that thinks
you're too good for his son? You
leave now and something bad
happens to him, you'll regret it.
Every time you think of your mom
or see Glen and Dale it'll eat at
you. Regret's a bitch.

HANK

I've been a lawyer for almost
sixteen years. Never met a hooker
with a heart of gold, a family
first mobster, or a criminal
satisfied with one last score.

(leans in; nasty)

(MORE)

HANK (CONT'D)

Or... the bartender capable of solving any problem, large or small, with their unique blend of blue-collar world-weary advice. You're forty-plus. A waitress. A bartender. Want some advice, Sam? Trade school.

She squeezes the soda shooter, sprays his eyes with Dr. Pepper. He yelps, hands to his eyes. Not done, she pushes him, knocks him off his stool, to the floor.

Hank lays there, stunned. She shit-eating-grins.

HANK

I might have deserved that.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-BASEMENT - DAY

Dim. Hank descends the steps. He squints, overhead bulbs with pull strings. Overflow of forty plus years.

Hank approaches a far corner, an audio/video nest; shelves packed with steel cannisters of 8 mm film, VHS, mini-DVs, DVDs. At a workbench, Dale splices 8 mm film.

HANK

Quite the set--

DALE

(sullen; childlike)

Setup I've got here, yes, uh-huh.

Hank squeezes Dale's shoulder. Dale shakes him off.

HANK

He doesn't want me here, Dale.
What do you want me to do?

Dale no-look pulls an overhead string. Darkness. He flips on an 8 mm projector. A motor, a beam of light--

Mary Palmer, 30s, pretty, silently laughs, runs from a toddler on the basement wall. Hank watches, transfixed.

A pre-school Glen and Hank dart in, dare their mother to give backyard chase. She does. The children escape to the safety of the unseen camera operator.

Mary looks directly into the camera. Hank stares back, eyes moist. Her words easy to read: "Who loves you?"

INT. MIDWESTERN ANTIQUES - DAY

Main Street. Hank follows the Judge through a warren of memorabilia... vintage farm implements, Route 66 signs.

THE JUDGE

You're here to listen, not talk.

C.P holds up a mercury glass vase, explains to a SHOPPER.

C.P

You can always tell authentic mercury glass by this double-wall.

(reads the bottom)

Made by, right there, see? "New England Glass Company, 1886."

He spots the Judge, Hank. Embarrassed, he hands the vase to the customer, calls out.

C.P

Mom! I'll be upstairs.

INT. C.P'S OFFICE - DAY (ABOVE MIDWESTERN ANTIQUES)

Cramped, tidy. Framed diplomas on fake wood paneling. C.P flips through a report.

C.P

Judge Sullivan caught it. Know him, sir?

THE JUDGE

Tough. Fair. Full of himself.

Hank bites his tongue. The Judge catches it.

C.P

Appointed a special prosecutor, Dwight Dickham, out of Gary. Wonder why so far? Preliminary hearing's set for next Friday.

(looks up)

Wow. We are in a pickle.

Hank chuckles, casts his eyes about the space.

THE JUDGE

I think it's pretty straightforward, C.P. It was dark--

HANK

Hold up.

The Judge tightens, damned if he didn't know better.

HANK

Law school?

C.P

Yes?

HANK

Yes, you're familiar with the concept or yes, you attended one?

C.P

Of course. Valpo.

He gestures to a diploma. Blank stare from Hank.

C.P

Sorry, Valparaiso. University. And you?

HANK

Northwestern.

C.P

Wow. That's a dandy school.

HANK

Ever defend in a jury trial?

C.P

I have.

HANK

Charge?

C.P

Assault.

HANK

Degree?

C.P

Third.

HANK

Verdict?

C.P

Guilty.

Hank motions for the rest of the story. C.P hesitates.

C.P

Coach Blakely broke a clipboard over his quarterback's head during halftime at homecoming. In his defense--

HANK

Now he gets one.

C.P

John junior had his helmet on.

Hank looks at his father, nods at C.P, this is your guy?

THE JUDGE

Jury was out for quite some time.

C.P

You didn't ask me about my class rank.

HANK

Something's telling me first.

C.P

Wow, more sarcasm. Third.

HANK

Just keep selling don't you?

C.P

I flatter myself I would've finished first, but I worked thirty-five hours a week bussing tables so I'll never know.

(confidence growing)

Summers I interned at the public defenders office in Evansville. After I graduated I clerked two years for Justice Roberts on the Indiana Supreme Court. I don't have a student loan to repay because my folks don't believe in borrowing and took care of what I couldn't. I grew up in this shop and try to repay them by helping when I can. That and I love them and can use the free office space.

Hank just stares at him. The Judge oozes satisfaction.

HANK

The word "wow" isn't your friend
in court. Stop saying it.

C.P

Great point. Duly noted.

EXT. COURTHOUSE-SIDEWALK - DAY

C.P vomits, breakfast hits the pavement. Hank treks up
the courthouse steps, spots C.P. Christ.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY (PRELIMINARY HEARING)

A quarter full. Hank behind the Judge with Glen, Dale.
Coiled behind the prosecution, Blackwell's Mom.

A woman (MARGARET STEVENS) sits apart, alone. 60s,
slight, a thousand yard stare etched on her face.

C.P (O.S.)

(halting)

Finally, there's no evidence to
suggest alcohol or any other
substance was involved. This was
an accident, one with tragic
consequences, but no more or less
than that; an accident.

JUDGE SULLIVAN, 60s, corn-fed heartland huge, presides.
DWIGHT DICKHAM, 40s, special prosecutor; deceptively
plain, Corvette engine in a Buick body, looks on.

C.P

There but for the grace of God go
I or any one of us in this
courtroom. Thank you, your honor.

JUDGE SULLIVAN

This is a preliminary hearing, not
a trial. See? No dog. No pony.

(to Dickham)

Ready to go, Mr. Dickham?

DICKHAM

Your honor in the interest of crap
cutting; if I request a change in
venue you'll say what?

JUDGE SULLIVAN

I'll consider it.

DICKHAM
And then?

JUDGE SULLIVAN
Deny it.

DICKHAM
Ready to go.

Dickham makes eye contact with Hank.

SERIES OF WITNESSES:

-- C.P questions Sheriff White.

SHERIFF WHITE
When I approached the victim he
was unresponsive.

C.P
Offer any assistance?

SHERIFF WHITE
(patient)
He was dead, son.

Hank settles in for a siege.

-- Dickham questions a notebook reading COUNTY CORONER.

CORONER
...massive internal damage...
Injuries consistent with being
struck by a car.

Sullivan looks at C.P.

C.P
No questions your honor.

Hank on the edge of his seat, in a black fidget.

-- Dickham questions Deputy Hanson.

DEPUTY HANSON
Mr. Palmer stated that he drove
his vehicle--

DICKHAM
His 1982 Seville.

DICKHAM (CONT'D)

However, sympathy will be difficult to achieve with my foot up your ass or a gag in your mouth. One of which will occur if you open that venomous pie hole of yours again.

(mock sympathy pat)

Have a seat. Dear.

-- Dickham questions Minit Mart Clerk.

MINIT MART CLERK

I saw Mr....

DICKHAM

Mr. Blackwell?

MINIT MART CLERK

Yeah. Saw Mr. Blackwell and Judge Palmer make eye contact.

HANK

(sotto; in pain)

Oh, sweet mother of God.

Hank scribbles furiously on a legal pad.

DICKHAM

And then what did Judge Palmer do?

MINIT MART CLERK

Dropped his eggs?

The Judge stares at the table, at a loss. He starts as a legal pad flaps through the air, strikes C.P in the head.

JUDGE SULLIVAN

(re: Hank)

Out! Bailiff, get rid of him.

HANK

For that?

Gus herds Hank out. The Judge straightens Hank's legal pad, reads: "You can't prove eye contact. IDIOT!"

INT. COURTROOM - DAY (LATER)

Prelim at an end. Judge Sullivan addresses the court.

JUDGE SULLIVAN

The court finds probable cause to hold this over for trial.

(to the Judge)

Mr. Palmer, it's my unfortunate duty to suspend you from the bench pending the outcome of this trial. I'll see you folks in court.

The Judge stoic.

INT. COURTHOUSE-BALCONY - DAY

Hank watches his father, takes no pleasure in his misery.

EXT. JUDGE'S HOME-DRIVEWAY - MORNING

Hank, boxers, pads barefoot across the front lawn. Across the street, an elderly NEIGHBOR tracks him.

Hank scoops up the paper, locks eyes with the nosy Neighbor, readies an insult--

NEIGHBOR

It'll be all right.

The hostility drains from Hank, profanity swallowed.

NEIGHBOR

You want me to collect this trash--
(waves his own paper)
...before your dad gets up in the morning, you just say so.

Hank scans the front page. Gut check. *Headline: "Judge Joseph Palmer Faces Manslaughter Trial."*

The Neighbor deposits his paper in a garbage can. Hank, unaccustomed to grateful.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-HALLWAY - MORNING (MOMENTS LATER)

Hank passes in front of the Judge's study.

THE JUDGE (O.S.)

(calling out)

Grant's victory deciding the siege of Vicksburg, 1863.

Hank slows, confused, pokes his head into--

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-STUDY - MORNING

The Judge at his walnut desk, attacking a crossword.

HANK

What?

THE JUDGE

Grant's victory deciding the siege
of Vicksburg. 1863's redundant.
Twelve letters.

Hank steps into a room he's rarely been invited into.
Scours his memory. Nothing.

THE JUDGE

Champion Hill.

"Why'd you ask?" on Hank's mind, lips. Then, he gets it.

HANK

I was never a big fan of Grant.

THE JUDGE

With the arguable exception of
Lincoln, Ulysses Simpson Grant was
the single greatest factor in
preserving the union.

Hank eyes shelves lined with law books, framed newspaper
articles/photos of Glen as a high school pitcher.

THE JUDGE

And you prefer which general?

HANK

William Tecumseh Sherman. West
Point grad, had three horses shot
out from under him at Shiloh.
While Grant dug in, Sherman
marched; burned the South's major
cities, destroyed transportation
lines, communications and morale.
All while suffering from clinical
depression.

THE JUDGE

Batshit arsonist.

Screw it. Hank turns to go--

THE JUDGE

C.P stepped down this morning.

(Hank freezes)

Said he'd assist a more seasoned attorney. Couldn't live with himself if his lack of experience cost the case.

Silence. The Judge can't ask, Hank can't offer. Eye contact fleeting. Uncomfortable.

THE JUDGE

How much did I pay you when you cut the grass?

HANK

Half of whatever minimum wage was.

THE JUDGE

Skip any meals did you?

Hank turns, and the Judge's last chance starts out.

THE JUDGE

What do you make now?

HANK

(stops)

Five hundred an hour.

THE JUDGE

(incredulous)

Fuck me.

HANK

What were you doing on Shelby Road? There's no route from the Minit Mart home where that makes sense.

THE JUDGE

I remember being there. The Minit Mart. I needed eggs. The road home was washed out, where it dips under the train tracks. I turned around, stopped at the light on State. Then... I'm missing time.

HANK

I think you're holding out. With your history, you and Mark Blackwell being in the same place, same time gives Dickham a good case. You turning Blackwell into a possum gives Dickham a great case. You could go to prison.

THE JUDGE

And?

The Judge and Hank share a knowing look.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-BASEMENT - DAY

Hank haphazardly dumps detergent into a washing machine. He shuts the lid, starts it.

Hank wanders the dim space, reaches Dale's nest.

Checks out the 8 mm projector, a roll mounted to the machine. He hits the toggle, film un-spools crazily.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-BASEMENT - DAY (MOMENTS LATER)

Hank picks Dale's video camera off the workbench. Powers it on. Rewinds. Play. Watches the LCD display:

The camera moves down a hall, a woman's voice, shrill, berating. Hank doesn't recognize it, frowns.

Fast forward. Stop. Play.

The camera follows the Judge down a Carlinville street from a distance. The Judge climbs steps to a home.

Hank riveted. DOCTOR "DOC" MORRIS, 60s, opens the door, the Judge disappears inside.

The camera circles the home, a backyard, screened porch. The Judge in a rocker, the Doc obscuring the view. The Doc moves and a chessboard appears. So does an I.V. stand hung with a clear bag of fluid.

EXT. SHELBY ROAD - DAY

Hank's Impala leans on the grassy bank. The Judge watches Hank scope the road, check the pavement, the steep grade, do the math.

THE JUDGE

What are you looking for?

HANK

The truth. I'll settle for brake marks. Body was recovered there--
(points to the slope)
Figure impact... right here.

Tough moment. Cicadas in the trees the only sound.

THE JUDGE

I don't see any. Skid marks.

HANK

No real shoulder to speak of. Police report has him on a bike, in the rain. Who does forensics for the county?

THE JUDGE

Asian fella out of Columbus.

"Asian" good enough for Hank, he wipes sweat.

HANK

Okay, old man, here it is: I don't lose at trial. I pay the mortgage with that reputation. If I've got skin in the game I'm not taking it up the ass over a hit and run in East Cornhole. No more it-was-like-that-when-I-found-it crap; I want answers. All of them. Now. Lawyer to client; why were you at the Minit Mart?

THE JUDGE

I needed eggs.

HANK

They're half the price at Krogers!

THE JUDGE

They're the only place that sells Bit O'Honeys!

HANK

Did you recognize Blackwell?

THE JUDGE

I don't--
 (off Hank's look)
 I can't have.

HANK

Look. We both know you didn't intentionally hit him--

THE JUDGE

No. Shit. Mister Sherlock.

HANK

But that's the way they'll spin it. A few shots of Jack mixed with just the right amount of axe to grind. I would. I did.

(beat; calming)

But you haven't been drinking. Have you? You're sick.

A car passes. Tough moment for the Judge.

THE JUDGE

Cancer. In my plumbing. Colon.

HANK

Ouch.

THE JUDGE

A few more chemo sessions it'll be in remission. Nothing I can't handle.

(snaps)

All I wanted was a fucking candy bar!

HANK

This is a good thing.
 (off Judge's look)
 Here's the upside; you buried your wife. Took a drive, went for a snack. You're almost home, the road's washed out like it is every time there's a heavy rain. You turn around, it's out of your way, dark, the Caddy's two tons of old school Detroit steel, you could hit the Bears' front line and not know it, much less a convicted murderer, on a bike, in the pouring rain!

(beat)

(MORE)

HANK (CONT'D)

They need intent for Man One. If push comes to shove, we roll out a diminished capacity defense due to the chemo--

No. THE JUDGE HANK
Native son, public servant
for over forty years--

No... THE JUDGE HANK
Recently widowed, cancer--

THE JUDGE
Enough Goddammit! No! Look what that does to all the cases I've heard for the last year--

A year? HANK THE JUDGE
You've had this a --everybody I sentenced
year? will challenge the ruling.

HANK
Strangers! Who gives a shit? You could die in prison!

THE JUDGE
I'd rather die in prison than be remembered like that! Reduced to a physically and mentally incontinent old man on the stand. An object of ridicule.

Oh, I'm not letting you HANK THE JUDGE
anywhere near a stand. U.S. Grant held this
country together--

THE JUDGE
--what's he remembered for? Being a drunk. Ronald Reagan oversaw the end of the Cold War. The fall of the Berlin Wall. But any discussion of his legacy ends with jelly beans, naps and Alzheimer's.

HANK
"Reagan?" With all due... I'm gonna say this as professionally and gently as I possibly can: you're a civil servant in a corn-belt bumfuck backwater. Nobody -- nobody -- gives a rat's ass about your "legacy." Least of all, me.

THE JUDGE

Crystal clear since you were fifteen. But I do. I've sat on the bench in that courtroom for forty-two years. The people of this community trust me. They trust the law. This accident is a legal iron ball, Henry. You can't fuck it up. So don't.

The Judge starts for the car, wheels around, mid-road.

THE JUDGE

And only guilty people refuse to take the stand. Got me?

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-HANK'S ROOM - MORNING

A plastic storage bag on the bed. Hank unearths a faded black t-shirt. *"Metallica Damaged Justice Tour '88-'89."*

He unleashes a pair of acid washed jeans, steps in. Wiggles. Inhales. Buttons the fly, muscles the last one closed. Saran-wrap-scrotum-hugging tight.

EXT. CARLINVILLE STREET - MORNING

Metallica 'T'. Baggy sweats. Hank jogs, pace easy. Past homes, yards, people. Sights, sounds of his youth. He breathes in memory lane, relaxes, enjoys...

A nearby tornado alarm sounds, full blare-- Hank startled sideways, a braking truck screech-swerves around him.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - MORNING

Hank labors, sweat soaked, more slog than jog.

A new Toyota 4-Runner pulls onto the opposite shoulder, paces him. Sam grins from her open driver's window.

SAM

Might take it easy... I only own the one black dress.

INT. SAM'S 4-RUNNER (PARKED) - MORNING (MOMENTS LATER)

Hank collapses into the back seat, shuts the door, fibs--

HANK

Thirteen point two miles.

SAM

Had to have leather seats. Hank,
somebody I'd like you to meet--

Riding shotgun, a woman swivels, all black hair and lips--

SAM

My daughter Carla.

CARLA

Light a match and hold my hair
back, *this* is your Hank?

Sam shoves it in gear, drives. Hank forgets to breathe.

SAM

Try not to embarrass me, kid.
(beat)
Have you two--

HANK

Met? Yes.

CARLA

At the bar. Hank here--

SAM

Mr. Palmer, young lady.

Carla loves it, leans over the seat, swats his leg.

CARLA

Mr. Palmer was verbally de-
constructing the Koch boys and
their toady. Ran 'em all out.

SAM

Girl, what is up with you? Turn
around.

(to Hank)

I see that t-shirt survived...

(pause; flat)

What a magical week that was.

CARLA

Oh, I smell a story.

SAM

No, you do not.

CARLA

I know a pregnant pause when I
hear one and that pause--

Carla slaps her visor-mirror down, catches Hank's eye.

SAM

My pauses are not pregnant.

CARLA

That pause was third
trimester--

CARLA

(fists the air)

--banging on the birth canal!

Hank seat slides out of Carla's eye line.

HANK

Since when do you have a daughter?

CARLA

November 1989.

SAM

She's home for summer break.

HANK

Were you married?

CARLA

(whispers)

Shh. I'm a riddle.

SAM

Carla goes to Georgetown.

HANK

(impressed)

Georgetown?

CARLA

You ever in D.C., Mr. Palmer?

HANK

No. You got a scholarship?

SAM

We going down this road again?

HANK

Major?

Carla turns to face him, chews her bottom lip, tucks
hair behind an ear.

CARLA

Law.

EXT. JUDGE'S HOME-DRIVEWAY - DAY

The 4-Runner idles, Hank next to the open window, Sam.

SAM

How's the Judge?

HANK

An intractable pain in the ass.

She holds up both hands indicating a short distance.

SAM

Fallen apple. Tree.

She grimaces, pushes his smelly self back.

SAM

If, after you shower, you're of a
 mind, maybe we could get together--
 (self conscious)
 --you know...

Carla emits a long low guttural groan of disgust. Sam
 ignores her. Carla catches Hank's eye, pantomimes
 locking her lips, throws the "key" out the window.

SAM

I'll call you.

Sam zips away. He pads up the drive, picks up the
 newspaper, slings it into a neighbor's yard.

INT. INDIANAPOLIS AIRPORT-CORRIDOR - DAY

Hank stands downstream of arriving passengers. Smiles.
 Lauren scurries toward him with her AIRLINE ESCORT.

INT. HANK'S IMPALA (MOVING)- DAY

Lauren buckled-up shotgun. Country through the windows.

HANK

All this way by yourself; you know
 how proud I am of you?

LAUREN

Yes.

He reaches over, squeezes a Lauren-leg. She squeals.

LAUREN

Mommy says you're helping Grandpa.

HANK

I thought you should meet him.

LAUREN

I should help too.

HANK

Kinda what I was thinking.

LAUREN

Mommy doesn't let me sit up front.

HANK

Your mother lacks my spirit of adventure.

LAUREN

Says I'm not tall enough yet.

HANK

What? Big girl like you? Flying solo? Madness.

They share a smug just-between-us-girls look.

LAUREN

Says the airbag will 'capitate me.
"Young lady, either your whole
body can sit in the backseat or
just your head."

Hank chuckles before his self-satisfied grin fades.

INT. HANK'S IMPALA (MOVING) - DAY (LATER)

Lauren buckled in the back seat. She rubbernecks as Hank arrives at the Judge's house, reverses into the drive.

HANK

Let's prep. Grandpa Palmer isn't
like Grandpa Schneider. He's not
a hugger and a kisser.

(MORE)

HANK (CONT'D)

He's not gonna take you for ice cream, not gonna read to you, don't ask him to play. But that doesn't make him a-- Yes it does. It doesn't mean he doesn't... like you.

LAUREN

You don't read to me.

HANK

(hurt; parks)

I'll read legal briefs to you all night long, see how you like that.

EXT. JUDGE'S HOME-DRIVEWAY - DAY (MOMENTS LATER)

Hank shuts Lauren's door. The front door opens, the Judge steps out. Hank instinctively pulls her close.

The Judge descends, eyes on Lauren. He towers over her, sizes her up, then makes a palms-up finger-beckoning motion. She lifts her arms overhead. He scoops her up, kisses the cheek of his laughing granddaughter.

He carries her into the house, kicks the door closed. Hank processes, picks up her suitcase, starts in.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-GLEN'S OLD ROOM - NIGHT

Wall shelves lined with baseball trophies. Hank tucks a sleepy Lauren into the single bed.

LAUREN

Whose room is this?

HANK

Your uncle Glen's when he was a kid. Now he has kids and his own house.

LAUREN

Why does he have so many action figures?

HANK

They're baseball trophies.

LAUREN

Did he play on T.V.?

HANK
 (wiggles hand)
 No. He got hurt.

LAUREN
 I'm sorry. Why didn't he take his
 little men to his own house?

HANK
 I think maybe they were more
 important to his father. Go to
 sleep now.

Hank pecks her forehead. Heads for the door...

LAUREN
 Mommy always sings to me.

Damn. He returns, sits on her bed, puts on a happy face.

HANK
 You are my sunshine, my only--

LAUREN
 That's mommy's song-- Sing one of
 your own.

HANK
 (long beat; halting)
 "In the day we sweat it out in the
 streets of a runaway American
 dream. At night we ride through
 mansions of glory in suicide
 machines. Sprung from cages out
 on Highway 9, chrome wheeled, fuel
 injected and steppin' out over the
 line--
 (into it; growling)
 Baby this town rips the bones from
 your back, it's a death trap, it's
 a suicide rap, we gotta get out--

Her eyes track behind him... the Judge in the doorway,
 amused distaste for his son's choice of bed time song.

THE JUDGE
 Thought I'd say goodnight.

Hank rises. The two navigate around each other, awkward.
 The Judge motions for Lauren to scooch over, he sits.

THE JUDGE

You warm enough?
 (she nods)
 Too warm?
 (shakes her head)

LAUREN

Why was six afraid of seven?
 (he shakes his head)
 Because seven ate nine.

Hank grins. The Judge laughs, hard. Lauren joins in.

THE JUDGE

You look like your grandmother.

LAUREN

Why didn't she want to see me?

HANK

Honey, that's not it at
 all.

THE JUDGE

Of course she wanted to see
 you.

LAUREN

Then why wouldn't you let us come
 visit?

The Palmer third rail crackles with electricity.

HANK

Sometimes, life gets busy.

LAUREN

(to the Judge; low)
 Mommy hates when he says that.

The Judge nods, conspiratorial. He turns to Hank.

THE JUDGE

Out.
 (afterthought)
 Please.

Hank off guard, backs up, a last look. He exits.

LAUREN

What was Grandma like?

THE JUDGE

Beautiful. Tough. Soft, hard.
 Kept her own counsel. Quality.

LAUREN
I would have liked her.

THE JUDGE
You'd have loved her.

LAUREN
Did she sing to daddy? When he
was little?

THE JUDGE
(emotional)
She sang to all her children.

LAUREN
Grandpa? Will you sing to me?
(silent; mouths)
Please?

He checks the room, wipes his eyes, clears his throat.

THE JUDGE
(slow; gentle)
"Oh, the shark has pretty teeth,
dear, and he shows 'em, pearly
white. Just a jack knife has
Macheath, dear, and he keeps it,
keeps it way out of sight.

Like father like son. She stares. He's animated...

THE JUDGE
When that shark bites with his
teeth, dear, scarlet billows, they
begin to spread.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Hank listens a few feet outside the door. Dazed.
Unfamiliar with the man singing to his child.

THE JUDGE (O.S.)
"On the sidewalk, one Sunday
mornin', lies a body oozin' life.

Little hands begin to clap in time. Hank retreats.

THE JUDGE (O.S.)
Someone's sneaking 'round the
corner, could that someone,
perhaps, perchance, be Mack the
Knife?"

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Hank melts into the couch with a thick stack of legal papers and an open Fed-ex box.

The Judge trudges in, plops down in his easy chair, newspaper in hand. Both read. Silent. Uncomfortable.

THE JUDGE

(re: files)

Chicago?

HANK

Not exactly carrying my load at the moment.

More silence.

THE JUDGE

Read about that Ponzi-schemer you defended last month.

HANK

(concerned)

Three years ago.

(more silence)

Alleged Ponzi-schemer.

THE JUDGE

He didn't steal all those people's life savings? I read he did.

HANK

He was acquitted. So, no, he didn't steal it.

THE JUDGE

You're right. Words matter. "Misplaced."

(recalling)

Six hundred some million?

HANK

Who remembers? There might be three, four lawyers in the country could have done what I did.

THE JUDGE

I told your mom I thought maybe you'd be on the *Today Show*. She watched all week. Nope.

HANK
No. No *Today Show*.

THE JUDGE
(lowers paper)
I wanted to say...

Hank slaps the file down, knives out.

HANK
Let's do it, old man--

THE JUDGE
I wanted to say that I was wrong
to belittle your marriage.

HANK
You wanted to say it or you are
saying it?

The Judge abandons the apology, returns to his paper.

HANK
Sorry.

Hank instantly infuriated that he's apologizing.

THE JUDGE
No such thing as an easy marriage.

HANK
You and mom did it for almost
fifty years. We couldn't do ten.

THE JUDGE
Most can't.
(beat)
How was the sex?

Hank stunned. His father's interest, the intimate topic.

HANK
I don't know... Fine.

THE JUDGE
I've spotted your problem.

HANK
She had a wandering vagina. That
was the problem.

The Judge produces a superior grunt.

HANK

What, you're a sex expert now?
When? You had three boys, a small
house with toilet paper-thin walls
and a stick up your ass.

THE JUDGE

First of all, you three deviants
were too busy churning your own
butter to notice if the house were
on fire. Second, your mother and
I were creative. If one of us,
usually me, was in the mood we'd
use code.

HANK

I'm begging you. Don't tell me.
(curiosity building)
Okay, tell me, you wanna tell me.

THE JUDGE

I'd inquire if she wanted to go to
the movies. She'd know by the
title if I was randy or not.
(Hank's skin crawls)
*Blazing Saddles. Midnight
Express. Enter the Dragon.*

HANK

Okay, okay, I got it.

THE JUDGE

She was a woman, smart ass, not
your soft place to land. And she
was up for just about anything.

Hank glares, the Judge lets it go. Then doesn't--

THE JUDGE

(low; knife twist)
Willy Wonka and the Chocolate--

HANK

Got! It!

THE JUDGE

You might consider giving Lisa
another chance. Or don't.
Whatever makes you happy.

HANK

Was mom happy?

Win. Hank settles in with his files and pound of flesh.

EXT. DINER (REAR) - NIGHT (LATE)

Sam watches Hank stand on an AC unit, lever open a transom window.

SAM

When you have date night in Chicago do you break into courthouses for fun?

HANK

We're not on a date and you used to enjoy it.

He hoists himself up, halfway in. Wiggles. Stuck.

HANK

Little help.

She hangs her head, walks.

INT. DINER-COUNTER - NIGHT

Ambient light. Keys on the counter. Hank and Sam eat a large slice of apple pie, two forks.

SAM

So, midnight, and I'm on the Dayton blacktop haulin' ass home--

HANK

The Chevette?

SAM

Dad's Maverick.

(Hank winces)

I know right? From the corner of my eye I see... something. I hit the brakes and the biggest buck you've ever seen, twelve, fourteen points, maybe two-hundred pounds give or take, flies over the hood.

(Hank's intrigued)

I just sat there. Shaking. Another second, he's coming right through the windshield. Carla was six, she wouldn't remember. I made a decision right then, right there;

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

whatever had or hadn't happened in the past I was going to be the hero of my own story.

(checks him)

Sound corny?

(not to him)

Had four grand to my name. Borrowed another twelve from my grandpa, took that sixteen grand and made Dan an offer for the diner he couldn't refuse.

(Hank puzzled)

He couldn't refuse sixteen grand. The place was on its last legs. I refinanced, changed the name, menu, advertised. Bought the tavern three years later. I also own a construction company and half a Toyota dealership in Anderson. I've got money like the Colonel's got chicken.

HANK

Jesus, that's impressive.

SAM

You think more of me now.

HANK

Absolutely.

SAM

We've known each other since third grade. You didn't already know enough to be impressed?

She quiets, hurt. Unexpected feelings rise in him, he changes the subject.

HANK

Why didn't you and mom stay close?

SAM

She changed. Not all at once, obviously, nobody does. But one day she wasn't fun to be around anymore. She became hard. I'm sorry.

HANK

Second grade.

SAM

What?

HANK

We met in second grade. You
tasted like cinnamon.

(Sam confused)

Mrs. Jenkins class. Kickball
field, South corner, I tried to
kiss you. You fish-hooked me.

He puts a finger in his mouth, POPS a cheek. She melts.

SAM

What'd we do when we broke in here
and were done eating?

She leans in, kisses him. Heat. Sam slides off her
stool, straddles him. He rethinks, tries to pull away.

HANK

I'm not done with my pie.

She shoves the plate off the counter, it shatters.

HANK

We need to talk--

SAM

(kissing harder)

You're such a girl.

HANK

I just don't want you to think
this is more than it is.

SAM

A meaningless memory lane hump?

HANK

(disappointed)

Really?

She squirms off him, frustrated, angry. Horny.

SAM

Why did we come here? I'm a forty-
three year old, twice-engaged,
never married, single mom. I work
fifty hours a week and rent a
shitpot full of movies. I'm never
leaving Carlinville.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

I love it here, I love-- I love seeing you here. But I'm not naive, Hank. I know you.

HANK

(with an edge)

What is it you think you know, Sam? I'm loyal. A good father, a great lawyer. I'm also, but for rare exceptions, the smartest guy in the room; I realize how that sounds, fuck it, there it is. I'm a decent person. I'm tired of being scrutinized.

SAM

How's it feel, Hank?

He watches her cross the diner, exit, the bell tinkling.

INT. DOC MORRIS' HOUSE-BACK PORCH - DAY

The Judge in a rocker, Lauren on his lap. She slow-reads a worn paperback; *Lonesome Dove*. I.V. tube in his arm.

LAUREN

"The first man comes along that can read Latin is welcome to rob us, far as I'm concerned. I'd like a chance to shoot at a educated man once in my life."

DOC MORRIS (PRE-LAP V.O)

It's called "chemo brain"; along with the fatigue, weight loss, cracked skin, you can suffer from memory loss, confusion, mood swings...

INT. CLINIC-DOC MORRIS' HOUSE-KITCHEN - DAY

Hank watches Lauren and the Judge. Doc Morris makes tea.

DOC MORRIS

There's no hard and fast rules. Everybody's different.

HANK

I may need you to testify.

DOC MORRIS

About?

HANK

The very real possibility, the probability, that he was mentally impaired the night he hit Blackwell.

DOC MORRIS

No.

HANK

"No" what?

DOC MORRIS

It's not my call. Or yours. It's his. And he's made it.

HANK

You people. As ugly and brutal as you think prison is? It's much much worse. Now imagine him there; old, confused, dying.

DOC MORRIS

You want to call me to the stand, call me. I'll tell you all about the ravages of chemotherapy. But as the Judge's physician, I'm bound by his wishes.

HANK

His vanity. When will he be done with the treatments?

DOC MORRIS

Like I told your father, it's kind of up to him.

HANK

To him? How would he know?

DOC MORRIS

(confused)

What exactly did he tell you?

HANK

That he has colon cancer. That it's under control.

(off Doc's look)

Don't, don't, don't.

(MORE)

HANK (CONT'D)

Before you dig your Hippocratic
situational-ethic heels in,
realize a trial's a grueling
thing. I'm not his son, I'm his
lawyer. Give it up.

DOC MORRIS

Not an act is it? You really
aren't a pleasant person.

Hank signals him to spit it the fuck out.

DOC MORRIS

Your client has stage four cancer.
It did start in his colon. That
was true. Moved to his lymph
nodes. His spine's full of it.
He's dying.

HANK

(rocked)

He said it was close to remission.

DOC MORRIS

He was passing blood for a year
before he came in. Too late to
cut it out, slap a bag on him. If
he'd had regular screenings...
But, the Judge isn't the type to
invite a camera up his ass with
any degree of regularity.

(eyes the porch)

Your mother insisted he try. I
suspect he's still doing it for
her. I told him to say when.

(faces Hank; tearing)

I've considered swapping out the
chemo with water. I'd say he's
got at most a year, maybe less.

Hank shifts to the door, watches Lauren, his father.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-KITCHEN - NIGHT

Hank and Lauren eat catfish from Styrofoam. Hank's mind
elsewhere. She holds up a hush puppy.

LAUREN

What's a hush puppy?

HANK

Good for you.

A Ka-Thump from upstairs, something/someone fallen.

HANK

Stay.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-JUDGE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Hank enters, sees the Judge crawling into his bathroom. Hank rushes over, lifts the lid. The Judge dry heaves.

Hank unsure what to do. A foul smell hits him a second after the Judge loses bowel control.

THE JUDGE

I can manage, get out!

He tries to rise, falls, Hank catches him. The Judge leans against the basin, head down, sobs once--

THE JUDGE

Mary.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-JUDGE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Lauren at the closed door. Men argue. She tests the knob. Locked.

THE JUDGE (O.S.)

Not so damn hot!

INT. JUDGE'S ROOM-BATHROOM - NIGHT

A clothed Hank stands in the tub supporting his father, washing the Judge's naked butt with the shower head.

THE JUDGE

Jesus, it's freezing, you moron.

Hank dials it up, a juggling act.

HANK

Thanks for stepping into my shit storm, Hank, appreciate it.

KNOCK-KNOCK. Lauren.

HANK

What is it?

LAUREN (O.S.)
Can I come in?

HANK
I'll be out in a minute, go eat.

LAUREN (O.S.)
I'm full.

HANK
In a minute, Lauren!

LAUREN (O.S.)
What are you doing?

Hank on the verge of exploding, checks himself.

HANK
(to the Judge; low)
What are we doing?

THE JUDGE
Fixing the sink.

HANK
We're fixing the sink. It leaks.

LAUREN (O.S.)
Can I help?

THE JUDGE
Too much water, she'll slip.

HANK
There's water all over the floor
honey. Go watch T.V., Grandpa and
I will be down in a minute.

Silent. Hank stretches for a towel.

LAUREN (O.S.)
Knock, knock.

HANK
Lauren--

LAUREN (O.S.)
I wasn't talking to you.

The Judge chuckles, steadies himself, Hank softens.

THE JUDGE
Who's there?

LAUREN (O.S.)

Army.

Hank watches the Judge attempt to respond, fail.

HANK

Army who?

LAUREN (O.S.)

Army and Grandpa still going for
ice cream?

Their eyes meet. Both amused, despite it all.

INT. HANK'S IMPALA (MOVING) - NIGHT

Hank drives down Main, Lauren in back. Both lick double-
scoop cones. He angles his mirror to see her.

HANK

How's the pink bubblegum?

LAUREN

Good.

HANK

So what's going on in your life?
You seeing anybody? Entertaining
any marriage proposals? What?

LAUREN

I'm six.

HANK

Job offers?

She attempts to fit a whole scoop in her small mouth.

HANK

Tell me about Lauren. Likes,
dislikes. What's the future hold
for you? Doctor? Captain of
industry? Lawyer seems popular.

LAUREN

I'd like to be a model.

HANK

I'll buy a firearm.

LAUREN

Or make doughnuts.

Hank raises an eyebrow.

LAUREN

What I'd really like is to be a
race car driver.

His head swivels to face her, she's serious.

INT. HANK'S IMPALA (MOVING)- NIGHT (MOMENTS LATER)

Lauren drives, on Hank's lap. Hank chews on his cone.

HANK

You're a pro.

(beat)

What would you think, if when I
got back, you and I live together?
Just us.

LAUREN

When you and mommy get divorced?

HANK

Uh-huh.

LAUREN

Mommy would be lonely.

HANK

What about me? Won't I be lonely?

LAUREN

Daddies don't get lonely, they
marry younger mommies.

HANK

Turn, left, left, left.

She jerks the wheel, he helps. Switching topics...

HANK

Who's your best friend in the
whole world, Lauren?

LAUREN

Mommy.

(afterthought)

And you.

He rests his chin on top of her head, goeses the gas.

HANK
Do I hear an airbag? Kidding.

EXT. INDY AIRPORT-SECURITY - MORNING

Hank kneels, face-to-face with Lauren.

HANK
Just like coming here, only in
reverse. Mommy'll be waiting.
(beat)
You good?

LAUREN
I will be fine.

HANK
(hugs her)
"I will be fine." You're
something else aren't you?

He hands her off to her smiling ESCORT.

HANK
Bye baby.

Hank watches as Lauren clears security, almost gone.

HANK
HEY! Lauren!

Heads turn, NTSB personnel on alert. He doesn't care.

HANK
Who loves you?

Lauren points at him. Hank smiles, eyes wet, waves.

She chews her lip, tucks hair behind an ear, turns.
Hank squints, smile dries. Lip chew. Hair tuck. Carla.

HANK
(sotto)
Oh, fuck me.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-ATTIC - DAY

Hot. Close. Hank squats, claws into dusty cardboard
boxes, searching. He pops a box, looks inside. Bingo.

INT. JUDGE'S HOUSE-HANK'S ROOM - DAY

Hank rifles through the attic box, dumps its contents; *Northwestern University Law Review* journals, a one-eyed Teddy Bear, a stack of colorful birthday cards spill out.

A wallet photo spins onto the floor. Hank pinches it up; a yellowed photo of a 10 year old girl, circa 1980. He looks at the card, generic birthday greetings for a kid, no inscription. Another card. Another photo, the girl older now, a teen. He recognizes her...

HANK

Hope Stevens.

He returns to his search. Finds a Carlinville High School Year Book. He flips pages, lands on his photo, Sam's, them at a senior dance... date: February, 1989.

He paces, counts out months on fingers.

HANK

February, March, April, May, June,
July, August, September, October,
Novem--

Five fingers on one hand, four on the other. Nine.

HANK

(rationalizing)
Nah, couldn't be.

EXT. COURTHOUSE-SIDEWALK - DAY

C.P leans a hand against a Courthouse wall, stomach roiling. Hank appears, grabs an elbow, steers him off the sidewalk, onto grass. He vomits, finishes.

HANK

Always on grass, never pavement.
Won't splash your shoes that way.

C.P

I don't know what my problem is.

HANK

You're personally invested in your client. You feel the life in your hands.

(they walk)

Both go away. Trust me.

C.P

I hope not.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Dickham questions numbered POTENTIAL JURORS. Sullivan at the bench. C.P huddles with Hank and the Judge.

C.P

(quietly)

Who exactly is our target juror?

THE JUDGE

Intelligent people who will listen to instructions and follow the evidence.

Hank draws a grid of the jury box with numbers and names.

HANK

Idiots I can persuade to swallow their own tongues; moon-landing deniers, so on, so forth.

Dickham addresses POTENTIAL JUROR 21, male.

DICKHAM

...To answer your question, this should be one, two, days at most. But keep in mind, sir, that serving on a jury is the hallmark of our legal system. To be judged by your peers isn't just a right it's a duty. Sometimes that duty inconveniences us.

JUDGE SULLIVAN

Anything else, Mr. Dickham?

DICKHAM

No, your honor.

JUDGE SULLIVAN

Mr. Palmer, chomp the bit no more.

THE JUDGE

(to Hank; whispers)

Subtlety. A velvet touch.

Hank nods, slides his grid to C.P. He strides over to the jury box. He studies them, strikes--

HANK

Who thinks the old man's guilty?

The Judge bites off a curse. Jurors squirm. Dickham eye-checks Sullivan. Two hands go up. Hank motions to C.P.

HANK

(to 21)

What about you, sir?

POTENTIAL JUROR 21

Hmm?

HANK

"Hmm?" You think he's guilty.

POTENTIAL JUROR 21

No... how would, I mean--

HANK

I wasn't asking you a question. You said he was guilty.

POTENTIAL JUROR 21

What? I didn't. I never--

HANK

Out in the hall, I overheard you tell Barbara there you thought the Judge was guilty as sin.

21 speechless, Potential Jurors look sideways at him.

POTENTIAL JUROR 21

(looks at Sullivan)

I never said that. I swear.

HANK

You didn't, but you see how hard it is to prove a negative? You can say any nasty untrue thing you want about somebody. That's why--

DICKHAM

(stands)
Objection!

HANK

--the state has the burden
of proof!

JUDGE SULLIVAN

Sustained. Mr. Palmer, I'm sure your legal hijinx are a big hit in Chicago. The Catskills even. But I lack the patience to continually reel you in. Got me?

HANK

Yes sir.

(turns to Jurors)

Bumper stickers! On your car,
truck, RV? Show of hands.

Sullivan sighs. Confused faces among the Potential
Jurors. Seven hesitant hands go up. Hank points...

22

It just spells out "tolerance"
with religious symbols.

Hank dismisses her with a grunt and a wave, points--

24

"Mensa."

HANK

Are you?

24

Yes.

Hank swivels to C.P, 24 scratched out.

25

"Merle Haggard for President."

26

(sheepish)

"Certified breast inspector, have
'em out."

27

"Gun control means using both
hands."

25, 26, 27 circled.

28

"Honor role student on board."

A lone hiss from the gallery. 28 scratched.

29

"Wife and dog missing..."

(reluctant)

Reward for dog."

A somber Judge stares at the marked up grid, listens to
the laughter, watches C.P circle 29.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-HANK'S ROOM - NIGHT

Dark. Hank stirs, wakes to the Judge's voice, rising.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Hank creeps. Light seeps under the Judge's door.

THE JUDGE (O.S.)
 (rambling; slurred)
 How am I to be blame? I took... I
 provided didn't I? Didn't I?

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-JUDGE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Hank enters, room a mess, clothes strewn about. A wild-haired Judge rummages through his bureau, incoherent.

THE JUDGE
 What would you rather... what
 should I have done, Mary? Tell
 me, you know every Goddamn thing!
 Tell me, woman, what do you want?

Hank crosses the room, tentative... frightened.

HANK
 Dad?

The Judge spins, cheeks streaked with tears, eyes unfocused, hands bleeding.

THE JUDGE
 You read those fucking birthday
 cards, tell her to stop already...
 stop. Stop yelling, Mary!
 Enough!

Hank leads him to the bed, helps him sit.

HANK
 Sit there, Judge. I'll get you
 some water. You want some water?

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-BATHROOM - NIGHT

Hank fills a glass, hands trembling, drinks.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME--JUDGE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hank offers water to the Judge. No response. Hank holds it to his mouth, his father sips. Calms.

THE JUDGE

Your mother know you're home?

Hank pops open Pond's cold cream. Gently rubs it into the Judge's hands.

HANK

This will make your hands soft.
Feels good doesn't it?

THE JUDGE

Yeah.

HANK

"Yeah?"

THE JUDGE

Hank. My lawyer.
(Hank nods)
You any good?

Hank grins. The Judge suddenly tears up again.

THE JUDGE

Where's my Mary?

HANK

Hey, hey... who's the best lawyer
you ever saw? C'mon, forty plus
years, had to see some characters.
(Judge calms)

Best I ever saw? Arthur Bloom. I
work for the man. You'd hate him.
Fearless. Juries love him,
prosecutors hate him, judges are
afraid of him.

(Judge blank)

It's true. He's argued two cases
before the Supreme Court. I've
seen Arthur object to a witnesses'
name, make veteran cops cry on the
stand, poison a jury with a look.
Once, hand to God, he wrapped a
Bible in the flag in open court
and set both on fire. Arthur
doesn't lose. Just like your
lawyer. Now who you got?

The Judge lost in himself, Hank opens his mouth to prod--

THE JUDGE

Mr. Shaw. Traveled the county circuit. My first job after law school. A drifter killed a farmer, violated his wife. Five Points road. Corn knife. Vile human being. County assigned Mr. Shaw the case. We'd take dinner to the jail. Every night. Mr. Shaw sat with him, prepared him, defended him. No tricks.

HANK

He win?

THE JUDGE

Electrocuted. He was dead, but Mr. Shaw had to live here. He was spit on, threatened, people wouldn't sit near him in church. Would have been easy to refuse the case. But he believed in the law. I can't say best. But Henry Shaw? Most decent man I ever met...

(yawns)

I'm going to sleep now. Put your mother's cream back where you found it.

The Judge lies down. Hank drags a cover across him, has a last look before he hits the lights.

INT. POLICE STATION-SHERIFF WHITE'S OFFICE - DAY

A picture-tube TV plays a grainy B&W surveillance tape of the Minit Mart. Hanson works a remote, Hank, Sheriff White, Dickham watch. Onscreen --

The Judge, Blackwell... we see what might be eye contact. The Judge spills eggs.

HANK

We've seen this ten times. The Judge leaves the store, his car goes one way, Blackwell the other.

DICKHAM

Patience.

Through the windows we see the Judge's Seville pull out of the lot. Hanson fast forwards. PLAY. Customers inside the store, traffic outside. FREEZE. The Seville on the street, heads in the opposite direction.

DICKHAM

Time?

HANSON

Four minutes forty-five.

SHERIFF WHITE

(to Hank; sorry)

It's at least six minutes from the store to the tracks. One way.

DICKHAM

He didn't get to the tracks.

HANK

And?

Dickham grins, knows Hank's a pro. Hanson confused.

HANSON

And he's lying. In his statement Judge Palmer said he reached the road under the trestle, it was washed out and he turned around.

HANK

You're kidding right? He's lived here his whole life, you think he can't gauge when the road's going to wash out? That's it?

HANSON

That's not the point--

DICKHAM

Sheriff may Mr. Palmer and I use your office please?

Sheriff and Hanson vacate. No sooner does the door shut--

DICKHAM

Ten years, he'll do seven.
Offer expires when you
leave this room.

HANK

Drop all charges, blame it
on the locals, save face
and go home.

DICKHAM

(sincere)

I'm so glad you're on your game.

HANK

I have but one speed. We done?

Dickham closes on Hank, his hostility personal.

DICKHAM

I have intent now. Premeditation. I'll paint your father as a holier than thou prick determined to see what he considers justice served.

HANK

My father *is* a holier than thou prick determined to see justice served. Sounds like a light day.

Hank heads for the door.

DICKHAM

Thanks, by the way. You're the reason I became a lawyer. You and Bobby Clemens.

(doesn't register)

Not important enough to remember. Fifteen years ago he was arrested by the Chicago P.D. on a marijuana bust. Bobby was small time, what little money he made went for groceries. You were the prosecutor. Convinced him he'd spend the next ten years in prison. Told him you'd cut him loose if he gave you a name, a bigger fish. Bobby was stupid. Didn't know his weed weight was a wrist-slapper. So he gave you a name and you made an arrest and the paper for a day or two.

(Hank remembers)

Bobby -- my older brother -- made a dumpster. His throat cut with a box knife.

Dickham picks up the remote, rewinds the video.

DICKHAM

When I saw the request for a special prosecutor I made sure you couldn't appeal on a conflict of interest charge and jumped on it.

The Judge appears onscreen.

DICKHAM

You may think Mark Blackwell's white trash and he may be, but in the eyes of the law his life matters. The law is the only thing capable of making people equal. Your father is a liar who thinks he can manipulate that law. Just like his son. I'm going to impale him on a Murder Two charge. And you get a front row seat.

HANK

Ever piss on an electric fence, Dickham?

EXT. CORNFIELD - DAY

One hundred acres of corn beneath a bruised sky. Two fingers of lightning on the horizon. Thunder rolls.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-KITCHEN - DAY

Lunch abandoned quickly. A tornado siren sounds.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-BASEMENT - DAY

Video POV: Gang all here. The Judge, Glen, Amy hunker down in lawn chairs with platefuls of food. The Teens mug for the camera. Hank festers on the floor, back against a wall, plate beside him, untouched. The Judge looks at him. Problem. Dale doesn't miss a beat.

TEEN 1

It's never a tornado, why are we down here?

GLEN

Tell that to the people in Joplin, Missouri. Be glad your Grandpa has a basement.

KA-BOOM! Dark. Lights, AC, power off. Silence.

AMY (O.S.)

Where's your mouth now, mister?

Video POV ends. A flashlight beam hits the ceiling, a second, third as Glen, Amy flip flashlights on. Beams play across faces, stored holiday decorations, old bikes.

TEEN 1

How 'bout it, uncle Dale?

A chorus of Dale! Dale! Dale! Applause.

Hank sits in silence, mind elsewhere. A weight on him.

A projector beam cuts the gloom, the room cheers. Images on a wall; 15 year old Glen pitches Little League, Mary, a young Hank, young Dale watch from stands, clap.

Teens whoop at the sight of their dad. Glen glances at Hank. Nothing. The images change... Amy, Glen at the hospital with their first baby. The Judge, Mary proud grandparents. Mary takes the baby, cradles him.

The porch swing, a woman's back to us, hair gray. The camera swings around and we see it's recent footage of Mary. Her hands in her lap, a thousand yard stare. Hank riveted, struck by her distance, lack of warmth.

GLEN

Speed it up, man.

DALE

It's film.

TEEN 2

Gram looks pissed.

THE JUDGE

Next, Dale.

Dale fumbles with the film. Onscreen Mary notices the camera, annoyed, snarls "Go away."

HANK

I want to see it.

THE JUDGE

Next, moron.

Dale hesitates, not sure what he's supposed to do.

HANK

Let it run!

THE JUDGE

Turn it off!

Mary viciously swipes at the camera just as Dale jerks the reel off. Hank and the Judge lock eyes, blame laid.

THE JUDGE

What the hell do you know?

GLEN

Hank, don't--

HANK

I know you didn't get close to the tracks before you turned around.

(MORE)

HANK (CONT'D)

I know I got blind-sided like a park bench lawyer because you decided to hold out on me.

THE JUDGE

I told you everything I knew--

HANK

I'm sick of you deciding how the world runs, what you should parcel out, when you should do it.

THE JUDGE

You want to quit, quit! I can--

HANK

Can what? Can what? Who you gonna get? C.P.? He can't hold down a breakfast burrito. Trial's in a week. I'm trapped!

GLEN

Hank this isn't the place.

THE JUDGE

Fine, you're fired!
Satisfied?

The Judge charges for the steps, bangs into something, keeps going, Hank in pursuit. Glen grabs onto Hank.

GLEN

Leave him be, he's sick!

HANK

Let go of me with that gimp fucking hand.

(to the Judge)

Remember why you pulled me out of Boy Scouts?

THE JUDGE

As punishment for blowing up the McGraw's mailbox with M-80s.

HANK

That, *that* you remember. I was thirteen.

THE JUDGE

Old enough to know better.

HANK

You didn't come to my high school graduation. Or college--

THE JUDGE

That wouldn't have helped you.

HANK

I didn't need help!

THE JUDGE

You were high. You rolled the car. With your brother in it.

HANK

I was seventeen.

THE JUDGE

"I was thirteen", "I was seventeen", you took his future from him!

Hank clutches at his head, face, knew it was coming.

THE JUDGE

You were headed down the wrong path. I did what I thought was right.

HANK

Well, you were wrong.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Blue, cloudless sky. Shoe soles sunk in mud. Hank studies his mom's headstone, wet dirt outlines her grave.

HANK

I'm sorry.
(louder)
I'm sorry, mom.

INT. FLYING DEER TAVERN - NIGHT

Sam enters financials on a laptop. The doorbell tinkles, Hank steps in, lugging two cardboard boxes.

He dumps them on a table, sits, pulls files. She watches him for a long beat. Her first. The love of her life. She shuts her laptop. Joins him.

SAM

This ain't a library.

HANK

Going through the old man's files;
counting, listing, separating
civil from criminal, felonies,
misdemeanors, violent, non-
violent, birth, death
certificates, divorces, assorted
busywork, etcetera, etcetera.

SAM

How far back?

HANK

Forty-three years.

She double-taps the table. Files thud in front of her.
She begins. He studies her, on the fence, over it...

HANK

You want to tell me who Carla's
father is?

SAM

At this point, does it matter?

No answer. She gestures to a box.

SAM

You could just pull her birth
certificate.

HANK

It doesn't list the father.

He watches her slow burn, her assistance in jeopardy.

HANK

I'm gonna just let it go for now.

He nudges her files closer to her, she returns to her
stack. He glances at her, grateful, attracted.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME - NIGHT

Hank walks through the house, searching. No Judge.

INT. JUDGE'S HOME-KITCHEN - NIGHT

Hank looks out into the backyard. The Judge leans elbows
on the picnic table, sipping Scotch.

EXT. JUDGE'S HOME-BACK YARD - NIGHT

Hank, plastic cup in hand, joins in. The Judge pushes a bottle towards Hank. Hank pours.

HANK

Finally opened her up, huh?

THE JUDGE

Maker's Mark. Drove down to Loretto, Kentucky 1979 to buy her.

HANK

I almost cracked this baby open a dozen times.

THE JUDGE

Be glad you didn't.

Hank drinks, feels the liquor, the night breeze.

HANK

Tastes expensive.

THE JUDGE

It is. Gonna tell me I shouldn't drink?

HANK

You're a big boy. You ready for tomorrow?

(Judge nods)

Went and saw Mom today. Outta curiosity... how'd you two meet?

THE JUDGE

She walked into Mr. Shaw's law office peddling this awful daily shopper. She wore a plaid blazer, these thick glasses, and a green skirt she always insisted wasn't tight on her, but...

(chuckles)

I damn near lost my mind.

Hank smiles, appreciates the memory.

HANK

You think there's something else? After we die?

THE JUDGE

You asking me if I believe in God?

HANK

Do you?

THE JUDGE

I'm seventy-two with stage four cancer. What choice do I have?

HANK

Mom ever cheat on you?

THE JUDGE

No chance.

HANK

You?

THE JUDGE

Nope. You the one lost my Freemason's ring?

HANK

Guilty.

THE JUDGE

I knew it. Why? You were ten.

HANK

I needed a fishing weight.

The Judge half mutters a curse, half chuckles.

HANK

What'd you think of Lisa?

THE JUDGE

I could take or leave her. Do you really make five-hundred an hour?

HANK

Five and a quarter. When do guys stop beating off?

THE JUDGE

I'll let you know. Did you move away just to spite us?

HANK

You yes, mom no.

(beat)

Why'd you change?

THE JUDGE

I didn't.

HANK

I have memories. Of us. All of us. Vacations, playing. You laughing, hugging us. Me. And then I don't.

Hank knows the Judge can't answer. Won't. He drinks.

EXT. COURTHOUSE-LAWN - MORNING

A tornado siren sounds. Hank and C.P vomit. Together.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Packed. Sweltering. Hank, the Judge, C.P for the defense. Glen and Dale just behind them. Judge Sullivan on the bench. ASIAN FORENSIC SCIENTIST on the stand.

FORENSIC SCIENTIST

It's the difference between reasonable probability and statistical certainty.

DICKHAM

In English?

FORENSIC SCIENTIST

It's the victim's blood on the Cadillac.

DICKHAM

Nothing further.

JUDGE SULLIVAN

Mr. Palmer?

HANK

(seated)

It's his blood, your honor.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY (LATER)

Hank questions the Minit Mart Clerk.

HANK

Didn't take a swing at Mr. Blackwell?

MINIT MART CLERK

No.

HANK

Use profanity, rant, rave, flip
him off, or display any sign of
hostility?

MINIT MART CLERK

No.

Hank glances at the JURORS, building rapport.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY (LATER)

Hanson on the stand, Dickham up. A tripod supports an
enlarged photo of the accident scene stretch of road.

DICKHAM

Any brake marks?

HANSON

No, Sir.

DICKHAM

Trees, low hanging branches,
weeds, anything that would
obstruct Mr. Palmer's view?

HANSON

It was a straight shot.

DICKHAM

So even if a person had perfect
vision, nearsighted, farsighted...
they'd have a clear field of
vision.

C.P

(bolts up)

Objection! Assumption of facts
not in evidence.

Hank, the Judge grin at C.P. As does Judge Sullivan.

JUDGE SULLIVAN

Sustained.

DICKHAM

Nothing further, your honor.

Hank strolls to the stand, in command. A showman.

HANK

Deputy Hanson. You were
previously an officer in *Detroit*?

DICKHAM

Objection. The deputy's
credentials are not in question.

HANK

(to Judge Sullivan)

I was going to say "welcome to
Carlinville."

JUDGE SULLIVAN

Uh-huh.

Hank squints at the photo, points to a small road bump.

HANK

What is that? Right there.

Gallery, Jurors, everybody cranes forward, squints.

HANSON

Road kill, raccoon maybe.

HANK

With that tail?

HANSON

I dunno, a possum then.

DICKHAM

Your honor...

JUDGE SULLIVAN

What's your point, Mr.
Palmer?

HANK

That there, is a snapping turtle.

The crowd laughs.

JUDGE SULLIVAN

And?

HANK

And Detroit can be forgiven for
not knowing what running over a
snapping turtle is like. Hit a
rabbit, possum, skunk, your car
goes ka-bump, ka-bump. But
nailing a big snapper like him is
similar to smacking into a cinder
block... car goes Ka-Bam! Ka-Bam!

More laughter, a couple male Jurors confer, agree.

DICKHAM

Objection; dead turtle physics are assumptions not in evidence.

C.P reddens, the Judge nudges the young lawyer, grins.

HANK

Your honor, the prosecution maintains that Judge Palmer deliberately ran Mr. Blackwell down. That he couldn't have accidentally hit him, not realized a person was struck and drove on.

DICKHAM

Is there a question here?

HANK

(to Hanson)

My question is: any brake marks in front of that turtle?

HANSON

No, Sir.

HANK

Deputy, did the police receive a call at anytime last week to say "Hey, I hit something, maybe someone on Shelby Road?"

HANSON

(grudgingly)

No. We did not.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY (LATER)

Sheriff White parked on the stand, a T.V. plays the Minit Mart surveillance footage. The Judge's car appears. Dickham works a remote. Freeze frame.

SHERIFF WHITE

The Judge's Cadillac reappears in the frame approximately five minutes after he left the lot.

DICKHAM

(hits rewind)

Exact time, Sheriff?

SHERIFF WHITE
Four minutes forty-five seconds.

DICKHAM
Again, when he leaves. Oops.

Rewound too far. Almost out of frame, the Judge cradles a carton of eggs.

DICKHAM
Went a little far.

The Judge stares at the footage, sees his own image. Memory flooding back...

FLASH TO:

INT. MINIT MART - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The Judge removes eggs from a reach-in cooler, pops the top to check for cracked shells.

BLACKWELL (O.S.)
Hey, Judge.

The Judge glances left -- BLACKWELL grabs a six-pack -- the Judge hardens.

RETURN TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Hank notices his stricken father eyeballing the T.V. The Judge stands, dazed.

C.P
Judge?

JUDGE SULLIVAN
Mr. Palmer?

The Judge collapses, C.P, Hank break his fall. The crowd gasps. Glen, Dale race to their father.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Clean. Window. The Judge in bed, I.V. in an arm. Doc Morris sits. Glen, Amy, the Teens hover. Dale videos.

AMY

Can we bring you supper, dad?

THE JUDGE

I would like a photo of Mary. The one on my nightstand. Please.

The Judge motions Dale in. Low.

THE JUDGE

I know that camera's a buffer for you. You want to keep using the damn thing, use it. But just know, you don't need it.

Dale nods, tucks the camera away. Hank and C.P step in.

THE JUDGE

The Dream Team. See you, folks.

Family files out, Doc Morris brings up the rear.

DOC MORRIS

(to Hank; exiting)

Doubt he takes much more of this.

C.P

I'll ask for a postponement.

THE JUDGE

So I can enjoy this hayride a few more days? You're as dumb as he is.

HANK

C.P, give me and the Almighty a minute.

C.P edges out. Door shuts.

THE JUDGE

I killed the bastard.

HANK

Do not say it again.

THE JUDGE

I'm seventy-two. I know me. I ran that man down.

HANK

Shut. Your. Mouth.
(beat; frustrated)
Do you remember hitting him?

THE JUDGE

Just a matter of time.

HANK

A lifetime of fist-shaking ethical superiority. Endlessly itemizing my deficiencies. And you murder a man? No. This you don't do.

THE JUDGE

I don't have the energy to fight with you, Henry.

HANK

Muster some. It was twenty years ago. How do you not let it go?

THE JUDGE

He stole from me.

HANK

I'm good with cliches. The integrity of the court? Your judicial innocence? So Hope's mom sent you cards every year, blister up. What'd he steal-

THE JUDGE

He took my sons from me.

(weary)

Never threw a ball to Glen after that day. Not once. Not sure I ever held Dale again, told him I loved him. Certain I never told you.

(beat)

If I'm your age, Henry, with a Lauren, yes, I do things differently. But I can smell the death in my breath. The thing is, I regret I can't remember the look on his face before I hit him.

HANK

You're not taking the stand.

THE JUDGE

I'll fire you and C.P will do it.

HANK

How am I supposed to defend you?
I've sprayed reasonable doubt all
over this thing, keep your mouth
shut and you walk!

THE JUDGE

I have to live here.

HANK

Not if you die in prison.

THE JUDGE

See you in court, Henry.

INT. COURTROOM - MORNING

Bench empty. Gallery full. Dickham waiting. C.P beside
the Judge, checks his watch, scans the crowd. No Hank.

EXT. COURTHOUSE-REAR STEPS - MORNING

Hank sits on the steps, alone. Thinking.

MARGARET STEVENS (O.S.)

Mr. Palmer?

Margaret Stevens appears before him, in a dated dress.

HANK

What can I do for you, ma'am?

MARGARET STEVENS

You can tell the Judge Hope
Stevens' mother Margaret said
"thank you."

Hank stands, uncertain of the message, how to proceed.

MARGARET STEVENS

I hated your father. I blamed him
for the death of my child almost
as much as I blamed Mark
Blackwell. Every year I'd send
him a birthday card, a picture of
Hope inside. I'll grant you it
was cruel but I wanted him to
remember her face.

HANK

He did.

MARGARET STEVENS

Your mother came to my house just before Hope's last birthday. She asked that I stop sending the cards. Said she had three boys and couldn't imagine my pain. That the Judge wasn't feeling well. I told her to go to hell.

HANK

Bet that went over well.

MARGARET STEVENS

She said I had three choices; I could stop sending the cards or two, she'd be happy to roll the card up every year, drive it back over, and twist it up my ass.

Margaret laughs, Hank likes her instantly. They sit.

MARGARET STEVENS

After Hope was gone, I'd hear the talk; her jeans were too tight, lipstick too red. Isn't it a shame, but what did she expect? Why didn't her mother do more?

(beat)

Easy to judge isn't it? When you don't have the responsibility of living with it? Fun even.

(emotional)

When the prison sent me the letter that he was being released, I was terrified. I'd have to relive that day every time I saw him. And I did. At the market, pumping gas, laughing with his brother. I'd see Hope, calling to me for help. Do you think those were her last thoughts, Mr. Palmer, where's my mom? I never came.

(Hank at a loss)

I was born here, my child's buried here, I can't just up and move. I crawled in bed. I was trapped.

(beat)

When I heard he was dead... I cried I was so relieved. I caused your father pain for so many years and yet he saved my life.

(she stands)

Your mother and I became close.

(MORE)

MARGARET STEVENS (CONT'D)

She was a wonderful woman. Good
luck Mr. Palmer.

Hank rises, watches her start away--

HANK

Mrs. Stevens -- my mom. What was
the third choice?

MARGARET STEVENS

(smiles)

That she'd call her son the
lawyer. That her boy was razor-
sharp. And that he'd scorch the
Earth if his father needed him.

Hank soaks that in.

INT. COURTROOM - MORNING

Box fans move air. The Judge sworn in. Hank looks at
his brothers, all their hope pinned to him.

The Judge sits. Hank braces.

HANK

You've... Judge Palmer, you've
been on the bench how long?

THE JUDGE

Forty-two years.

HANK

Sir, how many violent crimes have
you ruled on in that time?

DICKHAM

Objection, the defendant's history
as a judge is not relevant.

HANK

Your honor, the state has
introduced evidence that suggests
a motive for the alleged crime
related to the Judge's duties.
I'm entitled to rebut that
laughable presumption.

JUDGE SULLIVAN

Overruled.

THE JUDGE

Not something I keep track of.

HANK

Would it surprise you to learn you've presided over seventeen murder trials?

THE JUDGE

It would not.

C.P. hands stats to Hank. Hank reads--

HANK

Seventeen murder trials. Four hundred thirty-four assaults, fifteen rapes. Signed five-thousand twenty-five marriage licences, two-thousand six divorce decrees, nineteen hundred birth certificates and one-thousand seventy-five death certificates. Twelve-thousand nine-hundred forty-two civil cases.

(pause for emphasis)

Run over any of those defendants?

DICKHAM

Objection.

JUDGE SULLIVAN

Rein it in, Mr. Palmer.

HANK

You just lost your wife?

THE JUDGE

Yes.

HANK

How long were you married?

THE JUDGE

Fifty years.

HANK

How did she die?

THE JUDGE

She spent the morning in the garden. Kneeling. She fussed over her hydrangeas.

(MORE)

THE JUDGE (CONT'D)

A blood clot formed in her left leg, went to her heart.

HANK

The day of the accident. What did you do that morning?

THE JUDGE

I buried your mo-- My wife.

HANK

Hard day. How did you feel?

THE JUDGE

Tired.

HANK

Tired, dark, raining. Do you remember hitting the victim?

THE JUDGE

I do not.

HANK

Sir, in your experience of forty-two years, why don't defendants testify on their own behalf?

THE JUDGE

They're guilty.

INT. COURTROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The Judge still on the stand. Dickham on the attack.

DICKHAM

Fair to say you disliked Mark Blackwell?

THE JUDGE

Yes.

DICKHAM

Wished him ill?

THE JUDGE

Yes.

DICKHAM

Dead?

THE JUDGE

I did.

The honesty stays Dickham, he glances at Hank.

DICKHAM

Deputy Hanson testified that you told him only you were allowed to drive that car. Not even your late wife.

THE JUDGE

It's my car.

DICKHAM

So a man's blood, a man that you hate, was found on a car that only you drive, and yet you don't remember how it got there?

THE JUDGE

No.

DICKHAM

A six foot one inch, two-hundred twenty pound man on a steel bicycle and you're in the dark?

THE JUDGE

Correct.

DICKHAM

So on arguably one of the worst days of your life, you enter the Minit Mart and see a man you hate... And minutes later you've altered your route and both you and that man are on the same road, same time, only you're in a car with his blood on it and he's in a ravine; kidneys ruptured, back broken. And you don't remember hitting him?

THE JUDGE

I do not.

DICKHAM

You're telling this court under oath, which I know you understand more than most, that a man who killed somebody on your watch, a man you released, who drowned, a sixteen year old girl, a man you hated, on the worst day of your life and you have the perfect opportunity to balance the scales of justice and your testimony is that you didn't seize the chance and kill him?

THE JUDGE

(soft)

No.

Dickham heads toward his seat, wound inflicted.

DICKHAM

No more quest--

THE JUDGE

That's not my testimony.

Dickham hesitates. Hank sees it, wills his dad to stop.

DICKHAM

I'm sorry? How have I mis-characterized your testimony?

THE JUDGE

My testimony is that I don't remember hitting him.

Dickham pieces it together. Hank holds his breath.

DICKHAM

Mr. Palmer. Judge Palmer...

(beat; gentle)

Do you think you killed him *intentionally*?

Hank and the Judge lock eyes... Jesus Christ no--

THE JUDGE

Yes.

Bedlam. Hank sinks, the crowd all white noise.

C.P

Objection! Calls for speculation!

DICKHAM

No further questions, your honor.

Judge Sullivan gavels the crowd into submission, silence.

HANK

Redirect, Judge.

(rises)

So. You think you did it?

THE JUDGE

Correct.

HANK

But not because you remember hitting him?

THE JUDGE

That's right.

HANK

Your opinion is you hit him on purpose?

THE JUDGE

Yes.

HANK

You're a lawyer, you know your opinion doesn't matter.

THE JUDGE

I've been doing this longer than--

HANK

Possible you think your intent was to hit him but it wasn't?

THE JUDGE

Of course it's possible, but--

HANK

Isn't that why we're here?

The Judge starts to respond, Hank drowns him out--

HANK

Why is it you can't remember the accident?

THE JUDGE

My wife just--

HANK

Undergoing any medical treatment?

DICKHAM

Objection, irrelevant.

The Judge realizes Hank's angle, fidgets.

HANK

State of mind, your honor.

JUDGE SULLIVAN

Overruled.

THE JUDGE

Chemotherapy.

Rumble through the crowd, dies quickly.

HANK

How long?

THE JUDGE

Six months.

HANK

Chemo, that means cancer.
Prognosis?

THE JUDGE

It's advanced.

HANK

Why can't you recall the accident?

THE JUDGE

Asked and answered.

HANK

You're not presiding here, you're
on trial. Did your doctor caution
you against potential side effects
of chemotherapy?

THE JUDGE

He did.

HANK

What are they?

THE JUDGE

Fatigue, nausea, weight loss, loss
of appetite--

HANK

Delusions? Fits of anger,
depression? Memory loss?

THE JUDGE

Yes. But I don't--

HANK

Is that why you can't remember?

THE JUDGE

(to Judge Sullivan)

How many times do you intend to let him ask me the same question?

JUDGE SULLIVAN

He's *your* lawyer, Judge.

(pointed)

And it's not the same question.

HANK

Focus. What would happen to all the trials you've presided over in the last six months if it were determined your mental capacity was compromised? Diminished?

The Judge glares at Hank, betrayed.

HANK

They'd be declared mistrials would they not? Have to be retried?

THE JUDGE

Potentially.

HANK

A stain on your reputation. You'd do anything to avoid that would you not?

THE JUDGE

No.

HANK

Why don't you remember seeing Blackwell that night?

THE JUDGE

(flustered)

I remember him, I just don't recall hitting that sonofabitch--

HANK

What do you remember?

THE JUDGE

I remember he opened his
disgusting mouth.

HANK

What could he possibly have said?

The Judge looks at Hank, hates him.

FLASH TO:

INT. MINIT MART - NIGHT

The Judge watches Blackwell pull beer from the cooler.

BLACKWELL

Your wife isn't far from Hope.

(displays his beer)

I won't have to walk far to piss
on both graves.

The Judge shaken. The egg carton tips, two eggs fall...

RETURN TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Quiet. Dale wipes tears from his eyes. Dickham watches,
something like regret slides over him. Hank pushes.

HANK

Isn't it true you can't remember
the accident because of the
effects of chemotherapy?

THE JUDGE

No.

HANK

And that your vanity won't
allow you to admit it?

HANK

Because you imagine yourself the
U.S Grant of Carlinville. An
overrated general and a worse
president.

THE JUDGE

I won't be baited--

HANK

A drunk! Tecumseh Sherman,
there's your hero!

(MORE)

HANK (CONT'D)

Uncle Billy off his leash and on a bender! Below the grit line with a Bible and a blow torch!

(the Judge scoffs)

You've done this for forty-two years, it can't be the first time someone's insulted you!

(smirks)

Blackwell didn't steal from you. You allowed him to take it. You and I exist because guilty people do. We sort trash, it's the job. There's no legacy here, you're a janitor in a long black robe.

The Judge's breath turns ragged, eyes flecked with hate.

HANK

Why did you go easy on Blackwell the first time? Why do you of all people, of all the judges in Indiana, the one with the tightest sphincter, give him only a month? He shot up her room, that's six months easy! What were you thinking? You failed that girl! After six months, maybe he cools down, maybe he doesn't kill Hope Stev--

THE JUDGE

(breaks)

I looked at him and saw you!

Last thing Hank expected to hear.

THE JUDGE

Same willful disobedience. Same recklessness. I looked at him and saw my middle son. My little boy.

(voice cracks)

I watched him cry right there. I wanted to put my arms around him, tell him it didn't have to be like this. I wanted someone to help him like I'd want someone to help my boy if he lost his way. It was my chance to be that someone.

All the heat leaves Blackwell's Mom. Jurors' eyes shine.

THE JUDGE

(whisper)

I'd like to go home now.

Hank fights tears as he crosses the court, grabs Bailiff by the sleeve, leads him back to the stand.

HANK

This man's been your bailiff for twenty-two years. What is his name?

The Judge looks at Gus the Bailiff, can't pull it.

HANK

No further questions, your honor.

EXT. COUNTRY LAKE - DAY (SAME DAY)

Hank sits on the bank, absorbs the lake view. A car door shuts, Sam approaches, settles next to him. Silence between them. Blackbirds sway on cattails, sing.

SAM

I remember what we first did here.

(beat)

You do not taste like cinnamon.

Hank can't contain a grin.

SAM

You okay?

HANK

Depends on the verdict.

(has to ask)

Who's Carla's father, Sam?

SAM

This again. She doesn't know, she doesn't care. She's her own person and I love that about her. Why is it so important to you?

HANK

By my math, she was born about nine months after I split. Which puts me in the running... or you cheated on me. Am I on the right track so far?

SAM

Close enough, counselor.

HANK

Okay. This is going to get ugly.
Here it is. I met Carla at the
Flying Deer. Tavern. I was there
with Dale and Glen. And we, uh --

SAM

He's her father.

HANK

He who's her father?

SAM

Glen doesn't know.

HANK

(stunned)
My brother, Glen?

SAM

It was the one time!

HANK

Glen?

SAM

You left!

HANK

I went to a Metallica concert!

SAM

And never came back! He was
broken, sweet, almost normal! I
needed a little normal!

Hank speechless, angry, relieved.

HANK

Normal? That makes me what--

SAM

A more superior prick never shit
between two shoes! I loved you
then, I love you now. I love how
you're simultaneously the most
selfish and generous person I
know. I love how you hate a bully
while you're being one. I love
that you know every word to
Fleetwood Mac's Rumors and think
you're a good singer and you're
not, you're awful.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

But your constant second guessing of others, the crystal ball bullshit, that, that, that hyper-verbal vocabulary vomit thing you do. I disappeared around you, Hank.

Silence. Sam anxious, distance threatens to grow.

HANK

Say it again.

SAM

All of it?

Hank's mobile rings, he suddenly sobers.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY (LATER)

The Jurors file in. The Judge sits motionless between Hank, C.P. Bailiff hands Judge Sullivan the decision.

JUDGE SULLIVAN

Madame Forewoman, have you reached a decision?

FOREWOMAN

We have your honor.

JUDGE SULLIVAN

In the matter of the state of Indiana versus Joseph Palmer, on the charge of murder in the second degree, how do you find?

FOREWOMAN

We find the defendant not guilty.

Applause, shouts of encouragement race through the crowd. C.P celebrates, Hank cautious, the Judge expressionless.

JUDGE SULLIVAN

And on the lesser charge of voluntary manslaughter?

FOREWOMAN

We find the defendant guilty.

Shouts of outrage, disbelief. Dale, the Teens look to Glen for answers, Amy cries. Blackwell's mom sobs.

JUDGE SULLIVAN

And do you have a recommendation
for sentencing?

FOREWOMAN

We do your honor; we recommend the
minimum sentence of four years.

Hank, the Judge sit, stone-faced.

INT. COURTHOUSE-SPARE OFFICE - DAY (LATER)

Hank waits his turn, watches the Judge hug a tearful
Glen, Dale. Dale threatens to come unglued.

DALE

Well, what's gonna happen now?
Are they just gonna take you--

THE JUDGE

(grabs him; stern)

Listen to me, son. Listen.
You're a strong man not a boy.

(whispers)

I need you to look after your
brother for me. Can you do that?

Dale nods. The door opens, Sheriff White steps in.

SHERIFF WHITE

Time to go Judge.

The Judge squares up, starts for the door. Hank scoots
forward. He knows this is the last time he'll see a free
Judge, his father will die in prison.

The Judge eyes Hank with a swirl of disappointment,
betrayal. Then, nothing. The Judge just leaves. Hank
frozen, overcome with emotion.

EXT. COOK COUNTY COURTHOUSE-STEPS - DAY

Kattan steps to a mic. Flanked by a dozen victims,
family members, he calms a throng of REPORTERS, cameras.

KATTAN

Please... We are extremely pleased
with the guilty verdict. But the
victory doesn't belong to me, it
belongs to the victims and their
families. Questions?

The Reporters shout, Kattan smiles.

INT. COOK COUNTY COURTHOUSE-MEN'S BATHROOM - DAY

Empty save for a suit at a urinal, back to us. Urine strikes porcelain, he exhales. Hums. Hank.

The door creaks open. Kattan pokes his head in, enters.

HANK

You're learning.

KATTAN

Should I expect an appeal?

Hank finishes, washes up, no emotion.

HANK

Ninety percent of the country believe in ghosts, less than a third in evolution. Forty percent can't locate South America on a map even after you point out North America for them. Thirty-five percent can correctly identify Homer Simpson and the fictional town in which he resides but less than one percent knows the name Thurgood Marshall.

(heads for the sink)

But, when you put twelve Americans together on a jury and ask for justice... something just South of brilliance happens. They almost always get it right.

KATTAN

Six weeks we prepped Stipe's mistress for the Palmer cross. She reeked of Chanel and flop sweat and you went easy on her. Might cost you your job.

HANK

Well, when you're on a streak... you stick with it.

EXT. HANK'S HOUSE - DAY

Beautiful blue blooms of well-hydrated hydrangeas.

EXT. HANK'S GARAGE - DAY

The overhead door rises. Hank's over-stuffed boxes gone.

INT. HANK'S HOME-LAUREN'S ROOM - DAY

Hank lies on the floor, ratchets a nut tight on a new race car bed.

LISA (O.S.)

Hank?

Lisa enters, takes in the unexpected scene, the bed.

LISA

What are you doing?

HANK

When you're in Indy for the 500?
Avoid the infield. Trust me.

He stops working, the answer inadequate. Sits up.

HANK

You are a wonderful mother. It's
best -- for Lauren anyway -- if
she's with you.

She sits on the bed, relieved, overcome. He joins her.

HANK

I can't not share some of the
blame for what happened to us.
(beat; hard)
In a sixty-forty, seventy-thirty
double-negative kind of way.

LISA

(laughs; wipes tears)
Can't we just start over? Forget
it happened?

HANK

Increasingly freaky make-up sex
for a month? Hmm.
(smiles softly)
A better man would say yes. I'm
not that man. I'd remember and
take it out on you. I know me.

He kisses her, long, bittersweet. And it's over. His
mobile rings, he checks I.D., fear rising.

HANK
 (into phone)
 Hank Palmer, what's wrong?

EXT. INDIANA STATE PRISON - DAY (AUTUMN)

Trees hold fall colors. Guard towers, concertina wire.

INT. INDIANA STATE PRISON-SECURITY POST - DAY

Keys, money clip, phone in a plastic basket. Hank is wanded by a PRISON GUARD.

PRISON ADMIN (PRE-LAP V.O)
 Sign here, here and here to take
 possession.

INT. INDIANA STATE PRISON-RECEIVING ROOM - DAY

Hank signs the clipboard forms on his lap. A PRISON ADMIN next to him, points to the signature lines.

He stares at a signature: *Dwight Dickham*. The words: *Petition for Compassionate Release*. An inner door opens, an ORDERLY assists a frail Judge.

Father and son make eye contact. Something's different.

EXT. COUNTRY LAKE - DAY (AUTUMN)

Two bobbers on the lake. Hank and the Judge perch in lawn chairs, fish. A cooler between them.

HANK
 You warm enough?
 (the Judge nods)
 Too warm?

THE JUDGE
 Knock it off.

HANK
 Glen and Dale stopped for bait.

Hank pulls two Bit 'O Honey bars from a pocket. The Judge's eyes light up as he takes his, unwraps it.

HANK
 Remember bringing these home?

THE JUDGE

You little gremlins inhaled 'em.

HANK

Till Dale jerked a filling out;
ruined it for everybody.

THE JUDGE

Your mother cursed me out for it.
Fuckin' Dale.

Both laugh. The Judge rolls into a cough, controls it.

THE JUDGE

Remember what you'd say when you
thought I had one on me?

HANK

Where's my Bit 'O Honey,
old man?

THE JUDGE

Where's my Bit 'O Honey,
old man?

Hank touched, surprised. They chew in silence.

THE JUDGE

You are.

HANK

What?

THE JUDGE

The question you asked me.
Before. You picked the fella you
work for. I choose you.

Hank speechless, the biggest compliment of his life. He fumbles for his Blackberry, keys an app.

HANK

I brought something.

From the phone the unmistakable voice of the late *Paul Harvey*. The Judge smiles, listens, reminisces.

THE JUDGE

Y'know... Glen could have really
been something.

HANK

(acceptance)
No doubt about it.

Harvey talks, Hank stands, walks both poles to the lake's edge, casts twice. He turns and his face empties. The Judge slumps, eyes half open, candy bar on the ground.

Hank sits next to his father, listens to *Harvey's* signature wrap. Over. A breeze through dry leaves.

HANK

It was my idea. I told Glen better me than him, I was used to your disappointment. I just didn't think it'd last so long.

(difficult)

Glen was driving that night, dad, not me. He rolled the car.

He composes himself, picks up his Blackberry, dials.

HANK

(into phone)

Glen, hey, scratch the bait. The good news is we're done fishing...

INT. HANK'S RENTED MONTE CARLO (MOVING) - DAY

Sunglasses on, Hank drives, Lauren shotgun. Funeral procession; following a hearse through Carlinville.

LAUREN

I'm sad. Are you sad?

HANK

We'll be all right, sweetheart. I'm just glad your grandfather got to know you.

She turns in her seat, waves at the car behind them.

LAUREN

Uncle Glen's right behind us.

(amazed)

Daddy, look at all the cars.

(turns back; points)

Why are they pulling over?

Oncoming cars, trucks pull to the side, stop. Hank struggles to speak, moved by the dated show of respect.

HANK

It's what you do in a small town.

EXT. CARLINVILLE - DAY

Headlights on, vehicles snake as far as the eye can see.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT - DAY

Packed. Noisy. Row after row of crowded tables, people eating, telling stories.

Hank leans against a wall. His POV: Lauren howls, chases her cousins... Glen, Amy, Dale, C.P. eat comfort food.

Sam sidles up, leans, joins him in people-watching.

SAM

Sorry about the Judge.

He nods. She slides closer. He ignores her, the slide.

HANK

Glen, huh?

SAM

Not my proudest moment. No.

HANK

And? How was he?

SAM

Really? Absolutely no comparison.

(beat)

He was much better than you.

(both laugh)

Are we going to get over this?

HANK

We? There a "we" now?

SAM

Really? Not a smidge of a "we" in there somewhere?

(Hank smiles)

I'm closing the diner early tonight. Should you show up around nine-ish, I might save a slice of pie for you.

HANK

Still love me, huh? How sad is that?

She straightens, their eyes hold, tender. She darts an index finger into his mouth, sideswipes. POP!

She turns, saunters past an approaching Sheriff White.

SHERIFF WHITE

Got us a real shit omelette over
to the courthouse. Mistrials.
Motions, legal briefs. Christ.

(huffs)

Not a judge in five hundred miles
would consider walking into this.
I'm wondering if we might not
benefit from another Palmer in
that chair?

Hank laughs, ludicrous. He pushes off the wall, gives the Sheriff a shoulder slap, walks.

EXT. CARLINVILLE STREET - DAY

Hank strolls, streets less busy than usual. Memories. A passing car double-beeps at him. He waves.

DRIVER (O.S.)

Palmer, you asshole!

Hank smiles, doesn't slow.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Quiet. Empty. Hank moves through the gallery, runs a hand along hundred year old woodwork. He steps up to the bench, looks over the same grand space his father commanded for over forty years.

He gently spins the large worn leather chair. It turns in a slow circle, stops, seat facing him.

FADE OUT: