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The Whole Truth

By Nicholas Kazan

1

When the court
officer smiled at me
on the morning of trial,
I knew I was fucked.
They weren't taking
bets on this one.
Mike had killed his father,
Boone Lassiter,
left his handprint on the knife,
confessed.

Half my cases had
evidence this bad.
I just pled them out,
got manslaughter and moved on,
but this was Mike, and I'd
known him all his life.
He was going to college
and probably law school,
and I doubted his mother
could survive him
going to the penitentiary.
But I knew Boone, I had that,
and I knew enough about
the Lassiter household
to know that Mike had a defense,
if he would just talk to me.

- Jim.

- Morning.

Flyin' solo on this one?
Section 34 of the
judicial district court
of the state of Louisiana
in and for the parish
of St. Bernard
is now in session.
The honorable judge
Robichaux is presiding.
Order and silence are commanded.
God save the state of
Louisiana and this court.
All rise
for the honorable
Edouard Robichaux.

Bring 'em in.
Good morning, jury.
Please be seated.
The court
will come to order
in the matter of the state of
Louisiana versus Michael Lassiter,
on the charge
of first-degree murder.
Jury, you should
know the defendant
is still a minor...
Six weeks shy
of his 17th birthday.
But due to the seriousness
of the charges,
the case was transferred
to this court,
where he is being
tried as an adult.
Counselors.
Gentlemen, you both have
toiled in my courtroom before,
so you know how I
appreciate a swift trial.
Yes, sir.
Good morning.
Thank you for your service.
The case before you today
is a simple one,
a simple case of patricide.
Now, that's the killing
of one's father.
The defendant is the young
man that you see over there,
Mike Lassiter.
He's a senior at Newman.
He's a good student,
co-captain of
the debate team.
This past February, however,
on a Tuesday afternoon,
Mike took a knife,
and he stabbed his

father, Boone Lassiter,
right here.

Not by accident,
not in
self-defense.

He did it out of anger.
With premeditation
and malicious intent,
he murdered his father.
We'll prove this beyond
a reasonable doubt.

Now, you may hear,
from the other side,
that the victim, Mike's dad,
wasn't such a good guy,
that he was tough on his son,
that he bullied him.

But Boone Lassiter
isn't on trial here
for father of the year.

He may not have
been the best dad,
but the evidence will show
he wasn't the worst.

You want me to put you down?
Plenty of people grow up
without the best dads.

- There!

- Aah!

It doesn't give anyone
the right to murder.

Aah!

Therefore, at the
conclusion of this case,
I'll ask you
to return a verdict of guilty
of murder in the first degree.

- Thank you.

- If you don't talk to me,
I have to waive my opening.

Counselor?

Your honor,
the defense reserves its right
to an opening statement

until after the prosecution
presents its case.

Well, we are speeding along.

Your first witness ready?

Can you see if Angela

Morley's out there?

Do you swear to tell
the truth, the whole truth,
and nothing but the truth,
so help you god?

I do.

Your name, please.

Angela Morley.

- And your occupation?

- Flight attendant for deluxe charter.

- And deluxe is?

- A private airline.

People buy timeshares and we
fly them all over the world.

- Affluent people?

- Yes, very.

The victim, the deceased,
Mr. Boone Lassiter,
he was one of these people.

Yes.

And were you always
on his flights?

Most of them.

He'd request me.

And when did he
last fly with you?

The last week of January,
to la and back
with his son Mike,
and then round trip to Dallas.

And what was the
purpose of these trips,
if you remember?

The second, Dallas,
was business.

The first was to
take Mike, his son,
to look at colleges...
UCLA and Stanford.

We were supposed to go up
to Oregon to see, I think,
Reed, but they decided
to come home instead.

Listen.

It's your call,
but Stanford is one of the
top schools in the country
and you got in early.

I mean, look, I'm
happy to go to Reed,
check it out, but...

It's weird.

Maybe we should just declare
victory and head home early, huh?

Surprise your mom?

And how

would you characterize
the relationship
between father and son,
between Boone and Mike?

The trip home got kind of tense.

Mike seemed like
a typical teenager,
sullen with a little attitude.

Listen, we're gonna skip
Portland and head back.

- Tell the guys for me, will you?

- Okay.

You think you're old enough to
handle a piece of ass like that?

You don't

know why Mike was sullen.

No.

Thank you.

Ms. Morley.

I've never been
on a private plane.

Help me out here.

The customer can bring
whoever he wants with him.

Yes.

Mr. Lassiter would
do that sometimes.

Of course.

- Men and women.

- Sure.

Other lawyers, mostly.

And on the trip to Los Angeles,
he brought his son.

Yes.

Yours is a service
industry, right?

Yes.

And it's competitive.

Very.

So you have to provide
good service.

Naturally.

Did you like servicing
Mr. Lassiter?

Pardon me?

I'm asking if
he was a good client.

Yes.

He was professional, but fun,
pleasant to be around.

Ms. Morley,
when Mr. Lassiter
brought a woman,
or women with him on the plane,
did you ever leave their
names off the manifest?

Objection, your honor.

Women on the manifest?

How is this relevant?

Your honor.

Do you have a proffer of
evidence on this, Mr. Ramsey?

- Your honor...

- Do you or do you not
have evidence for this court?

Not at this time.

You're fishing.

I'll allow it.

Now, step back.

You may answer the question.

It would be against the law

to omit passengers
from the manifest, so, no,
of course they never did that.
No further questions.
You picked up Mr.
Lassiter and his son
at the lakefront airport.
That's correct,

around 4:

And the next

morning, 7:

you drove
Mr. Lassiter again.
That's correct,
straight to the airport.
Was there anything unusual?
No, nothing at all.
When he
returned, two days later,
on the evening of the murder,
you again dropped
him at his home.
That's correct.
Did you
notice anything unusual?
No, nothing.
Anything or anyone
out of the ordinary?
No one.
Thank you.
Nothing further, your honor.
Did you ever pick up women for Mr.
Lassiter...
Objection, your honor.
Withdrawn.
Sit down,
Mr. Ramsey.
You're excused.
This is what losing looks like,
but it's the best I can do
until you start talking to me.
Boone fucked

everything that walked.
It didn't relate to the case,
but it made Boone look bad.
I figured Loretta knew and didn't
care as long as it helped Mike.
Mr. Ramsey,
I'm Janelle Brady.
You're too late.
No, I'm not.
I wasn't...
Just as we feared.
Juror number three.
Gave you the stink eye
after you crossed?
Yeah, I caught it.
Janelle Brady, Jack Legrand.
Janelle is
Walter Brady's daughter.
I asked him to sit second chair
for me, but he couldn't.
He recommended Janelle.
Her dad is also famous
for being late,
but never to court.
Are you kidding me?
Concerned women for America?
Don't even ask.
I was sitting in
the back the whole time.
You missed jury selection.
I know, I'm sorry.
I tried calling.
I'm on trial. I don't answer
my phone when I'm on trial.
Well...
We still got two blacks, two single
moms, and an unemployed white kid.
Shit.
That ain't no guarantee.
- Call you this afternoon.
- Keep on it.
You want a job or not?
Ramsey.
Five minutes.

Okay.

Legrand's your jury consultant?

Ran out of challenges,
and got stuck with
juror number three...

Heiress to oil money
with nothing to do
but worry about people
stealing from her.

She's the kind that thinks
the death penalty
isn't severe enough.

So besides being
Walter Brady's daughter,
tell me who you are.

I graduated Vanderbilt '07,
Columbia for law.

Won all my mock trials,
then came back home
to work at Morris and Duprey,
but the corporate grind wasn't
my thing, so I took a year off.

To do what?

Regroup.

In river oaks?

Thanks, dad.

They put you on meds?

No shame in it.

I spent 18 months on antidepressants.

You still on 'em?

A low dosage.

'Cause once

I introduce you in court,
you can't decide halfway through
that it's not your thing.

I'll be there.

Your dad says you've got a
world-class bullshit detector.

Who lied this morning?

On the stand, you mean?

They don't teach
this in law school.

Yes, all witnesses lie.

About what?

Keeping their jobs,
winning the case, money...
Most people skim... morality.
We all want to be good
little girls and boys.
Sex... just assume everyone's
screwing everyone else
unless proven otherwise.
And the big one,
avoiding humiliation.
You'd think folks would be scared
of prison or lethal injection.
Nope.
It's loss of face.
And this morning,
the flight attendant...
Angela Morley?
She seemed evasive
when you asked about
passenger manifests,
looked at her hands
after she answered.
I guess Lassiter
took women on his flights.
And she didn't want to lose her
next job admitting as much.
Next?
The limo driver...
Went out of his way to say he
drove straight to the airport.
So maybe they stopped
to pick up a woman?
And me?
What did I lie about?
You've been on a private plane?
And since we walked
in this room?
You've never taken an
antidepressant in your life.
Not unless bourbon counts.
As you heard,
my client isn't
speaking to anyone,
including me,

which means I have to defend him
without knowing all the facts,
which means I'm finding
out the facts on the fly.
So if your bullshit detector
goes off, you tell me.
Other than that,
you're window dressing.
A mixed-race woman at the table who
thinks your client is innocent.
That's the deal.
Your honor.
I wish to introduce my associate
Janelle Brady to the court.
Relation to Walter Brady?
Yes, your
honor, his daughter.
Fine lawyer.
I got a call at 4:42 P.M.
Domestic violence, possible 187.
And 187 is?
Homicide.
And this is late afternoon
on February 4th.
Yes, sir.
And you responded?
I was the closest car.
I didn't know whether
I should wait
for backup or go in,
but I was told the situation
was under control,
so I went in.
Please hurry.
It's my husband.
Who is that?
Michael, our son.
What did you do first?
I made sure the victim was dead.
He was.
Hello? Loretta?
I called our lawyer.
I'll go.
I should've done this

a long time ago.

What, if

anything, did Mike say?

"I should've done it

a long time ago."

Objection, your honor.

This is inconsistent

with the officer's

prior sworn statement.

Judge, I'm simply clarifying...

Officer Steed's

police report states...

"Should've done this

a long time ago,"

not "I should've."

Without a pronoun, my

client might have meant,

"someone should've done

this a long time ago,"

suggesting that

someone else did.

Continue.

Well, which was it?

Hang on a second.

Yes, I'm sure.

He said, "I should've done it

a long time ago.

I should've done this

a long time ago.

How long did it take

the other officers to arrive?

Only a few minutes.

I told the lawyer, mister, um...

Mr. Ramsey.

Yes, sir, I told him,

I need the boy to step

away from the body.

Mike.

He needs to step back.

Honey?

We need to leave the room now

so the police can do

their work, okay?

Ma'am, I'm gonna need you

both to stay nearby.
Thank you.
No further questions,
your honor.
Mr. Ramsey?
You're excused.
We're in recess until

9:

You see, Mike? You see how
it sounds in open court?
"I should've done this
a long time ago."
To a cop? Really?
Unless you start talking
to me, we're going down.
All rise.
Why won't he talk to you?
That's the problem with
people who refuse to speak.
They never say why.
You're cocky for a kid
going to prison for life.
- Did he say anything to you?
- Loretta Lassiter,
Janelle Brady.
- Hi.
- Hi.
Is he talking?
- Loretta...
- Ramsey, I'm terrified!
You can't let him go to prison.
Relax, Loretta.
It's the first day.
He's a boy.
The papers make him
look like some monster.
I know.
I know that.
The way it sounds in there...
It always sounds bad
in the beginning.
I want to see him.
Can I see him?

Yeah, if you can get down there
before they put him in the Van.
What a horrible position
for her to be in.
Yeah, mother of the
accused is never easy.
Loretta's, actually,
compared to some...
She's pretty calm.
- Where's your car?
- Oh, around the corner.
They sent you to c lot?
Room 254 at the Marina hotel.
Our war room.
You don't have an office?
Yeah.
People there who expect me
to return phone calls
and answer emails
and god knows what.
Everything we need
is in room 254.
Witness statements, police
reports, coroner's report.
Are you coming?
Got it all up here, I hope.

Tomorrow, 9:

I doubted miss
Ivy league corporate law
would come back when she saw
what she was getting into.
But just sitting
there beside Mike,
she would help him look
less like a spoiled rich kid
or a sociopath,
maybe even get him to talk.
Funny thing
was, I second-seated
my first murder trial
with Boone.
It was a case where a teenage
mother suffocated her own infant,

put him in a garbage bag,
and threw him in the bayou.
The pictures alone
convicted her.
But Boone kept saying,
"if you can stand her,
so can the jury."
He had me talk to her,
put my hand on hers.
Every day I told her
she looked pretty.
Those little things counted.
Please, tell us,
how did you know the deceased?
He was my neighbor
for the last 15 years.
Your next-door neighbor?
Yes.
And were you friends?
I liked Boone.
My wife found him entertaining.
Do you do that down thing?
The down thing?
Our son Alexander
was a classmate with Mike
at Newman,
so we took down the fence
between the yards
so that the boys
could play together.
How would you describe
the relationship
between Boone and Mike?
Very close.
Loretta was sort of
the odd woman out.
Mike wanted to be
a lawyer like his dad.
See the lawyer?
Dressed too fancy.
Jury's not gonna like him.
Mike was a very quick study.
He became kind of
a legal junkie.

He was a very, very bright kid.
When Mike was 12, he wanted
to go to forensic camp.
I'm sorry.
Forensic camp?
Well, it's like "CSI," you know?
You learn how to
break down a crime scene.
Anyway, when he got back...
Well, there was something
going on on our block.
Someone had poisoned
a neighbor's cat.
And Mike, I don't know how...
But he figured out who did it.
Yeah, got his picture
in the paper.
Now, this closeness,
the bond between father and son,
did that continue until
the death of the victim?
No, no.
Something happened.
I mean, I don't know,
it might've been, you know,
adolescent rebellion,
but it came out...
Well, I guess it was about eight
months before Boone died.
Well, I don't
want to give offense
to any of you candy-ass
liberals here,
well, maybe, if you get...
Well, look.
I'm not stupid, okay?
I'm gonna vote
for my own self-interest.
Of course.
Everyone should
vote their own interest.
That's how democracy's
supposed to work.
Is that so?

Well, sure.
I mean...
I was just agreeing with you.
I was agreeing with you.
You were?
"Of course."
You said
"of course."
As if I said something obvious.
Come on, Boone.
Maybe you're a
little drunk, huh?
I am drunk.
And tomorrow,
I'm gonna wake up
with a big hangover.
And you...
You're still gonna be stupid.
Now listen, nobody gives
a fuck what you think.
Don't you know that by now?
You went to typing school.
You should be like Trixie over
here, she takes care of herself.
She's smart. She's got a
degree in dental hygiene...
Stop it!
- So you spoke up.
- Yes.
- You tried to stop him.
- I did.
Then what happened?
Hey.
Boone.
Come on.
Let's just...
I got this. I got this, dude.
I'm okay.
First, come here.
No one spoke
to Boone that way.
No one.
Well, I couldn't...
I couldn't hear

what Boone said to him,
but I could see the
effect it had on Mike.
Look at me.
And after they'd
finished their conversation,
Boone walked over to me.
You got something to say?
It's none of your business.
You know...
You look at me like that
again and I'm gonna kick
your little ass back to that
shitty little house of yours.
There's nothing I'd enjoy more.
There's dessert if
anybody's still hungry.
So as you can imagine, that was
the end of our friendship.
I didn't want Alex
going over there.
I didn't want him to have anything
to do with that type of behavior.
Thank you. No further
questions, your honor.
Mr. Ramsey?
Nothing from me, your honor.
You may step down.
Want me to work harder?
Start talking.
So, what's
our defense here?
You mean are we screwed?
Don't know.
Unless Mike talks to me, all we've
got is "defense of others."
Like someone who shoots
first to prevent a murder?
Right.
I gotta tell you, it's
pretty brutal in there.
It's not all bad.
How do you mean?
How much do you know

about Muhammad Ali?

I know he didn't go
to law school.

Better than that.

In 1974, he took on
George foreman,
who was seven years younger,
and had knocked out
every man he'd fought.

Foreman was at his peak.

And Ali, round after round,
just stood there
getting pounded.

He wouldn't or
couldn't fight back.

No one knew which.

- You mean the rope-a-dope?

- Yeah.

And finally,
in the eighth round,
foreman got tired,
tired of punching,
exhausted himself.

Suddenly, Ali came to life.

In one round, foreman was on
the canvas like an old man.

What are you saying?

For the rest
of the day, we lose.

And in this kind of
situation, detective,
apparently a family dispute,
- is there a normal...

- The spouse.

Excuse me?

Anyone who's married, the
spouse is the first suspect.

But you moved off this
hypothesis pretty quickly.

Yeah.

Well, I first spoke
with the officer on the scene.

Anything unusual?

The kid said, "should've

done this a long time ago."
She told me what the boy said.
And that knife from the wall.
And I took a look at the knife.
And it was the print,
or the size of the palm print
that changed your focus.
Yes.
But to be safe, we took the boy and
his mother down for questioning.
- Where were you...
- And how did that go with Mike?
At the time of the incident?
You need to answer...
He's not talking at all.
First of all, I want to say...
And his mother?
Mother didn't
have anything to say,
on advice of counsel.
Thank you, detective.
No further.
You were the lead detective
on this case, is that right?
Yes, sir.
And you said that from the
start you didn't pursue
any suspects other
than the defendant.
That's correct.
Why was that?
You want me to answer that?
Yes.
Because...
In my professional opinion,
it was open and shut.
That boy did it.
No further questions,
your honor.
Mike was a fucking vault.
I decided to let him
think I'd given up,
let the evidence roll in,
invite it.

Hopefully, the jury would think
it was going too well
and start rooting
for the underdog
without even knowing it.

And this is from the New Orleans
crime lab and evidence division?

Yes, sir.

Sir, what was
the cause of death?

Knife entered the box...
Central area of the chest.

- Just one stab.

- Yes, sir.

It severed the aorta, resulting in a
sudden and massive loss of blood.

Victim lost consciousness
in a matter of seconds.

Died in under a minute.

Thank you.

So the victim had
no scratches on him,
no defensive marks,
no skin under his nails.

Which led me to
believe he knew his assailant
and was taken by surprise.

You were in the room at
the time of the murder?

No, sir.

Any hairs on the
victim's clothing?

From the defendant,
and his mother.

Plus some other people who had
entered the scene post mortem.

And the rest of the house,
the hall, bathroom, stairs?

Your staff did
a sweep of that, too?

Yes, and found no
material evidence.

Nothing? A stray hair?

A drop of blood?

Nothing at all?

Look at this.

The mom said she was
in the shower when it
happened, washing her hair,
but they found all these
hairs in the sink drain
and only this one in the shower.

So she mixed up
where she washed her hair.

Scott, that is the exact kind
of detail to confuse a jury.

Uh-huh.

No other evidence.

Sir, you're telling
me there was nothing at all
which might directly
or indirectly
point to a suspect
other than the defendant?

That's correct.

Which makes this a perfect case.

Is that a question?

No, sir.

No further questions.

You may be excused, Mr.

Doucette.

And you live
next door to the Lassiters?

Yes, sir.

Since you were how old?

Two.

And you and Mike were friends.

Mostly when we were kids.

But your families were friendly.

Uh-huh.

Alexander.

Uh, yes, I guess

we were all friends.

The defendant, Mike.

Your father testified
that he and his dad,
that their relationship
went downhill.

- Yes.

- And you saw that.

Yes, I did.

Now tell us, please,
what you saw.

To be honest,
I was kind of jealous.
They seemed so close.

- But that changed.

- That's right.

Why?

It had something do to with...

Mike wouldn't say,
but I could tell
it had something
to do with his mom.

Why do you think it had
something to do with her?

Was it something that he said?

Something she said?

No, she never said anything...

No!

Oh, ow! Come on.

You're hurting me.

Ow. Baby!

And did you
witness the backyard incident
between Mike and his father?

Yes.

Well, no, no.

I did not witness
what my dad called
"the backyard incident".

But it was after this that
the change came over Mike.

No, before.

At least six months.

For Mike to say that to his dad,
he must've stewed
about it for a while.

A blind man could see
he had a thing for Loretta.

I just tried to keep him
talking long enough

for the jury to catch on.
Alexander,
did you ever see Boone
being unpleasant to his wife?
Um, yes.
- Rude?
- Yes.
Abusive?
- Come here!
- No!
Come here.
Come here, god damn it.
No!
Maybe.
It's not your family.
You can never tell what
they consider normal.
Did you ever see him
behave brutally toward her?
Let me hear it!
- Come on.
- No, Boone!
Brutally?
I don't know.
Fine.
You never saw that.
But was there something
about their relationship,
their marriage,
that made you uncomfortable?
She was kind of...
She was fading away, day by day.
He was so mean to her.
It was like she didn't
want to live anymore.
No redirect, your honor.
Loretta. Loretta.
They're gonna call you tomorrow.
Are you ready?
You're sure I can't refuse?
You can, yeah, but you'll
go to jail for contempt.
I can't help you with that one.
A wife doesn't have to

testify against her husband,
but a mother does
against her child?
Like the bond is somehow
less or something?
Loretta, we've gone over this.
It's part of our strategy.
If they don't call you, I will,
and it's better if they do
so, we stick to
the strategy, yes?
Bad of you to smoke.
I know. Keeps me from
eating everything.
- Hey Mike.
- Oh, hey.
- How is he?
- He's okay, I guess.
He really wants to go to Reed,
but Boone keeps pushing
him toward Stanford
'cause it's more prestigious.
I can't really say anything
'cause I didn't even
go to college, so...
Hey!
How about some drinks over here?
Well, he's a smart kid.
He'll do fine wherever he is.
I just wish
I knew how to help him.
I just read something.
If someone says
vicious things to you,
it's the same
to your brain waves
reacting or something...
It's exactly the same
as being hit.
Hey, my father hit me
sometimes when he was drunk.
I'm all right.
Well, I hate myself
for not protecting Mike.

I mentioned divorce
once to Boone.
He said he'd kill me.
"Oh, I'd find you. With my
money, you could count on it."
- Loretta... - then he'd
laugh, like it's a joke.
Wasn't a joke.
Okay, the lies?
Putting aside the
weirdness with Alex?
What was up with detective
graves not pursuing other leads,
gathering forensic evidence?
He had a confession.
Didn't think he needed to.
Well, why didn't you go
after him on the stand?
Never humiliate a cop in front
of a jury unless you have to.
Besides, we're still
doing the rope-a-dope.
I don't know,
it all feels so one-sided.
Okay, I got two hours before I have
to prep Loretta for her testimony.
But first, I need to
eat some real food.
What landed you at river oaks?
Oh, that.
Um...
Kind of embarrassing.
A guy.
At the firm.
A partner.
He was married.
- An affair.
- Mm.
Well, it...
Sort of became an obsession.
Clinically, that is.
What? Did you stalk him?
Called him, texted him,
10 times a day or more.

Followed him, parked
outside his house.

His wife figured it out
and called the firm.

They fired you.

Yep.

River oaks seemed like the best
available option at that point.

So, you crazy?

Was.

Well, I gotta go prep
Loretta for testimony.

Walt had
neglected to tell me
the actual circumstances
of her commitment,
implied it was voluntary,
which was bullshit.

He was a good dad.

I do.

Please state your name
for the record.

Loretta Lassiter.

And you were married
to the victim.

- Yes.

- And you are the mother of the defendant.

That's correct.

Describe for me, please,
the afternoon of
your husband's murder.

Uh...

It was a normal afternoon.

It had rained earlier.

Mike was at soccer practice,
or so I thought.

So I worked out in our gym

from 3:

Were you
expecting your husband home?

Yes, but I
didn't know what time.

He always texted when he landed,

but I didn't hear it come in
when I was working out.
And where were you
when he did come home?
I was getting in the shower.
And then?
We exchanged a few words,
and then I took my shower.
A few words?
What were they,
Mrs. Lassiter?
I'd rather not say.
You're under oath, ma'am.
Mrs. Lassiter.
He said some...
Very vile things,
and I'd rather leave it at that.
What vile things did your
husband say, Mrs. Lassiter?
Mrs. Lassiter.
No.
No. He was my husband.
I'm sure you got the picture
from Mr. Weston's testimony.
My husband could be
exceptionally cruel.
You can cite me
for contempt if you like,
but I'm not gonna repeat
what he said.
Mr. Leblanc,
I'm willing to cite her.
How do you wish to proceed?
Let's see how it goes,
your honor.
All right,
Mrs. Lassiter,
after your husband said
these vile things to you,
then what happened?
Like I said, I, um...
I took my shower.
And...
When I came out...

Mike was in the doorway and...

Is he dead?

He asked if

his father was dead.

I checked, and he was.

And then Mike said...

What did Mike say, Mrs.

Lassiter?

No, ma'am.

You need to answer

that question aloud.

He said, "I did it."

He said...

I did it.

I did it.

Mrs. Lassiter,

these vile things that
your husband said to you,
did that happen often?

I'm sorry. What?

Did he verbally
abuse you frequently?

Yes, it was frequent.

And was Mike
ever a witness to it?

Your honor, who's on trial here?

Continue.

We all lived under
the same roof.

I'm sure he heard more
than I wish he had.

And was the abuse your
husband inflicted on you,
was it always only verbal?

How do you mean?

Did Mike only hear vile
things your husband said,
or did he also see and hear
your husband hit you?

Yes.

- Many times.

- Yes.

And when was the last time?

The day he died.

I'm sorry, judge.

This is absurd.

I just asked the witness
about that day in question
and she made no mention of it.

Now, this testimony
has clearly been arranged
and rehearsed by
defense counsel.

Clearly? Even the part
where the witness said
my client confessed to murder?

Do you really want to impugn
this testimony, Mr. Leblanc?

Okay, Mr. Ramsey,
but if there was abuse,
where's the evidence, sir?

A police report?

Anything, your honor?

I have marked exhibits a
and b for identification.

Photographs of injuries
to Mrs. Lassiter
on February 5th.

As a courtesy, I am providing
a copy to the prosecution.

- May I approach the witness?

- Approach.

Mrs. Lassiter,
do you recognize
these documents?

Yes, I do.

Do you recognize
the photographs?

Yes.

Were they taken the day
after your husband's death?

Yes, they were.

Do the photographs
fairly and accurately
depict the injuries inflicted
upon you by your husband

- prior to his death?

- Yes, they do.

For the record,
the defense's exhibit a and b,
I hereby admit into evidence.
Loretta would
have said anything
to get Mike acquitted,
but the idea was
to keep her on track,
get her to say things
that proved
Mike had witnessed Boone's abuse
and was defending her from it.
And she did it, in spades.
Those photos...
Why were you holding out on me?
I saw 'em for the first
time last night.
They're keeping us alive.
Now what?
I'm thinking of resting.
What?
Thanks. Shit.
No way am I putting
you up there.
Never put a witness on the stand
unless you know what
they're going to say.
You know that.
That's not happening.
This right? You're not
his lawyer anymore?
Give us one second, okay?
Mike, we have half a
chance of winning here.
Why would you
blow it now? Huh?
This was a fucking disaster.
I had no way of knowing
what Mike would say,
no way to prepare,
and he knew it.
Normally if a client
refused to speak to me,
I'd order a psychiatric

evaluation.

But Mike wasn't crazy.

He just didn't trust anyone,
including me.

It's not true, is it?

You're putting him on?

But that's crazy.

Ramsey, you promised me.

You think I don't know?

You think I like it?

And if we don't put him on,
he's gonna fire Ramsey.

Why are you talking?

This is between me
and my lawyer.

- Ramsey.

- Listen to me.

I can't keep him
from testifying.

It's his constitutional right,
and he knows that.

He knows that, okay?

The only time I'd
used "defense of others"
was a barroom brawl
where my client intervened
between two guys fighting
and shot one in the head.
I lost.

It's hard for
a jury to understand
how the intent to kill
can be formed
on behalf of another.

They always see it
as two against one.

Mr. Ramsey,
you declined your opening
statement at the start of trial.

You have another
opportunity now.

May I, your honor?

Your honor, my client insists
on taking the stand

against my wishes.

Since I have no idea
what he's going to say,
I have to waive
my opening again.

My sympathies.

Deputies.

Mr. Ramsey, a question?

Please state your
name for the record.

I'm Michael Lassiter.

Michael, is it true
you haven't spoken
since the day of
your father's death?

Yes.

Why is that?

I don't know.

You have no idea at all?

None.

But my father did teach me
that I have the right
to remain silent.

So, why are you speaking now?

To tell the truth
about who he was.

There's been
some testimony about
your father's treatment
of your mother.

Is that testimony accurate?

Yeah, I'm afraid so, yes.

You witnessed it?

Not all of it, obviously.

He was cruel to my mom
in ways that were horrifying.

And he'd call her stupid,
call her ugly.

What about physical abuse?

Did you see that?

No.

No, but I did...

I heard noises.

Your honor, noises...

Continue.

I heard things, and I saw them.

What I heard was, you know,

the sound of a hand

hitting flesh,

and then I'd hear

my mom cry out.

And the next day she'd

be wearing a turtleneck

even though it was

the middle of July,

or she wouldn't even come

out of her room at all.

The day your father died...

You got home early

because soccer

practice was canceled.

Yeah, that's correct.

Mom?

Came home, heard them

in their bedroom.

- When you...

- That's not why I did it.

Tell the jury why, Mike.

It was the trip.

Something happened on the trip?

What happened, Mike?

Michael?

I'm really just really stupid.

I thought it'd stopped.

What?

What had stopped?

There was a door.

There was a privacy

door on the plane,

and my dad pulled it.

We had privacy, if you

want to call it that.

He knew.

He knew once I

went off to college,

he wouldn't be able

to do it anymore.

Do what, Mike?

Rape me?
I'm sorry?
He wouldn't be able
to rape me anymore.
You know, I loved my dad once.
I loved him.
I would've done anything,
anything to win his approval.
When...
When did this start, Mike?
When I was 12.
It started when I was 12.
Where was the flight
attendant during all this?
I don't remember.
I don't know.
Mike, this...
This abuse,
did you ever tell
anyone about it?
No.
No, I was ashamed.
Mike, when you got home
on the day of the murder,
and you went into
your parents' bedroom,
what was your father doing?
I guess he was about to unpack.
So, there was no immediate
threat from him to you?
He told me to be ready.
On the plane, he said that
when we got back to the house,
that he'd do it again
before I went off to college.
Okay, but was he threatening you
with abuse at that moment?
He was always threatening me.
It was what he did.
It was who he was.
Michael, were you in
imminent danger right then?
Yes, at that very moment.
Yes, he was threatening me.

He was always threatening me.

- Yes or no, son?

- Yes.

Yes.

No further questions.

Leblanc is gonna
recall Angela Morley.

He's having deluxe reroute
her here tomorrow morning.

- Shit.

- Yeah.

But you got bigger problems.
You were hard on that flight
attendant first time out.

You lay into her
again like that?

- But you do got one option.

- What's that?

Let her do it.

That's true.

I felt bad for giving
the kid such a hard time.
If he'd told me about his
father's abuse before the trial,
I would've built
the whole case on it
and Leblanc would've
torn it apart.

So he held back.

It would come down
to Mike's word
against Angela Morley's,
which must've been
his plan all along.
So, you'd either be
there or with the passengers.

Yes.

And does your
alcove have a door?

Yes, there's a door I can
close for privacy on request.
Was it closed at all during
this flight?

No.

So you could see
Mike and Boone Lassiter
for the whole six hours?
Yes. Of course.
Miss Morley, did Boone Lassiter
sexually molest his son
at any point during that flight?
Certainly not.
Did he touch him
inappropriately?
Did he do anything worse?
No.
You would've noticed that.
I would've done
more than noticed,
I would've stopped him.
No, Mr. Lassiter never
did anything like that.
- Thank you.
- Ask about Ginsburg.
Your witness.
Miss Morley, how many
flights a week do you work?
It varies. Sometimes one
or two, sometimes a dozen.
That week in late January,
do you remember
how many you flew?
It was busy.
I remember that much.
So, you were flying a lot.
That must be tiring.
Do you have a question,
miss Brady?
Do you ever doze off
on a flight?
I pride myself on staying awake.
That's my job.
I carry Adderall and
Provigil just in case.
I have them right here.
Tell me, miss Morley,
who were the pilots
on that flight from la?

Captain green
and copilot Ginsburg.
Did you spend time
in the cockpit with them?
Maybe.
Maybe a minute or so.
Do you fly with them a lot,
green and Ginsburg?
Yes.
We're kind of a crew team.
So, if you stay
overnight somewhere,
the company puts y'all up
in the same hotel?
Yes.
Do you socialize
on these layovers?
How do you mean?
Are you friends with the pilots?
Sure. We're friendly.
Isn't it true you're in a personal
relationship with copilot Ginsburg?
Objection, your honor.
Where's defense counsel
headed with this?
Miss Brady, I don't follow
this line of questioning.
Judge, if she has a personal
relationship with copilot Ginsburg,
it may be worth calling him
to hear his recollections,
what was discussed,
what they talked about.
I'll allow it.
I don't know.
I don't know how much
time I was up there.
Thinking back on it,
that flight,
it could've been as much as...
10 minutes.
Only 10 minutes?
Or longer?
It could've been longer.

I'm not sure.
More than once
during the flight?
Possibly.
Thank you, miss Morley.
You're excused.
Here, give me that, sugar.
I'll run it down for you.
When'd you send her
to poker school?
- Wasn't so bad.
- No, it was not.
Did you see her spot that
wedding ring?
You wouldn't have spotted
that wedding ring, Richie.
I told you there's a reason
why we have women lawyers.
I'll catch y'all tomorrow.
What's the matter?
What if she's not lying?
Don't get carried away
with yourself.
You said everybody lies, right?
Doesn't everybody include Mike?
He testified.
That's our defense, okay?
I'm going to the hotel,
work on my closing.
I'll see you tomorrow.
Nice job.
Can I bum one of those?
Nice job in there.
Thanks.
That must've been
really hard to hear.
Did you have any idea
what Mike was gonna say?
Of course I didn't know.
I stayed up all night thinking,
"how could I not see it?"
Is it possible he's...
Not saying what really happened?
Why would he do that?

It was a terrible
situation you were in,
both of you.
No one would blame
either of you.
I think maybe
Mike wanted to protect you.
I did it.
I did it.
No, no, Mikey.
- Mom, listen to me.
- No, Mikey, honey.
Mom, listen to me, please.
- This is the only way.
- This is my mistake.
- Mom, I did it. Mom!
- I did it. No, Mikey, no!
Well, I don't know
what you think you know,
but your theory's wrong.
Wait.
Your job is to represent my son.
Did she phone you?
Ramsey, did Loretta call?
Yeah.
Did she tell you what I said?
Yeah.
She wants me to fire you.
I told her no way,
not after what you did in court.
It's just normal craziness
at the end of a trial.
Don't worry about it.
I accused her
of killing her husband,
did she mention that?
Yes, she did.
What if Mike
didn't stab his father
and our defense is a lie, too?
He wasn't molested.
Yeah.
Yeah?
Yeah.

That might be true.
I don't know, or care.
All I know is I have a chance
to get this boy acquitted.
It's like you're protecting her.
I have to work on
my closing argument now.
Did you know?
'Cause if you knew
and you're protecting her...
Wait, back up, okay?
I asked for your help in keeping
this boy out of prison.
Are you going to do
what you promised me,
represent our client, Mike?
He shouldn't even be on trial.
You don't know that
'cause you weren't there.
Who are you representing
here, Mike or Loretta?
Okay, now you're scaring me.
This is not about Loretta.
- This is about you.
- What?
Is Loretta a trigger for you?
Is this what got you fired
from your firm?
- What are you doing?
- Good luck, Ramsey.
Where are you going?
You're leaving?
Now, you promised me.
What about the jury?
What about Mike?
The impact on the jury
of seeing someone they trust
leave the defense table
cannot be measured.
You're a lawyer, Janelle!
I just hoped Walter Brady's
brilliant daughter
could get her mind around that.
At some point, every defense

lawyer has to choose
between his own need
to know the truth
and the best interests
of his client.

But I was more worried
about Janelle
than I needed to be.

All rise.

Sometimes things erupt.

It's called a trigger,
a trigger to violence.

Mike Lassiter was sulking
on the plane home,
and two days later, he erupted.
That is what happened here.

It wasn't abuse.

You heard the flight attendant.
Nothing happened on that plane,
and if nothing happened then,
how do we know
any of it happened?

Where's the evidence?

The defendant is supposed
to be a legal prodigy,
yet there's no evidence,
nothing.

No physical evidence
to support his defense.

There is nothing.

Michael Lassiter
acted with malice,
deliberate premeditation,
and an intent to kill.

Do your duty. Guilty.

Guilty of murder
in the first degree.

Thank you.

Yes, Michael

Lassiter killed his father.

That is not a fact in dispute.

All that remains

for you to decide is why.

You heard Michael say

that he would do anything,
anything to win the
approval of his father.

So why?

I asked Michael
if it was the abuse
inflicted on his mother
by his father,
and Michael said no.

No.

Then Michael told,
for the first time,
something he had never
uttered in his life.

That his father abused him...
violated him repeatedly.

And that when his father
had threatened him on the plane
to do this again
before he went to college,
something in Michael said no.

No more.

I ask you to do the
just and right thing.
Send this boy back
home with his mother.
Find the defendant not guilty...
and release him
from this nightmare.

I think it
hurt Boone's feelings
when I stayed in
criminal defense
instead of moving into
personal injury with him,
but he never said so,
claimed it was good
to have someone to call
if he ever got a DUI.
He bought me my first nice suit,
reminded me to shower every
day and get a haircut.
He knew where I came from.
Jury's in.

Michael.

Whatever happens here,
there's still things
we can do, okay?

What, like appeal?

Thanks a lot.

One question.

Did dad really hit you?

Of course he did, Mikey.

All rise.

Bring 'em in.

Jury, have you
reached a verdict?

We have.

Bailiff.

Thank you.

- Is it unanimous?

- It is.

- I did it.

- No, no, honey...

Mom,

listen to me, please.

- This is the only way.

- This is my mistake.

- I did it.

- Mom, I did it.

No, Mikey, no.

No, I won't let you!

Please hurry.

It's my husband.

Jury, what say you?

On the charge
of first degree murder,
we find the defendant...

- Not guilty.

Ladies and gentlemen,
this concludes the trial.

I'd like to thank you
for your service.

The jury is dismissed.

Meet me after court.

Come on,

let's go get your things.

Thank you.

Will Mike come out here?

I think he wants
to talk to me first.

Okay.

The jury believed Mike,
ignored the facts and the law,
did what they knew was right.

How does it feel?

What's this?

It's your watch.

It's on the rug.

You were there in their bedroom
before my dad came home.

Honey...

You were there,
and you killed him.

Just tell me
you killed my father.

Mike, you know
I'd never do that.

Never kill him
or never admit it?

I'm gonna tell
the da everything.

Tell him what, Mike?
That you saw a watch?

There's no evidence.
They can't prosecute
anyone else,
and they all pointed to you.

Graves, the coroner,
they swore under oath.

You swore under oath.

I didn't trash Boone's memory
and brand myself a killer
raped by his father...

I didn't do that to save you!

- Answer me!

- No!

You won't let me go to prison?

You're not going
to prison, Mike.

It's all over.

You're free.

Now what?
He was destroying her...
and you know it.
Even Alex knew.
Your mom's out there.
She's waiting for you.
Can I?
Thank you.
I'll see you.
Hey.
What are you doing here?
My wife is having an affair.
Boone.
Please.
Seriously?
So what do I do?
I don't know.
Divorce her, I guess.
Come on, Ramsey.
You know I can't do that.
You know Loretta.
She won't live without me.
"Oh, I'd find you. With my
money, you could count on it."
And then he'd laugh
like it was a joke.
Wasn't a joke.
He's here.
Touch the knife.
Put your hands on it,
for god's sake.
Mom?