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# Freeheld

By Ron Nyswaner

Hey, my boy said you could hook me up.  
I don't know you.  
Come on, bro, I could use  
an ounce if you got it.  
I don't know what you're  
talking about, man.  
- How about...  
- Yeah, no.  
But let's get the Ferris  
wheel in the shot. Come on.  
- Oh, yeah?  
- Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.  
How long you been dying your hair, Quesada?  
Come on.  
Put your arm around her.  
Come on. Smile, Hester. With teeth.  
What are you doing Saturday?  
- Now grab her tit.  
- Knock it off.  
Shit.  
- Relax.  
- Damn it.  
Dane can handle himself.  
Who are these two punks?  
Let's go.  
I don't want a 50. I need an ounce.  
That's too much. I don't carry that.  
- What's wrong with you?  
- I'm strung out.  
Strung out?  
You playing with me?  
'Cause you smell like a cop.  
No, man.  
Police. Don't move.  
Drop the gun, asshole. Stop moving.  
- You hear me?  
- Get off of me.  
- Laurel? You all right?  
- Yeah.  
Grab his gun.  
- Got it.  
- Okay.  
Hey! Listen up, buddy! Here's the deal!  
When a police officer

tells you to stop moving,  
you stop moving.  
Ocean County police.  
Get down on the ground! On the ground now!  
Get down! Get down now!  
Put your hands behind your head.  
- Dane.  
- Yeah?  
Hands behind your head!  
Oh, boy.  
Oh, boy.  
Yeah, shut up.  
Let's go.  
Cheers, partner. Good work.  
Cheers, Dane.  
Looks like every politician  
in the county is here tonight.  
They like cops when we make headlines.  
Yeah.  
Fan of yours?  
She's just after me  
for a ride on my Harley.  
Is there any female in the Ocean County PD  
who hasn't gotten a ride on your Harley?  
Just one.  
Hey, Dane.  
Good work.  
Thanks, Chief.  
Have you met Bryan Kelder?  
He was just elected Freeholder.  
- Congratulations.  
- Thank you.  
The Board of Freeholders is proud  
of our excellent police force.  
Well, this is my excellent  
partner, Laurel Hester.  
How do you do?  
Nice to meet you.  
My daughter here wants to be a detective.  
Good for you.  
It's a good job, but it's  
not what you see on TV.  
I know.  
It was good to meet you.

Good to meet you.  
That lowlife you busted.  
You think he might give us a lead  
on our double homicide in Brick?  
It's possible. He certainly ran  
his share of coke through Brick.  
Why don't you give us a crack at it?  
We'll tail him.  
It's your case.  
To Ocean County's finest.  
Get it, Stacie! Come on!  
Come on, Stace!  
- Nice serve.  
- Oh! Oh! Whoa!  
That's what I'm talking about.  
- Spike Drama!  
- Spike Drama!  
All right, you almost had  
it. It's okay. It's okay.  
- Yeah.  
- At least you're trying.  
I haven't played since high school.  
I know.  
All right, come on.  
Round two!  
Let's go. Right here.  
Who is the new girl? The one with the...  
- With the hair?  
- Yeah.  
She can't play for shit.  
That's your hole, okay? Make  
her eat it. Make her eat it.  
Come on! Pick it up, ladies! Come on, now!  
Here we go, guys. Get ready.  
Okay.  
Right here. We're going again.  
Yeah.  
Let's get it, Stacie. Come on. Right here.  
Go, go, go, go. Come on.  
Oh, shoot.  
Whoa! What kind of bullshit serve was that?  
- Come on, right here.  
- Good serve. Good serve.  
Here we go.

Point time, ladies. Point time.  
We suck this year.  
Second and 18, though.  
Over the middle pass is complete.  
Oh! There goes the princess.  
Hey, it's now or never.  
Shut up. Shut up.  
- Hey.  
- Hey.  
Hey, are you leaving?  
Oh, yeah. All kinds of work to do.  
It's a long drive home.  
Where's that?  
Ocean County, New Jersey.  
Damn.  
You drove all the way out  
here to play volleyball,  
and you don't even like it?  
Every now and then I think  
I should go out and...  
Try to meet someone?  
Yeah.  
And they don't have girls in Jersey?  
It's not that.  
It... people know me back home.  
It's hard to go out and have privacy.  
I should go.  
Okay.  
Can I have your number?  
I don't have any paper.  
Write it on my arm.  
I'm Stacie.  
I'll give you my cell.  
If I'm working, I probably won't answer.  
And if anyone asks where we met,  
please don't mention it.  
Laurel.  
You've a lot of rules, Laurel.  
Yeah. I've been told that.  
What? What? What?  
Three suspects at this time...  
This still gets you going?  
Spying on junkies?  
Come on. He's never gonna

lead us to the shooters.  
Maybe his girl will.  
Hello.  
It's Stacie from volleyball.  
Listen, I can't talk right now.  
Go right ahead. We're not  
doing anything important.  
Just your run-of-the-mill  
double homicide investigation.  
Will you shut up? I can't hear.  
Maybe I should get out of the car.  
Give you some privacy.  
When?  
Can I call you later?  
Okay. Bye.  
You got a date?  
Yeah. I do.  
Something serious?  
I'll let you know. I'll call you after.  
Here's a soda.  
- And the straw you asked for.  
- Thanks.  
Let me pay you for that.  
Oh, no.  
Okay. Thank you.  
You look great.  
You look great.  
You know I'm significantly older than you.  
Yeah.  
Do you dance?  
Not to this. I hate country music.  
I guess this was a bad idea.  
No. No, I'm sorry.  
That... that came out wrong. I, uh...  
You know, I don't date much.  
I don't know how to be smooth or whatever.  
You don't...  
you don't have to be smooth with me.  
But if you're really sorry  
and you want to make it up to me...  
Oh, come on. No. I'll  
make a fool of myself.  
No, you won't. Trust me. Trust me.  
Take my hand.

Put your other hand on my shoulder.  
Shuffle, shuffle, step, step.  
Shuffle, shuffle, step, step.  
Shuffle, shuffle, step, step.  
Shuffle, shuffle, step, step.  
I don't like going backwards.  
I'll guide you.  
You hate giving up control, don't you?  
Yeah, I hate it.  
We'll have to work on that.  
I need a break.  
You want a beer?  
I'll get you a beer.  
Sure. Yeah.  
Hey.  
What's the matter?  
It was just hot in there.  
I wanted to get some air.  
Well, that was weird. What, are you...  
Are you trying to ditch me?  
No. Of course not. No.  
Uh...  
Wanna go look at the water?  
Sure.  
I always, uh...  
I always feel better if  
I can look at the water.  
Day or night.  
That's why I live at the ocean.  
Just to be near it.  
Does this bother you?  
No.  
You want a drink?  
Oh, no, thanks.  
You don't drink?  
Uh, not much.  
My mother was an alcoholic.  
Was?  
She passed away.  
I really miss her.  
Sorry.  
My, um...  
my father just died.  
I'm sorry about that.

He was cool. Yeah.  
He taught me how to take apart an engine.  
It was so nice just working.  
Being...  
Why'd you stop?  
Suddenly felt stupid.  
You're not stupid, not at all.  
I just meant that's what  
it's supposed to be like.  
With another person?  
Trusting that person.  
It's so hard.  
Yeah.  
Sorry.  
I get a few beers in me  
and sound pretty ridiculous.  
I don't think so.  
Hey.  
What's going on here?  
We love us some dykes.  
We don't want any trouble, so...  
Who gives a fuck what you want?  
I want your money.  
Hey. Get out of here.  
- Take it easy.  
- Get out.  
Take it easy.  
- Go on.  
- Get out! Get out!  
Take it easy.  
Come on! Come on!  
You okay?  
What's going on?  
I'm a police officer.  
You're a cop?  
Detective. I should have told you.  
- You always carry a gun?  
- Most of the time.  
On a date?  
Sorry.  
Sorry.  
I think you should come home with me.  
Martha Stewart has a new worry.  
An assistant to her



stockbroker has pleaded guilty  
to a charge of keeping quiet  
about alleged insider trading  
in Stewart's enclosed...

Laurel?

Laurel, your phone's  
ringing. Do you want me to...

Do you want me to get it?

Hey.

Hester?

Oh, hi, Lyndy. I thought  
you were the office.

Can I call you back?

Okay.

Never answer my phone, okay?

That could have been my partner or my boss.

I'm sorry I yelled at  
you but it's important.

And I'm, uh...

I'm over it.

You want some...

You want some coffee? Or some toast?

What? You're a cop so you think you can  
yell at people? Is that...

I have to be careful.

In law enforcement,

women don't get important cases.

They don't get promoted.

A gay woman, forget it.

I have to drive all

the way to Pennsylvania.

It's like an hour.

I'm going home.

Okay.

Okay?

That's what you're gonna say? "Okay"?

I've got a lot of work to get  
through this afternoon, so...

Shit.

- Hey.

- Hey.

Remember how you said that

none of Jeeter's buddies

would help us with the double homicide?

Yeah.

Look. Christy Miller. Jeeter's girl.

So?

Same high school as Debbie Cherico.

Signed the yearbook,

"best friends forever."

Nice! Well, let's find

her and bring her in.

She works at that coffee shop in Beachwood.

You have been working on it.

All night long.

I'll make a call.

I guess I owe you \$10.

No, I think it's 20.

Hey.

What's up, Belkin?

Hey, Belkin! I want those files on my desk!

- You were at the...

- He finally shut up.

... club Saturday night, right?

Okay.

But we're good, right?

I mean I just made detective.

I can't risk anybody...

We're good, Belkin.

You don't have to worry.

Okay.

Hey.

- Hi.

- Hi.

Um...

I screwed up.

I had no right to talk

to you the way I did.

I ruined our date and I

really enjoyed being with you.

And I'm nervous.

Um...

maybe I am too old for you.

Will you stop saying that?

If anything you're too smart for me.

No way.

You're smart, funny,

and you're honest and...

basically I think you're amazing.  
You there?  
So you called to say I'm amazing?  
Yes.  
Can I see you again?  
Yeah.  
Yeah, you can.  
Great. Great.  
If you could have  
anything, what would it be?  
What's your dream?  
What do you mean? Like, be rich or famous?  
No. I mean your...  
your big dream. Dream for your life.  
My big dream is kind of small.  
Yeah?  
A woman I love. Loves me.  
A house. A dog.  
Mmm. Me too. House. Yard. Dog.  
Partner.  
- What kind of dog?  
- Mmm...  
I don't know. Maybe one  
of those little ones.  
You know, that you carry around with you.  
With long, white hair. What  
are they called? Maltese?  
Oh, shit.  
Shit, no. No. No!  
There is no way!  
There is no way I am gonna  
live with that little dog!  
I...  
- That's a deal breaker.  
- I'm kidding! I'm kidding!  
- That's a deal breaker.  
- I'm kidding. I'm kidding.  
That's a deal breaker.  
And the one-two swung on! Driven  
deep to right-center field!  
Going back is Crawford...  
- Yeah.  
- Yeah!  
I made you a baseball fan, huh?

Mm-hmm.

Detective Hester.

Christy Miller's manager just called.  
She's leaving town. It's now or never.  
I'll be there in half an hour.

Throw to home, you idiot!

You having a party?

Uh, my sister's over.

I'll see you.

I've gotta go.

It's Saturday.

Yeah. Something's up.

We're working the right lead.

Uh, you want to put money on it?

Give me a minute.

Christy?

Can I talk to you for a sec?

- What about?

- Your friend Debbie Cherico.

You're not in trouble. Okay?

I just want you to come down to the station  
and talk with me for, like, 30 minutes.

Christy?

Stop!

Come on!

Stop the car!

- Stop! Laurel!

- Damn it!

Get away, bitch!

You okay?

You hurt?

I'm fine. I'm okay.

Come on, Christy.

Let's stop playing games, right now. Okay?

You and Debbie were best friends.

You went to high school together.

You must have been by Tommy's place  
at some point or another.

Now Tommy was moving dope for these guys.

They were in and out of

his apartment all the time.

You expect me to believe you never saw him?

I told you, I don't know anything.

I don't believe you.

I don't believe you!  
Can I talk to Christy alone?  
Sure.  
Come on, Belkin. Let's let the ladies  
chat for a few minutes.  
I'm gonna turn this off.  
It's just us.  
What the hell is she doing?  
No one needs to hear.  
I know you're scared.  
Nothing's going to happen to you here.  
It's my job to protect you.  
Right.  
I know what it's like to be afraid.  
It's not a nice feeling.  
You don't know anything about me.  
You're 19, right?  
When I was, um...  
when I was a few years  
younger than you, like 16...  
there was something in  
my life that I was...  
I was really scared of and trying to hide.  
And after a while I  
couldn't take it anymore.  
And I...  
I went to my mother and I  
told her that I needed help.  
And I ended up in a  
psychiatric institution.  
I was so scared I made myself sick.  
I gave myself a nervous breakdown.  
And I thought I'd never survive it.  
But I did. I did survive it.  
And I've learned that being  
afraid and hiding things  
is a horrible way to live.  
I don't want that for you.  
I want you to help me find Debbie's killer  
so I can protect you from them.  
'Cause I don't want you to spend  
the rest of your life being afraid.  
Okay.  
Okay.

- Hi.

- Hi!

I hope my directions didn't confuse you.

Get ready. Here come the dykes.

The backyard is very private.

Just like you wanted.

And it's a sweet

neighborhood. All families.

Which one of you is Mrs. Hester?

I'm Detective Hester.

And you are a friend?

Yeah.

She's my friend.

Yeah, I'm her friend who

is also gonna live here.

I'll just wait outside.

What a bitch.

It needs a lot of work.

There's plenty of light.

We'll need more closet space, though.

The garage is attached!

And there's enough room for your car

and my truck and my dad's Harley.

You can't bring your dad's motorcycle.

- What?

- No. It's too dangerous.

I don't want to worry about

you every time you go out.

But I... I'll let you get a dog.

You'll let me? You'll let me?

You like it?

Yeah. A lot.

There's no way I can afford this mortgage.

Not even half.

Yeah. I'll take out the loan.

I mean I can do the renovation.

I can paint and drywall.

You can drywall?

Hell yeah.

That's sexy.

So do we have a house?

Yeah. We have a house.

You beat the shit out of that!

- Thanks, Mom.

- Of course.  
You two are a long way from home.  
Okay.  
I've got your three forms of ID.  
Proof of common assets and common domain.  
A shared bank account. A deed.  
Give me a second here.  
This domestic partnership thing is new.  
Take your time.  
When people get married, they don't have  
to go through this whole rigmarole.  
Well, that's it.  
Thanks.  
Happy Domestic Partnership Day.  
Thank you.  
I got something for you.  
Yeah?  
It looks like the beach.  
Thanks.  
I got something for you, too.  
- Yeah?  
- Yeah.  
It's a card from the police union.  
It's got your name on it.  
It says we're family.  
So, if you're stopped while you're driving,  
and let's face it, you do drive fast,  
just give this to the officer.  
You won't get a ticket.  
Family.  
I guess that makes it official, huh?  
Official, baby.  
Hey, how you doing?  
Can't complain!  
I have a certificate  
in computer diagnostics.  
And I can do engine work, and electrical.  
You're, like, four feet tall.  
How long's your fastest tire rotation?  
Eight minutes. My guys are good.  
Well, I can beat that.  
Derrick's our rotation champ.  
You can't beat him.  
Do you wanna bet?

This is a waste of time.

Go.

That tire weighs as  
much as you, sweetheart.

Are you sure you can handle it?

Done!

Wait, what?

No way!

Mm-hmm.

Seven minutes, 12 seconds.

That's gotta be a record.

So I got the job?

So she can change tires. So what?

We need a real mechanic in here, Jake.

Yeah, I can do my job. Thanks.

See you tomorrow morning at 8:00 A.M.

Better be good.

Congratulations on the job.

Thanks.

And I'm gonna make a contribution  
to the mortgage every month.

You don't have to do that.

Yeah, I do.

I kind of like the idea of  
you as a kept woman. It's sexy.

Kind of makes you feel  
like you're in charge, huh?

No. I know I'm not in  
charge of you, sweetie.

It's impossible.

That doesn't stop you from trying.

Oh, God.

What's the matter?

I think I pulled a muscle.

Yeah? How long have you had that?

A couple weeks.

- A couple weeks?

- Yeah.

Will you get it checked out?

Yeah.

- This week?

- Sure.

- Tomorrow?

- I will!



Don't look so worried. I pulled a muscle on the job. I'm a cop. That's what happens. I know. You're a superhero. Mmm...

Laurel, you wanna come in?

Hey.

Hey.

Can I, uh...

can I help you?

Yeah.

I dropped by to see Laurel. Laurel Hester. This is her house?

Is she here?

Yeah.

Is that... is that a rhody?

That's what the fellow at the nursery told me. You doing the landscaping?

- Hey.

- Hey!

I, uh...

dropped by to give you a housewarming present. I figured it was kind of overdue. Hey, thanks.

Did you meet Stacie?

Yeah.

He thinks I'm the... he thinks I'm the gardener.

No.

Stacie's my roommate.

Oh, great.

Yeah. It's great.

Well, I didn't mean to... I... Just wanted to wish you good luck with the house, and...

- Thanks.

- I'll... I'll see you Monday.

- I'll see you Monday.

- Thanks for stopping by.

Nice to meet you.

Yeah.

Yeah, roommates don't

sleep in the same bed.  
He's my partner.  
No. I'm your partner.  
That is the person you work with.  
And he's got a total crush on you.  
No, he doesn't.  
Yes, he does.  
Hey! Wait a minute!  
Yeah, sorry. It's a bad cop habit.  
Showing up unannounced.  
Stacie's not my roommate.  
She's my girlfriend.  
Why the hell didn't you tell me?  
Never came up.  
Never saw any reason to talk about it.  
Hmm...  
Remember when I found out I had a daughter?  
- Yeah.  
- Yeah.  
You know that wasn't my proudest moment.  
But I told you about it. You know why?  
Because you count on me. Right?  
- Yeah.  
- When things are happening  
and we get into a situation,  
people are reaching for their guns,  
you need to know what's going on with me.  
Am I up? Am I down? Am I distracted?  
In love. Whatever.  
Your life depends on it.  
And all these years  
you've been holding back  
this part of yourself because what?  
Because you didn't trust me enough  
- to say anything?  
- Oh, come on. Come on!  
- Thanks a lot!  
- I could have been out at work  
and gotten anywhere beyond the  
back office, filing reports?  
You don't get it. You know?  
You're straight. You're white.  
- You're male. This is not...  
- Don't give me that bullshit.

No. No. It is not bullshit.

Things are handed to  
you I have to fight for.

- That's the way it is.

- Oh, boo-hoo.

So you're the oppressed  
minority now? Is that it?

Yeah.

Well, are the other cops'  
wives gonna be there?

Yeah. Probably.

We, you know, all have to  
go. It's the chief's birthday.

Well, that kind of sucks, doesn't it?

Yeah. It does.

It does suck, but that's how it is, right?

You know that.

Look, I don't have to go.

I could stay home.

You want me to stay home, babe?

No.

I mean you want to make lieutenant, right?

First woman in Ocean County.

That's the plan.

- Go.

- Okay.

This is Laurel Hester.

Please leave a message.

Laurel, it's Dr. Tonner.

Please call me back as soon  
as you get this message.

Hello? It's Laurel Hester.

He wants her in for an MRI.

Um, hey, I'm waiting for

Laurel. It's been hours.

You're waiting for Laurel Hester?

Right.

You're her sister?

Um, partner.

Oh.

I was expecting a family member.

She's my partner. Or my wife, or whatever.

And I know that something's wrong.

Okay. Please calm down. I... I'm sorry.

The results of the bronchoscopy  
are very concerning.  
Laurel has three masses in her right lung.  
Masses?  
You mean cancer?  
It's not definitive until we get  
the results back from the lab.  
But, yes. It's probably late-stage cancer.  
Now, we do have treatment options.  
Where are you going?  
They told you everything?  
Yeah.  
But we're... we're gonna fight this.  
We're gonna get the best treatment.  
And I'm gonna take off work,  
and help you.  
And my mom can come stay with us.  
Right. But I... I think that...  
- we need...  
- It'll be okay.  
I can't pull up.  
Christ.  
Did the doctor tell you  
about the survival rate?  
Yeah.  
Yeah, but...  
You know, we're gonna beat this.  
We're gonna beat this.  
We will.  
How're you doing?  
Uh...  
I'm okay.  
You know?  
I start my treatment next week, so...  
Um...  
I'm sorry.  
Nah, it's okay.  
You've seen me in plenty  
of compromised situations,  
drunk off my ass.  
Listen, I know it's a cliché,  
but if there's anything I can do...  
Yeah. You know, if...  
If something happens, um,

I want my pension to go to Stacie,  
'cause it's the only way  
she can afford to keep our house.  
But that's for married people, right?  
Thanks for the support.

- Laurel...

- It's all right, man.

Sweetie? Sweetie?

I don't want you to see this.

All right, here.

Pass that around.

All right, so this is from  
Detective Laurel Hester,  
who's currently on medical leave of absence  
because, unfortunately,  
she has stage-four cancer.  
And she's asking that in  
the event of her death,  
her pension benefits be  
assigned to her partner,  
a Stacie Andree.

Stacie Andree is a woman, correct?

Correct.

I'm just trying to wrap my mind around  
her being a lesbian.

Why?

Well, she's so not like a lesbian.  
The contract we negotiated  
with the police union  
doesn't give Detective Hester the rights  
to assign her benefits to her roommate.  
End of story.

All right, so motion to deny  
Detective Hester's request?

Well, actually,  
the Domestic Partnership Act,  
passed by the state legislature,  
extends benefits to same sex partners  
of state employees.  
Hester is a county employee.  
But the law says we can assign benefits  
to county employees.

Bryan.

Right. And bankrupt the county.

Oh, come on.

Come on. What? People can make anybody their partners and get benefits. It's really very hard to form a domestic partnership, actually.

- Harder than marriage.
- Nothing's harder than marriage.

Bryan.

The law you're talking about violates the sanctity of marriage.

It offends traditional values and, in this county, that's political suicide.

She's dying.

Yes. And that's a personal tragedy, and we deal in public policy here.

- But...

- I move that we deny

Detective Hester's request.

We should wish her the best and tell her she's in our prayers.

All right. All in favor?

Yes.

Bryan?

I'll abstain.

We like our decisions to have the authority of a unanimous vote. It's been our tradition for 150 years.

Yes.

Good.

The technician said, um, "that you just suck in and hold the medicine in your lungs as long as you can."

Okay.

Are you okay?

Uh, we're in the middle of treatment.

So...

Dane.

It's okay. Come in.

That's my sister Lyndy.

Lyndy, that's Dane.

- Hey.

- Hey.

Well, they turned you down, Laurel.  
And then they buried the decision  
in the back of the paper.  
Yeah, I saw.  
Well, I just wanted you to know.  
I'm not happy about it.  
- Yeah, thanks.  
- Laurel, treatment.  
There's one other thing we could try.  
What's that?  
These guys are terrified of controversy.  
If you go to one of their meetings...  
You mean in person? Make a speech?  
Make a request.  
Laurel.  
They have a public meeting every two weeks.  
In front of everyone?  
Yeah, so then everyone knows our business?  
I mean who are these people?  
They're the local government.  
They run Ocean County.  
It's gonna be a lot harder  
for them to shoot you down  
if you go in there face-to-face  
and ask for what you got coming to you.  
You deserve it.  
Laurel, do the treatment.  
I gotta go to work.  
Okay. Okay.  
This whole pension thing  
is a waste of time. Okay?  
She's not gonna need it  
'cause she's gonna get better.  
Can you stop bothering  
us with this bullshit?  
This is so hard for her.  
Laurel, you gotta go to  
one of these meetings.  
It's the only thing that could work.  
My relationship to the patient is partner.  
I've been through this with you.  
This bill from Sloan Kettering for \$900.  
I know that some members of the public  
have questioned the cost

for the parking meters.

But after careful review,

we think it would be

the best thing for the community.

So, motion to approve the new meters?

So moved.

- How do you vote?

- Yes.

- Yes.

- Yes.

- Are you okay?

- Yes.

Motion's passed.

Don Bennett is here.

Hey, sis.

Who's that?

He's a reporter.

Is he gonna write about this?

Yeah, probably.

Well, that takes care of

all the items on our agenda.

Hi. There's a seat there.

And unless anyone has any more questions,

we will call this meeting to a close.

Yes?

Good afternoon, Freeholders.

You have a question

about the parking meters?

No. Uh,

my name is Detective Laurel Hester.

- Hopefully you remember me from...

- Oh, of course. I'm sorry.

I didn't recognize you. Hello.

I've worked for the Ocean County

Police Department for 23 years.

And I'm here today with my partner,

Stacie Andree.

In my career,

I've been shot at, dragged by a car,

clubbed, beaten, punched and kicked,

but I've always come out on top.

I've never been afraid of injury or death

while performing my duties.

That's the job, and I love my job.



Recently, I was diagnosed  
with stage-four lung cancer.  
Although radiation has shrunk the tumors,  
my chances for survival  
remain less than 10%.  
It's possible I've finally  
met an opponent I can't beat.  
Please reconsider your decision,  
and grant my request to assign  
my pension benefits to Stacie,  
making it possible for her  
to stay in our home when I'm gone.  
When my heterosexual colleagues die,  
their pensions go to their spouses.  
But because my partner is a woman,  
I don't get to do that.  
In my 23 years as a police officer,  
I've never asked for special treatment.  
I'm only asking for equality.  
Thank you.  
We commend you for your  
service to the county.  
You're a valuable and trusted employee.  
Agreed.  
Thank you.  
My colleagues and I, we've  
anguished over your situation.  
But benefits for county employees  
are part of a negotiated  
contractual settlement.  
And we just can't reopen negotiations...  
She gave you 23 years of service.  
You're out of order, Dane.  
God bless you. This meeting is adjourned.  
Hey.  
No, no, no.  
Detective Hester, how about an interview?  
Not today.  
Please leave us alone.  
Listen.  
I'll set up an interview  
if you promise to put her  
story on the front page.  
- Done.

- Yeah?

Did you see those guys squirm?

No one ever questions them about anything.

Well, they should.

My partner spends her  
life fighting for justice.

They deny justice to her.

That, that is great.

Dane Wells.

This is Steven Goldstein  
from Garden State Equality.

I just wanted to call to tell you  
that we are all outraged  
about what's happening to Laurel Hester.  
And we would like to help.

Okay.

What these Freeholders are  
doing is unconscionable.

We need to let them know  
that either they reverse their decision,  
or there are going to be consequences.

They've never reversed a decision.

They have never met me before.

Their next meeting, we show  
up with a hundred protesters.

Gay cops. Gay attorneys.

A priest. A rabbi.

I know a couple gay grandmothers.

Maybe we organize a gay pride parade.

You mean a bunch of bare-chested men  
in leather marching down Main Street?

We show them that we are a  
force to be reckoned with.

In this county there are  
a quarter million senior citizens,  
registered Republicans.

You're gonna turn them all against Laurel.

I appreciate your perspective.

I ran Corzine's senate campaign in 2000,  
so I know what I'm doing.

Okay, Steve. But I know this community.

It's Steven, with a "V."

As in, very gay.

And when people disrespect

my gay brothers and sisters,  
I rain terror on them. Shock and awe.  
Shock and awe.  
And, sweetheart, I am going to need you  
to be available for interviews.  
Lots and lots of interviews.  
This is gonna be a national news story.  
Steven, it seems to me that you're using  
my case to promote your cause.  
Gay marriage.  
That is exactly what I'm doing.  
This is the case that  
I've been waiting for.  
That I've been dreaming of.  
This is going to put this issue  
in the national spotlight,  
is going to turn the tide for gay marriage.  
My fight is not about marriage.  
It's about equality.  
It's about a cop getting  
the benefits she deserves...  
Not about marriage? Are you kidding me?  
I'm sorry.  
I just... I'm very passionate about this.  
If you were married  
and not this bullshit, second-class citizen  
domestic partner crap, but married,  
there wouldn't be an issue.  
Stacie would be entitled to your benefits.  
Hell, if you and I got married tomorrow,  
I'd be entitled to your benefits.  
Is that a proposal?  
Oh, honey, I'll marry you.  
But I wouldn't know what  
to do with your vagina.  
Oh, my God.  
I just don't want this  
whole political thing  
to take over our lives.  
We need to get you better.  
All this hoopla isn't necessary.  
All we need are Ocean County voters  
at the next Freeholder meeting.  
Radicals and strangers from New York

aren't going to convince these guys.  
I am not a radical and  
I am not from New York.  
I am a middle-class, Jewish  
homosexual from New Jersey.  
How about you, sweetheart?  
I'm a straight, white, Anglo-Saxon,  
ex-Protestant, atheist cop.  
You okay with that, sweetheart?  
I am. That is very hot.  
It's an opportunity to change the world.  
Laurel, this can be your legacy.  
It is not a local story, Mark.  
It's an outrageous miscarriage of justice.  
I'm giving you the opportunity  
to cover this nationally.  
Yes.  
Okay. Well, you know what?  
If your editor doesn't see  
how important this story is,  
then he is an idiot,  
or a closeted homophobe.  
Yes, you heard me.  
We need more entenmann's.  
Hey, you got room. You can pull up.  
Why don't you get out of our town?  
Just get out of here, you lesbian bitch!  
Get the hell out of here! Get out!  
Assholes!  
You goddamn dyke!  
You okay?  
Yeah.  
Hello?  
What?  
I'm coming. I'm coming.  
Go!  
Laurel? Laurel? What happened?  
All of sudden she was so confused.  
She didn't know where she was.  
And I didn't know what to do.  
She's gonna be okay.  
Patients only.  
Laurel?  
I love you!

I love you!  
What's going on?  
The cancer spread to her brain.  
And her lymph nodes.  
And the side of her neck.  
Jesus.  
The doctor said that...  
That we're not trying  
to cure anything anymore.  
That we're just trying  
to buy a little time.  
I...  
I thought we had a few years.  
I had myself convinced.  
Oh, God.  
So the meeting's tomorrow?  
Yeah.  
Steven's got all kinds of  
big things in the works.  
Protesters. Speeches. And who knows?  
He might shoot himself out of a cannon.  
Wrapped in a rainbow flag.  
Now, if we win,  
I hope I'm still around to see it.  
Hey.  
Hey, don't talk like that.  
They're gonna get you all sorted out  
with this radiation thing.  
I have a very sensitive bullshit meter,  
and it's ringing off the hook right now.  
I expect the truth from you, partner.  
Okay.  
I'm worried about Stacie.  
Yeah, you know.  
She's trying to accept it.  
She's had so much to  
deal with. She's so young.  
It's not fair.  
Life's not fair.  
No, it isn't.  
Sorry I never told you  
the truth all those years.  
You know maybe I...  
maybe I wanted people to

think we were into each other.  
It was just easier. You know, for me.  
Maybe I thought  
you wouldn't want to be my friend.  
I should have known better.  
I have no regrets.  
Justice for Laurel!  
Justice for Laurel! Justice for Laurel!  
Everyone! Energy! Energy!  
Justice for Laurel! Justice for Laurel!  
Justice for Laurel! Justice for Laurel!  
All right. All right.  
Hi, sweetie. Are you one of us?  
No, I'm not.  
Do you wanna be?  
I can make it happen.  
Come on, guys.  
The more of us show up at this meeting,  
the more they know the  
department's behind her.  
And if they say yes,  
then my tax dollars go to her girlfriend.  
Yeah.  
The same way your wife gets  
your pension if you die.  
Yeah, but she's my wife.  
The chief says it's a political issue  
and we can't take sides.  
What's political about a cop  
getting screwed out of her pension?  
Who's coming to the meeting?  
Oh.  
Don't put yourselves out.  
She'd back up any of you in a heartbeat.  
And she's dying!  
But, hey, you know, she's a dyke  
so who gives a shit?  
Cowards.  
Well, now we know for sure.  
Dane Wells is a fag.  
Why don't you just back off?  
Why don't you just let me know  
when you're gonna come  
out of the closet, Julio?

Dane?

I just wanted to say that  
I think you're doing the right thing.  
Well, show up for Laurel.

I can't.

I'm sorry.

We never had this conversation.

You have the power!

You have the power!

You can do this!

It's out of our hands.

It is in your hands.

You have the power! You have the power!

Ladies and gentlemen, please sit down.

Please sit down.

Please.

You can do this!

You have the power! You have the power!

You can do this!

This all came out in  
the shower this morning.

I got this.

You're so professional.

- I try.

- No, it's good.

You did good.

- Ready?

- Yeah.

I know I'm the type of guy who scares you.

I'm a big, loud, gay Jew.

You don't scare me.

Laurel Hester

gave the citizens of Ocean County  
justice for 23 years.

And now she's asking you to  
give her justice in return.

You have the power.

We don't have that option.

You do!

The Domestic Partnership Act  
gives you the option to grant benefits.

You have the power. You have the power!

You have the power! You have the power!

You have the power!

This is not a local crowd.  
They've been shipped in here.  
No. I see some locals.  
Please! Please!  
You have the power! You have the power!  
It's in your hands. You have the power!  
Ocean County cannot afford to do this.  
Actually, we can afford it.  
The question is, who tells us  
how to spend the county's money?  
That is for us and our  
constituents to decide.  
Oh, no, no, no, no, no. No!  
Shame! Shame!  
Shame on you!  
- Yes?  
- Hello?  
Father John Thompson-Quartey,  
Saint Mary's episcopal church.  
Point Pleasant Beach.  
Laurel and Stacie have been to my church.  
And now I've heard that some of you believe  
that Laurel Hester's relationship  
with Stacie Andree is  
not sanctioned by God.  
And that is why you are  
taking this position!  
No. No. Father...  
Would you like to hear what Jesus  
actually said about homosexuality?  
I will tell you what he said!  
And I quote.  
That's right.  
Jesus said nothing on the subject!  
But he said plenty about compassion!  
Please.  
Well, Father,  
there are definitely Old  
Testament verses that...  
You want to get us sued here?  
Don't cut me off.  
Look, ladies and gentlemen.  
I understand this issue.  
My uncle died of lung



cancer. It's terrible.  
And I have always tried  
to do the right thing,  
but we need to look at the total picture.  
Please. Please! Please! I am begging you.  
I am begging you. Do this for Laurel!  
You can do this. You have the power.  
You have the power!  
You have the power!  
You have the power! You have the power!  
Hey, get off your knees.  
Listen to me! Listen  
to me! This is a circus.  
It's gonna backfire.  
It's political theater. And you know what?  
If you think you can do better,  
there's the mic!  
Unless you're afraid they're  
gonna think you're gay.  
You have the power! You have the power!  
You have the power!  
All right! All right!  
Hello, Detective Wells.  
Hello.  
Gentlemen.  
I was born and raised in Ocean County.  
I'm a piney.  
Or a constituent,  
as Mr. Johnson would like to say.  
I'm straight, by the way.  
I also happen to be Laurel Hester's  
partner on the force.  
We've worked together  
for many, many years now,  
and I can tell you from  
first-hand experience  
that she is about as fine an officer  
as Ocean County could hope to have.  
Now, Laurel, Stacie, and I  
could solve this problem real quick, okay?  
I could go get a justice of the peace,  
take him to Laurel,  
and we could get married.  
Then when she dies I'd get her pension.

No questions asked.  
I could pass it along  
to Stacie. No problem.  
But we're not gonna do that  
because Laurel would never agree to it.  
I used to tease Laurel about  
her integrity, her ideals,  
because I'm one of those  
cynical, hard-ass cops who likes to say  
he doesn't believe in  
the system or justice.  
But Laurel does.  
She believes in it. The whole deal.  
So what's it gonna be?  
Can I go to Laurel right now  
and tell her she can die in peace,  
with dignity,  
because she was right?  
Because in this one instance  
justice has prevailed.  
- Come on.  
- Yeah.  
Thank you, Detective Wells.  
We anguish over this situation.  
And Detective Hester is in our prayers.  
But our decision is gonna have to stand.  
The state made a bad law.  
The state made a bad law and  
it's up to them to fix it.  
Not up to us.  
So Detective Hester's request is denied.  
This meeting is adjourned.  
We tried the carrot. Now  
we're gonna try the stick.  
The number one source of income  
in this county is what?  
Tourism!  
And what are we gonna do?  
Boycott Ocean County!  
Boycott Ocean County!  
What the hell were you  
doing in there, Bryan? Huh?  
I'm in agony over this, okay?  
My wife and daughter look at

me like I'm a serial killer.  
I was watching you. You're on our side.  
I'm one vote out of five.  
Convince the others!  
That's easy for you to say.  
Where are your fellow cops?  
You can't even get them  
to come to a meeting.  
Some people get a  
pension, some people don't.  
Some people get two or  
three. Life isn't fair.  
Does that help you sleep at night?  
Kiss my ass.  
Water?  
Drink.  
Thank you.  
You look so tired.  
Why don't you go home and get some rest?  
No.  
- Come on.  
- No, I can't leave her.  
She needs me here.  
Thanks, Mom.  
Hey.  
They turned her down again.  
I don't even know if I can tell her.  
Tell him about the insurance.  
- No.  
- Tell him.  
Come on. Tell me about the insurance.  
I got this letter from  
the insurance company  
saying that she has,  
like, three sick days left  
and then she loses her medical benefits  
and life insurance and everything.  
She's been fighting the  
insurance companies, the doctors.  
I can handle it.  
I'll do something.  
No, no.  
Come on. Let me take care of it.  
I need to do something. Please?

Okay.  
Okay.  
Thanks.  
What's this?  
Any officer can assign  
his or her sick days to another officer.  
Yeah, but what if you get sick?  
You're not gonna get those days back.  
Am I right, Chief?  
You don't get them back.  
So you're screwed.  
You bleeding hearts.  
That dyke wouldn't do it for me.  
Yes, she would.  
Fine.  
I'll give her one day.  
One day.  
How about three?  
Don't push it.  
Make it five, Toohey.  
Fellows, fellows. Don't pressure him.  
You never know.  
He might get the sniffles.  
All right. Five.  
Happy?  
We're standing by our decision.  
Just keep your men in line.  
So now the police department is against us?  
They're donating sick days.  
It doesn't mean anyone is against us.  
Have you read the papers?  
We're being ridiculed!  
Yeah, by who? The New  
York Times? Who cares?  
The local papers are supporting Hester,  
and I'm getting a lot of calls.  
Yeah, from outsiders.  
And from the locals, Bill!  
It seems like  
we are sticking to a losing position  
because of some personal beliefs.  
Why shouldn't I vote according  
to my personal beliefs?  
I'm not ashamed of them.

We give in on this,  
we are putting the state one  
step closer to gay marriage,  
and if I do that, how can I face my family?  
Huh? My friends.

What?

Their Christmas is gonna suck.

Who?

Those women. The ones you're screwing over.

Maya?

This is politics.

I'm running for re-election next year.

I can do a lot of good for our town.

But not if I lose my  
job over this one thing.

You understand?

If you die does Mom get your pension?

What do you want, Dane?

What do you mean some people  
get more than one pension?

I never said that.

Yeah, you did.

Something about life isn't fair.

Some people have a pension, some don't.

Some have more than one.

Do the Freeholders get multiple pensions?

I'm not gonna answer  
that question directly.

It's in the public  
record. Payroll department.

If you say I told you this, I'll deny it.

Of course you will.

It's okay.

I don't know who that is.

Hello?

Hey, I need to talk to Laurel.

- It's important.

- Okay.

Laurel, it's Dane.

- Hey, partner.

- Hey.

Remember the Selco case? It  
was, like, five years ago?

Yeah, sure.

They hid their names  
in the records somehow but you  
managed to find them anyway.  
How'd you do that?  
They used versions of their full names.  
An initial and a middle  
name. Or two initials.  
So a regular computer  
search couldn't find them.  
Right. Thanks.  
Good night.  
Yeah.  
Get some rest.  
First, I think we're  
gonna start with a wide.  
Then we're gonna move to a medium.  
All that matters is the close-up, right?  
We wanna see what's  
going on behind her eyes.  
- Hi, Stacie.  
- Hi, Stacie.  
It is a 30-second spot,  
supporting gay marriage.  
I'm fighting for equality.  
Laurel? Come on.  
Like it or not, you're an activist.  
You're a gay marriage activist now.  
Just say it. Just say  
the "M" word just once.  
Equality.  
Can I have a minute? Just a minute?  
Sure, yes. We'll be back.  
Step out. Step out.  
What's the problem?  
Do you want some applesauce?  
No.  
What's wrong? What's wrong?  
I hate how he pushes this stuff on you.  
It's okay. No.  
It takes your energy and  
then you don't wanna eat.  
No, I have to do it.  
I have to do it while there's time.  
There is.

- No.
- Yeah.
- We don't know that.
- Yeah.

We don't know that, babe.

You know, with the time I have left, my priority is you.

I'm still a police officer.

We're taught to do the right thing.

I'm gonna do the right thing for you.

The only thing I care about is justice for the woman that I love.

And that's you.

Is that okay?

Yeah.

When you see this.

I will have passed away from cancer.

The county refused to give death benefits to my partner.

Gay couples are fighting for equality.

Please support them.

What makes you think they'll change their minds?

Instinct.

And something I found out about their pensions.

You need cover.

How about this?

How about the governor says that thanks to the Freeholders he realizes that the domestic partnership law is flawed and he is willing to support changing the law?

That way they go from villains to heroes.

You have access to the governor?

Oh, honey, are you kidding me?

That man is number three on my speed dial.

Okay. That'll work.

And Steven?

Yes?

Don't call me honey.

I love you, too.

Let's set up right here.

Okay. Are you ready?  
All right?  
Where's Bill?  
He had to make a sudden  
trip to Pennsylvania.  
A family emergency.  
Bullshit.  
He thinks if he stays away we won't vote  
because we have to vote  
in a unanimous block.  
That's the tradition.  
Dane Wells is prepared to tell the press  
that some of us are  
getting multiple pensions.  
How does he know that?  
I told him.  
Why? Is it a secret?  
No. It's not a secret.  
Dane Wells can go screw himself.  
I do two jobs for the county.  
I'll get two pensions. Big deal.  
It's legal and it's common.  
Imagine the headlines.  
"Freeholders get several pensions  
while dying cop gets none."  
We'll look like idiots  
if we change our minds now.  
It'll look like we cave.  
That's what you do when your ass  
is against the wall! You cave!  
The Board of Freeholders  
doesn't reverse itself.  
That's all there is to it.  
Besides if Bill's absent, we can't vote.  
We need to cancel the meeting.  
We are not canceling the meeting.  
That's the governor.  
The governor's got no authority  
over county officials.  
Governor?  
What's going on out there?  
Another Freeholder meeting  
about that lesbian's pension.  
Where are you going?



Going down to that Freeholder meeting.  
I'm gonna show my support  
for another gay cop.  
Does anybody have anything  
they wanna say about that?  
How about you, Toohey?  
I'm going in my office  
and I'm closing the door.  
And if anybody wants to  
duck out for any reason,  
I won't notice.  
You have the power!  
You have the power!  
You have the power!  
You have the power!  
You have the power!  
You have the power!  
You have the power!  
You have the power! You have the power!  
You have the power! You have the power!  
You have the power!  
You have the power!  
Please sit down. We can't start...  
About time.  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
please, please, please.  
We've called this meeting today...  
We're here today to address  
the issue of extending  
domestic partnership  
benefits to county employees.  
So if anyone wishes to make a comment,  
now would be a good time.  
I just wanted to let you know  
that time is of the essence.  
All I'm asking is that you make a change.  
Are you okay? Are you okay?  
Um...  
I hate speaking in public.  
I really hate it.  
And I never really cared  
about this whole pension thing.  
I never understood why it  
was so important to Laurel.

But now I think I get it.  
We're just average people.  
We have a house, and a dog,  
and we pay our taxes.  
And we're not perfect.  
We have our differences  
and our disagreements.  
I love motorcycles and she hates them.  
Our house, it isn't fancy.  
But it was a labor of love.  
You know, working on it and renovating it.  
And Laurel put a lot of  
thought into every detail.  
The light fixtures and the tile.  
And, um...  
we worked so hard on it  
'cause we thought we were  
gonna live in it forever.  
But I guess that's not gonna happen.  
So the house,  
I'd just really like to  
hold onto it, you know?  
To remember...  
to remember how much we love each other.  
Thank you.  
Thank you.  
On the motion of extending  
domestic partnership benefits  
to county employees,  
Freeholder Kelder, how do you vote?  
Yes.  
Freeholder Wickery?  
Freeholder Wickery?  
Yes.  
Freeholder Santucci?  
Thanks for hanging me out to dry.  
I vote yes.  
It's unanimous. The motion is passed.  
I love you guys!  
I love you! Thank you!  
Thank you for opening your hearts!  
Yes!  
Hey, Laurel.  
How're you doing, Chief?

We got a conviction against the men  
who killed Tommy and Debbie Cherico.  
Put them away for life.

Thanks to you.

And we're pleased to inform you  
that you've been promoted  
to the rank of lieutenant  
in the Ocean County Police Department.

Congratulations.

Thanks, Chief.

Congratulations, partner.

Let me see.

Will you marry me?

Yes.

I love you.

I love you.

I love you.

I love you.

Platoon, attention!

Present arms!

Order arms!

About face!

Piece of garbage.

I don't know. Maybe it's not so bad.

Maybe I'll keep it.

Do you want it? You want it back?

Then you're gonna have to get it.

Come and get it.