

# Rule of Law

by

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Class of 2016

A thesis submitted to the  
faculty of Wesleyan University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Degree of Bachelor of Arts  
with Departmental Honors from the College of Film and the Moving  
Image

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Joe Cacaci for guiding me through this project with patience and kindness. I would also like to thank the faculty and staff of the Film Studies department for their support and for the wonderful education that let me write this script.

I'd also like to thank the following people for their support and inspiration: My parents, Leonard, Emily Rosenberg Pollock, Laura Douglass Vanasek, Elena Kay, Louis Fidel, Susanne Rabe, Fred Kay, Fauver 312, Alexa De la Cruz, and Patrick McHugh.

RULE OF LAW

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INT. LOBBY OF A HIGH-END LAW FIRM IN TUCSON, ARIZONA - DAY

ALBIE (20s) fidgets while waiting in line for a receptionist. He is wearing a cheap suit and holding a cardboard tray of coffee. He stands out against the expensive surroundings. The wall behind him reads LAW OFFICES OF WILLIAMS, MAXWELL, & CARTER.

Finally, it's Albie's turn. The receptionist doesn't look up.

ALBIE

Hi. It's my first day here and I'm not really sure where to--

RECEPTIONIST

(Still not looking up)  
What's your name?

ALBIE

Oh um, Albert Shepard. But everyone has always called me Albie, which--

Albie is interrupted by a man, TREY (20s), putting his arm around him in an overly friendly and forceful manner. Trey is much larger and better dressed than Albie.

TREY

Hey! You must be little Albie.

ALBIE

(Unpleasantly surprised)  
Oh! Hi. Just Albie is fine. And you are?

TREY

Trey. I'm here to show you around WMC. I know this place pretty well.  
(To receptionist)  
Don't I Tony?

TONY doesn't look up.

ALBIE

Well thanks. I have to say, I've never worked in a place this... big.

Trey, arm around Albie, starts walking them to the elevator.

TREY

It's a privilege allowed to a chosen few. Why'd they hire you anyway?

ALBIE

Well, I don't want to brag, but I graduated near the top of my class at UCSF Law, I was assistant editor of the law review, I--

TREY

(chuckling)  
Relax, I know Grace is your aunt.

ALBIE

Oh yeah Grace was very kind to put in a good word for me.

TREY

She's gonna have a hell of a day.

ALBIE

Just because I'm her nephew doesn't mean she'll have to baby sit me.

TREY

No, they have me doing that. Grace is in a meeting with management, which either means she's getting a huge case or she's up the creek.  
(Off Albie's Alarm)  
Come on, it's tour time.

ALBIE

Should I take notes?

TREY

Dude, it's just a building.

Trey presses a button in the elevator.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY OF LAW OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Trey and Albie exit the elevator. Trey begins walking very quickly and Albie follows.

TREY

(Quickly)  
That's the cafe.

ANGLE ON: Bustling and surprisingly large cafe. Everything is white, steel, or glass. The workers look miserable. The customers are in suits and most are on cell phones.

TREY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

But if someone says the cafe they really mean the cafeteria, which used to be the cafe. Most law firms don't have a cafe and a cafeteria, but that's what you buy when a client beats three embezzlement charges in a row. That's the investigators' wing.

ANGLE ON: Wooden door with frosted glass window (classic PI door). A grizzled older man heads towards the door while pouring a flask into his coffee. He sneers at the camera.

TREY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

They're pretty chill, but do not go there on a Monday. That's payroll.

ANGLE ON: Windowless metal door with PAYROLL printed at the top in big block letters. The door has a heavy lock on it and a single slot with HOURS printed above it.

TREY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

God help you if you come down here on a day that's *not* a Monday. Unless it's after three on the second Wednesday of the month, which reminds me, never ask a secretary to do anything after 4 on a Thursday. That's billing or IT or HR or something.

ANGLE ON: Generic office door. A friendly looking man in a shirt and tie walks towards the door and waves at the camera.

TREY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

It doesn't matter, I've never had to talk to them.

Trey stops Albie in his tracks by slapping him on the chest. Trey sniffs the air and looks at the tray Albie is carrying.

TREY (CONT'D)

What's *that*?

Albie holds up the drink tray.

ALBIE

Oh, I thought I'd bring in some coffee for people. You know, start out on the right foot. Want some?

Trey takes a coffee... removes the lid... smells it... and THROWS IT AND THE REST OF THE COFFEE IN THE TRASH CAN.

TREY  
I'm doing you a favor. We don't  
have a cafe so we can drink *that*.

ALBIE  
Oh, thanks.

TREY  
(Sincerely)  
You're welcome.

Trey leads Albie through a glass door that reads CRIMINAL  
DEFENSE and into a nice modern office (lots of white  
surfaces, glass walls, tastefully bland art).

TREY (CONT'D)  
And this is where we work!

ALBIE  
Wow.

TREY  
Well this is where we work. You're  
a junior associate, so *this--*

Trey opens an office door.

TREY (CONT'D)  
*--is where you work.*

The office is revealed to be a small windowless room cramped  
by file cabinets and two desks. Albie stares at the office.

TREY (CONT'D)  
Gotta say, part of me misses  
sharing an office. A tiny crappy  
office. But hey! If you don't like  
it, maybe your Aunt has room in her  
office. Actually, if her meeting  
goes south, maybe you can just *have*  
her office. See you around buddy!

Trey slaps Albie on the back and leaves. Albie doesn't move.

CUT TO:

INT. LARGE CORNER OFFICE - DAY

DON, a middle-aged management type, sits behind the desk in a  
beautiful corner office. In front of him is Grace (40s).

DON  
Grace, please sit down.

GRACE

(Annoyed)

Oh it's going to be one of those meetings?

DON

Yeah, it is.

Don motions to a chair in front of his desk. Grace sits down.

DON (CONT'D)

So, today's Albie's first day! I'm looking forward to meeting him. How are you feeling about it?

GRACE

Cut to the chase, Don. You're playing with your tie. You always do that when you have bad news.

Don looks down to see that he has indeed been playing with his tie. He sighs.

DON

The firm wants to provide you with some *guidance* in choosing cases.

GRACE

You can't be serious. Any lawyer who's been here *half* as long as I have brings in their own cases.

DON

No one's disputing that. You're a great lawyer, but in the past year the cases you've brought in... don't make any money.

GRACE

It's not like we're hurting for cash around here.

To illustrate her point, Grace grabs two iPads that Don happens to have on his desk. Don snatches them back.

DON

Because every other lawyer here knows how to choose cases. You do too. *You just won't.* If the client can afford you, great, take them on. If they can't, let them go to the public defenders.

(MORE)

DON (CONT'D)

And, if you feel bad, take on a pro bono case every now and then. *As long as it looks good for the firm.*

GRACE

That's what I do.

DON

'Every now and then' does not mean every other month. Waiving legal fees for a dope-dealing biker does not 'look good for the firm.'

GRACE

Butch was paying until the cops seized his money as evidence.

DON

Because he was selling heroin to pay his legal fees!

GRACE

He was cash poor! And he shouldn't have been charged in the first place.

DON

He was selling heroin!

GRACE

But he was charged with--

DON

That's not the point! It's not just that case! For the past year, every one of your cases--

GRACE

Hasn't been chosen based solely on how it affects the bottom line?

Don sighs. This argument is going nowhere.

DON

Grace, you've been an associate here for nine years. We both know you make partner after ten or--

GRACE

I know

There's a sullen pause. Don shuffles some papers around.

DON

Do you know who Clare Boucher is?

GRACE

The suit who puts vodka in her cucumber water?

DON

And the third most senior member of the board. Her son, Gavin, got into a situation that could, let's say, be easily misunderstood. Clare wants it to go away. No charges. Nothing. Make this work and Clare is going to be a lot friendlier to the idea of making you a partner.

Don tries to give a thin manila folder to Grace. She doesn't take it.

GRACE

I didn't become a lawyer to help rich teenagers escape the consequences of their actions.

DON

Do you think in law school, when we were chaining ourselves to that animal testing lab, that I thought we'd end up at a place like this?

Don gestures at his nice corporate office.

DON (CONT'D)

But we're both here now and I'd like to keep it that way. So please, take the case.

Grace narrows her eyes and exhales.

CUT TO:

INT. ALBIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Albie is attempting to arrange his desk to match the other desk in the room.

A MAN a little older than Albie bursts in and makes a beeline for the other desk. Albie tries to hide what he was doing.

ALBIE

Oh hey! I'm Albie. I think I'm your new office buddy. I mean coworker.

The man doesn't acknowledge Albie. He is visibly upset and quickly puts the things on his desk into a cardboard box and heads for the door. As he leaves, he turns to Albie.

MAN

Don't screw up here.

Albie is clearly shaken. As the man leaves, Grace comes in.

GRACE

(To Man)

That's tough Tom, but *hey*, now you can spend time with your kid.

(Cheerily to Albie)

It's been a long time since I've seen my favorite nephew.

Grace looks at Albie expectantly. Albie smiles.

ALBIE

Hi Aunt Grace.

GRACE

I said 'it's been a long time since I've seen my favorite nephew.'

ALBIE

(unenthusiastically)

But I'm your only nephew.

Grace laughs. Albie doesn't.

GRACE

That joke used to kill you.

ALBIE

When I was ten.

Grace hugs Albie.

GRACE

Looks like you don't have to share an office for a little bit. That should make your parents happy.

Grace laughs and Albie is taken aback.

ALBIE

Nothing about my working here could make them happy.

GRACE

I'd be lying if I said hiring the son of

(MORE)

GRACE (CONT'D)  
 (Affected Haughty Voice)  
 'Assistant District Attorney Carol  
 Shepard'  
 (Back to regular voice)  
 to work criminal defense with her  
 no good sister wasn't one of the  
 reasons I got you this job.

ALBIE  
 Well whatever the reason, I'm glad  
 to be here Aunt Grace.

GRACE  
 Don't call me that here, that would  
 be so *weird*. Call me Boss.

ALBIE  
 Got it Boss.

GRACE  
 That was a joke. Call me Grace. So,  
 anyone shown you around yet?

ALBIE  
 Yeah this guy Trey met me in the  
 lobby. He seems fr--

GRACE  
 Like a pile of pomade on top of a  
 degree from Dartmouth Law. Come on,  
 I'll give you the *real* tour.

Grace beckons Albie out of his office.

CUT TO:

INT. CRIMINAL DEFENSE WING - CONTINUOUS

Grace and Albie are walking around the criminal defense wing.  
 As Grace speaks, Albie writes down everything she says in a  
 notebook.

GRACE  
 Here's what matters: Those are the  
 legal assistants-

Grace points to people sitting at desks outside offices.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
 -Always be nice to them. You might  
 survive being a dick to everyone  
 else, but you'll never survive  
 being a dick to the assistants.

Grace points to a group of tired men and women picking up pizza from a delivery man.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
Those are the criminal defense attorneys. You're in competition with all of them. And that-

Grace points to a few very nicely dressed older men laughing and leaving the office together.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
(With disdain)  
-is management on their way to a three martini lunch. Country club lawyers like your father.

ALBIE  
You know, if you called him your brother-in-law it would feel less hurtful.

GRACE  
I'll do that next time.

Grace looks at her watch.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
Tell you what, it's your first day, let's go out to lunch to celebrate. It'll have to be quick though.

CUT TO:

INT. "EL MEZÓN DEL COBRE" MEXICAN RESTAURANT - DAY

Albie and Grace are sitting at a small table in a crowded Mexican restaurant. The restaurant's clientele isn't just people in suits, but it's mostly people in suits.

GRACE  
That's Judge Cauler, he mostly does drug court stuff, guy's been popping pills for a "bad knee" for years, but that hasn't stopped him from only handing out maximum sentences. Federal prosecutor Joanna Shen's over there. She loves the prestige more than anything. Probably going to go private if she doesn't get a judgeship soon. That's "Truck Stop" Rutherford--

ALBIE  
Why do you call him that?

GRACE  
I don't know, but he hates it.

ALBIE  
Man, everybody sounds awful.

GRACE  
No, there are plenty of good  
lawyers. Like uh--

Grace scans the room.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
Julia Costa. She could have worked  
for any firm in the city, but she's  
at the juvenile public defenders.  
*Though I heard she's interviewing  
at Sullivan & Cromwell.*

Grace notices that Albie is writing down everything she says  
in his notebook.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
Jesus don't write that stuff down.

Albie stops writing.

ALBIE  
You got it, no more writing.

GRACE  
And buy a legal pad. You look like  
you're still in college.

ALBIE  
Right, legal pad.

Albie sheepishly looks at the notebook. Grace sighs.

GRACE  
Go ahead.

Albie quickly writes LEGAL PAD in his notebook.

ALBIE  
So why the short lunch?

GRACE  
I got a new case.

ALBIE

Is that why you were in a meeting?

GRACE

Did Trey tell you that? Jesus you can't scratch your ass at this firm without someone whispering about it.

ALBIE

So what's the case?

GRACE

Well it's sort of unofficial.

ALBIE

Oh unofficial *hmm*? Some politician get his mistress pregnant?

GRACE

No, it's boring, defending a dumb teenager kinda stuff. Basically, Frat Guy A and Frat Guy B get drunk and get into a fight. Frat Guy A is unlucky enough to punch Frat Guy B right before Frat Guy B drunkenly trips over his own feet and shatters his elbow. Turns out Frat Guy B is only seventeen and his mother is pressing charges. Normally I wouldn't have a thing to do with this case, but Frat Guy A happens to be Gavin Boucher, the son of Clare Boucher--

ALBIE

The board member?

GRACE

Very good. You did your research. Not only is Clare a member of the board, she's also an 'integral part of the community.' Now it's my job to make sure the Boucher name isn't besmirched with assault charges.

ALBIE

So you have to convince the victim--

GRACE

Don't say victim.

ALBIE

You're going to convince Frat Guy B's mother to drop the charges?

GRACE

Eventually. The problem is Ms. Putzy's a bit of a hard ass. A few years ago she charged the paperboy with vandalism for throwing the paper onto her flowerbed.

ALBIE

Ms. Putzy?

GRACE

Frat Guy B's bull of a mother- Ms. Sarah Putzy.

ALBIE

Crusty Ms. Putzy is the victim's mother?

GRACE

He's not a victim! And I wouldn't call her that.

ALBIE

She was my teacher in 8th grade!

GRACE

Really. Anything you can tell me?

ALBIE

She's horrible. She called me Albert and "accidentally" told everyone I had the lowest grade in the class. But I was so desperate for an A that I spent the whole year sucking up to her. She thought I worshiped her, which just made all the humiliation worse.

As Albie speaks, Grace starts to think.

GRACE

Any chance she still thinks you adore her?

ALBIE

On the last day of class, she gave me a D. I gave her an apple.

GRACE

What if you come with me to talk to Ms. Putzy? She'll trust you more than she'll trust me.

ALBIE

Are you serious? I would love to beat her and it would be my first case.

(Coming to a realization)

Hey I got my first case!

CUT TO:

INT. GRACE'S MUSCLE CAR - DAY

Grace is driving and Albie is next to her.

ALBIE

I can't wait to shut Crusty Putzy down.

GRACE

This isn't just about shutting her down. Right now she's upset. Her kid just got really hurt.

ALBIE

And we're going to shut her down.

GRACE

But first we're going to express sympathy for her kid's busted arm. And then--

ALBIE

We'll shut her down.

GRACE

With a well-reasoned argument as to why pursuing a criminal case would be futile.

ALBIE

Why should she believe us?

GRACE

Because she thinks you're honest to a fault and I'm an experienced lawyer. Hell, you're a lawyer too. We're the experts. Ready for some adolescent revenge?

ALBIE

Yeah.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNREMARKABLE SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

Grace's car comes to a stop outside a meticulously maintained house. Grace and Albie exit the car. Before they walk towards the house, Grace stops Albie and fixes his tie.

GRACE

You know why lawyers wear suits?

ALBIE

Because it's court appropriate?

Grace begins brusquely dusting off Albie's suit and fixing his hair. Albie is halfway uncomfortable. It's demeaning, but it's also pretty affectionate as far as Grace goes.

GRACE

A suit projects confidence. It tells people, 'I *know* more than you', 'I *make* more than you', 'you *should believe me*.'

ALBIE

This reminds me of when I was a kid and you used to check me out of school to see you argue cases.

Grace stops looking at Albie's clothes and looks at him.

GRACE

(Smiling)

Your mom hated that. Come on.

Grace and Albie walk to the house. Grace rings the doorbell.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Remember how Ms. Putzy bullied you? Remember how she made you feel stupid? Well now you look smart, you are smart, you're in control, let's school Ms. Putzy.

The door opens to reveal MS. PUTZY (60s), a small woman who looks older than her age due to her hunched posture and cane.

MS. PUTZY

Hello? What is it?

ALBIE

Ms. Putzy? It's me Albie. It's so--

MS. PUTZY

Who?

ALBIE

Albert, Albert Shepard.

Ms. Putzy's eyes widen and she smiles warmly.

MS. PUTZY

Albert! My how you've grown. How old are you now? Nineteen? Twenty?

ALBIE

Twenty seven. It's so good to see you. How are you?

MS. PUTZY

Well, there's the vertigo and the broken hip, which meant I had to retire early, I can't drive anymore, Eric's in college now and the house seems so empty... but seeing an old student like you makes me feel so much better. Please come in! I'll make us some tea and you can tell me all about what you've done with your life.

Before Grace and Albie can move inside, Ms. Putzy notices Grace for the first time and moves her cane to block Grace's path.

MS. PUTZY (CONT'D)

Do I know you?

ALBIE

This is my au- my colleague Grace Hackman. Ms. Putzy, it's wonderful to see you, but I'm not here just to visit. I'm a lawyer and--

MS. PUTZY

A lawyer? That's wonderful! I always knew you'd make something of yourself. So why the sudden visit?

ALBIE

Well, we're um here to--

GRACE

We'd like to talk about your decision to pursue charges against Gavin Boucher.

Ms. Putzy waivers as if she might fall. Albie drops his briefcase and moves to catch her. Before he can, Ms. Putzy puts her hand on the doorway to steady herself. This blocks Grace and Albie from entering the house.

MS. PUTZY

I'm sorry, sometimes I get so dizzy all of a sudden. Eric normally drives me to pick up my vertigo medication, but with his arm like that... Albert, did she just say that you're representing Gavin Boucher? Don't tell me you've become an ambulance chaser.

ALBIE

No, no, not exa--

MS. PUTZY

Did that family send you here to bully me?

As Albie speaks, he notices how frail Ms. Putzy appears and becomes increasingly less confident and coherent.

ALBIE

We're not here to bully you. We feel that, with the nature of your arm... I mean my... uh... his arm! Eric's arm. That uh...

GRACE

(Muttering to Albie)  
Are you alright?

ALBIE

(To himself)  
Am I alright?  
(To Ms. Putzy)  
Excuse me I... I have to get something from the car.

Albie, flustered, walks away towards the car.

GRACE

With the spring weather there's so much pollen in the air he must need his inhaler...

(MORE)

GRACE (CONT'D)

What my colleague was trying to say, is that the Bouchers feel terrible about what happened between Eric and Gavin, but, if you'll hear me out--

MS. PUTZY

Oh go take care of your child. I'll see you in court.

Ms. Putzy slams the door with a surprising amount of force.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRACE'S CAR - DAY

Albie leans against the car breathing heavily. After a moment, Grace appears carrying two briefcases and making a beeline for Albie.

GRACE

What the hell. I told you to project confidence, not run away from an old woman. I thought I could trust you with this.

ALBIE

Trust me to what? Convince a sick woman that she can't protect her son?

GRACE

Oh so that blathering was just you taking the high road?

ALBIE

I'm sorry. It's just when I saw her like that...

GRACE

Let's go.

Grace tosses Albie the briefcase he left behind.

CUT TO:

INT. GRACE'S CAR - DAY

Grace and Albie are driving in silence.

ALBIE

She's going to go ahead with the charges isn't she?

GRACE

Well, the defense's lawyer couldn't even get through explaining why she shouldn't without having a panic attack, so yeah I think she's going to press charges. Maybe sue.

ALBIE

Isn't there... I mean we have a good case, couldn't we still win if we go to court?

GRACE

The courtroom is death. Being a lawyer isn't about giving eloquent speeches or nobly defending your client to a jury. It's about taking deals, making pleas, and getting charges dropped. Court is where you end up when you've failed.

ALBIE

So what now?

GRACE

Dunno. If this goes to trial I doubt they'll keep me on the case. Or at the firm for that matter.

ALBIE

They can fire you over one case?

GRACE

I'm sorry I put you on this case your first day out.

ALBIE

You don't have to apologize. You gave me a chance, I screwed it up.

GRACE

I wasn't apologizing.

Grace parks the car outside WMC. She rubs her temples.

GRACE (CONT'D)

No one at the firm knows you were helping me on this.

(MORE)

GRACE (CONT'D)  
Say you were stuck in traffic  
coming back from lunch or something  
and you might avoid the storm  
that's coming.

CUT TO:

INT. ALBIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Albie is at his desk, halfheartedly trying out different ways of arranging his things. There is a knock on the door. Trey pops in.

TREY  
Hey A-man, where were you?

ALBIE  
I uh... had a doctor's appointment.

TREY  
On your first day?

ALBIE  
I set it up a while ago.

TREY  
Is that why you look so sad? Got  
some bad news at the doctor?

ALBIE  
What? No, no I'm fine.

TREY  
Cause that would suck, if you found  
out you were terminal or something  
right after you got a job.

ALBIE  
I think that would suck regardless  
of if I had a job.

TREY  
I don't know. Once, one of my buds  
was driving back from an interview,  
*that he slayed*, and he got into a  
wicked car wreck. Broke his leg.

ALBIE  
Jeez.

TREY

Yeah. And his blood wasn't clotting so the doctors thought he might have leukemia or something. He was pretty bummed.

ALBIE

Oh my god.

TREY

Turned out the bastard was just completely wasted. Blood alcohol through the roof. They caught it in blood tests or something. He was so happy he wasn't dying. Classic.

Albie has an idea.

ALBIE

Thank you Trey!

TREY

Anytime A-bomb. Oh by the way, here's a bunch of notes I took. Could you type them up? The secretaries are all busy or avoiding me or something. Peace.

Trey throws a legal pad onto Albie's desk. It is covered in MESSY NOTES and CRUDE DRAWINGS. Trey exits. Albie grabs the phone on his desk and dials a number.

PHONE

St. Mary's Medical Center.

ALBIE

Hi, I was *wondering*, if someone were injured near campus would they be taken to you?

PHONE

They sure would.

ALBIE

Great. This might be a weird question, but, if a patient seemed intoxicated, would you test their blood alcohol level?

CUT TO:

INT. DON'S OFFICE - DAY

An exasperated Don and Grace are sitting at Don's desk. Between them is a conference phone.

CLARE (PHONE)  
(Disarmingly sweet)  
Are you telling me you didn't offer  
a misdemeanor compromise?

GRACE  
You know full well that--

Don signals to Grace to stop talking.

DON  
What Grace *means* Ms. Boucher, is  
that she was unfortunately made to  
leave before she had the chance to  
bring up the possibility of a  
misdemeanor compromise.

CLARE (PHONE)  
And why would that be?

GRACE  
Emotions were high.

CLARE (PHONE)  
And I imagine you were your usual  
self. Was no one else there to  
blunt your language?

GRACE  
No. I spoke to her alone.

DON  
You know, a parent-to-parent talk  
might be able to avoid some of the  
vulgarity of the legal system.

CLARE (PHONE)  
I'm not on the board of the oldest  
law firm in Southern Arizona so  
that I can personally negotiate  
with anyone who jealously attempts  
to tarnish the Boucher name.

Grace rolls her eyes.

DON  
Yes of course, just a suggestion.

CLARE (PHONE)

I must go, my driver is here, but I expect that you will prevent this from getting more out of hand. If not, I will be having a very short conversation with you Grace. And a very very long one with you Donald.

Clare hangs up. Don lets out a huge breath.

GRACE

(immediately)

If this goes to court, I hope her son gets 10 years and Clare has a heart attack from the shock.

As Grace says this Don rushes to put the phone on the hook.

DON

Damn it Grace, at least let me close the line.

GRACE

Oh come on. You heard her hang up.

DON

You just never know. So what's the plan?

GRACE

I'm going to get drunk and pray that either Clare or Ms. Putzy gets hit by a bus.

DON

Sounds about right.

CUT TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Albie is at a table by himself. He is fidgeting and sipping on a small cup of coffee. Next to him are six empty packets of sugar. He sees something outside and rushes to open the door. Ms. Putzy enters. She and Albie walk towards his table.

ALBIE

I wish you had let me pick you up.

MS. PUTZY

I know how to call a cab.

Albie pulls Ms. Putzy's chair out and she sits down.

ALBIE

Would you like some coffee?

MS. PUTZY

Coffee stunts growth.

Albie sits down.

ALBIE

*Right...* I want to apologize for yesterday. I can't imagine my behavior inspired confidence. But, if you'll hear me out, I think you'll realize there's a better course of action than pursuing legal *umm* action.

Ms. Putzy leans back in her chair.

ALBIE (CONT'D)

And I know part of you feels the same way because you're here right now.

MS. PUTZY

The only reason I'm here is so I can tell you this to your face. As soon as I realized you were defending Gavin, I knew we'd win the case. You haven't changed since I had you in school. You think by sucking up to me I'll just have to see things your way. Well it didn't work then and it's not working now. Don't be stupid Albert. Grow up.

Ms. Putzy is rather pleased with herself. Albie is a bit shaken and takes a second to collect himself.

ALBIE

Maybe you're right Ms. Putzy. Maybe I have been stupid. But you know what's really stupid? Getting written up three times for underage drinking and then complaining on Facebook that the 'fascist' dean scheduled your disciplinary hearing for 9 AM. Do you know what this is?

Albie pulls out a blank form.

ALBIE (CONT'D)

It's a hospital intake form. See this little box?

(MORE)

ALBIE (CONT'D)

That's for BAC or Blood Alcohol Content. St. Mary's started including this for all the drunk college kids that come in on the weekend. If Eric was drunk when he came in, they know exactly how drunk. And you know, I really doubt that Eric got into a violent fight because he was sober. I'll know for sure if we go to court and I request his intake form as evidence of his injury. Then his insobriety will be a matter of public record. *And who knows*, a concerned citizen, an angry Boucher maybe, points the dean's attention to the fight. You know the Bouchers don't you Ms. Putzy? The family whose name is all over the university? Maybe the university decides it doesn't want a violent, remorseless drunk as a student.

Ms. Putzy is white-knuckling her handbag.

ALBIE (CONT'D)

Of course, if we just avoid court altogether, the university might never know about Eric's drunken fight.

Ms. Putzy stands up. Albie looks very satisfied with himself.

MS. PUTZY

Don't think I'll forget you threatening my son.

Ms. Putzy leaves. Albie's satisfaction slips into worry.

CUT TO:

INT. ALBIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Albie is on his laptop with the same worried look on his face. A Skype call comes in from 'Mom and Dad' and Albie quickly tries to fix his hair, straighten his tie, and look happy. He clicks accept. CAROL and TED SHEPARD appear on screen. They're both in their 50s and dressed as if they just had brunch at a country club.

ALBIE

Hey Mom! Hey Dad!

CAROL

Hi! Just checking in on your first day.

TED

Have they thrown you any cases yet?

CAROL

Have you 'saved anyone from the system'?

ALBIE

Actually I'm working on an assault case. I just had a really good sit down with the respondent's mother.

CAROL

Mother? Perfect, they already have you defending someone who beats up children.

ALBIE

He's barely a minor.

CAROL

You know, I could still get you that job at the DA. You could put away people like that.

TED

Or if you want something corporate-

Trey pokes his head in Albie's door, but no one notices.

TREY

Hey Albie I-

TED

-I still golf with the head of Union Bank.

Trey overhears this and walks over to the computer.

TREY

Hi I'm Trey Baumerman, I'm Albie's senior here at WMC. I'm sort of showing him the ropes around here.

CAROL

Oh that is so sweet. Thank you for doing that for our Albie.

Trey, confused, mouths the words 'our Albie'.

TREY  
 (Whispering to Albie)  
 These clients *really* like you. And  
 they look rich.

ALBIE  
 (Whispering to Trey)  
 What? These are my parents.

Trey immediately loses interest in Carol and Ted.

TREY  
 (To Albie)  
 Oh Don wants you in his office  
 ASAP. So that's either really good  
 or really bad.

CAROL  
 I hope your client didn't attack  
 another child.

ALBIE  
 I'm sure it's just a routine first  
 day check-in.

TREY  
 I didn't meet with Don my first  
 day.

ALBIE  
 (To parents)  
 Alright bye! Talk to you later.

Albie shuts his laptop.

CUT TO:

INT. DON'S OFFICE - DAY

Grace opens the door for Albie, who stumbles in. Grace  
 signals for him to be quiet. Don is sitting at his desk. It's  
 clear someone is on the conference phone.

CLARE (PHONE)  
 Is that the young man who met with  
 Ms. Putzy?

Don and Grace look expectantly at Albie.

ALBIE  
 Yes it is. Sorry to have kept you  
 waiting...

Grace and Don mouth Boucher to Albie.

ALBIE (CONT'D)

Ms. Boucher, My name is Al--

GRACE

This is our newest hire, Albie Shepard.

CLARE (PHONE)

Let him speak for himself. I don't want you taking credit from him again. Well Albert, I thought you'd like to know that I just finished talking to Ms. Putzy. I don't know how she got my number and she used the opportunity to say several unkind things to me, but she also said that you convinced her to drop the charges against Gavin.

Don, Grace, and Albie all react with great happiness and relief, but attempt to sound calm to Clare.

DON

She made the right decision.

CLARE (PHONE)

Out of curiosity, what did you say to Ms. Putzy at your meeting?

ALBIE

I just explained to her that if Eric had been drinking the night of the... incident that could come out in court and have repercussions for him at the university.

CLARE (PHONE)

Well that sounds very reasonable.

ALBIE

I should mention, I couldn't have done any of this without Grace's guidance. I wouldn't have even known about the case without her.

CLARE (PHONE)

Is that so? I'll keep that in mind. Of course, things aren't perfect. Ms. Putzy is suing for damages.

DON

How much is she asking?

CLARE (PHONE)  
Five hundred thousand.

GRACE  
They'll be laughed out of court.

CLARE (PHONE)  
True, but we won't go to court.

GRACE  
Why not?

CLARE (PHONE)  
Because Ms. Putzy has this.

A recording starts playing through the phone.

ALBIE (RECORDING)  
And who knows, a concerned citizen,  
an angry Boucher maybe, points the  
dean's attention to the fight. You  
know the Bouchers don't you Ms.  
Putzy? The family whose name is all  
over the university? Maybe the  
university decides it doesn't want  
a violent, remorseless drunk as a  
student.

Grace puts her head in her hands. Albie is confused.

ALBIE (NOT RECORDING)  
What? I didn't say anything  
illegal.

DON  
If this gets out, it will look like  
the Bouchers threatened to use  
their influence at the university  
to get a student kicked out.

GRACE  
And if it's admitted to court in  
their lawsuit...

CLARE (PHONE)  
The media would have a field day. I  
trust you know what to do Donald.

Clare hangs up. Don takes a moment and then turns to Grace.  
Before Don can say anything--

GRACE  
You can't fire me Don. I'm  
quitting.

DON  
If I fire you you'll get severance.

GRACE  
Quitting feels too good.

ALBIE  
I'd love to get severance.

GRACE  
You can't get severance after one  
day of work.

DON  
I'm really sorry.

ALBIE  
I moved back to Arizona for this...

GRACE  
Better to be fired in Tucson than  
San Francisco. Rent's a lot cheaper  
here.

DON  
I'll tell security to let you leave  
the building on your own.

GRACE  
Oh Don you sweetheart. You're the  
only thing I'll miss about this  
place.

Grace pats Don's shoulder.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
Because I'm going to steal all my  
favorite office supplies. Alright,  
I'm out.

Grace walks out the door and Albie follows her.

CUT TO:

INT. OUTSIDE DON'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Grace is walking quickly towards her office. Albie struggles  
to keep up.

ALBIE  
Grace I'm so sorry. I thought I was  
helping. What are we going to do?

GRACE

Albie I love you. What's done is done. But you just got me fired, so right now I need to figure out *my own* life.

Grace walks off towards her office, swiping a stapler from a nearby desk in the process. Albie, alone, walks slowly towards his office. Trey runs up.

TREY

Hey! Did you hear that Grace just quit? I wonder what that's about.

Albie ignores Trey and keeps walking.

CUT TO:

INT. ALBIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Albie enters his office. There is a young man sitting at the other desk. When he sees Albie he stands up to shake his hand. Albie doesn't notice him.

NEW GUY

Hi I'm Jared! I think we're sharing an office.

Albie walks to his desk. He opens his briefcase, shoves everything inside, and turns to the new guy.

ALBIE

Don't screw up here.

CUT TO:

INT. EL MEZÒN DEL COBRE - NIGHT

Albie, drunk, is sitting alone at the restaurant's small bar and playing with the label of an empty beer bottle. His phone rings and Grace's name appears on its screen. Albie answers.

ALBIE

Am I being sued too now?

GRACE (PHONE)

Don't be melodramatic. How quickly can you get downtown?

ALBIE

I just got fired, don't tell me I can't be melodramatic.

GRACE (PHONE)  
Are you drunk?

ALBIE  
Should I not be?

GRACE (PHONE)  
Hold on I'll come get you.

CUT TO:

INT. GRACE'S MUSCLE CAR - NIGHT

Grace is driving. Albie is laying down in the back.

GRACE  
You can sit in the front you know.  
You're not ten.

ALBIE  
I think I need to be ten for a bit.

GRACE  
Suit yourself, but I'm not pulling  
over to get you ice cream.

ALBIE  
You know what the worst part is?

GRACE  
No ice cream?

ALBIE  
My parents are going to be so happy  
that I'm not working at WMC.

GRACE  
Not when they hear where your next  
job is.

Grace stops the car and Albie looks out the window. We see an old motel with a neon sign of a woman diving into a pool.

ALBIE  
I didn't know you lived in a motel.

GRACE  
This isn't where I live. This is  
where we work.

Grace exits the car and Albie follows.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Grace goes to trunk of the car and opens it.

GRACE

We're returning to our roots. Here.

Grace hands Albie boxes from the trunk. Grace begins walking to a first floor room and Albie follows.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Remember when I used to bust you out of school to watch me in court? It will be just like that. Only this time you'll be wearing a suit and your parents will be even more upset. Welcome to the Law Offices of Hackman and Shepard!

ALBIE

In a motel?

GRACE

In the lovely Almendra Arms.

ALBIE

Grace didn't you join WMC because your solo practice failed?

GRACE

It only failed in that it didn't make any money. But this time it will be different because you'll be with me.

Grace and Albie get to a door. Grace begins struggling to unlock it.

ALBIE

I don't know if you've been paying attention, but last time I tried to be a lawyer I lost my client half a million in less than a day.

GRACE

Sure you screwed up, but you showed that you could think like a lawyer, you saw the angle. A little coaching and--

We hear the sound of footsteps behind Grace and Albie. Albie turns around and, panicked, jumps in front of Grace as if to protect her.

ALBIE

Watch out!

A hulking figure cloaked in shadow walks towards Grace and Albie. The figure steps into the light to reveal a large tattooed man wearing glasses.

GRACE

This is Boomer, our paralegal.

Albie sheepishly stops trying to protect Grace.

ALBIE

Oh I'm sorry. Uh nice to meet you.

Boomer shakes Albie's hand. He's polite, but offended.

BOOMER

Hi.

(To Grace)

There still stuff in the car?

GRACE

Yeah in the back. Thanks for coming on such short notice.

BOOMER

Thanks for hiring me.

Boomer starts off towards the car.

ALBIE

(Whispering)

*That's a paralegal?*

GRACE

Yeah. I represented him a few years back. It didn't work out, but in prison he studied law. He's working for cheap because he needs a job to get his PO off his ass. See? Our firm's already shaping up.

Grace opens the door to the room. She and Albie head inside.

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Grace turns on the lights. The room is revealed to be a dingy motel room with garish pink walls and a hole in the ceiling.

ALBIE

It's not *ours* yet. I haven't agreed to anything.

Albie looks around the room.

ALBIE (CONT'D)

And this isn't a firm. It's a motel room! Not even a good one.

From the doorway-

EMILY (O.S.)

It's free isn't it?

EMILY (60s) enters the room wearing a tool belt, tight leather pants, and pumps.

GRACE

And we're very grateful, Emily. However, as your lawyer, I think you should consider covering up that hole. It looks a little--

ALBIE

Asbestos-y.

EMILY

I'll call the drywall guy tomorrow.  
(To Albie)  
I hope that pleases you.

Emily exits.

ALBIE

I'm sorry.

GRACE

I thought you'd be excited.

ALBIE

I really appreciate you inviting me to be a partner, but... I could still get a job in San Francisco.

GRACE

I thought you came out here because you didn't want to do what your parents do. Now you're going to run back to them?

ALBIE

I *thought* I was going to work at an established law firm, not start my own! At least I know the DA's office or Union Bank isn't going to collapse.

GRACE

Hackman & Shepard is not going to collapse. I'm a seasoned lawyer.

ALBIE

A seasoned lawyer whose previous solo firm collapsed!

GRACE

I was in a lot of debt.

ALBIE

That's reassuring.

GRACE

But that's not going to happen this time. The office space is free because I represented Emily over some bogus brothel charges, Boomer's working half-salary, and I liberated our supplies from WMC.

ALBIE

Even with no overhead we still have to make money. Who's going to hire two fired lawyers?

GRACE

First of all, *you* got fired. I quit. Second of all, the government! The state slashed the public defenders' budget. Now they contract out every other case.

ALBIE

That's... actually reasonable. But we can't live off the scraps of the legal system forever.

ALBIE (CONT'D)

I have student loans. Our office space is a motel-cum-brothel. Our paralegal's a criminal. Our supplies are stolen. We have no guaranteed benefits or salary. Crime is going down overall. Our business model is built on a disappearing clientele!

GRACE

It's a perfect springboard, we'll take on the cases no one else will touch, but with guaranteed pay! Soon we'll get a reputation. Clients will flood in. But I'll be discerning, higher rates for the rich ones! One day we'll own this entire motel.

GRACE (CONT'D)

I can see it now...

Grace grabs Albie's arm and drags him outside.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

GRACE

Blazing against the desert sky,  
calling out to the clients everyone  
else is too coward to take on. A  
beacon, a monument, a middle finger  
directed at Clare Boucher and every  
board member at every law firm in  
this godforsaken, wannabe  
libertarian, jail-the-poor-and-fine-  
the-rich, chicken crap state. A  
sign, Albie, a sign-

We cut to Grace and Albie from afar with the neon sign in the foreground.

GRACE (CONT'D)

-Hackman & Shepard, Attorneys at  
Law.

Albie lets out a sigh, turns to Grace, and shakes her hand.

The neon sign flickers and goes out.

Credits.

\*

Rule of Law Supplement

## Episode 2:

Hackman & Shepard is just getting off the ground. The motel room barely looks like an office, Albie is still unsure if joining was the right decision, and, worst of all, the firm has yet to get a case. Then, it gets its first job applicant. Trey has been let go by Williams, Maxwell, & Carter after unknowingly sleeping with the prosecutor of a major case and letting slip key parts of the defense's argument. The details of his firing have been whispered across Arizona's law firms and so, with nowhere else to turn, Trey comes to Grace and Albie. Normally, they'd both love to reject him, but Trey has brought along a major case when they need it most. A life-insurance salesman has been hanging outside a motorcycle shop and offering to pay for people's motorcycle upgrades *if* they let him take out a life-insurance policy on them. Last week, one of the salesman's "beneficiaries" died after his bike was apparently sabotaged. The DA suspects the salesman and charges are probably coming in the next few days.

Grace and Albie go to a biker bar to track down the dead man's friends. Grace asks Boomer to come, but he refuses. A biker bar isn't a good place for someone on parole to be. Grace is completely at ease around the

drunken and rowdy bikers, while Albie is transparently nervous. Meanwhile, Trey teams up with Boomer to do research for the case. However, Hackman & Shepard has yet to acquire research materials, so Boomer and Trey must sneak into the university law library, from which they are each banned for very different reasons.

After a series of awkward attempts at blending in, Albie manages to find the dead man's best friend, a mechanic named Stink. However, a faux pas on Grace's part makes the whole bar think she and Albie are cops and Stink's a snitch. Back at the law library, Boomer is doing a first year law student's homework in exchange for her smuggling him legal texts. Trey insists that he is Boomer's superior and that therefore he should not have to do the student's homework. Boomer gets a call from Grace about the trouble she and Albie are in.

Things are looking dire for Albie, Grace, and Stink, when Boomer bursts into the bar holding Trey up by his tie and claiming he found Trey sneaking about around back. As the bikers swarm around Trey (now suspected of being another cop), Boomer quickly ushers Grace, Albie, and Stink to safety and the four of them return to the motel. In the tag, Trey joins them, having escaped from the angry bikers.

## Season Arcs:

*Rule of Law* works with three primary themes: reconciling who you thought your family members were with who you understand them to be as an adult, the way family conflict can play out across generations, and accepting that you can't change the flawed system that you work in, but you might be able to fight it. Albie grew up with a romanticized view of Grace fighting and winning against an unjust system. He didn't see the debt, the stress, or the inevitable and numerous losses. He knows about those now, but as the season goes on, Albie will have to grapple with how unglamorous Grace's life really is. For all her experience, Grace can still make bad calls in her personal and professional life. For her part, Grace will spend the season struggling with how Albie is no longer a wide-eyed kid, impressed with everything she does. Now, he questions her and judges her. He doesn't provide the ego boost that he used to. They still have a mentor-mentee relationship, but over the course of the season it will mature into more of a partnership.

Grace doesn't want to be a part of "the sausage factory of justice," but she also knows it's impossible not to be. She can't change the criminal justice system and being a lawyer means participating in it. However, it can

be emotionally trying to choose your battles every day. Grace will overload the firm with difficult cases as she relishes her freedom from WMC and will eventually have to make some hard decisions to not take cases that she really cares about.

Trey will serve Hackman & Shepard well, but his ambition and personality will still render him an antagonist (especially towards Albie). Don will stay at WMC, but will frequently meet up with Grace to catch up and to tip her off to cases WMC has passed on. Albie's parents will go from quietly unhappy to furious when they learn of Hackman & Shepard. This will result in a huge fight between Grace and Carol (Albie's mother), which will put Albie in an awkward spot at the firm. Eventually, Albie will have to stand up to both Grace and Carol to prevent himself from being used as a pawn in their decades old sibling rivalry.