

INT BAR - EVENING NOVEMBER 2014

MICHAEL BRADLEY is a slim, semi-retired early fifties man with a full head of silver hair. He is sitting at the bar as RALPH FLINT, a very tall heavyset man in his late forties, balding with a ponytail walks up beside him.

RALPH

Michael?

Michael takes his eyes off the game on the TV above the bar in the corner to see who is speaking to him.

MICHAEL

Yeah. That's me.

Michael gives Ralph a quick glance up and down.

RALPH

Hey sorry for running a little late. I was meeting with the families of the cheerleaders and things ran a little long.

Ralph takes the seat next to him and motions to the bartender.

MICHAEL

No problem. --I was just sitting here trying to convincing myself that I was doing the right thing by meeting you and getting involved in all of this again.

RALPH

Trust me the parents of those girls will appreciate it. You're doing the right thing.

MICHAEL

If only you could convince my gut... 'cause I know my wife wouldn't agree with this.

Bartender shows up to get Ralph's drink order.

BARTENDER

Can I get you something?

RALPH

Yeah, uh give 'em another one of whatever he's drinking and a Budweiser for me.

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BARTENDER

Another Arnold Palmer comin' up.

RALPH

Hey why don't you go grab us a table in the corner where we can have a little privacy and I'll get everything covered over here.

Michael drinks the last of his drink and heads over to the corner while Ralph pays for the drinks.

Ralph watches as Michael heads to the far corner. He reaches in puts a twenty on the bar as the bartender leaves a fresh drink and a beer for him.

RALPH

Keep the change?

The bartender gives him an approving nod for the tip and turns his back to enter the sale into the register. Ralph stands there with the drinks for a couple moments before he picks up the drinks and heads to the table to join Michael.

RALPH

Ay, uh --can you bring us a bowl of popcorn and some pretzels please?

BARTENDER

Sure thing boss.

Ralph takes the seat in the booth opposite Michael and slides his Arnold Palmer to him.

MICHAEL

Thanks, I appreciate it.

RALPH

I know this is difficult and I appreciate you agreeing to meet with me.

MICHAEL

I'm only doing this for my wife. She can't take much more of this. If talking to you helps find the real killer then it'll be worth it. --But right now, nobody seems to care about me or the hell they're putting my wife and family through.

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RALPH

Believe me I actually understand you. I was a cop here for almost twenty years but because of some false trumped up charges against me --here I am doing gigs like this and providing personal security here and there to make ends meet.

MICHAEL

So what is it that I can do for you?

A waitress drops off three bowls, popcorn, pretzels and peanuts.

RALPH

Thanks sweetheart.

MICHAEL

Bars --always trying to make a buck huh? Salty and thirsty, hand in hand.

RALPH

That's the name of the game.

Ralph grabs a handful of peanuts and tosses them back.

RALPH

Looks like their plan is going to be working on me tonight. Hard for me to resist salty snacks and a cold beer.

MICHAEL

Never been a drinker. Sometimes I used to wonder if I really had any real friends or was it just because they knew they had a designated driver.

Ralph holds here beer in the air.

RALPH

Well here's to keeping the roads safe.

Ralph stares until Michael reluctantly responds in kind and takes a drink of his Arnold Palmer.

FADE OUT.

EXT BAR - HOURS LATER

Ralph is helping Michael out of the bar. Michael staggers and stumbles visibly relying completely on Ralph to walk.

RALPH

I wouldn't suggest you try to drive anywhere Mr. Designated driver. You'll feel a lot better in the morning after you sleep it off.

Prostitutes walking by are waving at cars that are slowly driving by as they stumble and stagger to the motel across the street.

INT MOTEL ROOM - HOURS LATER

Two policemen push the door of the Motel room open. They find Michael sprawled out on the bed with his pants around his ankles and signs of lipstick on his face, chest and stomach.

Michael is non responsive as they continue to enter the trashed room. The room is in total disarray as if there was a fight. As they approach the bed they find a young white female, visibly abused on the floor.

POLICE OFFICER

Ma'am, --Ma'am. Are you OK?

The officer kneels down and placing his hand on her neck checking for a pulse.

POLICE OFFICER

She doesn't have a pulse.

He continues to wait to confirm for a few more seconds before he looks back again.

POLICE OFFICER

She's dead.

The silence is broken as Michael groans as he tries to turn over.

INT JAIL - TWO DAYS LATER

Michael is in an interview room in the jailhouse talking to his potential Defense Attorney, ROY PRICE, a well dressed, man with square features, broad shoulders in his mid forties. Roy speaks very deliberately, calculated, sometimes dragging out the first word to his sentence as he collects his thoughts.

ROY

Welllll... Unfortunately I'm gonna need you to go back and tell me about the two cheerleaders that were murdered a year ago.

Michael sighs, dropping his head as he begins to picks at some scratches on the table.

MICHAEL

I never imagined that an innocent verdict would continuously haunt my life the way this case has.

ROY

Believe me... I understand. --But I need to know everything. I need to know what I'm up against if you want me to take this case and for you and your family to have a fighting chance.

Michael looks up from the table. Takes a deep breath as he straightens up to look Roy in the eyes as he gives him an acknowledging nod of his head.

MICHAEL

Can I ask you a question first?

ROY

Sure, --if you think it will help.

MICHAEL

It's never a conflict of interest for you? --You know, once you were putting people away... And now you represent the people your brothers in blue spent their blood sweat and tears trying to put away?

ROY

It's not a conflict of interest for me.

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ROY (CONT'D)

I'm not a public defender. I pick and chose the cases I believe in. I only take the cases where I honestly believe the person is getting a raw deal.

MICHAEL

So why did you become a Defense Attorney.

Roy breaks eye contact as he thinks back.

ROY

I sent a man to prison for a crime he didn't commit. --I wasn't in control... and for the first time in six years I realized just how little control I had.

MICHAEL

You couldn't live with that on your conscious.

ROY

The legal system isn't perfect. It's only as good as the people that support it. I just want to do my part to fix the parts that are broken.

MICHAEL

So are you hated by the police?

ROY

No. Most cops are good people that want truth and justice. --I don't look for loopholes. I don't try to discredit good work. And I don't try to get criminals off on technicalities.

MICHAEL

So is that why we're here? --You want to know what if any involvement I had in the crimes?

ROY

The sooner I know, the sooner we can move forward with getting you out of here.

Michael leans back in his chair to get more comfortable.

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MICHAEL

Where do I start?

EXT LAKE MICHAEL BRADLEY HOUSE - NOON OCTOBER 3, 2013

Beautiful, crisp fall day. Michael is out walking his two retrievers along the bank of the lake going into the woods behind his property. Dogs run and play.

Michael walks into the mudroom to rinse their paws off and his boots. The caked up mud begins to dilute and swirl down the drain.

INT. LAKE HOUSE

KAYE BRADLEY, a young looking fifty year old, beautiful, fare skin woman with short dark brown hair, is relaxing in the living area.

MICHAEL

Hey honey, what's for lunch?

KAYE

Not sure. I was hoping you'd have something in mind. Any ideas?

MICHAEL

Something simple, maybe just soup and a sandwich.

Kaye smiles, gets up to go to kitchen.

KAYE

You make the sandwiches and I'll get the soup.

The are interrupted by a knock at the mudroom door. They both look to each other.

MICHAEL

You expecting anyone?

KAYE

I was just about to ask you the same thing?

Michael goes to the door. Kaye peeks around the side.

MICHAEL

Hello, can I help you?

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OFFICER CHARLES

Yes, I'm Sheriff Snyder. You mind if I ask you a few questions?

MICHAEL

Sure, what's it regarding?

OFFICER CHARLES

Is this your house?

MICHAEL

Yes, my wife and I live here.

OFFICER CHARLES

We're looking for two teenage girls that have gone missing and just trying to see if you can provide any information.

Kaye is now standing next to Michael in the doorway.

OFFICER CHARLES

Hello, ma'am. I was just asking your husband if he had seen two teenage girls around here the last couple of days. Seems they've gone missing and people are growing rather concerned.

KAYE

Oh. Well, I can understand that. But no, we haven't seen anyone for that matter around here in quite some time. Typically during the fall and winter it's pretty dead around here.

OFFICER CHARLES

Do you mind if I come in and ask you all some questions about the property?

MICHAEL

Sure. Come on in. We're just about to have lunch.

Michael holds door for Charles. As he enters; he notices the work boots with wet traces of mud.

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OFFICER CHARLES

This is a beautiful home. I wondered who had bought the property. Never got a chance to meet you all.

KAYE

We bought the house a couple years back, but used to just come to visit. We're not much for socializing and pretty much just keep to ourselves.

OFFICER CHARLES

Can I ask you... are you able to walk from here to the Hillman factory?

MICHAEL

Yeah, pretty much if you don't mind getting muddy and climbing through some thick brush.

OFFICER CHARLES

They were last seen leaving the factory. Witnesses said they were seen heading towards the lake.

MICHAEL

Unfortunately we haven't seen or heard anything. But I promise if we see anything or can be of any help we won't hesitate.

OFFICER CHARLES

That's all I can ask. I appreciate your time. Here's my information in case anything comes up.

Officer Snyder leaves a card and begins to walk out, pausing in the mudroom, looking at the work boots again.

OFFICER CHARLES

Sorry. One last thing. What happened to your boots?

MICHAEL

I wear them when I go for a walk with the dogs.

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MICHAEL (CONT'D)

We usually get into some pretty interesting areas out there and they come in real handy.

OFFICER CHARLES

Alrighty, I'll get out of your hair and let you two enjoy the rest of your day.

RETURN TO THE JAIL CELL

ROY

Soooo after you talked... did you think you were a suspect?

MICHAEL

Not at all. A little over a week later and the nightmare began.

EXT MICHAEL BRADLEY HOME - NOON OCTOBER 12, 2013

Police cars outside the home. The dogs come running and barking as police begin to file out of the house. Kaye stands by the door as Michael comes into view.

MICHAEL

What's wrong? Is Anthony OK? What happened?

Officer Snyder begins walking towards Michael and sees that his boots are covered in mud.

OFFICER CHARLES

Mr. Bradley, you're under arrest for suspicion of murder. We need you to come with us to the police station for questioning.

MICHAEL

Murder? Who? What are you talking about? I haven't killed anyone.

OFFICER CHARLES

I'm going to need you to take off your boots.

Michael is confused as they begin to hand cuff him. They are taking off his boots and placing them in an evidence bag.

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MICHAEL

What is this? Why are you taking my boots?

OFFICER CHARLES

Read him his rights.

An officer begins reading Michael his Miranda Rights.

RETURN TO THE JAIL CELL.

ROY

I'll say one thing. Things went to trial pretty quickly for a case of this magnitude.

MICHAEL

Both sides felt that they had all they needed to win their case. I knew I was innocent and had nothing to do with it. I could account for my time so we wanted things expedited. Danny Frye felt he had enough to get a guilty verdict so both sides agreed to move forward.

ROY

Other than your lawyer. Who else can I talk to about the case.

MICHAEL

Talk to the parents of those two cheerleaders. They know more about the truth than anyone else. They were actually my most vocal supporters.

ROY

One last question. You said you were going to meet with Danny Frye and an investigator. Why would you do that?

MICHAEL

He told me if I wanted to clear my name and prove I had nothing to do with it, then I needed to help him. I had no choice, my wife was losing it.

INT. DEN BRADLEY HOME - NOON NOVEMBER 2014.

Michael is watching Kaye sitting in the den. The TV is off as she just sits with a blank stare. Michael finally enters the room and places his hands on Kaye's shoulder and kisses her the top of her head.

MICHAEL

Want anything for lunch?

He gets no response from Kaye. Looks on with an awkward silence waiting for a response. Walks towards kitchen.

MICHAEL

Honey, you want something for lunch? --Maybe soup and a sandwich?

KAYE

No. I'm not hungry.

Michael tries to think of something to say to strike up a conversation.

MICHAEL

--You know... you're going to wither away if you keep up like this. You're not on a diet or anything are you? --You still look amazing to me.

Kaye stands up and turns to look at Michael.

KAYE

You act like everything is OK, like our lives are the same as they were before all this happened.

MICHAEL

Honey, they found me not guilty, and I've told you a million times I didn't have anything to do with those girls. You know where I am almost a hundred percent of the time.

Kaye walks towards Michael in the kitchen, visibly agitated, fighting back tears.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

KAYE

I'm not accusing you of anything.
Did I say anything about doubting
whether you did it or not? I
believed you; I stood by you
through everything.

MICHAEL

And I love you for it. I
appreciate everything you did, and
all that you went through.

KAYE

Michael I can't take this any
more. Everywhere I go people
stopping, staring, pointing and
whispering. I know what they're
saying, what they're thinking.

MICHAEL

Honey

Kaye slams her hand on the island counter in the kitchen.

KAYE

No Michael. We lost our church;
the few friends we had are freaked
out and always have excuses why
they can't come over or go out.

Michael tries to hold her arms to comfort her.

MICHAEL

We knew this was going to take
some time. People will relax when
they find the real killers, when
they know the truth.

Kaye frees herself and steps back from Michael.

KAYE

How long Mike? How long are we
supposed to wait?

MICHAEL

I don't know!

KAYE

What if they never find anyone
else?

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KAYE (CONT'D)

What if for the rest of your life
we live under suspicion from all
our neighbors. How long can we
live with the whispers?

MICHAEL

I thought you said you didn't care
what people thought.

KAYE

(yelling)

That was then! That was what you
needed to hear! I was hoping,
praying that people would put two
and two together, look at the
facts and know it wasn't you!

Michael reaches out to hold her again. She stops
yelling.

KAYE (CONT'D)

--I hoped that they would accept
you being found not guilty and
everything would be fine. We're
still getting calls, notes,
threats. It's almost been six
months since the trial. How much
longer Michael? I can't do this.

She places her head on his chest, crying. Michael is
looking off in the distance for an appropriate response.

MICHAEL

--OK. Why don't you head out of
town? --We can always go back
home or we can look at starting
all over again somewhere else
where no one knows us... Where no
one knows me.

KAYE

Where is that? Everyone knows
you. Anywhere we go we're going
to have to face this. Maybe not
immediately but at some point it's
not like we have a common name.

MICHAEL

I'll change my look. I'll go by
an alias. We can buy a house
through our estate or start up a
company and buy it through the
company.

(MORE)

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MICHAEL (CONT'D)

If you want to disappear we can do that. We can go anywhere you want just you and me.

Just as she is about to reach up to kiss him they hear a loud thud and smashing of glass. They go to the window and see their car window smashed.

KAYE

We have to leave this place Michael. These people are crazy and it's getting dangerous.

MICHAEL

Yeah, OK. Let's think about some places tonight. You go and meet with some realtors in the areas. Don't tell them who you are.

KAYE

What about you? Aren't you coming?

MICHAEL

No, I'll stay and watch over the house. They aren't going to do anything to me. And plus, like you said everyone knows who I am. If I go then they might not help us or they'll start asking questions we don't want to deal with right now.

He looks down at her lovingly.

Think, it's not like you're going to listen to my opinion when it comes to picking the house anyway. --I trust your judgement.

She looks up, smiles and laughs.

KAYE

I honestly don't know how you handle all this. It's like nothing affects you. You always know how to make everyone laugh and forget about how bad things are.

Michael caresses her head and places it back on his chest as a lost, scared look comes over him.

RETURN TO THE JAIL CELL.

ROY

Got it. So while she was gone,
you were going to try to help
bring this to a close. Restore
your reputation and live in peace.

MICHAEL

Exactly. As long as there was
doubt, no matter where we went we
would always have to live with
people and their negativity.

ROY

You can run but you can't hide.
The only way to end things is help
find the real killers.

MICHAEL

So the big question for you is, --
will you take my case. Matthew
told me if anyone could find the
truth and help clear my name it's
you.

ROY

Welllll... I don't want to make any
promises I can't keep. You're
facing some difficult
circumstances and I need to do
some soul searching of my own.

Roy hands Michael the local newspaper.

Will Circumstantial Evidence Be Enough for a Conviction?

A picture of Michael at his previous trial with the
caption below.

Found innocent of the murder of two local teens, Michael
Bradley found naked with new victim.

MICHAEL

Please... I'm begging you, I need
your help. I didn't kill those
girls and I never met that young
lady. I would never hurt anyone,
let alone kill someone.

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ROY

Lucky for you, everything about that crime scene stinks to high heaven. I'll be able to get you out on bail. Your blood toxicology showed a date rape drug in your system and everyone that knows you will vouch for you that you don't drink or do drugs.

MICHAEL

So when can I get out of here?

ROY

Unfortunately you're going to have to wait until Monday. But I promise you, I'll at least help get you out of here. In the meantime I'll do some research on my own.

INT FAMILY ROOM - NOON

Roy is meeting with the parents of the two cheerleaders.

ROY

I really want to thank you all for inviting me to meet with you.

Father 1 speaks, tears in his eyes.

FATHER 1

I convinced everyone that it was in our best interest to talk to you. --We just don't want this case closed and someone in jail just to satisfy us or keep someone's record spotless. --We want justice for our daughters! They deserve it.

MOTHER 1

We heard Michael retained you to help him with the case at the Motel.

ROY

Welllll... I haven't exactly taken it yet. I wanted to speak to you all first and get a better understanding of the situation.

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MOTHER TWO

I don't know how to say this, as we feel guilty about how Michael's life has been turned upside down. I couldn't imagine trying to live through all this.

FATHER 2

He was a good man, who had the deck stacked against him. The thing that has been haunting all of us, and the reason we agreed to talk to you, is we just want the truth.

MOTHER 2

There were clues that pointed to there being two people at the scene. All that evidence was suppressed by Danny Frye, the prosecutor. He told us that there were things that we didn't want to know, details we wouldn't want to come out in public and that we needed to trust him to bring our daughters' killers to justice.

FATHER 1

I admit it. Initially none of us were thinking straight. We were told they had one of the killers and we trusted 'em. We had no reason not to believe 'em. But the more we learned the more we found that they were relying on circumstantial evidence, testimony from shady ex cons, some pretty far fetched assumptions of what might have occurred. No matter what anyone said, they made sure that everything lead back to Michael.

Mother 2 wipes her tears.

MOTHER 2

But the more we found out during the trial, and the more information we gathered on our own the more it was clear they were just trying to close the case.

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ROY

(confused)

Whoa, whoa, whoa. You said that you were gathering your own information? What do you mean?

Father 1 begins to scratch his head as he recalls the details.

FATHER 1

Too many things didn't add up. We were being told how to think, and what to believe. The trial was taking place on TV, polls on social media, it was everywhere. This is a small town, but now we're on the map across the country, even worldwide. The more publicity the case got, the more we were being told what to say, and how to feel.

Mother 1 reaches down to the coffee table and shows Roy various offer letters from people.

MOTHER 1

We couldn't talk about the truth; we had people from everywhere trying to turn this into a book, or a movie. You name it, we heard it. We had offers for everything imaginable, but we were being told not to bring too much attention to the evidence we were finding.

MOTHER 2

We weren't interested in the money. They said it would help with the expenses we would soon incur. But we continued to pursue our own investigation and be quiet. We were going to pursue this on our own until we had enough proof to make us feel comfortable about who they were sending to jail.

Father 1 half throwing his hands in the air looking around at all of them.

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FATHER 1

When they found Michael not guilty, it just added fuel to the fire. And let's not talk about how this killed Frye, the prosecutor. He publicly stated that he was disappointed in the jury. He said he wouldn't rest until Michael was brought to justice. --He had his own agenda. This was his fifteen minutes of fame and he wasn't ready for it to end.

Mother 2 moves from beneath her husband's arm.

MOTHER 2

He created the circus that you see. He has aspirations of becoming the mayor and instead of building a campaign for why we should vote for him he continued to dig at Michael, plugging away as to how we were not safe with a killer among us.

ROY

Why was he after this guy like that? Why did he take it so personal?

Father 1 sits back deep in the couch.

FATHER 1

I've known him for years. Everyone knows him as the guy that will eventually get his man.

Father 2 nodding in agreement.

FATHER 2

Same here, known him for years. He would tell people there are good people that have done bad things and there are bad people that do bad things, and his goal was to make sure that bad people don't get off on technicalities. He'll be the first to tell you; if you watch a criminal long enough it's just a matter of time before they screw up again.