

The Practice
Mr Shore Goes to Town
Season 8, Episode 15
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At the courthouse, in the hallway, Alan Shore and Jamie Stringer are making their way through a crowd of photographers and reporters.

Male reporter: See if you can get him to make a comment.

Male reporter: Where's Shore?!

Detective Kevin McCarley: ***Talking to a reporter.*** Personally, I think it's a mistake to hire Alan Shore. ***Alan sees Detective McCarley and slowly walks up behind him.*** People in Dedham remember him and well... I won't call him a liar, but let me put it this way, if he went out to feed the pigs, he'd have to get somebody else to call 'em.

The crowd laughs. So does Alan.

Alan Shore: That was very funny, Kevin. I demand you stop referring to this man as witless.

Jamie Stringer: ***She takes Alan's arm.*** Come on, Alan.

Alan pats Detective McCarley on the arm as he and Jamie leave.

In Judge Marcus Winnaker's courtroom, all parties are present. DA Harvey Clarke is giving his opening statements.

DA Harvey Clarke: We will present evidence of the affair. You will hear from a witness who places the defendant at the scene. You will hear from scientific experts who establish hair, body oils, semen on or in the victim, all coming from the defendant, clothing taken from the victim's home with blood splatterings from the victim. Ladies and gentlemen, in short, the evidence, all of it, eye witnesses, forensics, motive, every bit it, points to one suspect and only one suspect, Paul Stewart. ***He goes to sit.***

Alan Shore: ***He gets up.*** Isn't it exciting? A murder! Right in our own town! The delicious kind, too. One of our own dead, one of our own charged, one of our own prosecuting and best of all, one of our own defending. Me. My name is Alan Shore, and assure you I'll be doing everything I can to make this proceeding all about me. Prosecution will no doubt take delight in that, because you see? I'm a terrible person. Paul Stewart on the other hand is a good man. A kind one. Innocent too, and they make for lousy defendants. Justice. It works better when you get bad guys, not the innocent ones. And we here in Dedham... is it time for a break yet, Judge? Or shall I keep going?

Judge Marcus Winnaker: Keep going.

Alan Shore: We here in Dedham know all about travesty, don't we? Dedham! This very courtroom in fact, is ground zero for one of the worst miscarriages of justice in American history. Two innocent men, Nicolaus Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti were convicted, where we stand, for crimes they didn't commit. Why? Because the police needed these murders solved. Because they...

Judge Marcus Winnaker: Mr Shore? I'm going to instruct you to stick to this trial.

Alan Shore: ***A beat.*** This trial, in a way, is about a second chance for Dedham. In that other case, the one the Judge doesn't want me to talk about, we had Albert Einstein, George Bernard Shaw, Justice Felix Frankford or the Pope. Even the Pope! All writing letters to Dedham, begging for justice! Pleading! That we set those two innocent men free. Dedham didn't do that! On August 23, 1927, Sacco and Vanzetti were put to death. Dedham didn't get it right! Today we have yet again an innocent man on trial. This time we need Dedham to get it right.

In Judge Marcus Winnaker's courtroom, all parties are present. Detective Kevin McCarley is on the stand, DA Harvey Clarke is on direct.

Detective Kevin McCarley: Her eyes were open and vacant when we got there, and her head was like bashed in and mushed. We found the defendant's semen in her vaginal area. We found strands of his hair on her person. And we found his oil secretions on her person.

DA Harvey Clarke: But you, in fact, suspected Paul Stewart even before the blood and hair analysis.

Detective Kevin McCarley: Yes. Because a witness placed him at the scene. In fact the witness placed him at the scene on many occasions. We suspected the affair, and when we first went to question Mr Stewart, his lawyer just so happened to be there.

Alan Shore: I believe Mr. Stewart has a Constitutional right to Counsel. And I'd remind the court this is the United States of America. Ah! Forgive me. I'm sorry. I was thinking but the old America. Sorry!

Judge Marcus Winnaker: Mr. Shore! The court does not intend to tolerate your distractions.

Alan lifts his hand and nods in agreement.

DA Harvey Clarke: I have nothing further, Judge. **He goes to sit.**

Judge Marcus Winnaker: All right, Mr Shore. Now, it's your turn.

Alan Shore: **He gets up.** Thank you, Your Honor. Hello, Detective. So, how are we today?

Detective Kevin McCarley: Fine.

Alan Shore: Tell me. Would you regard yourself as a good detective?

Detective Kevin McCarley: Yes.

Alan Shore: You would? So! All the evidence that exists against my client, we should figure you to have it?

Detective McCarley doesn't reply. Well. You say a witness placed Mr. Stewart at the scene. That witness would be Catherine Piper? **Alan points to Catherine sitting in the first row.**

Detective Kevin McCarley: Yes.

Alan Shore: Would you stand, Catherine? **She stands.** Is this witness the heart of your detecting?

Detective Kevin McCarley: No. She merely supports my findings. The heart would be the physical evidence linking the defendant to the case.

Alan Shore: **Whispering.** Thank you, Catherine. **He motions her to sit down. She does.** Ah! The physical evidence. You mean like the murder weapon? Where is the murder weapon, by the way?

Detective Kevin McCarley: We didn't find it.

Alan Shore: You didn't find it?

Detective Kevin McCarley: He obviously ditched it.

Alan Shore: Ditched it? Where? You claim you've been able to plot out the exact route and timeline. My client went from Brenda's house to Church to his mother's house to his own house where he stayed till morning at which point he went to his office and from there the police station. So? Where did he ditch it?

Detective Kevin McCarley: We don't know.

Alan Shore: You don't know? That's disturbing. Let's turn to the victim then. Brenda Wilbur. Where is she?

Detective Kevin McCarley: The body was inadvertently destroyed. But the autopsy had been completed.

Alan Shore: Gee! No body. No murder weapon. Well! Lucky for us we have a good detective.

DA Harvey Clarke: Objection!

Alan Shore: So. Let me get this straight. By physical evidence you mean...

Detective Kevin McCarley: For starters, his semen.

Alan Shore: I see! And his semen would explain, A: Making love to her, or B: Killing her, or C: Loading zone for passengers only?

Detective Kevin McCarley: It means that he was there.

Alan Shore: But he could have been there hours earlier. Couldn't he?

Detective Kevin McCarley: His hairs were on her and his oil secretions.

Alan Shore: Tell me, Detective, honestly, you actually found his hair samples and body oil secretions, right on the victim?

Detective Kevin McCarley: Yes.

Alan Shore: As she lay there dead?

Detective Kevin McCarley: Yes!

Alan Shore: You're sure?

Detective Kevin McCarley: Yes!

Alan Shore: Well, then. I can see why you suspected him. **To the Judge.** Nothing further. **He turns to walk back to his table.** Oh! **He turns back.** I'm curious. Did you find anybody else's hair or body oil secretions on the victim? Say for example, mine? **The Detective doesn't reply. Alan walks right up to him.** Did you find my hair and oil secretions on the corpse, Detective?

Detective Kevin McCarley: Yes. Because you fainted on it.

Alan Shore: Well! Why didn't you question me? I certainly had motive. I'm the one person in town she didn't sleep with? Maybe I killed her?

DA Harvey Clarke: Objection!

Detective Kevin McCarley: You think you're funny?

Alan Shore: Any of your hair and fibers on her, Detective?

Detective Kevin McCarley: Because I helped you up after you fainted!

Alan Shore: So there was evidence of you on the victim? Detective! You led this jury to believe there was evidence of Paul Stewart and only Paul Stewart, on the body. That wasn't honest. I won't call you a liar, but who feeds your pigs?

DA Harvey Clarke: Objection!

Alan Shore: Sustained. So? Let's see. I could be a suspect. How about Catherine Piper? She hated Brenda! **He motions to Catherine.** Stand up, Catherine. **She stands.** Did you investigate her?

Detective Kevin McCarley: No. Be...

Alan Shore: You can sit down, Catherine. Wendy? Hi! Would you stand up please? **She stands.** Scorned wife! She certainly had a motive. No alibi, I'm told. Did you check her out? **He doesn't wait for a reply.** I'm sure you didn't. **To Wendy.** You can sit down. Thank you, Wendy. **She sits.** So many suspects. Let's not forget you, Kev. Stand up, Judge. Ah! Never mind. But you get my point, don't you, Detective. You really only looked at one person, didn't you? **The Detective doesn't reply.** Three years of fifth grade. We expected better. Shoddy work, Detective!

DA Harvey Clarke: Objection!

Alan Shore: Sustained. I'm very disappointed.

Outside the courtroom, Wendy comes up to Alan and Tara.

Wendy Stewart: Is that why you wanted me in the room? So you could point to me as a possible suspect?

Alan Shore: I wanted you in the room to help secure an acquittal for your husband. We do want that, don't we, Wendy?

Catherine Piper: **She comes up.** Hello. I want you to know, I don't mind being a suspect at all. It gives me edge.

Alan Shore: Catherine, I'm having a private conversation here.

Catherine Piper: Well, don't dilly-dally, Dear. My testimony's up next. We certainly don't wanna miss that.

In Judge Marcus Winnaker's courtroom, all parties are present. Catherine Piper is on the stand, DA Harvey Clarke is on direct.

Catherine Piper: He would come to her house, at least three times a week. He'd park on the corner of Milton and Toby. And then he'd walk a block.

DA Harvey Clarke: Three times a week?

Catherine Piper: Yes. To have lascivious sex with her.

DA Harvey Clarke: Ms Piper, on the day Brenda Wilbur was murdered...?

Catherine Piper: He was there!

DA Harvey Clarke: When?

Catherine Piper: Well, he came in the afternoon. And then, I saw him return that night. Before ten.

Alan Shore: Objection!

Judge Marcus Winnaker: On what grounds?

Alan Shore: From my interview with the witness. I believe she's misspoken.

Catherine Piper: No, I haven't. **To the Judge.** Could I be allowed to finish?

Judge Marcus Winnaker: Sit! Mr. Shore.

DA Harvey Clarke: You saw him return at ten PM?

Catherine Piper: Yes.

DA Harvey Clarke: On the night Brenda Wilbur was murdered?

Catherine Piper: Yes!

DA Harvey Clarke: And when did he leave?

Catherine Piper: Just after ten-thirty. And he was running like there was something terribly wrong!

DA Harvey Clarke: Now, Ms Piper, when the police first questioned you, you didn't said nothing about the defendant being there that night.

Catherine Piper: Because Victoria Stewart, Paul's mother, paid me six hundred thousand dollars, not to.

There is a gasp and murmuring from the spectators.

Alan Shore: **Under his breath the Paul.** We're dead.

DA Harvey Clarke: The mother of the defendant paid you six hundred thousand dollars?

Catherine Piper: And I'm so ashamed to say I took it. I think that's why Mr Shore was expecting me to lie just now. But my conscience simply got the better of me. That's why I came to you. I'm not the noblest of people. I'm obviously not above extortion. Or even lying! But... I just couldn't lie to help somebody get away with murder. No, I can't do that.

DA Harvey Clarke: Thank you, Ma'm. **He goes to sit.**

Alan Shore: **He gets up.** Hello, Catherine.

Catherine Piper: Hello.

Alan Shore: Tell me, Catherine. How do you feel about Victoria Stewart?

Catherine Piper: Why, I loathe her, of course. As does everyone else in this town.

Alan Shore: Yes. And in fact, I bet it occurred to you, you could get the extortion money and still bring her down by going to the police.

Catherine Piper: Why, yes! That was exactly my thinking.

Alan Shore: Just for fun, could you tell us your opinion of Brenda Wilbur?

Catherine Piper: She was a Godless whore.

Alan Shore: In fact you complained to the police about all the men she entertained. Tell me. Did you ever recognize any of these men?

Catherine Piper: I don't associate with those kinds of people.

Alan Shore: I see. So? In reviewing your testimony, you hated Brenda, you hate Victoria and in fact extorted her. You saw a lot of men enter and leave what eventually turned out to be the murder scene. But the only one you seemed to remember is my client. I guess, that's pretty much it. Right? You didn't see anybody commit any crime, did you?

Catherine Piper: No! But I'm sure he did it.

Alan Shore: I see. By the way, when you I said hello a few weeks ago we shook hands. You had something on your glove. Do you remember what that was?

Catherine Piper: Dog crap.

Alan Shore: Yes. Do you remember why you reached for my hand with dog stool on yours?

Catherine Piper: Because, you put dog stool in a bag and left it on my doorstep. And you ruined my fleece slippers!

Alan Shore: This happened when?

Catherine Piper: In 1971.

Alan Shore: So! You were getting even for a Halloween prank I pulled when I was nine?

Catherine Piper: Yes!

Alan Shore: You hate Godless whores, and you're a fan of vengeance.

Catherine Piper: I am a Christian, dear.

At a Catholic Church, Alan is there with Father Tom Dugan.

Father Tom Dugan: I'm not breaking any seal.

Alan Shore: I'm not asking you to. But you could verify that Brenda Wilbur was a sexually aggressive woman. Who got herself into situations.

Father Tom Dugan: How would I know that?

Alan Shore: Tom. We're desperate. I may have to ask you.

Father Tom Dugan: I'll lie.

Alan Shore: No, you won't. It's not in your character.

Father Tom Dugan: You gave me your word.

Alan Shore: I realize that.

Father Tom Dugan: If I had something to say that would help Paul...

Alan Shore: You do.

Father Tom Dugan: I don't! The only thing that will come from my little admission is the destruction of my Church. My Parish. And me. And I won't do it. I will lie, and I'll be believed, and your case will look all the more desperate.

Alan Shore: I may have to take that chance.

Father Tom Dugan: Well, you'll regret it. I promise you. **He leaves.**

In Paul's house, in his living room, Paul is pacing the floor, Tara is with him.

Tara Wilson: There's no reason to panic.

Dr Paul Stewart: No reason? The jury just heard that my mother tried to bribe a witness.

Tara Wilson: Your mother did, you didn't.

Dr Paul Stewart: I'm dead, Tara.

Tara Wilson: We still have a witness who thought that he saw a woman. We still have your testimony.

Dr Paul Stewart: My testimony. What does my testimony...?

Tara Wilson: **She walks over and touches his shoulder.** Listen, Paul...

Dr Paul Stewart: **He turns away.** Don't handle me, Tara. You know, I realize that you're assignment here to hand-hold the client. But don't.

Tara Wilson: My assignment isn't to hand-hold the client.

They look at each other for a moment.

Dr Paul Stewart: Let me ask you something, Tara. Do you think I'm innocent?

Tara Wilson: **A beat.** Yes. **They look at each other.** Yes. **She takes a step closer.** Paul...

Victoria Stewart: **She comes in.** Paul?!

Paul and Tara quickly move apart. He lets go of her hands.

Victoria Stewart: Could I have a moment with Ms Wilson, please?

Dr Paul Stewart: Why?

Victoria Stewart: I'd like a moment. **Paul sighs deeply as he leaves. Victoria walks up to Tara.** You and I had a certain discussion. My son has a family, Ms Wilson. Despite this temporary setback Paul Stewart is a respected doctor and family man in this community. That is the reputation he once had, and will have again, Ms Wilson. I am confident you don't mean to interfere with that.

In Judge Marcus Winnaker's courtroom, all parties are present. Father Tom Dugan is on the stand, DA Harvey Clarke is on direct.

Father Tom Dugan: I was actually getting ready to go home when he came in.

DA Harvey Clarke: This was around...?

Father Tom Dugan: Eleven, or so. Maybe a little bit earlier.

DA Harvey Clarke: Father, can you describe the defendant as he entered your Church that night?

Father Tom Dugan: He seemed agitated.

DA Harvey Clarke: Agitated? Did he say anything?

Father Tom Dugan: He asked if he could go into the confessional.

DA Harvey Clarke: Did something seem wrong?

Father Tom Dugan: Yes.

DA Harvey Clarke: Did you go into the confessional?

Father Tom Dugan: No. He saw a member of the cleaning crew. He seemed to panic, and he ran out of the Church.

DA Harvey Clarke: And this was on or around eleven PM the night that Brenda Wilbur was murdered?

Father Tom Dugan: Yes.

DA Harvey Clarke: Thank you, Father. **He sits.**

Alan Shore: **He gets up.** This agitation? In your opinion, could it be consistent with Paul seeing Brenda's murdered body. A woman he loved. Being emotionally traumatized by what he saw? Something that made him run to his Clergy?

Father Tom Dugan: Yes. It could be consistent with all of that.

Alan Shore: Father. Brenda Wilbur led a rather promiscuous life, didn't she? She was involved with various men, any number of whom could have come to her house that night.

Father Tom Dugan: I wouldn't know.

Alan Shore: You wouldn't know? **Father Dugan shakes his head.** You were her priest, were you not?

Father Tom Dugan: I was.

Alan Shore: Did she not indicate her propensity to seduce men?

Father Tom Dugan: I cannot break the confessional seal. I'm bound by Canon Law.

Alan Shore: Were you ever able to observe her outside the confessional. Something you could talk about?

Father Tom Dugan: No.

Alan Shore: **He nods. They look at each other for a long moment. Alan turns to walk back to his table. He stops, thinks for moment and then turns back.** Father? May I ask... were you ever romantically intimate with Brenda Wilbur? **The people in the courtroom look around at each other.** Father, I asked you a question, I'll need to insist on an answer. Did you have sex with Brenda Wilbur?

They look at each other for a moment.

Judge Marcus Winnaker: Father? We need a response.

Father Tom Dugan: Yes. I did.

Alan Shore: Was it she who seduced you?

Father Tom Dugan: Yes.

Alan Shore: Did she ever threaten to expose this to bring shame upon you and your Parish?

Father Tom Dugan: No. She did not.

They look at each other for a long moment. Alan nods and goes back to his table.

In the woods in Victoria's backyard, up in a treehouse, Alan and Paul are there.

Dr Paul Stewart: Then the other night I came up here to sit. I was pretending were ten years old again. With everything ahead of us.

Alan Shore: I've always believed, life should come with one free do-over.

Dr Paul Stewart: Are we gonna win?

Alan sighs, he doesn't reply.

At Victoria's house, in the livingroom, Alan and Victoria are there.

Alan Shore: Listen. Our defense has shifted a little. After I call Paul, I'm calling you.

Victoria Stewart: Me?

Alan Shore: You need to explain why you bribed Catherine Piper. You need to convince the jury Paul had nothing to do with that.

Victoria Stewart: I thought the idea was to distance me from the defense.

Alan Shore: Well, you've made that impossible.

In Judge Marcus Winnaker's courtroom, all parties are present. Dr Paul Stewart is on the stand, Alan is on direct.

Dr Paul Stewart: We had made love that day. Evening, really. Around six. I left, returned around ten, after I couldn't get her on the phone. And then I found her.

Alan Shore: Dead?

Dr Paul Stewart: Yes.

Alan Shore: Then what did you do?

Dr Paul Stewart: I was experiencing panic.

Alan Shore: Panic?

Dr Paul Stewart: I'm... I was a married man. A family man. I had a lot riding on this community that stemmed from leading a life of integrity. I think I felt my life imploding.

Alan Shore: Why didn't you call the police?

Dr Paul Stewart: Clearly I should have. There was nothing I could do to help Brenda. As I said, I panicked and I ran to Tom.

Alan Shore: Father Dugan?

Dr Paul Stewart: Yes. I went to the Church, I think, I guess to seek counsel or support. And then when I got to the Church I saw somebody from the cleaning crew and I panicked once again. I ran to my mother's.

Alan Shore: What did you do there?

Dr Paul Stewart: There's a treehouse in the woods out back that I built as a child, with you actually! It's a hideout from the world. I think I went there to seek refuge, I guess.

Alan Shore: Paul, how long had you been having an affair with Brenda?

Dr Paul Stewart: It was two years.

Alan Shore: Do you know if there were other men in her life?

Dr Paul Stewart: I believe there were, yes. But she would never tell me because...

Alan Shore: Because why?

Dr Paul Stewart: Because she knew I loved her.

Alan Shore: Did you kill her?

Dr Paul Stewart: No! I was there that night! But I didn't kill her! And I didn't see who did!

DA Harvey Clarke: You find a loved one lying in a pool of blood? You don't call an ambulance? You don't call the police? You just leave?

Dr Paul Stewart: I knew she was dead. And as for the police? I... My family name in this town...

DA Harvey Clarke: Oh, yes! The family name. Tell me about this treehouse you built? You're into carpentry, Doctor?

Dr Paul Stewart: It's a hobby.

DA Harvey Clarke: Hobby? Funny! We confiscated a tool box in the trunk of your car. Couldn't find a hammer?

Dr Paul Stewart: The toolbox was missing more than just a hammer. It was also missing several tools...

DA Harvey Clarke: But notably the hammer!

Dr Paul Stewart: I believe you seized several hammers from my house.

DA Harvey Clarke: None that matched that set!

Dr Paul Stewart: Look! You traced my moves that night. If I had tossed or ditched a weapon...

DA Harvey Clarke: Where's the hammer, Dr Stewart?

Alan Shore: **He gets up.** Your Honor, I must object to this. Its one thing not have evidence, it's quite another to try to prosecute with that which you do not have. Well, I tell you I have a hammer! It's a hammer of justice, it's a hammer of freedom, it's song about love between my brothers and my sisters all over this land. Except, perhaps Dedham, Massachusetts. **He sits down. DA Clarke gives Alan a look.** What?

At the courthouse, in a witness room, the defense team is there, Terry Glazer comes in.

Terry Glazer: I have good news and bad news.

Alan Shore: Bad news first.

Terry Glazer: My focus group thinks Paul is guilty.

Alan Shore: And the good?

Terry Glazer: They love you!

Alan Shore: **A beat.** Splendid.

Jamie Stringer: Alan, we might wanna think about a plea.

Alan Shore: Okay. **He sighs deeply as he sits down on a couch.**

A beat. I think not.

Jamie Stringer: This focus group is obviously trying to tell us something.

Alan Shore: Jamie. Try to understand this. If we plead out I don't get to give my closing, and I've practiced it so.

Jamie Stringer: You need to take this seriously.

Dr Paul Stewart: Everybody out. Now. Except, Alan. **Nobody moves.** I'm the client. I get to call the occasional shot. Everybody out. Now! **Tara looks to Alan, he nods. They all leave.** Seems like the old days. You and I getting in all kinds of trouble. And you having the time of your life. I'm facing prison.

Alan Shore: I'm doing the very best I can.

Dr Paul Stewart: Is there a good deal to be made here?

Alan Shore: For a guilty man I'm sure there's a terrific deal to be had. For the innocent? It would be despicably unfair. Which would you like, Paul? Good or bad?

Dr Paul Stewart: I didn't kill Brenda.

Alan Shore: I know you didn't. So let's not quit.

Paul nods.

In Judge Marcus Winnaker's courtroom, all parties are present. Victoria Stewart is on the stand, Alan is on direct.

Victoria Stewart: I know it was stupid thing to do.

Alan Shore: So why did you do it?

Victoria Stewart: I suppose I was afraid that my son wouldn't get a fair trial. I, I know how people think of me.

Alan Shore: But Victoria, if you knew your son was innocent? Why bribe a witness?

Victoria Stewart: Catherine Piper's so biased! I was concerned that she'd paint the worst possible picture. And I... It was a bad idea. One that... I was probably blinded a little. By my love for Paul.

Alan Shore: Your love for Paul. The perception is Paul is the most precious thing in your life.

Victoria Stewart: Yes.

Alan Shore: As Paul's oldest friend I've know you a very long time haven't I?

Victoria Stewart: Yes, you have.

Alan Shore: When I was sixteen years old, you and I made love. Several times in fact.

People in the courtroom are stunned. So is Victoria. The Judge pounds his gavel to stop the murmuring. He has to pound it several times.

Judge Marcus Winnaker: Mr Shore. As riveted as I am, and I am, I'm not sure this has anything to do with this trial.

Alan Shore: I'm afraid it does, Your Honor. Sleeping with me caused you a great deal of distress, didn't it Victoria? As I recall, you saw a therapist and he opined you were perhaps, on some unconscious level, not so much making love to me! But rather to Paul. Victoria? Are you in love with your son?

Victoria Stewart: That's ridiculous.

Alan Shore: Is it? I once asked you why never remarried after you husband died. And your response was, "You know full well, why!" Was that an admission to me, you were in love with your son?

Victoria Stewart: I love my son! The way a mother loves a child. It was never romantic love!

Alan Shore: Did you kill Brenda Wilbur? **Victoria gives him a stunned look.** Brenda Wilbur was not only compromising your son with a sordid affair, she was not only destroying his family, his reputation, she was sleeping with the man you wanted to sleep with!

Victoria Stewart: That is sick! If I'm gonna be accused of such depravity I should like to consult an attorney.

Alan Shore: That's alright, Victoria. I won't accuse you of anything.

They look at each other for a moment. Alan goes to sit.

DA Harvey Clarke: **A beat.** Well! That was wonderful. I guess since paying off the witness didn't work out, why not a little performance? And that was just wonderful! I guess we'll leave it at: you really, really love your son.

Judge Marcus Winnaker: Mr Shore?

Alan Shore: Defense rests, Your Honor.

In Judge Marcus Winnaker's courtroom, all parties are present. Alan is giving his closing.

Alan Shore: Ideally, whenever a crime is committed, the police should conduct an open and thorough investigation leading to a conclusion. In the best case scenario, the truth. But that presumes having unlimited resources which clearly we don't. So what often happens, we pick the most likely guy and exhaust all we've got trying to nail him. That happened eighty-plus years ago with Sacco and Vanzetti, it's happening here with Paul Stewart. Every year ten thousand innocent people are convicted in this country. That's according to one study. Others say that figure is low. That's staggering. It's disgraceful. Ten thousand wrongful convictions, every year. Why? Mainly because juries don't insist on finding guilt beyond all reasonable doubt. When a person is killed, we want somebody convicted. It's human nature. There's closure in saying a crime has been solved. There's also safety in it. We like to go to bed at night thinking the bad guy's been captured. Especially in small towns where we're desperate to feel safe. Please let Paul Stewart be the guy! He must be the guy! He's not the guy. So who is? Catherine Piper is a lunatic who not only derives glee in making the Stewart family suffer, she hated the victim as well. And she just so happened to live right across the street from her. Wendy Stewart? Had motive, she was angry, and hurt. Betrayed wives have certainly been known to react with violence. And she has no alibi. Father Tom Dugan. He had illicit sex with the victim, she had a history of committing extortion, he had everything to lose. And let's not forget Victoria, obsessed with her son's life. His reputation. His legacy. Or simply obsessed with her son. The point is, people, there are many potential suspects in this case. And that would include all the strangers in Brenda Wilbur's life. We know nothing of the nature and disposition of those relationships. Of the possible jealousies and betrayals. Precisely because they were never investigated. Paul Stewart represented only a small fraction of this woman's life. If this jury is going to insist on finding guilt beyond all reasonable doubt, Paul Stewart must be acquitted. Nobody witnessed this murder being committed. The murder weapon was never found. Despite the police tracing my client's every step. Prosecution inadvertently destroyed the victim's body before we could properly examine it. Of course there's reasonable doubt. Reasonable doubt. **A beat.** I love Paul Stewart. As I would a brother. I grew up with him. It's one of the reasons I know he's innocent. He's not infallible. He had an affair. It may cost him his marriage, perhaps the respect of his children. But he did not, Paul could not take the life of another human being. He simply could not.

A beat. This may surprise you. I love Dedham, Massachusetts. I grew up here. I'm offended by its legacy of convicting innocent people because I know that's not who we are. This time, let's set the innocent man free.

DA Harvey Clarke: Rarely, do we actually see somebody commit the crime. Typically, criminal cases are circumstantial. Now, the circumstances here are that the defendant had an affair with the victim. There was evidence that she tried to extort him. He had incentive to protect his family name and his community status. His hair, fibers, body oils were found all over the victim. His semen was found in the victim. Blood all over his clothes, he was spotted leaving the scene. That is overwhelming circumstantial evidence, ladies and gentleman. And it certainly allows you to find guilt beyond reasonable doubt. Now I suspect the defense Counsel already knows that, which is why he began finger-pointing elsewhere, everywhere. "Oh. Hey! Maybe an eyewitness did it!" "Oh! Perhaps the priest!" "Hey! How about the defendant's own mother?" And to compound this blatant attack on your intelligence, Mr Shore buttons his eloquent closing by appealing to your sense of justice. This lawyer deliberately fell on the body to contaminate evidence. The mother of the defendant tried to buy a witness. They staged a performance by mom to make you think that she killed the victim out of jealousy! Now, this would be funny if it weren't a murder trial? But it is. **He points to Paul.** That man picked up a hammer and bludgeoned a woman to death. **He points to Alan.** He's asking you to ignore that because of Sacco and Vanzetti. The police didn't explore any other suspects because there are no other suspects. Paul Stewart is the man who killed Brenda Wilbur! Which is why he dashed off to his priest to confess.

At the courthouse, in the witness room, the defense party waits.

Victoria Stewart: At some point will they send us home?

Jamie Stringer: Nine o'clock.

Jimmy Berluti: He was really compelling. The DA.

Alan Shore: How many times are you gonna say that?

Jimmy Berluti: I said you were good too.

Alan smiles and shakes his head.

Dr Paul Stewart: If the news is bad, do I go into custody right away?

Tara Wilson: The new isn't gonna be bad. We're winning.

In Judge Marcus Winnaker's courtroom, all parties are present as the jury files in.

Dr Paul Stewart: **He watches the jury come in and sit down one by one.** Don't they make eye contact when it's an acquittal?

Alan Shore: No.

Jimmy Berluti: Yes.

Judge Marcus Winnaker: **He reads the verdict then hands it back to the clerk.** I'm going to call on the foreperson to read the verdict. And I want decorum maintained by everyone. Especially the media. Madame Foreperson? Do you have a verdict?

Foreperson: Yes, Your Honor.

Judge Marcus Winnaker: Mr Stewart? You may stand up for the reading. **The defense team stands.** Would you please announce your verdict?

Foreperson: On the matter of the Commonwealth versus Paul Stewart on the charge of murder in the first degree, we the jury, find the defendant, Paul Stewart, not guilty.

Alan is stunned. So is Paul. Victoria sinks back in relief.

Judge Marcus Winnaker: The jury is dismissed! **He pounds his gavel.** We're adjourned!

Wendy smiles. So does Father Dugan. Jamie hugs Tara.

Male reporter: Mr Shore!

Male reporter: Comment, please?

People slowly start to applaud. Catherine stands up and looks at Paul in disgust.

Dr Paul Stewart: **To Jimmy.** Thank you.

Tara Wilson: **She comes over to hug Paul.** Paul, congratulations.

Catherine Piper: **She looks around.** Boo! Boo!

Dr Paul Stewart: **He and Alan look at each other in smiling disbelief.** I don't know what to say.

Alan Shore: You owe me a lot of beer. **They share a long hug.**

In the woods in Victoria's backyard, up in a treehouse, Alan and Paul are having a beer.

Dr Paul Stewart: I just have two questions for you.

Alan Shore: Okay.

Dr Paul Stewart: Who do you think killed her really?

Alan Shore: How in God's name would I know? It wasn't me.

Dr Paul Stewart: Did you really love my mother?

Alan Shore: I did.

Dr Paul Stewart: That stuff about her being romantically in love with me, is any of that...?

Alan Shore: Trial strategy.

Dr Paul Stewart: Hm. **A beat** Thank you. **A beat.** Thank you.

Alan Shore: I got a great idea. When's the last time you smoked pot?

Dr Paul Stewart: Wow. Hm.

Alan Shore: **He gets up and lifts a panel aside.** Depending on the integrity of the container.

Dr Paul Stewart: What are you doing?

Alan Shore: Our secret panel to the tree trunk. **He bends down.** Uhm. I put some good Columbian down there years ago. **He grunts.** It's nailed. **He looks at Paul.** When'd it get nailed?

Dr Paul Stewart: I don't know. It looks like an old nail.

Alan Shore: I don't know how you can see in this light whether...? **He stops. Paul looks at him. Alan has a stunned look of revelation. He sits back. Paul just looks at him.** Paul if I were to shine a light down the tree trunk what might I see? **Paul doesn't reply.** I don't wanna look down the tree trunk do I, Paul?

Dr Paul Stewart: No. You don't. **Alan looks at Paul in disbelief.** I really loved her, you know? She didn't... **He sighs.** I really loved her. **They share a long look. Paul casually drinks his beer as Alan looks at him in horror.**