BIG SHOULDERS

'Pilot'

By RJ Gray

EXT. FULLERTON TOWER - DAY

Outside his high-rise, BRIAN ALLEN, 25, immaculate in a Ralph Lauren pinstripe, refolds his pocket square. Two weeks on the job and this is a big day.

His DOG circles a solitary tree on a tiny island of grass, Brian picks up the pooper-scooper.

SUPER: CHICAGO: APRIL, 1980

He impatiently checks his Rolex, his breath steaming in the Chicago cold.

BRIAN
Come on, Oliver Wendell. Make a move.

The dog peers up. *Don't rush me*.

INT. FULLERTON TOWER APARTMENT - DAY

The opulent, three bedroom condo on the 30th floor looks out over Lincoln Park and Lake Michigan.

Brian comes in with Oliver Wendell.

Find his wife, LUCINDA, also 25, an aspiring actress. But the relentless competition and lack of success has begun to chip away at her humor and confidence. And Brian's patience.

She walks over, taking his hand. There are tears in her eyes.

LUCINDA
"I woke up this morning and I kept thinking about Billy and I-I was thinking about him waking up in his room with his little clouds all around that I painted. And I thought I should have painted clouds downtown, because then he would think that he was waking up at home. I came here to take my son home. And I realized he already is home."

BRIAN
He tells her to go up and see Billy by herself. She gets in the elevator and says--

LUCINDA
"How do I look?"

BRIAN
And Hoffman says, "You look terrific."

LUCINDA
What does Brian Allen say?

BRIAN
He says you look terrific.

LUCINDA
Everybody always does long monologues. A short one will stand out more.

BRIAN
That's smart. But I'd be careful using that scene.

LUCINDA
But I was good, wasn't I?

BRIAN
Absolutely. Just saying, it's a pretty high bar.

LUCINDA (stung)
What's that supposed to mean?

BRIAN
Nothing. They're just going to think of Meryl Streep. Maybe you should do one everybody isn't so familiar with. Hey, I gotta get going or I won't beat Michael to the office.
(beat)
You were really good. I mean it.

LUCINDA
Nervous about your first day in court?

BRIAN
Not at all.

LUCINDA
It's okay to be...

She goes to the closet--

LUCINDA (CONT'D)
I got you a little something.

--and pulls out a CASHMERE TOPCOAT and shows it to him.

BRIAN
I love it.

LUCINDA
You needed a new one. Bonwit's. Not on sale.

She begins to put it on him.

BRIAN
What time's the audition?

LUCINDA
4:00. And it's a *call back*.

BRIAN
You know, all I meant is I hate the way those casting directors beat people up. I don't know how you do it.

LUCINDA
You think I like it?

BRIAN
Remember when we talked about giving it a couple of years...

LUCINDA
You talked about giving it a couple of years!

BRIAN
Then tell me what you want me to do.

LUCINDA
Believe in me.

BRIAN
I do. I am so fucking late.

He pulls the topcoat off and drops it on the couch.

LUCINDA
You're not even going to wear it?

BRIAN
(kind of an asshole)
I love it! It's just not cold enough today.

He walks to the door, already sorry for what he said.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Break a leg, babe.

LUCINDA
(abrupt)
My father thinks you're sleeping with someone. He wants to hire a private investigator.

BRIAN
God, Lucinda. Don't be absurd! Listen, we'll talk about everything tonight. It's all gonna be okay. Okay?
(convincing himself)
Okay.

EXT. FULLERTON PARKWAY - DAY

Brian sprints toward the CTA stop by his building. As the bus pulls up he drops a coin in the CHICAGO TRIBUNE VENDING MACHINE.

THE HEADLINE: "CARTER READIES NEW MOVES AGAINST IRAN"

When he pulls the paper out, the DOOR LID SLAMS DOWN clamping onto his suit jacket. He gently tugs the expensive fabric a couple of times trying to free it. No luck. A little harder.

Still no luck. He reaches in his pocket. No change. He pounds at the machine. Finally, he turns to the boarding passengers.

BRIAN
Anybody got a dime?

A MIDDLE-AGED FLESHY MAN sitting in a nearby parked car chuckles under his breath at Brian's predicament. Then he pulls out a CAMERA WITH A TELEPHOTO LENS and begins clicking away.

EXT. QUINCY, ILLINOIS - AMTRAK STATION - DAY

JUDGE WILLIAM KNOX, 60. A pillar of the legal community. A Mason, a Republican, a Presbyterian. His manner is measured, his beliefs unshakable.

He is about to board a COACH ON THE ILLINOIS ZEPHYR, saying goodbye to his wife of nearly 40 years, DORIS.

JUDGE KNOX
If you have any trouble with the car call Tichner's. And Rob said he'd come over and help in the yard.

Suddenly, tears begin to cloud Doris's eyes. She wipes them away, laughing at her unexpected emotion.

DORIS
My goodness me...

JUDGE KNOX
Except for Fort Campbell, we haven't been away from each other for more than two or three days.

DORIS
You don't have to go.

JUDGE KNOX
It wouldn't be right to pull strings. Truth is, I'm feeling a little prideful. Ted Davis told me it's an honor--a real honor.

DORIS
But, my word! Chicago. Al Capone. And that horrible man who dressed like a clown and killed all those people. And Mayor Daley - a democrat!

Knox chuckles.

DORIS (CONT'D)
Seriously. Be careful, please.

JUDGE KNOX
You know I will.

DORIS
Do you have your pills?

JUDGE KNOX
You know I do.

DORIS
And your hat and gloves. It'll still be cold up there. I'm such a mother hen...

JUDGE KNOX
I talked to the presiding judge into letting me come back the weekend of the 9th. Even got them to pay for it.

The conductor motions all aboard. They kiss. Judge Knox climbs the steps, then turns to Doris.

JUDGE KNOX (CONT'D)
I love you.

As he disappears into the coach, she remains there.

DORIS
I love you more.

INT. SILVERMAN LAW OFFICE - DAY

The elegant, understated Law Offices of Michael Brooks Silverman occupies the 9th floor corner of 144 N. LaSalle Street in Chicago.

MICHAEL SILVERMAN, late 30s, 6'4" with a Magnum P.I. mustache, is a dying breed--a solo practitioner. But he's still one of the city's richest, most successful trial lawyers. He specializes in criminal, personal injury, and matrimonial law.

Michael can hold a room better than anyone in the city. Right now, he's regaling his newly hired associate, a laughing, mesmerized Brian.

MICHAEL
The prosecutors can't help it. They're such tight-asses. Especially the Feds. He has his second chair wheel in, I kid you not, three shopping carts full of documents in these color coded tabbed folders. He figures the jury will think all that evidence looks insurmountable.

BRIAN (worshiping)
But it wasn't, right?

MICHAEL
All I have is this thin little briefcase and I pull out--one sheet of paper. I put it on the table right in front of me and my client. I do this for two weeks. The whole trial. And it's driving the prosecutor nuts--"What's on that paper? What's on that paper?" And the jury's wondering "What does Michael Brooks Silverman have up his sleeve?"

BRIAN
What'd you have?

MICHAEL
Nothing. Just a piece of paper, the hell out of god-damn blank but it distracted that prick.

BRIAN
So another Silverman client walks--

MICHAEL
Oh, no. He did six months. Hell, I could have got him that on a plea bargain. Which brings me to the moral of the story. You know what that is?

BRIAN (quoting Michael)
"The practice of law has nothing to do with the law."

MICHAEL
Nope.
(with a grin)
Though that is well-said.
(beat)
Here it is - never go to trial unless the client has already paid you.

IRENE KOZLOWSKI 30, comes in carrying an armful of correspondence and pleadings. Irene is from Polish stock, and can practically finish Michael's sentences. She's worked for him since graduating from secretarial school. Attractive, but make-up takes too much time.

IRENE
Here's the amended complaint for the Erickson divorce and interrogatories. She was out of town--so Brian, these need to be filed today.

MICHAEL (to Brian)
Do it before you go to 26th and California.

IRENE
Don't forget, I want both of you here for lunch. I'll order in.

MICHAEL
Ok, but no more than half an hour. Brian gets his cherry popped at 2 -

IRENE
Will you please quit saying that?

MICHAEL
--and I've got to try and track down Meadows this afternoon.

IRENE
Oh, and Syphilis called. In a panic, naturally.

BRIAN
I'm sorry, did she say Syphillis?

MICHAEL
Phyllis. My ex-wife.
(beat)
It's a pet name.

INT. SHEAR MADNESS BEAUTY SALON - DAY

A small store-front beauty parlor in a Chicago suburb.

The sound of a BELL above the door announces the entrance of JONETTE KOPCZYK, carry-all bag over her shoulder. Although older, Jonette looks like she's barely in her twenties. She's wearing a little too much make-up and the South Side accent she tries hard to suppress keeps popping out.

Two of the three stations are busy with CUSTOMERS. Jonette's frantic. She looks at the GIRL standing behind the vacant chair.

JONETTE
Are you Lynn? Jonette. Thanks for doing me. I'm about half crazy. I've got a job interview big-time.

LYNN
Downtown?

JONETTE
Yeah. That's why I'm here.

She engages the customer sitting next to her.

JONETTE (CONT'D)
You know, I've heard that some of those guys, when they interview you, will stick an ash tray down right in front of you. You know, to see if you smoke. If you do, they don't hire you. It increases the premium on their employee insurance. But I don't anyway so it's no big deal.
(beat)
I'm sorry. Listen to me, just running on.

LYNN
Don't worry about it. We've all been there. Now, who do you want to be today, hon?

Jonette reaches in her carry-all and pulls out a "PEOPLE" MAGAZINE.