

BONDI LEGAL

By

Tony Laumberg

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ABOUT THE PLAY

The playwright, Tony Laumberg, is a practising lawyer in Sydney. *Bondi Legal* is based on an actual case of his in which a single mother sued a chemical company seeking justice after her daughter's prized show pony was ravaged by one of its grooming products.

In the play anxiety prone locum lawyer, Brad Pitt (no relation) turns up at Bondi Legal to relieve the holidaying principal. But on his very first morning he is unwillingly thrust into the hearing of the mother's complex product liability case. More adept at conveyancing than confrontation Brad and his client are forced to take on the might of the corporate heavyweight's legal representative (a Rottweiler with a law degree) and its impressive array of expert witnesses.

What follows is nail-biting, fish-out-of-water comedy thriller that proves beyond all reasonable doubt that it's never too late to realise your full potential.

CHARACTERS

FRANK BAILEY Loud-mouthed, aggressive proprietor of a Bondi Beach legal practice. In his mid-fifties he is totally self absorbed and cares little for the plight of others.

BRAD PITT A lawyer in his forties who finds it difficult to decide if he is a man or a mouse. Completely lacking in self confidence, he is prone to panic attacks. And no-one believes his name is Brad Pitt!

FRANCES DENYER An elegant and attractive woman in her late thirties, she lives an alternate and spiritual lifestyle.. Calm, cool and collected she believes a few deep breaths can overcome any tense situation. She is a caring and gentle soul.

SIMON CROOKWELL A tall, brash, young lawyer who has a take no prisoners attitude to everything. Best described as a Rottweiler with a law degree, he will crush you as soon as look at you.

MAGISTRATE In her fifties this judicial officer has a no nonsense

NEWMAN approach to the conduct of cases in her courtroom. she seems to wear a permanent scowl on her face and goes by the nickname of “Smiley”.

DR JAMES NASH A veterinary surgeon in his thirties, he is a composed and thoughtful man, not easily ruffled.

PROF. VON SCHLESSER Of German extraction this Chemistry Professor is deeply suspicious, overly cautious and very definite and precise in his views.

DR GAVIN ROBERTS Australia’s leading equine dermatologist is so full of himself his cup certainly runneth over. He has a commanding presence and a pompous tone in his voice.

SETTINGS

There are two settings. The early action takes place in the legal office of Frank Bailey depicted by a desk full of files with an executive chair behind it and two plain chairs on the other side. The remainder of the action occurs in a courtroom represented by a raised magistrate’s bench with a desk either side of it for legal representatives and their clients.

“...a classic underdog story...”

“...lots of stirring emotion...”

“...plenty of humour and witty dialogue...”

“A funny and touching play...”

Stage Whispers 2009

ACT ONE

SCENE 1

The lights come up on a desk in the middle of the stage. Upon it are some files stacked in a pile and next to them, a telephone. Behind the desk is an executive chair and in front, two plain chairs.

In the foreground stands FRANK BAILEY, mid-fifties, wearing an Hawaiian shirt, a large straw hat and sunglasses and holding a surfboard under his arm. He looks impatiently out an imaginary window. He checks his watch.

FRANK: Where the hell is that guy?

FRANK throws his arms up in disgust.

BRAD PITT, late forties, shoulders slumped and dressed in a suit and tie, appears at the open doorway, carrying an attaché case. He knocks on the door.

BRAD: Excuse me...

FRANK spins around and takes in the awkward looking stranger.

FRANK: Who the hell are you?

BRAD wanders in apprehensively.

BRAD: Um, the agency sent me.

FRANK: The agency! What the hell are you talking about? Huh?

BRAD puts his case down.

FRANK confronts him, rather closely.

BRAD: [*shaking*] You see, your normal locum, Mr Hutchinson, slipped in the shower this morning. Banged his head real bad. He's in hospital.

FRANK: Jesus Christ! This is terrible. [pause] You mean I'm stuck with you?

BRAD: Apparently.

FRANK paces around the office.

FRANK: Great, great. Just what I need.

FRANK stops and glares at BRAD.

FRANK: And how come you couldn't get here any sooner? Huh?

BRAD: But but I was told to be here by eight o'clock and it's...

FRANK: I've got a taxi waiting outside. My plane is taking off in forty five minutes. How am I supposed to make it to the damn airport if you keep me waiting? Huh? Fine way to start a holiday.

BRAD holds his head, slightly overcome.

BRAD: I'm sorry, Mr Bailey. I just turned up when I was told and if I would have known...

FRANK: [agitated] Yeah, yeah. I haven't got time for your excuses.

He moves over to the desk and points at the files.

FRANK: Now, these are all the matters you'll have to deal with while I'm away.

BRAD rushes over to the desk and starts examining the files.

BRAD: I only do conveyancing, you know. Nothing else.

FRANK: Yeah, yeah, conveyancing. Whatever.

BRAD: But there aren't any file notes here. How will I know what to do?

FRANK: Jesus Christ! I haven't got time for file notes. You're a solicitor, aren't you? Can't you use your brain?

BRAD: I suppose so. I just expected...

FRANK: Yeah, well I expected to be on my way to Coffs Harbour by now. I thought paying for a locum would be a bit smoother than this. But you can't have everything, can you?

BRAD is lost for words.

FRANK fishes some keys out of his pocket and hands them over to BRAD.

FRANK: All you've got to do is just hold the fort and enjoy the view.

FRANK escorts BRAD to the window. They both look out.

FRANK: How about that, huh? Bondi Beach. You can't beat it. Best place in the whole world.

BRAD: [*confused*] Then why are you going to Coffs Harbour?

FRANK: You're a nosy bastard, aren't you? [*pause*] Now don't forget to leave the keys in the top drawer at the end of the week. And most of all, don't make any mistakes!

BRAD: I'll try not to.

FRANK smiles sarcastically and touches BRAD's face with the palm of his hand gently.

FRANKS laughs menacingly.

FRANK: I want you to do a lot better than "try". Understood?

BRAD nods.

FRANK: Okay, I'm off.

He scurries towards the door and then halts.

FRANK: And one last thing. Don't call me unless it's an emergency. Like the place is burning down and peoples' lives are in danger. And even then I may not be interested. Got it?

BRAD: Got it.

FRANK: [*reflecting*] Why do I feel like I've forgotten something. Never mind. You can handle it.

BRAD summons up a nervous smile.

FRANK: What did you say your name was?

BRAD: It's Pitt.

FRANK: Pitt, eh? What kind of pit? Orchestra pit cherry pit, armpit? Huh?

BRAD: It's ah, Brad Pitt.

FRANK drops his head.

FRANK: Everyone's a comedian. Just don't try your little jokes on the clients. I'd prefer to keep them.

BRAD: But that's my real name.

FRANK departs, shaking his head.

FRANK: Brad Pitt! Just my luck!

BRAD returns to the files and starts straightening them into a neater pile. The phone rings.

BRAD: [*unsure*] Ah, hello, Bondi Legal. [*pause*] No, I'm sorry. Mr...ah, Mr Bailey's on leave. Can I help you? [*pause*] My name's Brad Pitt. [*pause*] Hello? Hello?

BRAD *shrugs his shoulders and hangs up.*

He sits down behind the desk and scans the room.

BRAD: [imitating FRANK.] And most of all, don't make any mistakes!

He gets up.

BRAD: [offended] Mistakes! Hah! I'm a lawyer too, you know.

He strolls over to the imaginary window and surveys the panorama.

BRAD: Man, and I thought Marrickville was good!

FRANCES DENYER, late thirties, elegant and oh so attractive pops her head in with a sense of urgency.

FRANCES: Excuse me, I'm looking for Mr Bailey.

BRAD turns around, hesitant.

BRAD: I'm sorry. He's on leave this week.

FRANCES: What!!! That wasn't in my horoscope.

She confronts him.

FRANCES: [flabbergasted] He can't be. That's absurd. Simply absurd.

BRAD: [shrinking away] Why's that?

FRANCES: [frantic] Because we've got a court hearing in just under two hours. That's why. I'm supposed to meet him here. Don't you know anything? Who are you?

BRAD steps away and clears his throat.

BRAD: I'm Mr Bailey's locum. He's on holidays.

FRANCES: [*adamant*] Well, you better get him back here right now. The universe is out of kilter and balance must be restored.

BRAD: I'm not sure that's practical.

He indicates towards a chair.

BRAD: Look, just take a seat for a minute. There must be some mistake.

FRANCES *sits down.*

FRANCES: Yes but I didn't make it.

BRAD *sits down himself and starts searching through the pile of files.*

FRANCES: [*agitated*] I'm normally very calm, you know. Very calm!

BRAD: I'm sure you are. Ah, what's the name of your matter?

FRANCES: My name's Denyer. Frances Denyer.

He keeps looking.

BRAD: It doesn't seem to be here.

FRANCES: I don't care about that. Look.

She hands him a letter.

FRANCES: See. From Mr Bailey himself. Himself! The hearing's on Monday, the 21st. Today. I should have known something crazy would happen. [*in an eery, hushed tone*] There's a full moon tonight.

BRAD *coughs nervously.*

BRAD: You appear to be right.

He hands back the letter.

FRANCES: Of course I am. So, what are you going to do, Mr...ah...

BRAD: My name's Pitt. [*long pause*] Brad Pitt.

FRANCES: Are you kidding me?

BRAD: [*frustrated*] No. That's my real name.

FRANCES: Are you any relation?

BRAD: Do I look like I'm any relation?

She studies his face.

FRANCES: Not in the slightest. But what about my case?

BRAD: I tell you what. I'll call Mr Bailey right now and we'll sort this out. Okay?

She nods her head.

BRAD gets to his feet, takes out his mobile and walks around the office as he presses in some numbers.

The lights go down as a mobile phone ring tone is heard.

A spotlight appears on BRAD.

A spotlight then appears on FRANK sitting in a chair (representing a taxi).

FRANK shouts to the driver ahead.

FRANK: Do you know the way to the airport or not? I'm not paying for the scenic tour.

FRANK answers his mobile.

FRANK: [*annoyed*] Hello. Who's this?

BRAD: Mr Bailey, this is Brad.

FRANK: Brad who?

BRAD: Brad Pitt. Remember.

FRANK: [*gruffly*] Oh yeah. Say hello to Angelina and the kids. Goodbye.

BRAD: [*quickly*] No, Mr Bailey. I have to speak to you. I'm your locum.

FRANK: So what? You got an emergency already?

BRAD: I think so. A woman's come in. She has a hearing on this morning.

FRANK: [*angry*] Oh for Christ's sake! Send her somewhere else. I don't know. These people come in off the street at the last minute and expect us to perform miracles. This isn't the Catholic Church. Tell her, "Too bad."

BRAD: [*flustered*] I can't exactly do that.

FRANK: Why not? Haven't you got any balls? Put her on to me. I'll tell her what for. [*to driver*] Turn right here, you idiot.

BRAD: Mr Bailey, can I call you Frank?

FRANK: [*firmly*] No!

BRAD: Mr Bailey, she's already one of your clients, Frances Denyer. She's got a hearing at ten o'clock this morning.

FRANK: [*scoffing*] Don't be ridiculous. That's next Monday. I don't make mistakes like that. Do you think I'm some first year law graduate who doesn't even know how to scratch his backside? Give me some credit, please!!!

BRAD: She has a letter from you saying the hearing's today. I just read it.

Long pause.

FRANK: Damn! I was sure that was next week. You see, this is exactly why I need to go on a holiday. Do you know what sort of pressure I'm under day in, day out. And does anyone care? Anyone? Huh?

BRAD: Can we focus on the matter at hand, Mr Bailey? I don't quite know what to do.

FRANK: Well, you should. You're a lawyer. You're supposed to make decisions. This is the real world not a sheltered workshop. Get with it! [to driver] For goodness sake, get out of the slow lane. Do you want me to drive?

BRAD: [distraught] But this is your matter not mine. I'm just supposed to hold the fort, remember? Just help me out. I've only been here for five minutes.

FRANK: Okay, okay. Don't panic. It's not the end of the world. It's quite simple. You just go with her to court...

BRAD: [nervous] No, no, no. I...I...I can't do that.

FRANK: Of course you can. You just explain the situation and they'll give you an adjournment. Guaranteed. One week. That's all you need. I do it all the time. [to driver] Come on. I can walk quicker than this. Have you ever heard of an accelerator? Huh?

BRAD: [breathing quickly] I don't know about this.

FRANK: Oh for goodness sake, do you want to ruin my holiday? I'm gone two minutes and already you've come up with a "situation". Spare a thought for me. Can you do that? Huh?

BRAD: But Mr Bailey...

FRANK: What am I paying you for? Just deal with it.

FRANK *terminates the call.*

The spotlights dim.

The lights come up on BRAD. He is at a complete loss.

FRANCES: You look concerned. What did he say?

BRAD resumes his seat.

BRAD: It'll be okay. He said to adjourn it for a week.

FRANCES: Well, I'd prefer to proceed today if that's okay. I'm a catch 'em while you can sort of person.

BRAD: No, that's impossible.

FRANCES: Impossibility is a concept of the mind. Only in the mind can one overcome obstacles.

BRAD: That's fine but I'm not the lawyer handling this case. I'm not familiar with it.

FRANCES: It's simple. I'm suing a chemical company for making a spray that caused all the hair on my daughter's show pony to fall out. Open and shut case.

BRAD: I'm sure it is. But I'm not a litigation lawyer. I handle mostly conveyancing and wills.

FRANCES: It's okay. I'll help you. I've seen lots of court cases on TV. Isn't that Judge Judy something? And don't forget, the universe is on your side.

BRAD: That's very comforting but I can't do it!

BRAD gets up, wanders over to the window and stares out of it.

BRAD: I just don't handle stress very well. Court is definitely one place I don't want to be. I'll get you the adjournment somehow but that's all.

He turns around and faces FRANCES.

BRAD: Okay?

FRANCES: My goodness. You're an endless reservoir of negative energy. I can feel it all the way down to my toes. Would you like me to give you a quick tarot reading? We might be able to sort something out.

BRAD: I'm fine thanks.

She gets to her feet and looks him in the eye.

FRANCES: You most certainly are not. I can help you but it will take many sessions.

BRAD: Sessions?

FRANCES: Yes, I'm a holistic life coach. I unblock the channels to a person's life force and help restore energy equilibrium. My rates are quite reasonable. I have a special on this month. Four sessions for the price of three and a free foot massage.

BRAD: I'm sorry. I'm not interested in inner peace. I'm a lawyer. And right now you have a court case. So is it an adjournment or what?

FRANCES sighs.

FRANCES: All right. But just wait till I get my hands on that Mr Bailey.

BRAD: Yeah, me too.

The lights fade.

SCENE 2

The lights come up in the courtroom.

BRAD, *standing at a table with his attaché case resting on it upright, speaks softly with FRANCES.*

They are approached by SIMON CROOKWELL, a tall, confident, young legal turk wearing an immaculate pinstriped suit and dark rimmed glasses. He sucks on a lolly loudly.

SIMON: Simon Crookwell for Regent Chemicals. [*suck, suck, suck*] Are you representing Mrs Denyer?

BRAD: Well, sort of. You see...

SIMON: Good.

SIMON hands BRAD a thick wad of papers.

SIMON: Here are copies of some documents we want to tender at the hearing this morning. Get back to me if you have any objections. Also...

SIMON hands BRAD a few sheets of paper.

SIMON: ...we'll be making an application to strike out parts of your client's Statement of Claim and we want to amend our Defence. As far as one of my witnesses is concerned, Professor...

BRAD: Excuse me, can I say something?

SIMON: If you don't mind, I haven't finished.

BRAD: I know that but there isn't going to be a hearing today.

FRANCES: My lawyer's on holidays. Got his dates wrong. Must be the full moon.

SIMON: [*to BRAD*] This is some sort of joke, right?

BRAD: Ah, no.

SIMON: What's your name?

BRAD: Ah...Pitt.

FRANCES: Brad Pitt. No relation.

SIMON: You want to play games, eh? Well, my client won't be consenting to any adjournment. As a matter of fact, we'll be insisting that the hearing proceeds. We have two very eminent witnesses who've completely rescheduled their arrangements to be here today. The chances of us getting both men together on the same day again are fairly remote and you've given us no notice whatsoever. So, Mr Tom Hanks, or whatever your name is, play around with that!

He sucks loudly on his lolly.

BRAD is speechless. He gives SIMON back all his papers.

BRAD: [*jittery*] Well, we'll just have to see what the judge says about that.

SIMON sneers.

SIMON: It's not a judge. It's a magistrate. Do you even know what court you're in?

BRAD: I do. It's a...[*looking around*]...a court of law.

SIMON: [*scoffing*] Sure it is, Tom. Or should I call you Mr Cruise?

SIMON marches off to his table, sniggering.

FRANCES: Don't worry. He's always like that. He's got even more energy blockages than you.

BRAD: Great. Just what I need. A Rottweiler with a law degree!

BRAD sits down at the table with

FRANCES.

SIMON *takes his seat at the other table.*

VOICE: All rise.

Everyone gets to their feet.

Magistrate, JANET NEWMAN, mid-fifties with a permanent scowl, enters. Her nickname is "Smiley".

She sits down behind a bench overlooking the court.

MAG. NEWMAN: Are the parties ready to proceed?

SIMON *jumps to his feet.*

SIMON: Your Honour, I've just been informed by Mr Cruise here that his client wishes to adjourn the matter for no apparent reason. I'm speechless, Your Honour. Lost for words. Unable to summon up even the most basic form of communication.

MAG. NEWMAN: [*incensed*] Is this so Mr Cruise?

BRAD: [*mEEKly*] That's not quite right, Your Honour.

MAG. NEWMAN: Stand up when you address me, Mr Cruise.

BRAD *rises, overawed.*

BRAD: And I'm not Mr Cruise, Your Honour.

FRANCES: He's not even a movie star... [*pause*]...but he does have energy blockages.

BRAD *turns and glares at FRANCES.*

FRANCES: Sorry.

MAG. NEWMAN: Then what is your name?

BRAD: It's Brad Pitt, Your Honour.

MAG. NEWMAN: Mr Pitt, I don't take kindly to humour in my court. This is not a place of amusement or entertainment. It is a place of decorum and solemn reverence. Do I make myself clear?

BRAD: Yes, Your Holiness...[quickly]...I mean Your Honour. I can show you my driver's licence if that'll help.

MAG. NEWMAN: I don't wish to book you for a traffic offence, Mr Pitt. Now, what's this about an adjournment?

SIMON: I'll be objecting to that most strenuously, Your Honour. Firstly, we weren't even...

MAG. NEWMAN: I'll hear from you in a moment...if I need to.

SIMON: As Your Honour pleases.

SIMON *takes a seat.*

MAG. NEWMAN: [to BRAD] And before you say anything, let me recite a little limerick for your assistance.
"There once was a lawyer who'd try,
To tell me a little white lie,
He now lives with regret,
And even better yet,
He has learnt his sins to decry."
[pause] Do I make myself clear?

BRAD: [flustered] I think so. [pause] I just turned up at work today and Mrs Denyer told me she had a hearing on. I...I...I called Mr Bailey but he's on holidays at Coffs Harbour, Your Honour. He said to apply for a week's adjournment and that you'd give it... guaranteed. Does it all the time he said.

MAG. NEWMAN: He would.

The MAGISTRATE examines the file.

MAG. NEWMAN: I note that Mr Bailey has already had to adjourn this matter on three separate occasions. Let's see. Once he was caught in a traffic jam, once in a lift and once he had to go to hospital for an unspecified emergency procedure.

She looks up at BRAD and glares at him.

MAG. NEWMAN: That's not a very good track record, is it, Mr Pitt?

BRAD: No it isn't, Your Honour but...at least it's not mine.

MAG. NEWMAN: No but we stand here today with a legal representative for the Plaintiff, ready to go.

BRAD: [*innocently*] Ready to go where, Your Honour?

MAG. NEWMAN: Into battle, Mr Pitt.

BRAD: Oh no, Your Honour. I'm just a locum. I don't know anything about this case.

MAG. NEWMAN: As it says in Ecclesiastes, "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." Rise up, Mr Pitt. Rise up. I'll grant you fifteen minutes to familiarise yourself with the pleadings.

BRAD: [*imploring*] Your Honour, I'm not a litigation lawyer.

MAG. NEWMAN: Don't worry, Mr Pitt. After this case, you will be! We'll reconvene in fifteen minutes.

The MAGISTRATE departs.

BRAD is stunned and motionless.

FRANCES approaches him cautiously.

FRANCES: Look on the bright side. At least my case will be heard today.

She offers BRAD a smile.

SIMON shoves loads of documents into BRAD's chest.

SIMON: Well done, Mr Cruise. And that business about the strong not winning the battle...next you'll be believing in fairy tales. As a matter of fact...

SIMON snatches back the documents.

SIMON: ...it's not really a contest at all. It'll be like stealing candy from a baby.

SIMON smirks as he walks off.

FRANCES: Don't worry.

SIMON looks at her in disbelief.

BRAD: Why not?

FRANCES: If you believe in the abundance of the universe, it will provide.

BRAD: Will it provide me with a hole so I can bury myself in it?

FRANCES: [*confused*] I don't think it works like that. See you soon.

FRANCES leaves the courtroom.

BRAD takes out his mobile phone and presses in some numbers.

BRAD: This is just great.

A mobile phone ring tone is heard. A spotlight comes up on a forlorn BRAD with his mobile at his ear.

A spotlight comes up on FRANK BAILEY lying on a banana chair in a swimming costume still wearing sunglasses and a straw hat and soaking up the sun in complete bliss as he sips on a drink. He answers his mobile.

FRANK: [annoyed] What? I'm on holidays! I just got here.

BRAD: I know that Mr Bailey but we have a major problem.

FRANK: Is that you again? The George Clooney guy?

BRAD: No, Brad Pitt.

FRANK: I thought I told you to handle things.

BRAD: I did what you told me to but the Magistrate wouldn't give me an adjournment. You said it was guaranteed. She wants the hearing to go ahead...now!

FRANK: Okay, so do the hearing. What's the big deal? I can't run the case from the side of a pool, you know. Who do you think I am? Perry Mason.

BRAD: Mr Bailey, I told you from the outset that I only handle non-litigious matters. You said you were fine with that.

FRANK: Yeah but obviously the Magistrate isn't. She has precedence over me. Don't you know how the legal system works? Did you go to Law School or what?

BRAD: [desperate] Mr Bailey, this is insane. I can't do a court case. I just can't.

FRANK: Look, don't panic.

BRAD: You said that before.

FRANK: This time I mean it. The way these things work is that any moment now the lawyer on the other side will come up to you with a pained expression on his face.

BRAD: Why's that?

FRANK: He'll tell you it's against his advice but his client is willing to offer X amount of dollars to settle the case.

BRAD: And what if he doesn't?

FRANK: He will. And that's guaranteed. Whatever the offer is, accept it and then you're out of there and out of my hair. Now let me get back to my rest. Why do you think I'm up here?

FRANK terminates the call.

BRAD ponders the advice as the spotlights fade.

The lights come up on SIMON walking up to BRAD, looking a tad uncomfortable.

SIMON: Mr Cruise. Can we discuss something?

BRAD: What?

SIMON: It's against my advice but my client, Regent Chemicals, wants to put this matter to bed and stop wasting its time. It's willing to make a take it or leave it offer to settle this case. Of course, if your client doesn't accept the offer then we'll proceed. This case is an attack on the integrity of my client. It's more than willing to defend its good name and make an example of your client. And make no mistake both you and your client will be crushed.

BRAD: That's very sensitive of you. What's the offer?

SIMON: It's without prejudice, inclusive of all costs and interest and is in the sum of...[pause]...fifteen thousand dollars. And, of course, the settlement would have to be confidential.

BRAD *smiles with joy. He hugs SIMON.*

BRAD: Thank you! Thank you!

FRANCES *returns, appearing surprised at the two men hugging.*

BRAD *separates himself.*

SIMON: Aren't you going to check with your client first?

BRAD: Oh yes. Of course.

SIMON: The offer is good for ten minutes. Otherwise...

BRAD: [*still smiling*] I know. [*singing merrily*] We'll be crushed.

A bemused SIMON strolls off.

FRANCES: Well, you two seemed to have hit it off.

BRAD: I'm not sure about that but at least they've made an offer. [*grinning*] Looks like it's all over.

FRANCES: [*suspicious*] What is it?

BRAD: Sit down and I'll tell you.

She takes a seat.

BRAD: Are you ready?

She nods.

BRAD: Fifteen thousand including costs and interest. *[hopeful]* So, how does that sound?

She mulls over it.

FRANCES: I'm not getting a positive energy flow. It doesn't feel right.

He stares at her in shock for a moment.

BRAD: What doesn't feel right?

FRANCES: Could you sit down? I need to explain something to you.

BRAD: *[edgy]* But we were given ten minutes to respond. I have to give them an answer.

FRANCES: I still need to tell you something. Have faith in the process.

BRAD takes a seat.

BRAD: Okay.

FRANCES: Were you obsessed with anything when you were a child? I mean something meant so much to you, you couldn't live without it.

BRAD: *[perplexed]* I was but I don't think I need to discuss my lucky Star Wars pyjamas right now.

FRANCES: My daughter's whole life is horses. Ever since she was two and rode a Shetland, she was hooked. Now she's fourteen and she's ridden in Royal Shows all across the country. She finds a peace with horses she can't get anywhere else.

BRAD: I'm very happy for her but what's that...

FRANCES: I saved for years to buy her a show pony, Empire Nell. Eli was overjoyed. It meant the world to her. They were inseparable. Then one day last February, just before the Royal Sydney Show, the biggest Show of the year, she used a Regent Chemical's product, Shine and Glow spray on Empire Nell.

BRAD: I guess it didn't do what it was supposed to.

FRANCES: [*smiling*] See, you are a good lawyer.
[*pause*] Almost immediately her skin began to flake...

BRAD: Your daughter's?

FRANCES: No. Empire Nell's! And then a few days later her tail and mane fell out.

BRAD: Definitely not your daughter.

FRANCES: The vet says it'll all take four years to grow back. That's four years of not competing in Royal Shows and getting a chance to prove Empire Nell against the best. Even if she does recover she'll be too old to compete. The universe is completely out of whack.

BRAD: Can't your daughter use another pony?

FRANCES *glares at him.*

FRANCES: That's like saying, "Can't you replace your best friend?"

BRAD: I'm sorry. I'm not an expert on ponies.

FRANCES: It takes years to build up a relationship.

BRAD: Like people.

FRANCES: Exactly. Empire Nell was special. Everyone said so. Now my daughter's heartbroken.

FRANCES *reflects for a moment.*

BRAD *observes her then checks his watch.*

BRAD: I understand all that but what about the offer?

FRANCES: Suppose I accept. The fifteen thousand will pay for the medical bills and only a small part of our loss. What about the legal costs?

BRAD: What about them?

FRANCES: Mr Bailey did this case on spec. We couldn't afford to pay him. He was sure he was going to win. The costs must be a whole lot more than fifteen thousand. Will he forgo his costs?

BRAD *gets to his feet in complete anguish.*

BRAD: Oh no!

He stomps his foot a few times.

FRANCES: I sense an inner turmoil.

He turns to her with a tortured look.

BRAD: [*almost crying*] You could say that. I can't do this case. I can't represent you in court.

FRANCES *rises and puts her hand on BRAD's shoulder.*

FRANCES: Why not?

He moves away and sighs.

BRAD: I told you. I don't handle stress very well.

FRANCES: It can't be that bad.

BRAD: Oh, it is. Believe me.

