

Trust, Trial

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Why can't I remember anything?

"All rise!" The sudden sound brought Patrick back to reality. He quickly stood up and saw Anna gave him a meaningful stare. George Randy, the judge for Patrick's case, came in, sat down and said, "Be seated." Patrick could tell that his lawyer looked painful.

Just two days ago, I and my lawyer were arguing, "George Randy usually is in favor of rape victims!" Anna said. "But I'm innocent! I didn't do it. I..." I screamed. "It doesn't matter! Your best shot is to accept the plea. Going to court may do more harm than good. Listen to..." "No, I'm not guilty. I'll fight to the last minute!" I answered, firm and cold.

"Mr. Peterson?" Patrick was knocked back again. "Yes?" He instantly knew he made a mistake for asking because Charlie Rong, the state prosecutor, had a subtle evil smile on his face. The judge repeated after a sigh, "I asked you that, in this case, do you maintain your innocence?" With his lips trembling, he answered, "Yes, sir." The judge pushed his glasses, "I see." Patrick could see that Charlie's eyes had a victorious flash, and his stomach turned a bit. The judge spoke again, "With the evidence I got, and no alibi for Mr. Peterson, I found there's enough reason to proceed a trial." Anna shook her head and gathered her files together. Suddenly, Charlie stood and said, "Sir, may I ask to expedite the trial? I think there is enough to have a quick conviction." Patrick heard his lawyer cursed, "What? That son of a bitch!"

"Granted!"

Focus, focus and think harder, Patrick.

The next morning, Patrick was discussing strategies with Anna. She's holding a witness calling list from the state prosecutor, asking him why the DA chose to

summon these particular people. "I cannot remember a bit from that night!" He yelled, with frustration. "I know, because you took too many sleeping pills." "No, I didn't. I've told you...." "You never took sleeping pills? But there's trace in your body system, and one pill bottle in your bathroom when police searched your apartment. Why is that?" Patrick stared at Anna angrily, thinking why she didn't believe him. Then, she spoke again, "Look, I'm just a public defender. You don't want my help? Suit yourself. It won't affect my life at all." Patrick remained in silence for several seconds, and then said, "How am I going to help if you don't even trust me?" "Trust you? Look at these files against you! How am I supposed to trust you when you don't provide any proof of innocence?" Patrick opened his mouth. Then, Anna said, "Don't say you don't remember." He closed it again and sat back.

The courtroom was filled with people. Patrick saw Hannah and her mother sitting next to the DA. Behind them, on the first row of observers' bench, was Hanna's boyfriend, Angus Pickle. Patrick and Anna's previous discussion had led to no end, so they had to sit here and listen to what the witnesses had to say. After everyone and the judge were seated, Charlie Rong started to call upon witnesses.

In the beginning, several tenants in his apartment, including the landlord, were called up to prove that Patrick went into the Moore's apartment that night. Next, a forensic officer talked about the scene, that is, Patrick's apartment. The officer presented pictures of the scene: a messy sofa, a liquor bottle, body fluid on the floor, and the sleeping pill bottle in the bathroom. Later, Patrick heard Charlie asked the officer, "So, from these clues, can you portrait the event happened that night?" He saw Anna stand up and object, but was overruled. The officer answered, "It may be the defendant was drunk, and raped the helpless teenage girl, then got to the bathroom and accidentally took too many pills. Therefore, he woke up with

no knowledge of what had happened that night.” Patrick didn’t believe the officer’s words; he knew he didn’t do it. Suddenly, a blurry memory started to come up.

The weather was so cold. I quickly opened the apartment gate and went inside. Another bad day for my food truck business, I walked upstairs step by step exhaustedly. Then, a figure popped up in front of me, “Oh! Hi, Mr. Peterson. Bad day?” It’s my neighbor, Katelyn Moore’s daughter, Hannah. “Yeah, is it so obvious?” “Of course! Do you wanna come into my home for some cold ones and talk? Maybe I can help.” She answered. “Nah, I don’t think so... and you’re not old enough to drink, aren’t you?” I raised an eyebrow, wondering. “Comm’on, teenagers nowadays drink! Come on in! Come!” She tried to grab my hand. “Umm... I don’t think it’s a good idea.” Then I turned and walked toward my door, and... and... what had happened? Did I go in my home?

“The prosecution calls upon Dr. Miller.” The DA’s sound interrupted his thinking. He looked up and saw a doctor stand on the stand to describe the examination she had done on Hannah. “Miss Hannah,” she said, “has the psychological condition which is consistent with that of a rape victim.” Then, the DA asked, “What kind of condition is that?” She answered, “Insecurity, unconfident, paranoia, these are common symptoms for rape victims.” “No further questions.” Charlie sat back to the plaintiff seat. It is the defendant’s turn to question the witness. Patrick saw his lawyer stand up, walk to the front of the doctor with a folder on her hands, then speak. “Doctor, are you sure she’d been raped?” “Absolutely!” The doctor answered confidently. “Then,” she opened the folder and present several documents, “please mind the highlighted part. Dr. Miller, why are there no laceration in her genital?” Patrick can see the doctor was surprised by the question. She paused a bit, and slowly, answered, “Mo... most rape cases do

have lacerations in both... genitals, but in some... some particular cases... don't." She kept swallowing when speaking. *Why does she seem so nervous? Is she hiding something?* His lawyer's voice interrupted his thought once more. "What makes these cases so 'particular'?" "Umm... that is, when... both sides are turned on... then have sex... umm... in that case, there will be no laceration." Just about the time, everything went on so fast that Patrick didn't follow what had happened. He could recall Angus stood up and shouted, "You're a monster! Go to hell!" And the judge yelled, "Bailiff! Take him out!" Next, he felt a hard blow on his head and he passed out.

Wait! I think I remembered something! Huh?! Where am I? My head hurts so badly.

He opened his eyes. Anna was sitting next to his bed reading something. She looked up and saw he was awake. "How're you feeling?" She asked. "I'm fine." He looked around and realized that he was in a hospital, "What happened?" He asked. "Hannah's boyfriend, Angus, punched you." She answered with distraction, still reading. "Now, listen, I've found some interesting things." She handed over what she was reading. It was a folder full of photos. Patrick took it and shockingly found a lot of his image in the photos. "I asked my brother to disguise as a cable guy and entered the Moore's house. It was terrifying! There were your pictures all over their place, on the walls, in the yearbook, and even pictures on the table. Sorry I didn't believe you in the first place." He stared at her with disbelief, "Are you saying they did these on purpose?" "Yes, I'm afraid so. However, illegal evidence cannot be presented in court, so there's still no proof of your innocence. Even your landlord testified your presence in their house; I don't know how I'm going to overturn your case. I have to find a way to let the police search the Moore's." Suddenly, Patrick screamed out, "Landlord!" He sat up strait, "That's it! That's

what I remembered! Wait a moment.” He reached for his cellphone, scrolled through pages, and found the text message. “Look! The landlord asked me to attend his party at Plaza Hotel; it was the afternoon of that day. He could not be in the apartment building.” Anna looked at the text, then had a flash in her eyes, “Right, this is great! I’ll contact the hotel and see what I can find. If he did lie, others might be lying too!” She looked excited for this new clue. Quickly, she collected her stuff, and then left the room.

Friday, the day for the next trial. *What a nice, sunny day!* Patrick thought to himself. *Hopefully I can be a freeman once again after today.*

The cell door opened after a buzz sound, “I have terrific news!” Anna came in with excitement. She handed over a tablet to me, “Check on that! I think we finally get a chance to fight back!” I tapped on the “play” button. It was a surveillance footage from the Plaza Hotel, showing the landlord’s presence from afternoon to almost midnight on that day. After watching, I could feel that the heaviness in my stomach was gone. It was the very first time I felt... I felt, how to say that, relief?

“The defendant calls upon witness, Frank Grid” Anna said after the judge had sat down. “Objection! The witness has been called but the defendant chose not to question him! Your honor.” Charlie yelled out immediately; it seemed like he was ambushed by Patrick and Anna’s move. Judge Randy thought for several seconds, and said, “I find no reason to excuse him from coming to the stand; the witness will come up. Overruled!” Patrick saw that Charlie quickly went through his documents, trying to figure out what they might have prepared for this questioning. “Mr. Grid, you said in this Tuesday’s trial that you’ve seen Mr. Peterson entered the Moor’s premises, correct?” Anna started asking. “Yes, I did” “Are you sure?” “Yes, indeed I’m sure.” The landlord answered with a snobby face, making Patrick wanted to punch him. “Then, tell me,” She turned on the television

in court, "Is this person you?" She pointed at the face in the video. "I... I..." He sat there silently, staring at the screen. Charlie stood up straight again, "Objection!" he looked panicky too, but with a little despair. "Overruled! Mr. Grid has to answer this question." Judge Randy said with an expression of amusement; the sudden turn seemed to trigger his interest. The landlord searched around the room, hoping someone would help, "I..., yes, that's me..." He looked down. "Why did you lie? Don't you know perjury is a felony?" He didn't look up, and answered in a low voice, "Katelyn Moore paid me handsomely and asked me for help." "You liar!" Katelyn stood up angrily, "You... I... I paid you 50 grand! And this is how you repay me? Huh!?" Everyone was shocked by this drama, and then the judge seemed to come back to his senses. "Bailiff! Took both of them away! Oh, and Hannah Moore too." "What?" Hannah looked scared, "But..." Her mother turned to her, "You useless girl! Such a DISAPPOINTMENT!"

I can't really recall a vivid image of what happened next. I heard the judge said, "Mr. Peterson is hereby to be released, effected immediately!" A smack of the hammer of law. Anna came and gave me a hug, "Congratulations!" She said happily. The room was full of noises; everyone in the room was still discussing what had happened. Katelyn was still screaming, "Liar! Evil girl! All of you will PAY for this!" while she was dragged out of the room.

Wow, finally, finally....