

“This is \*\*\* speaking for Channel 8 New York City. Wall Street broker Robert Stevens has won the case that accused him of fraud. Stevens’ new attorney Peter Wilkins managed to handle the situation and the reputation of Robert Stevens has been restored. This new face lawyer Peter Wilkins has joined the new club of Wall Street and finance lawyers. While this is yet another disappointment for those that have been trying to earn back their money from these investors, it is still another victory for the New York finance world. Thank you and back to the studio.”

-----

The clock read 11 pm but the party was still in full swing. Mina was very bored even given the excitement that was happening all around her. She rested her chin on her hand as she leaned against the railing while looking out at the city light. It was almost beautiful yet cold. It had almost amazed her that a city that looked so innocent in the light could harbor so much evil, crime and a loss of innocence. *Where was Peter?*, she thought. She looked around but he was nowhere in sight. *Probably talking to those other lawyers or to Stevens.* Any other girl in this situation would have been very proud of her fiance by this point but she seemed to feeling everything but appreciation for Peter’s success. By her words, it was anything but success. Maybe it was because she had known Peter would never have taken cases like these a few years ago or maybe it was because she was a civil liberties lawyer, she was still unable to understand how defending someone that was clearly wrong could ever seem so right. When she had step foot in streets of New York, she was a newcomer and had taken time to learn the rules of trade. She may have been called naive as she was fresh out of law school but she was shocked at how the law world existed in New York. Gone were the ideals that law school seemed to preach about: justice, honor, honesty. These ideals seemed to have been replaced by money, greed and

power. Every lawyer only wanted to take cases for money and no one seemed to be concerned whether or not the decision would be moral in the end. She had chosen to stick to her values and it had been the hardest thing she had ever done. It meant staying late because she was the underdog in any law firm, it meant taking cases that often paid very little but for her, it meant that it was something important. She had come from a small town and coming to New York had been scary for her but good values were something she felt should always be a constant in her life. But, what was happening to Peter? She had met him in law school but the Peter then definitely wasn't the Peter now or even the Peter that existed only a year ago. She had accepted his proposal but lately she was regretting it. He was moodier and angrier and he had changed after he taken this Stevens case. Gone was the necessity to stick to any reason but he had joined the group of lawyers which Mina had always hated: those that only sought money. *What was happening to him? Is the old Peter gone?*

"Mina," a voice said as Mina felt a hand on her shoulder.

"About time Peter. This party has been going on for three hours and I have not seen you for any of them," Mina said as she turned around to look at him.

"Well, it's a victory party in my honor. Of course, I mean you understand, right?"

"I understand but... I don't know. Lately, there have been some things which I haven't been able to understand."

"Understand? Mina, I'm tired. I don't really feel like talking. Look, I can see you're getting bored. I'll just drop you off at your apartment, okay?"

"But, Peter..."

"Come on"

The walk had been silent. Any passerbys would be able to see the uncomfortable silence that rested between the two. Mina tightened her shawl around her shoulders as they walked together to her apartment. *When had our walks become like this? Cold, silent, bare, almost like the emotion of this city.* They reached the door to her apartment building as she turned around and hugged him.

Peter hugged her back and said, “Look I’m sorry Mina. It’s just the party and Stevens wanted me to talk to people and..”

Mina sighed. “I understand... it’s just.. I’m worried about you Peter.”

“I’m fine. Don’t worry about me.”

“Remember, lunch with my parents tomorrow at 12?”

“Yeah..yeah.”

Peter turned and walked back to the party leaving Mina at the apartment door. *Something had definitely changed. Whatever it is, I hope the old Peter comes back. The Peter I fell in love with.*

-----

The door burst open and Peter looked up at the intruder. Mina stood in front of him looking steaming.

“What time is it Peter?,” Mina asked glaring at him.

“3 o’ clock. Why? How did you even get in?,” he asked calmly.

“ I have the key to your apartment, remember? You missed lunch with my parents.”

Peter slapped his head. *How could I forget lunch?*

“Sorry, Stevens had just set up a lunch appointment with one of his stock broker friends and I had to go.”

“Peter, we’ve had this lunch planned forever. What happened? Couldn’t you have rescheduled for another day with Stevens?”

“Look Mina. It’s not a big deal. We eat with your parents all the time. This is my career, you know. I need to develop a contact list.”

“Career? I care about my career too Peter! But I never put that before my personal life.”

“Career? You? You have no ambition. What, it’s been two years and you’re still at the same position. Two year! And you’re only second-in-line for the head of the firm! Anyway, I don’t think I would have been able to stand another conversation with your parents,” he exclaimed.

“I don’t take the cases that you seemed to have been taking lately. My cases always try to help people in need. My parents are wonderful and I’m sorry that you are being too blind to see it.”

“ Help people? Yeah, help people that have the time don’t appreciate you or don’t even know you’re helping them! Your parents frustrate me endlessly. They’re constantly asking about my job.Well, tell them I’m a lawyer just like the last hundred times they’ve asked.”

“I can’t believe you. I do help people and my parents just want to know that you’ll be able to provide for me in the future. I am you future wife.”, Mina said with angry eyes.

“Well, I’m not sure if I want you as my wife.”

Mina stood there with her lips pressed in a line. Anyone could see the anger and hurt that boiling in her.

“Well, I’m not sure if you’d make a great husband, either. I think I need some time to think.” And Mina left the apartment closing the door with a bang. Peter looked at the door and went back to his work.

-----

Peter rubbed his eyes at the bar. It was nine o'clock and he was alone. Mina hadn't called or talked to him since the fight. He sighed. He had been feeling so dissatisfied lately with everything. He had been do discouraged at the fact that the reality and real working world was so much different from what he imagined in law school. He was working so much but he seemed like his rewards were little in amount. There were lawyers that took cases from Wall Street and instantly rose to top of their respective firms and became famous within the New York lawyer circuit. Did he really spend so many years in law schools to become like this? He wasn't some 40 year old in the middle of a mid-life crisis but he felt like one at this moment. He needed change. *Was that too much to ask for? Having the chance to finally get some proper recognition and credit? So, I never wanted to take these cases before but what's wrong now?* Peter's thoughts were interrupted as he heard a voice behind him.

"Hi," Peter turned around at the sound of the female voice. The blonde was beautiful but in a very different way. It was the type of beauty that Mina possessed but the type of beauty that he had often seen in Victoria's Secret models. If it had been any other type, Peter would have waved off the blonde as "not being his type". *But, I'm different now. This is a new Peter.*

"Hey," Peter said in his flirting tone. He hadn't used this tone since before he was seeing Mina.

The blonde girl had raised a perfectly plucked eyebrow at him. "Single?", she asked.

For the first time, Peter hesitated. He answered, "Yes."

-----

“Peter? Is that you?,” a voice said as Peter turned around. He rubbed his eyes and blinked at the sunlight that was streaming into the cafe. It had been a very late night and no amount of coffee could cure his hangover at the moment.

A very tired and puffy eyed Mina came to sit down across from him at the tiny cafe table.

“Peter, I’m sorry. I thought about everything last night. Maybe I was overreacting and..”

“It’s fine.,” he said while looking everywhere but at Mina’s face.

“But Peter, I still think there were some things...”

“Look Mina. I’m really tired and I don’t feel like talking at this moment...and..”

“Excuse me,” Peter and Mina looked up to see who had interrupted Peter. The blonde from the bar stood in front of him smiling as Peter suddenly turned away. *Great. Please to any God up there....please don’t let her say anything to Mina.* Peter prayed silently.

The blonde continued, “I think I left my purse at your apartment. Sorry, I just...”

Mina immediately stood up. *I can’t believe this is happening,* she thought. She shook her head. “I can’t do this Peter....I can’t believe this is happening.,” Mina looked at Peter in disbelief. “What happened to you?”

“Look Mina... you don’t understand I...,” Peter stammered.

The blonde spoke and once again surprising both people in the conversation.

“You jerk. I can’t believe you did this.”The blonde stomped off in her patent pink leather stilleto leaving the rest of the cafe sit and stand astounded by the scene.

Everyone at the cafe looked at the couple.

“So apparently, blonde bimbos have been a new acquired taste.” Mina said with her eyes flaring as she pressed her lips into a fine thin line.

“ Mina.. I..,” Peter said as he tried to stop her from leaving.

Mina started marching to the door of the cafe. She stopped right at the door and said, "You know Peter. Unlike you, I did think about our relationship and our conversation last night. You may say that I have no ambition in my career but at least I can go to bed every night, knowing that I contributed to some of the good in this world."

"Here is your ring" and Mina threw the ring across the cafe. The ring seemed to bounce off the wooden tables and landed right on the hardwood floor. By this point, all the customers were looking at both Mina and Peter. Mina turned around and left the cafe.

-----

Peter was running. He needed some time to clear his head from all the chaos that had been in his life this past week. He always liked his morning runs. They were very early as they were always at 6 in the morning but it was the only time when he could think. When he had a case, there were times when his morning runs would allow him to formulate legal arguments and other contentions in his head. But, now, he felt like work was the last thing on his mind. It's funny how things from one's childhood always seem to creep up at pivotal times in your life. When he was running by the small man-made lake in Central Park, he instantly remembered a memory with his grandfather when he was six. They were racing paper sailboats on the lake that was next to his grandparents' house and he remembered how happy he had been. His parents had divorced only the month before and the day at the lake had been the one day since the divorce where he had not cried. It wasn't as if he had gotten the shiny red bike that he wanted or that his parents had put together their broken marriage, but he had felt incredibly happy at the simplicity of everything. There were times where he had shared that incredible happiness with Mina and that was when he had decided to propose. But lately, he hadn't been able to experience that happiness at all. It had been replaced by a dull and cold happiness. One that seemed ever-fleeting

and temporary. It left him unsatisfied and yearning for more. He had thought his new found reputation and larger pay check would give him more happiness but instead it replaced the one that he had. After the scene at the cafe, he had analyzed his life at the moment. *Mina is right. What happened to me? No, I'm not this person.* He was determined to make things right.

-----

“Sir, I’m sorry but I’m afraid there are no other options or loopholes. You will probably lose this case.” Peter said calmly to the man that sat across from him.

“Lose! You know Stevens said you would be a good lawyer...”

“I’m flattered by Mr. Stevens’ words but there is simply now way that you can win this case. The fraud is obvious and everyone involved knows that your company is the culprit.” Peter exclaimed as he stood up.

“You look here,” the client William Rodner said as he jabbed his finger in Peter’s chest. “ I know you can do this. I’m giving you a check for a hundred grand. Find a way!” and he strode out of the office. Peter looked at the check with distaste. When had he become like this? His client would have to lose his case which means he would have to lose this case. In other words, his reputation might as well fly out the door. He never thought it would become this. At one moment, cases like these seemed trivial. They were simply stepping stones to establishing himself as a lawyer as it was a tough world out there as he soon learnt. Fresh out of law school, he wanted to hold the moralistic attitude that Mina had accused him of leaving, but reality shook his world. No one wanted moral lawyers. Those that stuck to their morals often never were able to climb the professional ladder and were neither recognized nor did they receive a large volume of clients. In his point of view, he was never the greedy man that Mina characterized him as. He was simply a lawyer that was forced to act this way given the circumstances. After all, he wasn’t

doing anything wrong right? He was still helping humans, just possibly not the group that he anticipated at first. He didn't believe morals could exist in this cold, hard 21st century world. But after everything, a small doubt began to creep into his mind. *Was I doing the right thing? Could I ever really sacrifice morals for the sake of money or even this check?* He had made his decision.

-----

“This is \*\*\* speaking for Channel 8 New York City. Wall Street Tycoon William Rodner's lawyer Peter Wilkins has resigned from the case that Rodner requested him to take. The case concerned an accusation of fraud against investor banker Rodner. Though the move was entirely unexpected, it is still very unclear what impact this decision will have on Wilkins' careers. It remains unknown but the resulting consequences will most likely not appear present. Thank you.”

Peter turned off the TV. It could be worse. He had given Rodner his decision last night. It was a little strange now as he felt a little different. For once, he had gotten a good night's sleep and it seemed as if something was lifted off his chest. For someone whose career was close to shambles, he was feeling fine. He checked his watch. 10 o'clock- he needed to find someone.

-----

Peter ran past the numerous joggers that were present in Central Park that Saturday morning. He knew she would be here as she was every morning. She had often said that feeding the ducks reminded her of the pond at her hometown. Peter's heart was pounding but his face fell with dismay as he realized that Mina wasn't there by the lake. He looked around but there was no sight of her. He sighed and sat down on the fresh grass. *Well, it was worth a try. She hasn't forgiven me yet.*

“Peter” and Peter turned around at the sound of her voice. In his opinion, she had never looked more beautiful. The seemed to add a shine to her hair and her eyes had never seemed so bright.

She walked slowly to the patch of grass where Peter was sitting and grinning.

“You know I watched the news today. And, you know how much I hate \*\*\*.” She sat down on a patch of grass. “And, I got to say. I’m proud of you.”

Peter started to speak, “ Look Mina, I’m saying...”

“ No need.. but could you do something for me?”

“Anything. I know I’ve been an idiot to you for the past few months.”

“Well I think you’ll owe me way more than this for your idiocy. But, my left ring finger has been feeling a little lonely these past few weeks. Do you think you could solve the problem?”

“Of course. I always loved your humor.” and he presses the ring in the palm of her hand.

“And, there is the Peter I’ve always known” and Mina hugs him. Peter grins and as he looks over Mina’s shoulders, he swears he can see paper sailboats gliding on the water.

Everything would be all right.