Lovereading.co.uk
Helping you choose your next book

You loved your last book...but what are you going to read next?

Using our unique guidance tools, Love**reading** will help you find new books to keep you inspired and entertained.

Opening Extract from...

Rogue Lawyer

Written by John Grisham

Published by Hodder & Stoughton

All text is copyright © of the author

This Opening Extract is exclusive to Love**reading**.
Please print off and read at your leisure.

John Grisham

Rogue Lawyer



First published in Great Britain in 2015 by Hodder & Stoughton
An Hachette UK company

1

Copyright © Belfry Holdings, Inc 2015

The right of John Grisham to be identified as the Author of the Work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of the publisher, nor be otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

All characters in this publication are fictitious and any resemblance to real persons, living or dead is purely coincidental.

A CIP catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library

Hardback ISBN 978 1 473 62286 9
Trade Paperback ISBN 978 1 473 62287 6
Ebook ISBN 978 1 473 62289 0

Typeset in Plantin Light by Hewer Text UK Ltd, Edinburgh

Printed and bound by Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

Hodder & Stoughton policy is to use papers that are natural, renewable and recyclable products and made from wood grown in sustainable forests. The logging and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

Hodder & Stoughton Ltd
Carmelite House
50 Victoria Embankment
London EC4Y 0DZ

www.hodder.co.uk

Rogue Lawyer

PART ONE

CONTEMPT

1.

My name is Sebastian Rudd, and though I am a well-known street lawyer, you will not see my name on billboards, on bus benches, or screaming at you from the yellow pages. I don't pay to be seen on television, though I am often there. My name is not listed in any phone book. I do not maintain a traditional office. I carry a gun, legally, because my name and face tend to attract attention from the type of people who also carry guns and don't mind using them. I live alone, usually sleep alone, and do not possess the patience and understanding necessary to maintain friendships. The law is my life, always consuming and occasionally fulfilling. I wouldn't call it a "jealous mistress" as some forgotten person once so famously did. It's more like an overbearing wife who controls the checkbook. There's no way out.

These nights I find myself sleeping in cheap motel rooms that change each week. I'm not trying to save money; rather, I'm just trying to stay alive. There are plenty of people who'd like to kill me right now, and a few of them have been quite vocal. They don't tell you in law school that one day you may find yourself defending a person charged with a crime so heinous that otherwise peaceful citizens feel driven to take up arms and threaten to kill the accused, his lawyer, and even the judge.

But I've been threatened before. It's part of being a rogue lawyer, a subspecialty of the profession that I more or less fell into ten years ago. When I finished law school, jobs were scarce. I reluctantly took a part-time position in the City's public defend-

er's office. From there I landed in a small, unprofitable firm that handled only criminal defense. After a few years, that firm blew up and I was on my own, out on the street with plenty of others, scrambling to make a buck.

One case put me on the map. I can't say it made me famous because, seriously, how can you say a lawyer is famous in a city of a million people? Plenty of local hacks think they're famous. They smile from billboards as they beg for your bankruptcy and swagger in television ads as they seem deeply concerned about your personal injuries, but they're forced to pay for their own publicity. Not me.

The cheap motels change each week. I'm in the middle of a trial in a dismal, backwater, redneck town called Milo, two hours from where I live in the City. I am defending a brain-damaged eighteen-year-old dropout who's charged with killing two little girls in one of the most evil crimes I've ever seen, and I've seen plenty. My clients are almost always guilty, so I don't waste a lot of time wringing my hands about whether they get what they deserve. In this case, though, Gardy is not guilty, not that it matters. It does not. What's important in Milo these days is that Gardy gets convicted and sentenced to death and executed as soon as possible so that the town can feel better about itself and move on. Move on to where, exactly? Hell if I know, nor do I care. This place has been moving backward for fifty years, and one lousy verdict will not change its course. I've read and heard it said that Milo needs "closure," whatever that means. You'd have to be an idiot to believe this town will somehow grow and prosper and become more tolerant as soon as Gardy gets the needle.

My job is layered and complicated, and at the same time it's quite simple. I'm being paid by the State to provide a first-class defense to a defendant charged with capital murder, and this requires me to fight and claw and raise hell in a courtroom where

no one is listening. Gardy was essentially convicted the day he was arrested, and his trial is only a formality. The dumb and desperate cops trumped up the charges and fabricated the evidence. The prosecutor knows this but has no spine and is up for reelection next year. The judge is asleep. The jurors are basically nice, simple people, wide-eyed at the process and ever so anxious to believe the lies their proud authorities are producing on the witness stand.

Milo has its share of cheap motels but I can't stay there. I would be lynched or flayed or burned at the stake, or if I'm lucky a sniper would hit me between the eyes and it would be over in a flash. The state police are providing protection during the trial, but I get the clear impression these guys are just not into it. They view me the same way most people do. I'm a long-haired roguish zealot sick enough to fight for the rights of child killers and the like.

My current motel is a Hampton Inn located twenty-five minutes from Milo. It costs $60 a night and the State will reimburse me. Next door is Partner, a hulking, heavily armed guy who wears black suits and takes me everywhere. Partner is my driver, bodyguard, confidant, paralegal, caddie, and only friend. I earned his loyalty when a jury found him not guilty of killing an undercover narcotics officer. We walked out of the courtroom arm in arm and have been inseparable ever since. On at least two occasions, off-duty cops have tried to kill him. On one occasion, they came after me.

We're still standing. Or perhaps I should say we're still ducking.

2.

At 8:00 a.m. Partner knocks on my door. It's time to go. We say our good mornings and climb into my vehicle, which is a large black Ford cargo van, heavily customized for my needs. Since it doubles as an office, the rear seats have been rearranged around

a small table that folds into a wall. There is a sofa where I often spend the night. All windows are shaded and bulletproof. It has a television, stereo system, Internet, refrigerator, bar, a couple of guns, and a change of clothes. I sit in the front with Partner and we unwrap fast-food sausage biscuits as we leave the parking lot. An unmarked state police car moves in front of us for the escort to Milo. There is another one behind us. The last death threat was two days ago and came by e-mail.

Partner does not speak unless spoken to. I didn't make this rule but I adore it. He is not the least bit bothered by long gaps in the conversation, nor am I. After years of saying next to nothing, we have learned to communicate with nods and winks and silence. Halfway to Milo I open a file and start taking notes.

The double murder was so gruesome no local lawyer would touch it. Then Gardy was arrested, and one look at Gardy and you know he's guilty. Long hair dyed jet-black, an astonishing collection of piercings above the neck and tattoos below, matching steel earrings, cold pale eyes, and a smirk that says, "Okay, I did it, now what?" In its very first story, the Milo newspaper described him as "a member of a satanic cult who has a record of molesting children."

How's that for honest and unbiased reporting? He was never a member of a satanic cult and the child molestation thing is not what it seems. But from that moment Gardy was guilty, and I still marvel at the fact that we've made it this far. They wanted to string him up months ago.

Needless to say, every lawyer in Milo locked his door and unplugged her phone. There is no public defender system in the town—it's too small—and the indigent cases are doled out by the judge. There is an unwritten rule that the younger lawyers in town take these low-paying cases because (1) someone has to and

(2) the older lawyers did so when they were younger. But no one would agree to defend Gardy, and, to be honest, I can't really blame them. It's their town and their lives, and to rub shoulders with such a twisted murderer could do real damage to a career.

As a society, we adhere to the belief in a fair trial for a person accused of a serious crime, but some of us struggle when it comes to the business of providing a competent lawyer to guarantee said fair trial. Lawyers like me live with the question "But how do you represent such scum?"

I offer a quick "Someone has to" as I walk away.

Do we really want fair trials? No, we do not. We want justice, and quickly. And justice is whatever we deem it to be on a case-by-case basis.

It's just as well that we don't believe in fair trials because we damned sure don't have them. The presumption of innocence is now the presumption of guilt. The burden of proof is a travesty because the proof is often lies. Guilt beyond a reasonable doubt means if he probably did it, then let's get him off the streets.

At any rate, the lawyers ran for the hills and Gardy had no one. It's a commentary, sad or otherwise, on my reputation that I soon got the phone call. In this end of the state, it is now well known in legal circles that if you can't find anybody else, call Sebastian Rudd. He'll defend anybody!

When Gardy was arrested, a mob showed up outside the jail and screamed for justice. When the police perp-walked him to a van for the ride to the courthouse, the mob cursed him and threw tomatoes and rocks. This was thoroughly reported by the local newspaper and even made the City's evening news (there is no network station based in Milo, only a low-end cable outfit). I howled for a change of venue, pleaded with the judge to move the trial at least a hundred miles away so we could hopefully find some

jurors who hadn't thrown stuff at the kid, or at the least cursed him over dinner. But we were denied. All of my pretrial motions were denied.

Again, the town wants justice. The town wants closure.

There is no mob to greet me and my van as we pull in to a short driveway behind the courthouse, but some of the usual actors are here. They huddle behind a police barricade not far away and hold their sad signs that say such clever things as "Hang the Baby Killer," and "Satan Is Waiting," and "Crud Rudd out of Milo!" There are about a dozen of these pathetic souls, just waiting to jeer at me and, more important, to show their hatred to Gardy, who will arrive at the same place in about five minutes. During the early days of the trial, this little crowd attracted cameras and a few of these people made it into the newspapers, along with their signs. This, of course, encouraged them and they've been here every morning since. Fat Susie holds the "Crud Rudd" sign and looks like she wants to shoot me. Bullet Bob claims to be a relative of one of the dead girls and was quoted as saying something to the effect that a trial was a waste of time.

He was right about that, I'm afraid.

When the van stops, Partner hurries around to my door, where he's met by three young deputies about his size. I step out and am properly shielded, then I'm whisked into the rear door of the courthouse as Bullet Bob calls me a whore. Another safe entry. I'm not aware of any case in modern times in which a criminal defense attorney was gunned down while entering a courthouse in the middle of a trial. Nevertheless, I have resigned myself to the likelihood that I could well be the first.

We climb a narrow rear staircase that's off-limits to everyone else, and I'm led to a small windowless room where they once held prisoners waiting to see the judge. A few minutes later, Gardy arrives in one piece. Partner steps outside and closes the door.

"How ya doing?" I ask when we are alone.

He smiles and rubs his wrists, unshackled for a few hours. "Okay, I guess. Didn't sleep much." He didn't shower either because he's afraid to shower. He tries it occasionally but they won't turn on the hot water. So Gardy reeks of stale sweat and dirty sheets, and I'm thankful he's far enough away from the jury. The black dye is slowly leaving his hair and each day it gets lighter, and his skin gets paler. He's changing colors in front of the jury, another clear sign of his animalistic capabilities and satanic bent.

"What's gonna happen today?" he asks, with an almost child-like curiosity. He has an IQ of 70, just barely enough to be prosecuted and put to death.

"More of the same, Gardy, I'm afraid. Just more of the same."

"Can't you make them stop lying?"

"No, I cannot."

The State has no physical evidence linking Gardy to the murders. Zero. So, instead of evaluating its lack of evidence and reconsidering its case, the State is doing what it often does. It's plowing ahead with lies and fabricated testimony.

Gardy has spent two weeks in the courtroom, listening to the lies, closing his eyes while slowly shaking his head. He's able to shake his head for hours at a time, and the jurors must think he's crazy. I've told him to stop, to sit up, to take a pen and scribble something on a legal pad as if he has a brain and wants to fight back, to win. But he simply cannot do this and I cannot argue with my client in the courtroom. I've also told him to cover his arms and neck to hide the tattoos, but he's proud of them. I've told him to lose the piercings, but he insists on being who he is. The bright folks who run the Milo jail forbid piercings of all types, unless, of course, you're Gardy and you're headed back to the courtroom. In that case, stick 'em all over your face. Look as sick and creepy and satanic as possible, Gardy, so that your peers will have no trouble with your guilt.

On a nail is a hanger with the same white shirt and khaki pants he's worn every day. I paid for this cheap ensemble. He slowly unzips the orange jail jumpsuit and steps out of it. He does not wear underwear, something I noticed the first day of the trial and have tried to ignore since. He slowly gets dressed. "So much lying," he says.

And he's right. The State has called nineteen witnesses so far and not a single one resisted the temptation to embellish a bit, or to lie outright. The pathologist who did the autopsies at the state crime lab told the jury the two little victims had drowned, but he also added that "blunt force trauma" to their heads was a contributing factor. It's a better story for the prosecution if the jury believes the girls were raped and beaten senseless before being tossed into the pond. There's no physical proof they were in any way sexually molested, but that hasn't stopped the prosecution from making this a part of its case. I haggled with the pathologist for three hours, but it's tough arguing with an expert, even an incompetent one.

Since the State has no evidence, it is forced to manufacture some. The most outrageous testimony came from a jailhouse snitch they call Smut, an appropriate nickname. Smut is an accomplished courtroom liar who testifies all the time and will say whatever the prosecutors want him to say. In Gardy's case, Smut was back in jail on a drug charge and looking at ten years in prison. The cops needed some testimony, and, not surprisingly, Smut was at their disposal. They fed him details of the crimes, then transferred Gardy from a regional jail to a county jail where Smut was locked up. Gardy had no idea why he was being transferred and had no clue that he was walking into a trap. (This happened before I got involved.) They threw Gardy into a small cell with Smut, who was anxious to talk and wanted to help in any way. He claimed

to hate the cops and know some good lawyers. He'd also read about the murders of the two girls and had a hunch he knew who really killed them. Since Gardy knew nothing about the murders, he had nothing to add to the conversation. Nonetheless, within twenty-four hours Smut claimed he'd heard a full confession. The cops yanked him out of the cell and Gardy never saw him again, until trial. As a witness, Smut cleaned up nicely, wore a shirt and tie and short hair, and hid his tattoos from the jury. In amazing detail, he replayed Gardy's account of how he stalked the two girls into the woods, knocked them off their bikes, gagged and bound them, then tortured, molested, and beat them before tossing them into the pond. In Smut's version, Gardy was high on drugs and had been listening to heavy metal.

It was quite a performance. I knew it was all a lie, as did Gardy and Smut, along with the cops and prosecutors, and I suspect the judge had his doubts too. Nevertheless, the jurors swallowed it in disgust and glared with hatred at my client, who absorbed it with his eyes closed and his head shaking, no, no, no. Smut's testimony was so breathtakingly gruesome and rich with details that it was hard to believe, at times, that he was really fabricating it. No one can lie like that!

I hammered at Smut for eight full hours, one long exhausting day. The judge was cranky and the jurors were bleary-eyed, but I could have kept going for a week. I asked Smut how many times he'd testified in criminal trials. He said maybe twice. I pulled out the records, refreshed his memory, and went through the nine other trials in which he'd performed the same miracle for our honest and fair-minded prosecutors. With his muddled memory somewhat restored, I asked him how many times he'd had his sentence reduced by the prosecutors after lying for them in court. He said never, so I went through each of the nine cases again. I pro-

duced the paperwork. I made it perfectly clear to everyone, especially the jurors, that Smut was a lying, serial snitch who swapped bogus testimony for leniency.

I confess—I get angry in court, and this is often detrimental. I blew my cool with Smut and hammered him so relentlessly that some of the jurors became sympathetic. The judge finally told me to move on, but I didn't. I hate liars, especially those who swear to tell the truth and then fabricate testimony to convict my client. I yelled at Smut and the judge yelled at me, and at times it seemed as though everyone was yelling. This did not help Gardy's cause.

You would think the prosecutor might break up his parade of liars with a credible witness, but this would require some intelligence. His next witness was another inmate, another druggie who testified he was in the hallway near Gardy's cell and heard him confess to Smut.

Lies on top of lies.

"Please make them stop," Gardy says.

"I'm trying, Gardy. I'm doing the best I can. We need to go."

3.

A deputy leads us into the courtroom, which is again packed with people and heavy with a layer of tense apprehension. This is the tenth day of testimony, and I now believe there is absolutely nothing else happening in this backwater town. We are the entertainment! The courtroom is packed from gavel to gavel and they're lined up against the walls. Thank God the weather is cool or we'd all be soaked with sweat.

Every capital murder trial requires the presence of at least two lawyers for the defense. My co-counsel, or "second chair," is Trots, a thick, dull boy who ought to burn his law license and curse the day he ever dreamed of showing his face in a courtroom. He's