

ABSENCE OF MALICE

Megan & Teresa meet in the park.

TERESA
I'm Teresa Perone.

MEGAN
I guess we know I'm Megan Carter.

TERESA
Thank you for meeting me like this.

MEGAN
Sure.

TERESA
Would you like a cigarette?

MEGAN
No, I'm trying to quit.

TERESA
Michael hates it. I have a story for you.

MEGAN
Michael Gallagher is innocent. You were with him the night they got Diaz. You'll swear to it in court. I'm used to dealing with girlfriends.

TERESA
Why do you think I'm a girlfriend?

MEGAN
Just a hunch.

TERESA
No I've never been Michael's girlfriend. I've known him since childhood. We're friends.

MEGAN
Of course you think he's innocent.

TERESA
No, I know he's innocent.

MEGAN

How?

TERESA

Well, because I was with him at the time. But I don't want you to say it was me.

MEGAN

I see. Where were you?

TERESA

I can't tell you that.

MEGAN

How do you remember this? It was ten months ago.

TERESA

Do you remember where you were the day Kennedy was shot?

MEGAN

Can you prove it?

TERESA

I don't know.

MEGAN

Ms. Perone. You're very loyal, if that's what it is. But I can't write a story that says someone claims to know Michael Gallagher is innocent. Won't say how, or why, or even give her name.

TERESA

I am assistant to the Principal at St. Ignacio School. And the publicity would be...I just can't.

Megan gets up to leave.

MEGAN

Suit yourself.

TERESA

But you printed that other story.

MEGAN

That was different. I knew where it came from.

TERESA

You don't believe me?

MEGAN

Ms. Perone, I've never met you before in my life. You want me to write me a story that says Michael Gallagher is innocent, then you tell me I can't use your name. You say that you were with him but you won't tell me where. Now what would you do?

TERESA

If I told you, just you, would it have to be in the paper?

MEGAN

Probably.

TERESA

Why? If it has nothing to do with Diaz, I mean, it's private.

MEGAN

Look I can't promise you anything. I'll speak to my editors about it but I can't promise you anything.

TERESA

I don't understand. Couldn't you say that you spoke with someone who said they were with him the whole time?

MEGAN

I'm a reporter. You're talking to a newspaper right now. Do you understand?

TERESA

You said you could keep it out.

MEGAN

I did not say that. I said I would discuss it with my editors. Look, if you have some information about where Michael Gallagher was that night and you want to help him—

TERESA

I don't understand. There was this guy. Michael hates him. Maybe he's not so hot. But uh, you see, I'm Catholic.

MEGAN

Ms. Perone, I really don't want to be rude, but I don't understand what you're trying to tell me and I do have a deadline, I have to get back to the paper.

Megan gets up to leave.

TERESA

I had an abortion. I got pregnant and I didn't know what to do. I gotta name in Atlanta. Michael took me. It was three days. He stayed with me every day, every hour, and that's what happened.

MEGAN

That's not such a terrible thing. Have you told anybody else this?

TERESA

I'm Catholic.

MEGAN

It's 1981. People would understand.

TERESA

Are you crazy? Not my people. Not my father. I don't even understand it.

Megan takes out a notepad & starts taking notes.

MEGAN

How old are you?

TERESA

You believe me don't you?

MEGAN

Yes, I do.

TERESA

Well then don't write this.

MEGAN

You're a friend of Michael Gallagher's. He's in trouble. You've told the truth about something that will help him. No one's gonna hate you for that. Really. Really. Now do you have any ticket stubs or receipts or anything that will prove that what you're saying—

Teresa gets up and walks away.