

The Wrong Man (1956)

Alfred Hitchcock

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OVERVIEW

Director Sir Alfred Hitchcock (1899-1980) is a household name and perhaps the best-known British filmmaker. With over 50 films to his credit, Hitchcock helped to shape the modern understanding of the thriller genre. His best-known films include *The Birds*, *Psycho*, *Vertigo*, and *Dial M for Murder*, all of which have earned accolades, including preservation by the US Film Registry. In 1960, Hitchcock was inducted into the Hollywood Walk of Fame with two stars for his work in both film and television. He was also the first recipient of the BAFTA Academy Fellowship Award.

Film Based on a book, *The True Story of Christopher Emmanuel Balestrero* by Maxwell Anderson, *The Wrong Man* is unique among Hitchcock's films in that it is entirely based on real events. Unlike in his other films, Hitchcock's cameo is more of an introduction, informing the audience of the story's factuality before the film begins. The director intended his cameo to be even more covert, entering the Stork Club as a customer, but this was edited out of the final cut. Initial reception was mostly positive and remains so. At the time of writing, the film has a 92% approval rating on the review aggregation site Rotten Tomatoes.

Background Many of the outdoor scenes were shot on location in Jackson Heights, the Queens neighborhood in New York, where Emmanuel ('Manny') Balestrero lived at the time the events took place. The courthouse exterior was shot on location, as well, but the interior was reconstructed in a soundstage. Balestrero was paid \$22,000 by Warner Brothers for his life-story, and he used the funds to repay the loans he took out to pay for his wife's care at a sanitarium. After the film, a street was renamed "Manny 'The Wrong Man' Balestrero Way" to honor both the Balestrero family and the film.

CINEMATIC NARRATION

The Wrong Man features many notable cinematic choices, especially Hitchcock's striking use of noir light and staging, amplified by the director's return to black and white. The way the story is told places us inside Manny's head so efficiently, that viewers lose track of time, just as one would going through the booking and imprisonment process. Of all Hitchcock's films, *The Wrong Man* possesses a haunting level of hyperrealism, putting the viewers through the heartbreak and tedium of a false criminal accusation without viewers experiencing boredom or undue discomfort. Manny's struggle to prove his innocence compels the viewer to keep watching and drips with natural suspense unlike any other Hitchcock film.

SYNOPSIS

To begin the film, Hitchcock himself—albeit in silhouette—promises the audience that “every word is true” and sets the stage. The narrative follows the true story of Christopher Emmanuel "Manny" Balestrero, a

struggling musician in New York City, desperate for \$300 to cover his wife Rose's dental expenses. Seeking a loan against Rose's life insurance policy, Manny unwittingly becomes embroiled in a case of mistaken identity. Similar in appearance to a robber who stuck up the insurance office twice the year before, Manny finds himself thrust into a Kafkaesque nightmare. Police questioning, mistaken identity in lineups, and the damning misspelling of a word on a stick-up note all lead to Manny's arrest for armed robbery.

Determined to unveil the truth, Attorney Frank O'Connor takes Manny's case despite his lack of experience with criminal cases. With meticulous detail, he attempts to prove Manny's innocence, emphasizing that Manny was on vacation during the first robbery and incapacitated during the second. All the while, Rose's mental state deteriorates, leading to her hospitalization before Manny's trial, which is declared a mistrial due to a juror's remark. Yet, it's not until the true culprit is apprehended red-handed that Manny's name is cleared. Despite his exoneration, the toll on Rose is profound. Visiting her in hospital, Manny brings the bittersweet news of his vindication. The film's poignant conclusion reveals Rose's ongoing struggle with depression, enduring even after Manny's triumph.

CHARACTERS

Christopher Emmanuel "Manny" Balestrero – A bass player at the famous Stork Club who falls into legal trouble when he is mistaken for a robber

Rose Balestrero – Manny's long-suffering wife who suffers a psychological break as the case against Manny grows

Robert Balestrero and Gregory Balestrero – Rose and Manny's young sons

Frank O'Connor – The lawyer who agrees to take Manny's case

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Manny (Emmanuel) Balestrero

Manny is a pious family man caught in a bad situation. He's mistaken for a robber when he attempts to get a loan against his wife's life insurance policy to pay for dental work. Despite his struggles, he remains strong, seeking justice.

Determined Manny's determination is admirable. In similar circumstances, many people cave in to the pressure of the police and courts, hoping that a guilty plea will lessen their stressful stay in prison or end the legal process more quickly. Manny never even considers that because he is determined to prove his innocence so he can get back to caring for his family as he always does. His determination shows not only in the courtroom but also in his quest to find someone to confirm his alibi. While Rose breaks down because of the death of two of the men who could vouch for Manny, Manny never gives up and ends up finding helpful evidence in his defense that can easily be corroborated by his dentist. To help Rose recover, Manny is forced to separate from her, a painful choice for him as he loves Rose deeply. Despite his initial reluctance, he demands the best care for Rose, even if it means going further into debt.

Responsible Manny is a very responsible father. While Rose and some other characters accuse him of financial irresponsibility, this doesn't seem to be entirely true. His children are fed, housed, and cared for medically, and the debt he takes on is always for their benefit instead of vices like drinking and gambling. His mother and Rose both comment about his always being on time, another clear sign of his responsibility. Later in the film, he talks about working even with a painful infected tooth, showing his commitment to supporting his family and paying off his debts. Manny shows us that debtors are not just reckless individuals who make their own problems, but more often everyday people struggling to make ends meet.

Brave Manny's bravery is incredible. He faces the police, their questioning, jail, and the courts. all without a second thought. Despite the rising cost both in money and time, Manny commits to proving his innocence like a mythical hero who accepts a quest. His bravery isn't limited to himself, either. He knows he has to be strong for his children. Robert says so, commenting that he's proud of his father around the movie's midpoint. Manny's bravest moment may be sending Rose to the sanitarium so they can treat her depression. Despite not wanting to leave his wife and relying on her support for much of his strength, he realizes the best thing he can do for Rose is to get her the treatment she needs.

Rose Balestrero

Rose is Manny's wife and constant companion. She is a loving mother to Robert and Gregory, but financial strains have been weighing on her. Before the trial even begins, she has a depressive breakdown and has to be sent to a mental hospital for treatment.

Emotional Rose tries to contain her emotions throughout the film. Perhaps that's why she succumbs to a mental breakdown while Manny does not. She often states her anger concerning the financial situation her family is in. She also has more highs and lows than her husband, even before her breakdown. Ultimately, in a bid not to feel the pain of the anxiety and stress of Manny's false accusation, she decides to feel nothing, disconnecting herself from reality. Because of this disconnect from her emotions and the world, she must seek treatment in a mental hospital.

Anxious Rose's anxiety is apparent from the start. She'd rather remain in pain from her impacted wisdom teeth than borrow money to have them removed because of her anxiety around money. She is the first to worry when Manny doesn't make it home the night he is arrested. Likewise, she's the first to panic once the news comes in that Manny is in prison. During her first on-screen outburst, we see her explode into nervous laughter about the lack of people to confirm Manny's alibi. Her next outburst is fiercer. Mounting anxiety about the court case and bill collectors makes her lash out, striking Manny on the head with the hard back of a hairbrush. After this, she realizes what she has done and agrees to seek treatment at a mental hospital.

Dissatisfied Overall, Rose is dissatisfied with her lot in life. She loves Manny and her boys dearly, but she wishes they didn't have the money troubles they live with. Perhaps it is this dissatisfaction that drives her anxiety: She wishes for so much that her goals and dreams seem unattainable even in the best of circumstances. Her dissatisfaction grows while the trial begins, as she knows that Manny is innocent. This attitude blossoms into an outburst about the court case, yelling that Manny is trapped in a situation he can't escape before striking him. We see her overall dissatisfaction in full form when she listlessly ignores Manny at the mental hospital when he comes to give her the good news about the trial. Thankfully, as per the text at the film's end, we learn that Rose recovers from this mental episode and lives a happy life with her family.

Mr. O'Connor

Frank O'Connor is a lawyer with little experience in criminal law. Despite this, he believes in Manny's innocence so much that he takes his case without pay, at least up front. O'Connor's keen legal mind helps guide Manny through the trial.

Planner Mr. O'Connor is unsure of his skill in criminal law, but that's nothing a good plan can't handle. He seems to be a man of plans, asking for Manny's story before agreeing to take his case so that he can build up a proper defense against the barrage of prosecutor's accusations he knows will be coming. This plan relies on solidifying Manny's alibis, but this proves to be a challenge. However, using his quick wit and legal know-how, Mr. O'Connor can confirm that Manny was not the man in the second robbery by noting Manny's swollen jaw around the time of the crime. None of the witnesses noticed this, and it becomes a key defense for Manny, one the prosecution won't see coming.

Inexperienced Mr. O'Connor's confidence and planning ability has one flaw: he is inexperienced in criminal law. Because of this, he makes some errors in his defense, taking for granted that the jury will see the truth in Manny's claims of innocence and falling prey to some of the prosecution's counterarguments. We see this most clearly when O'Connor seems to get stuck during his cross-examination of the witnesses from the insurance company. He tries to prove that the witnesses only remember Manny because he is sitting right in front of them, but in trying to do this, he loses the jury. Because of this and other legal fumbles, Manny's only hope is a mistrial. Luckily, the statement made by the jury member leads to this possibility being realized. Even in his inexperience, Mr. O'Connor possesses a quick legal mind.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How does *The Wrong Man* differ from Hitchcock's other noir films? How is it similar?

In your opinion, are the legal struggles Manny undergoes more or less common in today's world?

What notable noir themes stick out to you? How do they add or detract from the reality of the narrative?

How does the portrayal of psychiatric illness in the film hold up to modern understandings?

Choose two themes and list several scenes in which they appear.

SCENES

Stork Club and the journey home- After Hitchcock addresses the audience to tell them about the true-life inspiration for the film, we're shown an array of images from inside the famous Stork Club in New York. It's a busy night, and the band plays long into the evening, but eventually, all the reveling customers and amorous couples leave, allowing the band to head home. The camera singles out one man, the stand-up bass player. "Good night, Manny," the doorman says as he leaves, and he returns the farewell. The streets are dark and empty, as is the subway. Manny takes a moment to catch up on the results at the horse races, penciling in his predictions for the next race while stopping at a lunch counter for a late-night meal. Finally home, he peeks into a bedroom at two sleeping boys, his sons, before putting the milk in the icebox and heading into another room.



Teeth troubles- Manny turns on a lamp, and it seems to disturb his wife. "Oh, Rose," he says apologetically, "did I wake you?" "I was awake," she says, smiling before talking about her impacted wisdom teeth. She and Manny talk about the dentist's advice and the cost of the removal: \$300. Rose is stressed and guilty, blaming herself for this new and large expense, but Manny assures her they'll find a way. Eventually, he assures Rose that everything will be alright, praising her beauty and their sons' intelligence, telling her love is all they need to get by. "You make everything alright again," Rose replies. She smiles and they kiss.



Piano and Harmonica- The next day, Rose works washing dishes at the sink when Manny approaches her with an idea. He'll see if they can borrow against her life insurance policy, figuring it will get them most if not all the money they need to cover the dental surgery. Rose asks him to stop by the insurance office and make sure the plan will work while someone plays Mozart on the piano in the background, a harmonica chirping in with the melodic line. Suddenly, the piano bangs out sour notes and a boy begins shouting. Husband and wife stop drying the dishes and move to the front room to see what's causing the problem. Roger, the elder brother, is upset that Gregory is playing the harmonica while he's trying to practice. The boys continue bickering until their father intervenes, saying that both of them are skilled musicians and deserve private lessons, promising to give them each one that evening before dinner.



Putting the plan in action- The phone begins ringing, and Manny stands to answer it. It is his mother on the line, asking for him to come visit his ailing father. After saying goodbye, he hangs up and informs Rose of his plans for the day. He will go to the insurance office and then visit his parents before returning home for dinner before work.



Insurance office- Manny makes his way through the city to the Associated Life Insurance offices and enters. Inside, the office is filled with busy women who talk on phones and type out forms. The woman behind the counter eyes Manny suspiciously, nervous about his hand resting in his pocket. When Manny's turn comes, she can't keep the nervous look off her face when he draws the life insurance policy from his breast pocket, asking how much he can borrow against it. The insurance clerk takes the form over to another woman, telling her that Manny looks like the man who robbed the office a few months before. The two women approach a third acting like they're discussing the insurance paperwork while asking her to covertly confirm that Manny is the man who robbed her. She says that he is, and the first woman returns to Manny, saying that his wife will have to be present to sign for the loan. Manny thanks her and leaves. After he's gone, the women approach their manager, who calls the home office and contacts the police. The policemen enter and then leave the insurance office in a rush, looking to hunt down Manny.



“Always on time”- Back at the Balestrero home, Rose works in the kitchen preparing a pie and assuring one of her sons, “Your father said he’d be home by 5:30, and he’s always on time.” The phone rings and one of the boys answers. Rose asks who it was, and her son says, “It was some man. He didn’t say.” Somewhere down the street, Manny exits a bus, a smile on his face. A pair of officers lie in wait for Manny, keeping track of the time and guessing how they should address him when he shows up. Manny appears at the front steps, fishing around for his keys, when one of the officers calls out, “Oh, Chris!” Manny looks around, confused, when the officers confront him and ask him to come down to the precinct to “help them out,” assuring him “it won’t take long.” Nervously, Manny is led into the car, a bit upset that he didn’t get to say anything to Rose.



Precinct- The car rolls slowly along the street, the officers to either side of Manny seeming cold, while the one driving keeps eyeing him in the rearview mirror. They arrive at the precinct, and Manny is ushered into a small interview room. The officers explain that there have been several hold-ups in the neighborhood, and Manny matches the description. Despite his pleas of innocence, the detectives strong-arm him into ‘clearing himself.’ A family man to the end, Manny asks to call his wife, but the police tell him it’s been “taken care of,” asking him to accompany them to another location to help them confirm if he is or isn’t the man.



“High old times”- Manny and the detective from before sit in the rear of a police car while another officer drives. The detective asks what Manny does at the Stork Club, and the musician replies that he plays the bass in the band. “Suppose you have some pretty high old times, there,” the officer in the front says, grinning. Manny doesn’t understand what he means. “Women, drink, dancing,” says the officer. “That sort of thing.” Manny responds firmly: “I don’t drink.” They roll up to a liquor store and the car comes to a halt. The detective has a strange request for Manny. He is to go into the shop, walk in, turn around, and come out. Manny does this, the shop’s purveyor giving him a close look while he does.



Lenny's- The car rolls away, and after a few moments, the officer driving asks, "Lenny's?" The detective says yes before asking Manny about Rose: "Your wife ever go to the Stork Club with you?" Manny says that even if they didn't have children, it's too expensive. By the time he's done explaining, the car has stopped, and the detective instructs Manny to make the same walk into a nearby delicatessen. Manny does as he's instructed, but this time the people inside have something to say. The man behind the counter asks if Manny is "from the 110th" precinct, a knowing look in his eye, but the woman with him doesn't seem to recognize him. Manny is a bit perplexed by all of this parading around. After he heads back outside, the detective ducks in, saying, "I'll give you a ring." Manny sits in the back of the car, looking from the deli to the detective with a worried look on his face.



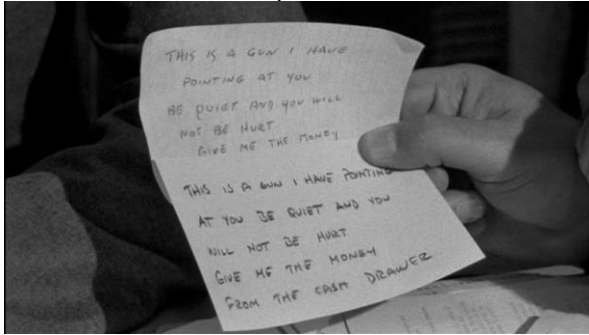
Rose's worry- Back at the Balestrero home, Rose speaks on the phone. "It's been over an hour since the last time I called you, Mother," she says, "and he still hasn't come home." She says there must have been an accident that held up Manny's bus when the boys start shouting at her about their father's tardiness. They're upset he hasn't returned home to give them music lessons. After telling the boys to keep it down, she says to her mother that she's already called the hospitals looking for Manny, but none had anyone matching his name or description. "This is unlike Manny," she says. "You know if he couldn't make it home for dinner, he'd call!" On the other end, her mother assures her that it's just her nerves: "Manny is so steady," she says confidently, "you never expect him to be late."



Interrogation- Back at the police station, the detectives begin working Manny over in the interrogation room. They pry into his activities at the insurance office earlier that day, and Manny responds truthfully, telling them he hoped to take out a loan against Rose's life insurance to pay for her dental surgery. They don't seem to believe him, focusing heavily on his admission that he needs money. They lean in on this, asking if he has a betting problem and when he took out his last loan. "Am I being accused of something?" Manny demands after the prodding. "Who says I'm a hold-up man or look like the man or... What hold-up are you talking about?" The detective moves in close, saying Manny has a right to know and telling him that he's been positively identified by witnesses as the robber in several stickups. Manny denies the accusations, but the detectives are steadfast.



The note- “We wanna give you every break possible, Manny,” The detective says calmly. “That’s the way we do things here.” He asks Manny to write a printed note with the same words as the hold-up note for a handwriting comparison. The note reads: “This is a gun I have pointing at you. Be quiet and you will not be hurt. Give me the money from the cash drawer.” Manny dutifully writes the note before the detective takes it for comparison. Saying he wants to give Manny every chance to clear his name, the detective asks him to write it again. This time, however, it contains a damning spelling error: Just like the robber’s note, the final word is spelled “draw.” The detectives seize this as proof of Manny’s guilt.



Witness identification- Several men mill around in a room in the police precinct, all dressed in typical overcoats and hats similar to Manny’s. Manny joins them, standing in a diagonal row. In an adjoining room, partially obscured by shadow, two of the women from the insurance office look over the men, listening to the detective’s instructions: “I want you to count. Please look at the men from right to left. Count them off, and when you come to the one you can identify, stop.” The women do this in turn, both stopping on Manny, number four. Both women say they’re sure that he is the man who robbed their office twice the year before. The detective dismisses the women and pulls Manny aside.



“No use beating around the bush”- After showing a commanding officer the written notes side by side, the officer approaches Manny, telling him, “There’s no use beating around the bush... You held up the office, you might as well say so.” Manny pleads his innocence, but the officers don’t believe him. “With the evidence before us, there’s nothing we can do but lock him up,” the officer in charge says. Even in the silvery black and white tones, we can see Manny’s face blanch. “What can I do?” He pleads. “If you can come up with something else,” the officer in charge says, “we’ll listen.” The detective leads Manny away, turning on a lamp across the room. He takes Manny’s prints before they leave the room, somber yet tense brass music blaring.



Booking- The detectives lead Manny deeper into the precinct. They approach a large desk and tell the man behind it they're booking Manny for armed robbery. The officer at the desk writes down the charge and takes Manny's information, adding it to the form. They search him, taking his meager belongings from his pockets and placing them on the desk. "Six dollars and seventeen cents," one of the detectives says, laying some bills next to the rosary beads that came from his other pocket. "What else you got?" He only has his wife's life insurance policy. They add it to the pile, and the officer at the desk gives Manny a receipt, saying he can keep the rosary beads. Manny takes them before the detectives lead him to a holding cell. "I never called my wife!" Manny protests, but again the detective says it's been "taken care of." They put Manny into a cell after taking his tie. Sinister music plays while Manny gets his bearings in the cramped cell.



"Are you sure you heard it right?"- Back at the Balestrero home, Manny's brother-in-law, his wife, and Manny's mother gather around the phone with Rose. Gene, the brother-in-law, takes down a note before hanging up. The women are impatient, but he waves them off, saying he wants to "get this right." After re-reading the note, he tells them, "Manny was locked up for the hold-up of the Associated Life in New York." The women are beside themselves, a mixture of disappointment and disbelief rippling through the small hallway. The brother-in-law reports that Manny has to go to felony court the next morning and can't be seen until after. "How could this happen to Manny?" Manny's mother asks. "Are you sure you heard it right, Gene?" "I wrote down what the man said!" Gene says. Rose begins to panic, but Gene comforts her, promising to go down to the courthouse the next morning. Back in the cell, Manny paces. As if suddenly realizing the gravity of the situation, he sinks to the bench and begins clenching his fists. Loud brass music plays, becoming more frantic as the camera traces a tight circuit around his head.



The next morning- The following day, Manny is startled awake by the clanging of jail bars when policemen walk down the row of cells, opening the doors one by one. As the prisoners file out of the cramped jail, a detective pulls Manny aside and leads him away from the others. Outside, a police transport van awaits. Manny, the detective, and another officer enter, and the van drives across town to a courthouse. Somewhere inside, prisoners are paraded in front of a felony court for their initial arraignment. A judge sits in a metal framework raised above the crowd and asks the men questions before declaring the state's charge, and they're pushed along. Manny goes through the same process before being carted off to yet another courthouse.



Bail hearing- The detectives accompany Manny into the prison of another court building. There, Manny is led to the rear of a courtroom, where he can see his family gathered on the benches. He mouths to them that he's innocent before being led to the stand. A public defender stands beside Manny while discussing the case with the judge. After entering a plea of 'not guilty,' the lawyer and judge agree on a date for the criminal hearing, and the judge sets Manny's bail at \$7,500 despite this being his first offense and of low flight risk. The officer pushes Manny away, and he turns for one last fleeting glance at his family's worried faces. In the maze of corridors behind the courtroom, Manny is lined up with other felons and cuffed before being loaded onto a prison bus.



Prison- The ride to the prison takes a while, and the camera mostly rests on Manny's face for the duration. Occasionally, it darts to where he looks, to the other men's shoes or out the grated window to the world outside. After disembarking outside the prison, the prisoners are uncuffed and approach a policeman who takes down their names and information on a form, starting with Manny. The camera jumps to a cramped cell where Manny and several other men undress for a strip search. The camera jumps again to the cell block. Manny looks around like an overstimulated dog before following the guards into a different wing. There, he's given clothes, bed sheets and a blanket and shown to a tiny cell. Blaring brass music rings out once more while Manny observes his surroundings. Fading in, he can barely make out someone saying his surname: "Balestrero... Balestrero... Balestrero." Suddenly, the door slides open, and a man gruffly announces, "Okay. You've got bail."



Reunited- Outside the courthouse, a door opens and Manny rushes out. Rose rushes to greet him, pulling him close and laughing softly. After kissing her, Manny asks who raised the bail, and Rose responds that it was the in-laws, who we can see standing nearby when the camera pulls back. After greeting and thanking them, Manny turns back to Rose, holding her tight and saying, "You'll never know how much I needed you." Turning to leave, Manny only manages a few steps before nearly collapsing. Rose can barely contain her panic, feeling that she should be doing more. She holds Manny steady while the camera fades out.



“Did your Mother tell you what happened?”- Outside the Balestrero home, Manny hesitates before unlocking the door, looking over his shoulder at the empty street behind him. Rose looks concerned, asking, “What is it, Manny?” He says that he remembered the police car sitting there “about a million years ago.” Rose soothes him, trying to give him a good homecoming. He gets it inside when his sons and mother come rushing to hug him in greeting. Too tired to eat, Manny asks to lie down for a nap and retreats into his bedroom. His older son lags behind the others, who go into the kitchen. Instead, he turns and opens his parent’s bedroom door. Manny greets him fondly yet tiredly, asking, “Did your mother tell you what happened?” The boy says she didn’t. “I got arrested for something I didn’t do,” Manny continues. “You don’t have to tell me that,” his son says. “Dad, you’re the best dad in the world.” Manny thanks him before saying he hopes his children never have to go through something like what he just did. “I never knew what my boys meant to me until right now,” he says with conviction, and his son holds him tight before leaving to let him rest.



Mr. O’Connor- The next day, Rose seeks guidance in the small backyard from Manny’s mother, but she’s not sure what she or Rose can do to help. Back inside, the boys eat breakfast. Manny sleeps in bed, and Rose takes the opportunity to place some phone calls. After several calls to lawyer’s offices, she reaches the home of Mr. O’Connor, speaking to the lawyer’s wife and telling her the story of Manny’s false arrest. Sometime later, Rose and Manny make their way to Mr. O’Connor’s office, mere steps away from the Associated Life offices. Inside, the lawyer’s secretary leads them into Mr. O’Connor’s office. After conversing with Mr. O’Connor about his willingness to take on the case, the secretary enters and takes down Manny’s full story as he tells it. It’s much later in the evening when the lawyer says he’ll take the case.



One difficulty- “There is one difficulty,” Mr. O’Connor says, standing, “which is only fair to mention. I have little experience in criminal cases.” Despite this, Manny and Rose say they trust him, and that’s enough. As the lawyer begins leading them out of the office, he promises them that they don’t have to worry about payment until they win the case, saying after that, things will “work themselves out.” Mr. O’Connor has one last request of the couple, telling them to dig up a solid alibi for the dates of the two insurance office robberies. Rose says they were vacationing on the first date, and O’Connor recommends that they start there. After saying their goodbyes, the camera watches through the doorway of O’Connor’s private office while Rose and Manny walk away holding one another.



Hotel- When the camera fades back in, we see a small hotel somewhere in the hills, fresh snow lying on the surrounding ground. The camera jumps inside where a conversation is ongoing between the Balestreros and the hotel owners. While the hotel owner knows they were registered at the hotel, he doesn't feel comfortable swearing that he knew the whereabouts of his guests because he was distracted by his wife's birthday celebration. While talking about the festivities, Manny remembers where he spent much of his time that vacation, prompting the hotel owner to recall the names of several card players who could confirm Manny was at the hotel the day of the first robbery. Armed with this new information, the Balestreros return to New York City.



Search for witnesses- Mysterious music plays while the Balestreros' car rolls to a stop in front of an apartment complex. Rose and Manny enter, climbing the stairs to #3. The sound of girls giggling can be heard from inside. Two young girls answer the door, and Manny asks after Mr. Lamarca. The girls are confused at first, but then they report that the man Manny is looking for died before resuming their giggling and closing the door. A similar scene plays out by the docks as the Balestreros enter another apartment building. Deep inside, they buzz at the door of Mr. Molenelli. After their repeated rings and knocking go unheeded for too long, a Spanish-speaking woman from the floor below shouts up at them to keep quiet. After a moment of trying to overcome the language barrier, Manny learns that Mr. Molenelli is dead. Rose suffers a bit of a breakdown, laughing hysterically in despair, saying, "There's our alibi! Perfect! Complete!"



The other man- Back at their home, Manny dresses for work, assuring Rose that they'll find "the other man," and he'll be the alibi Manny needs to win the case against him. Rose blames herself and her wisdom teeth for Manny's predicament. She doesn't listen to Manny's reassurance that it's not her fault, saying, "I haven't been a good wife." Again, Manny reassures her, but we can see on Rose's face that she doesn't believe him. After a quick shot of Manny playing bass at the Stork Club, the scene fades out and back in on O'Connor's office. There, Manny tells the lawyer about their problems confirming their alibi, with the first two men on their list being dead. O'Connor says they can't let the bad luck shake them, that the hotel owners acting as character witnesses and their log books with the Balestreros' names listed will be a big help to their case.



Swollen jaw- O'Connor moves on to the date of the next robbery. Manny says he didn't go out much as he had a toothache. "My jaw was so swollen, I didn't feel like working that way," he explains, saying other than work, he didn't leave the house much. O'Connor latches onto this, asking if Manny's coworkers would corroborate his swollen jaw around the time of the second robbery. Manny says they would, and his dentist can attest that he received treatment around the same time. O'Connor also notes that even if Manny had robbed the insurance office that December, his swollen jaw would have been very noticeable and none of the women who identified him said he had a swollen jaw. Rose barely responds to this news, and Mr. O'Connor shows them out, Rose walking as if zombified. The lawyer and Manny talk about her strange mood for a moment before Manny follows his wife out.



Something's the matter with Rose- Returning home after work that night, Manny stops his usual routine and goes into the bedroom to check on Rose. He finds her fully dressed, sitting on a chair with the light on. She simply looks up at him as if she had been sitting that way since he left. Manny asks why she hasn't gone to bed, showing concern when she says she can't sleep and she's barely eating. He suggests that Rose see a doctor, and she reacts with offense, saying, "There's nothing wrong with me. Why should I see a doctor?" She goes on about the cost, sinking deeper into her depression. Manny asks why she doesn't seem to care about what happens to him in the trial, and she explains that it doesn't matter: the cards are stacked against Manny. She begins speaking erratically, shouting that they'll lose the case before picking up a hairbrush and striking Manny. Realizing what she's done, she agrees to go see a doctor.



Psychiatrist- In a psychiatric hospital somewhere, the camera finds Rose seated in front of a lamp. She looks as if she's been crying, talking about her warped beliefs as a psychiatrist paces behind her, asking gentle but probing questions. "I let them down," she says, still blaming herself for Manny's arrest and false accusation. She reveals through her beliefs that she has a persecution complex brought on by years of city living and financial stress. She views the debt collectors as enemies "coming at her from all sides." In an office elsewhere in the building, the psychiatrist approaches Manny and tells him that Rose has a mental disorder. "Her mind is in an eclipse, and she doesn't see anything as it is." Manny is distraught. The doctor tells him not to worry, saying this is something he's treated many times before, but it will require treatment for Rose to recover fully. Manny struggles with the idea of institutionalizing Rose, but the doctor convinces him of the need. "I want her to have the best there is," Manny says before the scene fades out.



Mental hospital- Manny helps Rose out of the car while soft, somber music plays. Rose appears to be in a daze, having to be led by the arm to the steps of the mental hospital. Inside, a doctor and orderly approach, shaking Manny's hand. The doctor asks Manny to say goodbye. Rose barely responds before being led away. "Rose?" Manny says while she ascends the stairs in silence. He looks heartbroken, staring down at her luggage on the ground before turning and leaving the building.



Trial- "Christopher Balestrero," a bailiff says while the scene fades in on a courtroom, "please rise." Manny stands and the bailiff reads the charges. Sometime later, a lawyer speaks to the courtroom while the camera shows Manny's rosary beads swaying in his hand underneath the table. The camera draws back to the prosecution lawyer attempt to defame Manny before telling the jury they will find Manny guilty after hearing all of his evidence. The prosecution rests, and Mr. O'Connor begins his opening arguments. He begins by reminding the jury that "an indictment is only an accusation." He argues that his witnesses will counter those the prosecution promised, reminding the jury of how the American system of justice is supposed to work: the defendant is innocent until proven guilty.



Witness testimony- Sometime later, the prosecution interviews the women from the insurance office, starting with the slightly older woman with a nervous disposition. After asking her some questions about the robberies, the prosecution asks her to rise and put her hand on the shoulder of the man who robbed the insurance office that day. Hesitantly, she moves to Manny's side and touches his shoulder. Another insurance worker takes the stand, pointing out Manny as the man she saw, but slipping up in her description of him. Finally, the woman with the glasses from the insurance office takes the stand. While being cross-examined by Mr. O'Connor, the lawyer seems to fumble his argument, displeasing the jury. A member stands and asks if they have to listen to his endless questions about the other men in the lineup. When the judge silences the jury member, Mr. O'Connor ends his cross-examination.



Mistrial- After a quick, whispered discussion with the prosecution, Mr. O'Connor and the lead prosecutor approach the judge, with a request which he seems to accept. O'Connor turns around with a dissatisfied look and loudly asks for a mistrial. Returning to Manny's side, O'Connor whispers to him, "There's nothing else to do." It's not the victory they were hoping for, but at least Manny will avoid prison for now. Manny wishes they could just end the process now, but O'Connor assures him that the next trial will go better.



"Pray for strength"- Manny's mother knits in the kitchen of the Balestrero home when Manny walks in. He looks frustrated, reluctant to talk to her. He sits with his back to the camera, comparing the legal process to "being put through a meat grinder." He then says that everyone would be better off without him. His mother assures him that it's just a run of bad luck. Manny says he doesn't know what to do, and his mother suggests that he pray. He says he's prayed for help. "Pray for strength, Manny," his mother pleads, but Manny doesn't seem to hear it. In his room, he lays eyes on a picture of Jesus and begins to pray. The scene slowly fades out while he silently mutters his plea to God.



Hold up- As the previous scene fades out, a new one fades in. During the cross-fade, we see a man walking up a New York City street. He draws closer to the camera, his face lining up with Manny's praying face almost perfectly. Manny fades out, and we see the man clearly: He looks very similar to Manny, though with meaner eyes and stronger cheekbones. Turning, he enters a nearby convenience store and asks the awaiting sales clerk for a pound of ham. When she moves to prepare his deli meat, he quietly makes his way around the counter, a sickening smirk touching the corners of his mouth. The woman looks up and sees him, and he declares that he has a gun and that he wants the money from the drawer. The woman picks up a knife and takes a defiant step toward him, banging the floor loudly with her feet. As if on cue, a man emerges from the rear of the store and quickly pins the robber to a shelf, disabling him with a minor struggle while the woman calls the police.



“Won’t be long”- A police car rolls up to a precinct and the robber steps out. He’s quickly pushed up the stairs by an attending policeman. Inside, a detective who worked on Manny’s case sees the man who strongly resembles Manny being booked and exits the building. As if it suddenly dawns on him what he’s just seen, the detective rushes back inside the precinct. Sometime later, Manny is called from the Stork Club to the 110th precinct. When he gets there, he’s greeted by an excited Mr. O’Connor who shakes his hand, saying, “I guess it won’t be long now... They got him.” The process that Manny went through at the film’s beginning replays itself in another room. The women from the insurance office exit the room where they have been identifying the robber, looking bashfully at Manny without a word while they walk by. The detective from before exits the room and addresses Manny, asking if he’s ready. Manny nods and smiles, saying he can’t wait before his lookalike exits the room in police custody. The two similar-looking men eye each other for a moment before Manny speaks up: “Do you realize what you’ve done to my wife?” The robber looks remorseful before being led away by the police.



Good news- Sometime later, Manny exits a cab outside the mental hospital. He rings the buzzer, looking at the newspaper in his hand with an article about the case, clearing him of any wrongdoing. An orderly leads Manny to Rose’s room. Inside, she stands glumly by the window. Manny is elated to be cleared of the crime, but Rose doesn’t seem to care. Manny repeats the news, telling her they can start their lives again. She begins to look away from him, and when he moves to embrace her, she flinches. Again, Manny pleads with Rose to believe that the nightmare is over. “Nothing can help me,” she says eventually. “No one... You can go now.” She remains trapped in the prison of her mind, utterly depressed. Manny leaves, saying he was hoping for a miracle. “It takes time,” the orderly says gently while somber music plays. Lively music plays while a title card is displayed, saying that after two years in the sanitarium, Rose recovered and now lives in Florida with Manny and her children before the film ends.

