

the beginning of

TOUGH COOKIE (from **SINFULLY RICH**)

a short comedy by Rich Orloff

Place: A prison visiting room.

Time: The present.

Characters: JAMES, a high school student

MOM, James' mother

DAD, James' father

LAWYER, James' lawyer

GUARD, a guard

In a prison visiting room, JAMES, a high school student, sits around a table with his MOM, his DAD and his LAWYER. A GUARD observes.

JAMES

So I looked at him and said, if you even touch my chocolate chip cookie, I'll kill you.

MOM

(tearfully)

And?

JAMES

Well, you raised me to be a man of my word.

DAD

(to the lawyer:)

So big shot, can you get him off?

LAWYER

This is a complicated matter.

DAD

Always is to you lawyers.

LAWYER

Your son could be charged with murder.

The mother begins to cry.

DAD

Calm down.

MOM

I never knew he liked my cookies so much.

DAD

He'll be okay. He did nothing wrong.

LAWYER

He did kill a boy over a cookie.

DAD

I figure it's like his word against the dead kid's.

LAWYER

There were 223 witnesses.

JAMES

The cafeteria always gets crowded on meatloaf day.

MOM

(to the lawyer:)

So what do you suggest?

LAWYER

Well, I'm just meeting James. I'd like to do some preliminary investigating first.

DAD

I bet *that'll* hike up your fee.

MOM

(to the lawyer:)

So what are our options?

LAWYER

Well, there *is* insanity.

DAD

My boy's not nuts. Haven't I taught you the difference between right and wrong?

JAMES

It's wrong to pray to God for the death of my enemies. But it's okay to pray to God to kick the butts of the other football team.

LAWYER

I meant temporary insanity, brought on by unbearable and overwhelming emotional trauma.

DAD

And how much will *that* cost?

LAWYER

I don't charge by the defense. James, perhaps you could tell us a bit more about why you felt *forced* to kill the boy.

JAMES

I was protecting my cookie against potential theft.

DAD

Which the Constitution says is okay.

LAWYER

Yes, but –

MOM

Theft is illegal.

JAMES

And immoral.

DAD

Eighth Commandment: Thou shalt not steal.

LAWYER

Sixth Commandment: Thou shalt not kill.

DAD

So it's a wash.

LAWYER

Not in this state. James, did you... did you – like this boy?

DAD

What are you getting at?

JAMES

I didn't like him at all. He used to make fun of me.

LAWYER

How so?

JAMES

He called me a fairy.

LAWYER

Are you a homosexual?

DAD

No son of mine is a –

LAWYER

And before you answer that, I want you to think seriously. After all, to be taunted by a classmate, or to have one covet your cookie, that's a normal part of growing up. But to be persecuted for your sexual orientation, that's a hate crime, and a behavior so heinous it's easy to imagine how a sensitive, closeted teenager might crack under pressure and become a temporarily homicidal homosexual. So tell me, are you now or have you ever been a homosexual?

JAMES

Well –

DAD

My son is not a homo. He'd rather go to jail than be a homo.

MOM

From what I've heard about prison, it's like a cram course in homosexuality.

LAWYER

Well, James? Have you *ever* questioned your sexuality?

JAMES

Well...

DAD

Boy, tell the truth. You beat off to my *Playboys* every chance you get.

MOM

Maybe he likes the cigarette ads with those hot-looking cowboys in them.

DAD

Howda you know what's in *Playboy*?

MOM

Well, sometimes when you go away for a week –

DAD

You lusting after those cowboys?

JAMES

Maybe she likes the girls.

DAD

You do?!

MOM

I was just curious to see what's in there.

DAD

You looking at naked broads ain't natural.

MOM

Well, neither are their boobs!

LAWYER

James, what were you doing with a gun, anyway? Were you afraid of this boy?

DAD

My boy's not afraid of nobody, are you?

JAMES

Well –

DAD

I taught him not to let nobody bully him.

JAMES

You bully me all the time.

DAD

I mean *outside* the family.