

MR. PRO SE, ESQ.

FEATURE SCREENPLAY

Based on a True Story
Written by Tony Loiacono

FADE IN:

INT. MODEST MIDWEST HOME - PRE-DAWN (1960)

A knock. Permanent.

Five-year-old TONY LOIACONO stands barefoot on cold linoleum, clutching a scuffed BASEBALL.

The door opens. TWO POLICE OFFICERS stand behind his father, LOUIS LOIACONO JR., dressed but not for work.

Louis drops to one knee.

LOUIS

Tony... you're the man of the house now.

Tony can't speak.

Behind him, his MOTHER trembles, then stomps her foot into the floor.

MOTHER

I will not lose a thing.

I will not lose a thing.

Louis is escorted away.

The door shuts. The latch clicks.

CUT TO:

INT. VA PSYCHIATRIC WARD - NIGHT (1971)

Green tile. Fluorescent buzz.

Sixteen-year-old Tony walks with his GRANDMOTHER down a narrow corridor.

They stop.

Tony sees his father HANGING by a belt. Still.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING AREA - NIGHT

A DOCTOR approaches.

DOCTOR

Twenty-two minutes without oxygen.

Tony swallows.

TONY

Can I pray for him?

CUT TO:

INT. ICU - MORNING

Machines beep.

Louis's eyes SNAP OPEN.

A miracle.

Tony should feel relief.

Instead, his jaw tightens.

ANGER is born.

MONTAGE - THE FIGHTER FORMS

Tony runs until his lungs burn.

Tony scrubs counters obsessively.

Tony wins popularity contests.

Tony refuses to visit the VA ward.

CUT TO:

INT. CENTRAL MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY - DAY (1978)

Snow outside.

Tony meets LORI.

LORI
Truth matters.

Tony is struck.

CUT TO:

INT. CAMPUS CHAPEL - DAY

LORI
You can't outrun who you hate.

Tony looks away.

CUT TO:

EXT. FLORIDA - MODEST HOUSE - DAY

Tony knocks.

Louis opens the door.

TONY
Lori wants me to ask you to forgive me.

Louis's eyes fill.

LOUIS
I never stopped loving you.

Tony breaks—just enough.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE - CAREER IGNITION

Tony sells condos.
Tony pitches campaigns.
MLB corridors.
Motorcraft Bronco II launch.
Plane to Los Angeles.

CUT TO:

INT. UPPER DECK - EXECUTIVE OFFICE - DAY

RICHARD MCWILLIAM studies Tony.

MCWILLIAM

I want you as my right hand.

TONY

You could never afford me.

MCWILLIAM

You'd be surprised.

They shake hands.

MONTAGE - UPPER DECK ASCENT

Michael Jordan signs.
Shaq laughs.
Sales charts explode.
\$18M becomes \$300M.

CUT TO:

INT. AWARDS DINNER - NIGHT

Tony accepts Ad Age recognition.

Across the room, Lori watches—proud, wary.

CUT TO:

INT. LOIACONO HOME - NIGHT

Lori sits with a Bible.

LORI
You're winning everything except us.

TONY
I'm building a future.

LORI
You're building a monument.

Tony turns away.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOIACONO HOME - NIGHT (DECEMBER 3, 1995)

A private jet lands.

Inside the house, a NOTE on the table.

Tony reads.

Nothing shatters.

Everything empties.

TONY
(whisper)
Break me.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE - THE SLOWING

Tony walks alone.
Tony declines flights.
Tony sits in silence.

CUT TO:

INT. FAITHFUL FRIENDS STUDIO - DAY

Tony directs calmly.

A PRODUCER watches.

PRODUCER

You could be anywhere.

TONY

I am.

CUT TO:

INT. NATIONAL PRESS CLUB - NIGHT (2011)

Controlled chaos.

Michele Bachmann steps forward.

Tony adjusts her mic.

TONY

Straight into the lens.

Talk to the people.

Red light.

CUT TO:

SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE - PARODY

Laughter.

CUT TO:

INT. BOARDROOM - DAY

A document slides across the table.

\$19,000,000.

TONY
You're suing me.

No one answers.

CUT TO:

INT. LAW OFFICE - DAY

ATTORNEY
You should settle.

TONY
I didn't do anything wrong.

ATTORNEY
Then you're on your own.

CUT TO:

INT. HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Stacks of legal books.

Tony writes one word on a yellow pad:

PRO SE

UNDERLINES IT.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT II

ACT III

FADE IN:

INT. FEDERAL COURTHOUSE - MORNING

Marble floors. Flags. Gravity.

TONY LOIACONO enters alone. No attorney. No entourage.

Across the hall, KRISTIN FECTEAU, polished and confident, laughs quietly with her legal team.

She notices Tony.

Alone.

A thin smile.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - CONTINUOUS

The BAILIFF calls the room to order.

BAILIFF

All rise.

JUDGE TODD J. CAMPBELL takes the bench.

Tony rises with everyone else.

JUDGE CAMPBELL

Mr. Loiacono... you are appearing pro se.

TONY

Yes, Your Honor.

JUDGE CAMPBELL

Then you will be held to the same standard as

counsel.

Tony nods calmly.

TONY

I wouldn't ask for anything less.

Fecteau watches him closely now.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY (TRIAL DAY ONE)

Fecteau addresses the jury.

FECTEAU

This case is about trust... and betrayal.

She gestures toward Tony.

FECTEAU (CONT'D)

The defendant had every advantage.

Tony listens. Writes nothing.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Tony rises for his opening.

TONY

This case is about documents.

(beat)

And whether truth survives panic.

Jurors lean forward.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY (TRIAL DAY TWO)

FIRST WITNESS on the stand.

Tony cross-examines with precision.

TONY

You reviewed these emails after the lawsuit was filed.

WITNESS

Yes.

TONY

So your memory required a motive.

FECTEAU

Objection.

JUDGE CAMPBELL

Sustained.

Tony nods politely.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY (TRIAL DAY THREE)

Fecteau introduces a surprise exhibit.

Tony stiffens.

TONY

Foundation, Your Honor.

Fecteau hesitates.

JUDGE CAMPBELL

Sustained.

The exhibit is excluded.

A ripple through the jury.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY (TRIAL DAY FOUR)

Tony walks a witness through a timeline.

TONY

This email was sent after the SNL broadcast.

WITNESS

Yes.

TONY

Before blame was assigned.

Silence.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY (TRIAL DAY FIVE)

A DAMAGING WITNESS testifies.

The words land hard.

Tony absorbs it. Expression controlled.

CUT TO:

INT. LOIACONO HOME - NIGHT

Tony sits exhausted.

LORI pours coffee. Opens her Bible.

LORI

Let justice roll down like waters.

TONY

I might lose.

LORI

Then lose clean.

(beat)

But don't surrender truth.

Tony nods.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY (TRIAL DAY SIX)

Tony regroups.

TONY

You swore this statement was accurate.

The witness hesitates.

TONY

Yes or no.

The witness falters.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY (TRIAL DAY SEVEN)

Tony dismantles credibility methodically.

Jurors scribble notes.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY (TRIAL DAY EIGHT)

Tony holds up a document.

TONY

You signed this under oath.

The witness freezes.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY (TRIAL DAY NINE)

Judge Campbell watches Tony differently now.

Respect has replaced skepticism.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY (TRIAL DAY TEN - CLOSING)

Tony stands alone. No notes.

TONY

Panic needs a villain.

(beat)

Evidence does not.

He gestures to the exhibits.

TONY (CONT'D)

Truth is patient.

Silence fills the room.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY (VERDICT)

The JURY FOREMAN stands.

FOREMAN

We find for the defendant.

Tony exhales slowly.

ACT IV

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY (AFTERMATH)

The courtroom empties.

Fecteau packs her files.

FECTEAU

This isn't over.

TONY

It rarely is.

CUT TO:

INT. FEDERAL COURTHOUSE - DAY

Stamped motions slide across the counter.

RULE 50.

RULE 59.

Tony reads.

CUT TO:

INT. HEARING ROOM - DAY

JUDGE CAMPBELL

There was substantial evidence.

(beat)

Motions denied.

The gavel falls.

CUT TO:

INT. STATE COURT - DAY

A different judge.

JUDGE

This court can jail you.

TONY

Then I'll tell the truth from a cell.

The judge reviews filings.

JUDGE

Case dismissed.

CUT TO:

INT. HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

An email glows on the screen:

"Any legal exposure will destroy your personal brand."

Tony closes the laptop.

CUT TO:

INT. FEDERAL APPEALS OFFICE - DAY

A clerk stamps paperwork.

DISMISSED.

Tony turns and walks out.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT IV

ACT V

FADE IN:

EXT. BON SALL RANCH - EARLY MORNING

Wide sky. Quiet land.

TONY LOIACONO walks alone with a mug of coffee. No suit. No armor.

In the distance, HORSES shift in the morning light.

Tony stops at a fence.

His father, LOUIS LOIACONO JR. (86), sits nearby, wrapped in a blanket.

They watch the horizon together.

LOUIS

You still wake up early.

TONY

Old habits.

Louis smiles faintly.

LOUIS

You used to wake up early to fight.

Tony looks at him.

TONY

What do you wake up for.

Louis considers.

LOUIS

To remember I'm still here.

A beat.

Tony sits beside him.

TONY
When they took you..
(beat)
I thought I lost everything.

Louis keeps his eyes forward.

LOUIS
I thought I was saving you.

Tony exhales.

TONY
It didn't feel like saving.

Louis nods.

LOUIS
PTSD doesn't care how it feels.
(beat)
It just takes.

Tony stares out at the ranch.

TONY
I hated you.

Louis turns slowly.

LOUIS
I know.

Tony's voice remains controlled.

TONY
And then you lived.

Tony steps forward.

A GRANDCHILD runs into him.

Tony lifts the child.

His face softens.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tony and Lori sit quietly.

Lori reads from her Bible.

LORI
Write the vision.
(beat)
Make it plain.

Tony smiles faintly.

TONY
You never stop.

Lori closes the Bible.

LORI
Neither do you.

Tony looks at her.

TONY
I'm not the same man.

Lori holds his gaze.

LORI
No.

(beat)
You're the man you were meant to become.

Tony nods.

CUT TO:

INT. EMPTY COURTROOM - NIGHT

Silent. Still.

Tony enters alone.

No jury. No judge.

He walks to the counsel table.

Places a single folder down.

On the cover:

MR. PRO SE, ESQ.

Tony looks up at the bench.

TONY (V.O.)
Some men inherit power.
Some inherit pain.

Tony breathes.

TONY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I inherited a fight.

He turns and walks out.

TONY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Justice doesn't require permission.

FADE OUT.

THE END

MR. PRO SE, ESQ. — FEATURE FILM PACKAGE

Logline

A disgraced media entrepreneur, falsely accused in a \$19 million lawsuit, fires his lawyers and defends himself in federal court—risking prison, reputation, and family to prove that truth doesn't need permission.

Synopsis

Mr. Pro Se, Esq. follows Tony Loiacono, a self-made marketing executive shaped by childhood trauma and driven by relentless ambition. After building iconic sports brands and achieving national acclaim, Tony's world collapses when a political media venture implodes and former partners target him as the scapegoat. Facing financial ruin and public humiliation, Tony rejects settlement and represents himself in federal court. Across ten grueling trial days, he dismantles lies through discipline, documentation, and restraint. As post-verdict harassment escalates, Tony's marriage and faith—anchored by his steel-and-scripture wife—become his stabilizing force. The film culminates not in celebration, but redemption: a quiet reckoning with his PTSD-scarred father and a final image of a man who stood alone and did not run.

Tone & Comparables

Courtroom-forward prestige drama with sharp procedural fireworks in the vein of *A Few Good Men*, paired with controlled intensity and moral gravity. Dialogue favors restraint over theatrics; victories are earned, not announced.

Casting Wish List (Tone Reference)

Tony Loiacono: George Clooney / Oscar Isaac / Mark Ruffalo

Lori Loiacono: Jennifer Connelly / Emily Blunt / Rebecca Ferguson

Kristin Fecteau: Cate Blanchett / Jodie Comer / Rosamund Pike

Judge Todd J. Campbell: Bryan Cranston / Jeff Daniels

Louis Loiacono Sr.: Robert De Niro / Nick Nolte / Ed Harris

Why This Film Now

In an era defined by reputational warfare, media distortion, and legal intimidation, Mr. Pro Se, Esq. speaks to the cost of truth and the courage required to defend it without permission. The story resonates across political and cultural lines because it is ultimately about integrity under pressure.

Production Notes

- Real names retained for authenticity and gravity.
- Courtroom sequences designed for clarity and escalation.
- Faith elements integrated with restraint (steel-and-scripture), never sermonizing.
- Final image favors legacy over victory.