

The Rainmaker (1997)

Rudy Baylor (Matt Damon) was brought up in a slum. His father, who was a severe alcoholic, abused him and his mother. After studying at Austin Peay State University, Rudy, who has an interest in social justice and civil rights, decides to attend law school. When he graduates from the University of Memphis Law School, he, unlike most of his fellow grads, has no high-paying employment lined up. He is forced to apply for part-time positions while he serves drinks at a Memphis bar. Desperate for a job, he reluctantly goes to an interview with J. Lyman "Bruiser" Stone (Mickey Rourke), a ruthless and corrupt but successful personal injury lawyer, who makes him an associate. To earn his fee, Rudy is turned into an ambulance chaser, required to hunt for potential clients at a local hospital.

Soon he meets Deck Shifflet (Danny DeVito), a less-than-ethical former insurance assessor turned paralegal, who has gone to law school but failed the bar exam six times. Deck is resourceful in gathering information, and practically an expert on insurance lawsuits. Rudy manages to get just one case, concerning insurance bad faith. It may be worth several million dollars in damages, which appeals to him because he is about to declare himself bankrupt. He rents an apartment above the garage in the home of elderly Miss Birdsong (Teresa Wright), a client whose will he has been drafting.

Bruiser is suspected of racketeering, and his offices are raided by the police and FBI. Not knowing what else to do, Rudy and Deck set up, without so much as a secretary for help, a two-man practice. They file a bad faith suit on behalf of a middle-aged couple, Dot and Buddy Black, whose 22-year-old son Donny Ray (Johnny Whitworth) is going to die from leukemia. Donny Ray would most likely have been saved by a bone marrow transplant had his medical claim not been denied by Great Benefit, the family's insurance carrier.

Although Rudy passes the Tennessee bar exam, he has never argued a case before a judge and jury. He finds himself up against a group of experienced and devious lawyers from a large firm that is headed by Leo F. Drummond (Jon Voight), a showman attorney who uses unscrupulous tactics to win his cases.

The original judge assigned to the case, Harvey Hale (Dean Stockwell), is set to dismiss it because he sees it as one of many so-called "lottery" cases that slow the judicial process. But after Hale suffers a fatal heart attack, a far more sympathetic judge, Tyrone Kipler (Danny Glover), takes over the case. Kipler, a former civil rights attorney, immediately denies the insurance company's petition for dismissal.

While preparing his case, Rudy gets to know a young woman whom he met at the hospital, Kelly Riker (Claire Danes), a battered wife whose husband, Cliff (Andrew Shue), has beaten her so savagely with a baseball bat that she must be hospitalized. After a particularly violent attack, Rudy persuades Kelly, to whom he is attracted, to file for divorce. Going to Kelly's home to pack her belongings, Rudy and Kelly are confronted by a bat-wielding Cliff. After Cliff is injured in the fight that follows, Kelly insists Rudy leave. From outside, Rudy can hear Cliff being hit with the baseball bat. To protect Rudy from being implicated in Cliff's death, Kelly tells the police she killed her husband in self-defense. Rudy promises to defend Kelly if the case goes to trial, but the district attorney declines to prosecute, knowing Kelly would never be convicted.

Donny Ray dies, but not before giving a video deposition. The case goes to trial, where Drummond capitalizes on Rudy's inexperience. He gets vital testimony by Rudy's key witness, former Great Benefit employee Jackie Lemanczyk (Virginia Madsen), stricken from the record, and attempts to discredit Donny Ray's mother (Mary Kay Place). Due to Rudy's single-minded determination and skillful cross-examination of Great Benefit's unctuous president Wilfred Keeley (Roy Scheider), the jury finds for the plaintiff with a monetary award far exceeding all expectations.

It is a great triumph for Rudy and Deck, at least until Keeley attempts to flee the country and Great Benefit declares itself bankrupt, thus allowing it to avoid paying punitive damages to the Blacks, as well as any future judgments in class-action lawsuits. There is no payout for the grieving parents and no fee for Rudy or

Deck. Dot Black expresses satisfaction that at least they put Great Benefit out of business, and that it is now unable to hurt other families like hers.

Convinced his success will create unrealistic expectations for future clients, Rudy abandons his practice to instead teach law with a focus on ethical behavior. He leaves town with Kelly, wanting to retain a low profile and protect Kelly from any possible retribution by Cliff's vengeful relatives. He leaves the legal profession after just one successful case.

Cast

Matt Damon	as	Rudy Baylor
Danny DeVito	as	Deck Shifflet
Jon Voight	as	Leo F. Drummond
Claire Danes	as	Kelly Riker
Mary Kay Place	as	Dot Black
Dean Stockwell	as	Judge Harvey Hale
Virginia Madsen	as	Jackie Lemanczyk
Mickey Rourke	as	J. Lyman "Bruiser" Stone
Randy Travis	as	Billy Porter
Roy Scheider	as	Wilfred Keeley
Red West	as	Buddy Black
Johnny Whitworth	as	Donny Ray Black
Andrew Shue	as	Cliff Riker
Teresa Wright	as	"Miss Birdie" Birdsong
Danny Glover	as	Judge Tyrone Kipler (uncredited)
Claire Robinson	as	girl at table

Memorable quotes (with notes on difficult vocabulary)

My father hated lawyers. All his life. He wasn't a great guy, my old man. He drank and **beat up** my mother, he beat me up too. So you might think I became a lawyer just to **piss him off**, but you'd be wrong. I'd wanted to be a lawyer ever since I read about the civil rights lawyers of the '50s and 60's, and the amazing uses they found for the law. They did what a lot of people thought was the impossible: they gave lawyers a good name. And so I went to law school. And it did piss my dad off, but he was pissed off anyway. In my first year, he got drunk and **fell off a ladder** made by his own company. He didn't know who to **sue** first. He died a couple of months after that.

To beat someone up: picchiare/pestare qlcn; **to piss someone off:** (volg.) far incazzare qlcn; **to fall off:** cadere; **ladder:** scala a pioli; **to sue:** fare causa.

Shiffler: [after waking Rudy with a before-sunrise phone call] Guess who died last night?

Baylor: Who? Do you ever sleep?

Shiffler: Harvey Hale! Age 62, quite a pedigree.

Baylor: Judge Hale?

Shiffler: **Yep. Croaked with** a heart attack, **dropped dead** by his swimming pool.

Baylor: **You gotta be kidding me!**

Shiffler: Guess which newly-made judge was assigned to Great Benefit's case?

Baylor: How the hell am I supposed to know that, Deck?

Shiffler: Tyrone Kipler. Black, Harvard, civil-rights lawyer. Hates Tinley Britt, and he's tough on insurance companies. You know what a Rainmaker is, **kid**? The **bucks** are gonna be falling from the sky.

Yep: (colloq.) sì; **to be croaked with:** morire di qualcosa; **to drop dead:** morire; **to kid someone:** prendere qlcn in giro; **kid:** (vezz.) ragazzo; **bucks:** (colloq.) soldi.

Baylor: I'm curious.

Drummond: About what?

Baylor: I'm just **wondering**... do you even remember when you first **sold out**?

To wonder: domandarsi/chiedersi; **to sell out:** (qui) vendersi

Baylor: Objection. Your honor, he's **leading** the witness.

Judge Kipler: This is **cross examination**, leading is allowed. **Overruled**, as to leading.

To lead: (qui) fare domande tendenziose; **cross examination:** controinterrogatorio; **overruled:** (obiezione) respinta.

Baylor: **Sworn in** by a fool and **vouched for** by a **scoundrel**. I'm a lawyer at last.

To be sworn in: fare giuramento; **to vouch for someone:** raccomandare qlcn; **scoundrel:** canaglia/furfante.

Judge Hale: I'm really tired of this type of **lawsuits**. I'm inclined to **grant the motion to dismiss**. You can **re-file** it in federal court, take it somewhere else. I don't want it **clogging up** my **docket**.

Lawsuit: causa; **to grant a motion to dismiss:** dichiarare il non luogo a procedere; **to re-file (a motion):** ripresentare; **to clog up:** intasare; **docket:** calendario delle cause pendenti

Judge Kipler: Are you **in over your head**, son?

To be in over one's head: esserci dentro fino al collo

Baylor: There's gotta be a hundred years of law experience sitting at this very table. My staff has **flunked** the bar exam six times.

To flunk: essere bocciati/non passare

Sources: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Rainmaker_%281997_film%29
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0119978/quotes?ref=tt_ql_trv_4