

The Grinder Episode Guide

Episodes 001-022

Last episode aired Tuesday May 10, 2016

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Two brothers. One's a lawyer. The other played one on TV.



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Season One

Pilot

Season 1

Episode Number: 1

Season Episode: 1

Originally aired: Tuesday September 29, 2015
Writer: Jarrad Paul, Andrew Mogel
Director: Jake Kasdan
Show Stars: Rob Lowe (Dean Sanderson), Fred Savage (Stewart Sanderson), Mary Elizabeth Ellis (Debbie Sanderson), Hana Hayes (Lizzie Sanderson), Connor Kalopsis (Ethan Sanderson), William Devane (Dean Sanderson Sr.), Steve Little (Todd)
Guest Stars: Tonita Castro (Yolanda), Odette Annable (Devin Stutz), Rose Abdo (Judge Stephanie Rossmyre), Juan Carlos Cantu (Victor Ramirez), Brian Huskey (Albert Krantz), Kumail Nanjiani (Prosecutor Leonard), Melanie Liburd (Ivy Dexter), Gregg Daniel (Bartender), John Owen Lowe (Joel Zadak), Chelsey Crisp (Reporter 1), Ervin Ross (Paparazzo), Courtney Richards (Fan)
Production Code: 1AYV01
Summary: When his long-running hit series comes to an end, Dean decides to move back to his small home town to take over his family's law firm.



Dean Sanderson, the star of a soapy primetime lawyer show also called *The Grinder*, is watching the series finale in the home of his brother Stewart and his family. Dean is at a crossroads: His show is over, and he finds himself full of melancholy and mildly envious of Stewart's quietly fulfilling suburban lifestyle.

He got that way by handling the family law business in small-town Idaho. Stewart is well-studied in the ins and outs of law, but, as we see in his first appearance in a courtroom, he lacks any sort of

charisma — he prepares endless note cards, then reads from them in comically speedy and mumbly fashion, to the point where the opposing counselor asks Stewart, "I have a question: Have you ever talked before?"

Dean sees an opening: Since he spent so much time being a fake lawyer, he believes he can be an actual attorney and lend a hand in the family business. Stewart is resistant to it, primarily because Dean doesn't have any actual law background but also because he's clearly tired of living in his famous (and beloved) brother's shadow. So he sends Dean away in a note card-assisted dismissal, but Dean decides that this is just another challenge he has to grind through, so he crashes Stewart's trial to spectacular effect. Using typical TV lawyer tricks, Dean gets a shady landlord to confess to messing with a couple's rent check, and the Sanderson boys manage to combine their powers to win the case, much to the chagrin of Leonard. "Your honor, this is insanity. I have 10 million objections, rounding down," he says.

Dean plans on leaving, but he's so energized by his success in the courtroom that he decides to stick around for a while to help out his brother. The pair stand awkwardly triumphant at the end, comfortable with the knowledge that there are any number of directions *The Grinder* could head from here.

A Hero Has Fallen

Season 1

Episode Number: 2

Season Episode: 2

Originally aired: Tuesday October 6, 2015
Writer: Jarrad Paul, Andrew Mogel
Director: Jake Kasdan
Show Stars: Rob Lowe (Dean Sanderson), Fred Savage (Stewart Sanderson), Mary Elizabeth Ellis (Debbie Sanderson), Hana Hayes (Lizzie Sanderson), Connor Kalopsis (Ethan Sanderson), William Devane (Dean Sanderson Sr.), Natalie Morales (II) (Claire Lacoste), Steve Little (Todd)
Guest Stars: Jarrad Paul (Pincus), Corey Dorris (Trevor), Sujata Ray (Dawn), Will Greenberg (Hugh Rozz), Matt Hobby (Patt Landy), Phil Abrams (Jeff Behar), John Owen Lowe (Joel Zadak)
Production Code: 1AYV02
Summary: After an exciting victory, Sanderson and Yao is flooded with cases — and Dean wants to choose what they tackle next; Stewart's attempts to stop being a buzzkill have unexpected effects on his family.



The family is again watching an episode of *The Grinder*, only this time they've started from the beginning with its pilot (there's even a bit of meta-humor about how *The Grinder* lost a lot of viewers because its second episode drifted away from the central conceit of the show). The reality is setting in for Stewart, who now has Dean coming to the office every day in a carpool. Dean is still settling in, too, and is awestruck by even the simplest of family-related activities, like dinner and driving the kids to school. But his biggest

impact is at work, where they are now inundated with new cases thanks to Dean's courtroom grandstanding last week. Stewart is talking about bringing in a new lawyer, but all Dean wants to do is find a slam dunk case the way it worked on his old show. "This is a real law firm. We can't do that," protests Stewart. "But what if we could?" Dean asks. Stewart is befuddled. "I don't know how to respond to that exactly."

In fact, nobody seems to know how to respond to Dean's nonsense, but they certainly get swept up in his enthusiasm, including a couple who are friends with Stewart and Debbie who were just fired because they work at the same place and violated company policy. But as opposing attorney Claire points out, there's literally no case there. In fact, Claire is seemingly the only person in the universe not charmed by Dean, and thus Dean has to eat his first ever defeat.

After a delightful depression montage that found Dean by himself in a batting cage (the saddest of all sports-arcade distractions), Stewart tries to cheer him up. Stewart doesn't want to be a naysayer — specifically, he doesn't want to be Pinkus, the character on *The Grinder* who always told Lowe's character he couldn't do something. But his open-mindedness backfires, leaving Dean depressed and Stewart's kids all messed up: his son's circadian rhythm in the toilet and his daughter hanging around the house with a football player. Stewart realizes that Pinkus is necessary, and there is no Grinder without Pinkus.

One loophole later, the case is won (2-0 for the Grinder!), and Claire comes to work for Stewart's firm. Her arrival not only gives Dean a love interest but also an adversary who doesn't buy

into his shtick. Stewart can only roll his eyes at Dean so much — he is family, after all — but Claire is free to rebuff both Dean's strange approach to law and his sexual advances. At the moment, it looks impossible that they'll end up together. But what if it wasn't?

The Curious Disappearance of Mr. Donovan

Season 1
Episode Number: 3
Season Episode: 3

Originally aired: Tuesday October 13, 2015
Writer: Dominic Dierkes
Director: Jay Chandrasekhar
Show Stars: Rob Lowe (Dean Sanderson), Fred Savage (Stewart Sanderson), Mary Elizabeth Ellis (Debbie Sanderson), Hana Hayes (Lizzie Sanderson), Connor Kalopsis (Ethan Sanderson), William Devane (Dean Sanderson Sr.), Natalie Morales (II) (Claire Lacoste), Steve Little (Todd)
Guest Stars: Will Greenberg (Hugh Rozz), Matt Hobby (Patt Landy), Melanie Liburd (Ivy Dexter), Dan Martin (Murph), Caryn Mower (Client Mom)
Production Code: LAYV04
Summary: Stewart dismisses Dean's claims that Claire is sharing secrets with a rival firm; Debbie and Stewart try to get to the bottom of who tampered with their DVR.



The episode opens, once again, on a re-run of *The Grinder* (which, it should be noted, is shown constantly in 170 countries). Dean talks about the struggles he had to go through to shoot one of those classic cop show scenes wherein people just confess for no reason (which is the third act of roughly 71 percent of all episodes of *Law & Order*) and says that the *Grinder* believes in the truth but also believes in justice, and a lie to get to the latter is always okay. Stewart disagrees and asks Dean not to use episodes of his

old show to teach his son, Ethan, lessons about morality. "Would you rather he learn it on the streets?" Dean asks.

The current crop of television dramas tends to deal in big lies, like Olivia Pope's affair with the president or the dirty deeds Gordon has done in the name of morally ambiguous justice on Gotham. But this week's *The Grinder* is knee-deep in the white lies that everybody tells just to get through the day. Somebody has deleted the latest episode of *Ray Donovan* from the DVR, which upsets Stew and Deb (even though, as Ethan points out, it's available on demand). But nobody claims the blame for deleting it, so both Ethan and his sister, Lizzie, get grounded. "Two siblings, pitted against each other in a battle of consciences. Who will prevail?" Dean helpfully narrates. In fact, the conflict dredges up an old tale: Once when they were kids, Stewart's bedroom window was broken, and though he always claimed that Dean was responsible for it, Stewart was the one punished.

It's a conflict that has stuck with both brothers for two decades and finds itself being played out in this week's case. The firm is working on a simple personal injury suit, but what seemed like an open-and-shut affair has a new wrinkle: the defense counsel discovered that the victim had a pre-existing injury that might allow them to wriggle out of paying a \$900 medical bill. Stewart is willing to allow that sometimes these things just happen, but Dean believes there is a mole at the office, and he's particularly convinced that said informant is Claire. His logic? "She's a new hire; she worked for the other side; she refuses to sleep with me," he explains to Stewart in the middle of the night. "It adds up! It adds way up."

But Claire has a clear conscience because it's the bumbling Todd who was an unwitting accomplice for the other side. His bartender explains that the two opposing lawyers have been sending him over free shots for weeks in an effort to get him to talk about the details on a number of cases. Nobody seems that upset that Todd is the culprit (as Dean points out, "It's fine for you to be wrong. Everyone expects you to be wrong"), but after Todd tells Dean the nature of his wrongdoing, Dean is more upset that he was wrong about who the mole was. He does not want to admit that he was wrong, so his quest now becomes to keep that fact away from Stewart.

Stewart finds out pretty quickly, and though he tries to play everything close to the vest, he can't keep it from Dean that he knows that Dean knows (a level of syntax Todd was unable to comprehend). Inspired by Ethan's teary faux-confession that draws out Lizzie, Stewart sets a trap and pretends he had to fire Claire for being the mole, only for Dean to call his bluff. "Todd didn't tell me anything," Dean says. "You just did." Callback!

In the end, everybody cops to what they've done: Dean takes the rap for breaking the window 20 years ago, Lizzie allows that she wiped out Ray Donovan, and Todd comes clean about being the mole (even though literally everybody knew already by the time he made his revelation). Nobody really ends up mad, either. In fact, Stewart and Dean's dad says, "He did what he had to do to get out of trouble. You can't fault him for that!" (Deb responds, "I would argue that you can fault him," and Stewart points out, "You faulted me for the same thing!") Dean comes to terms with being wrong. But he holds on to a shred of dignity in pointing out that while he was wrong about the identity of the informant, Stewart was adamant about there not being a mole at all.

"I guess it's kind of a tie," Dean says.

"Is that what you need to tell yourself to move on from this?" Stewart asks him.

"Yes. Yes it is," Dean admits, in a rare example of complete and total honesty.

Little Michard No More

Season 1

Episode Number: 4

Season Episode: 4

Originally aired:	Tuesday October 20, 2015
Writer:	Hayes Davenport
Director:	John Hamburg
Show Stars:	Rob Lowe (Dean Sanderson), Fred Savage (Stewart Sanderson), Mary Elizabeth Ellis (Debbie Sanderson), Hana Hayes (Lizzie Sanderson), Connor Kalopsis (Ethan Sanderson), William Devane (Dean Sanderson Sr.), Natalie Morales (Claire Lacoste), Steve Little (Todd)
Guest Stars:	Emmanuelle Chriqui (Addison Cross), Nat Faxon (Lyle Gerhart), Alexie Gilmore (Vanessa Gerhart), David Bloom (Brandon Gibgort), Mark Berry (Coach Kessler), Isabella Dake (Tanya), Rick Fitts (Judge Mc-Can)
Production Code:	1AYV03
Summary:	Stewart and Deb wonder if their new friends like them only because he has a famous brother, while Dean is perplexed because Claire doesn't seem the least bit impressed with his celebrity.



Stewart doesn't just have to play the awkward straight man opposite Dean's charismatic punch-line machine. He proves that not only does he have great chemistry with his wife, Deb, but is also an excellent foil against some top shelf guest stars in Nat Faxon and Alexie Gilmore. They play Lyle and Vanessa, a posh couple who suddenly wants to become friends with Stewart and Deb. Stewart is immediately skeptical, as he has spent a lifetime being exploited by people who want to get closer to his famous

brother. But Deb insists they go in with an open mind, and though it's pretty clear from the start that Lyle and Vanessa only want to be in Dean's orbit, Stewart is easily charmed thanks to Lyle's insistence that it looks like he's been working out and his praise for a traffic situation that Stewart helped correct.

A dinner escalates to a fundraiser, where Stewart will have the opportunity to cozy up to a judge. Lyle and Vanessa want Dean to come, too, and while Deb and Stewart go along with it, Dean claims he knows for sure they are only interested in him. He can recognize the signs, you see. "They had that sort of Donner Party look in their eyes, like I was a steak they wanted to eat," Dean says.

He ends up being right. When Dean doesn't show at the fundraiser, Vanessa and Lyle are upset, and they spin a tale about a sick kid in order to lure him over. (It goes unresolved, but that kid is definitely not ill.) Although he is seduced by the empty admiration, Stewart has finally had enough: He calls out Lyle and Vanessa for using him to get to Dean, and they basically own up to it. Stewart even gets to meet the judge in the end — it turns out nobody really likes Lyle and Vanessa.

Meanwhile, Dean still has the full court press going on Claire, and she continues to have none of it. Admittedly, this narrative is a little creepy, as Dean is pretty clearly sexually harassing Claire in the workplace. But it's a sitcom, and it's Rob Lowe, so we'll give it a pass for now.

Besides, his behavior has improved. After an episode of *The Grinder* doesn't impress Claire, Dean asks Deb what an "authentic" woman would like from him. Deb tells him to be humble — solid advice, but Dean manifests it by pretending to take a phone call about donating to a fake charity called Church for the Blind. He realizes that Claire's true passion is work, so Dean decides to throw himself into the mix. But when Claire asks him to do some real research on a bunch of background checks, Dean blanches because they didn't do paperwork on his show. "We usually just did an all-nighter montage and skipped the boring stuff and got right to the juice," Dean tells Claire.

After a hilarious attempt at crafting his own one-man montage (which includes him writing the words "Motive" and "Follow the \$" on a marker board and literally throwing stuff against a wall), Dean actually ends up reading the background checks and finds a piece of evidence that exonerates a schoolyard bully. Claire admits she underestimated Dean, a nice moment that he ruins by clearing off her desk in preparation for sex. As Dean is learning, you can take the man out of *The Grinder*, but it's much more difficult to take *The Grinder* out of the man.

A Bittersweet Grind (Une Mouture Amer)

Season 1
Episode Number: 5
Season Episode: 5

Originally aired: Tuesday November 3, 2015
Writer: Sean Clements
Director: Matt Sohn
Show Stars: Rob Lowe (Dean Sanderson), Fred Savage (Stewart Sanderson), Mary Elizabeth Ellis (Debbie Sanderson), Hana Hayes (Lizzie Sanderson), Connor Kalopsis (Ethan Sanderson), William Devane (Dean Sanderson Sr.), Natalie Morales (Claire Lacoste), Steve Little (Todd)
Guest Stars: Christina Applegate (Gail Budnick), Emmanuelle Chriqui (Addison Cross), Brennan Keel Cook (Toby), Talia Tabin (Candace), Taylor Lo-cascio (Brie), John Owen Lowe (Joel Zadak)
Production Code: 1AYV05
Summary: Dean, frustrated at not finding love, has his belief in romance restored when he reconnects with a former girlfriend. Meanwhile, Deb tries to convince uptight Stewart to allow Lizzie to go on a supervised date.



Dean is feeling melancholy because he is just coming off his latest sexual encounter that was based purely around his celebrity, which elicits some sympathy from Debbie. Stewart isn't having it. "I'm sure a lot of people like him because he's absurdly handsome and rich," he notes.

But Stewart realizes that if Dean meets somebody who really fulfills him, it might get him to move out sooner. So he sets up a meeting with Gail at the law firm (they handled Gail's divorce), and

she and Dean immediately hit it off (much to the delight of Todd). Not only does she still look as good as she used to, but she also isn't even aware of *The Grinder*. "I'm more of a book girl," she tells Dean, who is overjoyed to have someone in his life he knows doesn't want him just because he was on a show that was a staple of the culture.

Stewart's plan to get Dean and Gail together seems to be working exceptionally well, particularly when Dean announces that he's going to be a father — to Gail's already-out-of-the-womb son from her first marriage. There's a lot of riffing about the travails of fatherhood, but the joke was set up from a mile away: Gail's son Toby is actually 23 years old. The other, funnier bit of fallout from the Gail affair is that Dean disappears from the law firm, which leads to a very simple but extremely effective montage of everybody actually getting work done rather than being distracted by the TV star in their midst. (Claire gets the most done, probably because she's being so cool about all this.)

Gail, Dean, Stewart, and Debbie all meet for dinner, where Gail accidentally outs herself thanks to a quote from the episode of *The Grinder* we saw in the opening scene and a conspicuously placed painting on the wall where it looks like a television might have been mounted. In the end, Gail was only looking for what most other women were looking for: to have sex with Dean while the couple watches a rerun of *The Grinder*. "Gail, you're not really a book girl, are you?" Dean says, always grinding. After his interrogation, he says dejectedly, "I'm sorry. I can't say I enjoyed grinding you like that." Dean is disappointed — it's the kind of disappointment that

comes with a realization that love is fleeting, or that comes with an unlikely World Series run undone by defensive blunders and inopportune strikeouts.

Dedicating This One to the Crew

Season 1
Episode Number: 6
Season Episode: 6

Originally aired: Tuesday November 10, 2015
Writer: Guy Endore-Kaiser
Director: Phil Traill
Show Stars: Rob Lowe (Dean Sanderson), Fred Savage (Stewart Sanderson), Mary Elizabeth Ellis (Debbie Sanderson), Hana Hayes (Lizzie Sanderson), Connor Kalopsis (Ethan Sanderson), William Devane (Dean Sanderson Sr.), Natalie Morales (Claire Lacoste), Steve Little (Todd)
Guest Stars: Michael Showalter (Sandy Malmuth), Will Greenberg (Hugh Rozz), Matt Hobby (Pat Landy), Jerry Minor (Principal Davis), Kurt Yaeger (Prosecuting Attorney), Walter Addison (Judge Felmar), Jacob Guenther (Blaine), Amanda Landry (Judge)
Production Code: 1AYV08
Summary: When Ethan chooses to audition for the school play instead of following in his father's footsteps by joining the tech crew, it highlights the differences between those who seem destined for the spotlight and those who live their lives in the shadows.



The two brothers go head to head over the fate of young Ethan's future in the theater: Would he join the crew, as his father did as a member of the legendary Shadow Boys, or would he follow his uncle into the spotlight and onto the stage?

Much to Stewart's chagrin, Ethan gets seduced by the lure of praise and awards, so he auditions for the play — only to be denied by school play director Sandy Malmuth. Stewart and Debbie want to treat this as a learning experience for their son, but Dean obviously won't take such an

injustice lying down. He heads to the school, where it turns out he and Sandy have a history: Dean's first role as Ichabod Crane (taken after he broke his ankle while having sex in the shower the week before the state football championship) was at the expense of Sandy, the original holder of the part. Dean is convinced Sandy is denying Ethan the part (which is "right in his wheelhouse") as a way of getting back at him. Obviously, that leads to a hacking plot, wherein Todd uses his Excel skills to somehow find the auditions on Sandy's laptop, only to find that Ethan's performance isn't there.

Stewart initially resists Dean's madness, but he's hung up on the fact that their father used to tell Dean to "swing for the fences," while Stewart was told to stay within his limitations. "He said, 'Here are your limits; don't go past them,'" Stew tells Debbie. He doesn't want Ethan to feel inferior the way that he often felt growing up, so he goes all in on the plan in order to show his faith in his boy. Dean and Stewart head to the principal and ask him to observe Ethan's audition as an unbiased third party. Even though Ethan's monologue elicits a fist-pump from Dean, he's still told he's not getting the part.

But you know what they say about telling secrets in the theater: Always check for the Shadow Boys. Stew uses his old crew skills to haunt the wings of the theater, where he hears the principal telling Sandy he's sick of being blackmailed (and we don't want to know what happened on that

pole vault mat). Ethan gets the part, Dean and Stewart feel vindicated, and their dad even admits he was wrong to discourage Stewart back in the day. The resolution is a lot like a lot of the resolutions the Sandersons have seen over the past few weeks, but that's how families work, brother.

Buckingham Malice

Season 1
Episode Number: 7
Season Episode: 7

Originally aired:	Tuesday November 17, 2015
Writer:	Julius Sharpe
Director:	Christine Gernon
Show Stars:	Rob Lowe (Dean Sanderson), Fred Savage (Stewart Sanderson), Mary Elizabeth Ellis (Debbie Sanderson), Hana Hayes (Lizzie Sanderson), Connor Kalopsis (Ethan Sanderson), William Devane (Dean Sanderson Sr.), Natalie Morales (Claire Lacoste), Steve Little (Todd)
Guest Stars:	Carl Edwards (Strauss), Jim Piddock (Barrister Cromwell), Emily Arlook (Laura Springer), Nathan Fielder (Officer Collins), Jonny Coyne (Farouk), Rose Abdo (Judge Stephanie Rossmyre), Alastair Duncan (Lord Chief Justice Pogue), Price Carson (Mechanic), Bruno Amato (Jail Guard), Patrick Hume (Inmate #1), Nanrisa Lee (Media #1), Stewart Skelton (Barrister Heath)
Production Code:	LAYV07
Summary:	Instead of following in his father's footsteps and joining the backstage technical crew, Ethan auditions for a role in the school play. Meanwhile, Stewart questions his father about why he gave Dean and him two different takes on how to live their lives.



After getting a giant box of free socks, Stewart points out that while Dean wanted to come back home to live a "normal" life, he still receives all sorts of special treatment because of his celebrity. Dean takes this to heart and vows to turn down stuff like gratis meals and late-night Boggle sessions with Paul Giamatti.

Although everybody thinks that's a noble idea that Dean will not actually adhere to, it does get in the way of Stewart's sex vacation (sorry, "intimate getaway") to the mountains with Debbie. His car — the

one with the snow tires — is in the shop, and mechanic Farouk (who may or may not be Armenian) keeps moving the goalposts on when it's going to be ready. Stewart realizes that he can exploit Dean in order to get his car back earlier, but Dean isn't having it. But Stew takes Claire's advice and tricks him like she tricks her dog into going to the vet. Not only do they get the car on time, but Farouk tells the boys they can have the car back for nothing.

Speaking of cars, Dean has his own vehicular run-in while on the road. He blows through a stop sign and gets stopped by Officer Collins. Collins doesn't want to give the Grinder a ticket, but Dean insists that he get written up because that's what regular people do. What else do regular people do? They also go to court and argue their tickets, which is exactly what Dean does. Of course, he manages to seduce the judge into dismissing the ticket and also insults Collins in the process.

That comes around to bite him in the end, as when they go to collect Stew's car, they discover that Farouk is in the hospital and apparently didn't tell anybody they could have the work for free. So they get pulled over for jumping the bill, and once again it's Collins. They end up in jail, and though Stew comes up with a clever plan to bust out in order to make his intimate getaway,

Dean realizes the noble thing would be to go back into jail and wait it out like a normal person would.

When Dean Sr., Lizzie, and Ethan collect him the next day, he realizes one clear thing: He's famous, and he owes it to the people who made him famous to remain famous. It's a simple charge, with no politics required.

Giving Thanks, Getting Justice

Season 1
Episode Number: 8
Season Episode: 8

Originally aired: Tuesday November 24, 2015
Writer: Niki Schwartz-Wright
Director: Jamie Babbit
Show Stars: Rob Lowe (Dean Sanderson), Fred Savage (Stewart Sanderson), Mary Elizabeth Ellis (Debbie Sanderson), Hana Hayes (Lizzie Sanderson), Connor Kalopsis (Ethan Sanderson), William Devane (Dean Sanderson Sr.), Natalie Morales (Claire Lacoste), Steve Little (Todd)
Guest Stars: Jason Alexander (Cliff Bemis), Timothy Olyphant (Himself), Arielle Kebbel (Avery Banks / Gabrielle), Clyde Kusatsu (Joseph Yao), Debi Derryberry (Grinder AD), Sherry Mandujano (Ericka), Fernando R. Felix (Grip)
Production Code: LAYV06
Summary: After spending several holidays away from the family, Dean is thrilled to be reunited with them for his first real Thanksgiving celebration in a long time. But his overexcitement and meddling brings a major, unexpected family secret to light.



The episode opens, as it always does, with a scene from *The Grinder*, except instead of the Sanderson family watching at home, we're actually on set for the shooting of an episode directed by Cliff Bemis (a delightfully oily Jason Alexander). The script calls for Dean to take his shirt off, but Dean waffles. He wants to get back to making shows that were about edgy ideas, but Bemis is mostly into the ratings draw that is Dean's bare chest.

The timeline jumps forward to the present day, when Dean discovers that

Stewart's family doesn't celebrate Thanksgiving anymore. Dean assumes that Stew has unresolved issues surrounding their parents' divorce, but that's not it (not entirely, at least). Stewart reveals that a few years back on Thanksgiving, he walked in on his mother engaged in a standing 69 (she was really into Crossfit at the time) with Dean Sr.'s former law partner Joseph Yao. Since then, Stewart has been too traumatized to celebrate Thanksgiving and has been unable to talk to his father about it, despite Debbie's protestations. "I can keep this bottled up," Stew tells her. "You'd be amazed at the things I can keep bottled up!"

Dean is determined to celebrate Thanksgiving with his family because he believes that is one more element of normalcy that he has been missing during his time in Hollywood. He insists that Stew spill the beans to their father, but Stewart bails and sits alone in his car in the garage. It takes another pep talk from Dean to get Stewart to act, and Dean tells him he's got to get his dignity back from Yao. "I was with you until the end there. I feel like I have my dignity," says Stew. "Nope, he owns it," Dean tells him.

Like most everything involving the Sanderson boys and their good intentions, this confrontation ends up blowing up in their face. Dean Sr. knew about his wife's dalliances with Yao all along, and the Thanksgiving episode was not an isolated incident. (He's a little upset Yao neglected to lock the door.) "We lived the rock and roll lifestyle. Things were different back then," Dean Sr. explains.

"It was five years ago, Dad!" Stew points out.

"Rock and roll never dies," Dean Sr. tells him.

Meanwhile, in flashback, Dean attempts to keep his dignity, and his shirt. Fed up with having to be stripped to the waist in the law library and while cross-examining the Vice President, he tells Bemis no to taking his shirt off once and for all. "Do you want to come into more scenes already shirtless?" Bemis helpfully asks. Eventually he relents, telling Dean that they'll shoot scenes with and without shirts, and then they can edit them together to decide which is right for the scenes.

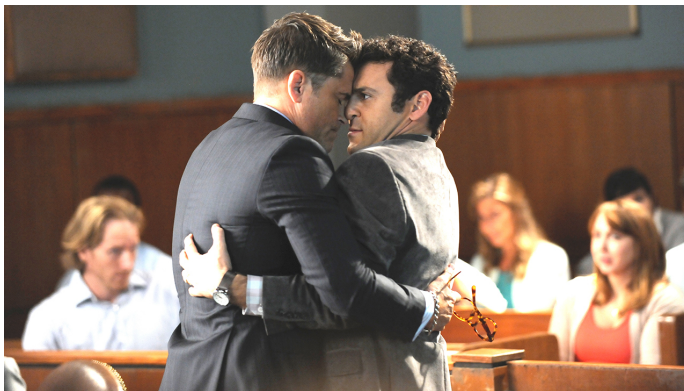
Bemis reneges pretty much immediately, and Dean goes to the beach to sort out his thoughts. He's visited by a magical surfing creature named Timothy Olyphant. "They used a shirtless take without consulting me," Dean tells him. "They always do," Olyphant replies. He encourages Dean to grab ahold of his integrity and walk away from the show if he needs to, which leads to this exchange: "You can't take your shirt off unless it's... " "Justified?"

So now we know how Dean ended up leaving *The Grinder*, and though he walked away with his head held high, he's been double-crossed: The episode ends with a promo for *The Grinder: New Orleans*, which tells the story of the Grinder's brother, played by a shirtless Olyphant. "The Big Easy just got hard," Olyphant says. Yes it did, Grinder. Yes it did.

Grinder Rests in Peace

Season 1
Episode Number: 9
Season Episode: 9

Originally aired: Tuesday December 1, 2015
Writer: Sally Bradford McKenna
Director: Max Winkler
Show Stars: Rob Lowe (Dean Sanderson), Fred Savage (Stewart Sanderson), Mary Elizabeth Ellis (Debbie Sanderson), Hana Hayes (Lizzie Sanderson), Connor Kalopsis (Ethan Sanderson), William Devane (Dean Sanderson Sr.), Natalie Morales (Claire Lacoste), Steve Little (Todd)
Guest Stars: Jason Alexander (Cliff Bemis), Timothy Olyphant (Rake Grinder / Himself), Arielle Kebbel (Avery Banks / Gabrielle), Dennis Cockrum (Judge), Taylor Locascio (Brie), Emma Engle (Zoe), Matt Miller (Defense Attorney)
Production Code: 1AYV09
Summary: *"The Grinder: New Orleans"*, a spinoff of the original hit series, asks Dean to film a scene giving closure to his beloved character, Mitch Grinder. Not surprisingly, Dean struggles with being replaced by his TV brother, Rake. Meanwhile Stewart, who has also been feeling replaced by his brother in Ethan's eyes, jumps at the opportunity to get Dean back into acting and out of his hair.



Cliff Bemis reaches out with his version of an olive branch and invites Dean to drop in on an episode of *The Grinder: New Orleans* in order to give his character a proper send-off. Dean is torn: He obviously feels hurt by the betrayal involved in launching the spin-off of his hit show, but the pull of the television world is clearly strong. (And, as Bemis notes, Mitch Grinder gets killed off either way: "A hero's death on screen, or a coward's off," he says.)

While Dean struggles with his identity, Stewart sees his return to the role of Mitchard Grinder as the opportunity he needs to finally get Dean out of the house. Dean has been doling out advice to Ethan that makes Stewart a little nervous. When Ethan mentions that Brie is no longer interested in him, Stew suggests he talk honestly to her. But Ethan goes with Dean's philosophy: Find a slightly hotter girl to hang with, thus making Brie jealous. But both Dean and Stew see eye to eye on one thing: They both want Mitch Grinder to survive, though Stew wants it so Dean will go back to TV, and Dean wants it so Mitch can work as a judge in the Florida Keys while he runs a Cuban nightclub on the weekend and lives with a black girlfriend.

Of course, it has to be on Dean's terms, so Stew gets the firm to sort through Dean's Grinder contract to figure out how Dean can seize control of his character. They discover he signed a "Caruso Deal" right before the seventh season, which gave him total control over the character because he had essentially become the character. Bemis agrees to their terms, and the new life of Mitch Grinder seems inevitable.

But something isn't right. When the script arrives, Dean realizes that he has been manipulated by Stew. Still, the shoot goes on — apparently in Idaho, because the entire firm is there, as well

as both of Ethan's girlfriends — but Stew can't let it go on. So what does he do? He walks right into the shot to reveal himself as Barry Grinder, the baby that Mitch and Rake were told died at birth. But he's alive, and he has given Mitch rat poison. Bemis declares the scene "truly repulsive," but it's okay because Dean tells him it doesn't matter to him how Mitch dies (in the end, he's eaten by a crocodile and given a dignified exit via Rake having sex with a paralegal on his lifeless corpse in a morgue). The Sandersons are staying together, and there will be plenty more family-style grinding in the new year.

The Olyphant in the Room

Season 1
Episode Number: 10
Season Episode: 10

Originally aired:	Tuesday January 5, 2016
Writer:	Sean Clements, Dominic Dierkes
Director:	Gail Mancuso
Show Stars:	Rob Lowe (Dean Sanderson), Fred Savage (Stewart Sanderson), Mary Elizabeth Ellis (Debbie Sanderson), Hana Hayes (Lizzie Sanderson), Connor Kalopsis (Ethan Sanderson), William Devane (Dean Sanderson Sr.), Natalie Morales (Claire Lacoste), Steve Little (Todd)
Guest Stars:	Chris Butler (Davenport), Lola Kelly (Janet), Jimmy Kimmel (Jimmy Kimmel), Timothy Olyphant (Himself), Rob Yang (Neal)
Production Code:	1AYV13
Summary:	Dean spots Timothy Olyphant romancing Claire, and feels justified in trying to "win her back" by taking the lead on a case involving her friend, but he resorts to questionable tactics. Meanwhile, Stewart is thrilled to be the subject of a reporter's feature story, but isn't so excited after Dean steps in and turns the focus on himself.



The episode starts with another bit of meta-commentary for those tuning into the show for the first time after the holiday break: During the usual Grinder rerun — this one featuring the main assistant state's attorney from *The Good Wife*, for extra brain-melting potential — Dean mocks the trope of catching new viewers up in one big infodump. Then in a hammy voice, he runs down the premise of the show that we, the audience, are watching and concludes, "I'm just saying, it's bad writing."

"I don't want to be spoon fed," Ethan adds. (How they resisted pitching reruns

on Hulu, I do not know.)

Ah, but the actual plot of this show is Neal, the journalist who's shadowing Stewart to write a profile of him and his trademark brand of simple law for the *Boise Herald*.

The case that Stew is desperately trying to showcase for Neal involves their defense of an environmentalist accused of throwing bricks through the windshields of SUVs at car dealerships. Stew just wants to establish an alibi, but Dean hijacks the conversation, as per usual, and promises to find the culprit and solve the case, which he tells Neal is what Sanderson & Yao does.

They don't, actually, but Neal doesn't jot that down when Stewart makes the correction. Instead, Neal's pretty clearly only writing down Dean's words, and a little snooping by Debbie proves that his notes point toward a smear piece about what a big fat albatross Dean is to the firm.

Dean isn't aware of that, though. He's too busy fuming as he watches Timothy Olyphant making out with Claire while parked in Dean's reserved spot at the office. (It should be noted that the license plate on Olyphant's muscle car is GRINDER 1.)

While Dean's grandstanding on the case, he's also pumping Todd for information on Timothy and Claire. Todd says they're pretty serious, and when Dean asks how many days Timmy's spending in Boise versus filming the show, Todd says he doesn't know.

This doesn't make Dean happy. "Todd, do me a favor. Do the math, and then come back to me with something that doesn't require math."

Then Dean has a brainstorm and points out to Stew that none of those windows were broken before Olyphant arrived in town. It's a theory, anyway.

"That Timothy Olyphant is smashing car windows in Boise?" Stewart asks.

Dean decides that if they catch the bad guy, it'll put Stew back in the headlines and (somehow) show Claire that Olyphant's not the real deal. He points to his crime board, which is a map with scribbles, pictures of the damaged windows, and an Olyphant headshot in the very middle.

"Look at the board. I'm so damn close," Dean says.

He is not, but Tim looks great there in the middle of that board of crazy.

When Dean hears that Olyphant has something big planned for Claire on Friday night, he hatches a plan: He'll taunt the real culprit into hitting one more dealership, which they'll stake out on Friday, forcing Claire to cancel her plans. And of course, he'll do this by making an appearance on *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*

So there's Dean on Kimmel, wearing his stocking hat, talking about the Boise crime wave and challenging the smasher to terrorize the best dealership in town. Debbie and Stew sit in their living room and watch in amazement.

"Kimmel owed him a favor," Stewart explains.

"Well, obviously, you would want to cash that in on this," Debbie responds.

Of course, Dean isn't just doing this to win the case; it's to win back Claire. And we know this for sure when Dean asks Kimmel to confirm that Olyphant's never been on the show. (Should we assume he's always been in the green room with Matt Damon, just waiting to be called?)

Tim and Claire are watching in bed, and he insists that he's actually been invited a number of times but had to cancel at the last minute. Then he guilts Claire for cancelling their plans and wrangles an invitation to the stakeout

Dean, Stew, Todd and Neal are sitting outside the dealership in the car when Claire pulls up with Olyphant. When Stew finally tells his brother that this is a smear piece (no, not about Todd, as Dean initially guesses), Dean's touched that Stew went along with the stakeout to protect Dean from Neal.

Dean then uses his persuasive gift to pitch Neal on a story about a man looking out for his brother. Simple story, simple law. Neal, who's fairly beaten down by life at this point, agrees and asks for a ride back to his car.

Well, it's half a win, anyway. In the end, the article calls Stewart one of the sharpest lawyers in Boise, but it refers to Dean as a deluded, soul-sucking roadblock. But as he reads it, Dean chokes up with tears of pride. Plus, he heard that Claire's kicking herself for taking Olyphant on the stakeout, which means they're dunzo.

The next morning, Clairlyphant's making out in Dean's parking space again. Dean wonders if it's maybe a goodbye kiss? (It's clearly not.) And then Timmy leans out the car window to say, "I hate that this keeps happening. Might be time to get my own spot."

The Exodus: Part 1

Season 1

Episode Number: 11

Season Episode: 11

Originally aired: Tuesday January 19, 2016
Writer: Justin Nowell
Director: Jeremy Garelick
Show Stars: Rob Lowe (Dean Sanderson), Fred Savage (Stewart Sanderson), Mary Elizabeth Ellis (Debbie Sanderson), Hana Hayes (Lizzie Sanderson), Connor Kalopsis (Ethan Sanderson), William Devane (Dean Sanderson Sr.), Natalie Morales (Claire Lacoste), Steve Little (Todd)
Guest Stars: Cesar Azanza (Juror), Dani Dare (Child #2), Isaac Linares (Child #1), Efren Ramirez (Andre), Richard Schiff (Gordon Stutz)
Production Code: 1AYV10
Summary: Stewart and Deb inform Dean that his time with them is up and he needs to find another place to live. Meanwhile, a rival firm wants Dean to come work for them; and Deb's come to depend on Dean's former stand-in, who has been staying with the family.



The episode opens with Dean, his dad, and Todd watching a particularly ridiculous episode of *The Grinder*, which finds a bearded, skinning-fish-in-the-lagoon *Grinder* explaining his philosophy to some native kids and getting an unfriendly visit from former partner/mentor Gordon Stutz (Richard Schiff, echoing the same relationship the two actors had on *The West Wing*). Dean is becoming more and more comfortable in his brother's house, so much so that he allows Todd to casually track his discarded popcorn

into multiple rooms. He's kicking it up a notch, though: Not only is he bringing a tractor trailer's worth of stuff from his sold home in Malibu, but he's also bringing in body double Andre (Efren Ramirez, a.k.a. the immortal Pedro from *Napoleon Dynamite*).

Even after all the challenges to his place as the king of Castle Sanderson, the latest is the last straw for Stewart, who gently wonders what Dean's long-term plans are and nudges him to look for his own place. Dean, of course, completely overreacts, treats it as a dismissal, and leaves to live at his dad's place (Todd also offers an air mattress, though Dean would have to share). Everyone gets mad at Stewart for alienating his brother (though Claire seems fine with it), and it gets so bad that Dean ends up signing up with a rival firm, whose top two partners share a business card.

Blood Is Thicker Than Justice

Season 1

Episode Number: 12

Season Episode: 12

Originally aired: Tuesday January 26, 2016
Writer: Bridget Kyle, Vicky Luu
Director: Tristram Shapeero
Show Stars: Rob Lowe (Dean Sanderson), Fred Savage (Stewart Sanderson), Mary Elizabeth Ellis (Debbie Sanderson), Hana Hayes (Lizzie Sanderson), Connor Kalopsis (Ethan Sanderson), William Devane (Dean Sanderson Sr.), Natalie Morales (Claire Lacoste), Steve Little (Todd)
Guest Stars: Steve Little (Todd), Will Greenberg (Hugh Rozz), Matt Hobby (Patt Landy), Scott Lawrence (Judge Adams), Thomas Crawford (Mr. Pascal), Kiva Jump (Mrs. Pascal), Isaac Linares (Child #1), Dani Dare (Child #2), Richard Schiff (Gordon Stutz)
Production Code: 1AYV11
Summary: After a falling out, Dean and Stewart square off against each other in a divorce case. Meanwhile, life without Uncle Dean around the house has an impact on Ethan and Lizzie, which Stewart and Deb quickly notice.



The episode begins with the vacuum Dean has left in Stewart's life. Dean so quickly and thoroughly ingratiated himself into every part of his brother's life that nothing seems to function without him, even though Dean doesn't seem to be useful at a whole lot of things.

Without Dean to rally them, Stewart's father and co-workers aren't really feeling the current pre-nup case. They have somehow forgotten, as Stewart points out, how they worked at a perfectly functioning law firm before Dean arrived. Stewart tries to rally them with a Dean-style Grinder speech, but everyone leaves

before he really gets started. Sorry, Stewart. Everyone chose a side, and you're the bad guy.

Meanwhile, Dean is feeling pretty rosy on his first day at the firm that's sitting across the aisle from Sanderson and Yao: Rozz & Landy.

Things are great for Dean. As Rozz and Landy told him last episode, his new firm found a loophole that allows him to speak in court. After an interaction that'd be more appropriate for awkward ex-lovers than reluctantly feuding brothers, Dean reveals this mysterious loophole: Rozz & Landy registered him as a certified legal intern, which means he's permitted to speak as long as one of his new bosses is present.

After this new development, literally everyone wants Stewart to make nice with his brother: his father, because he doesn't want his boys to fight across the courtroom; the client, who wants to settle; and even Debbie, who knows that Dean just wants Stewart to treat him like a lawyer.

So Stewart gives it a shot, visiting the Rozz & Landy office Dean has done up to look just like the one he has on the Grinder set. Before Stewart can bring up the settlement, Rozz interrupts, talking about all the people he wants Dean to meet. Stewart realizes that his brother is being used to glad-hand clients, and tells his brother as much — but Dean, of course, doesn't take kindly to that suggestion, and tears up the settlement agreement.

Their argument spills over to court the next day. Dean objects to Stewart's opening arguments (not a thing) and then tries to call his objections "comments" (also not a thing), and then Stewart takes the opportunity to stress how much of a lawyer Dean isn't. They bicker across the aisle for a solid minute before the judge interrupts and calls for "a do-over" (his actual words, which are delivered hilariously).

During the ensuing recess, Rozz tells Dean that he and Landy are going to do the lawyering, then asks Dean to take the client out for a good time. Dean soberly pieces together that he's supposed to "entertain" them — which is really freaking dark for this show — and decides to interrupt the reconvened trial with his own questions for the witness.

What follows is that TV thing where two characters talk about one thing, but they're really talking about each other and the only people who buy the ruse are the people talking. You know the one. So Stewart and Dean project their feelings for each other onto their clients — yeah, this is still giving off vibes that feel way more romantic than fraternal — while Todd concludes, "I think they're talking about personal stuff."

Thus, the Brothers Sanderson are reunited, with one final twist: Dean bought property behind Stewart's house and is building his dream home right there so he can always be near his family.

Grinder vs. Grinder

Season 1

Episode Number: 13

Season Episode: 13

Originally aired: Tuesday February 2, 2016
Writer: Ben Wexler
Director: Eric Appel
Show Stars: Rob Lowe (Dean Sanderson), Fred Savage (Stewart Sanderson), Mary Elizabeth Ellis (Debbie Sanderson), Hana Hayes (Lizzie Sanderson), Connor Kalopsis (Ethan Sanderson), William Devane (Dean Sanderson Sr.), Natalie Morales (Claire Lacoste), Steve Little (Todd)
Guest Stars: Timothy Olyphant (Timothy Olyphant), Scott Lawrence (Judge Adams), Tony Sirico (Sebastian), Terrence Beasor (Gene), E.J. Callahan (Fishing Guy #1), Jack Knight (Fishing Guy #2)
Production Code: 1AYV12
Summary: Dean's TV Grinder replacement returns to Boise and Stewart invites him to hang out at the firm, where the two actors' rivalry resumes. Later, when Dean and Stewart argue over who's the better attorney, the brothers square off in a mock trial.



Dean gets upset when Stewart does idle paperwork during the episode, thinking he missed the "what did you say" moment. He didn't, though; he just thought it was ridiculous. Then, in an exchange that's almost too fast to transcribe — "The Grinder never loses." "But he can." "But he won't." — the two of them hilariously debate the merits of a common Hollywood trope.

Yes, you read that right. I just wrote the word Hollywood, which means The Grinder is back in the business of crack-

ing showbiz jokes. Hence Timothy Olyphant, who makes a dramatic entrance of his own following Dean's at the law firm the next day. (Doubling the number of "OR ..." moments, to Stewart's chagrin.)

Turns out Timothy is in town visiting his girlfriend, Claire, while *The Grinder: New Orleans* is on hiatus, but because they just wrapped an episode relating to the very case that Sanderson and Yao are working on, he feels like he can chime in and be of assistance. Kind of like Dean!

And Dean hates this.

"He's done four episodes. He thinks he's a lawyer!" Dean later scoffs at the Sanderson home, before launching into his tried-and-true "if you were choking in a movie theater" routine. Except Stewart's not listening. He's got an idea — if Timothy Olyphant comes by the firm for a couple of days, maybe Dean will get a taste of his own medicine.

At first, this has the desired effect: Dean gets pretty visibly worked up by the Olyphant in the room (ha, puns) but when Tim pulls Dean aside to talk, things slowly start to turn around. See, Tim just wants to learn. He thinks it would improve his performance as the new Grinder.

It's hard to accurately convey just how much fun Rob Lowe and Timothy Olyphant have with this scene. It is a riot, especially when Dean tells Timothy to stop yelling so much and bring his voice "down here," adopting a growly, sexy register that's probably not too far off from the sexy phlegm voice Phoebe was obsessed with in that one *Friends* episode.

After seeing Dean instruct Timothy on the best way to dramatically take off his shades just before court, Stewart realizes his plan backfired. At home later that night, he complains to Deb about how he inadvertently created a carbon copy of his brother. Deb suggests pitting them against each other. "They're both used to being the star," she says. "Why don't you just remind them of that and let them destroy each other?"

Two points:

1. Deb needs more of her own stories.
2. Evil scheming Deb is amazing.

Stewart does exactly as Deb suggests at the firm the next day, asking both Dean and Timothy for their individual opinions about how to proceed with the case. Dean's jealousy kicks in as Tim reminds him he's not a real lawyer. Stewart suggests a vote on which Grinder is more of a lawyer — the loser walks. Todd has an even better idea: Take it to court. Let them hold a mock trial.

The mock trial is probably the best thing *The Grinder* has done in its brief run so far, a one-act farce that showcases the show's love for overblown grandiosity and jokes involving circular reasoning at its very best. Exhibit A: Olyphant's opening argument.

"Just because a person is not something does not mean he is closer to being the thing he is not than another person."

Again, half the joy of watching the scene comes from how much fun Lowe and Olyphant are having. They pour so much cheeky bravado and earnest investment into the proceedings, even as all the other attendees can barely get over how silly the whole thing is. (Except Todd, of course. Todd lives for this.)

What's more, it's a wonderfully neat conclusion to a tightly-written episode, with a resolution that loops back to the very first scene. After Olyphant gains the upper hand by calling Stewart on the stand to recall a quote he mentioned at the firm earlier ("A lawyer isn't a lawyer until they've lost their first case") Olyphant reminds the jury that Dean, as the Grinder, has never lost. On the other hand, Olyphant's Grinder lost in the third episode of "The Grinder: Naw'lins."

And with that, *The Grinder* gets to have its cake and eat it too, using the very trope it mocked in the beginning of the episode to give Dean his way out. By accepting his defeat, then immediately moving to reopen the case, he asserts that his loss made him more of a real lawyer than Timothy Olyphant. The "judge" rules in his favor, officially making Dean Sanderson the most real fake lawyer on *The Grinder*.

The Retooling of Dean Sanderson

Season 1

Episode Number: 14

Season Episode: 14

Originally aired:	Tuesday February 9, 2016
Writer:	Dan Sterling
Director:	Dean Holland
Show Stars:	Rob Lowe (Dean Sanderson), Fred Savage (Stewart Sanderson), Mary Elizabeth Ellis (Debbie Sanderson), Hana Hayes (Lizzie Sanderson), Connor Kalopsis (Ethan Sanderson), William Devane (Dean Sanderson Sr.), Natalie Morales (Claire Lacoste), Steve Little (Todd)
Guest Stars:	Maya Rudolph (Jillian), Colton Haynes (Luke), Jim Rash (Bill Foosley), Pat Healy (Coleman), Nigel Gibbs (Dandro)
Production Code:	1AYV14
Summary:	An overly dramatic Dean scares off an important prospective client, which prompts Stewart to suggest that it's time to dump his "Grinder" persona and take a reality check by going to see a therapist. But after therapy, Dean overcompensates and starts "therapizing" the entire family, including Debbie, who considers quitting her difficult job.



Sanderson and Yao wants to attract new clients, so Papa Sanderson asks Stewart to take Foosly to dinner and win his business. Dean, however, believes that his brother does not have the level of pizzazz necessary to wow Foosly, and insists on coming along. This prompts Stewart to approach Dean in his new office — he's set up shop in Yao's old office, just because — to talk to him about how he needs to stop being the character he played all the time. He points out Dean's tendency to bring stuff from the TV show

into the real world. Dean takes hardline stances like, "The Grinder never settles," when in reality, real lawyers settle a lot.

Dean is taken aback by this criticism — to him, it's coming out of nowhere. Stewart suggests he try therapy, if only to dial down his Grinder-ness in their day-to-day lives. Dean agrees to the latter, but not the former.

Unfortunately, it doesn't seem to help much at all, because in the middle of Stewart's seemingly successful dinner with Bill Foosly, Dean chooses to interrupt with one of his trademark dramatic entrances. He then tries to win Foosly over with his charisma, but it doesn't work. And, naturally, Dean doesn't listen to anyone who tells him it's not working.

Foosly is creeped out by Dean — a Boise first — and after complimenting Stewart's evident legal skill, says he's going to take his business elsewhere. Dean is too huge of a liability.

Even Dean can see he's screwed things up, and therefore agrees to begin therapy with Jillian. Like every other plan Stewart has had, this does not work out the way he hoped. Dean, for his part, is very gung-ho about it: "I am in therapy to win therapy," he declares to Jillian, "I need to make sure you're on board with that."

Dean finds therapy to be completely transformative, and later that night, he announces to the family that he's going approach things differently now. To prove it, he addresses Deb, telling her that he's never really been involved in her life because nothing grabbed him. There was no

drama. He wants to change all that now — not because she's any more interesting, but because she's boring. Then, he starts talking about her work problems. We know she's caught between two bosses who don't communicate with each other, but Dean doesn't know that. She doesn't get a chance to explain, either, before Dean starts parroting what Jillian told him about taking the wheel of his own life and being responsible for his own happiness.

This scene could be read as a self-deprecating bit of meta-commentary — the show has never really known how best to make use of Deb, and seems to want to do more with her. We even get a glimpse of her work life in this episode! But, just like Dean cuts Deb off to parrot Jillian's advice, *The Grinder* isn't really committed to exploring Deb's character. She remains adjacent to most of the comedy, not the source of it.

At the firm the next day, we find out that Foosly wants to give them another chance — and Dean wants in it. He wants to apologize. There's a lot of protesting, but Dean pretty much always gets his way, so he's at the next dinner. Claire comes too.

Except this time, Stewart is the liability. He has to excuse himself when Deb calls him; she followed Dean's advice and just quit her job. Stewart is plenty upset that she didn't talk to him before quitting, and that she took advice from Dean.

Dean, however, is on a roll. He's talking to Foosly about his problems, and Foosly is totally into it. When Stewart comes back visibly agitated, they all assume the worst and want to talk about his problems, too! But Stewart's default state is Not Chill, so he gets even more agitated and ends up grabbing Foosly's wrist when he asks for the check, thereby losing the client a second time.

But that's the least of Stewart's problems. At the office the next day, Papa Sanderson announces that someone is suing for malpractice... and coming after the whole damn firm.

The Ties That Grind

Season 1

Episode Number: 15

Season Episode: 15

Originally aired: Tuesday February 16, 2016
Writer: Bridget Kyle, Vicky Luu
Director: Nicholas Stoller
Show Stars: Rob Lowe (Dean Sanderson), Fred Savage (Stewart Sanderson), Mary Elizabeth Ellis (Debbie Sanderson), Hana Hayes (Lizzie Sanderson), Connor Kalopsis (Ethan Sanderson), William Devane (Dean Sanderson Sr.), Natalie Morales (Claire Lacoste), Steve Little (Todd)
Guest Stars: Maya Rudolph (Jillian)
Production Code: 1AYV15
Summary: Dean is encouraged by his therapist to dump his Grinder persona and discover the real Dean, and through therapy exercises, he begins to get those around him to come to grips with their own issues, which really gets under Stewart's skin.



Behold, the show's best cold open ever: A Grinder episode in which Mitch Grinder is buried alive and re-creates Kill Bill, one-inch punching his coffin until it breaks so he can claw his way back to the surface, rip off his shirt, and scream into the night.

Unlike most Grinder clips (non-Olyphant division) that are used to open the show, this one actually incites the plot of this week's episode: Dean is watching it with his therapist, Jillian (Maya Rudolph), and tells her that he's

been seeing this scene in his nightmares, where Mitch Grinder grinds his way out of his own grave.

Her prognosis is that the scene haunts Dean because he's haunted by the Grinder. Though the character has died, Dean hasn't yet let him go. She tells him that it's his job to say good-bye to the Grinder for good.

With that doozy out of the way, we get back to last week's malpractice cliff-hanger. Turns out it's an old case from the '80s, and Papa Sanderson doesn't seem to think it's that big a deal. To Stewart's frustration, he refuses to do much to prepare. This isn't really discussed much, however, because Dean wants to make an announcement: He's been going to therapy.

Just like you and me, everyone at Sanderson & Yao already knows this, but that doesn't stop Dean from confessing his major fault. "I realize that I can sometimes be ..." he pauses while walking over to the window and looking out through the blinds, "... dramatic." I regularly admire Rob Lowe's ability to play characters who have no sense of irony. It's a true gift.

Dean then tells the office about his need to purge the Grinder from within, and asks them to keep all Grinder-related conversation and ephemera away from him. To this end, he starts boxing up all of the Grinder memorabilia in his office, which is where Stewart approaches him to talk about their dad and his lax attitude toward the malpractice case. Dean, however, doesn't think their dad needs any help. "I cannot participate in this drama," he says, quite dramatically.

Next on Dean's list? Heading over to Claire's desk to continue his therapeutic process — he wants to apologize for his constant will-they-won't-they jokes. "I was relentlessly sexually

harassing you," he says. "It's unacceptable, and we really need to start thinking about gender politics in the workplace."

Dean then makes an offhand comment about how attractive they both are, and Claire cuts him off, and he agrees that he has to work on the sexual-harassment stuff a little bit more. He offers to come back with a new version of his apology speech, but Claire has heard enough. "We're good," she says.

At dinner that night, Stewart finds that his brother has invited Jillian to their home for a session. Dean confesses that he's been living a lie and hurting them all, but like most Dean-related things, Stewart finds a way to put himself through the wringer, too. He finally explains that he's concerned about the malpractice suit, and Papa Sanderson responds poorly to that concern. He doesn't want to let Stewart's controlling nature push him around.

The next day, Dean holds his big Viking funeral for the Grinder, gathering up all of his Grinder memorabilia in a funeral pyre to build his new home on the ashes of an old life. He is saying good-bye "not just to a multilayered TV character ... but to a friend."

Then he lights it all on fire and shouts, "LIKE A PHOENIX, I RISE FROM THE ASHES A NORMAL HUMAN MAN."

Somehow, I doubt that.

Delusions of Grinder

Season 1

Episode Number: 16

Season Episode: 16

Originally aired: Tuesday February 23, 2016
Writer: Niki Schwartz-Wright
Director: Chad Lowe
Show Stars: Rob Lowe (Dean Sanderson), Fred Savage (Stewart Sanderson), Mary Elizabeth Ellis (Debbie Sanderson), Hana Hayes (Lizzie Sanderson), Connor Kalopsis (Ethan Sanderson), William Devane (Dean Sanderson Sr.), Natalie Morales (Claire Lacoste), Steve Little (Todd)
Guest Stars: Dennis Haysbert (Special Agent), Brook Kerr (Heather), Maya Rudolph (Jillian)
Production Code: 1AYV16
Summary: Stewart believes there is a conspiracy against the firm and investigates. Meanwhile, Dean sheds his "Grinder" persona to concentrate on becoming the office intern.



At the close of last week's episode, the only responsible Sanderson was (justifiably) upset after discovering that Dean is sleeping with their mutual therapist, Jillian. Dean, however, doesn't get it. "Don't you think they teach you how to separate stuff when you date your patient in therapy school?" he asks innocently.

Jillian is not much help either. When Stewart mentions that there's maybe something ethically dubious about her dating a patient, she loops back around and asserts that Stewart's frustration is

really about his inferiority complex regarding his brother. ("Let's start with your recurring dream where Dean carries you around in his suit pocket.")

But this is just one layer in a series of events that seem specifically constructed to make Stewart look as crazy and irrational as possible. Another comes from the malpractice lawsuit faced by Sanderson & Yao. Stewart's father continues to dismiss the suit, both because he thinks the statute of limitations has long expired and because the case ought to be literally dismissed.

However, when they go to the courtroom to meet the plaintiff, Cory Mandler (played by Kenny Lucas!), that strategy backfires. As unassuming as Mandler looks, he's ready with a legal counterargument, and the Sandersons can't get the case dismissed.

Back at the firm after the court hearing, Stewart thinks there's some sort of conspiracy going on with the malpractice suit — someone must be out to get them. Dean offers his input, too. He wants everyone to know that he's not a lawyer. He's just an actor, so instead of playing lawyer, he's going to be Sanderson & Yao's new intern, doing things like taking out the trash. No more legal stuff at all ... except for this one hunch about the malpractice suit. Dean thinks someone is probably coaching Mandler, which is exactly what Stewart had been saying, but no one listens to him because he's not Dean, and also because he has this habit of being perpetually flustered by everything, and that can really work against a guy.

Naturally, Stewart ends up being his own worst enemy. After he picks up his kids from practice, he spends an extra three hours tailing Mandler, and even snaps a photo of him receiving a thumb drive from a shadowy figure. The kids rat Stewart out to their mother and Dean, which makes him look pretty obsessed, although he maintains they're overreacting.

In a delightful bit of absurdity, Dean decides to hold an impromptu intervention, which illustrates just how far gone Stewart seems to be in their eyes: "You're stalking people. You're kidnapping the kids." Realizing he can't win, especially with Jillian there, Stewart lies and says they're right. He admits that something's going on with him.

And then he hatches a plan to prove he's on to something.

Todd and Stewart concoct a plan to sneak into Mandler's apartment and copy the flash drive, which Stewart believes to hold the evidence he needs to prove his hunch about a puppet master. It seems like he might be right, too — except when he shows the files to everyone back at home, it triggers a virus. Everything is erased.

Dean says Stewart is starting to sound like a character in a TV show, with his conspiracy theory and evidence-destroying computer viruses.

From the Ashes

Season 1

Episode Number: 17

Season Episode: 17

Originally aired: Tuesday March 1, 2016
Writer: Guy Endore-Kaiser
Director: Andy Ackerman
Show Stars: Rob Lowe (Dean Sanderson), Fred Savage (Stewart Sanderson), Mary Elizabeth Ellis (Debbie Sanderson), Hana Hayes (Lizzie Sanderson), Connor Kalopsis (Ethan Sanderson), William Devane (Dean Sanderson Sr.), Natalie Morales (Claire Lacoste), Steve Little (Todd)
Guest Stars: Maya Rudolph (Jillian), Jason Alexander (Cliff Bemis), Odette Annable (Devin Stutz), Karan Soni (Cooper), Katherine McNamara (Ginger), Crista Flanagan (Professor Danforth)
Production Code: 1AYV17
Summary: Stewart desperately tries to turn Dean back into *"The Grinder"* to help unravel a conspiracy surrounding Sanderson and Yao, but Dean has abandoned the *"grind"* to attend law school.



In the previous episode Stewart looked like a crazy person for believing there was a grand conspiracy behind the malpractice suit against his father's firm. At the start of this episode, everyone now seems to be totally on board with the idea — granted, they said they would believe him, but it comes across as more genuine than pacifying.

Well, everyone except for Dean, who thinks that Papa Sanderson needs to hire outside help for the malpractice suit, since he's going to enroll in law school and cannot work on the case. The elder Sanderson isn't particularly keen on

hearing this, and he tells Stewart that he wants both of his boys working on it. He tells Stewart he needs to bring *"The Grinder"* back.

Thus begins Stewart's most devious turn yet, as he tries to do everything he can to stymie his brother's recovery and turn him back to his Grinding ways. He tries putting together an evidence board (you know the kind, with string and photos and everything) — which Dean finds almost irresistible. He shamelessly turns to Jillian, asking her what Dean needs to avoid lest he relapse, with the intention of doing exactly those things. Stewart even calls in Cliff Bemis (welcome back, Jason Alexander!) to ask Dean if he can help him with a story problem on *"The Grinder: New Orleans"*.

Dean eventually pieces everything together while talking it over with Jillian, who tells him what his brother wanted to know. But when he heads in for a confrontation, Stewart's still got one last play: Singe Dean's ego. He saying that he doesn't need *"The Grinder"* anymore, since he can ask the man who invented *"The Grinder"*. He'll consult Cliff Bemis instead of him.

This maneuver doesn't sway Dean, though — nothing does, not even his tort law study group, which comprises a group of kids who have zero interest in passing exams and every desire to see *"The Grinder"* at work.

But when Stewart asks him to meet at the firm and the two of them find the place trashed, his resolve starts to crack. He breaks up with Jillian, both as a girlfriend and as a therapist ("Yeah, I

think I've got to see someone else for that too") and goes to the site of his future home, where he had piled the ashes of his life as "*The Grinder*".

Buried in those ashes, he finds a still-intact pair of sunglasses. Because of course he does. Mitchard Grinder is back.

Genesis

Season 1

Episode Number: 18

Season Episode: 18

Originally aired:	Tuesday March 15, 2016
Writer:	Justin Nowell
Director:	Christine Gernon
Show Stars:	Rob Lowe (Dean Sanderson), Fred Savage (Stewart Sanderson), Mary Elizabeth Ellis (Debbie Sanderson), Natalie Morales (II) (Claire Lacoste), Hana Hayes (Lizzie Sanderson), Connor Kalopsis (Ethan Sanderson), William Devane (Dean Sanderson Sr.)
Guest Stars:	Steve Little (Todd), Jason Alexander (Cliff Bemis), Caroline Rhea (Fran), Jenna Fischer (Kelly), Chris Klein (Benji), Kenneth Lucas (Cory Manler), Paul Bates (FOX Guard), Mason Vale Cotton (Son), Kate Amundsen (Actress), Kim Yarbrough (Casting Agent), Scarlett Mellinger (Young Lizzie), Sierra Mellinger (Young Lizzie)
Production Code:	1AYV18
Summary:	Dean loses his ability to grind after therapy, so he tries to solve the case of the office being ransacked. Meanwhile, in flashback, a young Dean must decide whether to embrace a simple life or pursue his destiny and become the Grinder he was meant to be.



Dean Sanderson has a problem: He finally knows who he wants to be, but he can't quite remember how to go about being it. This new Dean, which is pretty much the old Dean, just slightly more self-aware of the fact that his primary way of interacting with the world comes directly from tvtropes.org, is frustrated by the fact that he seems to have lost his mojo — he's not sure he knows how to Grind.

At the same time, we're treated to a parallel story, one set in 2005 when Dean is newly engaged to his then-girlfriend Kelly and struggling to make it as an ac-

tor. In a twist introducing the flashback, the cold open is not a scene from *The Grinder* but the sitcom *Fran of the House*, which Dean is frustrated by because none of the elaborate backstory he created for his walk-on role was included in the episode.

The present-day plotline follows the trend set by the last few episodes of immediately following up on last week's cliffhanger, in which the brothers Sanderson walk into Sanderson and Yao to discover the place completely trashed. It's not long before we figure out that Todd was the perp, at first because he is hammily appalled at all the damage, and then because he meets with Stewart, who says he did a terribly excessive job. Todd doesn't really agree.

Meanwhile, Dean's Grinding is failing him, and he can't seem to get to the bottom of who's suing Sanderson and Yao. Fortunately, Dean failing to Grind is just as funny as his actual Grinding, as we see when Mandler meets with Sanderson and Yao to answer questions about the trashed office and try and see if he'll cop to working with anyone. Dean tries to pull one of his Grinder moves, but it falls apart.

At dinner that night, Dean talks to his brother's family about his trouble getting back to the Grind. To Stewart, the problem is obvious: He's bluffing without having any facts, putting all of his chips on the bluff.

Throughout all this, we learn things about Dean's life in 2005: Turns out he's only engaged to Kelly because she gave him an ultimatum, and also she's pretty awful, infantilizing him and not really invested in what he wants. She also thinks two years is enough time for his acting career to take off, and since it hasn't happened yet, it might be time to pack it in. She wants him to move out of L.A. with her and work for her dad as freezer-door salesman. He reluctantly promises to give up acting. Like I said, she's the worst.

But there's a new script going around, one for a legal drama that Dean's actor buddy Benji can't help but think Dean is perfect for, mostly because of the way Mitch Grinder is described: "Mitch's chiseled features are handsome... that's you bro."

Dean won't audition, though, because of his promise to Kelly. He even sticks to his guns later on, when his pal updates him, saying that they're changing the part of Mitch Grinder to a woman because they can't find anybody. ("Dammit, what is wrong with this business? Every good part goes to a woman," Dean laments.)

Deb and Stewart are also concerned with Dean's decision to leave the acting game as they're not convinced he's doing it for the right reasons (This is after a hilarious exchange between Dean and Kelly when she asks what he's going to tell her father when he interviews him, and Dean sets his jaw and says, "I am going to tell him the truth: Freezer doors are who I am").

Turns out Stewart's affirmation was all Dean needed (he totally ignores the fact that Deb also voiced her support) and stands up for his dreams and breaks up with Kelly.

Back in the present, Stewart is desperately trying to come up with a fake conclusion for Dean to reach in the case of the trashed office, but he's coming up short because Todd is incompetent and Deb has no sympathy. Dean interrogates every staff member but can't seem to piece together anything.

So he bluffs and pretends he left his phone recording while Stewart and Todd were alone in the conference room, and Stewart buckles under the pressure, telling him that they needed the Grinder back and he was willing to do anything to get it.

And so Dean finally sees the missing piece, why he couldn't Grind: Stewart's confidence in him is what allows him to Grind.

Then we flashback to 2005, for the best, final scene of the episode, a beautiful scene that has quite possibly the best intentionally bad joke I've ever seen on a show full of intentionally bad jokes, as Dean sneaks his way onto a studio lot in order to storm the Grinder auditions, where a woman is delivering this exquisitely bad line:

"I see you like my brassiere. You can have it, because the only support I need ... IS THE U.S. CONSTITUTION."

And then Dean storms into the room, interrupting the actress's audition to launch into a hilarious speech about how women get all the best parts, and how it's "my duty to rectify that injustice and give voice to the voiceless... shame on you. Mitchard Grinder is a man, and it is my destiny to be that man."

Dean gets the job, and the iconic shades, and *The Grinder* lands a really funny joke lampooning Hollywood's institutional sexism. Grinder rests.

A System on Trial

Season 1
Episode Number: 19
Season Episode: 19

Originally aired: Tuesday April 12, 2016
Writer: Jamie Block, Michael Levin
Director: Jay Chandrasekhar
Show Stars: Rob Lowe (Dean Sanderson), Fred Savage (Stewart Sanderson), Mary Elizabeth Ellis (Debbie Sanderson), Natalie Morales (II) (Claire Lacoste), Hana Hayes (Lizzie Sanderson), Connor Kalopsis (Ethan Sanderson), William Devane (Dean Sanderson Sr.)
Guest Stars: Steve Little (Todd), Megan Heyn (Miranda), Erick Chavarria (Ian), Lisa Long (Theresa), Ruth Williamson (Sue), Indira G. Wilson (Joyce), David Futernick (Chris), Leonora Pitts (Courtney), Cory Jacob (Warren)
Production Code: LAYV19
Summary: Stewart is concerned about Dean Sr.'s anger issues complicating their case, so Dean arranges some focus-group testing to see what the masses really think.



In the cold open, we learn why focus groups are such a big deal for Dean. Flashback to 2008, just before *The Grinder* is set to premiere, as Dean watches from behind a two-way mirror while a focus group talks about the show's sizzle reel. He is initially skeptical of the process, and doubly so when a lone holdout objects to the show's tagline, "There's no one he can't get off."

"There's gotta be someone he can't get off," she says, just trying to be realistic. "You mean he can just get anybody off? Please. I'd like to see him get my brother-in-law off."

What makes this cold open so good is that it's not just a marvel of silly double entendres, but also a microcosm of the entire episode. Dean's first reaction to focus groups is correct. It's kind of nutty to ask random people superficial questions, then take their responses as actionable advice. But then, after Dean tells the moderator to ask about the lead actor, and they all agree he's hot... well, focus groups suddenly seem pretty cool.

Naturally, Dean applies the same logic to the problem currently facing Sanderson and Yao. He and his brother are trying to prepare Pop Sanderson to take the stand in his malpractice suit, but he's being ornery and doesn't see the point of it all. Although he clearly has a temper problem, Dean wants to gather a focus group to determine whether or not he actually has a temper problem.

So, Dean goes to the mall with Todd to round up a focus group for them to blindly trust and "allow them to guide us and steer my father's case." Meanwhile back home, Lizzie and Ethan wonder if their uncle is right about focus groups and decide they might benefit from them, too.

At the firm the next day, Dean's focus group watches as Stewart goes through a mock examination of his father. Pop Sanderson is feeling this whole gimmick even less than their earlier prep session, and the focus group picks up on his frustration. ("It seems like the old dude got angry for no reason.") And then, they completely pivot their titular focus to Stewart's performance.

The verdicts are grim, as the focus group offers such criticisms as, "He didn't seem like a real lawyer," and "He didn't say 'objection' once," and "He had no charisma."

That night, Dean finds a complication in their focus group: One of the participants said they think Pop Sanderson was hiding something. Since it's only one person, Deb thinks they should ignore it, but Dean explains that focus groups are an all-or-nothing sort of thing — and this time, nothing is not an option.

But first, Stewart's kids come home with the results of their focus groups. Lizzie is distraught because half of the girls from her school don't even know who she is. Ethan is pretty chill about what he learned, though. "My friends kept it pretty positive," he says. "Mostly asking for more of some stuff, but nothing I can't deliver on." It's a great B-plot that gives the underutilized Sanderson kids a lot of rich comedy, but even if it were all just a set-up for Dean's response, I wouldn't be too mad.

All this focus grouping, however, doesn't unearth whatever Pop Sanderson is hiding. In fact, Dean thinks he isn't hiding anything. To him, that's is an awful revelation — even more awful than if his father had lied — because he's always believed that he could trust random groups of people with zero insight. The system has failed him. Devastated by this lesson, he reverses his position on focus groups — and then, of course, Stewart manages to prove them worthwhile. Turns out their father was hiding something. He didn't bring the deal in question to Cory Mandler. He just took it.

And so, Dean's faith in focus groups is restored once more, closing a story progression I like to call the Grinder Loop. Here's what it looks like:

1. Dean embraces a patently absurd idea.
2. Dean drags everyone in his orbit into pursuing this absurd idea.
3. Dean attempts to understand why this idea was always absurd.
4. Dean accepts that the idea is absurd, even though he doesn't totally understand why.
5. A highly unusual circumstance proves the idea correct, leading Dean right back to his original position. The Loop is complete.

For the People

Season 1
Episode Number: 20
Season Episode: 20

Originally aired: Tuesday April 19, 2016
Writer: Sean Clements
Director: Jamie Babbit
Show Stars: Rob Lowe (Dean Sanderson), Fred Savage (Stewart Sanderson), Mary Elizabeth Ellis (Debbie Sanderson), Natalie Morales (II) (Claire Lacoste), Hana Hayes (Lizzie Sanderson), Connor Kalopsis (Ethan Sanderson), William Devane (Dean Sanderson Sr.)
Guest Stars: Steve Little (Todd), Anne Archer (Lenore Sanderson-Grant), Odette Annable (Devin Stutz), Chloe Bridges (Calista), Ajay Mehta (Manager), Jarrad Paul (Pincus)
Production Code: 1AYV21
Summary: Dean and Stewart's mother visits unannounced, which sends Dean into a panic since she's never been a fan of his lifestyle. Meanwhile, Stewart is desperate to snare a reservation to a hot restaurant in town for his anniversary; and having his ex-wife in town spurs Dean Sr. to get back into the dating scene, with help from Ethan and Lizzie.



The episode comes right in the middle of a high-stakes story arc, with the fate of Sanderson & Yao hanging in the balance. It's a surprisingly vanilla sitcom plot, too: Stewart and Deb have both forgotten their anniversary and lie about their plans for one another. Stewart claims he's made dinner reservations at Boise's hottest restaurant, a trattoria with a two-month waiting list. Deb says that she's got a mind-blowing gift of some sort. They are very obviously both lying, and Dean knows it.

First, the Sanderson family matriarch Lenore makes a surprise visit to her sons'

home. Lenore has disapproved of Dean's lifestyle choice for years, and Dean — who longs for nothing but affirmation — lies to her, thinking a settled-down life would finally win some approval. So, he tells her he's engaged to Claire.

Then, because he promised he would stop harassing Claire, he uses Stewart's lie as leverage to get him to help convince Claire to play along.

Obviously, that approach isn't going to work. Stewart still mentions it to Claire *just in case* she'd be game. (She's not.)

Good thing Dean can exploit Deb's lie, too. Since Claire won't play along, he wants Deb to feed his mother a story about how Claire used to date Todd, but then he became violent and horrible — and that's why Claire won't admit that she and Dean are engaged. Deb agrees to this ridiculous plan, only because she doesn't want Stewart to learn she doesn't have a gift yet.

On top of all that, Lenore is lying too! She's not living happily with Nigel, her current partner. She's after Dean Sr. again. Pop Sanderson, however, doesn't know this ... and he's also fibbing. To make it seem like he's got "irons in the fire," his grandkids help set him up with an online-dating account, and he quickly lands him a date with Callista, a hot twentysomething who matches with him because he uses a photo from his Army days.

It all comes to a head at the trattoria, where *everyone* shows up: Stewart and Deb (because he got Dean to call the restaurant for him), Dean, Lenore, and Claire (because she feels compelled to go along in the most noncommittal way possible, since everybody else seems invested in their lies), Pop Sanderson, Callista (because of the aforementioned online date), and even Todd (because he's picking up takeout).

Everyone spots everyone and the lies are immediately threatened by Todd, the only character who knows nothing and hasn't told a single lie. (He barely even utters a sentence throughout this episode.) It's all set up for disaster: Lenore spots Todd and wants to get Claire out of there, Todd is about to inadvertently ruin the whole invented history between him and Claire, and Dean is desperate to keep his poor clueless friend quiet. So, he sucker-punches him. It's a pretty mean thing to do, if I'm being honest.

Of course, the gang can't keep up the lies beyond that point. Of course, they all forgive each other and come clean. (Even Dean Sr., who tells Callista, "That picture of me was taken quite a while ago. I'm actually an old man!") And of course, everyone still likes each other — especially Lenore and Dean Sr., who passionately make out in front of everyone.

Divergence

Season 1

Episode Number: 21

Season Episode: 21

Originally aired: Tuesday May 3, 2016
Writer: Sally Bradford McKenna
Director: Andy Ackerman
Show Stars: Rob Lowe (Dean Sanderson), Fred Savage (Stewart Sanderson), Mary Elizabeth Ellis (Debbie Sanderson), Natalie Morales (II) (Claire Laccoste), Hana Hayes (Lizzie Sanderson), Connor Kalopsis (Ethan Sanderson), William Devane (Dean Sanderson Sr.)
Guest Stars: Steve Little (Todd), Colton Haynes (Luke), Kenneth Lucas (Cory Manler), Jerry Minor (Principal Davis), John Owen Lowe (Joel Zadak), Austin Fryberger (Chad Oseroff)
Production Code: 1AYV20
Summary: After finding out Dean Sr. is guilty, Stew thinks they should settle the case. Dean, of course, believes they should try to win, and wants to use one of his old "Grinder" tricks, by throwing himself into an unrelated sub plot that will lead him to what he needs to solve the case. Meanwhile, Stew is concerned that he is now "infected" by "The Grinder".



The episode opens with a Grinder episode that epitomizes the main story. Mitch Grinder, scrubbing a boat in a marina, is greeted by his son (welcome back, Colton Haynes!), who just got home from "the war." Mitch warmly embraces his son, and the two of them start scrubbing the boat together ... until Mitch realizes the name of the boat, the S.S. Inkspot, reminds him of a bloody spot in the sink that was mentioned in his current case. So, he hastily abandons his son without so much as a second glance.

Deb and Stewart, watching with Dean, are flabbergasted at Mitch's total willingness to leave his long-lost son and disinterest in the war. "NOBODY CARES ABOUT THE WAR!" a frustrated Dean yells. "The case got solved, that's what you care about ... it's just a side story to help solve the main one."

When Deb and Stewart point out how that seems like a lot of work that could otherwise be spent just working on the main case, Dean counters with, "Have you solved our big case just by working on it?"

And that's how Dean gets everyone involved in side stories. He hopes that if a few of them go off and do other things, someone will have a break that will help them clinch the malpractice case. hilariously, Dean (and Pop Sanderson, who remains weirdly game for his son's showbiz-fueled schemes) mine the Sanderson kids for material over dinner that night, and everyone is off.

"We're gonna find something," Dean says. "We've just gotta not look in all the right places." Let's run through 'em all:

Dean and Liz team up to help her ex-boyfriend, Joel, who gets in trouble for trashing the principal's office.

Pop and Ethan talk about Ethan's gambling problem after learning that he owes \$130 to one of his classmates.

Todd desperately wants a side story of his own, but doesn't really have one, so Claire makes him copy papers all day.

Stewart, despite insisting that he's not going to get into a side plot with Dean, becomes a side plot in "Divergence" itself, as events keep conspiring to prevent him from signing a settlement agreement with Mandler, strongly suggesting that he doesn't really want to settle.

In a wonderfully meta way, Dean's side plot involving Liz and Joel becomes the episode's main story. It's all about how side stories ought to be as important as main stories, except they aren't ... because Dean only got into this side story as a means of solving his main one. Still with me?

It all reaches a hilarious crossroads once we find out that Joel is taking the fall for Chad Oseroff, the kid who actually trashed the principal's office, but who unfortunately has the principal's ear. Oseroff can tell that Dean isn't fully invested, and uses Joel for something else. Dean admits this is true: He was hoping he could put minimal effort into this little side story, then sneak out when he found his eureka moment.

"Well, this little side story is my main story," Joel shouts. "It's called my life."

Liz and Joel are left to face the principal and Chad by themselves, but then Dean returns and apologizes to Joel. "This is my main story," he tells him, which touches Joel but confuses everyone else. The ensuing argument does exactly what Dean had been hoping for all episode: It gives him a breakthrough, so he's ready to leave the teens hanging again. This perplexes Joel, who was totally ready to take the fall until Dean said he would defend him.

"Okay, maybe the lesson today is the side story is as important as the main story," Dean hurriedly offers as he tries to leave. When he's reminded that this isn't relevant at all, he blurts out the truth: "OKAY, FINE. THE SIDE STORY ISN'T AS IMPORTANT."

About Those Side Stories:

Pop and Ethan turn out to be terrible for each other. Pop Sanderson talks about how he also had a gambling problem, but instead of admitting it, he just doubled down and gambled more, hoping to win back what he owed. It didn't work out. Ethan and Pop get the idea that they're going to run away together to avoid both Ethan's gambling debt and the malpractice suit, only they're caught by Deb, who tells them they have to buckle down and face their problems.

Todd spends the day copying papers for Claire while she watches *The Grinder*.

Stewart finally makes it to a settlement meeting with Mandler, but suddenly realizes he doesn't want to settle — so he tells Mandler that Sanderson & Yao will see him in court. Immediately afterward, his brother comes in with his breakthrough, which he wants to share as soon as Mandler leaves. This leads to the episode's best bit of physical comedy: Mandler slowly gathers up many scraps of paper and messily stuffs them into his backpack, eating up the few remaining seconds of "Divergence," which ends just before Dean tells Stewart what he's learned. Well played, *Grinder*.

Full Circle

Season 1

Episode Number: 22

Season Episode: 22

Originally aired: Tuesday May 10, 2016
Writer: Dominic Dierkes
Director: Jay Chandrasekhar
Show Stars: Rob Lowe (Dean Sanderson), Fred Savage (Stewart Sanderson), Mary Elizabeth Ellis (Debbie Sanderson), Natalie Morales (II) (Claire Lacoste), Hana Hayes (Lizzie Sanderson), Connor Kalopsis (Ethan Sanderson), William Devane (Dean Sanderson Sr.)
Guest Stars: Steve Little (Todd), Kumail Nanjiani (Leonard), Kenneth Lucas (Cory Manler), Keith Lucas (Second Cory Manler), Scott Lawrence (Judge Adams)
Production Code: 1AYV22
Summary: Stewart gets sidelined during Dean Sr.'s malpractice trial and it's up to the rest of the Sanderson & Yao team to save the firm and discover the secret mastermind behind Cory Manler and Dean Sr.'s case.



Riffing on the circular nature of TV plotting, it's revealed that the mastermind behind the malpractice suit is Kumail Nanjiani's Leonard Velance, the man who lost a court case to Dean when he steamrolled into town in the pilot episode. We find out that defeat ruined him — it cost him his job and triggered an obsession with Dean and "The Grinder."

"I tried to beat you at the law," he tells Dean, "But you beat me with drama. Now you will learn what that feels like."

Velance's scheme almost works, too: He's obtained a transcript from Dean's focus-group testing of Pop Sanderson in which he admitted to not offering Manler a settlement, and Velance's incessant grilling goads Pop to lose his temper and admit as much.

Velance, however, is undone by what's probably my favorite meta-joke of the season, one that's only funny if you know that the actor portraying Cory Manler, Kenny Lucas, has a twin brother named Keith. (Odds are you do know this, most likely from their scene-stealing cameo in 22 Jump Street.) In a moment of epiphany, Stewart decides to look into Manler and discovers that he isn't Cory Manler — his name is Raury Manler, and he's impersonating his twin brother. When the Sandersons call the real Cory Manler to testify, the prosecution's case is immediately invalid due to fraud.

Does any of this make sense? No. Does it end with Pop Sanderson embracing Dean and exclaiming, "You got me off son, just like you said you would?" Yes.

Other Notes:

The Sanderson kids, cub reporters. Lizzie and Ethan cover their grandpa's trial for their school paper. They end up running afoul of their mother, who gives them an interview while totally drunk and becomes obsessed with trying to confiscate the tape.

Stewart, sidelined. When Stewart goes with Dean to present their theory that Manler is just a pawn in a larger scheme to the judge, he's not willing to hear it — because Manler has security footage of Stewart breaking into his apartment, which disqualifies him from participating in the case. This leads to Stewart and Deb routinely whisper tips to Dean from the gallery and the judge allows it, to Valence's supreme frustration.

Actor Appearances

A

Rose Abdo	2
0101 (Judge Stephanie Rossmyre); 0107 (Judge Stephanie Rossmyre)	
Phil Abrams	1
0102 (Jeff Behar)	
Walter Addison	1
0106 (Judge Felmar)	
Jason Alexander	4
0108 (Cliff Bemis); 0109 (Cliff Bemis); 0117 (Cliff Bemis); 0118 (Cliff Bemis)	
Bruno Amato	1
0107 (Jail Guard)	
Kate Amundsen	1
0118 (Actress)	
Odette Annable	3
0101 (Devin Stutz); 0117 (Devin Stutz); 0120 (Devin Stutz)	
Christina Applegate	1
0105 (Gail Budnick)	
Anne Archer	1
0120 (Lenore Sanderson-Grant)	
Emily Arlook	1
0107 (Laura Springer)	
Cesar Azanza	1
0111 (Juror)	

B

Paul Bates	1
0118 (FOX Guard)	
Terrence Beasor	1
0113 (Gene)	
Mark Berry	1
0104 (Coach Kessler)	
David Bloom	1
0104 (Brandon Gibgort)	
Chloe Bridges	1
0120 (Calista)	
Chris Butler	1
0110 (Davenport)	

C

E.J. Callahan	1
0113 (Fishing Guy #1)	
Juan Carlos Cantu	1
0101 (Victor Ramirez)	
Price Carson	1
0107 (Mechanic)	
Tonita Castro	1
0101 (Yolanda)	
Erick Chavarria	1
0119 (Ian)	
Emmanuelle Chriqui	2
0104 (Addison Cross); 0105 (Addison Cross)	

Dennis Cockrum	1
0109 (Judge)	
Brennan Keel Cook	1
0105 (Toby)	
Mason Vale Cotton	1
0118 (Son)	
Jonny Coyne	1
0107 (Farouk)	
Thomas Crawford	1
0112 (Mr. Pascal)	
Chelsey Crisp	1
0101 (Reporter 1)	

D

Isabella Dake	1
0104 (Tanya)	
Gregg Daniel	1
0101 (Bartender)	
Dani Dare	2
0111 (Child #2); 0112 (Child #2)	
Debi Derryberry	1
0108 (Grinder AD)	
Corey Dorris	1
0102 (Trevor)	
Alastair Duncan	1
0107 (Lord Chief Justice Pogue)	

E

Carl Edwards	1
0107 (Strauss)	
Emma Engle	1
0109 (Zoe)	

F

Nat Faxon	1
0104 (Lyle Gerhart)	
Fernando R. Felix	1
0108 (Grip)	
Nathan Fielder	1
0107 (Officer Collins)	
Jenna Fischer	1
0118 (Kelly)	
Rick Fitts	1
0104 (Judge McCan)	
Crista Flanagan	1
0117 (Professor Danforth)	
Austin Fryberger	1
0121 (Chad Oseroff)	
David Futernick	1
0119 (Chris)	

G

Nigel Gibbs 1
 0114 (Dandro)

Alexie Gilmore 1
 0104 (Vanessa Gerhart)

Will Greenberg 4
 0102 (Hugh Rozz); 0103 (Hugh Rozz); 0106 (Hugh Rozz); 0112 (Hugh Rozz)

Jacob Guenther 1
 0106 (Blaine)

H

Colton Haynes 2
 0114 (Luke); 0121 (Luke)

Dennis Haysbert 1
 0116 (Special Agent)

Pat Healy 1
 0114 (Coleman)

Megan Heyn 1
 0119 (Miranda)

Matt Hobby 4
 0102 (Patt Landy); 0103 (Patt Landy); 0106 (Patt Landy); 0112 (Patt Landy)

Patrick Hume 1
 0107 (Inmate #1)

Brian Huskey 1
 0101 (Albert Krantz)

J

Cory Jacob 1
 0119 (Warren)

Kiva Jump 1
 0112 (Mrs. Pascal)

K

Arielle Kebbel 2
 0108 (Avery Banks / Gabrielle); 0109 (Avery Banks / Gabrielle)

Lola Kelly 1
 0110 (Janet)

Brook Kerr 1
 0116 (Heather)

Jimmy Kimmel 1
 0110 (Jimmy Kimmel)

Chris Klein 1
 0118 (Benji)

Jack Knight 1
 0113 (Fishing Guy #2)

Clyde Kusatsu 1
 0108 (Joseph Yao)

L

Amanda Landry 1
 0106 (Judge)

Scott Lawrence 3
 0112 (Judge Adams); 0113 (Judge Adams); 0122 (Judge Adams)

Nanrisa Lee 1
 0107 (Media #1)

Melanie Liburd 2
 0101 (Ivy Dexter); 0103 (Ivy Dexter)

Isaac Linares 2
 0111 (Child #1); 0112 (Child #1)

Steve Little 6
 0112 (Todd); 0118 (Todd); 0119 (Todd); 0120 (Todd); 0121 (Todd); 0122 (Todd)

Taylor Locascio 2
 0105 (Brie); 0109 (Brie)

Lisa Long 1
 0119 (Theresa)

John Owen Lowe 4
 0101 (Joel Zadak); 0102 (Joel Zadak); 0105 (Joel Zadak); 0121 (Joel Zadak)

Keith Lucas 1
 0122 (Second Cory Manler)

Kenneth Lucas 3
 0118 (Cory Manler); 0121 (Cory Manler); 0122 (Cory Manler)

M

Sherry Mandujano 1
 0108 (Erica)

Dan Martin 1
 0103 (Murph)

Katherine McNamara 1
 0117 (Ginger)

Ajay Mehta 1
 0120 (Manager)

Scarlett Mellinger 1
 0118 (Young Lizzie)

Sierra Mellinger 1
 0118 (Young Lizzie)

Matt Miller 1
 0109 (Defense Attorney)

Jerry Minor 2
 0106 (Principal Davis); 0121 (Principal Davis)

Caryn Mower 1
 0103 (Client Mom)

N

Kumail Nanjiani 2
 0101 (Prosecutor Leonard); 0122 (Leonard)

O

Timothy Olyphant 4
 0108 (Himself); 0109 (Rake Grinder / Himself); 0110 (Himself); 0113 (Timothy Olyphant)

P

Jarrad Paul 2
 0102 (Pincus); 0120 (Pincus)

Jim Piddock 1
 0107 (Barrister Cromwell)

Leonora Pitts 1
 0119 (Courtney)

R

Efren Ramirez 1
 0111 (Andre)

Jim Rash 1
 0114 (Bill Foesley)

Sujata Ray 1
 0102 (Dawn)

Caroline Rhea 1
 0118 (Fran)

Courtney Richards 1
 0101 (Fan)

Ervin Ross 1
 0101 (Paparazzo)

Maya Rudolph 4

0114 (Jillian); 0115 (Jillian); 0116 (Jillian); 0117
(Jillian)

S

Richard Schiff 2
0111 (Gordon Stutz); 0112 (Gordon Stutz)
Michael Showalter 1
0106 (Sandy Malmuth)
Tony Sirico 1
0113 (Sebastian)
Stewart Skelton 1
0107 (Barrister Heath)
Karan Soni 1
0117 (Cooper)

T

Talia Tabin 1
0105 (Candace)

W

Ruth Williamson 1
0119 (Sue)
Indira G. Wilson 1
0119 (Joyce)

Y

Kurt Yaeger 1
0106 (Prosecuting Attorney)
Rob Yang 1
0110 (Neal)
Kim Yarbrough 1
0118 (Casting Agent)