

MASTERSON: SYNOPSIS

*Note:* Masterson juxtaposes real, remembered, and imagined events in the minds of the characters; in this synopsis imagined, surreal or past events are described in *italics*.

*Characters from the Past:*

**Oliver** and **Miriam** Masterson: parents of Rex; Oliver built a business empire  
**Sarah** Robinson: nurse to Miriam and nanny to Young Rex; an African-American  
Father Andrew **Duggan**: abusive headmaster of Catholic orphanage

*Characters from the Present:*

**Rex** and **Millie** Masterson: wealthy parents of Alex  
**Alex** Masterson and **Rosalie**: Ivy League law student and his fiancée  
Kenan **Sanders**: rising New Jersey politician; of mixed race

*Prologue/Overture:*

Figures from the past enter against projected images from 1920: Miriam Masterson, her husband Oliver, their son Young Rex (age 10), nanny Sarah Robinson, and Father Andrew Duggan. The mood is dreamy, shifting and uncertain, combining tenderness, anxiety, tension and even the ominous suggestion of evil, especially upon the entrance of Duggan.

ACT ONE:

- (i) April 2001 dinner party at Masterson mansion in East Hampton; Rex is now 70. His wife Millie prepares for their son Alex, on Spring Break from Yale Law, and his fiancée Rosalie. They are joined by Kenan Sanders, a rising New Jersey politician backed by Rex. Despite Millie's efforts, Rex and Alex argue about his career plans; Rex and Sanders are pushing him toward Wall Street but he resists; they blame Rosalie and conspire against her. Sanders' behavior with Millie suggests there is something between them. After a bitter outburst, Alex storms out with Rosalie; the evening is a disaster.
- (ii) Rex wakes from recurring *nightmare in which he is confronted by his controlling father Oliver and the abusive priest Duggan*; Millie comforts him.
- (iii) In Rosalie's Manhattan apartment, she and Alex make love and agree to marry; Alex laments his poor relationship with his father; Rosalie vows to save him from Wall Street.
- (iv) In flashback, *Young Rex bids farewell to his dying mother; Oliver forces himself on Sarah near Miriam's deathbed*.
- (v) *The spirit of Sarah appears to Sanders to dissuade him from revenge*.
- (vi) On 9/11, Rosalie is trapped atop the World Trade Center; she phones Alex to say farewell; she urges him to marry, stay clean and leave New York.
- (vii) In flashback, *pregnant Sarah rescues Young Rex from beating by Oliver, delivers Young Rex to orphanage run by Duggan, and leaves the Masterson household*.

- (viii) In another of Rex's nightmares, *Duggan berates him, saying he has failed as father and husband and blaming him for the death of Rosalie.*
- (ix) Rex wrestles with financial problems; Millie is anguished over Alex's depression; we learn that Rosalie was pregnant.
- (x) Distraught, Alex relapses into cocaine and alcohol abuse.
- (xi) In a vision, *the spirit of Oliver appears to Rex and berates him as a total failure.*

ACT TWO:

- (i) In a cocaine-fueled nightmare, Alex sees his life on Wall Street: *a crazy chorus chants names of prestigious schools, firms and resorts; he networks frantically, defrauding friends and family in wild investment schemes.*
- (ii) In a second dream, *Rosalie appears to Alex, who is incarcerated; she is worried and hurt; he decides to kill himself to atone and to be with her.*
- (iii) Millie visits Alex in his apartment; she laments Rex's coldness and confesses her affair with Sanders; she and Alex pledge to stand by each other.
- (iv) Sanders warns Rex that Rex's tax fraud is about to be made public and that he must distance himself from Rex.
- (v) In a vision, *Oliver scolds Rex for bringing shame on the family name.*
- (vi) Millie tells Rex of her shame and her disappointment in him over the tax fraud disgrace.
- (vii) In a vision, *Rex's mother Miriam appears; she laments that her death forced her to leave him with Oliver, asks for his forgiveness, and vows to love him eternally in the afterlife.*
- (viii) Alex confronts Rex over the tax fraud, vowing to leave New York and never to see him again.
- (ix) In a vision, *Duggan appears to Rex and scolds him yet again.*
- (x) Millie confronts Rex, confesses her affair with Sanders and announces she is leaving him.
- (xi) In a vision, *Sarah appears to Rex and tells him she has a son.*
- (xii) Sanders confronts Rex, tells him it was he who informed the IRS, that he is Rex's half-brother by Sarah, and that Rex's downfall is his revenge for Oliver's and Rex's treatment of his mother.
- (xiii) In a vision, *Rex confronts Oliver and witnesses Oliver's suicide; Rex then takes his own life.*

*Epilogue/Coda:*

In a bookend to the Prologue, characters from the past file in and look down upon the scene. Below them, characters from the present enter and surround the body of Rex. Alex and Millie embrace; Rosalie joins them. Finally Miriam steps into the scene and embraces the body of her son.

*Note:*

Masterson is loosely based on events in the lives of Finn and Andrew Caspersen. Finn took his own life in 2009; Andrew's fiancée died in the World Trade Center on 9/11.