

Legal Precedent

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FADE IN:

EXT. PARK - DAY

A section of the park is blocked off by police tape. Police officers walk in and out as they hold people back.

A detective, JASON HOUSTON (39), shows his badge to an OFFICER, walks under the police tape.

Jason approaches a man, CHRIS DEJESUS (41), dead on the grass.

Chris bends down at Jason's side.

JASON
Where's the gun?

A young POLICE OFFICER walks over.

POLICE OFFICER
Forensics took it a few minutes ago.

JASON
And, this guy, he just...

POLICE OFFICER
Yeah, pretty much.

Jason stands up straight.

JASON
Ok, I walk around and enjoy the beautiful day.

Jason spins around, holds his hands out. He looks out at the trees.

JASON (CONT'D)
I see something I don't like? No.

Jason runs his hand through his hair.

JASON (CONT'D)
Diversion?

POLICE OFFICER
I don't know. This is a hell of a diversion.

JASON
No, wait a minute. You're
protecting someone.

Jason makes a gun with his fingers, puts it under his chin.

JASON (CONT'D)
Someone else is going to get hurt
and I'm screwed anyway. So, I cause
a panic so someone else can get
away?

POLICE OFFICER
How about blackmail?

Jason looks at the police officer.

JASON
Blackmail...

POLICE OFFICER
Yeah. How many people DON'T want to
blackmail the D.A.?

JASON
That's true. And, you'd scare the
shit out of anyone who'd be willing
to prosecute any case on the books
at the moment.
(Snaps fingers)
Next of kin?

POLICE OFFICER
Daughter, Sasha. McCauley and
Winston are getting her statement
right now.

JASON
Ok, we're all good here, thanks.

The police officer nods his head, walks away. Jason walks
towards a young woman, SASHA DEJESUS (17).

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. CHRIS' OFFICE - DAY

SUPER: FORTY-FIVE MINUTES AGO

Chris sits at a desk, looks through folders. A nameplate on the desk reads District Attorney Chris DeJesus.

His phone rings. He answers.

CHRIS

Hello?

MAURA (V.O.)

Hello, Mr. DeJesus, this is Maura Winstead. Sasha's principal.

CHRIS

Hello, Miss Winstead. How can I help you?

MAURA (V.O.)

Are you aware that your daughter was not in school today?

CHRIS

(Pauses, smiles)

Yeah, I am. She had migraines when she woke up and just couldn't do it today.

MAURA (V.O.)

I see.

CHRIS

I'm so sorry I forgot to call. Things have been hectic at the office this morning.

MAURA (V.O.)

It happens. That'll be all.

CHRIS

All right. Have a good day.

MAURA (V.O.)

You, too, Mr. DeJesus.

CHRIS

Goodbye.

Chris hangs up the phone.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

(Scoffs)

Sasha, Sasha, Sasha, you have to quit ditching.

Chris' phone beeps. He presses "SPEAKER".

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Yes?

LEAH (V.O.)

Sir, I have a David Carlisle here to see you.

CHRIS

Tell him I'm at lunch.

LEAH (V.O.)

He says it's urgent and you'll want to hear what he has to say.

CHRIS

All right, then. Send him in, Leah.

A man, DAVID CARLISLE (44), walks in.

Chris points to a chair. David sits down.

DAVID

Mr.--

CHRIS

Before you speak, I just want you to understand that it is wholly inappropriate for us to be speaking right now.

DAVID

I know and I won't be long.

CHRIS

(Checks watch)

Let's have it.

DAVID

I'd like you to consider dropping the case against my son.

CHRIS

You would? You come to me the day before the trial begins and ask me to call it off?

DAVID

That's right.

Chris nods his head.

CHRIS

Well, I'm not going to. I have an obligation to serve my clients ethically and to the best of my ability. With the evidence, I feel we have the right suspect.

DAVID

Listen to you. He's not a "suspect", he's a person. An *innocent* person.

CHRIS

If he is, in fact, innocent, the court will prove it.

DAVID

Oh, please. O.J. was guilty, too. It goes both ways.

CHRIS

Mr. Carlisle, you are testing my patience.

DAVID

Last chance.

Chris presses "SPEAKER" on his phone.

CHRIS

Leah?

David pulls a gun from his jacket, points it at Chris.

LEAH (V.O.)

Yes, Mr. DeJesus?

David glares at Chris.

CHRIS

I think I'll be heading out to lunch soon.

LEAH (V.O.)

Yes, sir.

CHRIS

Thanks, Leah.

Chris hangs the phone up.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

What the hell are you doing?

DAVID

I told you. My son is not a murderer.

CHRIS

Ok. Just put it down and we can talk.

DAVID

We talked. I'm done.

CHRIS

Ok. All right, fine. I'll drop the charges.

David shakes his head.

DAVID

Too late. I gave you a chance. So, how am I going to trust you, now?

CHRIS

I swear to God I'll do it.

DAVID

It's too late.

(Sighs)

There's three ways I see this happening.

Chris tenses up in his chair.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I kill you. I go to jail, you die and my son might not be convicted.

(Beat)

You kill me. I die, you go to jail and the case against Vincent falls apart.

Chris breathes very shallow and fast.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Or, you kill yourself. You die, I live and the case still falls apart.

(Sighs)

I don't like any of these choices but it has to be one of them.

CHRIS

I--

DAVID

So, what's it going to be, Mr. District Attorney? One, two or three?

CHRIS

Neither. You're insane.

DAVID

(Shakes his head)

No, I'm... thinking very clearly. And, if you don't decide, I'll decide for you.

CHRIS

Please don't do this.

DAVID

Hmm... That's exactly what my son said when the police arrested him. He begged because he was innocent.

(Beat)

All right, I can see you're not going along with this. So, I'll throw in something to sweeten the pot for you.

CHRIS

(Cold)

What?

DAVID

If you don't decide, your daughter will die. Sasha, is it?

Chris lunges forward. David cocks the gun, Chris freezes in place.

CHRIS

You son of a bitch!

DAVID

Didn't I tell you I didn't want it to go this far? Now, sit down!

Chris slowly sits back down.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Since you weren't keen on being decisive, I'll do it for you. You're going to kill yourself... and you're going to do it publicly.

Chris rubs his face, clears his throat.

CHRIS
You don't have my daughter.

DAVID
Really? Correct me if I'm wrong but she didn't go to school today.

Chris hangs his head.

CHRIS
You promise not to hurt her?

DAVID
I give you my word of honor. If you do what I told you, she will be 100% unharmed.

(Beat)
I also give you my word that if you don't... you'll be making funeral arrangements tomorrow.

David sets the gun down on the table.

DAVID (CONT'D)
I was willing to die for my son. Would you die for her? You've got fifteen minutes to decide. The park outside the office is where you're to do it.

David pushes the gun over to Chris. Chris grabs it, points it at David.

DAVID (CONT'D)
If you follow me out of this office or tell anyone about it, she's dead. Are we clear?

Chris nods his head.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Nice talking to you.

David stands up, straightens his tie.

DAVID (CONT'D)
And, I'd put that away if I were you.

Chris puts the gun inside his suit jacket.

David opens the door, leaves.

Chris leans back in his chair, stunned. He presses "SPEAKER" on the phone.

CHRIS
Leah... I'm going out, now.

LEAH
To lunch?

CHRIS
I just... I...
(Sighs)
Yeah.

LEAH
Ok.

Chris checks his watch. 1:47PM. He opens the door, leaves.

MAIN OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Chris walks past a young woman, LEAH (23), at a desk near his door.

Leah smiles as he passes. Chris doesn't even notice.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Chris jaywalks across the street.

A car slams on the brakes, narrowly misses Jason. The car blows its horn. Chris doesn't acknowledge it.

EXT. PARK - CONTINUOUS

Chris walks in through the main gate.

He sits down on a park bench. He checks his watch again.
1:50PM.

Chris stares ahead at the grass, solemnly.

PARK - LATER

Chris stares ahead, just as he was before. He checks his watch. 1:57PM. He exhales deeply.

Chris stands up, walks out into the grassy area. He sees a TEENAGE COUPLE kissing on a blanket.

Chris' hand shakes nervously. He reaches into his jacket, pulls out the gun.

He puts the gun under his chin, promptly pulls the trigger.

Chris' body falls to the ground.

FADE OUT.

A woman screams.

WOMAN
Oh, my god!

The screams fade to silence.

FADE IN:

EXT. PARK - LATER

Jason walks up to Sasha. He nods at McCauley and Winston. They walk away.

Sasha grabs a tissue, blows her nose.

JASON
I'm sorry.

Sasha looks up, her mascara obscured by tears. She nods her head.

JASON (CONT'D)
Did you know your father was...?

Sasha shakes her head.

SASHA
This morning, everything was fine.

JASON
You don't know of any reason why he might have done this?

SASHA
(Shakes her head)
He was a little stressed about some upcoming case but he liked that. He liked challenges.

JASON

I see. Did you come straight here from school?

SASHA

It was senior skip day. I was at the mall. One of my friends texted me that they saw my dad... you know.

JASON

They were here?

SASHA

They said it happened right in front of them.

JASON

So, they knew him right away?

Sasha nods her head, looks down in shame.

JASON (CONT'D)

I'm going to need you to answer a few more questions... later. Whenever you're ready, ok?

SASHA

Yes.

JASON

I'm really sorry for your loss. Your father was a good man.

SASHA

(Looks up)

I know.

In the background, Chris is covered in a white sheet.

FADE OUT.

THE END.