

LAW & ORDER

"Vendetta"

FADE IN:

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

A mass of young PEOPLE mill about in the street in front of a club- The Squeeze.

LANKY TEEN

That party was off the chain!

SHORT TEEN

Mic Nice knows how to throw a party

POP!

BANG! BANG! BANG!

POP! POP!

People panic and run in all directions. Screams can be heard.

The sound of tires SCREECHING.

Two teens run around a corner and see a grey Range Rover, a body lays in the street next to the truck. One of the teens walks over, slowly taking in the scene. His friend stays several yards away.

LANKY TEEN

Yo! What the hell is wrong wit you?
Let's book!

His pleas fall on deaf ears as his friend edges closer. He peers into the driver's seat and sees Mic Nice his shirt smeared with blood. He moans softly.

SHORT TEEN

Yo! It's Mic Nice!

EXT. STREET -- LATER

The street is cordoned off in yellow police tape, cops mill about everywhere. Forensics officers comb over a grey Range Rover. Detectives Ed Green and Lenny Briscoe get out of a squad car and walk over to the SUV

BRISCOE

What was the special occasion last night?

Detective Green picks up a flyer off the ground. The flyer advertises-

GREEN

Album release party for the new Mi c Nice album.

Briscoe grimaces.

GREEN

Not a fan of the hottest record producer in the business? He built Misdemeanor records from nothing, used to sell mix tapes out of the back of his trunk.

BRISCOE

At least he worked for it. It still pains me to see somebody that young making more money than I'll see in a lifetime.

Briscoe walks over to a body a laying a few feet from the truck. He lifts up the sheet and examines the body of Malik Evans, a bloody hole where his chest should be.

GREEN

I think he knows something about pain.

BRISCOE

He did.

EXT. STREET- LATER

Briscoe and Green question two scantily clad women. One is tall, athletic and wearing a skirt two sizes too small, the other short and thick sports an incredibly long weave.

GREEN

What did you two ladies see?

SHORT SKIRT GIRL

We seen Nice's truck come round this corner (points) and den we heard somebody let off crazy shots.

WEAVE GIRL

We ran back toward the club.

BRISCOE

You see anything else, a car maybe?

SHORT SKIRT GIRL

There was a large Expo, it sped by right after we heard the shots.

GREEN

Expo? An expedition?

SHORT SKIRT GIRL

Yup.

GREEN

I don't suppose you got a license plate?

SHORT SKIRT GIRL

Naw, but it had some Lorenzos-

WEAVE GIRL

-on Yakohama tires!

BRISCOE

Excuse me?

GREEN

Lorenzos, it's a brand of rim, the latest fad in car detailing.

BRISCOE

What were you two doing at the back entrance?

WEAVE GIRL

Tryin to peep Nice, we was tryin to get discovered, you see me and my girl here are dancers.

The two women start to gyrate wildly.

GREEN

(sarcastically)

You two are quite lovely.

Briscoe and Green question two teenage boys.

SHORT TEEN

We heard somebody bus off... BLAM!
BLAM! BLAM! and I ran to see what
was going on.

GREEN

Not very bright.

LANKY TEEN

That fool ain't exactly book smart.

SHORT TEEN

Shut up.

BRISCOE

How many shots did you hear?

LANKY TEEN

About six, maybe seven.

SHORT TEEN

Yeah, it was like POP! then BANG!
BANG! BANG! Then POP! POP!

GREEN

You guys hear or see anything else?

LANKY TEEN

Yeah, we heard a car peel out right
after the shots.

BRISCOE

Did you see the car?

SHORT TEEN

Nope.

GREEN

Thanks fellas. Here's my card. If
you remember anything else, use it.

Briscoe and Green talk to Tim Muholland, a hefty crime scene investigator. They stand next to the bearded corpse of Malik Evans.

BRISCOE

Tim

ROBBINS

Lenny, Detective Green.

GREEN

What you got? Who's the body?

MULHOLLAND

No id on him, we'll run his prints,
maybe he has a record.

BRISCOE

What's your theory?

MULHOLLAND

Well there was a shoot out between
Mr. Goatee here

(points to the body)
and the driver of this truck, Mr.
Nice.

(motions at the truck)

Robbins walks over to the truck.

MULHOLLAND

We have two bullet holes here-
(indicates two bullet
holes in the driver's
side door)
and Mr. Goatee was hit three times,
dead center mast.

BRISCOE

What did they use?

MULHOLLAND

Our corpse was found clutching a
twenty-two and we found a nine
millimeter in the truck, recently
fired.

GREEN

(to Briscoe)

From what the kids told us, sounds
like Mr. X fired first.

MULHOLLAND

If that's true, looks like he tried
to car jack the wrong music mogul.

GREEN

How is Mr. Nice?

ROBBINS

He suffered minor injuries, a few
broken ribs. They took him in as a
precaution.

BRISCOE

Broken ribs, I thought he was hit?

ROBBINS

He was. He was wearing Kevlar.

Briscoe looks at Green.

BRISCOE

Now is that standard Hip-Hop party attire?

Green frowns.

INT. POLICE STATION-DAY

Briscoe and Green sit at their desks. Lt. Van Buren walks in.

VAN BUREN

What you got?

BRISCOE

Right now nothing, we're still waiting for a check on our John Doe's fingerprints.

VAN BUREN

What about his gun?

GREEN

Serial numbers were filed off, CSU says it'll take a few days to determine what it was.

BRISCOE

In the meantime, we're thinking it was a car jack attempt. Mr. Nice drives an eighty-thousand dollar ride. That's a hell of a temptation.

VAN BUREN

What about the feud?

GREEN

(realizing)

Urban Beats.

VAN BUREN

I take it you haven't talked to them.

BRISCOE

You two want to fill me in?

GREEN

Misdemeanor records has a major rivalry with Urban Beats records, they're another hip hop record label based in Queens.

BRISCOE

And?

VAN BUREN

And recently their rivalry has become pretty heated. Two months ago there was an incident at a music awards show. Some of Misdemeanor's people bumped into some of Urban Beats people, a few punches we're thrown.

GREEN

Lenny don't you read Page 6?

BRISCOE

If I want gossip, I call my divorce lawyer.

VAN BUREN

Well, why don't you two take a trip up to Queens?

BRISCOE

Queens, now that's a misnomer, all three of my ex-wives are from Flushing.

INT. URBAN RECORDS OFFICE-DAY

The luxuriously furnished office of MARLON STONE, an enormously built record executive. The cream colored office walls, covered with plaques, contrast with the navy blue carpeting. Briscoe and Green sit across from Stone, seated at his desk.

BRISCOE

Mr. Stone, we hear you're not exactly Mike Nice's biggest fan.

STONE

To be honest detective, that punk bores me.

GREEN

Surprised to hear he was shot last night?

Stone runs his hand over an ugly scar on his cheek.

STONE

Nuttin surprises me detective. People die every day and Nice has many enemies.

BRISCOE

Like you?

STONE

I consider him a colleague. True... we are rivals, but everything else has been blown out of proportion by the papers and the po-lice.

GREEN

I remember a couple of your other, colleagues dying over... similar-

STONE

Look detectives you tryin to put this on me? Am I a suspect?

BRISCOE

I'd say so, as a matter of fact I think we're going to need you to come downtown with us.

STONE

Wait! We off the record here?

Briscoe and Green exchange a surprised glance.

BRISCOE

This isn't confession Mr. Stone, I have to warn you if you incriminate yourself-

Stone waves his hand, dismissing Briscoe's warning.

STONE

Save it narc, I spent four years in law school. Look, this supposed Misdemeanor, Urban Beats rivalry is just hype.

GREEN

Excuse me.

STONE

It's a farce, we made it up for
publicity reasons.

BRISCOE

What about your rumble at the awards
show?

STONE

Do you know we both saw our record
sales jump twenty percent after that
little melee?

GREEN

You mean to tell me that was
orchestrated?

STONE

We practiced that for about a month.
Hell stunt men are a lot cheaper
than prime time commercials.

BRISCOE

What about your staff, everyone
can't know your beef isn't real?
What if someone in your crew tries
to make a name for himself?

STONE

After we lost two of our greatest
names in this industry, we changed
the game, adopted new hiring
policies.

GREEN

You still hire from your
neighborhood don't you?

STONE

Yeah, but everyone undergoes
extensive background checks and once
you're hired you're placed on
indefinite probation. Any violence
is cause for dismissal. Misdemeanor
has a similar policy.

GREEN

What about your fans, they don't
know you two are playacting? ****

STONE

We can't be responsible for the actions of a misguided fan. If some fool on the streets wants to trip over something he heard on the radio, that ain't none of my concern. Now detectives I've told you this in the strictest confidence.

BRISCOE

Yeah, we'd hate to ruin your little charade.

GREEN

We'll check your story with Misdemeanor and don't worry we'll be discreet.

INT. STUDIO OF MISDEMEANOR RECORDS-DAY

The high-tech studio of Misdemeanor Records; a beautiful young singer harmonizes in the sound booth. A mustached sound engineer works the boards. ANDRE PATTERSON, tall, bald and clean shaven, stands over the engineer as Green and Briscoe look on.

BRISCOE

So you and Urban Beats are running a big publicity stunt?

PATTERSON

It's good for business.

GREEN

What about the young people watching you two act like fools?

PATTERSON

We're artists detective, not parents. Excuse me for a second.

Patterson taps the sound engineer on the shoulder.

PATTERSON

Run that last bit again.

BRISCOE

Mr. Patterson do you know anyone who would want to harm your boss?

PATTERSON

No, not by name. However, he is rich, young and black. People don't like that.

BRISCOE

What people?

PATTERSON

Take your pick, anyone in his position would be a target of jealousy. Do I know any of these people? No.

GREEN

Where was Nice going after the party?

PATTERSON

I'm not sure, my guess back to the studio, he's a workaholic.

BRISCOE

That his only vice?

PATTERSON

Yeah, that and fine women. Nice worked too hard to blow it on drugs. We've been the number one selling hip hop record label since he started this place five years ago.

RING! RING!

Green answers his cell phone.

GREEN

Green... uh-uhh... okay, we'll be right there. Mr. Nice is ready to talk.

INT. ST. LUKE'S HOSPITAL-LATER

The sterile hospital room of Mic Nice, a brash record producer. Nice is propped up in his bed with Detectives Briscoe and Green standing beside him.

BRISCOE

Busy night huh?

NICE
(smiling)

I was just tryin to get my party on.
It was a great turn out.

BRISCOE

We hear the after party wasn't too bad either. Mr. Nice can you tell us what you remember?

NICE

Well officers, I left the party at around two-thirty. I was gonna stop by the studio and clean up these tracks I've been working on for my new group... I pulled up to the corner at Seventh and Broadway and heard someone shoutin my name. I thought it was a fan... I looked out the window and some cat standing on the corner. He was shouting, real hot.

BRISCOE

Hot, about what sir?

NICE

I couldn't make it out. Then he pulled out his piece. I was shocked. He pointed at me and squeezed the trigger. I pulled out my nine and shot back.

BRISCOE

You didn't recognize the man?

NICE

Can't say that I did.

BRISCOE

Did you see or hear anyone else, a car maybe?

NICE

I think I heard a car pull off after I was hit. I'm not sure.

GREEN

Mr. Nice do you normally wear a bulletproof vest to album release parties?

Nice laughs aloud, the force of the laughter causes him to clutch his ribs in pain.

NICE

Would you believe it's a fashion statement? You know, baggy jeans, bulletproof vest, brown Timberlands.

BRISCOE

On this salary I can't afford a fashion sense.

NICE

Actually, I always wear one when I ride solo. My business attracts a lot of (beat) How should I say... undesirables.

BRISCOE

Terrible way to make a living, always looking over your shoulder.

Nice shrugs.

NICE

The price of fame.

Ed scribbles some notes in a small notebook.

GREEN

Mr. Nice is your weapon legally registered?

NICE

Of course officer, we do everything legit.

GREEN

We'll need to see it.

NICE

I'll have my people send it you.

GREEN

And your permit for the vest.

Nice nods.

BRISCOE

We'll be in touch if we have anymore questions.

INT. PRECINT- LATER

VAN BUREN

What are you two thinking, robbery attempt?

GREEN

Looks that way, our John Doe may have been working with somebody.

Briscoe walks in and hands Green a sheet of paper. He scans it and hands it over to Briscoe

GREEN

What's this?

BRISCOE

A rap sheet, turns out our mysterious gunman has a name and a record, Mr. Malik Evans.

Green reads aloud.

GREEN

Pretty impressive, suspected of a murder when he was 16, all charges dropped. Since then, aggravated assault, drug possession, breaking and entering-

BRISCOE

Check out his latest endeavors, at the bottom.

GREEN

Mr. Evans did four years on an armed robbery charge... He was released just last week from a bid upstate.

BRISCOE

He didn't waste anytime picking up where he left off.

VAN BUREN

Why don't you two go see his parole officer? See if Mr. Evans had any friends.

EXT. PARK-DAY

Green and Briscoe talk to ANDREW MARKS, parole officer, over hot dogs in a park. Joggers and dog walkers scurry by.

MARKS

So Evans got himself killed huh?
Remind me to shed a tear later.

BRISCOE

Evans, a real hard ass?

MARKS

I just got his file last week, but he appeared to be everything his sheet claimed he was. Most guys are happy when they get out, at least for a moment they can be almost human, not Evans. The guy was like ice, no feelings, nothing.

GREEN

Did he run with anyone in particular, any partners?

MARKS

Not that I knew of, I imagine no one could stand him enough to work with him.

GREEN

Real sweetheart huh?

Marks shrugs his shoulders and takes a huge bite out of his foot-long.

BRISCOE

Did he mention anyone, friends, family?

MARKS

Nope,

(beat)

Wait a minute... he did mention an old girlfriend. Sasha... Sara... something.

GREEN

No last name?

MARKS

Sorry.

GREEN
Where was he staying?

MARKS
A motel on Fifty-Fifth and Broadway.

INT. HOTEL- DAY

Briscoe and Green question the fat, front desk attendant of a seedy roach motel.

GREEN
You have a guest named Malik Evans staying here?

FAT ATTENDANT
You guys cops?

Briscoe flashes his badge.

BRISCOE
What gave us away?

FAT ATTENDANT
The trench coats... johns usually have more expensive tastes.

BRISCOE
We're going to need the key.

The attendant reaches under the counter for a key and hands it to Briscoe.

INT. HOTEL ROOM- DAY

Briscoe and Green search the sparsely furnished room. A dingy suitcase lies open on the bed.

BRISCOE
I don't even know what we're looking for.

Green opens up a drawer and whistles.

BRISCOE
What you got?

GREEN
Come see for yourself.

Briscoe walks over and peers in the drawer. A pile of cash lays inside.

BRISCOE

Could it be Mr. Evans had a silent partner?

GREEN

Lets get CSU in here.

INT. PRECINT-DAY

Green and Briscoe discuss the case with Van Buren over coffee in the break room.

VAN BUREN

Update gentlemen?

BRISCOE

The cash in Evans's room added a new wrinkle to this. Could be one of two things-

GREEN

Either, Evans started robbing people as soon as he got out of the joint and Nice was in the wrong place at the wrong time or-

BRISCOE

Or somebody paid him to ruin Mr. Nice's party plans.

GREEN

And don't forget the silent partner. I'm thinking that car those kids heard was the getaway vehicle.

VAN BUREN

What did forensics get?

BRISCOE

Nothing, so far. There was a lot of prints in that room. It'll take a year to run them all down.

VAN BUREN

Well you guys don't have a year. What about phone records?

GREEN

They should be coming over today.

VAN BUREN

In the meantime go over Evans's rap sheet again. Maybe this isn't the first time he's been hired to do someone's dirty laundry. Wasn't he the main suspect in a murder before he was sent upstate?

GREEN

That was eight years ago. He was only sixteen.

VAN BUREN

Some get an early start. Talk to the investigating officers.

INT. BAR-DAY

Briscoe and Green sit at the poorly lit bar. They are joined by Detective STEVE LOGAN, late thirties, tall and balding.

LOGAN

Lenny, long time no see. What brings you guys to this neighborhood?

GREEN

We wanted to ask you about a case you worked eight years ago, murder investigation. The victim's name was Kamarla-

LOGAN

Kamarla Barnes, nineteen, pretty young thing, two months pregnant.

BRISCOE

Good memory.

LOGAN

The ones that get away stay with you. You know?

Logan downs a shot of whiskey. Briscoe nods.

GREEN

So Evans was the guy?

LOGAN

No doubt in my mind, he gave us the gun and some of her jewelry.

BRISCOE

Robbery turned bad?

LOGAN

Naw, as near as we can tell he just shot her. Just cause he was a sonofabitch. Oh well, good riddance.

Logan downs another shot.

GREEN

If he was guilty how did he get off?

Logan stares at his drink.

LOGAN

That was my fault, didn't do my homework. The kid had this look... his face... looked aged... you know? I figured him for at least twenty-five. Almost messed my pants when I found out he was sixteen. That made his interrogation and subsequent confession inadmissible. Damn judges and lawyers just lookin for a loophole.

GREEN

But you had the gun and the jewelry. You didn't need his confession.

LOGAN

We found the hard evidence as a result of his confession, you know what that means...

BRISCOE

Inadmissible.

LOGAN

Exactly.

Logan downs another shot.

LOGAN

So what's this about anyway?

GREEN

You've heard of Mic Nice?

LOGAN
The record producer... ohhhh, the
other night... Mic Nice...
(Realizing)
So what, you guys thinkin this was
revenge?

BRISCOE
(surprised)
What do you mean?

LOGAN
Nice, he's the same guy right?

GREEN
Same guy from what?

LOGAN
Kamala Barnes fiancée. He was real
shook up over the whole thing. He
went ballistic when the charges were
dropped.

INT. PRECINT INTERROGATION ROOM- DAY

Green and Briscoe grill Michael "Mic" Nice.

BRISCOE
Why didn't you tell us about Evans,
Mike?

NICE
I told you already, I didn't know it
was him.

Green slaps the table.

GREEN
Come on! You don't expect us to
believe that do you?

NICE
I don't care what you believe.

GREEN

Well let me tell you what I believe!
I believe you saw Malik Evans, the
man who killed your finacee, the man
who killed your child, the man who
ruined your life, and you lost it!
You wanted him to pay! The courts
couldn't do it! So you decided to
take matters into your own hands!

NICE

You got it all wrong.

GREEN

No... I think I got it all right...
and you know it!

Green storms out of the room.

BRISCOE

You'll have to excuse him. Young
guys are always full of fire.
Everything is black and white to
them.

NICE

And you?

BRISCOE

Me, I've been through a lot. I know
what you went through.

NICE

(disbelieving)

How could you know?

BRISCOE

My daughter testified against a low
level drug dealer two years ago. A
week after the trial she was shot in
the back and left for dead in the
streets, like a dog.

Nice's lips start to quiver.

BRISCOE

I hear Kamala was a real looker.

NICE

(voice cracking)

She... was... an angel. She could
have been... a model. I always told
her... she could be a model.

BRISCOE

Do you know if you were having a boy
or a girl?

NICE

A b-b-boy.

BRISCOE

Did you have any names?

NICE

I liked Mike Jr.

(smiles)

Kamala wasn't hearing it. She wanted
to name... him. Darryl.

BRISCOE

And Evans.

NICE

(screaming)

He took all of that away from me! My
world! He took my world!

Nice breaks into tears. Briscoe puts a comforting hand on his
shoulder.

BRISCOE

It's okay. People will understand.
You were upset, he deserved to die.
You just lost it and did what had to
be done right?

NICE

I-I-I- need to see my lawyer.

BRISCOE

Sure thing, just a minute. Why don't
you get this off your chest first?

Nice buries his head in his hands.

KNOCK-KNOCK

Briscoe opens the door where he is met by Assistant D.A.
Abbie Carmichael and Van Buren.

BRISCOE

Counselor, your timing is
impeccable.

CARMICHAEL

Can the sarcasm Lenny, you heard him ask for his lawyer.

BRISCOE

See, I didn't hear that.

CARMICHAEL

What's your theory detective?

BRISCOE

Revenge, an oldie but goodie.

CARMICHAEL

How?

BRISCOE

We think Mike here hired Evans to do somebody.

CARMICHAEL

Himself?

BRISCOE

Exactly, then when Evans tries to fulfill his duty, Nice is ready for him, simple.

CARMICHAEL

It's interesting. I'll give you that. Still, Evans may have been a criminal, but he'd have to be an idiot not to know he was being set up.

GREEN

Not if he didn't know who he was dealing with. Nice could've done it over the phone. No reason to believe Evans would recognize his voice.

CARMICHAEL

Maybe so, but whatever the connection we need to find it. I'm thinking a third party. Someone acted as a liaison between these two. Find them.

INT. PRECINT-DAY

Green walks over to Briscoe's cluttered desk, reading some papers.

GREEN

I've got the phone records. Lenny didn't Evans's parole officer mention an ex-girlfriend?

BRISCOE

Yeah, Shasha... or Shandra..

GREEN

Well Evans made several phone calls to an address in Harlem. The phone number is registered to one, Shandra Jones.

INT. HOME OF SHANDRA JONES-DAY

The living room of Shandra Jones, mid twenties pretty, is modestly furnished. The walls are lined with huge posters of various music artists. Jones, her arm in a sling, is seated in an easy chair. Briscoe and Green sit on the couch.

GREEN

What happened to your arm Ms. Jones?

JONES

I... fell

BRISCOE

Shandra, he's dead. There's no need to lie.

Shandra smiles.

GREEN

Did Evans hit you often?

JONES

Well, I hadn't seen him since he got locked up. I've moved past that part of my life, at least I thought I did.

BRISCOE

I take it when your ex made parole you didn't rejoice with the news.

JONES

No and he didn't take rejection well. When he got out he came to see me. I told him I wasn't the same person he knew. That's when he did this.

motions to the cast on her arm.

BRISCOE

Did he mention Michael Nice at all?

JONES

Mike? Why no? Why do you ask?

GREEN

You heard about the shooting right?

JONES

Yeah, I... Oh my god! Are you saying that was Malik?

BRISCOE

I'm afraid so. He made several calls to your home up until the day he died. What did he want?

JONES

Money mostly, and sex. I declined.

GREEN

He doesn't seem like the type to take no very well.

JONES

I told him I'd call the police. I guess he believed me.

BEEP! BEEP!

Green checks his pager.

GREEN

Mind if I use your phone?

JONES

Go ahead.

Green picks up the phone and dials.

GREEN (ON PHONE)

Right, okay.

BRISCOE

Well thanks for your time Ms. Jones

Green hangs up the phone. Briscoe gets up and heads for the door, Green grabs his arm.

GREEN

(to Briscoe)

Just a sec Lenny, I think Ms. Jones will be joining us downtown.

JONES

But I thought we were finished.

GREEN

And I thought I heard you say you didn't give Mr. Evans any money.

(beat)

Your fingerprints are all over a pile of money we found in his hotel room.

Shandra looks at the floor.

BRISCOE

You're coming downtown with us.

INT. POLICE INTERROGATION ROOM

Briscoe and Green question Shandra Jones.

GREEN

Come on Shandra, what was the money for?

JONES

I-I don't know what you're talking about.

BRISCOE

Then how did your prints get all over the cash Shandra?

JONES

(agitated)

I... I don't know.

GREEN

shandra we can check you're bank records. We'll be able to prove you gave the money to Evans and then he tried to kill Nice. We just want to know why?

TAP! TAP!

Green steps out of the interrogation room. Van Buren is waiting for him.

GREEN

What you got LT?

VAN BUREN

Did Ms. Jones happen to mention she works at Misdemeanor Records?

GREEN

You're kidding, doing what?

VAN BUREN

She was a sound engineer.

Green walks back into the room.

GREEN

Hey Lenny, Shandra forgot to mention that she works at Misdemeanor Records.

BRISCOE

Really, now isn't that interesting. Didn't think that was worth mentioning Shandra?

JONES

You didn't ask.

GREEN

Shandra, we know your ex-boyfriend killed your boss's girlfriend.

JONES

I didn't know about that.

BRISCOE

Shandra you gotta see how this is gonna play out. Either you hired Malik Evans to kill Mike Nice or Nice hired you to set up a fake meeting with Evans so he could kill him. Either way...

GREEN

That's conspiracy to commit murder and murder two, that's a lot of time for someone your age.

BRISCOE

You better start talking.

Shandra shakes her head in frustration.

JONES

I didn't know he was going to kill him.

GREEN

Who Shandra?

JONES

I think I should wait until I talk to my lawyer.

INT. POLICE INTERROGATION ROOM

Shandra Jones and her lawyer MILES HARVEY, short, bald and confident, sit across from Jack McCoy and Carmichael.

HARVEY

What's this about Jack?

MC COY

That's what we'd like to know. Your client's fingerprints were found all over a large sum of cash found in the deceased Malik Evans's hotel room.

CARMICHAEL

Just under ten thousand dollars to be exact.

HARVEY

So she loaned a friend some money during a hard time. Is that a crime?

CARMICHAEL

It is, if that money was used to lure Mr. Evans to a meeting where he could be killed.

HARVEY

Interesting theory Jack but, that's all it is.

MC COY

We were curious too. Apparently Ms. Jones works at Misdemeanor Records.

HARVEY

So now it's a crime to work for a young black entrepreneur?

CARMICHAEL

No, but it is a crime to conspire to commit murder.

JONES

But I didn't know-

HARVEY

Shandra let me handle this. What do you want Jack?

MC COY

I want Nice.

HARVEY

And if she gives him to you?

MC COY

Criminal facilitation, with a sentence recommendation.

HARVEY

No way, she does no time.

CARMICHAEL

This is a murder investigation. We can charge her with conspiracy now.

HARVEY

Based on what? Face it, you have nothing without her testimony. My client is afraid for her life.

MC COY

Then advise her to help us.

HARVEY

She pleas to nothing.

MC COY

Tell us what she has to say first.

HARVEY

Off the record.

MC COY

Agreed.

HARVEY

Go ahead Shandra.

JONES

After Malik got out he was hounding me pretty hard. He needed some money, to get started, he said.

MC COY

How did Mr. Nice find out about your ex?

JONES

We were working on Mic's new album one day last month. I was going through the motions and Mic asked me what was going on. I told him all about my wonderful ex. He said he'd talk to Malik, get him to back off. I told him don't bother, but he insisted.

MC COY

What about the money, Ms. Jones?

JONES

A couple of days before the shooting, Mike gave me an envelope full of cash and told me to give it to Malik. He said it was for Malik to get out of town with.

CARMICHAEL

You didn't think it was strange that your boss was so generous?

JONES

That's how Mike is. He's a real good person. Every Thanksgiving, he drives a truck into Harlem and hands out turkeys.

CARMICHAEL

A regular Good Samaritan.

MC COY

What about the night of the shooting
Ms. Jones?

JONES

I don't know anything about that. I
didn't talk to Malik or Mike that
day. I was busy preparing for the
show.

HARVEY

Well Jack?

MC COY

She testifies before the grand jury.

HARVEY

Done.

INT. DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE-DAY

LEWIN

Well how does your case look?

MC COY

We have a lot of circumstantial
evidence.

CARMICHAEL

And with Ms. Jones testimony we have
enough for a grand jury and probably
a conviction.

LEWIN

Probably? Maybe an indictment will
persuade Mr. Nice to make a deal.

CARMICHAEL

I didn't think we were in the
business of making deals on murder
one charges.

MC COY

There are extenuating circumstances
Abbie. The victim was a cold blooded
killer.

LEWIN

His murder was cold blooded.

MC COY

If the police had done their job right the first time, our victim would be in Attica not the morgue.

CARMICHAEL

So, we should let people handle their disputes in the streets with automatic weapons?

MC COY

(smiling)

Well, this isn't Texas...

Lewin smiles.

LEWIN

Okay you two, enough debate. I don't want this going to a jury. People can understand an eye for any eye, they can't understand justice for criminals. Get your indictment and lean on Mr. Nice. Offer him manslaughter two.

CARMICHAEL

We may as well drop the case

MC COY

If this goes to trial as is, we might wish we had.

INT. DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE- DAY

Mc Coy and Carmichael sit across from Nice and Terrence Dixon, his lawyer.

DIXON

Jack, nice to see you again. I assume you called us here to inform us you're dropping all charges and issuing a public apology for unfairly accusing my client in this matter.

CARMICHAEL

Matter? I would call it murder.

DIXON

Counselor, I see you took the gloves off before we arrived.

MC COY

I asked you here to offer Mr. Nice a chance to save on his legal bills.

DIXON

A plea bargain? While the grand jury indictment is still warm? What's the matter Jack feeling less than confident about this one?

MC COY

Nothing of the sort, we wanted to show your client some consideration. He was upset over his loss, a guilty man was allowed to roam free. We think this fits man one.

DIXON

Man one? Please! You don't have a leg to stand on. How about man two extreme mental anguish, no jail time?

CARMICHAEL

You're client planned this from the beginning. He lured your client to a meeting where he could kill him. That's a far cry from shooting someone in the spur of the moment.

DIXON

Maybe, but that will be extremely hard for you to prove. The victim shot first, my client simply acted in self-defense.

CARMICHAEL

We'll paint a different picture for the jury.

DIXON

For your sake I hope they're art lovers. We'll see you two in court.

Dixon and Nice rise and leave.

CARMICHAEL

Can you believe him?

MC COY
I'm worried the jury will. Let's
make sure we have all the ammunition
we need for trial.

INT. DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE-DAY

Carmichael and Mc Coy pore over papers.

CARMICHAEL
Music execs sure know how to waste
money, listen to this; twenty-five
thousand for that little album
release party, thirty-thousand for
Mike Nice's birthday party, ten
thousand to fly his entourage to
California for a video shoot...

MC COY
Lifestyles of the rich and shameless

CARMICHAEL
This is interesting(beat) the phone
records from Misdemeanor offices,
three calls were made on the day of
the shooting to a hotel in Times
Square

MC COY
The one Mr. Evans was staying at.

CARMICHAEL
Yep

MC COY
Check it out.

INT. MISDEMEANOR OFFICES-DAY

Carmichael questions a curly haired receptionist.

CARMICHAEL
Can you tell me whose extension
these numbers are?

She hands the receptionist a sheet of paper.

RECEPTIONIST

I don't think I should be giving out that information.

CARMICHAEL

I can have a warrant here in twenty minutes. I don't think your superiors would appreciate being interrupted by twenty five cops conducting an Easter egg hunt in their office.

RECEPTIONIST

(sighs)

These are executive lines, only a few people have access to them.

CARMICHAEL

Couldn't I just sneak into someone's office and use their phone.

RECEPTIONIST

You have to use a code to dial out.

CARMICHAEL

Does every employee have a different code?

RECEPTIONIST

No but, these codes are used by a select few.

CARMICHAEL

Do you have a list?

RECEPTIONIST

I can tell you. Only Mr. Nice and Mr. Patterson, the vice president, use this code.

CARMICHAEL

Who else knows these codes, besides you?

RECEPTIONIST

I don't know the actual code, just that an executive code was used.

INT. DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE- DAY

Mc Coy and Carmichael discuss the case.

MC COY
It's circumstantial.

CARMICHAEL
The only other person with access to these telephone codes is the vice president. As far as the police could find out he's never met Evans. They got a warrant and searched his house and office, nothing.

MC COY
We got nothing when we searched Nice's office too.

CARMICHAEL
There's no smoking gun here Jack!

MC COY
What about the gun Evans had, did the police ever get a serial number?

An assistant walks in and hands Carmichael a folder.

CARMICHAEL
That was scary!

MC COY
What?

CARMICHAEL
This is CSU's report. The gun was reported stolen three weeks before the shooting.

MC COY
I guess nothing about this case is going to be easy.

CARMICHAEL
I don't know Jack, the gun was reported stolen from the offices of Misdemeanor records.

Mc Coy smiles.

INT. COURTROOM- DAY

MC COY
The people call Shandra Jones, to the stand.

Dixon rises.

DIXON

Your honor, we object to this witness.

JUDGE BARCLAY

On what grounds, counselor?

DIXON

It's uncorroborated accomplice testimony your honor and therefore inadmissible.

JUDGE BARCLAY

Both of you, in my chambers.

INT. JUDGE BARCLAY'S CHAMBERS-DAY

MC COY

Your honor this is ridiculous, Ms. Jones is not an accomplice.

DIXON

According to you, Ms. Jones will testify that she is the one who paid Mr. Evans.

MC COY

At the behest of your client!

DIXON

The people are entitled to their theory, we're entitled to our own.

JUDGE BARCLAY

Jack?

MC COY

Your honor, as far as the people are concerned, Ms. Jones has committed no crime. Her actions while naive, were not criminal.

JUDGE BARCLAY

So you've made no deals with this woman?

MC COY

No.

JUDGE BARCLAY

Well, I'm satisfied with that explanation.

DIXON

But your honor-

JUDGE BARCLAY

I said, I'm satisfied. The defense's objection is overruled.

INT. COURTROOM- DAY

MC COY

How much money did the defendant give you?

JONES

Ten thousand dollars.

MC COY

And what did he instruct you to do with it?

JONES

He asked me to give it to Malik. He said they had agreed he would leave town.

Dixon rises from his chair.

DIXON

Objection your honor, heresy!

JUDGE BARCLAY

Sustained the jury will disregard the witnesses last statement.

MC COY

That's all your honor.

Dixon rises to cross examine.

DIXON

Ms. Jones how long have you worked at Misdemeanor Records?

JONES

About three years.

DIXON
And you work as an engineer correct?

JONES
Yes.

DIXON
No aspirations to work in the
spotlight as opposed to behind the
scenes?

Mc Coy rises.

JONES
Objection your honor, I don't see
the relevance of this line of
questioning.

DIXON
Your honor, if you would allow some
leeway, I assure you I'm going
somewhere.

JUDGE BARCLAY
Take us there quickly counselor. The
witness will answer the question.

JONES
Well I hope to one day, have a
singing career yes.

DIXON
Isn't it true you gave your demo to
Michael Nice to listen to.

JONES
Yes.

DIXON
And what happened, I don't think
I've heard you on the radio lately.

JONES
(beat)
He... felt I could do better.

DIXON
Isn't it true he threw your demo
into his garbage can?

JONES
I don't know.

DIXON

Oh you don't know, I see, Ms. Jones aren't you involved with the vice president of Misdemeanor, Andre Patterson?

JONES

What do you mean involved?

DIXON

Aren't you two having an affair?

JONES

... Yes.

DIXON

If anything was to happen to Mr. Nice, who would take his place?

A flustered Mc Coy rises.

MC COY

Objection your honor Ms. Jones cannot possibly be expected to predict-

DIXON

Your honor, she's an employee, she's sleeping with the vice president, surely she's qualified to at the least, make an educated guess.

JUDGE BARCLAY

Agreed, objection overruled, the witness will answer the question.

Mc Coy flustered, sits down.

JONES

I guess, Andre would be in charge.

DIXON

Your boyfriend, hmmm, I suppose that would do wonders for your career.

Mc Coy nearly jumps from his chair.

MC COY

Objection!

DIXON

Withdrawn.

Dixon walks back to his table and picks up a folder before returning to grill Ms. Jones.

DIXON (CONT' D)

Ms. Jones you testified earlier that Mr. Nice gave you ten thousand dollars to give to your ex-boyfriend in order to lure him to his death, is that correct?

JONES

As I said before I didn't know what the money was for.

DIXON

Of course you didn't. Ms. Jones can you tell me what this is? (he hands her the folder and a copy to the judge) defense exhibit 11 your honor.

JONES

It's my bank statement.

DIXON

Please read the highlighted portion.

JONES

Two withdrawals of five thousand dollars each.

DIXON

And what is the date on those?

JONES

September twelfth

DIXON

I see, that would have been two days before Mr. Nice shot your ex boyfriend, correct?

JONES

I suppose.

DIXON

Now would you mind telling the court why you took out ten thousand dollars?

JONES

I needed it for studio time. I was working on my demo.

DIXON
So you actually paid for studio
time?

JONES
Not yet.

DIXON
I see, so I guess the money is
laying around your house somewhere?

JONES
I... suppose.

DIXON
Ms. Dixon where were you on the date
of February 16th earlier this year?

JONES
I was... working, I believe.

DIXON
The gun your ex boyfriend was found
with was stolen on that day from
your office. I suppose you didn't
see anything?

Mc Coy rises.

MC COY
Objection your honor!

JUDGE BARCLAY
Sustained.

DIXON
Ms. Jones weren't you furious when
Mr. Nice rejected your demo tape?

JONES
I... was.. upset, but-

DIXON
Ms. Jones isn't it true that you
stole that gun and gave it to your
ex boyfriend to murder Mr. Nice?
With him out of the way your
boyfriend would become the big
cheese and your career would be
resurrected!

JONES
No... I-

Mc Coy rises.

MC COY
Objection!

JUDGE BARCLAY
Sustained, watch yourself counselor!

DIXON
Withdrawn, the defense is done with
this witness.

Dixon sits down triumphantly.

Mc Coy and Carmichael look on in stunned silence.

INT. DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE-DAY

Mc Coy and Carmichael storm into the office. Mc Coy slams his
briefcase on the desk. Nora Lewin walks in.

LEWIN
I take it you didn't see that cross
coming.

MC COY
I want to know what the hell just
happened in there!

LEWIN
I thought we tried to get the right
person, not the biggest name.

CARMICHAEL
We never looked at Jones as a
suspect. There was no mention of any
of this before. Besides we can't
touch her. She has immunity as a
result of her testimony before the
grand jury.

MC COY
Nice still has the strongest motive,
revenge.

LEWIN
And his attorney has established an
equally plausible alternative,
greed, ambition, revenge. I'd say he
has us beat three to one.

INT. COURTROOM- DAY

The bailiff hands Judge Barclay the verdict, he reads it and puts it down.

JUDGE BARCLAY

Has the jury reached a verdict?

JURY FOREMAN

Yes your honor.

JUDGE BARCLAY

On the count of murder in the second degree what say you?

JURY FOREMAN

We the jury find the defendant not guilty.

JUDGE BARCLAY

On the count of conspiracy to commit murder what say you?

JURY FOREMAN

We the jury find the defendant not guilty.

Michael Nice raise a fist into the air. He blows a kiss to the heavens and hugs his attorney.

INT. DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE- DAY

Mc Coy, Carmichael and Lewin discuss the case.

MC COY

One thing bothers me.

CARMICHAEL

Just one thing, Jack?

MC COY

Why would Dixon object to Jones testimony, she made his case?

CARMICHAEL

Without her testimony, the case might have been dismissed.

MC COY

I think he wanted her to take the stand.

CARMICHAEL

Why?

MC COY

Thanks to her testimony, Nice goes free, an acquittal. If the case had been dismissed...

LEWIN

You could have brought charges later. You think Ms. Jones was in on this?

MC COY

Maybe, that's a hell of a risk, we could've bring charges against her for murder.

CARMICHAEL

You think, that's what really happened?

MC COY

I don't know, the evidence suggests it's possible.

CARMICHAEL

We couldn't prove it.

MC COY

Probably not, my guess is Nice orchestrated this entire thing.

LEWIN

How? It takes a lot of persuasion to convince someone to voluntarily become a murder suspect.

INT. PRECINCT-SIX MONTHS LATER

Briscoe and Green sit at their desks. Briscoe reads the New York Post while Green fills out reports.

Briscoe's eyes scan up and down the page and come to rest at the bottom of a page. His eyes grow wide.

BRISCOE

Hey Ed, look at this.

Briscoe hands Green the paper and then picks up the phone and begins dialing.

GREEN

I'll be damned.

BRISCOE

Yeah, it's Briscoe, you get today's post. Check out page 6. Yeah, I don't normally read it either, but check out the bottom of the page.

INT. D. A. 'S OFFICE-SAME TIME

McCoy hangs up the phone and stares at the newspaper in front on his desk, shaking his head. Carmichael, sitting in the corner looks up.

CARMICHAEL

What is it Jack?

MC COY

Read this.

McCoy tosses her the newspaper.

MC COY (CONT' D)

Page six, bottom

CARMICHAEL

In music industry news today; music mogul Michael Nice, president of Misdemeanor Records signed a new talent. Shandra Jones, a former sound engineer at Misdemeanor, has agreed to a three album record deal with Misdemeanor. The deal is reportedly worth a record three million dollars including a seven figure advance. Jones will record under the name "Black Angel" and will release a single titled "Vengeance" next week.

MC COY

She lied, she risked life in prison for a record deal.

CARMICHAEL
How much is your freedom worth?

Mc Coy shakes his head.

FADE OUT: