

A COP AND A CHRISTIAN

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

A police car cruises the shady side of town. Graffiti on the walls, bars on the windows, trash on the street. A DRUNK stumbles past HOMELESS sleeping on the grates. PEDESTRIANS walk briskly along, avoiding the tattooed STREET THUGS.

INT. POLICE CAR

CHRIS NELSON, a handsome cop in his twenties, is driving. In the passenger seat sits gruff veteran JOHN BURKE, late thirties, looking out the window at the unwashed humanity.

JOHN
Fine upstanding citizens, huh?

CHRIS
Job security, my friend.

JOHN
Seeing all these scum-bags puts me
in the mood to bust some dopers.

CHRIS
Man, you're always in the mood to
bust some dopers.

Suddenly the POLICE RADIO crackles to life.

DISPATCHER (ON RADIO)
Central, 307.

JOHN
307, Central... go ahead.

DISPATCHER (ON RADIO)
307, physical fight in progress,
Highland Ridge apartments. Two
males fighting in the parking lot.

JOHN
307 in route.

CHRIS
Hold on to your butt.

EXT. CITY STREET - POLICE CAR

The emergency lights come on and it bolts through traffic.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - MOMENTS LATER

The police car roars up the street of some dilapidated housing projects. The RESIDENTS look up from their porches.

INT. POLICE CAR

John and Chris scan the lots as they drive along.

JOHN
Government-assisted living at its
finest.

The police car rounds the corner and the headlights fall on HARLEY, a young thug covered in jailhouse tattoos, fighting with JEROME, another youth clad in "gansta" attire. John throws open the car door and leaps out, no hesitation.

EXT. HOUSING PROJECTS

Harley lands one on Jerome and sends him sprawling, then sees the police car and takes off on foot. John isn't far behind.

JOHN
Stop!

Not happening. Harley runs and John chases him through the neighbors' yards; leaping over strewn bicycles, kids toys and picket fences, dodging parked cars and clothes lines.

JOHN (cont'd)
I said stop!

Harley huffs and puffs, but John stays right with him. When Harley is within reach, John shoves him forward, causing him to stagger and tumble. John whips out his collapsible baton.

JOHN (cont'd)
Put your hands behind your back!

But Harley only starts to get to his feet. John delivers a blow to his thigh, dropping him like a sack of bricks. Harley YELPS, and John grabs an arm and twists it behind.

JOHN (cont'd)
Give me the other arm!

HARLEY
Get off me!

John torques the one arm until Harley YELLS in pain and gives up the other. Then John ratchets the handcuffs on both.

JOHN
 (into radio)
 307, Central... one in custody.

HARLEY
 Why'd you hit me, man?

JOHN
 (hauling him up)
 Why'd you run?

EXT. HOUSING PROJECTS - MOMENTS LATER

John leads Harley back to the patrol car, where Chris has Jerome handcuffed and bent over the hood.

CHRIS
 (singing)
 Bad boys, bad boys... what'cha
 gonna do? What'cha gonna do when
 they come for you?

John shoves Harley over the hood to add a second trophy.

HARLEY
 (to Jerome)
 Happy, fool? Now we're both going
 to jail!

JEROME
 Shut up, hootch! We wouldn't be
 here if you hadn't a ripped me off!

JOHN
Both of you shut up...

Chris pats Jerome down and finds a small bag of drugs.

CHRIS
 Well, now we know what you ladies
 were fighting about.

JEROME
 Yeah, he sold me a dime for twenty!
 I want to press charges, too.

John shares bemused smiles with Chris as he pats Harley down. His smile grows when he pulls more bags from Harley's pocket.

JOHN
 Man, didn't I just arrest you for
 dealing last week?

HARLEY

Yeah, man, you're always picking on me. That's harassment!

John grabs Harley and pulls him close. This is personal.

JOHN

And you know why? Because you're a stinking piece of filth who sells this junk to kids just so he can make a quick buck. I enjoy arresting you because you're a lowlife little punk who doesn't care one bit about the lives you're destroying.

(pulls closer, whispers)

And you know what? I'm going to keep on busting you until the day you either quit dealing, fall down dead, or are too old to wipe your own miserable rear end. Got it?

He shoves Harley back onto the hood.

JEROME

(to Harley)

You don't have to worry about getting old, homey... because I'm capping you! You got that?

CHRIS

That's enough...

Chris and John place their prisoners in the back of the car.

CHRIS (cont'd)

You really think we ought to transport them together?

JOHN

Who cares? Maybe we'll get lucky and they'll kill each other.

John notices that something is missing from his hand. He groans and shines his flashlight around on the ground.

CHRIS

What's the matter?

JOHN

I lost my wedding ring.

CHRIS

Again?

They shine their flashlights around but with no luck.

CHRIS (cont'd)
 Man, you need to either stop
 chasing so many bad guys or gain
 some weight in your fingers.

Harley and Jerome start arguing loudly in the back seat of the police car and John finally has to concede defeat.

JOHN
 Forget it... could be anywhere.
 I'll come back first thing tomorrow
 when it's daylight.

CHRIS
 In this neighborhood? If it's
 still here, I'm calling the pope...
 because that would be a miracle.

John only grunts and they head back toward the car.

CHRIS (cont'd)
 What is that, three you've lost? I
 hate to be you when you get home.

JOHN
 Yeah... me too.

INT. BURKES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

The clock reads 3 AM. A lump is sleeping in the bed. John sneaks in, trying not to wake it as he begins shedding the endless components of his uniform. The lump stirs when he unfastens the noisy Velco straps of the bulletproof vest.

JESSICA, his thirty-something wife, looks bleary eyed at the clock, then falls back with a groan. John kisses her cheek.

JOHN
 Had to work late. Sorry.

JESSICA
 Don't forget we have to get up
 early.

JOHN
 Why?

JESSICA
 Your son is getting baptized,
 remember? Church camp last
 weekend?

John sighs and rubs his eyes. Obviously he forgot.

JOHN
What time?

JESSICA
Nine-fifteen.

John looks at the clock. He sighs again.

JESSICA (cont'd)
Some of your car parts came in, I
put them in the garage. And your
sister called.

JOHN
Yeah? Which parts?

JESSICA
She wants you to come visit her.

JOHN
Forget that.

JESSICA
She's your sister, John, no matter
where she is.

JOHN
Where she is, is right where she
belongs.

JESSICA
I'm just passing along the message.
Don't stay up late.

JOHN
Can you get the kids around and
I'll meet you there? I have to do
something first.

JESSICA
What?

JOHN
I, uh, have to go look for
something.

JESSICA
You didn't lose your wedding ring
again...

No answer. Jessica sighs and pulls the pillow over her head.

INT. ASHLEY'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

John checks on ASHLEY, his eight-year-old daughter, who's sleeping soundly. He pulls up her covers, kisses her cheek.

INT. MATTHEW'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

John checks on MATTHEW, his eleven-year-old son who's also fast asleep. John watches him with a proud satisfaction.

EXT. HOUSING PROJECTS - DAY

It doesn't look much better in the daylight. The same Residents sit on the same porches. KIDS play in the yards.

John drives up in his personal car, and is surprised to find two police cars and crime-scene tape around a yard. Two uniformed officers, BERSI and HILL, lean against the cars.

John gets out, dressed in a suit and tie, and starts to walk over. The two cops grin as they recognize him.

BERSI

John Burke. Did you make detective or are you just out here to bag some arrests on your off hours?

HILL

Won't do you any good to go undercover, buddy. Every drug dealer in town knows your face.

JOHN

Just heading to church, guys.

HILL

Boy are you in the wrong neighborhood!

JOHN

(looking at crime scene)
What have you guys got?

Bersi motions for John to look behind the patrol car. On the ground is a white sheet covering a body. The neighborhood Kids play on in the b.g. -- no big deal.

BERSI

One bad guy popped another bad guy.

HILL

Get this... these two losers get arrested together, bond out of jail together, come home together, and the first thing they do is-

Hill makes a finger-gun and puts it to his head; "Bang." John is hesitant, partly shocked and partly apprehensive.

JOHN

Who is it?

BERSI

Probably one of your regulars.

John steps over the crime scene tape. He kneels by the body and lifts the sheet. Harley's eyes stare back at him.

JOHN

Ah, geez...

BERSI

Know him?

JOHN

Yeah. Got your suspect yet?

BERSI

Already in custody. He was still here waving the gun and bragging when the first officers arrived.

John stares at the kid. Harvey stares back. John hears a WAILING and looks up to the house. Through a window he can see a woman, HARLEY'S MOTHER, sitting on a sofa, sobbing and rocking, surrounded by family trying to comfort her.

FLASH! A brilliant splash of light makes John look back. A grinning DETECTIVE HENDRIX is holding a camera.

BERSI (cont'd)

It's about time the detectives crawled out of bed.

HENDRIX

Well, you know how we like to sleep in on Sundays. What are you doing in my crime scene, John? Wanted to make sure he was dead?

(steps over tape)

Nice suit. Know this guy?

Hendrix yanks the sheet off and begins snapping photos. John stares, obviously deep in thought.

JOHN

Arrested him last night. I told him I'd chase him until the day he died... just didn't realize it would be today.

HENDRIX

Well, look on the bright side... you're already dressed for the funeral.

John grunts, then he looks at his watch.

JOHN

I'll catch you guys later.

John steps out of the crime scene, pausing for one last look at Harley before walking back to his car. He stops, noticing something on the ground and picks it up -- it's his ring.

INT. CHURCH - LATER

The church is already in session, the CONGREGATION rejoicing as the newly converted are being baptized by PASTOR CRAWFORD, a charismatic preacher. The sermon is VOICE OVER as the baptisms takes place.

PASTOR CRAWFORD (V.O.)

This morning I'm going to tell you a story about a man. He was an important business man who lived in a big city. Now, every day this business man hopped off the subway and walked to work downtown. And every day he passed this dirty, homeless man living on the streets.

John sneaks in the back. Up front, Matthew wades into the baptismal and smiles as he sees John.

PASTOR CRAWFORD (V.O.) (cont'd)

And one day that business man said to himself, "You know, I think I'm going to pray for that homeless man." And he did. Well, it wasn't before long that the business man noticed that the homeless man began to look sick. Living on the street had started to take its toll.

John scans the pews and locates Jessica. Ashley smiles up as her daddy slips in beside her and wraps his arm around her. Jessica smiles when she sees John's wedding band.

PASTOR CRAWFORD (V.O.) (cont'd)
So the business man started praying harder, asking God to intervene in this poor man's life. But the more he prayed, the sicker this homeless man seemed to get.

Pastor Crawford baptizes Matthew, who smiles and waves.

INT. CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

Pastor Crawford stands on the pulpit and continues his sermon in real time. Matthew has joined John, Jessica, and Ashley.

PASTOR CRAWFORD
Then one day when the business man walked to work, he noticed the homeless man wasn't there any more. He soon learned that the homeless man had caught pneumonia and died. And he couldn't help but wonder... why hadn't God done anything to help? Had he not prayed the right way? Had God just ignored his prayers? And he became angry with God! And the next time he prayed, he said, "God! I prayed every day for that poor homeless man! Why didn't you do anything?" And God answered him and said, "I did! I sent you every day! But you... did... nothing."

Pastor Crawford pauses to let that sink in. And it does. With John most of all.

PASTOR CRAWFORD (cont'd)
I wonder... how many times has someone prayed to God, asking for help and He sent you. Did you do anything? Or did you walk on by, thinking that He would send someone else? I wonder how many people have died without knowing God because someone didn't take a moment, just one minute, to show them the way.

John twitches. The sermon is hitting a little too close to home. The Pastor even looks directly at him at one point.

PASTOR CRAWFORD (cont'd)
 I'd like to close with a little challenge. This week God will bring some of you in contact with someone who needs help. Someone who's crying out for direction, who might be close to their last chance. What will you do? Will you share with them the one thing that can turn their whole life around? Or will you walk on by?

John stares ahead, more than ready to get out of there.

INT. POLICE STATION BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

POLICE OFFICERS slowly file in, taking their seats, laughing, kidding each other, getting ready for the shift.

LIEUTENANT Cogger takes the podium, clicks a remote and a LCD projector shines a badge on the screen behind him.

LIEUTENANT COGER
 Alright... settle down. Let's kick this thing off.

The cops quiet down and ready their pens and notebooks.

LIEUTENANT COGER (cont'd)
 First off, congratulations are in order. The results of the sergeants written exam are in, and I'm happy to inform you that two of you from this shift were selected to move on to the interviews. Patrolmen Cox and Corporal Burke.
 (the cops clap)
 Good job, guys. Burke, you scored number one... congratulations.

Burke nods modestly. Chris taps three fingers on his sleeve to indicate sergeant stripes and points to Burke.

LIEUTENANT COGER (cont'd)
 Interviews are in two days, so get those shoes polished, boys.

He clicks the remote and addresses come up on the screen.

LIEUTENANT COGER (cont'd)
 Moving right along... extra-patrol list. Be sure to swing by a few of these, especially the B&E's.

OFFICER #1

If they'd start parking their beamers and Mercedes in their garages, they wouldn't get their stuff stolen.

The cops grin as they scribble. Cogger clicks again and reads:

LIEUTENANT COGER

Bolo's. Stolen vehicle on Powell; mother reports that her son took her car, saying that he was going to kill himself by driving off a bridge. If located, she wants the car back.

The cops all laugh. Lt. Cogger has to shake his head.

LIEUTENANT COGER (cont'd)

Man, you couldn't make this stuff up. Okay, next up... runaways.

He clicks and a list of names and descriptions comes up.

OFFICER #2

Stay away from the runaways, Chris.

The officers smirk at Chris, who plays along.

CHRIS

Hey, she said she was eighteen.

That brings a round of snickers.

OFFICER #3

Five-two, a hundred-sixty pounds? That's one hefty little mamma!

OFFICER #4

You can't miss her... she's the one with a turkey leg in one hand and a Big Gulp in the other.

More snickering. Cogger clicks again, more info on the screen.

LIEUTENANT COGER

Moving right along. General info's. Pay attention to number five... word is they're dealing again over in Coggins trailer park.

OFFICER #1

Go get 'em, Burke!

The Officers laugh. All except John, who only manages a halfhearted smile. Even the lieutenant grins.

LIEUTENANT COGER

And on that note... courtesy of
Detective Hendrix, here's one for
the scrapbooks.

Coger clicks the remote and the photo Hendrix took of John kneeling over a dead Harley pops up on the screen. Beneath is captioned: "Burke scratches another dealer off his list."

The Officers all CHEER and CLAP, and one even slaps John on the back. Someone hands him a printout of the photo. But John isn't amused. If anything, he's ashamed.

LIEUTENANT COGER (cont'd)

Alright, let's be safe out there.

The men start to file out. John only stares at the photo.

INT. POLICE CAR - LATER

Chris is driving as John stares somberly out the window. They pass a pretty WOMAN, prompting Chris to quip:

CHRIS

Ooo, hello darling... if you let me
cop a feel I'll let you feel a cop.

He looks over to John for a laugh but none comes. Chris sighs and they drive on in silence. After a few moments, Chris grins and John gets a perturbed look as he sniffs.

CHRIS (cont'd)

You're the one who wanted Mexican.

John scowls and starts to roll down the power window, but Chris mischievously flips the window-lock button on the driver-side panel. John's window won't roll down.

JOHN

Ah, you jerk...

Chris only laughs harder at his trapped partner.

CHRIS

Oh, come on... what's up with you?
You haven't said three words all
night. Man, I'm going to have to
take you to some drug-house so you
can bust some heads just so you'll
be in a better mood.

John grunts. Suddenly the police radio sounds:

DISPATCHER (ON RADIO)
Central, 307.

CHRIS
Show time.

JOHN
(into microphone)
307, Central, go ahead.

DISPATCHER (ON RADIO)
307, disturbance at the Palms
Motel, 902 North Edward. A
distraught woman banging on the
door to one of the rooms.

JOHN
307 ten-four. In route.

CHRIS
(scoffs)
Palms Motel. Where's a tornado
when you need one?

EXT. SLEAZY MOTEL - NIGHT

A typical red-and-green-neon roach motel.

INT. POLICE CAR

John and Burke pull into the drive and their headlights pass over SHANNON DOYLE, a skinny, unkempt woman kicking one of the doors. PASSERSBY stare at her, prompting Chris to quip:

CHRIS
So which one do you think it is?

EXT. SLEAZY MOTEL

Shannon, strung-out with hollow eyes, noisily KICKS and YELLS at the door. She may have been pretty once, but the dope has eroded her beauty -- she's twenty going on fifty.

SHANNON
Open the door, you son of a-

She hears CAR DOORS CLOSING and looks over her shoulder to see John and Chris approaching. She grumbles, adjusts her purse and quickly starts to walk away.

JOHN

Shannon!

Shannon starts to walk faster.

JOHN (cont'd)

No point in walking away, Shannon,
I already know who you are. It's
not like I haven't arrested you a
million times.

Shannon stops, sighs, wipes matted hair from her face and
defiantly turns around. Chris and John approach.

SHANNON

Go away, Burke. I ain't done
nothing.

JOHN

What are you doing here, Shannon?

SHANNON

I told you, nothing.

JOHN

Who's inside?

SHANNON

I don't know.

JOHN

Then why were you trying so hard to
get in?

CHRIS

He probably threw her out without
paying her.

SHANNON

(glaring at Chris)
I ain't hooking, rookie.

CHRIS

No, hookers get paid. And in cash,
not dope.

Shannon flinches as though she wants to lash out at Chris.

JOHN

You using again, Shannon?

Shannon clutches her purse.

SHANNON

No!

JOHN

Let me see your arms.

Shannon thrusts out her wrists. Burke looks as if to say, "I'm not stupid." He pushes her sleeves back. There are so many red track marks that it looks like she has chicken pox.

JOHN (cont'd)

You're on the needle again. Can I look inside your purse?

Shannon clutches the purse tightly to her chest, looks away. Her eyes well up. John holds his hand out. A tear slides down her cheek. Then she thrusts the purse into his hand.

CHRIS

Put on your rubber gloves, man.

John digs through the purse and pulls out a syringe, a bent metal spoon, and a tiny plastic bag with drug residue. He hands the purse to Chris and reaches for his handcuffs.

SHANNON

No, Burke! Please, I just got my kids back!

CHRIS

Should have thought of that before, huh?

SHANNON

No... please!

She slips into hysteria as John tries to handcuff her.

SHANNON (cont'd)

No!

They begin to scuffle, Shannon flailing and SCREAMING. The men have a hard time wrestling her, and at one point they trip over a garbage can. All three go down and splash around in a puddle of trash water until they can get her cuffed.

They manage to get her kicking and screaming into the patrol car. Panting, Chris is soaked in liquid garbage and reacts.

CHRIS

Aaagh! Disgusting!

INT. POLICE STATION SALLY PORT - NIGHT

Chris parks the patrol car and he and Burke step out. Shannon is crying in the back seat.

CHRIS

I think I'm going to puke.

JOHN

There's no telling what was floating around in that can.

CHRIS

You mind if I go try to wash some of this off?

JOHN

Go ahead. I got her.

CHRIS

You sure?

JOHN

Yeah, she's done fighting. Go ahead.

Chris heads inside and Burke opens the back door. Shannon is blubbering; her mascara running, snot dripping from her nose, stringy saliva hanging from her quivering lip. Pathetic.

JOHN (cont'd)

Come on, Shannon.

SHANNON

I just want to die.

JOHN

You don't want to die.

SHANNON

Yes I do! I just got a job and an apartment... I got my kids back, and now it's all going to hell!

Burke sighs, realizing the pastors words have come to pass. His face shows his inner dilemma: help her or walk on by?

INT. POLICE STATION HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Chris exits the bathroom, mumbling as he dabs his wet shirt with a paper towel. He rounds the corner to:

INT. POLICE STATION FRONT DESK

Chris dabs as he passes FRANK CARTER, an older, distinguished man in a disheveled tuxedo sitting on a bench, intoxicated. Chris looks him over -- definitely not the typical prisoner.

CHRIS
Why are you here?

FRANK
Driving while intoxicated.

CHRIS
You know that's against the law, right?

FRANK
Yes... an unfortunate lapse in judgement on my part, I'm afraid. The champagne crept up on me.

At the station desk, SERGEANT BIRD, a crusty old desk jockey, listens with only half interest to the gripes of EUGENE BARKER, a weasely little attorney in a suit that easily cost more than the cops' take-home pay.

BARKER
My client has sat in a drunk tank for six hours -- six hours -- without being allowed to call his attorney. That is completely unacceptable, Sergeant.

Sergeant Bird only sips his coffee and munches a doughnut.

SERGEANT BIRD
Maybe he was just sleeping it off, counselor.

CHRIS
Six hours and you're still drunk? How much did you have?

BARKER
Don't answer that, Frank!

FRANK
Why? I'm guilty as charged. Pay the officer and let's go.

Barker ignores Frank's request.

BARKER

Sergeant, do you have any idea who my client is? He is a very respected businessman in this community.

SERGEANT BIRD

Yeah, he looks it.

BARKER

And for him to have to sit in a dirty jail cell with common street criminals is utterly ludicrous. Now I demand that he be released on his own recognizance immediately.

Sergeant Bird offers the counselor a doughnut.

SERGEANT BIRD

Want a doughnut?

Chris tries not to laugh, but a loud snort escapes. Barker glares at him and the sergeant.

BARKER

We'll see how much you're laughing when we file suit against you.

SERGEANT BIRD

If you want to sue me, counselor, you'll have to take a number. Just remember one thing... I'm only a cop, so a third of nothing is nothing. Now, the bond for DWI #1 is seven-fifty. If you want to bond your client out, fine. If not, then excuse me. Chris, you stink! What do you want?

CHRIS

Burke come through here yet?

SERGEANT BIRD

Nope.

CHRIS

He was supposed to bring one in.

They look to the security monitors, specifically the one showing the sally port. Burke is still there, Shannon is still in the back seat. Sergeant Bird turns up the volume.

SERGEANT BIRD

What's he doing?

CHRIS
Don't know.

INT. POLICE STATION SALLY PORT

Burke looks down at the pathetic sight of Shannon. Torn clothes, torn life.

SHANNON
I just want to die.

John looks around, sighs. He stares at the tormented soul before him. When he finally speaks, it's a completely different tone; soft, compassionate. He kneels down.

JOHN
Shannon.

SHANNON
Just let me die...

JOHN
Shannon, look at me.

She does, but it's with contempt and bitterness.

SHANNON
Why do you hate me so much? Why?

JOHN
I don't hate you, Shannon. I hate the drugs. I hate what the drugs do to people... and their families. Believe me, I know.

Shannon looks away in shame, can't argue with that.

JOHN (cont'd)
Drugs are a cancer. Worse than cancer. A cancer you can cut out, but drugs... they eat you alive from the inside out and just leave you wanting more.

Shannon snuffles. Can't argue with that either.

INT. POLICE STATION FRONT DESK

Sergeant Bird and Chris watch the monitor in disbelief -- is this their John Burke?! Barker also watches, but with slimy interest... always on the lookout to catch a cop doing something he shouldn't.

INT. POLICE STATION SALLY PORT

Shannon blubbers away.

SHANNON

How did I get so dirty, Burke?

JOHN

We've been rolling around in the trash, Shannon... we're all dirty.

SHANNON

No... the drugs, the men. How did I screw up my life so much?

John thinks for a moment. This is new territory for him.

JOHN

Shannon, have you ever heard of a woman named Mary Magdalene?

Shannon shakes her head "no."

JOHN (cont'd)

Mary Magdalene was a prostitute.

SHANNON

Fifth street?

John tries not to grin.

JOHN

No... a very long time ago. She was considered very dirty in her day. But then she met... a very special man. One who cleaned her up, turned her whole life around and made her completely new.

SHANNON

(scoffs)

There ain't no man like that.

JOHN

Yes, there is.

SHANNON

Then I wish I could meet him.

JOHN

Would you like to?

She looks at him like he's crazy. But he's sincere.

SHANNON

Yeah...

INT. POLICE STATION FRONT DESK

Sergeant Bird and Chris look at each other, completely blown away. Barker watches like a hawk spying a rabbit.

On the monitor, we see John leading Shannon in prayer.

INT. POLICE STATION SALLY PORT

John and Shannon finish praying. John looks her in the eye.

JOHN

Welcome to your new life, Shannon.

Shannon starts weeping anew, but these are tears of joy.

SHANNON

Thank you. Thank you...

JOHN

Now comes the hard part. You have to get off the drugs.

SHANNON

I know. I will.

JOHN

And you still have these charges. You may be in jail a while, but that may not be such a bad thing. It will keep you away from the dope and give you time to clean up. But you've got a fresh start now. Alright?

SHANNON

Yeah.

JOHN

When you get to the county jail, you ask for the chaplain. Tell him of the decision you made today and he'll steer you in the right direction, alright?

SHANNON

Thank you, Burke.

JOHN

Don't thank me. Thank someone else. He's the one who brought us together today.

Shannon cries even harder, then surprises John by leaning forward to rest her head on his shoulder to cry. He's hesitant, but lets her. He places a hand on the back of her head; its' a strange, new, and powerful moment for them both.

INT. POLICE STATION FRONT DESK

Sergeant Bird and Chris turn from the monitor, completely taken aback and almost embarrassed as they look at Barker.

SERGEANT BIRD

Well... there's something you don't see every day.

But Barker doesn't even smile. He looks stone-faced mad.

John and Shannon enter and he leads her down the hallway. Both are quiet, almost smiling. Frank smiles up at John as they pass, but the three men standing at the desk only stare.

JOHN

What?

Sergeant Bird only shrugs. Chris doesn't speak. Barker only turns and walks away.

INT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

Chris and John drive through the city. Chris is quiet and actually looks uncomfortable. John, however, looks out the window with a little smile of contentment. After a few moments, Chris finally has to break the silence.

CHRIS

So are you going to, like, start preaching to everyone we arrest?

Now it's John's turn to be taken off guard.

JOHN

What?

CHRIS

That whole Mary Maglite thing back in the sally port. What was that all about?

John is hesitant. Busted!

JOHN
You saw that?

CHRIS
Yeah I saw that... on the monitors.
And so did the Sarge.

John winces and rubs his eyes.

JOHN
Oh.

CHRIS
So, I mean, that's great if you've
found God and all that... but just
give me a heads up, alright? You
really kind of freaked me out.

JOHN
Look, that was... that was just a
spontaneous... I don't know.

CHRIS
Well, I'm just saying let me know
how I should act from now on. If
my cussing or looking at women
bothers you-

JOHN
Just forget about it, okay? Forget
about what you saw.

CHRIS
Alright... but I just don't want
you to go thumping my head with a
bible, alright?

John looks out the window and the two ride on in silence.

INT. BURKES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

John enters and starts to take off his duty belt. Jessica
stirs in the bed, looks at the alarm clock, and is surprised
to find it's only 1:10 am.

JESSICA
Whoever you are, I better warn you
that my husband is usually home
around two or three.

John kisses her and she rolls over.

JOHN
I wouldn't worry too much about
him.

JESSICA
Oh, you stink!

JOHN
I'll take a shower.

JESSICA
Please do. Oh, and some more of
your car parts came in. I put them
in the garage.

Now John is torn; the bed or the garage?

JOHN
Hmmm. Maybe I won't take a shower.

Jessica groans and rolls over.

JESSICA
Don't stay up too late. And try
not to wake the neighbors.

JOHN
What are they going to do... call
the cops?

INT. BURKES' GARAGE - NIGHT

John flips on the light and we see a partially-dismantled
1968 Chevrolet Camaro convertible, parts strewn everywhere.

MONTAGE:

John opening a box, taking out some parts, removing others,
checking them. This is his happy place, working with his
hands in his garage.

INT. BURKES' BEDROOM - MORNING

John is sleeping, a pillow covering his head to block the
morning sun. A PHONE RINGING makes him stir, and Jessica can
be heard answering it in the other room.

JESSICA (O.S.)
Hello? Yes, but he's sleeping
right now. Can I take a message?
Oh... yes, just a moment.

Jessica pokes her head in the room.

JESSICA (cont'd)
John. It's the P-D.

John rubs his eyes, looks at the clock. 9:00 AM. He groggily picks up the phone.

JOHN
Yeah. What... right now? Alright.

Jessica looks worried as John crawls out of bed.

JESSICA
What's the matter?

JOHN
I don't know.

INT. POLICE STATION BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

John tentatively pokes his head into the room. Lt. Coger sits at a table, also having been roused out of bed. Next to him is CAPTAIN PAMELA REIGNS, a career administrative cop.

Seated opposite the cops is Barker, his expensive suit as gray as his personality. He's accompanied by KARL REEVES, another lawyer who, aside from being African American, would be an exact photocopy.

CAPTAIN REIGNS
Good morning, Officer Burke.
Please join us.

John steps up uneasily, his defenses raised.

JOHN
Morning, Captain. L-T.

LIEUTENANT COGER
Morning, John. How are you?

JOHN
Confused.

CAPTAIN REIGNS
Officer Burke, this is Mister Barker and Mister Reeves. They're attorneys.

BARKER
Morning.

The lawyers extend hands and John grudgingly shakes them -- his distaste for attorneys second to his dislike for drugs.

JOHN

Woken up to come in and meet with two lawyers. This can't be good.

BARKER

I assure you, our visit is quite amicable.

JOHN

I never went to college, counselor. You'll have to remind me to look that one up.

REEVES

It means peaceful.

JOHN

(sitting)
So I'm not being sued.

Barker only smiles, but it's not entirely a friendly one.

BARKER

Not yet.

JOHN

That's reassuring.

CAPTAIN REIGNS

Officer Burke, these two gentlemen come to us representing the interests of the A-C-L-U.

Now Burke is especially on guard.

JOHN

A-C-L-U? Who'd I thump this time?

Barker looks to the chagrined Captain: "This time?"

BARKER

Actually, Mister Burke we're here-

JOHN

It's Officer Burke... actually.

The Captain and Lieutenant almost cringe. Barker pauses, annoyed at the triviality. Burke is pushing him.

BARKER

Of course. Officer Burke, we are here to express concern with an incident that occurred with a prisoner in your custody yesterday.

JOHN

What incident?

BARKER

Last night you arrested a young woman by the name of Shannon Doyle?

JOHN

Yeah, possession controlled substance.

BARKER

And when you returned here to this facility, were you at any time alone with this young woman?

Burke's eyes narrow and he shuffles defensively.

JOHN

Maybe a few minutes. Why?

BARKER

Did you have any conversations with her? Private conversations?

JOHN

Briefly.

BARKER

And what was the nature of this conversation?

John is starting to understand. He's guarded, but perturbed.

JOHN

Did she file a complaint?

BARKER

No, she did not.

JOHN

(puzzled)

Did Chris file a complaint?

LIEUTENANT COGER

Nobody filed a complaint, John.

JOHN

Is this an internal?

CAPTAIN REIGNS

Officer Burke, this is not an internal investigation, nor did anyone file a complaint. This is merely an informal meeting to address an issue of concern.

JOHN

What issue? You'll have to excuse me, but if nobody filed a complaint and this isn't an internal, then I'm just a little confused as to why I'm here at ten in the morning, having to answer to two blood-sucking lawyers from the A-C-L-U.

Captain Reigns starts to speak but Barker pipes up, angry, clearly not used with being talked to in such a manner.

BARKER

Proselytizing, Officer Burke. And so you don't have to look this one up, it means to spread one's religious beliefs, in this case while under the color of law enforcement authority. Last night I personally witnessed a flagrant abuse of power by a police officer!

Now it's John's turn to be nonplussed.

JOHN

What? What abuse of power?

BARKER

Did you or did you not lead a prisoner whom you had arrested in a prayer of the Christian faith?

JOHN

Yeah... I did. So what?

BARKER

Was this action solicited?

JOHN

What? Oh, come on...

BARKER

No, Officer Burke it was not. At no time did she ask you for your religious opinions. You took a handcuffed prisoner, deprived of her freedom and who was obviously at an emotionally vulnerable time, you cornered her in the back seat of a police car and you thrust your personal religious views upon her.

JOHN

Oh, please...

BARKER

This isn't the crusades... you can't drag people off the street, put them in shackles and force them to convert to your religion!

JOHN

Now look here-

Burke really starts to get riled and the Captain intercedes.

CAPTAIN REIGNS

Alright, let's all just take a moment to catch our breath. Officer Burke, these gentlemen are clearly concerned, and I have promised them our full cooperation in the matter. Now, at this time they have agreed that if this can be resolved within the department, there would be no need for any external action. Did I understand you correctly, gentlemen?

Barker is angry, so Reeves quickly speaks up.

REEVES

That's correct, Captain. We recognize that this may simply be an isolated incident of... poor judgment.

CAPTAIN REIGNS

Officer Burke, I'm sure you can answer that. Is this the only time anything like this has happened?

JOHN

Yes, Captain. It's the only time.

CAPTAIN REIGNS

There you are.

BARKER

But is it the last?

Barker and John lock eyes. A challenge... who will blink first? John refuses to succumb, so Reigns intercedes.

CAPTAIN REIGNS

Gentlemen, I assure you that Officer Burke has an exemplary record here at the department. I'm sure he doesn't want to engage in any activity that might jeopardize his outstanding career.

Barker reaches for his briefcase.

BARKER

Good. Then I'm sure he has no problem with signing off on that.

Barker slides a prepared document across the table to John.

JOHN

What's this?

BARKER

That is a written agreement, saying that you promise to abide by your end of the bargain.

John looks at him like he's completely crazy.

JOHN

You seriously want me to sign this?

Barker is completely serious.

BARKER

I'm a blood-sucking attorney, remember? I get everything in writing.

John looks from Barker to the Captain, who only shuffles uncomfortably, her bluff called. John picks up the document, looks it over contemptuously.

JOHN

And if I don't?

BARKER

Then in addition to making your captain a liar, you would leave us little choice than to pursue the matter. Complaints, lawsuits... whatever it takes.

JOHN

Whatever it takes to what... get me fired?

BARKER

To protect the rights of the people you are sworn to protect. There is a thing called separation of church and state, an ideal which you clearly violated. When you put on your gun and uniform to police my fellow citizens, I want to know your intent... are you doing it as a cop or a Christian?

John looks to his supervisors, who only look back helplessly. Barker takes a fine gold pen and places it by John's hand.

BARKER (cont'd)

It's your call, Officer Burke. All of this either ends or begins right here, right now.

Burke glares at Barker a moment, then stares at the paper with deep inner conflict. Everybody stares at him. After a few moments he pushes the paper back toward Barker.

JOHN

I can't sign that.

Barker stands, gathers his papers and shuts his briefcase.

BARKER

Very well.

(nods to the brass)

Captain, Lieutenant. Thank you for your time. You will be hearing from us again.

He abruptly turns and walks out. Reeves stands, shakes the Captain's and Lieutenant's hands.

REEVES

Captain Reigns. Lieutenant Coger. Thank you for seeing us.

Reeves faces John and tentatively offers his hand, a genuine gesture of no hard feelings.

REEVES (cont'd)
Officer Burke.

John looks up, stares a moment, then takes it. Reeves dismisses himself and exits. Captain Reigns sighs deeply and rubs her temples.

CAPTAIN REIGNS
Your diplomacy skills could use a little work, Burke.

JOHN
Sorry, Captain. That guy was a total jerk.

CAPTAIN REIGNS
Agreed. I just hope that "jerk" doesn't wind up costing you your career.

Burke smiles and holds up the gold pen.

JOHN
That's alright... I still have his pen.

Captain Reigns groans and rubs her temples again. Lieutenant Coger has to stifle a laugh. Burke only shrugs.

JOHN (cont'd)
He didn't ask for it back.

Reigns stands, but pauses.

CAPTAIN REIGNS
Just so you know, if they actually follow through with their threats then my hands may be tied.

JOHN
Is there a policy against what I did?

CAPTAIN REIGNS
I don't know... that's what I'm going to go have to look up.

She starts out the door. John calls after her.

JOHN
Captain. You going to throw me to
the wolves if there is?

CAPTAIN REIGNS
Let's just wait to see what
happens. Till then, keep your nose
clean, alright?

JOHN
Yes, ma'am.

Captain Reigns leaves. Coger looks at John, curious.

LIEUTENANT COGER
This is a switch, John. Usually we
have these meetings because you
beat someone up.

JOHN
Maybe I'm just going soft.

LIEUTENANT COGER
Maybe... but you're still ticking
people off. You may have opened
up a real can of worms here.

JOHN
I know. I just... I couldn't do
it. You know?

LIEUTENANT COGER
I won't fault you for your
decision, John. I just hope you
made it for the right reasons.

JOHN
Yeah... me too.

LIEUTENANT COGER
Go home. I'll see you tonight.

Coger pauses as he heads out the door.

LIEUTENANT COGER (cont'd)
This is your call but, uh, you may
want to prepare the wife. Just in
case this does turn ugly.

The lieutenant leaves and John looks around the empty room,
standing alone within the criminal justice system.