



Word Count about 87,644

In Love and Law

Chapter 1 Task Force in the Fog
Musical theme; Hello. I Love You by the Doors

Chrissie Jasmine sat down at the little table outside the deli. Will pushed a cup of coffee to her.

“You remembered I like it with cream.”

“I remember a lot of things about you, Chrissie.”

She looked at him awkwardly, as if her stylish suit was somehow not as cool as his jeans and T shirt. “Well, this is about Marie Estofan?”

“Yeah. She had this .25 Raven, which, if it matters, is a piece of junk. And she says it belongs to someone else, which I imagine is true. The cops search her on some kind of shaky reasons. Now I know they will lie and fix

up the motion to suppress for you. I also know you won't like being involved in that kind of thing, because you're a nice lady, and you would not lie yourself."

"Yet you are implying I would suborn perjury."

"You wouldn't. I'm saying they are going to lie to you, too, because they know you wouldn't."

"You think they always lie."

"I think they usually do."

"OK, let's leave that." She looked across the street at a woman with two small children walking by.

"Do you wish you had kids, Chrissie?"

"No. Too much noise, and too many problems."

"I agree. Kids are cool, but too much stress to have your own."

"Tell me how wonderful your client is, and why I shouldn't nail her hide to the wall."

"Well, here she is." He handed over some prints. "If she had any sense, she should be a model. But she hangs out with these low lifes who have coke, and gets in trouble because she's too dumb to get out of the way when the garbage truck comes down the street."

"I wish I was as pretty as her."

"You're cute, Chrissie. You're better off with your brains than her looks."

“She could be a model, you think?”

“She would be hard to pose. She has the looks, but what you really want is a girl who has the looks *and* the sense of how it will look on film. A little vanity doesn’t hurt. They look in the mirror, and they know what will look good.”

“You have the T shirt. How about her?” She motioned with her head at a woman across the street.

“You want me to make her over? The skirt is too high. Her tail is a little big. I’d put her in some tight jeans and a bare midriff blouse. I’d pick some low cut jeans to show off her tummy. I’m sure it’s nice. Lose the push up bra. She’s a little heavy in the bosom anyway. I’m talking fashion here, not appealing to the large udder crowd. I’d have her save those shoes for gardening. Replace them with something high heeled and strappy.

She’s got great hair. She should fire her hairdresser. Let it grow even if it gets frizzy, do it up in a pony tail or just let it fly. Some cute ribbons to bring out her eyes.”

“Would you tell a model that?”

“No. I would say the hair, the more you have the more I will love you. The rest, I would just say ‘this is what I want to do here today’”.

“You won’t be honest.”

“You won’t undermine an insecure person’s feeling of adequacy. You could injure her emotionally and professionally. The guy I used to work for, some advertising guy said a certain model couldn’t do shoes because her second toes were longer than the big ones. This girl had a pretty face, and a nice front, an even better tail, and real nice legs, and her feet were pretty. That ad guy made her feel like something was wrong with her. She wouldn’t do shoes, even pumps where you couldn’t see her toes. I insisted on a trial shoot with sandals and stuff. I kissed her feet, and told her they were very pretty, which they were. I got her the job, and both of us made money on it. So now she thinks her toes are all right.”

“Getting back to your client.”

“I’d use her in swimsuits. Let her and a couple of her friends run around on the beach and jump in the water, and see if I could get some good shots when they forgot I was shooting a thousand frames an hour. Real professional models can fuss around in a dress, and it looks like ‘hey, I look great in my new dress, don’t I? And they do. Marie Estofan can’t do that.”

“OK, Will. Getting back to your client’s situation.”

“Well, we trash the gun. The cops never give a gun back, not even when the court tells them to, so. She would not profit by being locked up with the animals, so maybe community service. We know she won’t show up on

time, so figure that in. Six months probation, she has to do 100 hours of community service?”

“Will that fix anything?”

“Some agency will get some free work.”

“We’re supposed to be so smart, to work out things.”

“Better us than some arrogant judge/politician who doesn’t know the players because he can’t read the program.”

“OK, just because you asked.”

“That is firm, yes.”

“Of course it is.”

“Now I have to say something. I feel like you gave my client this deal because you like me, and since I have taken care of her interests, I need to be ethical, even though legal ethics is more or less a joke.”

“You got the Am Jur in professional responsibility.”

“I’m surprised you know that.”

“I think a lot of you, Will.”

“And I, of you. Which only makes this harder. I think we should avoid having cases with each other, even though we can plead them fair and fast. Because I will never know if I am taking advantage of your feelings for me. And the same thing going the other way.”

“Who says I have feelings for you?”

“Well, then, it is only my side. My problem is harder, anyway, because the defense lawyer is the only person a defendant can talk to in confidence. It’s a special responsibility.”

She stood up. “I wish we were on the same side.”

“So do I. In one sense, we are, because we both want to make a better world. But we have these rules, this system to work in, and we have to be honest.”

“Yeah. Well, Doug the Thug would fire me if he found out I dated you, anyway.”

“It seems like I just hurt your feelings, and I didn’t want that.”

“I know that, and you didn’t. Don’t worry about dealing misdemeanors with me. We might have to think it out if it was a capital case. I’m doing the same for you I would do for anyone else who asked politely. If it’s more for you, it isn’t about you, because it isn’t you who would be sitting in jail anyway. It’s about you’re smart, you write great motions, and you know how to try a case. I can fill the jail with mutts any time I like, so why try a case against the 5% of defense lawyers who can walk the walk, when I don’t have space for the defendants who drew bad cards from the custody referee?”

“Are you mad?”

“No. Well, you acted like I couldn’t be objective. You sort of did aggravate me. I can be objective, Will.”

“I’m sorry I made it seem otherwise. I ...”

“Forget it. We’re still friends. Seeya.”

She went to the register to pay for her own coffee. Keeping it exactly correct.

* * *

Will went back to the office, and tried to call Marie, but he was told she had moved out of the place where she had been staying. He told the guy on the phone that he was her lawyer, had some good news for her, and that she needed to be in court next Thursday. He said he would tell her, but Will kind of doubted it.

The phone rang, and he picked up. It was Nathaniel Wrateurski, known as Nat the Rat. Nat was an intense activist lawyer, hated by the money and power elite. Nat sued the police, big corporations, and anyone who pulled a kitty’s tail.

“So Will, I won the Isabel case. The board of stupidizers made county counsel give up, and I got it down on paper, the State and the County have totally given up on condemning the house. You know it is just about the war on some drugs, of course. This crap about buildings being toxic because some asshole cooked meth in them, give me a breaking fuck.

So it's for sale for \$20,000 and the owner will carry paper. He wants to sell it to a friend, but he doesn't hang with the crowd who need a junky old house. So it's you, Will, you don't even need a down payment. How much is your rent?"

"\$400."

"Well, that would be fine. I'm on the way to your office right now. You have time to see it? Be a homeowner by the time the sun sets tonight? Sure."

"I can look at it, Nat."

"Good. I am almost at your door."

Will opened the door, and saw Nat coming. Nat shot in the door, still talking a mile a minute, putting his cell phone in his pocket. "So it's all messed up, but it would be yours. I don't think he would even charge interest. Just \$400 a month for 50 months. You can't beat that. It's not as nice as your apartment but you can change all that. I'm parked begging for a ticket. Let's go."

The house was in Westfield, on the wrong side of the tracks, where the streets had pot holes and cars that might have been pretty nice 20 years ago sat on blocks in the front yards. They stopped at a sorry looking place with a dead lawn, several dead trees, and junk all over the yard. The front door was not locked. The cops had broken it in arresting the meth cook.

The house smelled musty, and there was mildew on some of the walls. The wood stove was burned through on the bottom, and the floor under it scorched from a near fire. The plumbing fixtures were broken. There were water stains on the ceiling where roof leaks had dripped through.

The basic structure was all right, though. It had been built right some long time ago. They went out the back door, and faced a back yard of dead grass and weeds. One tree looked like it was still alive.

“You know plants, Will. That is a Black Tartarian cherry. The only thing here that is in good shape. Probably the pollinator for the whole town. It had cherries on it last summer. Tasted pretty good. Well, he wants to get it sold and get back to Florida. Let’s go back inside. It’s got two good bedrooms and one little bitty one, I guess for a kid. Roy will roof it for you for two thousand. He has a lot of comp shingles that are sort of yellow ochre. Good shingles, lousy color. He owes me six, so I can carry that. Pay me when you can.”

They looked around the house some more. “The water and electric are off, so you can’t test anything. The refrigerator was working back when. Probably still is. Comes with a cat, but I don’t see her anywhere.

Might have deserted. What do you say? Be a home owner. It’s worse than your apartment right now, but you can fix it, I know you can. Stella Reeves

is giving me a couple of toilets for it. Let's go to the seller and put you in a house, don't you think?"

Nat aggravated court reporters for the same reason they liked Will.

Nat talked like a radio disc jockey, much faster than they could type. Will spoke clearly and at a measured pace that kept them typing, but not too fast to get things and have to ask him to slow down, which court reporters usually do not like to do.

"Let's go see him."

Nat asked Will to drive so he could use the phone and do some paper work. He lined out the seller to be at his office, and returned some calls, and made some new ones. He used the rapid, clipped speech that aggravated a lot of people. He had once told Will that he had settled a case against a corporation because the CEO found him so aggravating. Will had seen Nat in deposition, being called a "Mother fucking Jew." Nat had come back instantly, calling the witness a "Daughter fucking Goy." The man had come halfway out of his chair, saying "You son of a ..." when he saw Will looking at him. Will had looked at him calmly, like the Marine infantry officer he had been. The man sat back down, and for the rest of the deposition, he kept track of where Will was. Knowing there was a lion in the grass.

They pulled into Nat's parking lot and went into the office. Nat returned calls for a while. He got up to let the seller in.

"Will Ames. A friend of Nat's"

"He has a lot of friends. I'm Julian Orange. Nat tells me you can send me \$400 a month for 50 months. We stood for principle on that place, and we won. You take good care of it."

"I will, Julian."

Nat's printer spat out a bunch of stuff. Will read over the standard form mortgage and trust deed, and signed where it was required. Julian signed also. Will wrote him a check for the first month's payment, and got his address on the back of one of the forms. Will had the water, garbage, and electric services turned on, and Nat sent his secretary to the courthouse to record the deed.

Nat drove him back to his office, where he wrote a letter of notice to his landlord, and ordered a debris box at the Westfield house. He returned some phone calls, and finished up a motion to suppress that was legally right but would be denied. He cleared a little of the inbox, and then got in his suit and went to court. His client was not there, so he went to the desk.

"Julie? Would you put Alan Stiles on the bottom of the stack, in case he does come?" She did so. "Another FTA, looks like. When are you appointed guys going to get them to come in?"

“Juice Newton said it all in ‘When I Get Over You.’”

“The truth will be untrue. One and one will not be two. You continue to amaze me, Will. You don’t like country.”

“I like Juice Newton.”

“All rise, for the honorable Alice Reynolds.”

Will stood with his file folder in hand.

“You may be seated.”

The judge smiled. “Let me guess, Mr. Ames. Your client is late.”

“Regrettably true, your honor. On the bottom of the stack.”

“Living on the edge, Mr. Ames?”

“As usual, your honor.”

Alice Reynolds was one of the really cool judges that make it almost fun to be in court. She was close to 70. A 20 year veteran of USMC JAG. In 15 years on the bench, she had never found anyone in contempt. She did not induce it. She despised liars, especially lying cops. She liked Will, possibly because of his honesty and integrity, and maybe because he reminded her of her son, who had died in the gulf war Will had served in.

“You are keen, my lord. But I expect you to refrain from quoting the next line.”

“Understood, your honor.”

“Good. I like it when I am understood.” She nodded to the clerk, who called the first case. Will prowled back to the pews and took a seat. The lawyer next to him, a stranger to him, said, “She’s fun but I bet you don’t mess with her.”

“You got that right.”

“I’m wanting to get bail for that little blonde girl in custody.”

“Don’t try to bullshit Judge Reynolds. If you client acted foolishly, say so. If it was with malice, leave it. Is she habitual?”

“First offense. DUII”

“Judge Reynolds is pretty tolerant of human weakness. Stick with the flight risk issue. She takes the Constitution *very* seriously. She will worry about what might happen to that little thing in with the animals. If the DA gets on the issues of the case, let him do it, and then tell Judge Reynolds it’s irrelevant. Be respectful.

The clerk called the little blonde girl’s case. Halfway into the DA’s spiel about her danger to the public and all that, Judge Reynolds cut him off. “Released O.R. I want her out of that jail in half an hour, Mr. Golf. It’s 1:42. I want a memo from your office before 5:00 tonight stating when she was released. If you have her car, give it back. If you don’t, take her home.”

The clerk called State v. Alan Stiles.

“Will Ames without Mr. Stiles, your honor.”

“Do you wish to be heard before the court issues a bench warrant?”

“No, your honor.”

“Mr. Ames, surely you could at least say your client is kind to animals.”

“He probably is, your honor, but I don’t think even proof of that would compel the court to refrain from issuing a bench warrant.”

“Such intelligence is nice to see in a ground pounder. Although your MOS is not exactly ground pounding.”

“The court is correct on that point, Ma’am.”

“Mr. Golf, if you move for a bench warrant, it will issue.”

“The State so moves.”

“A bench warrant will issue for Mr. Stiles. Mr. Ames, may I see you in chambers? Court is adjourned.”

They went in the back door. “Did I do something wrong?”

“No, Will. But I’m concerned that you might.”

She opened the other door. “Julie, could you make us some coffee? Will will want a lot of milk in his.”

She closed the door. “The toad upstairs is already asking about you and his minion.”

“We just met to discuss a plea.”

“The men can tomcat all they like, but she can’t.”

“I know that.”

The door opened, and Julie came in. “I put some coffee in your milk, Will.”

“Thank you, Julie.”

She went out and closed the door.

Will looked at the wall that in other judges chambers would be the bragging wall. Judge Reynolds had a little desk there, with a row of photo albums in it. You could look at pictures, but they were not in your face. A small old laptop sat on the desk. You could look at pictures on it, too. The ones taken since the digital photography era began.

“Will, you can’t even *want* to go out with her.”

“If he fires her for that, I’ll...”

“Don’t say it. Not even here. A .375 Holland and Holland magnum with a 300 grain Sierra match king. What a mess that would make. Or maybe you would just throw him out the window without opening it. I wouldn’t grieve for him, but I would for you.”

She opened the door to the back corridor. “Semper Fi, Mac.”

Will walked out. He went to his office to do some paperwork. When he got to the door, Marie was there.

“I called. We are on for Thursday. 100 hours of community service on a probation. No jail. If you promise me you will be good, I can get you on at St. Vincent de Paul.”

“I’ll do that.”

“Some very nice people doing some good work. You’ll like it.”

“That isn’t why I am here. I’ll go to court. But I want you to take me out tonight. She dug in her pocket. “I have six bucks. We could go dance somewhere.”

“You’re a client. I can’t date you. Some law professors made a law that says I can’t. The state bar could take my license away.”

“That isn’t fair.”

“It isn’t. Feminists think any time a man and a woman get together, she is being exploited. They want to be men, or, I don’t know what they want. But they are making the rules. You can’t have a calendar with naked ladies on it at work any more.”

“We can’t show off our tits?”

“Well, sort of.”

“Well, that law was dreamed up by bitches who don’t have nice tits. Have you seen mine?” She started unbuttoning her blouse.

“Don’t do that.”

She stopped. “You don’t want to see?”

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