

EXT. VICTORIAN MANSION - NIGHT

The WHOOSH of sprinklers as they shower a vast, landscaped front lawn. This place screams old money.

A WOMAN climbs through a second story window onto a slanted roof. She hangs off the side. Drops to the ground.

She whimpers as she scampers across the drenched grass. She slips and falls. Then pushes herself on her knees. Vomits.

The woman is LAUREN FAULKNER (30), a brilliant, self-righteous, idealist with no shortage of passion. She cries hysterically, gut wrenching sobs...

EXT. LOPATIN UNIVERSITY/LAW BUILDING - DAY

A Gothic looking university building encloses a bustling grass covered quad.

LAUREN (PRE-LAP)

So would there have been a difference in the Terry Shiavo holding had the Cognitive criterion been applied?

SUPERIMPOSE: "Three weeks ago"

INT. LOPATIN UNIVERSITY/LAW BUILDING/AUDITORIUM - DAY

Lauren paces in front of fifty law students. She teaches with the confidence of an ace attorney. The classroom is her courtroom. She calls on a student, CHET.

LAUREN

Mr. Meyers.

CHET

No, since this wouldn't be applied due to it's vague definition of personhood.

LAUREN

Says who? What defines personhood?

A man in a suit enters the auditorium. Meet NATHAN BECKER (50's). His mere presence commands attention.

Confident, charming, and motivated by power, he's a legal Ultimate Fighter. Lauren notices him.

CHET

Self-consciousness. The ability to think.  
To reason. To understand.

It looks as if she's lost focus, but-

LAUREN

What about someone with a mental  
impairment? Are they not people if they  
can't reason or understand?

CHET

Yes, they're people-

LAUREN

Why? Or perhaps you're confusing  
personhood with competency?

CHET

No, I just mean-

LAUREN

You just mean that according to your  
definition of personhood, anyone who  
can't reason or understand is a  
vegetable.

Chet sinks down in his chair. Nathan can't hide his  
amusement at Lauren's verbal swordsmanship.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

After the explosion at the Sago Mine in  
2006, thirteen miners went missing.

Lauren walks up and down the front row as if addressing a  
jury.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

When rescuers drilled holes to test the  
air quality, they found that carbon  
monoxide and methane levels were lethal.  
Microphones and cameras found nothing.  
Each miner had an oxygen supply of one  
hour, but they'd been down there for over  
40. So why not just give up? Evidence is  
pretty conclusive.

The auditorium is silent. Students hanging on her every  
word.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Because there is still a possibility that someone defied spectacular odds and survived. And someone did. He was two miles deep inside that mine.

Lauren walks back behind her desk. She scans the silent room.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Before you ever even think about dealing with a case involving a PVS patient, you better have a damned good idea what defines personhood.

Lauren looks up to see that Nathan is gone.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

See you next week.

INT. LOPATIN UNIVERSITY/LAUREN'S OFFICE - DAY

A cramped office. Lauren puts several files into her briefcase. She grabs her coat to leave. A knock at the door.

LAUREN

Come in.

Nathan saunters in. Looks around the office.

NATHAN

There must be one pissed off janitor now that his closet is gone.

LAUREN

Mr. Becker. what can I do for you?

Nathan sits. He admires a diploma from Harvard Law School. It reads, "SUMMA CUM LAUDE".

NATHAN

I was hoping you could help me understand how you could turn down the opportunity of a lifetime.

He takes a business card out of a holder on her desk. It reads, "LAUREN FAULKNER - Professor of Law and Bioethics."

LAUREN

I really appreciate your offer, but my life is in academia. I have no desire to be a lawyer...

NATHAN

That's what you said in law school. You were such an idealist.

LAUREN

Nothing's changed.

NATHAN

This is about being part of history, Lauren. Our nation's very first bioethics law practice group.

LAUREN

I understand that, but it doesn't change how I feel.

NATHAN

It's the legal final frontier, you know that more than anyone.

LAUREN

I do. Technology is advancing faster than our own ethical development. It's terrifying.

NATHAN

You don't belong here Lauren.

Lauren takes offense to this.

LAUREN

Excuse me?

NATHAN

You've published sixteen papers. Eight of which resulted in Amicus Briefs on highly controversial cases. Six of those decisions are credited to your briefs.

LAUREN

What's your point exactly?

NATHAN

My point is that you don't go to those lengths unless you want to make a difference.

LAUREN

I'm making a difference right here.

NATHAN

Oh please. To those students, this is just an elective that's right up there in importance with Art law.

Lauren stands.

LAUREN

Okay, Mr. Becker, I think we're done here.

Nathan heads for the door.

NATHAN

That's too bad considering we just took a case representing the FDA against Jenna Ferguson.

This gets Lauren's attention.

LAUREN

What? That's impossible. The FDA lost their appeal.

NATHAN

An Amicus brief by the American Oncological Association convinced the panel to remand the case back to district court. The DOJ referred the case to us.

LAUREN

Jesus Christ.

NATHAN

We lose this round it's over. The pharmaceutical industry makes tens of billions off flooding the market with untested drugs.

Lauren sits back down.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Anyway, best of luck with everything Lauren, sorry to have bothered you.

Nathan closes the door, then opens it.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Oh and by the way, I loved art law.

He closes the door.