

People Vs. Palmer (By: Tara Rangchi)

After a heated three-hour trial, the jury was unable to reach a decision in the murder case of People vs. Alex Palmer. The defendant was a friend of the famed producer, Jes Markson, who was found dead in his Hollywood mansion on June 6, 2007.

The defendant had a long history with Markson, and had always stood by him through the tough times. Markson let the defendant live with him, and gave her a steady income as a gardener. But as St. Francis Prosecutor Bliss pointed out, "The defendant always lived in the shadows of Markson. She had long been working on a script that would be her ticket to a better life. Markson, however, stole this chance away."

In May 2007, the defendant stumbled upon a script Markson was working on for a TV show, Cardiac Arrest. The defendant was surprised to find all her ideas in Markson's new hit show. She confronted Markson and moved out after an argument they had concerning the script.

The defendant allegedly shot Markson in the back after a cast party celebrating the success of the show. "Yes, I was angry", the defendant acknowledged, "but I would never kill my best friend."

The defendant was arrested by Detective Dana Brown the morning after the murder. She was brought in based on circumstantial evidence that was collected and tested by Dr. Lee Stark.

The defendant was also identified by party caterer, Carter Cravin, at Markson's house the night of the murder. But as Defense Attorney Lopez pointed out in the cross-examination, "It was dark, and you were far away- how could you be sure that you saw the defendant?"

In addition, the defendant's fingerprints were found on a broken glass shard. The defense was ready to refute this evidence with the professional testimony of Dr. J. B. Schrute. In a cool and confident manner he stated, "It is impossible to date a fingerprint- this fingerprint could be from the first day the defendant moved in."

Strengthening the prosecution's case was the residue of gun shot powder found on Palmer's clothing. Here, Dr. Schrute again countered that "the components in black powder can be found in everyday gardening supplies such as fertilizer." The prosecution witness, Dr. Stark, disagreed saying, "the great amount of black powder found on the defendants clothing is definitely not consistent with recreational gardening."

The defense again strengthened their case by throwing suspicion on other witnesses like neighbor Stevie Rico and actress London Desmond. Desmond was known for her rocky relationship with Markson and as testified by Cravin, "She was the last person seen with Markson the night of the murder." Defense Attorney Lopez emphasized, "There is equal evidence here that Desmond, Rico, or anyone else could have killed Markson."

In the closing arguments, Prosecution Attorney Savas made a dynamic point: "Markson pushed and pushed until the defendant finally pushed back. There is no doubt the defendant was provoked, and anger was her stimuli. The defendant had the gun, ammunition, motive, and opportunity."

Defense Attorney Lopez skillfully countered, "This is Hollywood- this kind of thing happens all the time. The defendant had no motive- she had always been there for Markson when the rest of Hollywood shunned him. There are too many could haves in this case, and to find this woman guilty, it must have been proven beyond a reasonable doubt."

With so many solid arguments on both sides, it is understandable that the court adjourned with a split jury. Is the defendant just a loyal friend in the wrong place at the wrong time, or did she finally step out of the shadows to take her revenge on Markson? One can only wait until the retrial to find out.