

A Clean Conscience

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2009

Fairfax High School

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INT. JAMIE'S CLASSROOM - DAY

JAMIE, a young man, 17 years old, and attractive, just sits in class, tagging on his desk. He displays a face that expresses his irritation towards his loud, unruly class. His friends, KEVIN, CHRIS, REGGIE, and TONI, all around Jamie's age, surround him. They constantly check their phones and talk with one another when their inboxes are empty.

The teacher, Mr. HAMMS, balding and round-shouldered, tries to catch the attention of his class.

MR. HAMMS

Class, please settle down. I still have to assign the homework.

The students pay no attention to the teacher and continue to talk. The teacher gets a bit angry.

MR. HAMMS

Are there any students here who actually care about graduating and going to college?!

The students completely ignore their teacher. He loses faith in his class and goes to his desk. Meanwhile, the eldest of Jamie's group, TONI, dismisses himself and his friends from class.

MR. HAMMS

Get back here! The bell has not rang yet!

Jamie and his friends walk out the class.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY

The hallway is quiet a few students wander with office summons and bathroom passes.

CHRIS

Why'd we leave class, bro?

TONI

I'm starving' man. I gotta eat.

JAMIE

C'mon guys, I know a way outta here. The teachers and staff never close this gate.

Jamie leads the group to a gate where they exit the school.

EXT. A STREET CROSSING - DAY

The street is fairly empty. Kevin, Chris, Toni, and Reggie walk into the street with no regard for the traffic signals. Jamie walks behind them.

CHRIS
'ey man, can I borrow a dollar?

KEVIN
Hells NO! I only have ONE dollar.

Jamie looks up from his phone at the two.

JAMIE
It's all right, I'll pay for you,
Chris.

Jamie looks back to his phone, stopping so he can answer his phone.

INT. CAR - DAY

RICHARD, 40, who looks to be a businessman, is driving with his six year old daughter, KAITLYN, seated in a car seat in the back.

RICHARD
So, sweetie, what kind of cake do you
want?

KAITLYN
A goo one! But it gotta be sweet!

RICHARD
(laughs)
Okay. Which character do you want on
your cake?

KAITLYN
Powerpuff girls!

Suddenly, Richard sees a boy in the street. His car screeches as he steps down on the breaks.

EXT. STREET CROSSING - DAY

The car nudges Jaime's leg as it stops. Seeking an opportunity to make money, Jamie acts fast.

JAMIE
Oh my God! You-you broke my leg!!

Richard exits his car.

RICHARD

Oh God! Are you okay, son?

JAMIE

I just got hit, you think I'm okay???? Augh! What'll I do?

RICHARD

Hold on, I'll call an ambulance.

The group doesn't catch on to Jaime's little plot. They think their friend is really hurt. They rush to assist Jamie by getting loud with Richard.

TONI

What the hell? You hit him!

RICHARD

I know, but it was an accident. I'm calling someone right now.

REGGIE

So what? You cant be let off easy and blame this shit on us?

INT. CAR

Kaitlyn watches in fear as her father is approached by the boys.

EXT. STREET CROSSING

The boys now have Richard surrounded.

RICHARD

I'm just going to call an ambulance.
The police will not be involved.

TONI

Like hell they won't!

Toni smacks the phone from his hand. Richard reaches down to pick it up. In the background, Jamie gets bored of the man and hops to his feet.

CHRIS

That's a nice phone. Can I have dat?

Without getting an answer, Chris takes the man's phone.

RICHARD

I'd like that back, please.

CHRIS

Have what back? I ain't got nothing'

o' yours.

Jamie springs forward and grapples Chris.

JAMIE

Hey, man, just give him back his phone.

Jamie looks to the rest of his friends.

JAMIE

Let's just go eat.

The crowd starts to walk way. Then, Chris turns and forcefully throws the man at his own car. He crashes headfirst into the window and falls over. He lies there motionless in a pool of blood.

GROUP OF BOYS

Hahaha!!! Punk!!

A tiny voice calls out and it reaches Jamie's attention.

JAMIE'S P.O.V.

Little Kaitlyn in the back seat has tears in her eyes.

KAITLYN

Dad! Get up! We gotta go!

RESUME JAMIE

Pained by what he sees. He turns from the girl and looks down at her father's crumpled body.

JAMIE

He ain't dead, is he?

TONI

Nah, he'll be alright.

Jamie kneels to the man and examines him. He places two fingers on the man's neck.

He turns to his group in horror.

JAMIE

He is dead.

KEVIN

Oh man! We gotta get outta here!

Kevin grabs Jamie and drags him away.

REGGIE

Huh-uh. We ain't getting' blamed for
this one!

The boys run as fast as they can. Jamie suddenly freezes. He looks back at the scene of the crime, and at the girl in the backseat. His heart breaks for the girl.

KEVIN

Jamie, c'mon, man. Let's go!

But instead of helping her, he runs away with his friends.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - THE NEXT DAY

Police officers enter the classroom. No one speaks. An officer, big and buff, ROY, searches the faces in the crowd.

Jamie tries to keep his cool, but the sweat beads on his forehead betray his fear.

Officer Roy finally makes his move. He points a commanding finger at Jamie, Kevin, Chris, Reggie, and Toni, beckoning them to come forward. He examines their I.D.'s.

ROY

You five, come with me.

The class watches in silence as the boys are taken away.

TONI

(whispers)

Nobody better say shit!

KEVIN

(whispers)

We ain't snitches!

CHRIS

(whispers)

Yeah! Snitches get stitches!!

The boys all snicker except for Jamie, who gives a very weak smile.

ROY

you boys know you're in trouble,
right?

TONI

We didn't do nothing' so we ain't
scared!

Officer Roy escorts the boys into the Dean's office where a

very strict looking detective, SLADE, waits for them.

INT. DEAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Flanked by two stone-faced detectives, Slade sits on a desk, eyeballing the boys who are slumped in chairs before him.

SLADE

Do I need to go over this incident with you, boys?

TONI

What incident? We're all innocent.

SLADE

We've received an anonymous call with your descriptions as our suspects.

TONI

Then somebody is way off and a racist!

KEVIN

Damn straight!

The detective's face doesn't change.

SLADE

So, would any of you like to speak up?

The boys remain adamant. Roy directs his vision at a nervous, sweat-stained Jamie, then whispers to a detective. The detective looks at Jamie and nods.

SLADE

(to Jamie)

Come here, son.

JAMIE

What for? Why me?

SLADE

Let's go. Now.

Jamie follows Roy and one of the detectives into a private room. Kevin whisperes nervously in Toni's ear. Toni gives him a "hush up/be cool" gesture.

INT. PRIVATE ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Jamie plays with his fingers, never stopping to make eye contact with either detective.

SLADE

I wanna know what you know.

Jamie stays silent, refusing to look up. He wipes a drop of sweat from his eyes.

SLADE

C'mon son, you wanna go to prison
with your friends?

(harshly)

Goddamnit, you look at me when I talk
to you!

Jamie looks up, breathing hard now. Making eye contact with Slade, his mind flooded with memories:

FLASHCUTS --

Richard slamming headfirst into the car.

Kaitlyn screaming for her dad.

Richard's dead body lying in the street.

Kaitlyn all alone in the car.

SLADE

(softer now)

Do yourself a favor, kid. Tell us
everything and I promise you'll walk
and have a clean conscience to boot.
Don't ya want that, Jamie?

After a long silence, Jamie finally breaks.

JAMIE

The man's kid, is she alright?

SLADE

About as well as she can be without a
daddy.

Jamie is clearly stung by his words.

SLADE

Okay, Jamie, let's start from the
beginning...

CUT TO:

INT. DEAN'S OFFICE - DAY

The boys are nervously staring at the door to the private room. Biting their nails, squirming in their seats, fearing the worst. The door suddenly opens and Jamie enters with the

detectives. He's looking real guilty, refusing to make eye contact with his friends. Not a good sign.

SLADE
(to a uniform cop)
Have these four arrested.

TONI
What?!

CHRIS
Oh man, what did I tell you?

Kevin and the others eyeball Jamie.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

The boys are thrown out the Dean's office, making lots of noise as Roy tries to keep them in line.

They look back at Jamie who watches them from the doorway.

TONI
Jamie! You know you're wrong!!

KEVIN
Back-stabber!

CHRIS
You a bitch!

Jamie sadly watches as his friends are taken away.

JAMIE
(mouths)
I'm sorry.

TONI
Don't let me catch your ass when I
get out!

Students, peeking from their classrooms, turn to gape at Jamie. He looks away, feeling miserable.

INT. JAMIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

CLOSE ON A TV SCREEN

A videotaped news report in progress. We see Toni, Chris, Reggie and Kevin, all in suits and handcuffs, being led from a police car up the court steps.

NEWS REPORTER (V.O.)

And so the first day of trial begins for the four teenagers accused of beating widowed banker Richard Crane to death in front of his six-year old daughter...

WIDEN to see we're in a modestly furnished living room. Jamie's mom BREANNA, thin, pretty, about 36, displays an angry face as she sits on the couch watching the report.

Suddenly, the sound of the TV gets MUTED. Breanna turns to Jamie, remote in hand, slumped in a nearby easy chair.

BREANNA

(cutting)

Sure, you don't need to listen. You know it all by heart.

Jamie blinks hard. The TV screen fills with a still photos of Kaitlyn with her dad -- hugging, laughing, contented.

BREANNA

You know your ass should be in jail. You're just as guilty as them "friends" of yours.

Jamie sinks deep into the chair.

JAMIE

You're still on about that?

BREANNA

Hell yeah I am! I think that d.a. was way too light on you.

Jamie kills the last of a bottle of water. Anything to avoid dealing with his mom.

BREANNA

You think you're okay just because you put your little "friends" in jail? Like you're all paid up for what you did.

JAMIE

What do you mean 'what I did?' I didn't do a damn thing.

Jamie's eyes dart to the TV and a smiling Kaitlin blowing out birthday candles.

BREANNA

You hang out with those damn kids in
the first place!

Jamie looks at Breanna, as if he wants to ask "are you
stupid?"

BREANNA

Don't you look at me that way! What
the hell is wrong with you? You
really don't feel guilty, do you?

Jamie turns to see Kaitlyn blowing a kiss at the camera. He
kills the power on the TV.

JAMIE

Why should I?

Jamie hops to his feet and angrily paces to and fro. He stops
and turns to his mom.

JAMIE

What the hell could I have done? How
could I have saved that man?! How in
the hell was I 'posed to know that
Chris was gonna hit him?!

BREANNA

I don't want hear anymore.

Breanna walks off to the kitchen. Jamie storms after her.

JAMIE

That guy died the second he hit the
car. Now tell me, how the hell was I
supposed to save him?!

BREANNA

I said that's enough!

JAMIE

(in her face)

Hey, I got nothin' to be guilty
about. My conscience is clean.

Breanna wheels to Jamie and slaps his face with all her
might. Jamie just stands there in shock and pain.

CUT TO:

INT. BREANNA'S CAR - NIGHT

All is quiet as Breanna drives and Jamie seethes beside her.
Finally, Breanna pulls to a screeching halt. Jamie turns to

see --

JAMIE'S P.O.V. - A STERILE BUILDING

A sign over the door says "FOSTER CENTER."

RESUME JAMIE

He looks at his mother, who stares solemnly straight ahead. Without turning, she throws the door open for Jamie. He gets out, and faces her defiantly.

JAMIE

If this is your idea of punishment,
forget it. I'll be just fine. 'Least
I won't have you blaming me all the
time for something I didn't do.

He turns and walks into the building. Breanna watches sadly as he goes.

CUT TO:

INT. FOSTER CENTER - OFFICE - DAY

Jamie is slumped on a bench, hands buried deep in his pockets, as he waits to be processed. He stares sullenly at the wall, paying no attention to the workers milling about.

Suddenly the SOUND of footsteps from the stairwell. A pair of social workers enter the office. In between them is a little girl, her back turned to Jamie. Something about her catches his eye, something familiar...

The social workers approach the clerk at the front desk.

CLERK

(to the girl)

Hello, sweetheart. Welcome to your
new home.

The little girl turns away sadly, locking eyes with Jamie. It's Kaitlin. Jamie just stares in stunned disbelief at his new housemate.

FADE OUT.

THE END