

McBRIDE

"DOGGED"

SYNOPSIS

McBride (John Larroquette) meets his newest client, Laurie Carter (Samantha Smith), in prison. Irascible Judge Jeffries (Charles Robinson), no fan of McBride's courtroom theatrics, has sentenced him for contempt. Laurie is being held because she was discovered kneeling beside the corpse of her ex-lover, Frank Sinclair (Richard Lineback), with a gun in her hand, at a dog show. Frank, a prominent veterinarian was at the show with his wife Sarah (Joanna Going). Tension was in the air. Sarah was livid that Laurie's golden retriever had won Best in Show over her dog Dexter. Frank was arguing with his business partner Barry Hastings (Jon Lindstrom) about the sale of their practice. A mystery man (James Wilder) was watching from the corner. As Laurie tells the story, she had just gone out to the country club parking lot when Frank sent her an urgent text message asking her to meet him at the loading dock. When she got there he was dead. She bent over to give him CPR and, in her panic, she picked up the gun.

When Laurie's lawyer is hospitalized, McBride takes over her case. Detective Roberta Hansen (Marta DuBois) tells him that Laurie had sent Frank a text message asking him to meet her at the loading dock—the message, time sent and cell number, are all recorded on Frank's cell. Laurie then changed into a raincoat and wig, killed Frank, ditched the disguise in a dumpster, returned to the scene of the crime, sent herself a text message from Frank's cell and was discovered by a waitress. But that scenario doesn't make sense to McBride. Why would she return to the scene of the crime? Why kill him in a public place? Roberta points out that one of Laurie's hairs was found in the wig and she and Frank had been overheard arguing a few days earlier.

Laurie insists that she had not sent a text message to Frank. And the argument was no big thing. Every few months since she had ended the affair, Frank contacted her to start things back up. She was not interested. That's what the argument was about. A survey of the scene of the crime with his young associate, Phil Newberry (Matt Lutz), convinces McBride that someone is framing his client.

When McBride and Phil pay a visit to Frank's widow, they discover that she has been in a wheelchair since a car accident about the same time as she found out about her husband's affair. She tells them she had broken bones before, even had two pins in her leg from a childhood accident but this time she would never walk again. At least it seemed as if her husband had come back to her until a few weeks ago when Laurie Carter came sniffing around again

(more)

HALLMARK CHANNEL/ MCBRIDE, "Dogged" Synopsis- Page 2

McBride asks Phil to find out the name of Sarah's doctor. Phil finds a prescription pill bottle with the doctor's name in Sarah's trash. Dr. Gordon (Tom Hallick) reluctantly shows McBride Sarah's x-ray, pointing out the severe fractures to her hip bone but, citing patient confidentiality, he refuses to allow McBride to take them. When Dr. Gordon is called from the room, McBride uses his new cell phone to snap pictures of the x-ray.

McBride and Phil meet at Frank Sinclair's veterinary office to talk to his business partner. Hastings tells him that he went into partnership with Frank about five years earlier when Frank first arrived in town. Recently Frank seemed perturbed about some phone calls and he was particularly upset over a letter that had been left for him outside the office door. Following Hastings' suggestion, McBride next pays a visit to dog trainer Judy Maxwell (Michele Greene), one of Sarah's closest friends. Judy tells McBride that everyone on the dog circuit knew about Frank's affair but Judy felt Sarah had stayed with her husband because it was a good marriage, at least by LA standards. Judy's dog, Rudy, a dead-ringer for his brother, Sarah's dog Dexter, comes over and Judy shows him Rudy's favorite trick, playing dead.

McBride wonders if the true objective of the crime was to frame Laurie. She tells him that her only enemy is an old boyfriend, Michael Whyte, who was so jealous and aggressive that she had to get a restraining order against him. Whyte turns out to be the mystery man from the dog show. He angrily tells McBride that he hasn't seen Laurie for years. Meanwhile Phil reports back that a second opinion on Sarah's x-rays confirms that she will never walk again. McBride returns to Sinclair's house ostensibly to establish a timeline with Sarah. He has Phil call her pretending to be a bank officer with a question about her account. When she leaves the room to take the call, McBride slips into Frank's study hoping to find the letter that had upset him. While trying to distract Dexter, he discovers a gym locker key hidden in the dog's chew toy. At Frank's gym Phil finds a yellowed newspaper headline "CRASH VICTIM DRUNK SAYS ME." From the baseball score on the other side they are able to pinpoint the date.

Roberta sends them the security camera tapes that show the woman in a raincoat and red wig. But why would the murderer want to be deliberately caught on camera when she could have slipped away unnoticed? It must be meant to mislead them somehow. Maybe it wasn't a woman. At that moment Hastings' receptionist (Brook Kerr) enters the office. She tells them that Frank refused to sell the practice. Now Hastings has sold and she is out a job. McBride discovers that Barry needed the sale because he was deeply in debt. But why was Frank so set against it?

Roberta comes to McBride's office after receiving a text message from him that he did not send. Then he receives a text message from her that she did not send. Phil has sent both messages from their carriers' websites using their name and cell phone number. It is a simple trick anyone could do with the right information

(more)

HALLMARK CHANNEL/ MCBRIDE, "Dogged" Synopsis- Page 3

They show her the newspaper clipping. After she enlarges it with a copier, they make out the tops of the letters below the headline. They puzzle out the name of a Medical Examiner who they find out was working in Sacramento on the date of the clipping. McBride pays another visit to Whyte, whom he has seen on the country club security tapes, as Phil reads through the 1998 Internet archives of the Sacramento newspaper. He finds an article about a tragedy at a stable involving a vet's misdiagnosis. And there is a picture of Frank, except identified here as Frank Reynolds. Excitedly he calls McBride who is too busy trying to corner Whyte to talk. Whyte tells McBride he went to the dog show to talk to Laurie but left when he wasn't able to get close to her.

Phil discovers that the clipping referred to the death of Carla Fabrizzi, who had become a heavy drinker after she and her husband lost their stables due to Frank's misdiagnosis of an equine disease. After the incident Frank moved to Los Angeles and changed his name. Carla had a sister - - Judy Maxwell. Judy admits to sending Frank the clipping. She held him responsible for her sister's death and wanted to see him squirm. She wasn't blackmailing him and she didn't kill him. Or so she says.

Now they have three possible suspects—Judy, Michael and Barry. But the shot of the redhead in the security video still puzzles McBride until a sudden revelation: she wanted them to see her walking. McBride remembers that Sarah had pins in her legs from her childhood accident. But there were no pins visible in the x-rays. Those were not Sarah's x-rays. He confronts Dr. Gordon threatening to bring him up on medical malfeasance unless he testifies to the truth.

McBride discovers that he will be appearing again before Judge Jeffries. The DA (Jeff Harlin) presents his case. McBride lays the seeds of doubt but he will need Dr. Gordon's testimony to win. When Gordon disappears, Jeffries refuses to grant a continuance. Desperately, McBride calls Sarah to the stand and lays out his theory of the murder ignoring the objections of the DA. Jeffries charges him with contempt again and has him led out of the court in handcuffs. Phil pays the fine and McBride signs the apology. He has just bought himself some time but how can he use it to prove Sarah's guilt?

He has Roberta meet him in a back alley beside Sarah's house where he has set up a video camera in a truck. Roberta is horrified to see Dexter laying dead in Sarah's yard. Sarah wheels herself out to the yard calling to her dog. When she sees his lifeless body, she wheels herself to the step beside the pool as McBride's camera tapes the scene. The next day in court, he is on the verge of another contempt citation when he shows the courtroom the sight of the paralyzed Sarah rising from her chair and running to the dog's side, so relieved to find him alive and well she doesn't realize it is actually Judy's dog Rollo. Sarah has been caught and Laurie is a free woman.