

Case Brief

People v. Clark

People v. Clark is the trial of Tobie Clark who works as in-house counsel for Sunshine Medical Components, Inc. (“SMC”), a billion-dollar medical technology company. Clark is charged with the homicide of SMC’s chief executive officer Kieran Sunshine. The prosecution argues that Clark should be convicted of first-degree murder.

On the morning of July 17, 2023, the body of Kieran Sunshine was found by Gerri Moayed in Kieran’s 10th floor suite of the Bells Hotel in the city of San Luis, California. Moayed was Kieran’s personal holistic wellness coach and an employee of SMC. Kieran’s body was lying on the floor, dead from an apparent stabbing. Detective Nova Perren collected evidence, including a small saber used to open champagne bottles, a partial bloody shoeprint, and two sets of fingerprints on the saber’s handle. Det. Perren also recovered silk fibers from Kieran’s clothing.

The prosecution alleges that Tobie Clark murdered Kieran because Kieran was backing out of Clark’s plot to commit fraud against SMC’s board of directors regarding SMC’s latest product, a prosthetic device called the ForeverFlex5000. Prosecution witnesses include Moayed who occupied the room next to Kieran and overheard two arguments between Clark and Kieran, one of which late at night on July 16, 2023. Moayed also learned of Clark’s fraud plot and Kieran’s change of heart and overheard two arguments between Clark and Kieran on July 16. Emari Sunshine, Kieran’s sibling and an executive at SMC, reported to have seen Tobie Clark heading toward Kieran’s suite around the time of the murder. Clark had purchased the saber and the expensive champagne to announce SMC was going public, and Clark had formed the intent to murder Kieran when learning of Kieran’s change of heart on the morning of July 16.

The defense argues that Tobie Clark did not have a motive to kill Kieran and furthermore never had the intent to murder nor was inside Kieran’s suite after the morning of July 16. It was Kieran, not Clark, who concocted the plot to commit fraud, and Clark had no idea about it until July 16 when Clark refused to participate. A third Sunshine sibling, Arian, was also an executive at SMC and knew that it was Emari more than anyone who stood to gain financially from Kieran’s death, and that Emari had always felt animus toward Kieran. Nic Yang, Clark’s law school friend, had always known Clark to have a reputation for integrity and empathy.

The testimonies of the state medical examiner and the defense forensic expert reveal different opinions about the evidence of the partial shoeprint, the fibers, and the fingerprints. The defense expert also testifies, subject to the outcome of the pretrial motion, about the reliability of evidence of Clark’s location on the night of the murder.

The pretrial hearing centers on a defense motion to quash Det. Perren’s geofence warrant that garnered evidence that appeared to show Tobie Clark in the hallway near Kieran’s suite. Geofences are virtual boundaries around geographic areas created by signals from cellphones and mobile devices within the area. The defense argues that the warrant was overbroad and therefore not based on probable cause as required by the Fourth Amendment protection against unreasonable search and seizure. The prosecution argues that the warrant was not overbroad and was sufficiently particularized, and Det. Perren executed the warrant in good faith.