

Case Brief *People v. Franks*

People v. Franks is the trial of Jordan Franks, a young actor who finished a run of performances of the Shakespeare-adaptation *Macbeth at Sea* on the cruise ship *Heart of the Ocean*. Franks is charged with robbery and battery of Franks' fellow actor, Billie Scher.

Just after midnight on June 10, 2022, Scher returned to Scher's cabin that Scher shared with Franks. An altercation ensued between Scher and Franks. Franks ran out of the room. Scher called 911 and reported that Franks had been violently shoved and that Franks stole Scher's signet ring, a ring that Scher claimed was once owned by William Shakespeare. Scher also explained that Franks broke Scher's arm during the robbery.

The prosecution alleges that Franks had the motive to rob Scher based on extreme envy. Cleo Shafer, an elderly theater enthusiast, was on the cruise and was a fan of *Macbeth at Sea*. Shafer gave the signet ring to Scher out of admiration for Scher's talents and because of the friendship between their families. On June 9, 2022, Scher learned that Scher had been cast in the lead role in a new Broadway production, *Jefferson: The Musical*. At the same time, Franks learned that Franks had been cast as Scher's understudy. In anger, the prosecution alleges, Franks violently shoved Scher in their cabin in order to steal the ring, which resulted in Scher's broken arm. After Scher reported the altercation, Detective Dylan Mavis discovered the ring box in the Midnight Café and the signet ring in Franks' costume pocket. Jewelry appraiser Ari Kouch will also testify to evidence that the signet ring did, in fact, belong to Shakespeare and has a value of \$170,000.

The defense argues that Jordan Franks neither removed Scher's ring from the shared cabin nor used any intentional force against Scher. Franks will assert that Franks merely took Franks' cell phone from the cabin which bears a resemblance to the signet ring's box. Franks will further assert that Franks did not shove Scher, but that Scher angrily stepped in front of Franks and caused an inevitable collision, resulting in Scher's broken arm. Another actor in the production, Karter Lucky, will testify that Lucky observed the altercation and will support Franks' claims. Jewelry expert Jade Marquez will testify that there is evidence to show that the ring is not certain to have belonged to Shakespeare and may even be a counterfeit ring worth less than \$950. Head of ship's security Ezra Weintraub will testify that other members of the *Macbeth at Sea* cast in addition to Jordan Franks — and including Karter Lucky — entered the dressing room where the ring was ultimately found.

The pretrial argument centers on the Fourth Amendment protection against unreasonable search and seizure. The question is whether Detective Mavis needed a warrant to search a safe in Franks' closet where a document was found with information about the signet ring and the number of an antique jewelry dealer. The defense will move to exclude the evidence, arguing that Detective Mavis unreasonably coerced Franks' consent.