

Alan Shore: 'Boston Legal' The Mighty Rogues, 2008

In the episode "Mighty Rogues" in Season 4 the series [Boston Legal](#), Alan Shore (the actor James Spader) defends a client in a courtroom debate on euthanasia for an Alzheimer's patient.

Transcripts for the series are available at on the [Boston-Legal.org](#) website

Alan Shore:

This is not a new debate, but the fact that we still continue to have the debate in this country baffles me. People are helped to die every single day in virtually every hospital. In the hospices, at home, all under the wink-wink of pain management. And yet every time someone suggests bringing this practice out of the closet opponents leap up screaming, "There's potential for abuse!" "We'll end up killing people who wanna live!" Come on! If there's potential for abuse then by all means let's regulate it. Have an administrative hearing, or go to court like we're doing now. But there's much more potential for abuse when we do it secretly!

AAG Jeremy Hollis:

No, no, no. There's a good reason for the secrecy. The last thing we want to do is to cultivate a culture of suicide. Almost twenty percent of today's teenagers contemplate taking their own lives at one time or another. Recent five-year analysis showed a twenty percent rise in suicides among middle-aged people. It's becoming epidemic! Not the time to lift the stigma.

Alan Shore: We would not be sending the message that...

AAG Jeremy Hollis: Oh yes we would, Mr. Shore. You make it

permissible, that's one step closer to making it acceptable. And the real danger is that elderly parents start thinking maybe it's their duty to spare their children so they won't drain their finances.

Alan Shore:

This would not be that case.

AAG Jeremy Hollis: Could be tomorrow's case.

Alan Shore: Which is why we take it on a case by case basis. Addressing all the concerns you raised, but why must we have an absolute blanket ban when it causes such immeasurable suffering? For so many!

Judge Victoria Peyton:

Because it's not potential for abuse that's really in play, Counsel. Let's all admit that. It's politics. And the legislator gets to make the laws. Not the Judges.

Alan Shore: But it's for the Judges to safeguard the constitution, included therein is our fundamental right to privacy. Can there be anything more private, more personal than the destiny of one's own body? One's life. It's also for the Judges to step in and be humane when a gutless, politically expedient Congress refuses to do so. My God, we put dogs to sleep! To spare their needless suffering. Why don't we extend the same compassion to human beings? This man is terminal. He will die. He fears people. All people. He can't control his bowels. He is in utter lack of cognizance and an inability to have any meaningful exchange or even contact. Would you choose to live like that? Would anybody?

AAG Jeremy Hollis: To allow assisted suicide is to say that life itself has no intrinsic value. No sanctity.

Alan Shore: Oh baloney! I'm saying Walter Schmidt's life in its current state has no intrinsic value. He lies in his bed with no apparent capacity to discern or think. His days have

devolved into a horrible cycle of soiling his bed sheets and screaming incoherently at the very touch of the nurse who cleans him. His life is a misery. I'm sorry, there is no sanctity in that. I don't care what...

I'm sorry.

My best friend has Alzheimer's. In the very early stages, it hasn't... He is a grand lover of life, and will be for some time. I believe even when his mind starts to really go he'll still fish, he'll laugh, and love. And as it progresses he'll still wanna live because there'll be value for him in a friendship, in a cigar. The truth is, I don't think he'll ever come to me and say, "This is the day I want to die." But the day is coming. And he won't know it. This is perhaps the most insidious thing about Alzheimer's. But you see, he trusts me to know when that day has arrived. He trusts me to safeguard his dignity, his legacy and self-respect. He trusts me to prevent his end from becoming a mindless piece of mush. And I will. It will be an unbearably painful thing for me but I will do it because I love him. I will end his suffering. Because it's the only decent, humane, and loving thing a person can do. Ms. Schmidt is here today because she loves her father. She's asking you to show mercy that the law refuses to.

AAG Jeremy Hollis: She is asking you to play God.

Alan Shore: Your Honor, whatever one's believe in God, I know we can all agree, some lives are taken far to early, and others far too late.