



HIGHLANDS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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Woman charged with taking cash to drop charges

AVON PARK -- Jessica Shae Perdue was arrested Monday, April 3, after she accepted money in exchange for a promise to drop charges against her brother.

The case dates back to March 29, when the 35-year-old Perdue said Jason Hill threatened Perdue with a machete while he grabbed her throat. Perdue and Hill, who are brother and sister, were sharing the same residence at the time. Hill was charged with aggravated assault and domestic battery and has been in the jail since then.

On Tuesday, the Highlands County Sheriff's Office received information that Perdue had contacted her mother and told her she needed to pay Perdue if she wanted Perdue to waive charges in that case. Perdue told her mother to send \$100 on Tuesday to Hendrick's Grocery in Avon Park via Western Union and then pay another \$500 the following day at an attorney's office. The money was coming from 77-year-old Perdue's grandmother.



What Perdue didn't know, however, was that Det. Steven Ritenour was aware of the phone calls and was watching when Perdue entered the store, completed the Western Union paperwork and collected the \$100. Perdue then handed the money to a man who was with her and the two attempted to buy drinks with the cash. That was when Ritenour stepped in and arrested Perdue.

Perdue had the Western Union Money Transfer Control Number written on the back of a letter from the Sheriff's Office telling her she owed \$140 in relation to a stay in the county jail. She told Ritenour she was out on bond. Perdue was arrested on Oct. 23, 2016 and charged with possession of a controlled substance and possession of drug equipment. She was released Nov. 16 after posting a \$1,500 bond.

She is now in jail -- with no bond -- on charges of grand theft, felony fraud, using a two-way device to facilitate a felony and compounding crime, which is the charge for attempting to accept compensation in order to not testify.

Note: All arrests do not lead to convictions. Everyone is presumed innocent until proven guilty in court.

