

FOR THE RECORD

Pilot script

By Aisha Casey

ACT ONE

INT. HOME GARAGE - EVENING

A CLICK of a ticking clock brings us in from BLACK, another CLICK reveals the dim lit interior of what we make out to be a home garage, wrapped in silence and stillness. CLICK again takes us to the garage door window, it's dark outside. CLICK, takes us to the driver's seat window of the car parked in the garage. CLICK, takes us down to the driver's side front tire. CLICK takes us into the --

INT. PARKED CAR - EVENING

CLICK, dashboard, CLICK, steering wheel, CLICK, the rise and lower of a man's stomach, he is breathing slowly as the clicks have stopped and we settle on his slow breaths. Up the man's chest onto HIS FINGERS clenching at his neck, a white ROPE around his neck we are now witnessing this MAN being strangled from behind, he is trying to fight it, trying to gasp for breaths, but his fight is not strong enough. As he turns red and his right hand slips off the rope, he has given up and we

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM 3E - DAY

At the Ann Arundel County Courthouse in Pasedena, MD, LINDA, Judge Fuller's clerk, very used to her job, has her face in a grimace as she's standing at her corner of the BENCH looking at the docket for the day. GLEN, the bailiff, sticks his head out from the bench entrance to see if anyone has entered the room besides the two of them.

GLEN

Hey there, you ready?

LINDA

Whatever, Glen!

GLEN

Ah, there she is! Good morning my sunny day.

Linda mouths back his words mocking, as, DAKOTA HOWARD, 30s, the official stenographer, hastily enters the courtroom dragging her rolling bag behind her through the gallery entrance. She's sharply dressed and today she's got the serious hair bun going on. She makes her way to the reporter's table at the front of the bench.

DAKOTA  
Hey you two.

LINDA  
Good morning dear.

GLEN  
(At Linda)  
Wow!

DAKOTA  
What'a we got today? I just grabbed  
my sheet and ran in, I was running  
late.

Linda picks up her clipboard and gives it a thumb-through.

DAKOTA  
I noticed all the boys outside, am  
I going to have to listen through  
God damn camera clicks all day.

LINDA  
You guessed it Madame Court  
Reporter.

DAKOTA  
God!

LINDA  
It's that case against the Gov's  
husband, Ted.

DAKOTA  
What case?

LINDA  
Please point me to the rock you  
live under?

DAKOTA  
Linda, you know I don't watch the  
news. I have enough drama in my  
life right here.

LINDA  
Well, the good Governor's husband  
is a perp.

DAKOTA  
What else is new!

LINDA

Asshole's six-year old had a birthday party and he got a few of the girls in the swimming pool.

DAKOTA

Okay, don't say any more, I'll be hearing it all soon enough.

LINDA

Yea, this is only the prelim. But up first we have lots of pleas this morning.

DAKOTA

Great. Land of the free, home of the PLEA.

LINDA

Okay sunshine, get it together.

GLEN

Hmmph, the pot calling the kettle!

Linda waives her fist Glen's way.

DAKOTA

What's the head count for this afternoon? Does she have four defense attorneys for poor hubby?

LINDA

Three.

DAKOTA

And the County?

LINDA

The regular. It's Dennis from the County, I don't see anyone else listed on her team, but it's bound to be a full table.

DAKOTA

And FULL HOUSE?

LINDA

All right, don't let him hear you keep calling him that.

DAKOTA

Can he hear?

LINDA  
(With a grin)  
Stop.

INT. COURTROOM 3E - DAY - CONT'D

The courtroom is packed. Gavel bangs three times. JUDGE FULLER, well over retirement age, muffles out a bark.

JUDGE FULLER  
All right. Let's get on with it.  
Dakota did you swear in the  
witness?

DAKOTA  
Off the record, there are no  
witness yet, Judge Fuller. We're  
hearing pleas.

JUDGE FULLER  
(Covering his mic and  
laughing it off)  
I know. Just a little light before  
the clouds roll on in. I see Dennis  
pacing in the lobby.

DAKOTA  
Back on the record.

Dakota goes back into reporting mode and shakes her head. She knows he wasn't kidding, but for now he's still fast with the cover up.

JAMES MILLS, seasoned public defender, his hair well-oiled and slicked as far back as it will go. Once a week he wears what is probably the first seersucker suit ever made. He belly's up to the raised podium, this is his domain without doubt.

MILLS  
Your Honor, if I may?

JUDGE FULLER  
Go on James.

MILLS  
Your Honor, my client would like to  
go to trail,  
(he turns to his client,  
annoyed)  
her plea is not guilty on the  
charge of theft at the Citgo as  
(MORE)

MILLS (CONT'D)

charged.

JUDGE FULLER

Ms. White, is this your plea?

A short gray-haired mid-50s white female, who looks like she eats and sleeps in a meth closet, inches over from beside her public defender to answer the Court.

MS. WHITE

Yes, your Honor.

JUDGE FULLER

Mr. Mills, do you have any witnesses present today?

MILLS

Uh, no sir. I didn't expect --

JUDGE FULLER

(Mumbling more to himself than to be heard)

No witnesses.

MILLS

I didn't catch that your Honor.

JUDGE FULLER

Ms. White you understand with no witnesses present here today we shall hold you until the date of your hearing?

MS. WHITE

Yes, your Honor.

JUDGE FULLER

Ms. White, you must really love it here, I mean, (slight laughter) we see you once a month. (a beat) Mr. Kim, you have anything to say before I rule?

BEN KIM, County Prosecutor, no nonsense and hated among many, lifts his head from staring at the WHITE CASE FILE.

PROSECUTOR KIM

No, sir.

JUDGE FULLER

Linda, what's our date going to be?

LINDA  
March 9th, your Honor.

JUDGE FULLER  
Ms. White, see you back here on  
March 9th, 10:00 am for your full  
hearing.

MS. WHITE  
Okay sir, I'd like to say that I  
did not --

JUDGE FULLER  
Ms. White, this is not your  
hearing, please save all testimony  
until I see you again.

MS. WHITE  
(While being pushed back  
to holding by the  
bailiff)  
Yes, Your Honor. I would like to  
say that I did --

Fuller BANGS his gavel and Glen takes Ms. White back into  
the holding cell with the other defendants for the morning.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Just outside the courthouse entrance, before security  
checkpoints, roughly 10 reporters with camera crew are  
setting up and looking around feverishly in anticipation of  
the arrival of the ex-Governor and her accused husband. It's  
a battle of the microphones on display.

MIRA BANKS, (pronounced MEER-RAH) late 20s, and hopeful,  
stops in front of the spectacle and takes it in. She then  
squeezes through the crowd, enters the courthouse and gets  
processed by security. She puts her bag through the scanner  
and it gets sent back out.

INT. COURTHOUSE LOBBY - DAY

COURT SECURITY GATE OFFICER  
Ma'am, can you take the computer  
out of the bag?

MIRA  
Um, sure, but I'm running late, do  
I really have to?

COURT SECURITY GATE OFFICER  
Do you have your attorney ID?

MIRA

Oh, I'm not an attorney.

COURT SECURITY GATE OFFICER

(cold and unrelenting)

Then, yes, you have to.

Mira, looks him in the eye, her first unpleasantness of the day. He looks through her and she quickly finishes up her security check-in and runs off to find her courtroom.

INT. COURTHOUSE - CASE MONITOR AREA - DAY

Getting up to the main case board, she looks down at her written note from the office, it says: Dakota Howard, State vs. Ted Jacoby. Looking up at the case board,

MIRA

(to herself while  
glancing from the board  
back to her note)

Okay, how am I supposed to figure  
out this board.

Just then she spots JACOBY, as the case monitor reaches cases beginning with J.

MIRA

3E.

INT. COURTROOM 3E - DAY

The courtroom doors open and we watch as Judge Fuller brings another case to a close. Mira makes her way to an empty seat in the gallery, although it's barely an easy task. Scanning the bodies below the bench Mira spots who must be Dakota, unless she's in the wrong courtroom. She waits for the proceedings to finish up and takes her chance to go in for an introduction.

MIRA

(to Dakota)

Excuse me, are you Dakota Howard?

DAKOTA

Yes. May I help you with  
something?

MIRA

I'm Mira Banks, I contacted you a  
while back about shadowing when I  
became certified, do you remember?



DAKOTA

Oh, yes. Wow, that was fast.  
You're all official now, huh?

MIRA

Yes. I guess I am.

DAKOTA

That's great, congrats! You must be proud.

MIRA

Thanks. I'm just getting started with a firm out in Silver Springs and I figured I would come and check in with you once I got settled in. Jeannie said you used to work for them before you branched out on your own.

DAKOTA

Oh, Jeannie's team. Yes, that's where I got my start. How is Jeannie?

MIRA

Well, I'm really just meeting them all. She seems good to me.

DAKOTA

She is, don't worry. I work full-time for Judge Fuller now and I freelance on his days off, well, if I feel like it.

MIRA

That sounds great.

DAKOTA

I've been doing this for eight years, haven't gotten to the "great" part of it yet.

They smile at each other.

MIRA

Do you mind if I shadow you for the day?

DAKOTA

Sure, no problem. You can even set your gear up beside me.

MIRA

Great. Thanks so much, I really appreciate it.

DAKOTA

Let me just put a note on Fuller's bench so he doesn't flip out. But go ahead and get set up, I'm just going to run to the restroom.

INT. COURTHOUSE 3RD FLOOR LOBBY - DAY

Dakota steps into the hallway and heads towards the bathroom, she is GRABBED from behind, mouth covered and pulled into a side room.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

As the door closes and Dakota is facing it, she uses her feet to kick off the wall and THEY both crash to the ground. Dakota elbows her attacker hard in the chest only to hear...

MICHAEL

Dakota, stop! Stop, it's me!

A now free Dakota swings around to look her captor in the eyes only to find out it's her husband MICHAEL. He goes from playful to taken aback.

MICHAEL

You been training with the CIA or something? What was that?

She turns over on top of him.

DAKOTA

You scared the shit out of me Michael! What was I supposed to do? Just let you kill me. I'm a keeper of the record, anyone could want to take me out for whatever reason!

(agreeing with herself)

I'm important.

MICHAEL

Oh my God, really!

He shakes his head and they sit up together. Then Dakota bursts out laughing.

DAKOTA

I'm sorry babe.

MICHAEL

Me too. I was just trying to get you,

(he sings in the key of the song by Yolanda Adams, snapping his fingers in the air)

"alone in a room."

DAKOTA

Baby, that's a church song, you know that right?

MICHAEL

Oh! Well, you know what I mean.

He kisses her like a lustful teen boy, she pushes him off.

DAKOTA

Okay, okay, come on, I've got to get back to the bench.

MICHAEL

So what.

He continues trying to kiss on her.

DAKOTA

(adjusting her shirt)

What are you doing here -- oh wait, Governor Jacoby.

(now concerned)

Shit Michael, I'm not sure about this. I have to look at the guidelines for reporter/reporter coverage, both of us on the same case might not be allowed.

MICHAEL

Oh, who is gonna to know?

He is still trying to get into her clothes.

DAKOTA

Look, seriously, stop!

MICHAEL

Okay. Tonight then.

DAKOTA

(Ignoring him)

Tonight I'll be looking online for conflict of interest guidelines

(MORE)