

Hell is an Innocent Man

"Pilot"

written by

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TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. WILSHIRE CENTER, LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

Establishing.

INT. SUPER MARKET - NIGHT

MARK MORRIS (mid 20s, screenwriter) stares at some fruit.

He's short, very thin with a bushy beard.

Mark's roommate EVANDER STUCKO (mid 20s, screenwriter) pushes a mostly full shopping cart behind him.

Evander is a giant man in an obscure anime t-shirt.

EVANDER

Are you sure you can afford this?

MARK

I just got a bonus for another job well done. Why not enjoy the fruits of his spoils, you know?

EVANDER

What's it like being Cyrano for a real life Chad?

MARK

I paid off my film school loans, so life's pretty good right now.

EVANDER

It'll suck when he finds true love.

MARK

This guy's menu is so full I don't so him settling for a regular order any time in the near future.

(tosses fruit into cart)

My agent loves the feature I wrote about this whole process.

EVANDER

You need a better title.

MARK

"The Secret Life of Chad" slaps.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

A crime scene is across the street from the supermarket.

Mark exits, spots it.

MARK

Holy shit.

Evander exits the supermarket behind him, pushing the cart full of bagged groceries.

Mark focuses on the crime scene.

Evander coughs.

Mark turns to him.

EVANDER

A guy writes one script about a serial killer and all of a sudden he thinks he's James Ellroy.

MARK

It'll be a quick look, that's all.

EVANDER

That cop recognized you last time.

MARK

There's more than one homicide detective in this city.

Evander sighs.

MARK (CONT'D)

I'll meet you at the car.

Evander nods.

Mark walks to the crime scene.

Evander pushes the cart towards a parked SUV.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

The corpse of a BEAUTIFUL WOMAN is on the ground.

A crowd of onlookers is separated from the scene by UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICERS and yellow police tape.

Mark gets to the front.

His eyes focus on her.

Recognition.

STAN (mid 30s, Medical Technician) takes photos of the body.

Detective FRANK CHAN (mid 50s) looks at the corpse and then into the crowd.

Frank is a big, burly man with a five o'clock shadow.

STAN

Her purse was in the dumpster.

FRANK

Exactly the same as the last three.

Mark's breathing accelerates. He sweats profusely.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Do a swab.

Frank spots Mark.

Recognition.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Serials sometimes return to admire their handiwork, right?

Frank and Mark catch eyes.

STAN

Right.

Mark turns around and sprints away.

Frank takes off after Mark.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Evander loads groceries into the trunk of the SUV.

FRANK (O.S.)

Los Angeles police, stop!

Evander looks up and sees Frank chasing Mark.

WHAM!

Frank tackles Mark to the ground and arrests him.

INT. POLICE INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Mark is handcuffed to a table, his face bruised.

Frank sits across from him.

A pair of coffee cups are in front of the detective.

Frank pushes one over to Mark.

FRANK

Help me and I'll help you.

MARK

I'm invoking my right to silence.

Frank looks at Mark for a long moment.

MARK (CONT'D)

I'm invoking my right to counsel.

FRANK

This doesn't help anyone, Mark.

MARK

I worked on a cop show. Anytime the perp talks to a detective without a lawyer, a guy like you twists it into some bullshit confession.

FRANK

Only guilty people need a lawyer.

MARK

Silence.

Frank angrily slaps the cup in front of Mark off the table.

MARK (CONT'D)

Lawyer.

END TEASER

ACT ONE**INT. PRISON CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY**

Mark is in an orange prison jumpsuit, exhausted.

His foot taps impatiently.

The door opens up revealing sleazy attorney TYLER MINSHAW (mid 50s), short, balding and in a cheap suit.

Tyler walks in and sits down across from Mark.

MARK

Are you the one who's going to tell me what's going on here?

TYLER

Your mother says hello.

MARK

I tried calling her but--

TYLER

You can worry about that later.

MARK

Yesterday I'm shopping at Trader Joe's and today I'm in jail!

TYLER

I'm Tyler Minshaw and your mother came to my office two hours ago. She's a very lovely woman who is as shocked about this as you are.

MARK

This is all a mistake.

Tyler takes out a form from his briefcase and hands it to Mark. A pen follows.

TYLER

I'm going to need you to walk me through all of this, Mark. If this is as simple as she says, one call to the district attorney and I'll have you back at Trader Joe's with a hell of a story to tell.

Mark looks at the form.

MARK
What's this?

TYLER
This allows me to work for you.

Mark quickly signs it.

TYLER (CONT'D)
You are officially my client.
(beat)
Now you tell me everything they
have told you up until the minute
before I walked in here.

MARK
I don't know where to start.

TYLER
Why were you at the crime scene?

MARK
I was curious and then I saw her.

Tyler motions for him to continue.

MARK (CONT'D)
She had a small role in a show I
was writing for. I asked her out
and she declined for trailer time
with Drexel fucking Stern.

TYLER
So why'd you run?

MARK
I freaked out. It was someone I
knew, you know?

TYLER
I don't.

MARK
That big ass cop chased me down and
arrests me for murder for god knows
what reason. After that my name
just becomes K-Town Slasher.

TYLER
Wait... what?

MARK
They said first degree murder and
it all blurs after that.

Tyler's face changes to one expression: oh shit.

MARK (CONT'D)

You're the first person who hasn't
looked at me like I'm sort of
monster since I've been here.

EXT. STRIP MALL - DAY

A pristine 1969 Dodge Charger is parked in front of a small store front.

"Gray Collins, Attorney at Law" is on the sign.

INT. GRAY'S OFFICE - DAY

Chicago sports team apparel is all over.

A photo of college-aged Gray playing football as a quarterback for USC is on the wall.

A law degree from UCLA is prominently displayed next to it.

Several awards for jurisprudence from the LA County District Attorney's office are in a box on the floor.

GRAYSON "GRAY" COLLINS (mid 50s, attorney) is behind a desk, staring at his laptop.

He's stocky with a dad bod, graying hair and a polo shirt.

A video of Mark being perp walked is up.

BRAD JAMES (mid 20s, client) walks in.

Brad is tall, athletically built and covered in tattoos. He looks at Gray's things, curious.

BRAD

Anything important?

GRAY

Apparently they have the K-Town
Slasher in custody.

Gray closes the video.

BRAD

No way.

GRAY

You don't perp walk a guy, and get every news crew in the county to cover it, if you aren't certain.

Brad's eyes focus on a photo of Gray and his wife JULIE (mid 50s) behind his desk.

She's a classic American blonde.

BRAD

My old man said you used to be a movie star's attorney.

GRAY

He and I did some big deals for Drexel Stern way back when.

BRAD

What's he really like?

GRAY

He's a good guy.
(beat)
They made a good offer.

BRAD

I didn't do anything wrong.

GRAY

One year in county with the chance to get out early for good behavior.

BRAD

He threw the first punch.

GRAY

The man you assaulted is still in a coma, by the way.

BRAD

He fucked around and found out.

GRAY

There's a reason why hockey and the State of California have penalties for instigating, Mister James.

BRAD

I want my day in court.

GRAY

I can recommend a good litigator for you, if you'd like.

BRAD
Why can't you do it?

GRAY
Litigation is a young man's game.

BRAD
How much more is this going to cost
my father, then?

GRAY
He asked me to make this as
painless as I possibly can for you.

BRAD
I'll be in jail, not him.

GRAY
All you have to do is behave inside
and you come out with the rest of
your life to live.

BRAD
That's easy for you to say.

GRAY
If you fight this, the prosecutor
is going to ask for ten years. The
wrong judge and you'll get it, too.

BRAD
For a bar fight?

GRAY
As you said, when you fuck around
they decide to make you find out.

Brad looks around, thinking. He turns to Gray and nods.

GRAY (CONT'D)
I'll let them know.

BRAD
What happens from here?

GRAY
We'll arrange a time for you to
surrender peacefully.

BRAD
What do I do until then?

GRAY
Stay out of trouble.

INT. PRISON CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Mark looks around.

Tyler's eyes look elsewhere, stunned.

MARK

So how fucked am I?

Tyler takes a deep breath.

TYLER

It's not scientific but I'd guess somewhere between a female porn star in a gang bang and Hitler in the bunker.

MARK

I'm innocent. The police have got the wrong guy, I swear to you. All they have to do is pull my PayPal and they'll see it. It'll prove I'm innocent, I swear.

TYLER

That'll be the first thing I do when I get back to my office.

MARK

What do I do until then?

TYLER

Keep your head down.

Mark buries his head in his hands.

TYLER (CONT'D)

And don't say anything to anyone.

EXT. STRIP MALL - LATER

A high-end luxury car pulls up and parks next to the Charger.

INT. GRAY'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Gray fills out paperwork.

DREXEL (O.S.)

You deserve better than this.

Gray looks up to see--

DREXEL STERN (mid 40s, movie star) walking in.

He's tall, jacked, impossibly handsome and looks younger than he is. Charisma oozes off of him.

A tailor made Tom Ford suit fits him perfectly.

A book titled "Framed: My Life On Death Row" is in his hands.

DREXEL (CONT'D)

So this is how you decided to spend your retirement.

GRAY

Golf is overrated.

DREXEL

I need to pick your brain.

Gray points to a chair.

GRAY

Girl problems?

Drexel sits down and tosses the book onto the desk.

Gray looks at it.

DREXEL

There's a whole chapter about his interactions with you. I can not picture that guy and you being one and the same, Gray.

GRAY

I treated him like I did every other man and woman that I charged.

DREXEL

They want me to play him in the movie adaptation.

GRAY

What's it like playing a guy who shot his business partner to death?

DREXEL

He says he was framed.

GRAY

He also said he didn't steal ten million dollars from him, either.

DREXEL

Frank says--

GRAY

I had my doubts on some guys who I convicted but not him.

DREXEL

I'd love to pick your brain on it. Julie's too.

GRAY

There's a great little Italian place nearby.

DREXEL

I can get a table at Providence.

GRAY

That means we would have to stay the night.

DREXEL

I've got three spare bedrooms.

GRAY

But you're already up here.

DREXEL

I'll call your misses and let her know I'm coming for dinner.

GRAY

She likes red, not white.

DREXEL

I know.

GRAY

Yet you always confuse the two.

INT. TYLER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Tiny, cramped and dirty.

Tyler glares at his phone.

TYLER

I'm not asking for the stars but--

(beat)

Hello?

He groans loudly.

Tyler's eyes turn to his speed dial.

The pull up Gray's information.

Tyler calls Gray.

INT. GRAY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Drexel, Julie and Gray sit at the table.

A mostly empty bottle of red wine is in the middle of the remnants of a very expensive meal.

A TV is mounted on the wall, turned to the local news.

JULIE
(to Drexel)
How did you get them to deliver?

Gray's phone rings with Tyler's call.

DREXEL
When I ask, they listen.

Julie glares at Gray.

GRAY
It's crazy to see how far you've
come, Drexel.

Gray sends it to voicemail.

DREXEL
I talked to my entertainment guy.

GRAY
I'm happy being the outside counsel
for you when it's needed.

DREXEL
Los Angeles is a short drive away.

JULIE
So tell me about this role that
they want you to play.

GRAY
He wants to play Frank Driscoll.

Julie's mood sours.

JULIE
Please don't.

DREXEL

I spoke to him in prison.

GRAY

He was a conman, Drex, and you're the latest mark in his game.

DREXEL

How can you be so sure?

GRAY

I presented the case that put him on death row. I know it better than anyone on this planet.

DREXEL

They made a documentary about it a couple of years ago.

GRAY

Which was entirely bullshit.

DREXEL

The case was--

The TV news changes.

GRAY

Good enough for twelve people to say he did it.

Mark's mugshot comes up.

DREXEL

Have you looked backed at it? Maybe you missed something, Gray.

The Chyron changes to "K-Town Slasher Revealed To Be Struggling Screenwriter."

GRAY

Have you actually looked at what I presented and not just the cherry-picked garbage they showed?

Julie spots it out of the corner of her eye. She turns her attention to it.

JULIE

Holy cow.

Gray and Drexel follow suit.

GRAY
I saw him get perp walked.

JULIE
Where's his lawyer?

GRAY
If he's smart he's replaced his
public defender by now.

DREXEL
Would you represent him?

GRAY
Depends.

Julie coughs.

GRAY (CONT'D)
I'd ask first.

JULIE
Thank you.

DREXEL
What would the guy in the ADA's
office say about that?

GRAY
This is the sort of case that can
make or break your career.

DREXEL
So ADA Grayson Collins does what
with that guy?

GRAY
He pleads it out as quickly as
humanly possible, most likely.

DREXEL
Really.

GRAY
Getting him to say "I did it" to a
list of bodies will give you more
closure than a trial does.

Drexel finishes his drink.

GRAY (CONT'D)
Litigation is not for the feint of
heart, either.

DREXEL

Trials are always quick, right?

GRAY

Your industry makes it look like a trial happens--

(snaps fingers)

--just like that.

(beat)

One case can be years of motions and meetings before you even begin to think about jury selection.

Gray finishes his glass.

JULIE

He worked eighty-hour weeks for most of the year.

GRAY

We didn't even have a date night for the ten years I spent in the D.A's office.

DREXEL

(to Julia)

And you put up with that?

JULIE

For better or worse, right?

Gray grabs the wine bottle and pours the last of it into his glass. He takes a drink.

GRAY

And the syndication package for your show paid for this house.

DREXEL

And you could buy a mansion if you came back and got back in the game.

Gray grabs Julie's hand.

GRAY

I'm perfectly happy here.

Julie squeezes it.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Yellow police tape separates the PUBLIC from a half dozen UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICERS.

Stan takes photos of a dead WOMAN (20s, blonde).
She's in a tight red dress and has been stabbed to death.
Detective Chan walks through the crowd, his badge in the air.
The Uniforms nod and let him through.
Frank makes a beeline to Stan.

FRANK
You should've called the detective
on duty, Stan.

Stan points to the body.
Frank looks at it. He mutters a profanity.

STAN
Same everything.

FRANK
Could be a coincidence.

Frank looks to the crowd and then back to Stan.

STAN
I can tell what's a pattern and
what isn't.

FRANK
Slade isn't going to like this.

STAN
She doesn't like anything that
isn't cut and dry.

FRANK
And this makes the case wet.

Stan motions for Frank to come close.

STAN
(hushed)
I can tell Doc Jeff to take his
time but this won't stay quiet.

FRANK
Thank you.

INT. GRAY'S OFFICE - DAY

Gray finishes up some paperwork.

TYLER (O.S.)
Hollyweird never shows how boring a
lawyer's life is.

He look up to see Tyler walking in.

Gray smiles.

GRAY
I always wondered why.

TYLER
Filling out a Form 1040 isn't very
cinematic, you know.

The men embrace.

GRAY
This is business, not personal.

Gray points to a chair.

Tyler sits down.

TYLER
I need your help.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO**INT. PRISON HALLWAY - DAY**

CONVICTS of all ages and races as far as the eye can see, walking slowly in line.

Mark is in the middle, looking around.

LEWIS FRANK (mid 40s, covered in Nazi tats) is behind him.

The following conversation is hushed.

LEWIS FRANK

Hey Slash.

Mark ignores him.

LEWIS FRANK (CONT'D)

I said, hey Slash.

Mark turns to him.

MARK

I'm not who you think I am.

LEWIS FRANK

I can keep you safe, for a price.

Mark looks at his ink and then to several BLACK CONVICTS.

MARK

Black Lives Matter.

The Black Convicts look at Mark angrily.

LEWIS FRANK

Out there, maybe.

Mark turns away.

MARK

I don't want your help.

LEWIS FRANK

What you want and what you need are two different things, Red.

MARK

I'm good, thanks.

LEWIS FRANK

I hear things about you.

MARK

Please, I don't want your help.

LEWIS FRANK

If something happens to you--

A PRISON GUARD glares at Lewis.

PRISON GUARD

Move along, convict.

The line moves in silence.

INT. GRAY'S OFFICE - DAY

Gray takes a deep breath.

GRAY

What did you get yourself into?

Tyler yawns.

TYLER

The kid's mom showed up in my office with a check for ten grand. She said it was simple and that he was innocent. She somehow forgot to mention the murder charges.

GRAY

Why didn't you Google him?

TYLER

Ten grand is ten grand.

GRAY

You can give the money back.

TYLER

Alimony in this state is for life and I've got two of them now.

GRAY

And they perp-walked him.

TYLER

How many guys did you perp walk and then kick?

GRAY

Not a serial killer.

TYLER

The kid's innocent and I'm trying to muster all the resources I can--

GRAY

On a budget.

(beat)

A case like this is mid six figures in billable hours, Tyler, and that gets you just to the trial.

TYLER

The kid's life savings are about twenty grand.

GRAY

That's a nice start.

TYLER

I wouldn't be here if I had a war chest, Gray.

GRAY

Gee, thanks.

TYLER

I just launched a Go Fund Me for him so that should help. Maybe people see his story and--

GRAY

Nick Stone doesn't charge someone with this sort of crime for fun.

TYLER

I never thought I'd see you back down from a challenge.

GRAY

Getting a DUI reduced to a speeding ticket is a challenge, Tyler. This is ice-skating up hill during a snow storm while getting shot at.

TYLER

The two of us can win this case.

GRAY

They are bringing the full weight of the office on this kid.

TYLER

I can't do this alone.

GRAY

You should be focusing on getting the needle off the table.

TYLER

He doesn't feel right.

GRAY

My reputation isn't going on the line for just a feel.

TYLER

What if I can get you the whole of the prosecution's case?

GRAY

I'd love to take a look.

TYLER

You remember what Andrea told us on the first day of the job.

GRAY

That was thirty years ago.

TYLER

Ten seconds with the kid and you'll see what I see.

GRAY

I need to talk to Julia about it.

TYLER

Tomorrow morning I'm meeting with him in prison. Join me.

GRAY

I remember where it is.

TYLER

Either way, I get it.

They shake hands.

INT. MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The Dead Body from earlier is on a slab.

Detective Chan has his notepad out.

L.A County Assistant District Attorney AURORA SLADE (mid 40s) angrily looks it over.

She's short, curvy with long dark hair.

AURORA
Who have you told about this?

FRANK
Nobody yet, Miss Slade.

AURORA
I need you to keep it that way.

FRANK
Excuse me?

AURORA
(points to corpse)
That there is reasonable doubt in
every courtroom in America.

FRANK
That kid is good for the others.

AURORA
Then how do we explain this?

FRANK
It's a famous case and in this town
fame breeds all sorts of copycats.
(beat)
Or he's not good for it.

AURORA
Or someone wants us to make us
think he's not good for it.

FRANK
Every single thing about this kid
screams I am a serial killer.

AURORA
And yet.

FRANK
What do you want me to do?

AURORA
Find me someone good for it.

FRANK
Maybe it's an accomplice.

AURORA
Find him, please.

FRANK
And until I do?

AURORA
Don't add this to the case until me
and your captain say so.

Frank nods.

INT. GRAY'S OFFICE - DAY

Gray pulls up an internet search engine on his laptop.

He types in "K-Town Slasher" into it.

An ungodly amount of results come up.

Gray clicks on one.

A YouTube Channel comes up with a number of titles.

All are dark, macabre sounding.

Gray clicks on one and watches it.

GRAY
What the hell?

He pauses it and takes out a notepad.

His hand quickly write the titles down.

Gray goes back to the search results.

Mark's IMDB profile comes up.

Gray goes through his credits.

INT. GRAY'S CAR - NIGHT (DRIVING)

Gray drives.

The California seaboard casually goes by.

Drexel FaceTimes him.

Gray answers.

DREXEL (FACETIME)
They made an offer.

GRAY

I don't want any part of it.

DREXEL (FACETIME)

It'll be the easiest check you have ever made, Gray.

GRAY

Outside of the clear conflict of interest on this, Drex, you'll be pissing on a lot of work from a lot of good people.

DREXEL (FACETIME)

This is my chance at an Oscar.

Gray takes an exit and goes towards a small beach house.

GRAY

Since when have you cared about that kind of stuff?

DREXEL (FACETIME)

I saw the other scripts my team wants to pitch. It's all "Die Hard" in a blank and I hate it.

Gray pulls into a driveway.

GRAY

Can we talk later?

DREXEL (FACETIME)

I need you on my side, Gray.

GRAY

What are you doing tomorrow?

DREXEL (FACETIME)

A couple of meetings downtown.

GRAY

I'll be down that way. Let's do lunch, if you can find the time.

DREXEL (FACETIME)

Anything important?

GRAY

If it goes through, you'll know.

Gray parks the car.

EXT. GRAY'S HOME - NIGHT

Gray exits the car and walks to the front door.

DREXEL (FACETIME)
When do you think you'll be done?

GRAY
Find someplace at noon and I'll
meet you there.

DREXEL (FACETIME)
Say hi to Julie for me.

GRAY
Take it easy.

Gray hangs up.

INT. GRAY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Julie watches local news.

Gray walks in and sits down next to her.

GRAY
Sorry I'm late.

JULIE
Another rich kid needs to get out
of a DUI and called you?

GRAY
Tyler stopped by.

JULIE
No.

GRAY
I haven't told you what he wanted.

JULIE
Every bad idea in law school
started with him coming over to the
apartment, dear.

GRAY
He's representing the K-Town--

JULIE
Hard no.

GRAY

Tyler swears he's innocent.

JULIE

He also swore he didn't do a lot of things he wound up doing.

GRAY

This is professional, honey.

JULIE

And he advertises on park benches.

GRAY

I'm just being courteous.

JULIE

What will the neighbors think?

GRAY

You know Romeo Collins, two doors down from us?

JULIE

His wife is nice.

GRAY

They rent their house for a reality TV show about male prostitutes.

JULIE

It's better than representing a god-damn serial killer

GRAY

I haven't even agreed to it yet.

JULIE

I wouldn't be shocked if he has already put you down as co-counsel.

GRAY

Ty is a lot of things but he would wait for me to say yes before filing a counsel notice.

JULIE

You're meeting with him. That's all he would need to do it.

GRAY

He wouldn't ask if he didn't think the kid had a case.

JULIE

Do you really want to defend *him*?

GRAY

This will never go to trial. Tyler knows his best shot is keeping this kid off of Death Row.

JULIE

You were supposed to just get rich kids out of traffic tickets because you couldn't fix your slice.

GRAY

If this gets to a trial, and I can practically guarantee it won't, then I will find outside counsel to take my place.

JULIE

Promise me.

GRAY

I promise.

INT. JAIL CELL - NIGHT

Mark's cellmate CHRIS GODFREY (mid 30s) lies on the top bunk.

Chris is tall, heavily inked and dangerous.

Mark walks in.

CHRIS

You shouldn't turn down help.

Mark lays down on the bottom bunk.

MARK

Not from them.

CHRIS

You can't think like that.

MARK

I marched against those guys and what they stand for outside. I join them and what am I?

CHRIS

Safe.

MARK
Not like that.

CHRIS
Have you noticed the brothers are
not exactly on your side?

MARK
We're all the same in here.

CHRIS
No we're not and the sooner you
realize that the better.

Chris leans down from the top bunk.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
(hushed)
Watch yourself in the chow line
tomorrow, you hear me.

MARK
(hushed)
What?

CHRIS
(hushed)
Watch yourself in the chow line.

Mark looks around, unsure, and then back to Chris.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
(hushed)
Paco's niece was one of your girls.

Mark shits himself in fear.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE**INT. PRISON HALLWAY - DAY**

Mark is escorted by Prison Guard RICK DENTON (mid 30s).

MARK
Guard Denton.

RICK
Yes, convict.

MARK
I need to be protected.

RICK
Who made the threat?

MARK
Call it a feeling.

RICK
Unless you tell me who--

MARK
You know I can't.

RICK
The only way to really be safe from
your fellow inmates is in solitary.

MARK
How do you get into there?

Rick stops Mark and slams him against the wall.

RICK
Tell me who and no one finds out.

MARK
It's just a feeling.

Rick lets go of him.

RICK
The quickest way is to punch a
guard, convict. I mean you will
take a beating, or five, but if you
really want into solitary then
that's what you should do.

EXT. PRISON - DAY

Tyler stands in front of a luxury car, tapping his foot.

Gray's Charger pulls up and parks.

Gray exits.

GRAY

My wife is going to use your name
as a profanity for the next week.

TYLER

Julie was never my biggest fan.

Gray walks to the front doors.

Tyler follows him.

INT. PRISON CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Gray and Tyler sit, waiting.

TYLER

I wonder what's taking so long.

GRAY

Your guy in the hole?

TYLER

Not as far as I know.

Rick brings Mark into the room and uncuffs him.

Mark sits down.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Mark Morris, meet Grayson Collins.

Mark looks in the opposite direction.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Everything you say to him is as if
you said it to me; it is all under
the power of privilege.

Mark looks over Gray.

MARK

Hi.

GRAY

I saw you were a writer's assistant on a Law and Order spin off.

(beat)

You invoked your rights as soon as they cuffed you. That was smart.

MARK

The one thing I hated about that show was every time a criminal was getting grilled, they always said the worst thing right before they asked for their lawyer. The cop said it's what guilty people did, so I figured it was the right thing to do at the time.

GRAY

How have you slept?

MARK

Just ask the question.

GRAY

Everything online makes it look like I don't have to.

MARK

It's all easily explainable.

GRAY

You have a script a about serial killer who attacks beautiful women on your Script Revolution account. It was a real... page turner.

MARK

My agent told me to expand my writing horizons and I did.

GRAY

Your YouTube channel.

MARK

It was a film school project.

GRAY

An uneducated man might say you were laying out the groundwork for what was to come.

MARK

Or I was a dramedy guy who didn't get read and then became a horror guy who did.

GRAY

Do you know how this all looks?

MARK

Like I wrote about what I knew best, right?

(looks around, takes a deep breath)

It isn't true, I swear to God.

(motions to Tyler)

He told you my story, right?

GRAY

Something like a rich guy hired you to play him on dating apps.

MARK

It trended on Screenwriting Twitter for a couple of hours.

GRAY

Someone leaked to the press that you showed pictures of the victims to an Evander Stucko.

MARK

He's my roommate. Was my roommate.

GRAY

Why would you do that?

MARK

I knew one of them.

GRAY

How?

MARK

She had a small part on one of the shows I wrote for. It was *the* episode I wrote for it, too.

GRAY

Did you ever talk to her?

MARK

I asked her out and she said she doesn't date writers.

GRAY

So why would you talk to her on a dating app?

MARK

He was her type.

Gray motions for him to elaborate.

MARK (CONT'D)

Big tits and in great shape.

(beat)

She was so hot that I was almost uncomfortable on set.

(beat)

I got a bonus if I got nudes before the date, too.

GRAY

This is a bit much.

MARK

I just thought this guy was the Chad of Chads.

(beat)

It got me inspired to write a script about a guy like this.

Gray takes a deep breath.

GRAY

What was the worst thing you'll have to admit to in court?

Silence.

MARK

One girl made a video where she, ahem, adjusted herself.

GRAY

Seriously?

MARK

It was amazing.

Gray is disgusted.

TYLER

Wait a second... what's a Chad?

MARK

Like a handsome dude who just owns the world, you know?

TYLER

I don't.

Tyler turns to Gray.

Gray doesn't know, either.

MARK

Well, I got to play this dude who had a yacht and millions to throw around. You'd be amazed at what these women would do to have a shot at that life.

GRAY

Besides your roommate, who else did you talk to about this?

MARK

Nobody... I signed an NDA and I took that shit seriously.

(beat)

I know how it looks but this is just a series of coincidences that look awful in a certain light.

Gray and Tyler look around.

GRAY

Why would you do any of what you did, the sex stuff?

MARK

The guy paid me a lot of money to do it and I was desperate.

GRAY

What about the morality of it?

MARK

Some people are perverts and the women just did it, you know? At the time I thought five hundred bucks for nudes wasn't a big deal. I was not sharing them, I just got them for someone else to beat off to.

Gray barely hides his disgust.

MARK (CONT'D)

That sounds pretty bad, right?

GRAY

I've heard worse.

INT. DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Awards and degrees are all over the walls.

Los Angeles County District Attorney NICK STONE (mid 70s) sits behind a massive executive desk.

An air of dignity and elegance surrounds him.

Nick's eyes are focused on his laptop.

A crowd-raising website is on a web browser.

The page title reads "Save an innocent man from a blood-thirsty government coward!"

A news website is in the tab next to it.

The title reads "Local woman brutally murdered."

Aurora walks in with a court summons.

NICK

I was just about to call you.

AURORA

GoFundMe said it would take a court order to take it down.

NICK

One thing at a time.

(beat)

I saw there was another body.

AURORA

It's off their radar but--

NICK

Do you have reasonable doubts?

AURORA

He did it and I know it.

(tosses the summons onto
Nick's desk)

Guess who is co-counsel?

Nick reaches into his desk and takes out a bottle of expensive scotch. Two glasses come out.

AURORA (CONT'D)

Grayson Collins.

Nick pours two drinks out.

INT. PRISON CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Gray and Tyler look around.

MARK

What can you do to get me out of here? I can stay at my mother's.

GRAY

There is zero chance of that happening in this or any other lifetime you have, son.

MARK

Everyone in here looks at me like I am the Devil.

GRAY

Lucifer would be disgusted with the crimes you're accused of.

(beat)

And the video stuff, too.

MARK

Someone is going to hurt me, soon. I need you to get me out so I can--

GRAY

The most progressive of judges is not going to let you out of prison, not for what you're charged with.

(beat)

Do you have any friends in here?

MARK

Just my cell mate.

GRAY

Don't talk about anything that has to do with your case, ever.

MARK

I got a death threat.

GRAY

Who made it?

MARK

It was more of "you're accused of killing someone's niece" and not "I am going to kill you."

GRAY

Who made it?

MARK

I talk and this gets worse.

GRAY

We'll try to get you into protective custody but no one will listen until you talk. If you don't want to, all I can tell you to do is just have eyes in the back of your head. You hear me?

Mark nods.

MARK

What if I need to vent to someone about all of this?

GRAY

Make sure it's one of us, OK?

Mark nods.

INT. DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Nick takes a sip.

Aurora slams her drink.

NICK

That's a five hundred dollar bottle of scotch, Miss Slade.

AURORA

They haven't looked at the evidence and he's bringing in a guy who knows how we work.

She puts the glass down.

He fills it up.

NICK

Gray is out of this life.

AURORA

What if they make this a spectacle?

NICK

It's OK to lose cases, Miss Slade.

Aurora takes a quick sip.

AURORA

I'm not having an OJ on my record.

NICK

Gray and I go back, before you were even in this office.

AURORA

I have him dead to rights.

NICK

They know it and we know it.

AURORA

What do you want me to do?

NICK

I'll talk to Gray and make sure he understands that he doesn't want to take this to trial.

AURORA

And what if does?

NICK

Grayson knows exactly what this office can bring to the field of legal warfare, Miss Slade.

Aurora nods.

Nick takes a long sip of the Scotch.

EXT. PRISON - LATER

Tyler and Gray exit.

GRAY

Settle this, please.

TYLER

You think he did it?

GRAY

I think if you put him on the stand he will positively sound like he fucking did it.

TYLER

His story is plausible.

GRAY

If I was prosecuting this kid that story will be used to hang him.

(beat)

Any reasonable person is going to look at him and think he used some model's photos to play out some fantasy with these beautiful women who turned him down. I bet he's connected to more than one of the victims, too.

TYLER

I spoke with ADA Slade and--

GRAY

Aurora Slade?

TYLER

With the stripper voice.

GRAY

And a near perfect conviction rate in capital crimes.

TYLER

The Red Baron didn't pick fights he couldn't win, either.

GRAY

This is high profile in all the wrong ways and now he's got the Grim Reaper looking to bury him.

TYLER

He didn't do it and you know it.

GRAY

I didn't get that vibe.

TYLER

Please?

GRAY

You can't afford me.

TYLER

Help me get through discovery and see if there's anything.

GRAY

It's a waste of time.

TYLER

If you don't see a case in ten billable hours or less than I'll cut you a check and you can walk away from this.

Gray nods.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - LATER

A-LIST CELEBRITIES and WEALTHY PEOPLE are all over.

Drexel and Gray sit in a corner booth.

Appetizers and expensive beers are in front of them.

GRAY

Next time let's just get a hot dog and a coke. There's a great place that does a proper Chicago Dog.

DREXEL

That sounds so unhealthy.

GRAY

I'd go get one right now but the wife and the doctor have been harping on my cholesterol.

Drexel takes out a manila folder. He places it by Gray.

DREXEL

This waives your conflict.

GRAY

Why do you want this so bad?

DREXEL

My father called me the other day.

GRAY

Does he need money... again?

DREXEL

He told me I wasn't an actor, just a really famous guy who just plays himself in the movies.

GRAY

So you're doing this to spite him.

DREXEL

It's a hit book, the script is good and every director who's won an Oscar is begging to make this film.

GRAY

Have you looked at the evidence?

DREXEL

I saw the documentary.

GRAY

You should give Nick Stone a call and have him walk you through this case, piece by piece.

DREXEL

I don't have that sort of pull.

GRAY

Tell him you know me and he'll open up the vaults.

A WAITER comes up to their table.

Drexel motions him away.

DREXEL

They wouldn't make the film if they hadn't done their research.

GRAY

They didn't, clearly, because I did not get a single call from them.

DREXEL

They probably know your opinion on the whole situation, Gray.

GRAY

He knows he did it, I know he did it, and a jury of his peers said he fucking did it.

DREXEL

He's said--

GRAY

His story changes depending on the time of day, Drexel.

DREXEL

The jail house snitch lied.

GRAY

His prints were on the weapon, his alibi didn't check out and three people spotted him at the scene.

DREXEL

What about--

GRAY

It's all a distraction from the fact that the evidence, and nothing but, put the needle in his arm.

DREXEL

His lawyer says he didn't do it.

Gray takes a bite of an appetizer.

GRAY

His second lawyer.

(beat)

Did you ever notice that no one talks to the guy who defended him the first time?

DREXEL

I've read that his original attorney wasn't that good.

GRAY

Jason Stern doesn't come cheap and last time I checked, he wasn't suing Frank for legal fees. So either Frank is lying because it's all he has ever done or he spent five hundred grand for the same verdict he could've got for free.

DREXEL

Expensive isn't an indicator of quality, either.

GRAY

Jason did excellent work on that case. It was a long day in the office with him.

DREXEL

That's not what Frank says.

GRAY

Frank Driscoll had the best defense money could buy and now he says this. Ask yourself why.

DREXEL
Because he's innocent.

GRAY
Or he'll say anything possible to
avoid a needle in his arm.

Drexel takes a drink.

GRAY (CONT'D)
This guy is just like the guy from
the other show that they tried to
make look innocent. As soon as you
looked at the evidence you knew the
guy did it but people don't want to
actually do that.

DREXEL
So what, he should've pled guilty?

GRAY
Frank and his attorney turned down
four plea deals that took the death
penalty off of the table. He knew a
jury could sentence him to death.

Gray takes a drink.

DREXEL
I talked to him. I can feel it.

GRAY
The same jury that saw the evidence
said he deserved the needle.

DREXEL
So if the K-Town Slasher pleads
guilty, when does he get paroled?

GRAY
They will bury that man in the
prison yard if he pleads this out.

DREXEL
And if he's innocent?

GRAY
I hope he would pray for the right
lawyer to defend him.

Drexel takes a drink.

INT. GRAY'S CAR - NIGHT

Gray gets in.

His hands take out his cell phone.

He pulls up Tyler on his speed dial and calls him.

TYLER (V.O.)
Either way, I get it.

GRAY
Do you think he did it?

TYLER (V.O.)
No chance.

Silence.

GRAY
If this goes to trial, you bring in
someone else.

TYLER (V.O.)
Deal.

Gray hangs up. He signs the form.

INT. PRISON HALLWAY - DAY

CONVICTS as far as the eye can see.

PRISON GUARDS are all over.

Mark is in line, eyes looking everywhere.

A handmade prison knife is discreetly passed up the line.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR**INT. PRISON HALLWAY - DAY**

Mark looks around.

His eyes spot the prison knife.

It's ten prisoners away from him.

Panic seizes a hold of him.

Mark spots Rick.

MARK

Hey pig!

Rick turns to Mark, angrily.

WHAM!

Mark punches Rick in the face.

WHAM!

Mark gets cracked across the skull with a baton.

The Guards swarm Mark, beating the ever loving shit of him.

INT. GRAY'S OFFICE - DAY

Gray eats a salad.

KNOCK KNOCK!

Nick walks in, a large evidence box in his hands.

NICK

Aurora got a counsel notice.

GRAY

You could've called.

Nick places the box on Gray's desk.

NICK

My wife wants to retire out here
and I figured two birds, one stone.

They shake hands.

GRAY

It's good to see you, Nick.

NICK

So what inspired you to get back into this dirty world?

GRAY

I'm just consulting on this.

NICK

Have you seen that he's raising funds for the psycho?

GRAY

How big is your budget now?

NICK

He called my office a gestapo that wants to put an innocent man behind bars to cover up their own sloppy case work.

GRAY

Tyler is an... acquired taste.

NICK

He said I have a blood-lust for the death penalty, too.

GRAY

Very acquired taste.

NICK

I want this to go away.

GRAY

Then make me an offer we can sell.

NICK

I can go to fifteen to life. I'm ok if he wants to do an Alford plea.

GRAY

You've grown soft, Nick.

NICK

I'm still the Nick Stone you worked for, Gray.

GRAY

The Nick Stone I worked for would fight a dozen men to the death to avoid an Alford Plea.

NICK
I'm still that man, Grayson.

GRAY
(imitating Nick's voice)
If a man is willing to do the time,
he should stand in the court and
say exactly what he's doing it for.

NICK
I hate the way you do my voice.

GRAY
You really want this to go away.

NICK
Let's avoid a circus.

GRAY
You mean a trial.

Nick taps the box.

GRAY (CONT'D)
I'll discuss it with the client
once we've done our due diligence.

NICK
You remember where the court house
is, right?

GRAY
I'll see you there.

Nick leaves.

Gray opens up the evidence box.

INT. SOLITARY HOLDING UNIT - NIGHT

The door opens up.

Mark is tossed in.

His face is freshly bandaged up.

Mark looks up and sees Rick.

MARK
I'm sorry.

RICK
You better have a good reason.

MARK
I saw something.

RICK
Give me a name and this gets easy.

Mark looks away.

Rick slams the door shut.

INT. GRAY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Julie sits at the table.

A half empty bottle of high priced wine and a pair of glasses are in front of her.

The glass nearest her is mostly full, the one further away from her empty.

Gray walks in.

JULIE
A reporter called me this
afternoon, Gray.

GRAY
About Frank Driscoll?

JULIE
The K-Town Slasher.

Gray sits down and fills up one of the glasses.

GRAY
I don't think the kid did it.

She takes a long drink.

GRAY (CONT'D)
I've got everything they have on
the kid. I called Big Joe to help
me go through it.

JULIE
I thought we agreed that this part
of your life was over.

GRAY
I won't be anything more than meat
in the room, honey.

JULIE

They said your his attorney of record right now.

GRAY

I told Tyler he has to replace me if this goes to trial.

JULIE

Promise me.

GRAY

I don't know if there's a case here but if there is, I have to follow my instincts on it.

JULIE

I went on YouTube after they called. A lawyer said--

GRAY

YouTube lawyers are barely lawyers.

JULIE

CNN's legal expert thinks he did it, too.

GRAY

They haven't looked into the kid's eyes, either.

JULIE

He looks like a creep, dear.

GRAY

I've been across the table from genuine nightmare types over the years, honey. He's not it.

JULIE

I hope you're right about this.

GRAY

So am I.

INT. GRAY'S OFFICE - DAY

Gray, Tyler and JOSEPH "BIG JOE" ANNAI (mid 40s, Samoan) go through the evidence box.

Joseph is well over six feet tall and very large.

TYLER
(to Joseph)
Have you done this before?

GRAY
Joseph was my in-house investigator
at the D.A's office.

JOSEPH
What do I tell my husband, Gray?

GRAY
That you're getting double your
normal rate for your opinion.

TYLER
What do you mean double?

GRAY
It's part of my ten hours.

Tyler grumbles.

GRAY (CONT'D)
This man will need everything you
have before I make my call.

Tyler looks at Joseph.

Joseph nods.

JOSEPH
I'm going to need a list of his e-
mail passwords and accounts.

Tyler goes through his notes.

TYLER
I didn't get those.

JOSEPH
We need to go through every day of
the last year of his life.

TYLER
What if we find out he did it?

JOSEPH
Then I'll make sure he gets the
chair, personally.

Tyler gulps.

GRAY

For your information, the District Attorney himself dropped this off. He never handles this himself.

TYLER

Did he make an offer?

GRAY

Fifteen with an Alford Plea.

(beat)

He just rolled over and offered it. Nick Stone does a lot of things but giving sweetheart deals to the K-Town Slasher is not one of them.

Tyler looks at Gray and Joseph. He has no fucking idea.

JOSEPH

Pleading out a serial killer means something. You find out and maybe we've got some reasonable doubt.

TYLER

I'll present it to the client. You two can go through this and--

GRAY

Go through the evidence and see what you can find.

TYLER

Mark and I have a connection.

GRAY

I want to see if our stories match.

Tyler nods.

Gray leaves.

JOSEPH

I need a white board and some dry erase markers.

INT. PRISON CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Gray and Mark sit around the table.

Gray has a notepad in front of him.

GRAY

They made you a offer.

MARK

No.

GRAY

At least hear it out.

MARK

I refuse to plead guilty.

Beat.

GRAY

Punching a guard isn't going to help your case, Mark.

MARK

I saw a shiv.

GRAY

And I can't get you protection unless you give them something.

MARK

I give them something and I become a bigger target than I already am.

Beat.

GRAY

The good news is that assaulting a guard is a fairly minor offense.

MARK

It's more time.

GRAY

You're charged with a half dozen counts of first degree murder. Six months is *nothing* compared to that.

MARK

It's still six months.

GRAY

You'll be in there that long before we get to trial, Mark.

(beat)

I've contacted the district attorney, to see if we can move you from solitary to protective custody. In the meantime, you'll need to find a way to survive.

MARK

What do we do now?

GRAY

Now is the time we begin to build your case, Mister Morris.

MARK

I already told Tyler everything. Do you two not talk or what?

GRAY

I want to look at this with fresh eyes. Start from the top.

Mark takes a deep breath.

MARK

The second season of the show I got staffed on got cancelled.

Gray takes notes.

MARK (CONT'D)

I was looking for some quick cash and saw this ad on Craigslist.

INT. GRAY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Gray walks in.

A white board is in one corner.

Photos of beautiful women stabbed to death on a timeline are arranged on the top.

Mark's life for the last year is underneath.

Several points between have red x's marked.

Joseph stares at it.

JOSEPH

Your friend doesn't have the stomach for what's in there.

Gray closes the door.

GRAY

Not too many people do.

Gray looks at the white board.

JOSEPH

Mark's laptop was wiped.

Gray sits down at his desk. He takes an expensive bottle of Scotch and two glasses out.

GRAY

What's your gut say?

Joseph turns to Gray.

JOSEPH

Either he knew what he was doing or this is an expensive frame up.

Gray pours two glasses out.

Joseph grabs one.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

I've seen convictions with less.

GRAY

So have I.

They clink glasses and drink.

JOSEPH

There're some inconsistencies on this I'll run down tomorrow.

Gray nods.

Joseph leaves.

Gray opens a file drawer.

His hands quickly pull out a file marked "Frank Driscoll."

He takes his laptop out and pulls up a streaming service.

His fingers pull up a documentary named "Framed."

Gray takes out a notepad and pen.

He writes "Discrepancies" on the top of it.

His hands open the file folder.

His finger presses play.

END OF ACT FOUR

TAG**INT. COURT ROOM - DAY**

Packed with REPORTERS and OBSERVERS.

Tyler and Gray sit at the defense desk.

Aurora and her ASSISTANT are at the prosecution's desk.

She turns to Gray.

AURORA

The offer expires ten seconds after
they ask him to plead.

Gray nods.

Mark is escorted to the defense desk by SECURITY.

Gray motions for Mark to sit down.

TYLER

We need to talk.

Mark sits down.

Note: Next conversation is hushed.

MARK

I'm not going to survive in there.

TYLER

One thing at a time.

GRAY

The offer stands.

MARK

I don't want a deal.

GRAY

Fifteen years and you don't even
have to say you did it.

MARK

I didn't do it.

GRAY

They are going to ask for the death
penalty, son.

MARK

I won't stand up in court and say I did it. I am innocent and I thought you believed me.

TYLER

The state has a good case.

Gray glares at Tyler.

Tyler shrugs.

GRAY

Technically you're not saying you did anything. You're just pleading guilty to the crime, nothing else.

MARK

That's the same as saying I did it.

GRAY

You could get out in fifteen years.

MARK

Do you really think they'll let a confessed serial killer out?

GRAY

It's technically not confessing.

MARK

I plead guilty and for the rest of time I will be that guy.

GRAY

Are you sure?

Mark nods.

Gray turns to the Prosecution. He shakes his head.

The COURT CLERK walks in.

COURT CLERK

ALL RISE!

Everyone stands up.

Judge TOM GRONKOWITZ (mid 50s) walks in.

He's older than he looks, balding with thick glasses.

The Judge sits down.

COURT CLERK (CONT'D)

Court is now in session. The People
versus Mark Morris on six counts of
murder in the first degree.

AURORA

Aurora Slade for the people.

TYLER

Tyler Minshaw and Grayson Collins
for the defense, your honor.

JUDGE TOM

How does the defendant plead?

Gray turns to Mark.

GRAY

(hushed)

Last chance.

Mark thinks about it for a moment. He looks at Gray and then
looks at the judge.

MARK

Not guilty, your honor.

The court room explodes.

The Judge hammers the gavel.

END OF SHOW