

Killings of the Land

By

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TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. MIA'S CAR - DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

The full moon is embedded in the clear sky.

MIA HARRIS (black, late 20s, astute) pulls up to the sidewalk and waits inside her vehicle.

She's dressed in black leggings and a black jacket, and her long hair is tied behind her. She's a woman on a mission.

A distance away is Monument Circle.

She's parked near an alley outside a bar with a lit sign that reads, "TIBBS BAR".

Even though it's late, it's bustling down here. Bar and club signs are lit up. The police directs traffic.

A TRUMPET PLAYER on the sidewalk a distance away dressed in a torn jacket plays for those who pass by.

Mia peeks into the alley and sees no one there. She fiddles with her thumbs, taps on the steering wheel. She then gazes at a photo.

The photo is the mugshot of PAUL DANNEY (late 50s, white, cognitively impaired). His cheek is smeared in dirt. His mouth is half open as his eyes squint.

Mia records a video of herself with her phone.

MIA

Hi, everyone. It's Mia of True Crime Nightmares, and right now I'm parked outside of Tibb's. I'm waiting to see if Paul Daney will make an appearance.

To the camera, Mia reveals the mugshot.

MIA (CONT'D)

He's some homeless drifter, and I got intel that he frequents the alley here to dumpster dive. The police did arrest him last week but let him go when they couldn't find anything to charge him with.

(MORE)

MIA (CONT'D)
Well, now they're looking for him
again, but they can't seem to find
him, of course!

Mia sighs, exasperated.

She glances out her window to see a HOMELESS MAN dressed in a dingy trench coat and dirty shoes stroll into the alley. The man glances her way. It's not Paul.

INT. MIA'S CAR - DOWNTOWN - NIGHT - LATER

Downtown isn't bustling anymore.

Mia can hear the chirping of cicadas.

She yawns as she dangles her POCKET KNIFE.

Paul, unbeknownst to Mia, makes an appearance with his shopping cart and treads into the alley toward the dumpster.

He's dressed in a dirty trench coat and sneakers nearly falling to pieces.

Mia sees the man now, though didn't get a glimpse of his face. She tries to peek at it, though Paul is already gone.

She takes a deep breath, puts the knife away in her jacket pocket, and climbs out of the car.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - CONTINUES

Mia closes the door of her vehicle and cautiously treads into the dim-lit alley.

In the alley, there are a few dumpsters full of garbage. There is trash tossed all on the ground from sheets of paper to food.

Rummaging through one of the dumpsters is Paul as he limps from one dumpster to another with his cart. He loads cans, food, and anything of use into his cart.

Mia gets a glimpse of Paul's profile. She comes to a halt.

It's definitely Paul.

She takes out her phone and records him dumpster diving, though only for a few seconds.

She turns heel nearly tripping over an empty, broken bottle on the ground.

Paul glances behind him and sees her with her back to him heading out of the alley.

As she rushes back to her car, he tosses a can back into the dumpster and limps toward her.

MIA
(in phone)
Detective Sherman? It's Mia Harris.
I found Paul Daney. I'm downtown in
front of Tibbs bar. Call me back.

She hangs up the phone and climbs into the driver's side of her car. Mia records herself on her phone.

MIA (CONT'D)
Looks like Paul has made an
appearance. If you're new to this
segment of my show, two black women
went missing a few weeks apart in
Indianapolis. One was found in a
dumpster and the other was found in
an alley downtown. Both were
sexually assaulted and died by
strangulation. What I'm
investigating is whether or not
black women are being targeted, and
if so, is it the work of a serial
killer, and if we are being
targeted, the police aren't telling
us because they aren't taking this
seriously! Black women are going
missing, and-

Mia glances into the alley. No Paul. She furrows her brows.

Paul is at the window as he violently opens the driver's side door.

Mia's eyes widen in horror.

Paul drags a screaming Mia out of the car as she struggles to get free. She pushes his face away and attempts to kick him.

He tosses her outside onto the pavement.

Mia tries to get to her feet, though Paul grabs her by the hair and slams Mia's head against the pavement.

She yelps out in a daze.

Paul glances at his car and tries to drag Mia toward it by the leg.

Mia kicks him. Hard.

He grimaces.

Mia struggles to stand.

Paul grabs her from behind.

MIA (CONT'D)
Let me go! Help!

He then flips her over and climbs on top of her as she flails her arms and shrieks.

Paul covers his ears and closes his eyes.

PAUL
Shhh-!

Mia tries to swipe his face.

Paul wraps his hands around her neck and squeezes.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Stop yellin'!

Mia gasps for air as she digs her nails into his wrists and swipes at his cheek.

Paul whines like a child. He palpates his cheek to see if there is blood.

PAUL (CONT'D)
You hurt me. You hurt me!

MIA
Get off me!

Paul pushes her hands away as she tries to swipe at his eyes.

PAUL
Stop it!

MIA
Get off!

Mia and Paul struggle with one another as Mia puts up a fight as she shrieks.

He wraps his hands back around her throat once again.

Mia pounds on his arms to get him to let her go, though he only squeezes more.

She gasps for air.

Her arms lose strength.

Just as she loses consciousness...

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF TEASER.

ACT I

SUPER: TWO WEEKS EARLIER

INT. HOUSE - MIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room is dim-lit.

In the corner is a camera set up with a white backdrop and two LED lights on tripod stands. Looks like a setup for self-auditions.

Next to the bed is a nightstand with prescription bottles of antidepressants and anti-anxiety meds on it.

Mia rummages through a SHOEBOX that's full of photos and old newspaper clippings.

She gazes at one photo after the other as she reminisces.

One is an old photo of Mia and her sister, JANET HARRIS (mid 20s, black, pretty), grinning next to each other in the same room she's in.

Mia appears a little younger with her hair tied back.

Mia then stands up and faces the bulletin board on her wall. She pins the picture on the board next to a newspaper clipping.

The headline reads, "MISSING WOMAN'S BODY IS FOUND" with a jovial photo of Janet. The date reads, "JULY 2015".

Underneath the picture is her name.

More newspaper clippings are scattered on the board.

One headline reads, "MISSING WOMAN FOUND DEAD." Below it is a picture of a PRETTY WOMAN (20s, black). The date reads, "JANUARY 2015".

Another headline on a newspaper clipping reads, "MISSING WOMAN HAS BEEN FOUND DEAD".

Under it is another photo of MODEL (20s, black, pretty), and the date reads, "OCTOBER 2015".

Mia sits at her desk and gets onto her laptop. She gets on social media, and a post from ABC News pops up.

The post reads, "BREANNE SMITH, THE BLACK WOMAN FATALITY SHOT BY POLICE".

Mia scrolls through her feed.

A post from local news, FOX 59, pops up.

The post reads, "MISSING INDIANAPOLIS WOMAN: WHAT DO WE KNOW?"

Below the text is a picture of MICHELLE LEWIS (black, 20s). She has pretty, brown skin and long, dark hair.

Under the photo reads her name.

LEEANN (O.S.)

Mia!

KNOCK KNOCK.

Mia, startled, pushes the shoebox back under the bed then opens the door.

LEEANN HARRIS (late 50s, black, narcissist) in her robe stands there with folders filled with paper.

MIA

Yes, ma?

LEEANN

What did I tell you?

LeeAnn pushes the folders onto Mia.

A newspaper clipping from the folder tumbles onto the carpeted floor.

On it is a picture of a body under a white sheet.

LEEANN (CONT'D)

I don't need this kind of stuff
lying around for me or your brother
to find. What are you doing with
this anyway?

MIA

It's for my YouTube channel.

LEEANN

Of course it is. Where is my rent
money?

MIA

I get paid Friday.

LEEANN

Hmph. Maybe find a job that pays me
on time besides doing those little
videos of yours.

LeeAnn treads off to her room.

BRIAN (black, early 20s, chubby) stands outside his room in a
sweatshirt zipped up to his neck. He has watched all this go
down.

Mia sighs and closes the bedroom door.

She goes toward her desk and glances out the window.

Her neighbor, JUSTINE (60s), scrambles inside her own house
as she struggles with the groceries in her arms.

EXT. CAMPUS - NIGHT

On the sidewalk and intersection is an ongoing protest.

They have their posters up as they chant, "BLACK WOMEN
MATTER".

SEVERAL PROTESTERS hold signs with a BLACK WOMAN's smiling
face on it. Another poster reads, "POLICE BRUTALITY MUST
END".

Mia makes her way through the crowd toward the library.

INT. CAMPUS LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

The university library is crowded with COLLEGE STUDENTS. Some
are at computers while others are at the circular tables
being studious.

Mia heads to the library as STUDENTS come and go. Over her
shoulder is a bag pack.

She takes out a list from her jacket pocket.

CUT TO:

INT. CAMPUS LIBRARY - NIGHT - LATER

Mia grabs a BOOK from the bookshelf. She takes a peek at the
cover of the book. It reads, "SERIAL KILLERS IN THE UNITED
STATES".

She strides up to SCOTT (early 20s, creamy skin), who checks
out a STUDENT'S book from behind the counter.

Behind him, his laptop is open.

Mia's turn. She hands Scott the book.

Scott pushes his glasses up on his nose.

SCOTT
Another one, Mia?

MIA
It's for class this time.

SCOTT
They have you reading about serial
killers?

MIA
What's the point in studying
psychology if not, right?

Scott chuckles.

Mia glances at Scott's computer screen.

"BREAKING NEWS" on a post crosses the screen.

MIA (CONT'D)
Hey, click on that.

Scott clicks on the news program.

INT. ALLEY - NIGHT

On the computer screen is JAMES O'NEAL (white, 40s,
ambitious) in the field in an alley that's roped off.

JAMES
(to the audience)
I got a tip that a body fitting
Michelle Lewis's description was
found in this alley tonight.

A young cop in uniform named KYLE (mid 20s, white, curious)
observes this all as he tries to keep a crowd at bay.

PARAMEDICS (male, 50s) push a covered body on a stretcher.

The camera gets a close up of it.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Is it her? Is it Michelle Lewis?

COP
We don't know for sure.

Kyle glances at the reporter as James faces the camera.

JAMES
Breaking news. The body of a black woman has been found matching the description of Michelle Lewis, the missing woman that the city rallied for to return home.

A PHOTO of Michelle Lewis appears on the screen.

Back to James on screen.

JAMES (ON TV) (CONT'D)
The police aren't talking to reporters at this time, but once we have more info, you'll be the first to know. This is James O'Neal reporting live.

INT. CAMPUS LIBRARY - NIGHT

The broadcast ends.

Back to Mia and Scott.

MIA
It's Michelle Lewis. The police really failed her.

SCOTT
You're into true crime. What could they have done?

MIA
I'm not the police, Scott.

Scott chuckles and checks out the book. He hands it back to Mia.

MIA (CONT'D)
I read a little about her. She was an aspiring actress too. Her grandmother's last living granddaughter. Her mother just passed away a year ago.

SCOTT
That is sad.

MIA
Yeah. Well...

Mia shrugs.

SCOTT
Hey. I have two tickets for a play
Saturday night. I was wondering-Um-
If you wanted to see it with me.

Mia is taken aback, though composes herself.

MIA
You're 21. I'm 28, love.

SCOTT
So you remind me.

MIA
You do know I work at the theater.

SCOTT
So you've seen the play?

MIA
Not yet...

SCOTT
Why not see it with me then?

Mia's grin fades, and she bites down on her lower lip.

MIA
I'm-I'm working that night. Sorry.

SCOTT
It's okay. Maybe next time.

Mia awkwardly grins.

MIA
S-See you later.

Mia strides out of the library with her books.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

MARIAH FAYE (black, mid 20s, pretty) ambles down a sidewalk
with a bright smile on her face dressed in a black skirt and
heels.

She talks on the phone and carries multiple desert boxes,
nearly dropping them.

MARIAH

(in phone)

Dad, I'll talk to you about it when I get home! But yes, they signed me! I'm officially a model!

Mariah straightens up the boxes she carries.

MARIAH (CONT'D)

Oh, just picking up a little something to celebrate your last day of chemo.

Mariah fumbles for her keys.

MARIAH (CONT'D)

Yes, Dad. I know. There are still people out. Anyway, I got you a dessert. I can't wait to see the look on your face.

Mariah comes to a halt as she fumbles for the keys and nearly drops the boxes.

MARIAH (CONT'D)

I'm not telling you where-You'll see! And this is to celebrate! You're cancer free!

Mariah continues to amble to her car.

MARIAH (CONT'D)

Yes, I'll be home in a few-

Mariah bumps into A FIGURE, a man. We don't see his face.

She looks up as she drops her phone.

INT. MIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mia sits at her study desk with her laptop facing her as she records a segment of her Youtube show.

MIA

Hello, all. Welcome back to Mia's True Crime Nightmares. We were talking about Caitlin Johnson, the black woman who was found stabbed to death in the doorway of her friend's apartment in Texas. The night she was found, she went to a Christmas party with some friends.

(MORE)

MIA (CONT'D)

That same night, she goes to her co-worker's house to study right after.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

CO-WORKER (woman, early 20s, white) hands CAITLIN JOHNSON (black, early 20s) a KEY.

Caitlin is dressed in scrubs and holds a couple textbooks to her chest.

The co-worker, who's also dressed in scrubs, waves goodbye and steps out the small apartment.

Caitlin pushes her glasses back on her nose. She sits down on the cushy, pale white sofa.

On the coffee table is a couple textbooks. Caitlin grabs one and opens it up.

MIA (V.O.)

According to the police, Caitlin's boyfriend, or ex-boyfriend, showed up at the co-worker's house that night after a big fight that happened earlier in the day. Now this guy, Thomas Mase, has a history of domestic violence. He once beat on his ex-girlfriend after finding out she was pregnant and was charged and found guilty. But the neighbors heard no noise. No struggle inside the apartment during the time he was supposedly there.

Outside the window, Caitlin hears a trash bin opening and being slammed shut over and over again.

Caitlin tries to read her textbook, but the noise outside won't stop. She furrows her brows and rises from her seat.

EXT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Caitlin emerges from the apartment building.

MIA (V.O.)
The neighbors did hear a commotion
outside though.

WHEN...

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Caitlin slams the door shut and locks it. She backs away from it...

THUD. THUD.

Caitlin stumbles back.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. MIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mia back at her desk on her laptop recording herself...

MIA
That's all we know in regards to
what led up to her death. The ex-
boyfriend swears his innocence.

Mia glances at Janet's photo on the board.

MIA (CONT'D)
What we can't forget is that a
woman lost her life. A woman with
her life ahead of her. She had a
family. She was a daughter. She
took care of people. So never
forget that these young women
aren't numbers. They're people. Now
there you have it. This case is
still ongoing so once I get more
details, I'll post another video.
Sleep tight, everyone.

Mia stops recording.

INT. MIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Several psychology textbooks are spread out on her desk.

Mia starts a web search on the missing woman that was found
earlier tonight.

The text reads, "THE BODY OF MICHELLE LEWIS WAS DISCOVERED TODAY". Next to the text is an image of a body on a stretcher covered by a white sheet.

INT. THEATER - LOBBY - NIGHT

Mia and ARTHUR SLOAN (50s, white, flamboyant) scan the tickets of PATRONS at the entrance.

It's a packed house tonight.

Behind the bar is NIKI (50s) serving the drinking population.

INT. THEATER - LOBBY - NIGHT - LATER

Mia scans the last ticket then sighs. She closes the double glass doors as the patrons head into the house.

Arthur steps into the lobby.

The top button of his shirt is unbuttoned, which shows a sliver of chest hair.

ARTHUR
Was that the last of them, hun?

MIA
Yup.

ARTHUR
Good. Thanks for working tonight,
honey, but it's Saturday.

Mia shrugs.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
I hope this isn't interfering with
homework, yeah?

MIA
Arthur, believe it or not, I'm
actually doing okay.

ARTHUR
Just okay, hm?

Mia side eyes him.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

You're doing too much, hun.
College, on top of working the
hours you do and doing that Youtube
show of yours. Slow down, honey.
You'll miss out on life.

MIA

Hey now. My sister worked two jobs
and went to school. If she can do
it, I can too.

ARTHUR

And you remember how she would walk
in here and take a nap before we
opened doors.

MIA

Ha, yeah. Where didn't she lie her
head?

ARTHUR

You know we're holding auditions
soon. Will I get to see parading on
stage?

MIA

Give me the one-liners. I just want
to say-
(in an English accent)
"Here's your tea, good sir!"

Niki pours vodka into three shot glasses.

NIKI

Hey, guys! Shots!

Arthur frowns at Niki.

NIKI (CONT'D)

What?

EXT. DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

Mia ambles on the sidewalk as she looks around focused on her
surroundings.

People are still out this late at night, though Mia seems on
edge .

A MAN treads toward Mia with his hands deep in his pocket.

Mia grabs the pocket knife in her jacket pocket, and the handle slithers out just in case she needs it.

As the man gets closer, she holds her breath. He treads past her.

Mia takes a deep breath. She glances behind her and sees that the man is now a distance away from her.

Mia's attention is caught on a CROWD near an alley across the street with SEVERAL POLICE OFFICERS, who keep them at bay.

The crowd murmurs.

FEMALE IN CROWD

Is that what I think it is? Oh my
God.

POLICE OFFICER 1

Stay back! Move!

Mia crosses the street toward the crowd as an officer leads Paul in handcuffs toward a squad car.

In between several full trash bags is the LIFELESS BODY of Mariah.

Her long, black hair is matted on her head. Her brown skin is now pale. Her manicured nails are chipped.

END OF ACT I.

ACT II

INT. MIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mia sits in her dark room at her desk in front of her open laptop talking into the camera. She records herself.

MIA

Two black women went missing a few weeks apart, and their bodies were recently found. The police have no leads, and this is barely getting any attention. I'm sure some of you are wondering why that is. Black women going missing isn't anything new nor has the media or police ever given attention to this problem. What's different this time is that black women have the spotlight on them with the Black Lives Matter Movement and the recent police killings. It's Black women that are out there protesting and bringing attention to police brutality. Now two black women have been killed.

Mia hits pause on her camera, takes a deep breath, then continues the recording.

MIA (CONT'D)

Who were the victims? First, there's Michelle Lewis, an aspiring actress. She loved the theater and enjoyed sewing and singing karaoke. Mariah Faye was an aspiring model whose day job was working as a certified nursing assistant. She had a two year old daughter and enjoyed taking care of her and her father, who is a cancer-survivor.

Mia hesitates then hits pause.

She rises from her seat and heads to the white board and sticks a photo of Mariah onto it next to Michelle's.

Mia gazes at the photo of Janet on the board then takes out the shoebox from under her bed.

She plants herself on the carpeted floor and goes through the shoebox of photos of her and Janet.

One of the photos is of Mia, Janet, and Brian with their arms around each other in front of the Christmas tree, all in pajamas.

Another photo is of Janet as she walks the runway.

There's a knock at the door.

Mia climbs to her feet and opens it.

Brian stands there.

BRIAN

Can I ask you something?

His face is blank, and his tone lacks depth.

MIA

What's up?

BRIAN

How do guys ask you out?

MIA

I don't know. They just say 'Can I take you out' or something. Why?

BRIAN

What would make you say no?

Mia ponders and a worried expression crosses her face for just a second.

MIA

I'm not ready for all of that so that would make me decline.

BRIAN

Because of what happened to Janet?

This catches Mia off guard.

Brian just waits for a response with a blank expression.

MIA

I-I'm just thinking about getting through the semester.

Brian blinks with a blank expression.

BRIAN

Why would a girl say no?

MIA
Because she's not interested.

Brian glances down and ponders hard.

Mia, teasingly, asks:

MIA (CONT'D)
You planning to ask a girl out?

BRIAN
I don't know.

MIA
Well, when you do, the worst she
can do is say no.

Brian opens his mouth to say something.

LEEANN (O.S.)
Brian?! What did I say about this
bathroom?

Brian grimaces.

MIA
Just clean it. She's having a bad
week.

BRIAN
Yeah, it is getting close to
Janet's birthday.

Off Brian goes to leave Mia to her own thoughts.

INT. CAMPUS LIBRARY - DAY

Mia approaches the counter, where Scott is. She hands him the
books she checked out before.

SCOTT
Are you done reading about serial
killers?

MIA
For now. I didn't see you at the
theater. Did you not end up going?

SCOTT
I kind of just wanted to take you.

MIA
O-Oh?

SCOTT

Yeah. Let me know when you have a day off.

MIA

O-Okay. Sure.

Scott grins.

MIA (CONT'D)

Um-Did you hear that they found a body downtown?

SCOTT

They found a body? A dead body?

MIA

Haven't been watching the news, I see.

SCOTT

I don't exactly follow things like that.

MIA

Just Neil DeGrasse Tyson, huh?

Scott chuckles.

SCOTT

You have to admit he has interesting views.

MIA

Yeah, I'm going to have to disagree, but I think I'm going to talk to the police and see what I can do.

SCOTT

Why?

MIA

What do you mean 'why'?

SCOTT

I don't think there's much you can do. I don't know. I just feel that women shouldn't put themselves in situations where things like that can happen.

MIA

Excuse me? You're victim blaming here. We should be able to feel safe.

SCOTT

Yeah, but-

MIA

No. Women should be able to walk around freely in public spaces and feel safe. Women feeling unsafe shouldn't be normal.

SCOTT

You're right. You're right.

MIA

I know I'm right.

Scott chuckles.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

DETECTIVE SHERMAN (50s, white, stubborn) sits at one of the tiny tables outside as he sips on a cup of coffee and eats his bagel.

He wears brown slacks and a button up, white shirt, and on his hip is a gun in a holster.

Mia appears, pulls out the chair, and sits across from the detective.

He sighs.

DETECTIVE SHERMAN

Yes, Ms. Harris?

MIA

I'm not here to talk about Janet, Detective Sherman. I'm here to talk about the two women, who were recently found. Michelle Lewis and Mariah Faye.

Detective Sherman wipes the bagel crumbs from his mouth.

MIA (CONT'D)

I think we're dealing with a serial killer.

Detective Sherman sips on his coffee.

DETECTIVE SHERMAN
'A serial killer'?

MIA
The killer has a preference,
wouldn't you say?

DETECTIVE SHERMAN
It's only been two women.

MIA
So you think. What about Janet?

DETECTIVE SHERMAN
So this does have to do with your
sister?

MIA
What about the way they were
killed. They were all strangled and
then sexually assaulted, yes? Janet
and Michelle were found in
dumpsters and I'm betting Mariah
was tossed in there too.

DETECTIVE SHERMAN
She wasn't found in a dumpster
though.

MIA
She was moved.

DETECTIVE SHERMAN
Out of the dumpster?

MIA
Yes!

The detective takes out a few dollars from his wallet and
places it on the table next to the bill.

DETECTIVE SHERMAN
Look, Ms. Harris. I understand how
you feel.

MIA
Was your sister raped and dumped in
a dumpster too?

DETECTIVE SHERMAN
You don't think we're trying to
find the culprit?

MIA

It's been eight years. Are you?

DETECTIVE SHERMAN

You're putting your feet in a ocean full of sharks. Stay away from the case and let us do our job.

MIA

Black women are being targeted, detective.

DETECTIVE SHERMAN

Why do you think black women are being targeted? Why now?

MIA

Because we don't matter. Janet didn't matter. People are seeing that now that the police are killing us too.

Detective Sherman clears his throat.

DETECTIVE SHERMAN

Ms. Harris, your sister's case isn't closed. I'm still doing everything in my power to find the SOB that did it.

Mia scowls.

The detective's phone goes off and he takes it out his jacket pocket to glance at the screen.

DETECTIVE SHERMAN (CONT'D)

Anything else?

Mia shakes her head, no.

Detective Sherman stands up.

DETECTIVE SHERMAN (CONT'D)

Good day, Ms. Harris.

Detective Sherman strides off and leaves Mia to gaze off into the distance.

INT. JAMES'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Newspaper clippings are scattered on the coffee table.

Folders with images of the two missing women are scattered on the floor.

James, the reporter, dressed in a wife beater sits in his recliner as he gulps down his glass of whiskey. On the floor next to his feet is the bottle.

A WOMAN OF THE EVENING (black, 20s) steps into the room from the corridor dressed in black mini skirt and matching heels.

WOMAN

That'll be two hundred, love.

James grabs his wallet from his back pocket and takes out two fifty dollar bills. He tosses it to her.

The woman scoffs then picks the money up from the carpeted floor.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Hey! This isn't what we agreed on!

JAMES

It's all I have.

WOMAN

Excuse me?

JAMES

That's all I have. Now get out.

WOMAN

Nah. You better pony up more-

James stumbles to his feet and grabs the woman by the throat.

James shoves the woman out of the house.

JAMES

Get the fuck out of here!

WOMAN

Hey-Hey!

He slams the door shut on the woman.

WOMAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Asshole!

James returns to his seat and scans the reports in the folders.

INT. HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Mia and Brian sit at the dining room table eating pasta as LeeAnn sips on a glass of wine.

Brian eats with his head low.

LEEANN

Isn't it just insane? No drinkin' water in Mississippi yet I bet they're still sendin' them a water bill.

MIA

It's just Jacksonville.

LEEANN

That's where the black people are! This government doesn't give a damn about us.

LeeAnn scoffs.

LEEANN (CONT'D)

Mississippi could give them their entire federal budget and it still wouldn't be enough to fix the damn problem. What the hell happened? I think the government poisoned the water.

BRIAN

The government? They won't give me my money.

LEEANN

That too! Where is my money? They promised us \$600. So where is it?

MIA

(under her breath)
Maybe it's for those working.

LEEANN

Excuse me?

MIA

I just think it's for people who have a job.

LEEANN

You don't think I work? Who do you think does the cookin' and cleanin' around here?

MIA
I didn't mean-

LEEANN
I do everything around here! What
do you do? Your little recordings?

Mia continues to eat her food as does Brian.

LEEANN (CONT'D)
How about you get a job? I'm tired
of you sittin' on that damn
computer.

MIA
I'm working on my show.

LEEANN
Give it up already. You're not
makin' any money.

MIA
It keeps the electricity on,
doesn't it?

LEEANN
What did you say? I keep the
electricity on. You just pay what
you add to it.

MIA
I forgot.

Mia rises, grabs her plate, and strides toward the kitchen.

LeeAnn takes a sip of wine from her glass.

LEEANN
Hmph. For those who have a job.

INT. MIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mia steps inside her room and slams the door behind her.

On her desk, the phone vibrates. It reads, "SCOTT ADAMS".

MIA
(in phone)
Hello?

SCOTT (ON PHONE)
Hey, I don't mean to call so late,
but this psychology homework has me
by the throat.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mia and Scott sit on the sofa.

Brian sits in the recliner as he watches television extra loud.

Scott glances at Brian then at Mia, who reads a textbook.

SCOTT
Is it possible to go to your room?

Mia tenses.

MIA
Um-it's a mess. Brian, turn that
down.

Brian uses the remote to turn down the television.

SCOTT
You know, I have never seen your
room.

MIA
It's-It's always a mess. Don't want
to embarrass myself.

SCOTT
It can't be that bad.

MIA
You don't know bad.

Scott chuckles then jots down notes in his notebook as Mia points to text in the textbook.

She glances at his notes.

MIA (CONT'D)
And there you have it.

SCOTT
Great. Thank you. Once again,
you've saved me.

MIA
You're welcome.

SCOTT

So I decided to look up the woman who was found. The one we were talking about.

MIA

Why?

SCOTT

You wanted to go to the police, right? Thought it would help.

Mia nods in approval.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Anyway, did you know she has a Facebook? She didn't use it much, but have you tried looking it up?

Mia opens her laptop that is on the coffee table and types away.

On the computer screen, Michelle Lewis's social media profile pops up.

Mia clicks on a photo of MICHELLE dressed in a black mini skirt and a floral pattern shirt.

MIA

That's what the police found her in. Check out her last picture? It's from months ago.

SCOTT

So?

MIA

I don't know. She didn't post much. Isn't it weird she posted a pic on the day she'd go missing?

Mia types away on the laptop and pulls up the social media profile of the second woman that was found.

Next to her profile picture, it reads her name, "MARIAH FAYE".

She clicks on the few photos of her and stops at the one where Mariah is dressed in what she went missing in.

Mariah stands next to a window, where the sun lights up her profile.

MIA (CONT'D)

It's the same for Mariah Faye. She doesn't post pictures, but posted one the day she'd go missing?

SCOTT

Where were they going?

MIA

Or coming from.

SCOTT

It would be nice if you could talk to someone who's been following this.

A lightbulb goes off in Mia's head.

INT. BAR - DAY

Mia sits at the bar as she plays with the straw of her fruity drink.

The bar is scarce of people. Some POOL PLAYERS play pool to the side while a COUPLE PATRONS sit a distance away from Mia.

James strolls into the bar. He catches sight of Mia.

JAMES

Mia Harris?

MIA

That's me.

They shake hands, and James sits beside her on the stool.

MIA (CONT'D)

What can I get you, James?

JAMES

Since you're buying, I'll take a bourbon. Neat.

The BARTENDER (40s) approaches James.

MIA

He'll take a bourbon. Neat. Put it on my tab?

The bartender nods, okay.

Off goes the bartender to make his drink.

JAMES

I watched an episode of your show.
The one about Faryion Wardrip.

MIA

And?

JAMES

I think you have a knack for
storytelling. You could be a
journalist.

MIA

I mean, that's what I do, but I'm
afraid that if it became a job, the
passion would fizz out.

JAMES

Doesn't that happen to all dreams
that turn into jobs?

MIA

Well, not if you love it.

The bartender places James's drink in front of him and steps
away.

James gulps down the bourbon.

JAMES

So what do you got for me?

Mia takes out her phone and puts it on the bar. She shows
various PHOTOS of Michelle and Mariah dressed in leggings or
jeans. Casual clothing.

The last photo they took the night they went missing pops up.

James takes hold of the phone.

MIA

That's what the police found them
in.

JAMES

So?

MIA

They took pictures the day they
went missing. Didn't you talk to
the family? What did they say?
Where did they go?

JAMES

Michelle's family didn't know, and
Mariah's dad said she was buying
him dessert.

MIA

Isn't that something to go on?

James takes a swig from his drink.

Mia ponders.

MIA (CONT'D)

What are his favorite dessert
spots?

JAMES

He likes donuts and cakes. He was
able to tell me that she had just
left a modeling agency.

MIA

Did you talk to them?

JAMES

All they could tell me was they
signed her that day.

Mia's shoulders slump.

MIA

Every actor and models' dream. To
hear those words, "We want to sign
you".

A lightbulb goes off in her head.

JAMES

What?

MIA

Michelle was an actress.

JAMES

So?

MIA

Mariah was a model.

James takes it all in. He nods, okay.

JAMES

You think someone is targeting
artists?

MIA
Not just artists. Black women who
are artists.

James crosses his arms.

MIA (CONT'D)
My sister...She was a model too.

Mia and James exchange glances.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

James ambles up to his apartment door with a set of keys.

WHEN...

...A MAN takes a bat and strikes James in the back.

James shrieks as he falls forward.

The woman of the evening ambles up with a grin.

The woman's PIMP stomps on James as he yelps out.

PIMP
Get his wallet.

The woman of the evening jams her hand into the pants pocket of James and retrieves his wallet. She takes out all the bills then tosses the wallet at James.

WOMAN
Hmph. Maybe next time pay me.

The pimp and woman stride off.

James moans as he struggles to his feet.

INT. THEATER - LOBBY - DAY

The lobby is clear. Not a patron in sight.

Mia tosses a bag of trash into the trash can.

Niki stands behind the bar as she puts things away.

Mia approaches the bar as she takes a deep breath and leans over it.

NIKI
Need a little something?

MIA
Yesssss. Chardonnay please.

NIKI
You got it. Don't tell Arthur.

Niki pours a glass of white wine and hands it to Mia. She then pours herself one.

MIA
What a day.

NIKI
You're telling me! I cleared a grand.

MIA
No joke?

NIKI
None.

Mia and Niki finish their drinks.

MIA
I'll be right back. I'm going to see if Arthur has enough pictures for the marketing campaign.

INT. THEATER - OFFICE - DAY

Mia knocks on the door. It CREAKS open, and she steps inside.

The office is cozy. A carpeted floor, a small desk in the back, gigantic photos from plays that have taken place over the years hang on the walls.

She glances at the computer screen where there are photos and videos of patrons. She looks through them.

Each patron seems to be dressed for the evening and smiles for the camera.

She scrolls past a video of a pretty, young, black woman

She furrows her brows and returns to the video and hits play. Her eyes widen in shock.

It's of Michelle Lewis dressed in the very outfit she was discovered in.

Mia presses play on the video. On the computer, a video plays.

MICHELLE (ON PC)

My name is Michelle Lewis, and I love coming to the theater because I'm transported into a story. I admire the actors who transform into these characters and are able to tell these magical stories. One thing I would change is being on the stage myself. I'd love a chance to help one of those stories, and-

Mia pauses the video with a quivering hand.

END OF ACT II.

ACT III

INT. THEATER - OFFICE - DAY

Mia has just played the video for Arthur. His eyes are wide.

ARTHUR

Oh, honey. I hadn't realized. We interviewed thirty people that night.

MIA

Yeah, but this could be her last known location. We have to tell the police.

Mia's phone vibrates. It's a text. She reads it and scowls.

MIA (CONT'D)

I have an emergency. Is it all right if I leave a little early?

ARTHUR

What's going on?

MIA

Brian.

ARTHUR

Yeah, go on ahead.

MIA

Thank you, Arthur.

Mia strides out of the office.

Arthur watches her leave shakes his head.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Mia and TIM (40s) amble down the corridor, Tim in a rush and Mia following behind.

TIM

Look, I just can't have him goin' off on every dick and tom that pisses him off.

MIA

Tim, how long have we known each other? Come on.

TIM

Look, I really can't have your brother here anymore.

MIA

You know how he is and the slightest from someone can upset him. He's really trying. Also, he's your best employee. Who puts in the hours that he does?

TIM

Mia-

MIA

Maybe give him a position where he's not next to any assholes.

TIM

Everyone here is an asshole.

MIA

Please? He's been doing so well since he started.

Tim deeply sighs.

TIM

Fine. Fine. One more chance.

MIA

Thank you, Tim.

TIM

Yeah-Yeah.

Tim turns the corner.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Mia and Brian exit the one story, brick warehouse and head across the street to the crowded parking lot.

MIA

What was it this time?

BRIAN

They started it! They wouldn't leave me alone!

MIA

You know how people are. When I was picked on here, I had to put up a fight too, but in a way that wouldn't get me fired.

BRIAN

They're assholes. Why did you work here anyway?

MIA

I needed money, and you're right so don't lose your job for them. And yeah, assholes.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Detective Sherman is at his desk.

The police officer who was at the crime scene, Kyle, pours himself a cup of coffee at the counter. Kyle then glances at Detective Sherman.

Detective Sherman's phone goes off. He answers it and rises from his seat as he steps into the hall.

Kyle ambles toward the detective's desk with his cup of coffee and glances down.

On the desk are photos of Michelle and Mariah, along with folders.

Kyle scans over the photos and documents that are face up. He takes a sip of his coffee.

As Detective Sherman returns, Kyle ambles off as he sips on his coffee.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

A BLACK WOMAN (20s, pretty) treads on the side of the road carrying a gas can. She's bundled up yet the cool air causes her to shiver.

Scott, in his SUV, drives down the intersection and sees the woman. He pulls up beside her.

SCOTT

Hey, is everything okay?

BLACK WOMAN

Yeah. I ran out of gas.

She raises the gas can.

SCOTT
It's really cold tonight. Would you
like a lift? The closest gas
station is a three minute drive.

BLACK WOMAN
I don't know. I'm okay. Thank you.

SCOTT
Come on. It's freezing, and walking
downtown by yourself can be
dangerous.

BLACK WOMAN
Well...

Scott grins as he reaches over to open the passenger side
door.

INT. THEATER - DAY

Mia and James step inside.

JAMES
You told the police about the
video?

MIA
Of course. Why?

James goes to open his mouth.

NIKI
Well, hello there.

MIA
Is Arthur around?

ARTHUR (O.S.)
Here I am.

Arthur treads toward the two from a corridor. He glances at
James then at Mia.

MIA
Arthur, this is the reporter I've
been talking to.

James shows Arthur his WORK BADGE.

JAMES

Hi. James O'Neal from Channel 6 news. I'm covering the story on Michelle Lewis. According to Mia, she was last seen here.

ARTHUR

(to Mia)

We'll have around 500 patrons tonight. Can you help get things ready?

Mia nods and glances at James. Off she goes to the office, though leaves the door open.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

How may I help you, hun?

James takes out a notepad.

JAMES

Can I have your last name?

ARTHUR

Sloan.

Niki prepares the bar, though observes the two as she does.

JAMES

Mia said that you recorded a video of Michelle Lewis the night she went missing. May I see it?

ARTHUR

I gave it to the police.

JAMES

Don't you have a copy?

ARTHUR

I do.

The two gaze at one another.

James takes out his phone and shows Arthur an IMAGE of the body of Michelle.

Arthur turns away as he grimaces.

JAMES

Maybe you can recall something.

ARTHUR

I'm sorry. I guess she was here,
but I can't help you. She spoke on
camera along with thirty other
people.

JAMES

Is that normal? To record your
patrons?

ARTHUR

It's a new marketing tactic.

JAMES

Do you have cameras?

ARTHUR

We don't.

JAMES

Maybe she bought something at the
bar.

ARTHUR

Niki gets around 300 customers a
night so-

James strides up to Niki and shows a picture of Michelle
beaming in the face.

JAMES

Do you remember serving this woman
a month or so ago?

Niki looks over the photo.

NIKI

Actually, I do. I complimented her
dress.

JAMES

Was she alone?

NIKI

When she ordered, yeah.

JAMES

What did she order?

NIKI

Wine.

JAMES

Was she drunk?

NIKI

She didn't speak much at first, but
after a few drinks, she opened up.

JAMES

About what?

ARTHUR

Excuse me, but we're about to open.

JAMES

Just a few more questions. What did
she open up about?

Several PATRONS start to line up outside the double glass
doors.

ARTHUR

I'm sorry, but there's a schedule
we need to stay on.

Arthur glances at Niki, who returns to work. He accompanies
James to the exit.

James hands Arthur his business card.

JAMES

If you or your bartender can think
of anything else.

Arthur observes James leave the theater.

INT. THEATER - OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Back in the office, Mia has been listening in behind the
door.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Detective Sherman sits at his desk as he gazes at the mugshot
of Paul and the photo of Mariah. His desk is scattered with
folders and pictures.

One is of Michelle.

DETECTIVE CAINE (40s, female) strolls in.

DETECTIVE SHERMAN

How was Daney released?

DETECTIVE CAINE
You know we couldn't hold him, and
besides he was in another county's
jail the night Mariah went missing.

DETECTIVE SHERMAN
His semen was found in her.

DETECTIVE CAINE
We'll find him. He can't be far.

DETECTIVE SHERMAN
Forensics had to take the whole
three damn days to get back to us?

Kyle stands a distance away as he gets coffee and listens in.

DETECTIVE SHERMAN (CONT'D)
As soon as we get Daney in here, I
want to question him, Caine. You
hear me?

Detective Caine notices Michelle's photo.

DETECTIVE CAINE
You think it's the same person?

Detective Sherman leans back in his seat and crosses his arms
deep in thought.

DETECTIVE CAINE (CONT'D)
Oh, I should warn you. A reporter
got news of Daney, and you're not
going to like who.

Detective Sherman furrows his brows.

Detective Caine shrugs and strides to her desk.

Kyle steps toward Sherman with his cup of coffee.

KYLE
How's the case coming?

DETECTIVE SHERMAN
Why?

KYLE
Just wonderin'. You know I was
first on the scene.

DETECTIVE SHERMAN
That's right. You were at the right
place at the right time.

Kyle raises a brow.

DETECTIVE SHERMAN (CONT'D)
It was your first day on the job,
right?

KYLE
Yeah...I'm still shaken up with the
whole thing.

DETECTIVE SHERMAN
Hm.

KYLE
To just find her like that. I can't
get the image out of my mind.

DETECTIVE SHERMAN
Get used it to, rookie.

KYLE
Yeah. I better get back to it.

Kyle leaves the station as Sherman watches.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Planted on the edge of the sofa, Mia watches a news program
on television as she bites on her nails.

On the screen is James in the field as he talks on camera.

The screen cuts to Paul Daney's MUG SHOT.

Back to James on the screen.

JAMES (ON TV)
Again, Paul Daney's DNA was found
on Mariah, but because the police
let him go before getting results,
they don't currently know where he
is.

MIA
Of course. Of course!

Brian appears from the kitchen.

BRIAN
What's wrong?

MIA
Nothing. Don't you have a long day
tomorrow?

BRIAN
Are you going to do your show
tonight?

A lightbulb goes off in Mia's head.

INT. MIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mia sits at her desk and speaks into the laptop camera on
livestream.

MIA
We need to find this Paul Daney.
He's a homeless man whose DNA was
found in Mariah Faye. If anyone has
any leads, you know how to get in
touch, and I'm happy to credit you.
For every lead that leads me closer
to him, I'll give \$50. Get in
touch.

Mia stops recording.

On the screen is her email inbox full of messages, though
nothing new.

Mia waits...and waits...and waits.

BING.

A new message.

Mia opens the email.

It reads, "THAT PAUL DANEY FREQUENTS THE TIBBS BAR DOWNTOWN.
NO NEED TO PAY ME. GET JUSTICE!"

Mia closes her laptop.

INT. TIBBS BAR - NIGHT

Mia shows her ID to the BOUNCER (30s, burly). He lets her
through.

The bar is packed with PATRONS. On the walls are nature
paintings.

Mia ambles around with her hands deep in her pockets.

In the center of the bar in a chair is the homeless man asleep. Mia peers into his face then checks the image on her phone. It's not Paul.

Mia sits at the bar.

A BARTENDER approaches her.

BARTENDER
What would you like?

MIA
Maybe you can help me.

Mia shows a picture of Paul on her phone to the bartender.

MIA (CONT'D)
Have you seen this man before?

BARTENDER
Yeah. Wasn't he just on the news?
He's the one always going through
our dumpster on Sunday mornings.

EXT. ALLEY - DUSK

Paul Daney rummages through a dumpster. He wears a greasy trench coat and filthy sneakers.

Next to him is his shopping cart.

He pulls out a half eaten sandwich from the dumpster and nibbles on it.

MONICA (30s, pretty, tall) dressed in heels and a long skirt strides past the alley like a model with her hands deep in her pockets.

Paul Daney notices her.

END OF ACT III

ACT IV

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Brian is at his station using the fluid analysis equipment and electrodes to check the pH of different oils in tiny, plastic cups.

Across from him at another station is TONY (40s, white, shaven head) in a white t-shirt and jeans working on his own equipment.

Next to him is ASHLEY (20s, white, slim).

Ashley and Tony glance at each other then at Brian, who isn't paying them any attention.

TONY

You sure you know what you're doing
at your new station?

BRIAN

Yeah. I do. Back off.

TONY

Whoa, buddy! I was just asking a
question.

Tony snickers.

ASHLEY

Leave him alone, Tony.

BRIAN

Do you have a problem with me or
something?

TONY

Nope. Just asking a question.

Brian glances at Ashley, who mouths, "JUST IGNORE HIM."

EXT. PORCH - DAY

Mia treads up the porch, where Justine sits on her rocking chair with her two black cats.

MIA

Hi, Justine.

JUSTINE

Well, hello, Mia.

INT. NEIGHBOR'S DEN - DAY

Mia is planted on the edge of the couch as a black cat ambles across the room, though Mia doesn't notice.

Justine sits adjacent to her as she holds her other black kitten.

MIA

So Janet came home and then what?

JUSTINE

She came over. We chatted for a bit about someone she was seeing then she went jogging.

MIA

And she was seeing someone?

JUSTINE

Mia, you ask me these questions every year. What's going on?

MIA

I'm just trying to understand-Why didn't she mention this to ma?

JUSTINE

You know Janet wasn't close to LeeAnn. I was the one that babysit you all when your mother worked nights. She just wanted to talk to someone familiar.

MIA

And you never met him.

JUSTINE

No.

MIA

Do you know anything about him?

JUSTINE

No, I'm sorry.

MIA

Did you tell the police everything you know?

JUSTINE

I did.

Mia ponders.

MIA

Did she tell you when she was going to see him again?

JUSTINE

Actually, yes. She was meeting him that day.

MIA

And she didn't tell you anything about him?

JUSTINE

No. Well, actually. I know he was white.

MIA

Really?

JUSTINE

She was nervous about that.

News to Mia.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

I think she was waiting to tell you. It wasn't anything serious.

MIA

I should've known. I should've been there. She-She had asked me if I was free that day. I didn't know. I wasn't there for her.

JUSTINE

Don't go blaming yourself for what happened, dear. You'll never make it out in one piece.

Mia's phone goes off. She answers it.

MIA

(in phone)

Hello?

INT. WAREHOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

Mia sits across the cluttered desk from Tim in the middle of a conversation.

On each side of Tim are a couple of house plants in the corner.

TIM

Mia, he sent a text to Ashley, and it wasn't to say hi. I can't allow this kind of behavior.

MIA

I don't know why he would do something like this.

TIM

I'm responsible for everyone here, and if someone doesn't feel safe, I have to do something.

MIA

It was a text.

TIM

Be that as it may, your brother can't work here anymore. I'm sorry.

MIA

Yeah. I'm sure you are.

Mia storms out as she slams the door behind her.

INT. CAR - DAY

Mia sits in the driver's side while Brian sulks beside her.

MIA

What were you thinking, Brian? Texting her? Putting words in writing? What has ma said time and time again?

BRIAN

She betrayed me! She was supposed to be my friend!

MIA

What even happened?

BRIAN

I asked her if she wanted to go out with me.

MIA

Oh...

BRIAN

She said no. I asked her why, and...

Mia gazes at Brian.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Nothing.

MIA

Brian, you don't have a job anymore. Something happened. What?

BRIAN

She was talking about my weight.

MIA

Why did she bring up your weight?

BRIAN

I don't know! Okay! Can we go home?

Mia shakes her head, no.

MIA

You'll have to find another one. Soon. You know how ma gets. When she finds out...

BRIAN

Don't tell her.

MIA

I'm sure she'll realize once she sees you at home all day, Brian. Tell me what happened.

BRIAN

That's all that happened.

MIA

Why did you send her a message? What is wrong with you?

BRIAN

I love her! Okay! I love her! and she made fun of my weight! She made fun of me!

Brian breaks down in tears.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

I love her!

Mia listens to him cry into his hands and scream. That's all she can really do.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

A protest is happening.

A CROWD has gathered outside with signs that read, "BRING HOME OUR BLACK GIRLS" and "JUSTICE FOR MICHELLE and MARIAH".

Some hold signs that read, "BLACK WOMEN MATTER".

Most of the crowd is black.

SEVERAL POLICE OFFICERS keep the crowd at bay and that includes Kyle.

James climbs out of the van with his CAMERA MAN and rushes into the crowd.

Detective Sherman steps out of the police station.

A PROTESTOR (woman, 60s, black) steps forward.

PROTESTOR

What are you doin' about the two women who were found? Why aren't we gettin' updates? I'm only seein' posts about this on Twitter, and that's from us!

DETECTIVE SHERMAN

We are working around the clock to bring justice to these women. We are-

PROTESTOR

Why aren't we hearin' anything about the investigation? Why isn't there a suspect yet? Why was Paul Daney released when his DNA was found on that poor girl?

James's cameraman has the camera pointed directly at the protestor.

Other news outlets pull up.

The protestors get riled up.

DETECTIVE SHERMAN

He was released before we found out about the DNA. We're currently looking for him and-

PROTESTOR

You were the one who let him go!
What about Monica Thompson?

PROTESTORS

We want justice! We want justice!
We want justice!

DETECTIVE SHERMAN

Please!

James nearly gets crushed by the crowd as the protestors shout for justice.

Kyle glances around. His eyes meet Detective Sherman.

Mia pushes through the crowd until she reaches the front.

MIA

Excuse me! Excuse me!

She holds up her phone to Detective Sherman and presses record.

MIA (CONT'D)

This is for Detective Sherman! Are we dealing with a serial killer?

DETECTIVE SHERMAN

What?

PROTESTOR

Answer her question!

MIA

Three black women have gone missing and two bodies were found. Are we being targeted?

DETECTIVE SHERMAN

There is no evidence that-

MIA

Are we being targeted and is it by a serial killer?

The protestors wait with bated breath.

DETECTIVE SHERMAN

At this time, we cannot say.

This riles up the crowd.

Mia and James catch each other's eyes as the crowd once again chants for justice.

INT. BAR - DAY

Mia and James sit at the bar as they both sip on a drink.

Mia's is a fruity drink with a straw, while James's is a bourbon. Neat.

JAMES

You can't throw those words around.
'Serial killer'. You'll get the
whole city worked up.

MIA

It should be worked up. If we were
dealing with missing white women,
it would be worked up, and why
aren't there more stories on them?

JAMES

There will be. Give me time.

MIA

You're the only one covering this!
Do black women not matter to this
country? I know we're invisible,
but for once, can we be seen?

JAMES

Didn't you say you had something
for me?

MIA

Yeah. I think I know where to find
Paul Daney.

JAMES

It wasn't his DNA under her
fingernails.

MIA

Yeah, well-I got a tip that he
frequents Tibbs Bar. He dumpster
dives Sunday mornings.

JAMES

We should tip off the police on
this one. Let them handle him.

MIA
You want to wait for the very
people who aren't doing anything?

JAMES
You want to go look for him?

MIA
Kind of. Yeah.

JAMES
I don't need to point my finger at
the man, and he's actually not our
guy. I won't let that happen again.

MIA
You have a story to share?

James takes a swig of his drink.

INT. MIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mia is at her desk on her laptop. She finds numerous articles
from James.

The last article she finds reads, "HUSBAND CONVICTED IN THE
KILLING OF HIS WIFE. JUSTICE IS SERVED."

Under it, it reads, "WRITTEN BY JAMES O'NEAL".

Mia furrows her brows.

She does a search on the husband.

One article reads, "HUSBAND FOUND INNOCENT IN THE MURDER OF
HIS WIFE."

Mia checks the time on her phone and rises. She puts on her
black jacket, grabs her keys and pocket knife, and leaves her
room.

EXT. ALLEY OF TIBBS BAR - NIGHT

Back to the teaser...

Paul's grip around Mia's neck tightens as she starts to lose
consciousness.

Mia takes out her pocket knife from her jacket pocket and
plunges it into Paul's thigh.

Paul yells out.

Mia climbs to her feet and sprints out of the alley.
She hears police sirens that get nearer and nearer.

END OF ACT IV

ACT V

EXT. TIBBS BAR - DAY

Mia sits in Detective Sherman's car with a sheet that covers her. She shivers from the chilled air or from fear.

Directly in front of her is Detective Sherman and Caine with pen and paper ready.

Paul is on the sidewalk handcuffed.

PAUL

She stabbed me! Why she stab me?

CUT TO:

Outside the car, Mia and Sherman gaze at one another. He grimaces.

DETECTIVE CAINE

...I'll go question Daney.

Off Detective Caine goes.

DETECTIVE SHERMAN

You want to tell me what the hell happened? What the hell were you doin' here?

MIA

Maybe check your voicemail!

Detective Sherman takes out his phone and listens to the voicemail.

CUT TO:

Arthur parks his BLACK SUV and leaps out of it. He rushes to Mia's side.

Mia and Arthur hug.

ARTHUR

Are you okay, hun?

Mia nods, yes.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

What were you thinking?

DETECTIVE SHERMAN

That's what I'd like to know.

Detective Sherman puts his phone away.

MIA

I was doing your job for you.

DETECTIVE SHERMAN

You could've been killed. Do you understand? Maybe next time leave my job to me. We'll continue this tomorrow. Get to the hospital.

CUT TO:

More cops are at the scene with reporters and paramedics.

James approaches the police caution tape with his cameraman.

The cop stops him.

James shows the cop his work badge.

The cop glances at Sherman.

James with his eyes pleads to Detective Sherman.

Detective Sherman notices James and grimaces.

DETECTIVE SHERMAN (CONT'D)

Let him through.

James and the cameraman duck under the tape and approach the ambulance with Paul.

Inside the ambulance lies Paul handcuffed as Caine questions him.

The paramedics look over his wounds.

DETECTIVE CAINE

What are you telling me?

PAUL

I found her and took her from the trash.

DETECTIVE CAINE

The trash? You mean the dumpster?

James listens in and signals his cameraman to record.

PAUL

I took her from the trash.

DETECTIVE CAINE
Did you kill Mariah, Paul?

PAUL
No. I didn't kill nobody. I took
her from the trash.

PARAMEDIC
(to Caine)
We really need to get him to the
hospital.

DETECTIVE CAINE
Yeah. Go ahead.

INT. MIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mia lies in bed with the sheets up to her chin. She has
scratches on her face as she lies in the fetal position.

THUD.

She hears perhaps a trash can fall outside her window. She
flinches.

Mia climbs out of bed and peeks out the window. We see her
arms are bruised and bandaged up.

Nothing out of the ordinary is outside.

She grabs her phone from the nightstand and sends a text.

The phone vibrates.

MIA
(in phone)
Yes?

ARTHUR (ON PHONE)
Are you all right?

MIA
Yeah. Detective Sherman wants me at
the station tomorrow morning.

ARTHUR
I'll go with you.

MIA
I'll be okay. Hopefully he'll tell
me this nightmare is over.

ARTHUR

...Get some rest.

Mia hangs up the phone then pops a pill from a prescription bottle as she rinses it down with a cup of cold coffee.

She sits on the edge of her bed and tosses her head into her hands. She lifts it back up and takes a deep breath.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

A FIGURE tosses a trash bag that's the size of an adult human inside the dumpster. We cannot see a face.

The figure ambles off.

Seconds pass, and the homeless man from the teaser emerges and peeks inside the dumpster.

The homeless man sees the trash bag tossed in and covered in waste and rips it open.

He reveals the pale face of Monica Thompson—Her eyes wide open.

FADE OUT.

END OF PILOT.