

In the Arms of Justice

By

Mindy Eddeson Wannabe

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FADE IN:

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Dozens of WOMEN, all shapes, and sizes, flock to the courthouse. One carries a newspaper who's lead story entitled "Trial of the Century" fills the page.

INSERT:

Front page - "TRIAL OF THE CENTURY," with a secondary header of "MEN NOT ALLOWED."

int. courtroom - day

The courtroom seems like a circus with people talking, writing, yelling...

The ALL-FEMALE JURY sits quietly.

Female DEPUTY SHERIFFS, BAILIFF, OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER, and a STENOGRAPHER stand in their usual places.

At the PLAINTIFF'S table sit LEAD PROSECUTOR STACY HAYDEN (35, heavy set, nicely dressed) and the SECOND CHAIR prosecutor BECKY GILMORE (31, nervous, nice pant suit).

At the DEFENDANT'S table sits Socialite PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE (25, extremely attractive, blonde, confident, wearing a tailor-made Oscar De La Renta dress suit).

The Bailiff rises from her desk.

BAILIFF

All quiet. We're about to begin.

The courtroom quiets down as witnesses and spectators take their respective seats.

BAILIFF

All rise for the Honorable JUDGE
DENISE PALMER.

The courtroom rises. Judge Palmer (48, salt and pepper hair, unattractive) walks in, sits down in her chair.

JUDGE PALMER

Please be seated.

The crowd sits.

JUDGE PALMER
Bailiff, are we certain that there
are no men in the courtroom?

BAILIFF
Yes, your Honor. Each person has
been thoroughly screened.

JUDGE PALMER
Miss Hayden? It appears that you
got your way, no men.

Stacy Hayden looks up, smiles.

STACY HAYDEN
Yes, she's finally out of her
element.

Phyllis looks up, speaks in a cute, highly seductive,
southern belle type accent.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE
All of this was unnecessary.

STACY HAYDEN
Hardly, Given your past-

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE
Objection, your Honor.

JUDGE PALMER
Miss Hayden, don't say another
word. I won't grant a mistrial
unless YOU screw it up.

Phyllis looks at the judge, shocked.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE
That doesn't seem fair.

JUDGE PALMER
Where's your lawyer?

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE
I'm a perfectly capable lawyer. I
can defend myself.

Disgustedly, Stacy stares at Phyllis.

STACY HAYDEN
Is there anything you can't do?

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE
 Maybe five or six, right girls?

Everyone laughs, save Stacy and the Judge. Phyllis clears her throat and scratches her head.

JUDGE PALMER
 Miss Hayden, opening statement.

Stacy walks up to the jury. Makes eye contact with all of them.

STACY HAYDEN
 It's simple really. Phyllis
 Nightingale seduced him with her
 wiles and now, he's dead and we'll
 prove it.

Stacy walks away from the jury. The judge nods to Phyllis, who gets up, walks to the jury box, leans over it so that she's very close to the jury.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE
 I don't think it was my wiles that
 seduced him, honestly.

Some jury members chuckle.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE
 The truth is, my husband passed
 away. They don't have any reason
 for the charges. There's no
 weapon, no motive, nothing. He
 passed away in his sleep.

Several jury members look at Stacy.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE
 Instead of mourning my husband like
 I want to, I have to fight for my
 life. And do you know why?
 Because I'm me.

She slams her fist on the rail the jury sit at.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE
 Because I'm a socialite. Because
 I'm beautiful, rich, successful,
 have tight, firm legs.

She feels her legs, slowly.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE
 Because I have a great face and a
 great body. Because I have
 unending stamina. No field is too
 great for me to transverse. No
 obstacle too great to overcome.

She backs away from the jury.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE
 Their paranoia about what I might
 do. No men, they say. As if I
 could only love men. I can find
 beauty in everyone here.

She looks at Stacy.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE
 You included. You're
 fascinating, intense, powerful,
 alluring.

Stacy appears flustered, drops her eyes to the floor, away
 from Phyllis.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE
 And I will prove that I'm innocent.

Phyllis sits down. The Bailiff speaks.

BAILIFF
 Prosecution calls Miss Bethany
 Silverstone to the bench.

BETHANY SILVERSTONE (25, thin, somewhat attractive, in a
 sheer Versace gown) walks to the bench, stands.

BAILIFF
 Place your hand on the Bible.

Bethany does.

BAILIFF
 Do you swear, to tell the truth,
 the whole truth, and nothing but
 the truth, so help you, God?

BETHANY
 I do.

Bethany takes her hand off the Bible, sits down, as the
 Bailiff walks away.

Stacy walks up to her.

STACY HAYDEN

Bethany, please tell the jury what you told me.

BETHANY

Phyllis told me that she wanted to kill her husband because she felt trapped in the marriage.

The jury gasps. Phyllis jumps out of her seat.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE

I object! This is hearsay.

STACY HAYDEN

Your Honor, this was a confession and goes to show her frame of mind.

JUDGE PALMER

I'll allow it, but, you are on a short leash.

Phyllis can't believe it.

STACY HAYDEN

Your witness.

Phyllis walks slowly towards Bethany like a cat stalking a helpless bird.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE

You look nice in your Marc Jacobs gown.

BETHANY

Oh, please, you know damn well this is Versace. You helped me buy it.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE

Do you remember what I wore that day?

BETHANY

Who could forget? You had on this gorgeous Oscar De La Renta tailor-made suit, almost like the one you have on today.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE

Yes, that was stunning.

Bethany agrees.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE
Do you remember what I was wearing
the first day we met?

BETHANY
Yep, you had on a lovely Louis
Vuitton pink gown.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE
Wow, I had forgotten that.

STACY HAYDEN
Your Honor, do any of us care how
the rich dress?

The Judge addresses Phyllis.

JUDGE PALMER
Does this have any meaning?

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE
Yes, with this next question.

Phyllis looks at Bethany.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE
You seem to recall what I wore on
most days, right?

BETHANY
I guess.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE
What was I wearing on that day you
said I confessed?

BETHANY
Ummm, I'm not sure.

Bethany looks towards Stacy for help.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE
What do you mean that you're not
sure? Are you not sure because the
conversation never happened?

Stacy stands up.

STACY HAYDEN
I object. What she wore has no
meaning.

Phyllis turns towards the judge.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE

Your Honor, this person can recall what I wore on so many days, but, she can't recall what I wore on the day I allegedly said that I wanted to kill my husband?

The crowd erupts in chaos. The judge bangs her gavel.

JUDGE PALMER

Order. Order in the court.

The crowd quiets down.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE

I established that she knew my attire on random days, but, not on that day. Ridiculous.

Phyllis storms back to her chair.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE

No other questions.

Stacy looks at Bethany, stunned at the turn of events.

montage

-A WITNESS talks to both sides, Stacy looks upset.

-Another WITNESS does the same.

-As do several other WITNESSES.

-Stacy looks devastated.

BACK TO SCENE

JUDGE PALMER

We shall reconvene tomorrow at 9. This was a long day for all of us. I sure don't want to end up with DKA, so...

She bangs her gavel.

INT. COURTROOM - NEXT DAY

The same chaotic scene from yesterday.

SEVERAL BYSTANDERS

(chanting)

Not guilty.

JUDGE PALMER

Quiet. We're about to start.
Order. Order in the court.

She bangs her gavel harder this time.

JUDGE PALMER

Mrs. Nightingale, you may call your
first witness.

As Phyllis stands, the doors swing open. A FEMALE MAIL
COURIER steps in. All the attention swings to the postal
worker.

JUDGE PALMER

What in the world?

POSTAL CARRIER

I'm sorry, but, I have an urgent
message that says I must delay this
trial for Mrs. Nightingale.

The crowd turns their attention back towards Phyllis.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE

I have no clue. What's going on?

STACY HAYDEN

Stop this stunt, Phyllis. This
whole thing has been an event.

JUDGE PALMER

Phyllis?

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE

Your honor?

JUDGE PALMER

Get the damn mail!

The postal worker walks up to Phyllis, hands her the
telegraph, leaves.

Phyllis opens the small letter, no more than a page, reads
it. Her eyes shoot wide open. Her face twitches, hands
tremble.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE

Your honor, I wish to change my
plea. I'm guilty and deserve the
death penalty.

STACY AND THE JUDGE

WHAT?

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE

I deserve to die.

JUDGE PALMER

What's in that letter?

It doesn't matter. She rips it up and eats it.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE

I do this willingly. I'm an evil,
vile person who deserves death.

She sits down, cries. The crowd erupts in chaos.

JUDGE PALMER

Are you sure?

Phyllis doesn't answer.

JUDGE PALMER

Then, I accept your guilty plea and
sentence you to death by needle.

She bangs her gavel.

INT. OFFICE OF EXECUTIONS - NIGHT

Phyllis stares ahead as she's tied to the gurney.

The machines are hooked up to her IV.

Phyllis shows no emotion.

The needle enters her arm. Not even a flinch.

The machines pump the liquid into her arm. She closes her
eyes as her heart monitor flatlines.

INT. JUDGE DENISE PALMER'S LAVISH BEDROOM - NIGHT

Denise rolls around in bed with someone. They giggle and
sound like they are having a great time.

REVEAL - Phyllis Nightingale in bed with Denise.

JUDGE PALMER

I put in for a transfer. Should
only be a week or two you have to
stay captive.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE
I know, can't risk anyone seeing
me, not after all this.

JUDGE PALMER
I'm sorry that you have to stay
hidden all day.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE
Gotta tell you, I thought you set
me up.

JUDGE PALMER
Why?

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE
That needle hurt going in my arm.

JUDGE PALMER
It had to look realistic.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE
Oh, it did.

JUDGE PALMER
Only two others know, the doctor
and the tech specialist. As far as
everyone else knows, you're dead.

Judge Palmer rolls out of bed.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE
Insulin time, right?

The Judge smiles. Heads to the bathroom next to the
bedroom. Phyllis cuts her off.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE
Why don't you use the other
bathroom. I have a surprise in
there for you.

JUDGE PALMER
Hmmm. I do love surprises. Be
right back.

She leaves the room. Phyllis looks around the bedroom.
Sadly, she looks at a photo of the Judge and her parents.

Phyllis sighs as she picks up the photo. She closes her
eyes, tilts her head back to stare at the ceiling.

Denise returns.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE

Wow, that was fast.

JUDGE PALMER

It takes nearly no time to take the
needle now because it's so
streamlined.

Denise climbs in bed. Phyllis joins her. They move in
close and cuddle.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE

Any regrets? I mean about leaving?

Denise shakes her head no, then coughs. Phyllis moves away.
Denise coughs some more, each one more powerful than the
last. Denise looks up at Phyllis.

Phyllis coldly looks back.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE

The sad thing is that I might have
been able to be happy with you.
But, the truth is, I can't pass
this chance up.

Denise looks at her, stunned. Phyllis gets out of bed.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE

I put a paralytic agent in your
insulin. You know, I'm sorry.

Phyllis opens up a drawer, pulls out a knife and some rope,
closes the door, gently.

She ties her legs to the end of the bedframe.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE

Gotta make this look like a crime
of passion.

Denise looks confused. Phyllis walks up to her left arm,
ties it to the bedpost. She continues towards the right.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE

The Doc's in the tub and the
techie's hanging in your bathroom,
so, no one knows I'm alive.

She cuts deeply into Denise's right wrist, blood squirts.
She walks to the left and cuts it the same way.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE

The Doc was kind enough to leave a murder-suicide note. You know, I'm really sorry. But, now that Phyllis Nightingale is dead, I can start anew, be anyone I want to be.

She leans in closely to Denise.

PHYLLIS NIGHTINGALE

I'll miss you.

EXT. JUDGE PALMER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Now dressed in black from head to toe, Phyllis slithers down the block, like an assassin stalking their prey.

A nearby light changes to green. She makes a run for it.

Out of nowhere, a car speeds around a bend right before the light. Its headlights barely illuminate Phyllis.

The car slams into her, but, it doesn't stop.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Alcoholic bottles strewn over the front and back seats. Two people sit in the front.

REVEAL - Stacy and Becky, drunk.

BECKY

Oh, God, I think you hit someone.

STACY HAYDEN

Nah. There's a giant pot hole that they never patch up.

Stacy lets loose a huge belch. Becky one-ups her. They giggle as they speed away.

THE END.

FADE OUT.