

SCRIPT TITLE

Written by

Lauren Giella

David Teller, a witness in a rape case, is sitting at a table. He is wearing a Yankees shirt and has a bad five o'clock shadow. Directly across from him is Detective Steve Jacobs, cool and collected. Detective Dana Russo stands behind Jacobs, leaning on the wall with her arms crossed, a smoking volcano ready to erupt.

There are photos spread on the table in front of Teller.

TELLER

(smirking, to Jacobs)

Oh yeah, I remember her. She's the kind of chick you notice walking into a bar, you know what I mean?

Teller winks at Dana. She stares him down, eyes narrowing. Jacobs moves past the crass comment.

JACOBS

And do you remember the man she was with? A distinguishing feature, something he said to you about his job or anything like that?

TELLER

(shaking his head)

Nothing I can think of. When you've been bartending as long as me, you learn to tune out anything that's not an order.

DANA

Were there any signs that this man was being aggressive?

TELLER

Aggressive? No. They both seemed like they were having a ball. He kept buying her drinks. And she kept drinking them.

DANA

So no warning at all that Bethany might have been in danger? That she had too much to drink?

TELLER

Nah. She had dat whole...

Teller moves his hands up and around his face and chest.

Look go'n on.

(MORE)

TELLER (CONT'D)

She waddent dressed to drink alone
that night. She was on a mission.

Dana moves off the wall. Still staring down Teller.

DANA

(hostile)

A mission to get raped.

That word hangs in the air for a moment. Jacobs turns to Dana. His look telling her to ease up.

TELLER

(suddenly nervous)

Listen, how was I s'posed to know
that? When they got up to leave, I
assumed she was into it.

DANA

Into it? You said she had six or
seven drinks by then. Surely even
you could see she was in no state
to go home with a stranger? She
could barely make it off the bar
stool without stumbling.

Teller sits back, throwing his hands up.

TELLER

(defensive)

Hey, I just pour the drinks.

Dana moves over to the other side of the table, closer to Teller. Jacobs' stare follows her. Teller sits up, tenses.

TELLER (CONT'D)

What could I do?

DANA

(voice raised)

Anything! You could have done
anything. But instead, while
Bethany was being brutally
assaulted, you sat there like a
wart on your mother's ass!

JACOBS

Russo!

Dana gets right in Teller's face.

DANA
 (through gritted teeth)
 I should put you away just for
 being such a degenerate scum, you
 sonovabith.

Jacobs stand up facing Dana with a stern look on his face.

JACOBS
 (telling, not asking)
 Detective Russo, can I see you
 outside.

TELLER
 Hey, people come into the bar every
 night because they want something.
 It looked to me like they were both
 getting what they wanted.

Dana stands back a bit, curious to see where Teller goes with this.

I bet she woke up the next day,
 realized it waddent Brad Pitt next
 to her, and called the police to
 make herself feel better about her
 dumb mistake.

At this, Dana SNAPS. She lunges at Teller, grabbing him by the shirt collar and pinning him up against the wall, yelling in his face.

Jacobs rushes over, pulling Dana off Teller. There is still fire in her eyes. And something darker behind them.

Teller cowers. Jacobs drags Dana out into the squad room. She is flailing and yelling. Everyone stops and looks on with horrified expressions.

2 INT. DANA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

2

Dana suddenly jerks awake in a sweaty panic.

[THREE WEEKS LATER]

The alarm clock reads 4:30 a.m.

Dana takes a deep breath and rolls out of bed.

She sits at her kitchen table in the dark, the light from her laptop beaming on her face.

On the screen, maps of bars in Brooklyn and news reports of recent rapes.

The clock reads 6:00 a.m. Dana scrambles to get dressed and rushes out the door.

3 INT. BROOKLYN PD SQUAD ROOM - DAY 3

Dana walks in. Bags under her eyes from lack of sleep. Hair thrown back in a greasy bun from lack of effort.

4 There is tension and unease in the air as soon as she enters. The other detectives give a slight nod or a timid "Hey," treading lightly.

Dana flops down in her desk chair. She looks at the never-ending pile of junk on her desk that has accumulated over the last few weeks.

Dana closes her eyes, trying to find whatever she needs to get her through her first day back.

Jacobs taps Dana on the shoulder, she jumps at his touch.

JACOBS

Sorry, didn't mean to startle you.

DANA

(remembering where she is)

No, it's, um, I'm fine.

JACOBS

Welcome back. It's good to see you.

How are-

Captain Harris enters the squad room, interrupting all chatter with his presence. He stands with the authority of a man both respected and feared by those around him.

Harris reads the daily briefing.

HARRIS

(reading from paper)

There has been another rape in Bushwick. Jacobs, Perez, go down to Wilson and Hart and see if there is any connection to the string of assaults in that area.

Dana is surprised.

DANA
 (to herself)
 What? Perez?

Harris looks back down and finished reading the other assignments. Dana is not mentioned. When Harris is done, he returns to his office. Dana gets up, kicking her swivel chair back, and follows Harris.

4 INT. HARRIS'S OFFICE

4

Harris is sorting through some papers when Dana knocks on the door.

HARRIS
 Russo. Have a seat.

Dana enters but remains standing.

DANA
 Uh, Cap, is there a problem here?

HARRIS
 Sorry?

DANA
 You sent Perez out with Jacobs. And I don't remember hearing my name at all.

HARRIS
 As you adjust from your leave, you'll be sorting through some paperwork.

DANA
 You're putting me on desk duty?

HARRIS
 I think it's best for the time being if you took a step back from the Bushwick case.

DANA
 (more heated, rambling)
 But I've been working this for months. You can't just sideline me now! We're so close. I have mapped out the bars and the victims' homes and cross-referenced the-

HARRIS
 (cutting her off, angry)
 After the stunt you pulled, you're
 lucky to even be carrying that
 badge around.

Dana shakes her head in disagreement.

HARRIS (CONT'D)
 Do you have any idea how much I had
 to stick my neck out to vouch for
 you? And thank God Teller isn't
 pressing charges.

Harris takes a breath.

HARRIS (CONT'D)
 I need to keep an eye on you.

DANA
 But I took my time off. I've...
 (reeling back)
 Cooled off. I'm ready to go back to
 work.

HARRIS
 This is work.

DANA
 Real work.

HARRIS
 For the time being, stay away the
 Bushwick case. Got it? There are
 enough forms and reports to keep
 you busy.

Harris returns to the papers on his desk.

Dana rolls her eyes as she leaves.

DANA
 (under her breath)
 This is such bullshit.

5 INT. SQUAD ROOM

5

Dana slumps down in her desk chair. Jacobs swirls his chair
 around.

JACOBS
 Hey partner. How've ya been?

Jacobs gets a better look at her.

You look terrible. When was the last time you showered?

DANA
(to herself, ignoring Jacobs)
Desk duty? Really?

Jacobs moves right in front of Dana, forcing her eyes to meet his.

JACOBS
Hey, what'd you expect?
(teasing)
This is typical protocol when a detective assaults a witness.

DANA
You know me. I'm no use trapped in here. I need to be out there.

JACOBS
I know this sucks. I miss having you with me. But maybe this is for the best. Gives you some time to readjust.

Jacobs picks up a file and quickly flips through it.

And who knows, maybe there's something useful in here. You're smart. You'll make the best of it.

Dana is unconvinced. She snatches the file from his hand and turns her chair. She opens a folder, her eyes skimming the page.

DANA
(curt)
Don't you have somewhere to be right now.

JACOBS
(sighing)
We're just looking out for you.

Jacobs leaves. Dana is left alone at her desk. There is a low murmur around the squad room, but Dana feels completely isolated. It's getting harder to breath and her legs feel numb. She closes her eyes trying to calm herself down.

6 INT. SQUAD ROOM - ONE WEEK LATER 6

Dana sits at her desk. The paperwork she is supposed to be doing off to the side. She is watching Jacobs and Perez in the conference room as they discuss the case. Her case. She tries to read their lips, but it's no use.

Dana takes out her notes on the case, outlining the details and timeline of each incident reported. She reads over every word, hoping she will extract something from the scribbles on the page.

Suddenly, Jacobs and Perez rush out.

7 INT. CONFERENCE ROOM 7

Dana waits until no one is paying attention and sneaks in there. She reads through their work. The name KATIE WOOD is on the board with an address.

8 INT. SQUAD ROOM 8

Dana searches Katie Wood on her computer. A rape report was filed a month ago. Dana carefully reads the case, searching for any detail that stands out, anything linking this to the other incidents.

Then she finds it. Hospital records show Katie got a rape kit the night she was attacked.

DANA
(confused, then horrified)
Never tested?

9 INT. SQUAD ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT 9

Everyone has left for the day. The lights are off, except the lamp on Dana's desk. She sits locked into whatever is on her computer.

Jacobs is walking out, notices her.

JACOBS
Dana? You still here?

No response. Jacobs walks over to her desk.

It's late, go home. I've seen you
when you don't get your eight
hours.

(MORE)

JACOBS (CONT'D)

(teasing)

Makes the way you roughed up Teller
look calm.

DANA

(not looking up)

I'm just waiting for test results
from the lab to come back.

JACOBS

What results.

DANA

(finally looking up)

Katie Wood's.

JACOBS

Huh?

DANA

She got a rape kit the night she
was attacked. But it was never
tested.

JACOBS

(puzzled)

Wait, what?

DANA

Yep.

(shaking her head)

She did everything right. Went to
the hospital, sat while she was
swabbed and prodded after just
being through the worst experience
of her life. To have the evidence
sit in a lab.

Jacobs pulls over a chair and looks on the screen with her.

JACOBS

How many other kits are sitting
around untested?

DANA

(to Jacobs)

Thousands.

(looking back at the
screen, scrolling)

I found her kit and sent it to the
lab. Liza stayed late to run the
DNA tests. She was as pissed as I
am.

Something pops up on screen.

JACOBS
Look, the results are in.

They read over. The DNA matches Chris Smith.

Dana searches his name across the database.

DANA
(stunned)
Oh my god.

JACOBS
What?

DANA
He, he was arrested for the rape of
a college student Martha Richardson
two years ago.

Dana swings around to face Jacobs.

DANA (CONT'D)
Only six blocks from the our first
victim.

JACOBS
How is this guy not in jail then?

DANA
(looking back at the
computer)
It says here the case was
dismissed. Lack of evidence. He
claimed it was consensual. She
claims he got her blackout drunk
and took advantage of her. The
judge said since the victim was
intoxicated, there was no way to
prove it was forced.

Dana leans back in her chair, shaking her head.

JACOBS
We gotta find her. See if her story
follow the pattern. A judge would
have to put him away if we can
prove he's a serial rapist.

DANA
She's not gonna want to talk to
more cops.

JACOBS

That's why you have to talk to her.

Dana looks up, surprised.

DANA

(skeptical)

Me? I was taken off this case, remember. Harris would have my badge if he knew I was doing all this. No way he'll let me talk to a victim.

JACOBS

You're the only one who can get her to open up about this. And don't worry about Harris, I'll cover for you.

10

INT. MARTHA RICHARDSON'S APARTMENT - DAY

10

A small, cluttered apartment. Dana sits in a chair across from Martha on the couch.

DANA

We have reason to believe that the man who attacked you, Chris Smith, has attacked several other women in the area.

MARTHA

Not surprised. But I don't know how I'm gonna help. My case was dismissed.

DANA

I know. But we ran DNA from another recent rape kit and it was a match. Now, with your story, we could build a strong case against him.

(Beat)

DANA (CONT'D)

(with conviction)

And he will go to jail.

MARTHA

I don't think I can do this all again. After what happened to me, I put it all in the past, I've moved on!

Dana glances around the apartment. Pill bottles, bottles of alcohol. Martha looks down.

DANA

I know, after everything you've been through, to have to relive this experience again. It's a lot. But this is your chance to get the justice you deserve. To get justice for all these other women who went through the same horror and shame you did.

Martha doesn't look convinced.

Dana takes a deep breath.

DANA (CONT'D)

When I was younger, just starting out as a cop, I was having a particularly rough week. So I decided to blow off some steam at a nearby bar. I had been drinking a lot, I was talking to this guy, and then. Blackness. Until I woke up in my bed, with some guy on top of me. And I froze. I had all the training I needed to fight him off. I had a gun a few feet from reach. But I couldn't move.

Tears rolling down Dana's cheek.

I did nothing. After he left, I just laid there feeling so helpless and ashamed. I was a police officer and I didn't do anything. And I thought no one would understand. Nothing would happen.

Dana takes a second to collect herself.

DANA (CONT'D)

I was pissed off and never wanted to feel so powerless again. So I was determined to become a detective. And I poured myself into my job thinking that would make me forget. And for a while, that was enough to push back the pain. But sometimes, when I'm alone, it all creeps up on me. I've been distant, hostile, anxious.

(MORE)

DANA (CONT'D)

I close my eyes and I can feel him on top of me again. But I never remembered what his face looked like. Never even knew his name. So for me, every perp I put away is him. And every victim that I see get justice, it helps me get out of bed in the morning.

Dana leans forward, taking Martha's hand.

DANA (CONT'D)

Martha, I know this is a lot to ask.

(pause)

But they need you.

Martha wipes tears from her eyes and draws in a breath, filling herself with some strength.

MARTHA

Ok. I was out with some friends. We were celebrating my new promotion at work. This guy came up to us. He was cute and charming. He bought us drinks. Then he pulled me away to dance and I lost my friends. He got me more drinks, and things got hazy. I remember falling down leaving the bar and hitting my head. Then I woke up at home, naked, with this guy next to me. It was horrifying. I immediately got up, found my clothes and ran out of my apartment. My friend had texted me to see how my night went and when I told her I was raped,

(suddenly angry)

She thought it was funny, like a joke.

Martha sits up straighter, with more authority.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

I went to the police station and waiting what seemed like hours until someone helped me. But even then, I just knew they were judging me. Like it was my fault or something.

DANA

It wasn't your fault.

Martha shakes her head.

Did you know him before that night?

MARTHA

Not really. I mean, I had seen him a couple of times at the bar. He was always chatting up with some girl. But I never met him until that night.

Dana thinks, scribbles down notes and takes out her phone.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry if that wasn't helpful I-

DANA

No, Martha that was great. Is your bathroom right here?

11

INT. MARTHA'S BATHROOM

11

Dana paces between the paint-chipped tub and rusty toilet. The phone is ringing.

JACOBS (V.O.)

Hello?

DANA

Steve! We got him. It's the same story, over and over again. I think Martha was his first. He saw how easily he could get away with it and is just maintaining his streak. Like it's some game.

JACOBS (V.O.)

Yeah, I'm not surprised. Did she mention anything else about him?

DANA

Yes. She said she had seen him at the bar before. I think he likes to stake out the bars, noting regulars to prey on. Sick bastard. He creates a familiarity, like he is a normal part of the scene to deflect any suspicion.

JACOBS (V.O.)

Any idea where he'll strike next?

12

INT. CAPTAIN HARRIS'S OFFICE

12

Jacobs and Dana burst into the room.

JACOBS

Sir, I think we know where the
Bushwick rapists is going to be
tonight.

HARRIS

(eying Dana)
We?

JACOBS

Me and Russo Sir.

HARRIS

Russo, I specifically told you to
stay away form this case.

Dana goes to speak, Jacobs jumps in.

JACOBS

Sir, if I may. Russo has been
working harder than anyone on this
case. We wouldn't have gotten where
we are without-

DANA

(interrupting him)
Captain. Did you know there are
over 40,000 untested rape kits
backlogged in this city.

HARRIS

What?

DANA

42,578 rape kits. 42,578 victims we
have let down. 42,578 women who
we've told don't matter.

Harris sits up, putting down papers.

DANA (CONT'D)

(smirking)

I found that while doing that dumb
paperwork you assigned me. I found
other stuff too. Like Marta
Richardson and a slew of other
women whose rape claims were not
take seriously. But their stories
match up.

Dana drops papers on the desk in front of Harris.

Now, when we put all these together
with the map of bars and victim's
apartments I tried to show you
before.

Harris glances up at Jacobs. Jacobs flashes a grin.

DANA

Jacobs and I were able to plot
where our guy is gonna be preying
on his next victim.

Harris reads it all over.

HARRIS

Are you sure about this?

JACOBS

Never been more sure about anything
before.

Jacobs and Dana exchange a confident look.

HARRIS

Ok. We'll set up cars outside the
bar,
(pointing on map)
Here, here and here. With a few
detectives inside as well. Jacobs,
go get a team together.

Jacobs walks out, Dana follows.

HARRIS (CONT'D)

Russo.

Dana stops, spins around.

HARRIS (CONT'D)

I know you got us here, but I can't
let you go out with them tonight.

DANA

Come on but I -

HARRIS

You know I can't.

DANA

(accepting he's right)
Yeah, I know.

Dana turns to leave.

HARRIS
Oh and Russo-

Dana turns back in the doorway.

HARRIS (CONT'D)
(smiling)
Good work.

Dana returns to her desk and sinks down into her chair. She is in her head while the squad room is bustling around her.

13 INT. SQUAD ROOM - NIGHT

13

Dana is alone again. The only light coming from the hallway. Dana sits at her desk, fingers tapping rapidly on her desk. She suddenly gets up and paces back and forth, taking long, drawn out breaths.

The phone rings. Dana picks it up right away.

DANA
Hello?

JACOBS (V.O.)
Dana. We got him.

Dana exhales with relief. She is overwhelmed with emotion, barely able to get words out.

DANA
That, that's great. Good work.

JACOBS (V.O.)
Now go home and get some rest.

Jacobs hangs up. Dana sits there, eyes closed, focused on her breathing. Then, a calmness overcomes her. Tears filling her eyes. And a soft smile forms across her mouth.

14 INT. COURTROOM - DAYS LATER

14

A packed courtroom. Russo, Jacobs, Harris, Perez and several victims sit with nervous energy.

Three of the victims take turns on the witness stand.

MARTHA

He pulled me away from my friends, isolating me, and kept the drinks coming until the night felt like a haze.

CUT TO:

KATIE WOOD

I was stumbling my way out of the bar. And he was pulling me along. I got bruises, his grip was so tight.

CUT TO:

BETHANY MATHEWS

And the next thing I knew, I was in bed at home, and he was on top of me, inside of me, and I was paralyzed with terror. And after he was done,

CUT TO:

MARTHA

I did what I had been told to do my whole life.

CUT TO:

BETHANY

I reported it.

KATIE

I got a rape kit and I waited. But I had no idea my name was on a box sitting among thousands on the shelves of an evidence locker. Never to be tested or investigated. The incriminating DNA evidence collecting dust while more and more women were attacked.

CUT TO:

15

DANA ON THE WITNESS STAND

15

DANA

He's smart. He knew just what to do to turn te situation around on the victims.

(MORE)

DANA (CONT'D)

To stir up enough doubt so that blame and the judgement would be on them. So no judge or jury would find any fault in the narrative he spun for them. But he got a little too confident. And he made a crucial mistake. He underestimated the strength and resilience of these women. Women who are unafraid to speak up, band together, and stop at nothing until they get justice.

CUT TO:

16 JURY BOX. A JUROR STANDS TO DELIVER THE VERDICT. 16

JUROR

On the count of rape, we find the defendant... Guilty.

CUT TO:

17 THE FACES OF THE VICTIMS AND DETECTIVES IN THE COURTROOM. 17
TEARS, RELIEF, EMBRACES.

18 INT. HALLWAY 18

Dana makes her way out of the courtroom and finds a quiet hallway. Her legs feel heavy, she clings to the wall.

Martha enters.

MARTHA

Oh, there you are.

Dana opens her eyes and smiles. Martha hugs her.

DANA

You did it, you were so brave.

MARTHA

We all did it. Thank you again, so much, for everything. I never thought this day would come.

DANA

Of course. This is my job. This is what I do.

MARTHA

Can I ask you something?

Dana nods.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Does this feeling ever go away?
Even when they read out the guilty
verdict, I should be relieved,
elated. This is everting I wanted.
But I almost immediately felt a
numbness overcome me, a sinking in
my stomach.

DANA

It's gonna be tough. These things
take time. You'll still feel angry,
and sad, and anxious, and isolated.
Some days, you won't want to get
out of bed in the morning. You'll
get a panic attack on the subway.
Maybe you'll even snap on the
people trying to support you. But
then-

19 INT. DANA'S BEDROOM 19

Dana waking up.

DANA (V.O)

One day you do get up out of bed.

20 INT. DANA'S KITCHEN 20

Dana making coffee, sitting at her table. The sun peaking
through the curtains, the warmth and light reaching her face.

DANA (V.O.)

And make coffee, and with each
step, you realize you can get
through this moment, this day, this
week.

21 INT. THERAPIST OFFICE 21

Dana sitting on a couch, talking with a therapist, opening
up.

DANA (V.O.)

And the darkness, the pain, it
won't just disappear, but you learn
to deal with it.

22

INT. SQUAD ROOM

22

Dana in the squad room. Her desk clear. She looks well-rested
and confident.

DANA (V.O.)

And slowly, your life starts to
feel normal again.

Dana grabbing her badge. She walks out with Jacobs to work
another case.

(OUT).

For more information on the nation's rape kit backlog, visit
the Joyful Heart Foundation website at www.endthebacklog.org

And check out the HBO movie I AM EVIDENCE, produced by
Mariska Hargitay.