



"YOUR DAY IN COURT" - ACT 1

THE JUDGE AND THE PROSECUTOR

Setting: Public defender is meeting with the accused in jail.

Characters:

Narrator/Bailiff

Public Defender (socially awkward, blunt, not tactful, doesn't spare feelings)

Defendant Gilda Guilty - wearing orange (as in jail garb)

Open with the defendant in handcuffs, sitting at a small table, dejected

Public Defender walks in, looking at a file, flipping through papers, concerned

Narrator: Gilda Guilty is sitting in the conference room at the Collin County Jail, awaiting her first meeting with the attorney assigned to her case.

Public Defender: *(walks in with folder)* Hello, my name is Debby D. Fender, and I will be your court appointed public defender. And you are *(look at folder)* Gilda R. Guilty?

Gilda Guilty: Everyone calls me "Gilda Guilty."

Public Defender: Ok, Gilda Guilty, nice to meet you. Let's get started. I've had some time to look over your case, and from what I've read so far, I think we have our work cut out for us.

Gilda Guilty: I can't imagine why that file is so thick. I'm not even clear on why I was arrested and why I'm even here...wearing this. This orange is hideous. I don't know what I am being accused of! Why have I been assigned a public defender? Friday I was at soccer practice with my kids, and all of a sudden the police descended on the soccer field, and I've been sitting in that nasty holding cell all weekend. What is going on?

Public Defender: Well, Miss Gilda Guilty, that's what I'm here to discuss with you. First of all, I was assigned to you because I was told that you are poor and wretched. Apparently you have no means to hire a private attorney, is that right?

Gilda Guilty: *(insulted)* Poor? Wretched? That's a little excessive. I may float a check from time to time, but we get by

Public Defender: I'm not here to judge you. I'm here to help you plan a defense. We need get down to business, because your trial has been scheduled for next week.

Gilda Guilty: A trial? What am I accused of? Tell me, what I am on trial for?

Public Defender: According to these court documents I was given, you have been charged on several counts of possession...with evil intent...criminal mischief...

Gilda Guilty: What are you talking about?

Public Defender: Basically, you’ve been charged with ten counts of first degree sin.

Gilda Guilty: First degree sin? It sounds awful...Isn’t everybody a sinner? I hope I have a jury of my peers. They’ll understand that I may be a sinner, but I’m a good person. I’ve done a lot of good things in my life. Doesn’t that at least balance it out?

Public Defender: I do hope we can come up with a better defense than your good works. And no, there won’t be a jury. Unfortunately, this a non-jury deliberation. Our case will be heard and decided by a judge only. However, I do have good news on that.

Gilda Guilty: Good news? I’ll take any good news...

Public Defender: The judge who will be hearing your case is the best around. His reputation is that He is fair and just, compassionate and merciful. But I have to say, on the other hand, I have heard that He hates sin with a passion. Sin is one of His pet peeves.

Gilda Guilty: Great...that’s the good news?

Public Defender: It is good news, because He takes delight in studying each case on its own merits. He will not jump to conclusions or assume guilt. He will read your file carefully, and will know every detail behind your alleged crimes. And, as I said, He will look on you with compassion and pity, because He knows you are just dust.

Gilda Guilty: Dust? What is happening to my life? I rarely cut in line at carpools, I try not to even take the pen at the bank...and today I’m wretched and poor and dust?

Public Defender: Sorry, I can be a little insensitive. But I do have some bad news, too.

Gilda Guilty: Wait? What you just told me was all the good news?

Public Defender: Trust me, this is the judge you want to have hearing and deciding your case. The bad news is that I am very familiar with this prosecutor, and he has no compassion, he’s notoriously tough and is out for blood. And for some reason, he seems to have a personal vendetta against you.

Gilda Guilty: What have I ever done to him? Does he even know me? Have we met?

Public Defender: I’m just letting you know what I’ve seen in the file. You need to be prepared for a bloody battle in that courtroom. He’s known for bringing to light crimes and sins that you have hidden for a lifetime, maybe even forgotten about, in order to prove his case. He has no scruples--he will lie and deceive and twist your words in order to destroy you. Who knows what witnesses he will find. If you have any skeletons in your closet, I suggest you tell me now.

Gilda Guilty: Skeletons? Like what? Some horrifying, deep dark sin? I have no idea what could be in that file. I’m in the dark here...

Public Defender: Ok, for instance, have you ever cheated in poker on a riverboat on the Mississippi? Have you ever lied when you went to Six Flags about your child’s age? Did you ever purposely interrupt your mom’s TV time with an unnecessary request? Have you ever pictured yourself driving your neighbor’s convertible? Fantasized about Brad Pitt? Lied to your husband? Taken a right on red when it was not allowed? Harbored unforgiveness and bitterness? Talked about your boss behind her back?

Gilda Guilty: What? No! Maybe! Are you serious? Is this seriously happening? Is there a hidden camera here somewhere?

Public Defender: Oh I’m very serious, Ms. Guilty. And your prosecutor will be dead serious. He’s quite the schemer, and he will find anything and everything that can be used against you in a court of law.

Gilda Guilty: I’m doomed. You are planning a defense, right? You’re going to make your best effort to get me off? If it is about money, maybe I could set up a payment schedule.

Public Defender: (*under breath*) Attempted bribery of a public official...delusional... irrational... (*looks up*) Going back to those skeletons, Ms. Guilty...anything like that in your past? In order for me to make a credible defense, you are going to have to tell me everything.

Gilda Guilty: I don’t know of anything I need to confess. I can’t think of anything I have deliberately done to hurt anyone. Yes, I’ve sinned, but they’re minor sins. Any lies I’ve told were little and white. I’ve tried to live a good and honest life. Do you really think they have a case against me?

Public Defender: Well, I’ve just skimmed all this paperwork. But they seem to have plenty of evidence and witness testimony to get a conviction. But I will make every effort to provide the best defense possible under the circumstances. That’s my job.

Gilda Guilty: Remember to bring up that I volunteered at the hospital for three summers when I was a teenager, and that I donated my old car, oh--and I regularly

drop off donations at Goodwill. I even put together a Christmas box last year. Surely that will mean something...

Public Defender: That's not much to build a case on, Gilda. But I will keep digging. Now, you go back to your holding cell. Worrying will not do any good. Try to relax, keep your nose clean, and don't talk to anyone--you never know who may be an informant in here.

Gilda Guilty: Maybe I'll check out some legal books from the prison library. When will I see you again?

Public Defender: I will see you in the courtroom next Monday, and we'll see what shenanigans that prosecutor has up his sleeve. *(both stand and exit)*

Public Defender: *(arm around her)* Hey, it's Monday night, that means steak fingers and gravy in the prison cafeteria.

Gilda: *(Sighs and hangs head in defeat as she leaves)*

Narrator: Is Gilda truly guilty of first-degree sin? Will there be enough evidence to convict her? What does the Prosecutor have on her?