

LIFE SENTENCE

"PILOT"

Written by

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EXT. CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S PRISON - DAY

LABRIAN DOBBS, a clean cut Black male in his mid to late-20s, sits in his pristine car waiting for someone. Annoyed, he taps his fingers on the steering wheel. Footsteps crunch in the gravel outside. Suddenly, the passenger door opens.

DARLETTA "DEE DEE" DOBBS bursts into the car like a cyclone, all her worldly belongings in tow. Despite being in her mid-40s, her feminine Black features have barely been phased by the 15 years she served in prison on drug related charges. Sitting next to her son, Darletta beams from ear to ear.

DARLETTA
Whaddup, nigga!

LABRIAN
Hey, Momma.

FREEZE FRAME/TITLE CARD: **LIFE SENTENCE**

INT. LABRIAN'S CAR - DAY

Dee Dee is excited to see LaBrian, but LaBrian? Not so much.

DARLETTA
"Hey, Momma?" Your mother's sprung free after 11 years in the clink and all you got is "Hey, Momma"?

LABRIAN
You weren't "sprung free". You were paroled.

DARLETTA
Same thing.

LABRIAN
No, "free" is free. Parole comes with more terms and conditions than an iTunes update. You gotta hold down a job, check in with your parole officer, find a place to live-

DARLETTA
I got a place to live. I'm staying with my son.

LABRIAN

Only until we find you something permanent. If that halfway house wasn't undergoing repairs, you'd be there right now.

DARLETTA

You know, most kids would be happy to have their mother home after she was...away.

LABRIAN

Most kids aren't public defenders with ex-cons for parents.

DARLETTA

Whatever, nigga. Come on, lets go. I ain't had a double-double in 10 years and I'm hungry as fuck.

LaBrian starts the car.

INT. DOBBS' APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

CLOSE UP on LaBrian sleeping soundly in bed.

LABRIAN

(sleep talking)

Oh hey, Gabrielle Union. You want what for breakfast? But won't Dwayne get mad? Yeah I used the baby wipes this time. Lemme grab the Reddi Whip.

Loud music blasts from outside LaBrian's room, stirring him from his slumber. He jumps out of bed to locate its source.

INT. DOBBS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Dee Dee dusts off tacky decorations that are even louder than her music. Her bonnet-covered head sways to the music as she balances a cigarette in her mouth.

DARLETTA

Hey, baby! Good morning!

Darletta scurries over to LaBrian to kiss him on the cheek. He coughs from her cigarette smoke.

LABRIAN

(yelling)

Can you turn the music down!?

DARLETTA
 (yelling)
 What!?

LABRIAN
 The music! Turn the music-

Darletta mutes the music with a remote.

LABRIAN (cont'd)
 (still yelling)
 -down!

DARLETTA
 Okay, nigga. You ain't gotta yell.

LaBrian looks around his unrecognizable living room. He picks up a random blue container from the TV stand and puts it back.

LABRIAN
 What is all this crap? And what did I tell you about smoking in my apartment?

DARLETTA
 You mean our apartment.

LABRIAN
 No. I don't.

DARLETTA
 My P.O. is coming for the home visit at noon. She's gonna make sure my housing is legit and permanent. And nothing says "permanent" like new decorations.

LABRIAN
 Shit, that's today? I guess I can cancel lunch with Montel.

DARLETTA
 Hey! Language, nigga! And you don't have to be here. Have lunch with Bae.

LABRIAN
 For the last time, Montel and I are friends from college. Straight, heterosexual friends.

DARLETTA

LaBrian, it's okay. You think I ain't munched a muff or two in my day - and not just in prison.

LABRIAN

(deadpan)

I'm gonna get ready for work.

EXT. RESTAURANT PATIO - DAY

LaBrian shares a meal with his best friend MONTEL WILLIAMS, a Black male and fellow attorney who is about 27-ish. Both are on lunch from work.

A WAITER/WAITRESS (any age) drops off a basket of fresh bread, which the guys begin to butter and eat.

MONTEL

I know I'm doing good in my community, but I don't think I have the same passion for the law like when we got out of law school. Know what I mean? Yo, earth to LaBrian.

LABRIAN

(distracted)

I'm sorry, what?

MONTEL

Still thinking about your mom? Yo, I get it. If my mom did a bid only to crash on my couch a decade later, I'd be messed up too, but you can't-

Montel takes his first bites of the bread.

MONTEL (cont'd)

Mmm, this bread good as shit! Look, you can't kick your momma out, man. That breaks like, 8 Black People codes; like when you brought 'Becky with the Good Hair' to the cookout.

LABRIAN

I didn't know she was Team MAGA! She voted for Bernie in the primary.

MONTEL

That should've been your first clue.

LABRIAN

Why should I care where my mom stays? She wasn't worried about me when she was out running the streets, getting locked up.

MONTEL

She did care, LB. But shit happens. And you and I both know how the system treats Black folks with substance abuse issues. If she was a White, suburban soccer mom your momma would've never seen the inside of jail cell.

LABRIAN

Doesn't matter. I've spent my entire life trying to escape Hurricane Darletta, and I'm not getting swept up now.

MONTEL

Is it really that bad?

LABRIAN

She's loud, smokes in my apartment, and spends all day watching "Real Housewives of Compton".

MONTEL

Did you see when Felicia straight whopped lying-ass Darnell on the reunion show!?

LaBrian sits silent and stone-faced.

MONTEL (cont'd)

Whatever. If your momma's so bad, why did you tell the board she could stay with you?

LABRIAN

It's complicated.

MONTEL

Bullshit. Do you know what I wouldn't give for more time with my mom? Another conversation? Another home cooked meal? But I can't have those things because my momma is gone. But yours? Yours is here, now. And that's a gift you don't want to waste.

Damn. LaBrian takes a beat to ponder the truth bomb his best friend just dropped. But then,

LABRIAN

Hold up! Your momma ain't dead! She just moved to Burbank.

MONTEL

(incredulous)

Yeah... And I'm not driving all the way to the valley.

Montel takes a bite out of a buttered roll.

MONTEL (cont'd)

Man, you stay stressed. You need to nibble on that edible I left you.

LABRIAN

What edible?

MONTEL

The cookie in the blue container. I left it at your place the other day.

LABRIAN

You know I don't partake-

LaBrian has a flashback to that morning when he picked up a strange blue container while talking to Dee Dee.

LABRIAN (cont'd)

Dammit, Montel! You left that shit in my living room!

MONTEL

So?

LaBrian pulls out his phone and begins dialing in earnest.

LABRIAN

So Dee Dee's P.O. is doing a home visit today! If they find that cookie they're shipping her right back to prison!

(Into the phone)

Come on Dee Dee, pick up...

INT. DOBBS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Dee Dee tidies up, sans bonnet, when her cell phone rings on the coffee table. As she walks to it, the doorbell rings. She ignores the call and goes to answer the door instead.

BRENDA ROGERS (30s), a stern-faced White woman is at the door holding a file, notebook and pen.

DARLETTA

Hello, your um...honor?

Dee Dee gives an awkward curtsy.

BRENDA

Brenda's fine, Ms. Dobbs.

DARLETTA

It's Darletta, but my friends call me Dee Dee.

Brenda walks past Dee Dee to the living room, ignoring her.

BRENDA

Ms. Dobbs, your file says you're co-habiting with a Mr...

(looks at file)

LaBrian Dobbs?

DARLETTA

Yes, your hon- Brenda. He's my son. He's a public defender. Keeps me on the straight-and-narrow.

Brenda ignores Dee Dee's attempt at chit chat.

BRENDA

I assume this domicile is close to your work?

DARLETTA

Well I don't have a job - yet. But I've put out a ton of applications and stay developing on my skills.

BRENDA

Your skills?

DARLETTA

Yup! I've watched a shit ton of YouTube videos on typing, filing, all that office shit. I excel at Excel.

Dee Dee laughs at her own joke. Brenda, not so much.

BRENDA

Ms. Dobbs, need I remind you that employment is a condition of your parole? Failure to find work could result in it being revoked.

Brenda walks to the couch, putting her back to Dee Dee. Dee Dee mocks Brenda, wagging her finger in the air. Brenda turns to sit. Dee Dee brings her hand down to pick up the bowl of chips from the coffee table.

DARLETTA

(overly cheerful)

Chip?

Brenda makes no gesture towards the chips.

BRENDA

Do you normally leave food out?

DARLETTA

Not all the time.

Brenda sighs loudly and takes more notes.

EXT. RESTAURANT PATIO - DAY - CONTINUOUS

LABRIAN

Dammit! No answer.

LaBrian hangs up his phone. He stands to put on his jacket.

MONTEL

Calm down! Weed is legal in Cali now.

LABRIAN

Being drug free is a condition of her parole and marijuana is still a federally banned substance! That cookie is a parole violation. I gotta go.

LaBrian rushes off to get home, leaving Montel alone.

MONTEL

(yelling)

Don't toss my shit! It's medicinal!

INT. DOBBS' APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Brenda kneels down as she inspects a lower cabinet. Dee Dee peers over her shoulder, visibly annoying Brenda.

DARLETTA

You see that base molding? Nice, right?

BRENDA

This might go faster if you were in the other room.

DARLETTA

Oh. Yeah, okay. Cool. I'mma just hang out in the living room. Let you get your inspecting on and whatnot.

INT. DOBBS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Dee Dee enters the living room. Off screen we hear the front door open. Dee Dee turns to see LaBrian enter.

DARLETTA

LaBrian? Shouldn't you be at lunch?

LaBrian runs to the TV stand to grab the box, but it's gone!

LABRIAN

(loud whisper)

Shit!

DARLETTA

What? What's wrong?

LABRIAN

Montel left a weed cookie in a blue box. It was just here this morning. Where is it?

DARLETTA

(loud whisper)

I don't know. I've been cleaning all morning. Everything's turned around.

Brenda enters the living room. LaBrian and Dee Dee tense up.

BRENDA

Oh hello! You must be Mr. Dobbs. I'm Brenda, your mother's parole officer.

Brenda shakes LaBrian's hand.

LABRIAN

Nice to meet a fellow servant of the court. How is the inspection coming?

BRENDA

Wonderful! I'm almost done. I just have to finish some notes in the kitchen, then I'm out of your hair.

LABRIAN

Sounds good.

Brenda exits back down the hall.

LABRIAN (cont'd)

(loud whisper)

We gotta find that box!

MONTAGE of LaBrian and Dee Dee searching for the container.

LaBrian checks the inside of an ottoman.

Dee Dee looks under the coffee table.

LaBrian shakes out the remaining clothes in a hamper.

Dee Dee looks into the bathroom medicine cabinet.

Dee Dee rushes back into the living room as LaBrian comes out from checking under the couch.

DARLETTA

Any luck?

LABRIAN

Found it!

LaBrian and Dee Dee are relieved as LaBrian pulls the cookie out of the blue container, holding up his prize. But then,

BRENDA

All good! The inspection went- Oh! A cookie! For me?

LABRIAN

Uh...

BRENDA

(to Dee Dee)

I really shouldn't. I've been so good on my Keto diet, but chocolate chip are my absolute-

Brenda turns back around to LaBrian, who has stuffed the entire cookie in his mouth and forcibly chewing.

BRENDA (cont'd)
-favorite.

DARLETTA
His sugar gets really low. All that lawyering really takes it out of him.

Dee Dee gently nudges a confused Brenda out the door.

DARLETTA (cont'd)
Anyway, thanks for coming! See you next time!

Dee Dee shuts the door and returns to the living room.

DARLETTA (cont'd)
Did you eat the whole cookie?

LABRIAN
She would've sent you back to prison.

LaBrian plops down on the couch, exhausted. Dee Dee sits beside him. LaBrian lays his head on his mother's lap and Dee Dee gently strokes his hair.

DARLETTA
You really had my back today. Thanks.

LABRIAN
No problem. Mom?

DARLETTA
Mmm hmm?

LABRIAN
I'm not making it back to work today, am I?

DARLETTA
(lovingly)
No baby. You 'bout to be high as fuck. But plus side? There's a "Real Housewives of Compton" marathon today. You in?

LaBrian takes a beat to ponder. Then,

LABRIAN
You know what? Yeah. I'm in.

Excited, Dee Dee reaches for the bowl of chips and hands it to LaBrian, then grabs the remote.

LABRIAN (cont'd)
You hear about Felicia popping
Darnell at the reunion?

DARLETTA
She knocked that nigga into next
season!

LaBrian munches on chips while resting his head in his mother's lap.

From her seat, Dee Dee points the remote towards us. She turns on the TV. On this, WE:

FADE TO BLACK

CREDITS

FELICIA (O.C.)
I'm Felicia. I'm a Pisces, a wife,
and an Instagram model with over
20,000 followers. But you can call me
the 'Countess of Compton'!

END OF SHOW