

AFTERSHOCK

DE number: 6

Writer Number: 5

FADE IN:

EXT. CHURCH BUILDING - NIGHT

A lit sign outside of the building reads "Midtown Christian Fellowship". There is not much other light in the vicinity.

MARIA exits the church building, locks the door, and slings her purse over her shoulder. She walks toward her car, keys in her hand.

A dark figure approaches behind her. Maria turns around. She gasps and her keys drop to the ground.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

It is the middle of a criminal jury trial. Maria is sitting at the witness stand. MS. ANDREWS, the assistant district attorney, is standing and directing questions at Maria.

MS. ANDREWS

What happened after you turned around?

MARIA

I saw a man standing there. He was pointing a gun at me.

The gun is laid out on a table, with the exhibit tag attached.

MARIA (CONT'D)

He told me to throw my purse towards him.

Maria starts to cry.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Then he told me to get down on the ground.

The jurors are listening intently, with sober expressions on their faces.

MS. ANDREWS

Do you see the man who robbed you in the courtroom today?

Maria, looking down and wiping her eyes with a tissue, nods.

JUDGE

Ma'am, we're going to need you to speak audibly.

MARIA  
 (finally looking up)  
 Yes.  
 (pointing)  
 He's right there.

The defendant KEITH STANLEY, who looks as if he could just as well be sitting through a boring math class, shifts in his chair.

SERIES OF SHOTS - THE TRIAL CONCLUDES

-- The jurors rise and file out of the room slowly.

-- Keith looks down at the handcuffs on his wrists.

-- The jurors file back in and the JURY FOREMAN starts to read the pronouncement. His lips move but the only word heard clearly is -

JURY FOREMAN  
 -- Guilty.

BACK TO SCENE

JUDGE  
 The victim is allowed to make a statement prior to sentencing.

Maria stands up from the front row of the audience gallery, and shakily pulls out a piece of paper. She starts to read quietly off of the paper.

MARIA  
 We should feel safe in our own home,  
 in our own community. And in our  
 church. He took that away from me.  
 I want the court to know...he took  
 more than my purse.

She stops and looks up from her paper.

MARIA (CONT'D)  
 I want you to know, he took more  
 than just my purse.

Maria sits back down. Her friend places a hand on her shoulder.

JUDGE  
 In light of the mitigating factors,  
 such as the defendant's age and lack  
 (MORE)

JUDGE (CONT'D)

of prior record, the court orders a term of eighteen months commitment to state prison and formal probation upon release for a period of four years.

Keith sits nonchalantly next to his lawyer, who leans over to whisper in Keith's ear.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

As part of the probation terms, the defendant is ordered to stay away from the victim. He is not allowed within 250 feet of her home, her workplace, or anywhere the victim is. He is not to contact or attempt to contact the victim, either directly or indirectly. It is so ordered. This hearing is adjourned.

As Keith is led away by the court guard, he looks casually over at Maria. Maria locks eyes with him for a moment, then looks away.

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

Maria is reading at the counter of the bookstore where she works. It's a slow day, with just a few customers browsing the shelves.

CUSTOMER

Excuse me.

Maria looks up and gasps. Keith is standing before her. Terrified, she backs up a step.

Thump. Her book falls on the floor. The sound startles Maria and she looks down at the book.

CUSTOMER (CONT'D)

(cautiously)

Ma'am? Are you ok?

Maria looks up and sees that the man before her is not Keith. She is shaking and breathing fast, but she nods, trying to compose herself.

The customer wants to leave now, but is trying not to make any sudden movements.

CUSTOMER (CONT'D)

Um, do you want me to come back later?

Maria shakes her head, but she is gripping the counter with both hands.

CUSTOMER (CONT'D)  
(nervously)  
Okay, well, um...I'm gonna go.

The customer scurries away. Maria continues to grip the counter.

EXT. BOOKSTORE - DAY - LATER

Maria walks out of the bookstore and walks down the fairly busy street.

She keeps looking behind her, trying to figure out if the man behind her is following her.

The man just walks, hands in his pockets, looking ahead.

Maria picks up the pace and keeps walking, but the man behind her is getting closer.

The man puts his right hand into the left inside pocket of his coat. He is about to pull something out.

Maria quickly ducks into a doorway.

The man walks by, and talks into the cell phone he just pulled out of his pocket. For a brief moment, he turns to look quizzically at Maria.

She leans against the doorway for a moment, trying to compose herself.

She walks from the doorway to her car and gets in. She puts her head down and cries into the steering wheel.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The alarm clock flashes 3 a.m. Maria suddenly sits up in her bed, awakened from a bad dream.

She reaches over and turns on the light. Her eyes fall on the bible on her nightstand.

She picks it up, and leans back against the headboard, flipping the bible open.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Maria is sitting in the office of BETTY, a therapist. It's a cozy office, with throw pillows on the couch where Maria is sitting.

MARIA

What is going on with me? I've just been feeling...crazy.

BETTY

Well, what you've been describing to me is not at all uncommon for someone who's been through what you've been through.

MARIA

So how long am I going to feel like this?

BETTY

Well, it varies from person to person, so I can't really tell you. You should take time to do things that you enjoy - whether it's time with friends, or church involvement, or anything else. It's all part of the healing process.

Betty pauses and looks carefully at Maria, who is looking down at her hands.

BETTY (CONT'D)

We'll also need to start talking about the process of forgiveness.

Maria looks up sharply.

BETTY (CONT'D)

I know, I know. But it's also part of the healing process.

MARIA

(Nodding)  
Ok, yes, whatever it takes to move on from this.

SERIES OF SHOTS - MARIA'S HEALING PROCESS

-- Maria standing outside her church building, chatting with friends.

-- Maria sitting at the park with her bible, looking at families playing nearby.

-- Maria inside Betty's office, talking with Betty.

-- Maria inside a coffee shop, chatting with friends and laughing.

INT. BOOKSTORE - EVENING

There are only two customers in the store, and they are both up at the counter.

Keith casually enters the store and walks to the shelves in the back of the store.

Maria is at the counter. She is just finishing up with a customer, and she hasn't seen Keith yet.

Keith gets in line behind the customer. As the customer leaves, Maria turns around to answer the phone, without looking at Keith.

Keith steps up to the counter.

MARIA

Hello...yes, we open at ten in the morning. You're welcome. Bye.

Keith is texting on his cell phone. Maria turns around and freezes when she sees him. A look of recognition and fear crosses Maria's face.

Maria looks back at the store phone on the counter.

KEITH

(casually, as he looks at his cell phone)

Uh, yeah, I'd just like to get this.

He gestures to a book on the counter.

Ring. Keith's cell phone is ringing. He looks at who is calling him while Maria quickly looks at the price tag on the book.

MARIA

(in a barely audible voice)

That'll be \$14.99.

KEITH  
(speaking into the  
cell phone while  
handing Maria a twenty)  
Oh hey, yeah, I'll be there, I'm  
just running a little late...

Maria puts the change on the counter with shaky hands.

Keith is still listening to the voice on the other end of his cell phone.

He nods curtly at Maria, then takes the money and the book and starts to walk toward the door.

Maria grips the counter in exhaustion as she watches Keith walk out.

He takes a couple of steps toward the door, but then stops.

KEITH (CONT'D)  
(Into the cell phone)  
Hey, listen, I gotta go.

Keith's back is still towards Maria as he hangs up the phone.

Maria starts to cry as she watches Keith's back.

Keith turns and walks back toward her. As he walks, he looks directly at her for the first time, and a look of recognition crosses his face.

Keith stops in his tracks. Then he starts to step toward the counter.

Maria reaches for the store phone.

MARIA  
(panicked and crying)  
You have to stay away from me...

KEITH  
(holding out his hand)  
Wait, no, I'm sorry...I didn't mean  
to, I mean, I didn't know that --

Maria has the phone to her ear now, and she is dialing 9-1-1.

KEITH (CONT'D)  
(urgently)  
I'm not here to hurt you - I've  
changed. Listen - I've changed!  
And I'm sorry, I'm really sorry,  
what I did...was stupid.

Maria is holding the phone a little bit away from her ear and looking at Keith in wide-eyed bewilderment, still mixed with fear.

KEITH (CONT'D)

Look, you gave me too much change back.

Keith holds out a ten dollar bill.

Keith quickly places the money and book on the counter. Maria backs up against the wall and looks toward the door.

911 OPERATOR (O.S.)

911, what is the emergency?...

Maria looks at the ten dollar bill, which is sitting on the counter on top of the book that Keith bought.

Keith motions for her to hang up the phone.

911 OPERATOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Hello?... Hello?

Click. Maria hangs up the phone. She looks at Keith and there is a tense silence. A few moments pass.

MARIA

(confused)

You're giving me money back?

KEITH

Well, yeah, you gave me a ten instead of a one.

MARIA

(with rising  
bewilderment)

Why? Why did you do it?

KEITH

(shrugging)

Well, I figured it's the right thing to do.

MARIA

(brows furrowed)

No, I mean, not about the money.

Why? Why - that night...?

KEITH  
 (looking genuinely  
 distraught)  
 I ... don't really know. Nothing I  
 can say will make sense anyway...

Maria looks at him for a moment, and brushes a hand across her eyes.

She picks up the ten dollar bill, and considers it. Then she looks down at the book that Keith bought.

INSERT - A BIBLE.

Maria picks up the bible.

MARIA  
 (looking at Keith  
 quizzically now)  
 You bought a bible?

KEITH  
 Yeah, well, there were some guys  
 that would come visit  
 us...inside...and talk about God,  
 and Jesus, and forgiveness and stuff.

He looks down, fumbling for words. Maria is still looking at him quizzically.

KEITH (CONT'D)  
 (quietly)  
 I just want you to know, that I am  
 truly sorry for what I did.

Maria looks at him intently. Then she looks at the bible in her hand.

MARIA  
 (carefully)  
 Listen, you'd better go. They might  
 send a car out anyway.

Keith nods, and starts to walk toward the door. He puts his hand to the doorknob.

MARIA (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 Hey, wait.

Maria walks up to Keith and hands him the bible. She looks at him as she takes a couple of steps back.

Keith looks down at the bible, looks up at Maria.

KEITH  
(with a small smile)  
Thanks.

Keith walks out of the bookstore.

EXT. BOOKSTORE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Maria is looking out the bookstore window as Keith walks away.

Keith continues to walk down the street, which is dimly lit by street lamps, with just a few people milling around.

A police car is coming down the street, lights flashing but no sirens. It drives by Keith.

As Keith walks, he takes off his cap and looks up at the night sky.

THE END