

Charlie

Manson on the Record

by

Travis Larson

Screenwriter holds the rights to:

Assassins... Serial Killers... Corrupt Cops...
Chasing the News in a Skirt and High Heels

by Mary Neiswender

2015 Nicholl Top 50 scripts

2015 Austin finalist, drama
(top 6 of 3,330 scripts; winner TBA)

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EXT. LOS ANGELES COUNTY HALL OF JUSTICE - AFTERNOON

A dozen TV REPORTERS practice their scripts. Harried PRODUCERS and CAMERA MEN pull gear from nearby vans and rush to lay-down extension cords that crisscross the sidewalk.

SUPER: "JANUARY, 1970"

TV REPORTER 1

Five months ago, it started here in Los Angeles. A grisly murder scene suggesting a strange religious rite -

MARY NEISWENDER (30's? early 40's? She'll never tell) hurries past the men. She wears heels, a skirt and PRESS BADGE. She's attractive, but more bookworm than beauty queen.

TV REPORTER 2

- victims had been stabbed, dozens of repeated stab wounds. The word "WAR" carved into LaBianca's chest and "DEATH TO PIGS" written in blood -

TV REPORTER 3

- accused of killing seven people, including actress Sharon Tate, Charles Manson allegedly led a sadistic cult whose followers were willing to murder on command in order to please him -

TV REPORTER 4 holds up a NEWSPAPER, the LONG BEACH PRESS TELEGRAM (LBPT), it screams "Exclusive: Manson Speaks."

TV REPORTER 4

- Manson finally broke his silence. And, for the first time since his arrest nearly two months ago, he spoke by phone to a local reporter -

Mary smiles. She passes TV REPORTER KEMPER of CBS (40's, his longest monogamous relationship has been his hair drier, but he's sharp). He applies pancake make-up.

TV REPORTER KEMPER

Neiswender! Uncle Walter wants to know how you did it. Give us an interview.

She turns, intrigued -

MARY

I'd love to, but I'm late for -

BUMP. A CLUMSY CAMERAMAN lugging gear runs into a distracted Mary. Her ankle twists as she almost goes to the ground.

CLUMSY PRODUCER
Oh my god. So sorry.

TV REPORTER KEMPER
That foot okay?

MARY
I'm fine - I brought a spare.

It does hurt, but worse she's BROKEN A HEEL. To it, quietly -

MARY (CONT'D)
You're not getting out of this.

And now, her watch says she's late. *Damn it.* She notices a GRIZZLED PRODUCER who secures a cable with DUCT TAPE.

MARY (CONT'D)
Excuse me. Yeah, can I borrow that?

The Grizzled Producer throws her the roll. Mary looks at the shoe again. *Not quite what she needs.* She spots the open doors on Clumsy's news van.

MARY (CONT'D)
Got a cordless screwdriver in there?

CLUMSY PRODUCER
Yeah, for lights and gear we -

MARY
And maybe a two-inch wood screw?

MOMENTS LATER

Mary takes the cordless and the screw from Clumsy. Her shoe and separated heel sit on the van's bumper.

MARY (CONT'D)
(re: shoe, to Clumsy)
Could you hold them? No - other way.
Okay, watch your fingers.

WHIRRRRRRRRR.

She sinks the screw through the sole and into the heel. Then wraps it all twice in tape. Tests it. The men are impressed.

TV REPORTER KEMPER
What do you say: you, me and Cronkite
in every living room in America.

MARY
Sorry, got to run.

TV REPORTER KEMPER
 Tomorrow, then.

She passes a handful of HIPPIE GIRLS (15-20, attractive but dirty) and longhaired CLEM (17, he rubs his hands as if washing them. Way too many drugs, man). They sit on the curb.

TV REPORTER 6
 - meanwhile, some of Manson's most ardent followers, dubbed "the family," descend each day on the Hall of Justice to observe the proceedings -

Clem spots Mary and FOLLOWS her, unnoticed, toward the -

INT. HALL OF JUSTICE - POLICE CHIEF DAVIS' OFFICE

Mary stands at the desk of POLICE CHIEF DAVIS (50s, stout, wavy white hair). He plays it by the book and he's not happy.

MARY
 I understand yesterday's interview was a bit unorthodox -

CHIEF DAVIS
 Unorthodox? He doesn't have phone privileges.

MARY
 But he does have visitor privileges.

CHIEF DAVIS
 The gag order is clear, and it -

MARY
 And so is the First Amendment, and I'll report whatever I damn well please.

CHIEF DAVIS
 Judge Dell's order applies to him.

MARY
 Then slap him with contempt. Add a few extra days to his sentence. But you're asking for the death penalty, so I'm not sure that's much of a deterrent.

(a change of tone)
 Chief, he put me on the list - your list. I have an appointment.

He looks at his clipboard. She's right, but he hates it.

CHIEF DAVIS
 And you're his "friend"?