

Academy

Pilot Episode: "Curtain Up"

Written by

Jonathan Light

(Excerpt)

917-302-8435
jon@fivefour.media

TEASER

INT. LINDSAY'S APARTMENT - DAY

LINDSAY COOPER, mid 50's - elegant and graceful, a movie star - gets dressed in her well-appointed bedroom.

On the walls: Several posters of plays and TV shows that she's starred in. The co-stars are names you recognize, but SHE has top billing.

In front of a mirror, she makes a final check: a picture of professionalism and confidence.

Satisfied, she puts on a pair of large sunglasses, grabs her bag and heads out.

EXT. LINDSAY'S APARTMENT - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Walking out into the sunshine, she starts down the street...

...And is INSTANTLY accosted by TWO JERKS with cameras. They start snapping photos as they back-walk in front of her.

LINDSAY
(in stride)
Seriously?

JERK 1
(snapping away)
Did you see *Days of Nights* yet?

LINDSAY
No. It came out like yesterday,
didn't it?

JERK 1
Still regret leaving the movie?

LINDSAY
Pretty slow today, huh?

JERK 2
(recording video)
People have a right to know.

LINDSAY
(exasperated)
Come on guys, I'm not a politician.
I left a movie, it happens all the
time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JERK 1

But Curtis is still pretty pissed
off at you.

JERK 2

Yeah, didn't you hear what he said?

Lindsay stops.

LINDSAY

(wary)

No..

Jerk 1 and 2 exchange a look. Jerk 2 pulls out his cell
phone and searches for something, then queues it up.

He holds the phone up as Lindsay comes closer.

INSERT ON PHONE:

A cellphone video plays. CURTIS FOSTER, towering and
artistic, sits on an interview stage:

INTERVIEWER

But why do you think she left the
production?

CURTIS

Why? I have no idea, but it worked
out in the end. The film turned out
better with a less, uh... mature
actress in the role, since the key
to the character was *in* that
immaturity. And Lindsay...I don't
know..

On Lindsay as she works to not react.

CURTIS (cont'd)

I hear she's going to do some
teaching or something? Well, good
for her. Some people just don't have
it for longevity in this business
and I'm glad she at least seems to
recognize it.

The video stops. Lindsay looks up, not sure what to think,
but very aware that her reaction is being filmed.

The Jerks snap and record away, but she gives them nothing.
They stop shooting.

JERK 2

Come on. At least a soundbite..

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LINDSAY
(measured)
Thanks guys. Good luck.

She walks off, and they don't bother to follow.

EXT. THE DRAMATIC ART ACADEMY (DAA) - DAY

Establishing. The modern, artsy-glass building shimmers, its polished angles overlooking a beautiful plaza.

The massive sign that overhangs the street trumpets the school's name: "THE DRAMATIC ART ACADEMY"

INT. THE DAA LOBBY - DAY

Lindsay walks in and greets the MARVIN, late 60's, the warm security guard who controls the gate.

MARVIN
(a little starstruck)
Miss Lindsay Cooper, so glad to have you here.

LINDSAY
(polite)
Hi..

MARVIN
You know, my son's a HUGE fan. I'm sure he'd love to meet you someday.

LINDSAY
(sincere)
Well, bring him in. I'd love to say hello.

Marvin smiles in gratitude as Lindsay passes through the gate. VARIOUS PEOPLE sit in the lobby, murmuring as she walks through it. She takes it all in stride and heads to the elevator.

INT. DAA - PETER COOK'S OFFICE - DAY

She walk in and is immediately greeted by ELLEN, the receptionist, 62, African-American, from Tennessee with an accent to match.

ELLEN
(jumping up to give a hug)
Hey there girl!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LINDSAY

Hi Ellen.

They embrace, warmly.

ELLEN

Ohh, we're gonna have fun this year!

LINDSAY

I hope so.

ELLEN

Go on in, he's just getting off a call.

She heads into the..

INNER OFFICE

and pokes her head in.

At the large and elegant desk - in an office that just screams "*The-a-tre*" - sits PETER COOK, ageless and jolly. A cross between Methuselah and Santa Claus, with impeccable diction.

Peter - on the phone - waves her in and points to the chair.

PETER

(in the phone)

Yes, yes...well actually she just arrived. Yes - I'm excited too.

(he looks at her)

I think so. She *is* good at keeping a neutral face, so I don't know what she's feeling, but I'll find out. Yes, thank you Joseph. Bye.

He hangs up, then stands to greet her.

PETER (cont'd)

Miss Cooper. You look wonderful. So glad you came in.

LINDSAY

(accepting his embrace)

Peter, please. You didn't call me "Miss Cooper" when I was a student here.

PETER

Yes, I believe I did.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LINDSAY

Well you don't have to now.

PETER

Sorry. *Lindsay*.

LINDSAY

(with a nod to the phone)
President Perceigh?

PETER

Yeah, yeah...he's just - concerned.
You know.

LINDSAY

About me?

PETER

Well yes, a bit but mostly about,
uh...Mark.

Lindsay doesn't answer, but her expression makes it clear the subject is not a welcome one.

PETER (cont'd)

He just - he wants to make sure it's
not a problem. There will be enough
distractions with you being here.

LINDSAY

Look, we're both adults now - at
least I am. I don't know about him.

PETER

(hands up, placating)
I get it, I do. There has simply
been some...*talk* among the faculty,
and we're a little worried about it
getting out of hand.

LINDSAY

It won't. Not from me anyway.

PETER

(a weary sigh)
Mark is a dedicated professional...

LINDSAY

So am I...

PETER

...but he *can* be difficult,
especially when he sees things
differently...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LINDSAY

...And yeah, I get it. He doesn't want some Hollywood *girl* waltzing in and screwing up his perfect little world.

Peter bristles at this. She grins.

PETER

Perhaps. I mean, your appointment here *is* a bit unorthodox. He's voiced concerns about press and paparazzi and the like..

LINDSAY

And I told you all that has stopped for me since I moved back. Nobody cares about me anymore, which is fine. There won't be any distractions.

PETER

I know, I just think it's best if you let Mark be himself and try to steer clear.

LINDSAY

Look, he might not have changed since we were here, but I have. I'll stay out of his way. I just want to teach, OK?

Peter ponders her for a moment.

PETER

I heard what Curtis said.

LINDSAY

Oh.

PETER

Yes. And he's wrong, you know. You're one of the greatest talents we've ever sent out the door, and you still are. I mean it.

LINDSAY

(touched in spite of herself)

Thank you. But I don't think many directors agree.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

PETER

(dismissive)

Well that's the problem with things out there. The business is so far from the craft in that respect.

LINDSAY

I hope you don't mind if I'm straight with the students about that..

PETER

Why do you think I want you here? I sure as hell can't speak about the real world, can I?

Lindsey responds with the smile of a woman who knows she can't say what she's really thinking.

CUT TO:

INT. SILVER SCHULTZ HEADQUARTERS - BEN'S OFFICE - DAY

The investment banking headquarters - about as luxurious an office space as you could possibly find.

Within, in a well-appointed (but small) office, BENJAMIN GILBERT sits at a desk - 25, attractive in a warm, slightly-dorky-but-inviting way. He mopes in front of a computer screen, which displays a stock chart dropping in real time.

Then: MARTIN MICHAEL - 55, grandiose and powerful - bursts in.

MARTIN

Well?

Ben jolts up.

BEN

What?

MARTIN

Where is it?

BEN

(panic)

I thought you wanted it tomorrow?

MARTIN

You're kidding, right?

Ben's look reveals that he's not.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARTIN (cont'd)

(roaring)

DAMMIT! Again?? Benjamin, what the HELL, man?? What is UP with you lately?

BEN

I'm..so sorry...

Martin, who just got back from a management-training-offsite, changes tack.

MARTIN

Look. Ben. Dude. Just..what is up? What's going on with you? Talk to me.

He waits for an answer, clearly not comfortable waiting for answers, but trying hard.

In the door, DAN LERMAN - 29, a broker type - appears...and watches.

Disarmed by Martin's invitation to talk, Ben starts talking...and Dan watches with growing horror:

BEN

I'm sorry Martin...I just - I'm just distracted. The truth is, I'm *questioning* things, you know? I'm just...where is my life? What am I doing? It wasn't supposed to be like this.

He finishes. Martin stands, thinking. Then:

MARTIN

Wow, Ben. I gotta say. I'm really sorry, but... I have absolutely no idea what in this universe you were talking about just now. So let me tell you what it's *supposed* to be like: You are *supposed* to stop talking, remove your head from your ass, and get those analytics to me TODAY. OK? TODAY!

He turns and almost bowls over Dan, who stands in the door.

MARTIN (cont'd)

What are YOU doing??

DAN

I uh...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAN (cont'd)
 (looking around)
This is not my office..

Martin pushes him out of the way and storms off. Dan looks in to see Ben, deflated, drop his head on his desk.

DAN (cont'd)
 You OK?

BEN
 (dejected)
 She said she'd call yesterday. We were supposed to talk.

DAN
 Yeaahhhhh...

This is as much support as Dan is trained to give. Ben keeps his head down.

Next to his ear, Ben's phone dings with an email. He jolts up, grabs it and reads, frantic. Whatever it is, it's stunned him.

DAN (cont'd)
 What?

Ben can't respond. He stares at his phone.

DAN (cont'd)
 (grabbing the phone)
 Is it her?

Dan reads:

CU ON EMAIL MESSAGE: "Dear Mr. Gilbert, We are delighted to inform you of your acceptance into the Dramatic Art Academy for the upcoming term."

DAN (cont'd)
 Holy crap... You got in?

Ben stands - suddenly in a fearful, cold sweat.

MUSIC BEGINS as we make our rounds of our incoming students: