

THE COST OF TRUTH

The truth has a price. She's the only one left willing to pay it.

GENRE

Legal Thriller / Social-Justice Drama

FORMAT

Feature · ~80 pp.

TARGET

OWN · BET+

SETTING

Atlanta, Georgia

In Atlanta, a burned-out prosecutor who stopped believing in the law takes a dead death-row appeal — and uncovers that the DNA clearing an innocent man was **buried by the very prosecutor, now a Supreme Court-bound judge**, whose conviction a grieving senator built his legacy on. With eighty-six days until an execution, she must dismantle the institution that made her — risking her marriage, her license, and her life — while the real killer, free for twelve years, begins to close in.

The Story

Sarah Jennings was the finest prosecutor Fulton County ever had. Now she's a ghost in her own office — until a death-row file lands on her desk and the condemned man, Marcus Thorne, asks her to do the one thing no one ever did: *count the evidence*. Item eleven — a missing DNA result — cracks a silence twelve years deep.

The thread runs through the whole house: a buried lab report, a witness terrorized into a lie, a fixer in a black SUV, and Judge Eleanor Robertson — the woman who convicted Marcus, now a month from the state Supreme Court. Stripped of her case and nearly her license, Sarah discovers the man who truly killed Elaine Whitmore has walked Atlanta free the whole time. And he knows her name.

tone & tradition

Just Mercy · When They See Us · A Time to Kill — carried by the faith-and-family heartbeat of an OWN prestige event.

THEMES

- ◆ The cost of conscience — and the price of comfort
- ◆ Redemption: reclaiming the self you buried
- ◆ Complicity and courage within the establishment
- ◆ Motherhood, marriage & faith under fire

WHY IT SELLS

- ◆ A career-defining lead for a Black actress in her 40s.
- ◆ An all-Black ensemble of power and consequence.
- ◆ Atlanta as a living character: church, courthouse, old money and new.
- ◆ Thriller propulsion + prestige depth — broad reach, awards ceiling.
- ◆ Built-in franchise & timely: rides the innocence-movement moment.

WHY OWN & BET+

A Southern, faith-anchored, unapologetically Black story of redemption and moral courage. Nearly every seat of power here — prosecutor, judge, senator, deputy DA — is Black, making this not *"the system versus a Black defendant"* but a searing portrait of conscience **inside the Black establishment**. Rooted in Southwest Atlanta and Mount Calvary church, it pairs OWN / BET+ catharsis with the engine of a studio thriller.

Principal Cast

An ensemble of power, conscience, and consequence — Atlanta.

THE LEADS

SARAH JENNINGS FEMALE • EARLY 40S • BLACK **LEAD**

A brilliant senior ADA gone numb — a legend who stopped being dangerous. The role *is* the film: she travels from moral exhaustion to reignited conscience, and pays for it with her career, her marriage, and nearly her life. Requires an actress who can hold stillness, menace, and grief in a single frame and carry a picture on interiority alone.

tone reference The coiled control and moral gravity of a career-defining dramatic lead — in the register of Viola Davis's most interior work.

MARCUS THORNE MALE • LATE 30S • BLACK **LEAD**

Twelve years on death row for a murder he didn't commit. Not a saint — sharp, testing, proud. He hands Sarah the key ("*count the evidence*") and refuses to let her erase his agency in his own salvation. A carpenter; a father who has never seen his daughter grow up.

tone reference The dignified, patient intensity of a man who has turned survival into a discipline.

JUDGE ELEANOR ROBERTSON FEMALE • 55 • BLACK **LEAD**

The prosecutor who buried the exculpatory evidence — now one month from the state Supreme Court. Regal, warm, and terrifying. Genuinely believes she sacrificed one man to advance the many. The antagonist as tragedy: she does not fold easily, and turns the courtroom into a referendum on Sarah before she breaks.

tone reference Velvet-over-steel authority; a villain of enormous, seductive dignity.

CATHERINE WELLS FEMALE • 60S • BLACK **LEAD**

Deputy DA; Sarah's mentor and conscience — the ghost of the future Sarah is trying not to become. "*I never stopped believing. I just stopped thinking it was worth it for me. There's a difference.*" The soul of the film in five scenes.

tone reference Lived-in wisdom and elegant fatigue; grace worn thin by the system.

FEATURED ANTAGONIST

TERRELL BOONE MALE • 40S • BLACK **KEY SUPPORT**

The real killer — ordinary, unremarkable, chilling. A landscaping contractor who has hidden in plain sight for twelve years. The "man in the hood." Mostly silent menace; a face you'd never look at twice, which is exactly the point.

SUPPORTING CAST

DAVID JENNINGS

MALE • 44 • BLACK

Sarah's husband, a firm partner. Steady and loving, pushed to an ultimatum as the case invades their home. Arc from support to fear to a scarred, honest love that refuses to shrink.

SENATOR ALDRIDGE WHITMORE

MALE • 60S • BLACK

The victim's father; a legacy built on a lie he chose not to examine. *"I didn't want to know. There's a difference."* Arc from immovable grief to reckoning.

TOM NASH

MALE • 70S • ANY ETHNICITY

The retired evidence clerk crushed by his own complicity. Shelved the truth to save a pension; breaks on the witness stand. A quiet, wrenching part.

KEISHA THORNE

FEMALE • 17 • BLACK

Marcus's daughter, who grew up without him. Guarded, watchful, learning how to call a stranger "Dad."

DR. ELENA VOSS

FEMALE • 50S • ANY ETHNICITY

GBI forensic analyst. Plain, precise, unshakeable. Wrote the truth once in 2014 and was ignored; delivers the science that frees Marcus.

MAYA CHEN

FEMALE • 30S • ASIAN-AMERICAN

AJC investigative reporter — Sarah's only leverage and, effectively, her bodyguard. A story in the paper is the protection she can't get from the law.

DALE WEBB

MALE • 40S

The Attorney General's aggressively-polite enforcer. Smiles while reading you your ending. Leads the raid and the license threat.

PEARL THORNE

FEMALE • 65 • BLACK

Marcus's mother. Faith is her ballast — Mount Calvary, a worn Bible, a church fan. Grief weaponized by a system, held together by scripture. A showcase featured role.

LINDA WADE

FEMALE • 50S • BLACK

The coerced witness; terrorized into a lie and hunted for twelve years. Her on-page recantation is the film's moral spine. A devastating featured role.

JAMES WHITMORE

MALE • MID-20S • BLACK

The senator's son and the family's conscience. Secretly ready to know the truth about his sister, even if it costs him his father.

DEVON PIERCE

MALE • EARLY 30S • BLACK

A young ADA who becomes the inside man — risking charges to feed Sarah the files the office is burying. The conscience she once ignored.

RAY TORRES

MALE • 28 • LATINO

Idealistic junior clerk, exhausted by his first year in the machine. Traces the forged records and joins Sarah's off-books hunt.

HAROLD VANCE

MALE • 60S

The politically-driven District Attorney. Protects the office, not the truth. Removes Sarah the moment she stops being useful.

JENNY JENNINGS

FEMALE • 10 • BLACK

Sarah and David's daughter. The film's heart and its light — and the reason the stakes are unbearable. Wants to know if Mom is a superhero.

DAY PLAYERS & FEATURED

GWEN ABBOTT F • 60S — Retired crime-scene tech; kept the truth in a diary for twelve years. • **DET. CALVIN STROUD M • 50S** — The 2014 lead detective who coerced the witness ID; broken on cross. • **GALE PRUITT M • 50S** — Ex-cop fixer and campaign muscle; the black-SUV threat. • **GREGORY HALE M • 60S** — GBI lab administrator who stamped the result "pending." • **DOROTHY F • 60S** — Veteran court coordinator; thirty-two years of institutional memory.

Tone references describe the register and gravity sought for each role and are provided as creative guidance only — not as offers, attachments, or confirmed casting. | NCCA Entertainment • Kelly R. Tenney • Atlanta, GA