

Misdemeanor: Class A

There was a point in time when I was enrolled in classes for graduate school, teaching dance at four studios, and performing with a company. All of this ultimately amounted to lots of meals eaten on the road and a continuous flow of money pipelining directly from my paychecks to local gas stations. And speeding. Lots of speeding.

I was at the point in my life where I would set my alarm for the time that I really should have been leaving the house. This particular morning we had a professional photographer coming in to shoot for company promotional material and charging by the hour, so the stakes were higher. I was a tornado, stumbling around and knocking things over in my wake. By the time I got into my car and blinked at the clock, I had about ten to fifteen minutes before the photoshoot started. I was a thirty minute drive away. Now, this sounds undoable. But unfortunately, I had been in stickier situations with tardiness and had always risen to the occasion. When I made it onto the highway, there was a moment where it felt like the clouds parted for me. The sun shined through. Moses stepped in to let me pass. There were three lanes in each direction, and for some reason, the far left hand lane was completely wide open. Not a single car in my way. I revved my engine.

...And I heard the sirens start up. A second later there were flashing lights in my rearview mirror. My heart stopped. I truly had believed that I was immune to getting pulled over. My speeding history and lack of consequences had deemed it so. This moment couldn't be real. My hands started shaking. As I slowed my car down and pulled over to the side of the road, the tears started. So *that's* why the left lane was wide open. Because all the other drivers noticed the cop car peeking out from the median.

The conversation with the cop was brief. Yes, he was sure he clocked my speed at one hundred miles per hour in a sixty mile per hour zone correctly. No, it wasn't that *he* had to go one hundred miles per hour to *catch up to me* from a standstill. No, I couldn't get a *warning*. Yes, the court date was mandatory because I now had a Misdemeanor Class A on my record- the same misdemeanor class as battery and assault. I called my dad after rolling up my window and asked him if he would bring our family dog to visit me in jail.

The pandemic started pretty soon after that. My court date was moved to a virtual appointment which continuously got postponed. *Maybe they would forget about it?* But as the third postponed date loomed closer and closer, I realized I had to begin preparing. I hired a lawyer. He was horrible. I dressed up and did my hair and makeup for my zoom court date. Light pink blouse with puffy sleeves on top and pajama pants on bottom.

Now, the most awkward part about a zoom court date is that you are essentially facetimeing with a bunch of other people who are also in trouble. And you just stare at each other while the judge tries to figure out how to use his microphone. Because I was

in the Misdemeanor Class A category, it was basically me and a bunch of people with DUIs waiting to hear what our sentencing would be.

Because I had a lawyer, I was one of the first people to be called up. And by called up, I mean asked to unmute myself. The judge said some words that sounded formal and intimidating. I felt my whole body tensing up. "You could have killed someone," he stated, staring directly into my soul, the interweb, and the faces of the forty other criminals. There was a pause. Shit. I was supposed to say something. He didn't ask a question, but I needed to show my understanding of the gravity of this situation.

"Yes..." My mind went blank. What do people call judges? *Why couldn't I remember what people called judges??* "...Your Majesty." I finished. Shit. That definitely wasn't it. There was a small twinkle in the judge's eye. I couldn't decipher it. Deeply annoyed? Amused?

"Don't speed ever again." He said with a note of finality. "Next!" My lawyer unmuted himself.

"Your Honor -" *That* was it. Your Honor. This lawyer should have given me a lingo briefing beforehand. "She hasn't paid for a ticket yet." My jaw dropped open an inch. Now the judge looked really irked.

"I said *next*. Please listen more carefully and follow my directions in the future." My lawyer contracted and muted himself promptly. *Did my lawyer just switch sides on me?* The traitor. As I hung up the call, I exhaled and collapsed back into my chair. I just got completely cleared. I was hoping hiring a lawyer would get the misdemeanor off my record, but nowhere in my wildest dreams was I not paying a hefty ticket. I drove over the speed limit by forty miles per hour and didn't pay a penny. All Hail Your Majesty.