

EXT. WILLITS STAR REAR PARKING LOT - DAY

GENESSA THODE gets out of her Geo Metro. She's in her early twenties and doing her impression of a big-city journalist.

She walks crisply across the dirt lot to the rear entrance of the Willits Star and presses a button by the door. After waiting and pressing the button multiple times, an annoyed, gruff person, PHIL, opens the door.

PHIL
What do you want?

GENESSA
I'm Genessa Thode. I have a job interview with Mr. Delot.

PHIL
You mean Franklin Deloit?

GENESSA
Yes.

PHIL
This is the back door. You'll need to go around to the front. Okay?

GENESSA
Oh sorry.

PHIL
(Rolling his eyes)
It's Okay.

She makes her way down a dirt driveway between buildings to the sidewalk and what is obviously the entrance to this small-town rag.

INT. WILLITS STAR WAITING AREA - DAY

The newspaper office is one large room with about 10 cubicles, but only 3 to 4 people present - an old two-story storefront in the downtown strip.

Genessa approaches a person who appears to be the receptionist, GRACE. After a moment, she looks up from her computer. She too is gruff and annoyed.

GRACE
Yes?

GENESSA
I have a job interview with Mr.
Deloit.

Grace checks across the room, and then picks up the phone and dials. We hear it RINGING.

GRACE
(Into phone)
You expecting someone?

Distant MUMBLING.

GRACE (CONT'D)
(To Genessa)
What's your name?

GENESSA
Genessa Thode.

GRACE
(Into phone)
You got that?

Distant MUMBLING. Grace hangs up.

GRACE (CONT'D)
He'll be right with you.

She goes back to her computer. Genessa looks for a place to sit. Nothing. After a while, CALLING from across the room...

DELOIT
Genessa, come on over.

She walks through the maze of empty cubicle desks to...

INT. WILLITS STAR BY DELOIT'S DESK - CONTINUOUS

As she approaches, he stands and extends his hand. You always get the impression he's multitasking on five other things.

DELOIT
How you doing? Franklin Deloit.
Have a seat.

They sit.

DELOIT (CONT'D)
So you want to get into the
newspaper business, huh?

GENESSA

Oh, yes.

DELOIT

Well, this is it.

He scans some paperwork.

DELOIT (CONT'D)

How long do we have you?

GENESSA

An internship is two months. But, of course-

DELOIT

Good. We can always use an extra hand. Still going to the community college?

GENESSA

Yes, but just at night. I plan to-

DELOIT

Good. Why don't you take that desk over there.

He stands and indicates a sad, empty cubicle.

DELOIT (CONT'D)

Looks like Dick's out now. When he comes back I'll have him give you an assignment.

She stands. He sits and goes back to his computer. She waits for more information. Doesn't get any. Then, heads for the desk he pointed to.

INT. WILLITS STAR BY GENESSA'S DESK - CONTINUOUS

She sits. Waits. Looks around. Switches on an antique computer. It CLATTERS and WHEEZES, as it starts.

She discreetly looks through the drawers. They're mostly empty, except for a desk nameplate, reading "Rox Campbell," an almost-empty box of Kleenex and a gag Pulitzer trophy, "You got it, Rox."

Grace's phone RINGS and Genessa looks up. As Grace talks, she looks toward Genessa. The short conversation ends and Grace walks across the room to Deloit's desk. She relays something to him, indicating Genessa. Then, she heads back to her desk and Deloit stands.

DELOIT
 (To Genessa)
 Hey, uh, come over here for a
 second.

Genessa does.

INT. WILLITS STAR BY DELOIT'S DESK - CONTINUOUS

DELOIT
 Looks like Dick's going to be out
 for a while. But he wants you to
 check on something for him. Okay?

GENESSA
 Sure.

DELOIT
 He's doing a story on that new
 federal building that's going up at
 the north end of town. You know
 where that is?

GENESSA
 Um...

DELOIT
 It's just a dirt lot with a fence
 around it now.

GENESSA
 Oh yeah. I think...

DELOIT
 Anyway, find out what you can about
 it. He'll be back tomorrow.

GENESSA
 Okay.

Deloit goes back to his computer. She waits. Nothing.

GENESSA (CONT'D)
 Um, excuse me. What, uh... Where do
 I... Is there a...

DELOIT
 (Annoyed)
 Drive out there. Check it out. See
 if there are any signs, like with
 names and phone numbers.
 (She's still there)
 Write them down.

(MORE)

DELOIT (CONT'D)

Take a picture with your cell phone. Whatever. Come back here. You know?

(She doesn't)

You got a computer. You know how to use a computer, right?

GENESSA

Oh yes.

DELOIT

Okay. Use it to look stuff up.

He goes back to his work. She's still not getting it. She starts to shake a bit, get a little weepy. After a moment, he turns to her.

DELOIT (CONT'D)

Sit down. Look, um, I forgot your name, sorry.

GENESSA

Genessa Tho-

DELOIT

Look Genessa, the number one rule of the newspaper business is you gotta figure stuff out. Okay? That's what journalism is all about - you figure stuff out so the readers don't have to.

(She nods)

If the readers could figure stuff out, they wouldn't need us, right?

GENESSA

I see. Yes.

DELOIT

So get to work. This is your assignment. If you can't do it, Dick will do it, but then we don't need you.

GENESSA

Oh, I can do it. That's not the uh...

DELOIT

Good.

He goes back to his work. She stands. Watches Deloit for a moment. Then, looks up and around as a transformation comes over her - an "aha" moment.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

Genessa is parked on an empty road next to a large dirt lot surrounded by a tall chain link fence. She gets out of the car and looks around. Nothing. No people, no cars or trucks or building materials, just a sign.

She walks to the sign and takes a picture with her cell phone - Roban Construction. Then, she takes another shot of the dirt lot.

INT. WILLITS STAR BY GENESSA'S DESK - DAY

She has Googled Roban construction and is dialing the number on the web site. Her lips move as she rehearses what she is going to say.

ROBAN RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)
Roban Construction. How may I
direct your call?

GENESSA
Hello, I'm Genessa Thode from the
Willits Star newspaper. I'm looking
for-

ROBAN RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)
One moment please.

Distorted HOLD MUSIC crackles on. Then, ED WALTERS comes in chirpy and ready to handle the press.

WALTERS (V.O.)
Hello, this is Ed Walters. How can
I help you?

GENESSA
I'm Genessa Thode from the Willits
Star in Willits, California, and
I'm looking for information about a
building you're building here...
North of town. A federal-

WALTERS (V.O.)
Ah yes. Let me check something.
Just a sec.

HOLD MUSIC.

WALTERS (V.O.)
You still there? Sorry for the
delay. Did you say Willits?

GENESSA

Yes.

WALTERS (V.O.)

Ah. That would be a structure we are building for the federal government.

GENESSA

(After waiting)

What is... Sort of is it... going to-

WALTERS (V.O.)

I'm sorry. That's all the information I have on it. You'll have to contact the federal government for more details.

GENESSA

Can you tell me... a number or name or...

WALTERS (V.O.)

Sorry. We're just the contractor. As you know we can't give out that information.

GENESSA

Oh, right. Okay then. Thank you.

She hangs up, collects herself, not sure what to do next. She looks back at Deloit. He's busy on the phone. Not wanting to exercise him again, she Googles federal government. Scrolls through a page of useless links.

Then, she looks around the desk and sees an old rolodex device. She thumbs through the cards. Behind a card labeled "Federal" is a piece of folded paper. She opens it. Inside is a note: "Fed Gov't White House guy" and a phone number beginning with 202.

She dials. The phone picks up immediately.

WHITE HOUSE GUY (V.O.)

(Furtive)

Yeah.

GENESSA

(Thrown off)

Oh, hi. I'm not sure... I'm looking for-

WHITE HOUSE GUY (V.O.)
How did you get this number?

GENESSA
I'm sorry?

BEAT.

WHITE HOUSE GUY (V.O.)
Well?

GENESSA
I'm calling from Willits,
California.

WHITE HOUSE GUY (V.O.)
I know. I can see. Who is this?

GENESSA
Um. Genessa Thode.

WHITE HOUSE GUY (V.O.)
How did you get this number?

GENESSA
I was... Uh, it's the number in
the... thing...

WHITE HOUSE GUY (V.O.)
Never mind. You know the deal,
right?

GENESSA
Uh, yeah. I'm just looking for
information about the building
you're building-

WHITE HOUSE GUY (V.O.)
You'll get it. All of it.

GENESSA
All of it?

WHITE HOUSE GUY (V.O.)
You have no idea. No idea! It goes
all the way to the top.

GENESSA
The top? I don't-

WHITE HOUSE GUY (V.O.)
Gotta go. I got your number. Don't
tell anybody we talked. Seriously.
You got it?

(MORE)

WHITE HOUSE GUY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And don't call me again. It's too dangerous. I'll get in touch with you.

The phone connection clicks off. She's stunned, hangs up.

DELOIT
Well?

She jumps. Deloit is standing over her.

GENESSA
Oh hi.

DELOIT
Find out anything about the building?

GENESSA
Yes and no.

DELOIT
What's that mean?

GENESSA
I called the construction company and they said it's going to be a federal building.

DELOIT
We already know that.

GENESSA
Right. Then, I called the White House and they said I'd be getting the information about it. All of it.

DELOIT
Wait a minute. You called what?

GENESSA
The Federal Government White House.

DELOIT
Why did you call the White House?

GENESSA
I thought it would be a good place to start.

DELOIT
No, you don't just call the White House.

GENESSA
But the guy said...

DELOIT
Who?

GENESSA
He didn't say.

DELOIT
What did he tell you?

GENESSA
You know. I probably shouldn't say.

DELOIT
Listen, um, what was your name
again?

GENESSA
Genessa Th-.

DELOIT
Genessa, please don't take this the
wrong way, but I think I may have
overestimated your capabilities.
It's my fault. I'm glad you took
the initiative and all, but let's
wait for Dick to come back before
you try any more things on your
own. This should be a very simple-

GENESSA
I did what you told me to do and
I'm getting the information you
want.

DELOIT
But the White House. I mean
that's...

GENESSA
Just give me a little while. He
said he'd get in touch with me.

DELOIT
The guy from the White House.

GENESSA
And get me the information.

DELOIT
Okay, whatever. Why don't you take
the rest of the day off-

GENESSA

I'm sorry. I thought you'd be
happy.

DELOIT

I am. Dick should be in tomorrow
and he can follow up. Thanks.

He heads back to his desk. She's crestfallen.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - NIGHT

It's late, dark and empty. A Geo Metro drives up and parks
off the road across from the site. It's Genessa.