



CHERYL LOCKE MYSTERIES: PILOT

By J.A. Brown

GENRE: Drama

LOGLINE:

A brilliant but underestimated teen detective, Cheryl Locke, struggles to escape her perpetual second-place streak at the prestigious Young Detective Festival. But when a family tragedy awakens her extraordinary deductive abilities, Cheryl finds herself entangled in a real-life mystery far more dangerous than any contest.

SYNOPSIS:

In the pilot episode of "Cheryl Locke Mysteries," we meet 18-year-old Cheryl Locke, an intelligent, quirky, African American teen with a passion for solving crimes though she's haunted by her constant second-place finishes at the annual Young Detective Festival. Determined to finally claim victory, she faces off against her longtime rival, the smug and seemingly unbeatable Catherine Russell.

Cheryl's life takes a dramatic turn when her mother, Sadie, suffers a catastrophic car accident triggered by a mysterious brain aneurysm linked to her military past. While grappling with her mother's critical condition, Cheryl discovers she's developed a heightened sense of deductive reasoning a skill that turns her into a real detective overnight.

As she navigates the emotionally charged challenges of her personal life, Cheryl's newfound abilities draw her deeper into an actual murder investigation involving military officers, a string of suspicious crimes, and a conspiracy that may be connected to her mother's hidden past. Balancing her competitive drive, family crisis, and the shadowy truths emerging around her, Cheryl Locke is about to prove she's more than just a runner-up she's a force to be reckoned with.

CHERYL LOCKE: PILOT

Written by

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SUPER: FRIDAY MAY 5TH - PRESENT DAY

EXT. TENNISON'S LUMBERYARD - NIGHT

A SHERIFF'S PATROL CAR stops outside the gates of a quiet and dimly lit TENNISON'S LUMBERYARD.

A considerable number of LARGE METAL STORAGE CONTAINERS are visible, and the barely audible hum of charging wood cutting machinery reverberates through the stillness. The air is heavy with tension.

Deputy Sheriff CALVIN BRYANT, African American (mid-30s) navigates through a maze of wooden crates, cutting tools, and stacked wood.

He grips his firearm tightly, ready for any sign of danger. He presses his MICROPHONE to the Sheriff's DISPATCHER.

DEPUTY SHERIFF BRYANT

(whispering)

Dispatch, Bryant here... I arrived at TENNISON'S responding to a silent alarm and a possible 211 in progress, but no one's here.

DISPATCHER

10-4, Deputy Bryant.

Suddenly, yelling is heard. A man's voice.

DEPUTY SHERIFF BRYANT

(whispering)

Dispatch, wait a minute... I think I...

MAN'S VOICE

(yelling)

Noooo! Please Noooo!

Suddenly, a blood-curdling SCREAM pierces the silence, sending shivers down Bryant's spine. He hesitates but follows the sound, his heart pounding in his chest.

DEPUTY SHERIFF BRYANT

(yelling)

This is the Sheriff's Department...! Sho... Sho... Show yourself!

Bryant reaches a secluded area of the lumberyard, where a single light bulb flickers ominously. He stops dead in his tracks, horror etched on his face.

Lying on the ground is the lifeless body of a man. His Army Officer's UNIFORM and SHIRT COLLAR are stained with blood.

The gruesome sight sends a wave of nausea through Bryant's body, but he forces himself to focus.

DEPUTY SHERIFF BRYANT
(whispering into his
radio)

Dispatch... I've found a body...
Looks to be the body of a male Army
Officer. Requesting backup, the
coroner, and the forensics team
immediately. And contact Chief
Locke.

DISPATCHER (V.O.)
10-4, Deputy Bryant... I'll notify
the Chief. Backup is en route.

Bryant kneels, carefully examining the lifeless body. He attempts to turn the body over when suddenly the victim's head rolls off of its torso and rolls a few inches resting on its nose next to his elbow. He's been decapitated.

Deputy Bryant turns and vomits, then he wipes his mouth.

DEPUTY SHERIFF BRYANT
(whispering) (grimly)
What the...!

Bryant hears a sound and turns. On the top of a nearby storage container is a DARK FIGURE carrying a sword.

DEPUTY SHERIFF BRYANT
(yelling, scared)
Hey you..., stop! This is the
Sheriff's Department!

Bryant takes out his firearm and fires two shots toward the figure. It leaps and runs away. Bryant holsters his firearm and speaks into his microphone.

DEPUTY SHERIFF BRYANT
(whispering)
Dispatch... I saw the suspect and
fired my weapon... The suspect is
gone. Please issue a BOLO for a man
dressed in black carrying a sword.

DISPATCHER
(confused)
Repeat that again Deputy..., did
you say a sword?

DEPUTY SHERIFF BRYANT
Yes, dammit...! A sword!

As Bryant continues his examination, his eyes catch a glint of something metallic near the victim's hand. He reaches out with gloved fingers and retrieves a small, ornate silver key.

He kneels and reaches into the pockets of the man and pulls out his wallet. He opens it as he ruffles through the wallet looking for his ID.

DEPUTY SHERIFF BRYANT
(reviewing the ID)
Major Dennis Williamson.

Bryant looks down at the body.

DEPUTY SHERIFF BRYANT
(firmly)
What in hell's name are you doing
here, Major?

With a steely resolve, Bryant steps away from the crime scene. In the distance, the faint sounds of Sheriff Car's approach.

The warehouse falls back into darkness, leaving only echoes of the incoming sirens.

EXT. TENNISON'S LUMBERYARD - AN HOUR LATER

A BLACK DODGE CHARGER pulls up to the scene. CHIEF JASON LOCKE (mid-40s), an African American exit and looks around the crime scene, his presence commanding and authoritative.

He surveys the area, lifting the sheet covering the dead Army Officer, taking in the grim sight before him.

CID Agent MAXWELL REED (30), an African American approaches him, a mix of determination and frustration etched on his face.

JASON
Good to see you again Agent Reed,
whatdawe have here?

AGENT REED
(urgent)
Chief Locke, looks like we have
another murder.

JASON
(gently)
Give me all the details.

Agent Reed quickly fills Jason in on the gruesome murder, emphasizing the surgical precision of the kill and the discovery of the silver key.

Jason listens intently, absorbing the information.

EXT. TENNISON'S LUMBERYARD - MOMENTS LATER

JASON
(nodding)
The killer is methodical.

AGENT REED
This is the fifth murder of an Army
Officer in the past several weeks.

Jason's eyes narrow as he contemplates the significance of the silver key.

JASON
That key you spoke of... We need
the forensic team to analyze it
immediately.

Agent Reed nods, his resolve strengthening.

AGENT REED
(steadfast)
We've already requested additional
military support from the base,
Chief. The base commander, General
Briggs' office, has instructed me
to tell you that this is a military
investigation. The victim is from
the base and he's in military
attire, so this falls under
military jurisdiction.

JASON
(adamant)
Agent Reed, this murder happened
outside the base gates, which makes
this a civilian police matter and
out of your jurisdiction. My office
is willing to share any part of our
investigation with CID, and
hopefully they can do the same.
Tell your superiors we can work
together on this.

(MORE)

JASON (CONT'D)
If not, pack up all your shit and
leave my crime scene.

As if on cue, sirens wail in the distance, growing louder as they approach the warehouse. The Sheriff's investigation team arrives.

AGENT REED
(adamant)
I'll bring this back to my
superiors, Chief. In the meantime,
let's secure the scene and gather
every piece of evidence we can
find. I'll do some research on this
key.

Jason springs into action coordinating his team, setting up perimeter control, and ensuring the crime scene is properly sealed.

Jason and Agent Reed exchange a resolute look.

INT. CHERYL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - AN HOUR LATER

Soft moonlight seeps through the curtains, casting a gentle glow on the walls adorned with true crime memorabilia.

We see a clock on the desk which reads 10:45 pm. The room's WALLS are covered with POSTERS of Famous Criminals, and Fictional Detectives.

CHERYL LOCKE, African American, (18) sits on her bed. She adjusts her reading glasses and continues reading a pamphlet on VIRTUAL REALITY SIMULATORS as she multitasks, watching T.V.

Her best friend AMANDA GRIFFIN, African American, (18) a fellow true crime aficionado, always by her side, sits on the bed watching TV.

Cheryl angrily glances at the THREE SECOND PLACE TROPHIES on her DRESSER as she begins to reminisce.

INT. YOUNG DETECTIVE FESTIVAL - MANY SMALL FLASHBACKS

A montage of Cheryl attending the 57th, 58th, and 59th Young Detective Festival unfolds, capturing her enthusiasm as she accepts her SECOND place win each time.

Every time Cheryl receives her runner-up award. Her nemesis, CATHERINE RUSSELL, Caucasian (20), pretty, slim build, stands beside Cheryl, holding the first-place trophy and smiling at her.

INT. CHERYL'S BEDROOM - FLASHBACK ENDS - CONTINUOUS

Cheryl and Amanda sit closely on the bed, their eyes fixated on the TV screen as the tension builds in the Sherlock Holmes movie "The Hound of the Baskervilles".

On the TV, the KILLER, male, Caucasian, (mid-40s) in the movie is just about to make his move when Sherlock, in his brilliant manner, unravels the intricate plot and foils his nefarious plans.

Cheryl's eyes are fixed, absorbed in the masterful detective's genius deductions.

CHERYL
(excitedly)
Watch this, Amanda! Sherlock always knows how to outsmart the villains.

AMANDA
(amazed)
I can't believe how he figures it all out. It's like magic!

But just as the killer is about to make their move, Sherlock Holmes foils his plans with his brilliant deduction. Cheryl and Amanda gasp in awe at the detective's prowess.

CHERYL
(exhilarated)
Yes! Sherlock always saves the day!

AMANDA
(excited)
I know, right? He's amazing!

Their admiration for the fictional detective fuels their own passion for crime-solving. Amanda glances over at Cheryl, who's deep into reading.

AMANDA
What's got your attention? Whatcha reading?

CHERYL
Some Virtual Reality pamphlets. The contest has a new sponsor this year. MIT has designed a new state-of-the-art Virtual Reality simulator we're using this year. The pamphlet says it will revolutionize the way crime solving is done.

AMANDA

Really? Are they replacing the live scenarios and onsite challenges they had last year?

CHERYL

No, from the contest itinerary I received, they will still have them, but most of the tests will be Virtual Reality.

AMANDA

Well, I'm not a big fan of VR. My brother has one of these expensive goggles and his programs look crappy. Hopefully, they made improvements.

Cheryl hands Amanda the pamphlets. Amanda's eyes grow wide with excitement.

AMANDA

(excited)

Oh my God! I've never seen anything like this before, Cheryl! This looks so real. You can actually see the wounds and everything around on the body.

CHERYL

(excited)

Yes, too real! It looks just like an actual body.

Suddenly, Cheryl's ROOM DOOR creaks open.

Both girls turn their heads, and a mixture of surprise and delight fills their faces as SADIE LOCKE, African American (44), an exquisitely beautiful woman, enters the room.

Her tired eyes hinting at the long journey from her business trip. She smiles warmly at her daughter and Amanda.

SADIE

(weary)

Hey, my young detective. Miss me?

CHERYL

(hugging her mom)

Always, Mom! How was your trip?

Sadie smiles warmly, though exhaustion is evident in her eyes. Cheryl pauses the movie.

SADIE
(tiredly)
It was very, very productive, but
I'm glad to be back home.

Amanda offers a friendly wave, sensing Sadie's fatigue.

AMANDA
(kindly)
Welcome back, Mrs. Locke.

SADIE
(gratefully)
Thank you, Amanda. It's good to see
you both.

As Sadie takes a seat on the edge of Cheryl's bed, Cheryl can't help but notice the weariness and slight wince of pain as Sadie touches her forehead.

CHERYL
(concerned)
Are you alright, Mom? You look
tired, and are you still having
headaches?

Sadie nods, a hint of concern in her expression.

SADIE
(sighs)
I'm fine, Cheryl. Just a little
tired from the trip. The headaches
come and go, but they'll pass.

Cheryl's empathy kicks in, and she gently places her hand on her mother's shoulder.

CHERYL
(caringly)
You should rest, Mom. You want me
to make you one of my famous
grilled cheese sandwiches?

Sadie looks at Cheryl with immense love and pride.

SADIE
(affectionately)
No, I ate something earlier, plus
you're always taking care of
everyone, my little detective.
Don't stay up too long. Remember,
you have the Young Detectives
contest tomorrow. You need to be
ready and prepared.

Cheryl's eyes light up, and she nods with determination.

CHERYL
(determined)
You're right, Mom. This year will
be different, and I'll do my best
to win.

SADIE
(encouragingly)
That's my girl. You're brilliant,
Cheryl, and you have a gift for
this. Just be yourself, and you'll
shine.

As Cheryl and Sadie share a heartwarming moment, Amanda
watches with admiration for their close bond.

SADIE
(optimistic)
Just believe in yourself, Cheryl.
You're capable of anything you set
your mind to.

AMANDA
(smiling)
You two have the best relationship.
It's beautiful to see.

SADIE
(grateful)
Thank you, Amanda. Cheryl and I are
a team, through thick and thin.

Sadie stands and leaves the room, holding her head. Cheryl
unpauses the movie where Sherlock foils the killer's plans.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. YOUNG DETECTIVE FESTIVAL - STAGE ONE - AFTERNOON

A massive crowd of people is gathered for the 60th Annual
Young Detective Festival. People are chatting as cameras are
flashing and interviews are being conducted. Several
teenagers are standing by a poster.

The poster reads "60th Anniversary of Young Detectives" with
a large picture of Sherlock Holmes with his famous HAT and
MAGNIFY GLASS in the center.

A bustling convention floor filled with true crime
enthusiasts wanders the floor. Cheryl, intelligent but
quirky, and Amanda navigate through the bustling crowd.

The participants are preparing to display their investigative talents on the main stage, and the room is filled with anticipation.

The host ALEXANDER SPENSER (mid-50s), Caucasian, is speaking with his staff. In the background, several MIT students and professors are unpacking the 6'x 6' IBM Virtual Reality simulator.

The name on the side of the IBM Server reads "C.R.I.M.E CS5000" with a uniquely designed SILVER X-PATTERN LOGO.

AMANDA

(confused)

C.R.I.M.E? What does that stand for?

CHERYL

It stands for Criminal Detection, Reality, Investigation, Mobile Crime Solving, Environment.

AMANDA

So, with all of this new technology, what do you think your chances of winning this year are?

Cheryl has a ho-hum attitude and seems to not care but does.

CHERYL

I am not entirely sure. I think the judges love seeing me finish second. I have successfully completed all of their pretests and resolved all of their scenarios. My strategy is to tackle each test individually.

AMANDA

Well, I'm not sure what to expect since this is my first year of participating. Those pretests and scenarios were hard. I still don't know who killed the butler in test number 3.

CHERYL

That's easy. The son did it.

AMANDA

The son!? How did he...

CHERYL

(excited)

The case represented several key suspects. All of the suspects had alibis except for the son. He said he was in a motel room with his girlfriend, but the hotel security camera did not detect anyone coming in or out of his room during the evening or in the morning. He was lying.

Amanda turns to Cheryl confused.

AMANDA

How did I miss that?

Cheryl's fingers start to move as though she's typing on a typewriter.

CHERYL

Also, his gun was missing. Remember when the detective questioned him about having a gun?

AMANDA

Yes, and...

CHERYL

And he denied having one, but the state's records indicated that he owned a Smith and Wesson 44 Caliber auto mag. The same caliber gun that killed the butler. It made perfect sense, thus labeling him as the killer.

AMANDA

Wow, you got all of that from the evidence that they gave us.

Cheryl pivots to Amanda confidently. Her hand stops its typing movement.

CHERYL

The facts are the facts, Amanda and I used what was given. It was logical and the only conclusion.

AMANDA

Oh, my God, Cheryl you sound just like him!

CHERYL

Like whom?

AMANDA

Sherlock Holmes, silly. That's something he would say. Can I ask you a question?

CHERYL

Sure.

AMANDA

Your hands. I saw your hands moving when you were explaining. Is that something new? I've never seen you do that before.

Cheryl hides her hand.

CHERYL

Um... I don't know. I guess it's a nervous tick or whatever...

A loud bell rings getting the room's attention.

Cheryl and Amanda are off-stage. Cheryl, her eyes shimmering with hope, prepares to walk onstage with a tinge of nervousness.

She is talking to herself. Her fingers are moving like she's playing piano.

CHERYL

(acting out answers with her fingers)

Ok, things are going to be different this year.

AMANDA

(smiling)

Cheryl, you're at it again with your fingers. You've got to stop that.

CHERYL

Whatever, it helps me think!

Cheryl chuckles, brushing off the comment, but her mind is always racing, analyzing every detail around her.

CHERYL

I only have four more days to get through these next 5 stages.

Cheryl surveys this year's contestants.

CHERYL

Look at all the participants this year.

There are six other contestants seated onstage. ELLERY BENSON, Caucasian, English (mid-40s), HILLARY WADE, Caucasian, Irish (mid-40s), GLADYS HITE, Caucasian, (mid-40s) JERROLD LEBARON, Caucasian, (50), and CHRISTOPH ALEXANDER, African American, (mid-20s) and Cheryl's bestfriend AMANDA GRIFFIN.

CHERYL

(whispering to Amanda)

These tests are getting harder each year, Amanda. It's like they want me to lose again.

Amanda pivots and sees Cheryl's nemesis, Catherine Russell. Catherine is calm and confident as she takes a seat onstage. Amanda sees Catherine and her demeanor changes.

AMANDA

(pointing and angry)

Look, there's Catherine. Look at that stuck-up bitch!. She makes me sick! She's smiling like a chesser cat. She knows she's a favorite to win it all again this year.

Cheryl looks over at Catherine with disdain.

CHERYL

Yeah, she's good, but she's lucky too. I beat myself last year. I'm the one who missed two key facts last year. That's why I picked the wrong suspect.

Cheryl takes her notes and puts them in her backpack.

CHERYL

Good luck Amanda. Hope to see you in the finals.

Amanda smiles as Cheryl walks onstage and takes her seat next to Catherine. Amanda walks on the stage and takes her seat next to Hillary Wade.

The main doors to the auditorium open, and Jason Locke enters and takes a seat in the back row. He claps and whistles loudly.

Cheryl hears his familiar whistle and frantically waves at him. She looks over and sees an empty seat next to him and the smile leaves her face.

ALEXANDER SPENSER

(excited)

And now, for our next challenger.
She finished in second place three
years in a row. Ladies and
Gentlemen, please welcome Cheryl
Locke! Let's see if Ms. Locke can
finally secure the win this year!

Cheryl smiles, adjusting her glasses with anticipation.

INT. YOUNG DETECTIVE FESTIVAL - STAGE ONE - MAIN HALL -
LATER

The atmosphere buzzes with anticipation as all the contestants gather on the stage for the annual crime-solving contest.

Cheryl, sits nervously beside Catherine, a smug and self-assured woman, who exudes confidence.

Alexander Spenser takes center stage, addressing the crowd.

ALEXANDER SPENSER

(lively)

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to
this year's Young Detectives
contest where anyone can be a
Sherlock Holmes!

The crowd stands and gives a round of applause.

ALEXANDER SPENSER

(lively)

We have our reigning champion,
Catherine Russell, here to defend
her title. And competing for the
fourth year in a row, let's give a
warm welcome to last year's
perennial runner-up, Cheryl Locke!

The audience erupts in applause once more.

ALEXANDER SPENSER

(excited)

Before I introduce the remaining
contestants. I want to introduce
our panel of esteemed judges...

(MORE)

ALEXANDER SPENSER (CONT'D)

From England and president of the English chapter of the Sherlock Holmes club, Mr. Rodger Willingham III.

The audience applauds. RODGER WILLINGHAM III (48), Caucasian, heavy build, steps out from behind the curtain, waves and takes the first chair.

ALEXANDER SPENSER

(excited)

Our second judge is a writer of mystery novels. His first novel "Soul of the Land" has sold over 100 million copies. Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. Terry Fletcher.

The audience applauds. TERRY FLETCHER (50), Caucasian, heavy build, steps out from behind the curtain, waves and takes the second chair.

ALEXANDER SPENSER

(excited)

Our third judge is also a writer of mystery novels. You've seen her work on the big screen and coming next month is her 5th movie entitled "Killer Clarkson" and she's also a native of Dawsonville. Ladies and Gentlemen, Ms. Ginny Davis.

The audience stands and gives a loud applaud. GINNY DAVIS (40), Caucasian, slim build, steps out from behind the curtain, smiles, waves and takes the third chair.

ALEXANDER SPENSER

(excited, smiling)

Lastly, our fourth and final judge is a stage and screen actor and two-time Emmy winner. His most memorable roles include playing Sherlock Holmes in the made for TV movie "Sherlock Holmes finds a Date." Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. Clive Barker.

The audience applauds. CLIVE BARKER (60), Caucasian, slim build, steps out from behind the curtain, smiles, waves and takes the fourth chair.

ALEXANDER SPENSER

(lively)

Thanks to all our judges, now in addition to revamping this year's contest, we have gathered several of the most brilliant detective minds worldwide to challenge our current champion.

The auditorium lets out a huge U.S.A chant.

ALEXANDER SPENSER

We've whittled the field down from 15 very strong contestants to what you now see here on the stage. These junior detectives have showed their skills in pre-qualifying scenarios and will face some of the most arduous tasks. Within the upcoming days, we will select a definitive winner who will be awarded the title of "The Greatest Young Detective."

The crowd applauds politely, Cheryl forcing a small smile. Catherine pivots addressing Cheryl.

CATHERINE

(teasingly)

Ah, Cheryl, always finishing second place. Are you ready to be runner-up yet again?

Cheryl's confidence wavers, and she fidgets with her fingers, her quirkiness showing.

CHERYL

(softly)

I... I'll do my best, Catherine. You know... I've always admired your skills.

Catherine smirks, relishing at Cheryl's lack of self-assurance.

CATHERINE

(confidently)

Of course, you admire my skills, sweetie... They're unparalleled, after all. But don't worry, Cheryl, maybe one day my skills will rub off on you... Maybe.

Cheryl's gaze drops, her insecurities weighing heavily upon her. Amanda gets Cheryl's attention from her seat.

AMANDA

(whispering to Cheryl)

Don't let that phony get to you,
Cheryl. You have talents of your
own, too. You can do this.

Cheryl glances at Amanda, finding a glimmer of encouragement in her eyes.

CHERYL

(quietly, to herself)

Yeah... You can do this, Cheryl.

Alexander Spenser interrupts the packed auditorium, ready to kick off the contest.

ALEXANDER SPENSER

(excitedly)

All right, people settle down.

The auditorium quiets.

ALEXANDER SPENSER

(excitedly)

Ok, contestants! Get ready for your
first challenge. This year, we're
testing your deduction skills in a
thrilling missing person case. The
clues are waiting for you
backstage. Good luck everyone!

Cheryl takes a deep breath, trying to summon her inner strength. She shoots a determined look at Catherine, her fingers twitching with newfound determination.

Catherine smiles as she walks backstage to get the clues.

CHERYL

(resolute)

This time, Catherine, I won't
settle for second place. Get ready
to be amazed.

Catherine raises an eyebrow, momentarily caught off guard by Cheryl's sudden change in demeanor.

CATHERINE

(smiling)

Well, well, Cheryl. It seems you've
found a hint of confidence. Let's
see if it lasts.

Catherine chuckles and, with a newfound determination and a touch of defiance, Cheryl walks backstage, ready to face the challenge ahead.

Amanda follows closely behind, followed by Catherine.

INT. YOUNG DETECTIVE FESTIVAL - STAGE ONE - BACKSTAGE -
MOMENTS LATER

Cheryl, Amanda, and Catherine enter the backstage area, followed by the remaining participants where the case clues are laid out on a table.

Cheryl takes a deep breath, trying to steady her nerves as she opens the case clues and surveys the challenge ahead. Amanda picks up her case clues and opens the envelope.

AMANDA

(lively)

Damn, this is going to be a long event.

Jason stands and yells out to Cheryl.

JASON

(yelling)

You've got this, baby girl! Believe in yourself.

Cheryl nods, her fingers fidgeting with anticipation. She reads the first clue, examining it closely.

CHERYL

(determined, quietly to herself)

I'm going to give it my all. No more doubts. It's time to trust my instincts.

As Cheryl immerses herself in the details of the missing person case, Catherine strolls into the backstage area, a confident smirk on her face.

CATHERINE

(mocking)

Aw, look at you, Cheryl. Trying so hard. But let's face it, you'll always be one step behind.

Cheryl lifts her head, her newfound resolve shining through her eyes.

CHERYL

(calmly)

Maybe, Catherine. But even if I don't win this, I won't let that define me. I'm here to challenge myself and learn. That's what matters.

Catherine's smug expression wavers, a hint of uncertainty creeping in.

CATHERINE

(defensive)

Well, it's easy to talk big, but can you back it up?

Cheryl smiles, her fingers beginning to move subtly, her deduction skills kicking into gear.

CHERYL

(confidently)

I may not have all the answers yet, Catherine, but I'm willing to work hard to find them. Unlike you, I believe in the power of perseverance and growth.

Catherine's confidence wavers, her competitive edge momentarily overshadowed by Cheryl's newfound determination.

CATHERINE

(gritting her teeth)

We'll see about that, Cheryl. Just remember, the trophy is mine for a reason. I already have three of them

Cheryl simply nods, her focus locked on the clues before her. She shuts out Catherine's taunting, channeling her energy into the task at hand.

INT. YOUNG DETECTIVE FESTIVAL - STAGE ONE - FOUR HOURS LATER

The crowd waits with bated breath as Cheryl and Catherine and the others return to the stage. The tension is palpable as they prepare to present their solutions.

ALEXANDER SPENSER

(enthusiastically)

Ladies and gentlemen, our contestants are back from their live field trip to the staging area. This is the question we asked all the contestants.

Alexander unfolds the questions.

ALEXANDER SPENSER

Question: Late one night, a woman named Emily Johnson was walking home from work. It was a deserted and poorly lit street, making it an ideal location for a crime to occur. Emily was approached by a masked man, who forced her into a van before anyone could intervene. He left his mask behind. The incident was reported to the police immediately. Can you solve the scenario?

All the contestants take their turn giving an answer. Next to last is Cheryl followed by Catherine.

ALEXANDER SPENSER

(enthusiastically)

With the last two contestants remaining, let's hear from last year's runner-up, Cheryl Locke.

The crowd listens intently as Cheryl steps forward, her nerves are still present, but her confidence shines through.

She presents her deduction, showcasing her improved deduction skills and unique perspective.

CHERYL

(assertively)

I've analyzed the clues and followed the trail meticulously. My deduction leads me to believe that...

Cheryl's right fingers move as she speaks.

CHERYL

(assertively)

I began my investigation by visiting the crime scene of the abduction of Emily Johnson and gathering information from eyewitnesses. After examining the area, several key details caught my attention: faint footprints on the ground, indicating that the assailant was lurking nearby before the abduction.

(MORE)