

9TH UNPLUGGED

SHENISE BAKER

JUDICIAL ASSISTANT

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HOSTED BY: ALICIA L. LATIMORE

JUDGE LATIMORE: Hi, I'm Judge Latimore.

MS. BAKER: Hi, I'm Shenise Baker.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And you're listening to 9th Unplugged.

(Music)

JUDGE LATIMORE: So before we get unplugged, tell me your name and the department you work in for the 9th Circuit.

MS. BAKER: Shenise Baker, and I work for Judge Alvaro, he's a circuit judge.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And what's your position?

MS. BAKER: I am his judicial assistant.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And what does all of that entail?

MS. BAKER: Oh, a whole lot.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Whole lot.

MS. BAKER: A whole lot.

JUDGE LATIMORE: What's the most exciting part about your job?

MS. BAKER: The exciting part about my job. I think working with the amount of people that we work with. We work with assistants. We work with attorneys. And I definitely love working for my judge. He's great.

JUDGE LATIMORE: All right, he is great. I'm glad you were able to join us. So let's go ahead and get unplugged and talk about you a little bit more. Where are you from?

MS. BAKER: I'm from St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands but I was raised on St. Croix.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Oh, okay. And did you like St. Thomas or St. Croix the most?

MS. BAKER: I like St. Thomas the most.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay. And why is that? Why is that so special?

MS. BAKER: There is a little bit more happening there. St. Croix is a lot laid back, very agricultural, so not much to do there.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay and when is it that you moved to Orlando?

MS. BAKER: I moved to Orlando almost eight years ago, back in 2013.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay. And since you've been here, like what is the most exciting thing you've done in Orlando? Tell me about that.

MS. BAKER: The most exciting.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yes, this booming city. What do you do?

MS. BAKER: The booming city. You know what, I really enjoy the parks. I love water parks. I have been to all of the parks. I used to be a pass holder but I'm not anymore.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Used to be what?

MS. BAKER: A pass holder.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay.

MS. BAKER: For most of the parks. But I really do enjoy the parks.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay, and how do you like this heat? You're used to it though with St. Croix and St. Thomas, but it's kind of different.

MS. BAKER: It's a different heat. And it's also very humid here. In the Islands, you had the trade winds that blow so the breeze is awesome down there.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yeah. I'd really like to visit those lovely Islands. I'd like you to tell me just what you do when you're not at work.

MS. BAKER: I enjoy baking. I really enjoy baking. Also, DIY projects. I'm always working on something, doing something. In fact, the wreath to my office door, I made that myself.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Oh, wow.

MS. BAKER: Also enjoy dancing, yoga now.

JUDGE LATIMORE: What type of dancing do you do?

MS. BAKER: Just about everything but not so much formally anymore. But I really enjoy hip-hop, dance hall, Solka music.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay. Is that something that you learned at a young age and that's your, you know, just your hobby?

MS. BAKER: Yeah, I think my stepmom put me in the Caribbean dance school when I was three, maybe so it's been a love since then. I didn't stay with them very long but I've definitely enjoyed dancing over the years.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay. What do you hope you'll change about yourself as a person in the future?

MS. BAKER: In the future. I want to be more mindful about the way I treat others and also I want to be more invested in my family and friends. I find that so much time goes by and you lose contact with people and, especially this year, I've made it my goal to make sure that I call my stepmom and I call my step – not my stepdad but my dad more often. Friends, family, everyone, so I'm making that more of an effort.

JUDGE LATIMORE: I think having this experience with the pandemic helped a lot of us realize how much more attention we need to give to maintain those relationships, right.

MS. BAKER: Very true.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yeah, I agree with that wholeheartedly. I mean, you also are very much interested in mental/physical wellbeing from what I understand.

MS. BAKER: I am. I am also a mental health counselor. I graduated with my master's in 2017 from Webster University so I – those two things are very much things that I focus on, especially in our community, the African-American community, health is something that you know we take for granted, our weight and what we eat, things like that. And I feel like that's something I want to bring a focus onto.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Speaking of what we eat, what would be your last meal if you had to pick it?

MS. BAKER: Pineapple pizza.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Pineapple pizza.

MS. BAKER: Um-hum.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Really. Just pineapple.

MS. BAKER: Um-hum.

JUDGE LATIMORE: No meat on it.

MS. BAKER: No.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Oh, my gosh. I love meat so I can't understand why you'd eat pizza without meat. Okay. That's interesting. I don't think I've had pineapple pizza. I've had pineapple rice, which is really good.

MS. BAKER: That is really good.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yeah. Okay, how did that become your favorite?

MS. BAKER: You know what, I think maybe my first memory of having that was back in the day where Pizza Hut, and I think their dining rooms are about to close down soon I thought I read. But I was there with my dad and my siblings and he ordered it. Mind you, I don't think I've seen him eat it since then but I do recall that was the first time I tasted it and I've been in love ever since.

JUDGE LATIMORE: That's wonderful. I have to try that next time we go – I go out somewhere. So you have lots of talents. What's one of your secret talents that many people might not know about?

MS. BAKER: I like to crochet.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Oh, okay, you have a lot of talents. You do. So what is the best thing you've made by crocheting?

MS. BAKER: Well, I get bored after a while, so blankets, pillows, but nothing that amazing yet.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay. Assuming that your basic needs are met, like food, shelter and clothing, what are three things you would want if you were stranded on an Island?

MS. BAKER: Music. I need music. There's – I think some pineapple pizza, but then that's food.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Well, we can say it's not like the basics, right.

MS. BAKER: Yeah.

JUDGE LATIMORE: So it's acceptable.

MS. BAKER: So that's acceptable. I don't know, but as long as I have music, I think I'd be pretty okay.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Now has your life been any different than you would imagine it to be when you were growing up?

MS. BAKER: It is.

JUDGE LATIMORE: How is that?

MS. BAKER: When I was growing up, I thought I was going to be a teacher. But in general I think I've always wanted to help which is why I fell into the fields that I have but I did imagine my life as a teacher.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Um-hum.

MS. BAKER: Yeah.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And if you were to, not to say that I would suggest that you ever leave your wonderful judge, but if you were to in another life, be in another profession in the future, what would that be?

MS. BAKER: You know what, I think where I am right now is pretty perfect for me. I do want my doctorate degree in psychology but I kind of fell into the court by chance and I love it so...

JUDGE LATIMORE: Wonderful. So tell me some adventurous things that you do?

MS. BAKER: Some of the adventurous things. Well, I like to travel. I haven't traveled much outside of the U.S. but we say when we're home on the Islands, like we get to Island hop. But up here it's so easy to just you know drive somewhere else or hop on a plane and it's not that expensive, so I actually like exploring different cities. I was recently in Boston and I loved it.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yeah. Where else would you like to visit?

MS. BAKER: I would like to visit Scotland. I want to see some of the castles out there. It just looks so beautiful.

JUDGE LATIMORE: That's great.

MS. BAKER: Yeah.

JUDGE LATIMORE: That is wonderful. If you had to choose a mystical creature that you would be, can you think of something?

MS. BAKER: Maybe like a fairy or a pixie because they have wings and they can fly anywhere, and then they just look beautiful because of the dust that comes off of them. So I think I'd be a fairy or a mermaid.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And you wouldn't have to pay for that ticket to travel.

MS. BAKER: Exactly.

JUDGE LATIMORE: You could fly there on your own.

MS. BAKER: I can fly.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Look at that, how it all comes around. Well, thank you so much for being unplugged with me today. It's been a pleasure.

MS. BAKER: Thank you for having me.

(Music)