

I want a good man -- **NO YOU DON'T!!!**

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FADE IN:

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INT. CONNIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

This room is military neat. The perfume bottles on the dresser are in alphabetical order; the clothes in the closet are arranged from lightest to darkest with every hanger turned in the same direction.

A hand writes neatly on a yellow notepad.

Meet CONNIE TRIFE (38). Her piercing eyes and sharp smile are endearing, but her self-confidence and boldness can be very intimidating.

KYLE (9), enters carrying a book. He hops on the bed -- dusts his feet off before they touch her sheets. He's mature, wise and a young romantic. He can hold a conversation with the best of them.

KYLE

Hello, mother. What might thou be doing today?

Kyle leans in to read the pad. Connie politely moves it out of his view.

CONNIE

Nosy. It's none of your business.

KYLE

I figured thou would speaketh that reply.

CONNIE

What's with the dialect?

KYLE

(holds up book)

I'm reading "The Massacre at Paris." Oh, how I adore the Elizabethan era.

He lies back, grabs the remote, and turns on the television.

CONNIE

And what do you think you're doing?

KYLE

Unwinding. School was long. Ain't nuthin' --

She shoots him a look. He laughs.

KYLE

I know, ain't ain't a word but...

CONNIE

No but! Improper English is a big no-no in my book.

KYLE

Yes, Mother, I know.

CONNIE

Now don't get too comfortable in my bed.

KYLE

Mom...

CONNIE

You're too old to still be sleeping with me.

KYLE

I know, but it kills me seeing you lonely.

INT. DEBORA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A dry, hard, and crusty foot is being massaged with Vaseline.

DEBORA SIMS, late forties, homely looking, no sex appeal. She's a STEP and FETCH IT KIND OF GAL.

JAMES POISER, fifties, a husky, country bama, is kicked back on a recliner, enjoying his massage. He's a old school type of fella'. Set in his ways.

JAMES

Baby, get that pinky... and pour summa' that alcohol tween' my toes.

She pours. James grunts his approval.

DEBORA

So I was thinking, maybe you can take me out this weekend. Since you'll be in town.

JAMES

We been together too long for you to be asking me to take you out. Real life hadn't set in with you yet now, huh?

DEBORA

You don't have to spend --

JAMES

Ummm, that feel good. That warm tingling in my toes reminds me of one thing. You know what that is, right? Only one thang make my toes tingle like that there.

He snatches his foot out her hand and replaces it with the other. She starts massaging.

DEBORA

Maybe a movie... dinner?

JAMES

(grunts)

Dinner sounds good.

She smiles, but just that quickly, it's wiped away when --

JAMES

God dammit, Debora, why am I hungry?!

Debora doesn't know whether to answer or stay quiet. James stares at her, his eyes piercing through her soul.

JAMES

I been working all damn day, Debora. I shouldn't have to beg for food.

DEBORA

James, I apologize. Dinner is done. I just wanted to finish your feet.

She hops up. Panicking.

JAMES

Don't apologize, be sorry. I keep telling you there's a difference!

Debora slides his feet into his slippers one by one. She heads to the kitchen.

JAMES

I'm trying to teach you how to keep a man. That's the problem with bitches nowadays. Can't get a man, and when you do, you can't keep one. But your old ass should know better. I expect more from you.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
 And dinner ain't done till it's  
 digested!

INT. THE FOSTERS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

In the corner sit storage boxes with the word  
 "Dishes" written on them in marker.

CECIL FOSTER, thirties, a skinny man, wearing shorts and a  
 wife beater, stands in front of a flat screen television,  
 remote in hand. He flips through the channels. Disappointed.

VERONICA FOSTER, thirties, enters wearing only a robe. Very  
 sexy, and pretty but her beauty is ONLY skin deep.

CECIL  
 Veronica, what was the music  
 channel over here?

VERONICA  
 I don't know. I'm too tired to  
 think.

She plops on the bed. Waits for him to respond.

VERONICA  
 Do you not care?

CECIL  
 Weren't you off all this week?  
 (finds channel)  
 Here it is.

VERONICA  
 You don't pay any attention to me.  
 None whatsoever! I told you I was  
 getting my nails and feet done  
 today, a wax and a facial. Can you  
 pay me some attention please?!

CECIL  
 Sounds tiring. You must be  
 exhausted.

She eyes the boxes in the corner.

VERONICA  
 And then I come home and...  
 (bout to raise hell)

VERONICA (CONT'D)  
 wait you didn't finish unpacking  
 the rest of the dishes?! I told you  
 to finish while I was in the  
 shower!

He ignores her. Gets in the bed.

VERONICA (CONT'D)  
 Cecil. Cecil! Get up. Go put up the  
 dishes.

CECIL  
 Will you chill with the nagging? I  
 had a 12-hour day. I wanna sleep.

Veronica rolls her eyes and gets out the bed, mumbling the  
 whole time. She throws a t-shirt on. When she turns around we  
 see the shirt reads: "You won't be hittin' below the belt."

A rap video comes on the TV.

VERONICA  
 We will NOT be listening to that  
 tonight. And she does not go to  
 sleep with the TV on. You know  
 that.

CECIL  
 Well tell she, that he does.

VERONICA  
 This is exactly what I mean. You  
 just --

He turns the volume down, gives her the "fair" look. Leans in  
 for a kiss.

She puts her hand in his face and points to her shirt. He  
 reads it, shakes his head in disgust.

CECIL  
 Veronica, I just need to unwind,  
 baby. I do a lot around here.

She looks at him, then the boxes, then back at him.

CECIL (CONT'D)  
 First thing in the morning. Now get  
 on over here.

VERONICA  
 Do it now.

He slides closer towards her. She stares at him. Dead serious.

VERONICA

You don't play by my rules then you  
won't play at all.

As Veronica turns her back to him, he slides closer. She figured he would, so she decides against that and turns onto her back -- arms folded across her chest. She puts on her eye mask. It reads: "Do Not Disturb."

Cecil stares a moment. Bobbing his head: okay.

Cecil flips through a few channels and lands on the SPICE network. The moaning is too loud. He lowers the volume.

With a big smile on his face he cuts his eyes over to Veronica.

CECIL

(to himself)

He gon' play, with or without you.

EXT. ROADSIDE - NIGHT

A parked car on the side of the road. The passenger door flies open. There's some tussling. A WOMAN is pushed out. The car speeds off leaving her in its smoke.

SHEREE SIMS (26). A beauty, body sculpted by God himself, dusts herself off and drifts on as best as a drunk woman in heels can.

INT. O'NEAL'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sheree's swollen ankles lie across the arm of the couch.

O'NEAL (27) walks in with frozen ground beef. He sets it on her ankle; she holds it there. He takes a seat and stares at her feet.

O'NEAL

That's all the way on the other  
side of town. At least two miles.  
Why didn't you call a cab?

SHEREE

O'Neal, please! Not tonight. I just  
want to relax. Thank you.

O'NEAL  
 Whatever, Sheree.

Her cell PHONE RINGS.

INSERT - PHONE

"CEAZER"

She drops the phone.

BACK TO SCENE

O'NEAL  
 Go ahead, I won't be jealous.

She won't answer. Her face is filled with fear.

SHEREE  
 I'm gonna crash here tonight.  
 Something came up.

O'NEAL  
 Hell no, you won't.

SHEREE  
 Oh, would you stop it. We're  
 friends --

O'NEAL  
 We're friends like "if you die I'd  
 go to your funeral" type friends.

Sheree gives him the middle finger.

SHEREE  
 Just for tonight. You see me. I  
 can't walk, and I know you're not  
 gonna give me any money for a cab.

O'NEAL  
 Your problems are not mine anymore.

She gives him a look -- a look of desperation, hopelessness.  
 A girl all out of options --

O'NEAL  
 (a beat)  
 You gotta get it together,  
 Sheree... and soon.

INT. CONNIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Connie types away on her computer. There's a KNOCK on the door.

CONNIE

Come in.

TONY, in all of his flamboyancy, steps in, carrying roses.

TONY

(surprised)

Hmm, you have an admirer. There's a card. And whoever it is, he knew your favorites. You didn't tell me you were seeing someone.

Connie stops typing. Equally surprised.

TONY

As your assistant, these are things I should know, don't you think? I assist in all areas -- even your love life, okay?

CONNIE

Throw them away.

TONY

Ms. Trife... but they're so beautiful.

She resumes typing.

CONNIE

Get rid of them, Tony.

TONY

(pouts)

Fine. But you should be open-minded, Ms. Trife.

CONNIE

Open-minded people usually have their brains fall out.

TONY

They usually fall in love, too.

She stops typing. Takes off her glasses.

CONNIE

If love is in my cards -- which judging by my last two dates, and the married creeps that roam this building, seems very unlikely -- I'd prefer to walk into it. Not fall. Two people on the ground have never been any help to each other.

TONY

Well, when you're ready to walk, let me know so I can PUSH you in the right direction.

EXT. BUILDING - PARKING LOT/PARKING ATTENDANT BOOTH - DAY

Connie drives up to the parking attendant booth.

DEXTER (26), the parking attendant, a handsome, young man full of ambition and vision, smiles at the very sight of her.

Connie glances at him, casual but appraising. Dexter stares like a kid meeting his idol.

She holds out the ticket and cash. He slowly takes the ticket.

DEXTER

I heard The Stylistics is in town. If you're not doing anything this weekend --

CONNIE

ARE in town.

DEXTER

Huh?

CONNIE

(shakes her head)  
Nothing. I'm busy.

DEXTER

That's fine. They'll be here the next few months.

CONNIE

I'll be busy then, too. Sorry.

DEXTER

Like sorry, "maybe next time," or --

CONNIE  
We've been through this for the  
past two months.

DEXTER  
Actually, the past fifty two  
days...

Connie flashes a smile. She's growing impatient.

CONNIE  
How much do I owe you?

DEXTER  
It's on the house.

CONNIE  
No, let me pay. I don't want you to  
lose your little job. How much?

Dexter lifts the post.

EXT. THE FOSTERS' TOWNHOUSE - DAY

A row of connecting town homes, sit on this vast green lawn.  
Sculpted edges, sprinklers, the works.

INT. THE FOSTERS' LIVING ROOM - DAY

A few unpacked boxes. Veronica sorts through some things. She  
pulls out a framed picture of her and Cecil. She puts it to  
the side. Pulls out more, smiling at each one.

As she pulls out the last, her face turns to stone -- eyes  
squinting. It's a picture of Cecil and his one year-old son  
(at the time), JEFFERSON.

INT. THE FOSTERS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cecil stands at the door in his Department of Sanitation  
uniform. Veronica lies asleep in bed.

CECIL  
Thank God...

He gazes down at his boots, they're caked with dried mud. He  
debates leaving them on.

Just as his butt touches the bed, Veronica leaps up like a  
fish out of water. BUSTED!

VERONICA

Why would you sit on MY bed with your nasty ass uniform on? You know how I feel about that!

She glances over and sees footprints on the floor.

VERONICA

And you walked in here with your shoes on?! No respect. None!

CECIL

Just go back to bed. I'm tired.

VERONICA

I work just like you, Cecil. I'm tired, too.

CECIL

Three days a week, five hours tops... right.

VERONICA

I contribute just as much to this household.

CECIL

This is turning into something else. Let's kill this, honey.

VERONICA

No, no, no. We gon' talk! So, you complain that I'm working, but didn't you want me to stay home? Huh? What the hell I look like?! If you made more, then I might consider it but seventy-five thousand ain't gonna do nothing for me.

CECIL

My salary got us this home. My salary bought everything in this home. So my little seventy-five thousand does everything for US!!

INT. CONNIE'S JOB - BOARDROOM - DAY

A room full of MEN -- mostly white -- sit at the executive table. On a projector screen is a pie chart. Connie's wrapping up a presentation.

CONNIE

At the end of this fiscal year,  
stocks should be up by 11 percent.

OLD WHITE MAN #1

Give us the worst case scenario.

CONNIE

(smiling)

Eleven percent is the worst case.

They're elated. Connie basks in the moment.

INT. BOARDROOM - SHORT WHILE LATER

As everyone exits, Connie's left talking to ROB JOHNSON, the president of the company.

ROB

If this goes anyway like you  
promise it will, that promotion is  
yours.

CONNIE

Mr. Johnson, thank you. In that  
case, let's pray it does.

ROB

You better. You like boats -- the  
water?

(she nods)

Come with me to Napa.

CONNIE

Mr. Johnson --

ROB

It's Rob.

Off his look, she glances at his left ring finger which sports a gold band..

CONNIE

I don't think that would be  
appropriate, sir.

A beat as Rob smiles at her...

ROB

Ehhh, God dammit! My wife was  
right. She said you wouldn't go for  
it. She swears you're not like the  
others.

She's unsure how to take it but her smile hides the questions in her head. Rob leaves.

All are gone except KARL, thirties, a dapper man with a deep roaring voice. He watches her from across the room as she gathers her folders. He walks towards her, clapping his hands.

KARL  
Bravo. Great job. You held it down.

CONNIE  
Thank you, Karl.

KARL  
What happened? You never got back to me about dinner.

She was hoping he wouldn't mention this.

KARL (CONT'D)  
Doesn't have to be romantic. I am your colleague --

CONNIE  
My married colleague.

KARL  
Soon to be divorced colleague.

CONNIE  
So I assume your mistress is no longer in the picture.

Karl doesn't know how she gets her information, but he does his best to save face.

KARL  
(a beat)  
I don't know what's wrong with you, but whatever it is, maybe we can talk about it over dinner.  
(he winks)  
Give it fair thought.

CONNIE  
(correcting him)  
Some thought.

He looks at her. Perplexed.

INT. CONNIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Connie and Kyle sit at the table as they eat dinner.

KYLE

I got an A on my math test, but for some reason, I ain't get an A on my English.

CONNIE

Watch your language.

KYLE

Mom, lighten up. I'm just joshing.

He plays with his spaghetti.

KYLE

(hesitant)

Remember Abigail? She asked me to be her valentine.

Connie restrains her smile.

CONNIE

God, you're growing up too fast. So what did you say?

KYLE

Told her I would talk it over with you first.

Connie's eyes widen.

CONNIE

That's right. Mama comes first.

KYLE

Sike! I said yeah -- I mean yes. I said yes, Mom.

They share a laugh. Kyle MOUTHS these words as Connie says them:

CONNIE

How are her grades? Is she polite?

KYLE

Smartest girl in her class. So, can you help me out?

CONNIE

Hold on, her grade?

KYLE  
She's in sixth.

CONNIE  
Oh, no. You're only in fourth.

KYLE  
Yes, but I read on an eighth grade level, so technically, when you factor in the two year age difference, then divide it by my reading level, we're brain appropriate.

Connie holds back her laugh. Just shakes her head.

CONNIE  
Well, you know I have to approve before I spend my money to get her a card from you.

KYLE  
I've been calculating and with tax her gift will come to \$4.27.

CONNIE  
Baby, I'm all for you not having a high maintenance woman, but 4.27?

KYLE  
I'm gonna get her a Hersheys bar with almonds. She eats them at lunch. Then I'll make her a card and staple a flower to it. I have a month to change my mind if I want to.

CONNIE  
That sounds like a good, affordable idea.

KYLE  
Nothing beats a thoughtful gift, right? That's what you said.

CONNIE  
And me?

KYLE  
I haven't forgotten about you, Mom.

He winks at her.

CONNIE

You know what I could use?

KYLE

Ummmm... a date?

CONNIE

Stop being a wise-ass. You wouldn't know what to do if I went on a date.

KYLE

(under his breath)

No, YOU wouldn't know what to do...

(normal tone)

You have a lot going for yourself, Mom.

CONNIE

And men are intimidated by that.

Kyle doesn't believe that.

KYLE

No offense, Mom, but why would a guy not want a successful woman? Doesn't everyone want the best?

CONNIE

Why I'm having this conversation with a boy who hasn't hit puberty yet is beyond me.

KYLE

So let me hook you --  
(correcting himself)  
May I hook you up?

CONNIE

You can hook those dishes up, and then hook that soap and water up in the shower.

INT. KYLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kyle's in his pajamas. He kneels beside his bed -- praying.

KYLE

God, thank you for my life and everything you gave me. My mom, my school, my valentine, my clothes.

KYLE (CONT'D)

Can you make my mommy happy, too,  
and send her a nice guy? In Jesus'  
name, amen.

INT. CONNIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Connie lies against her headboard, yellow pad in hand. She writes...

INSERT PAD - A GAME OF HANGMAN

A noose. In a separate column are a list of qualities:

<u>Height:</u>	She draws two short legs.
<u>Punctuality:</u>	A body with two arms -- Arrows pointed at the wrist
<u>Not enough education:</u>	She draws a head. Beside it she's written "no brain."
<u>Bad teeth:</u>	She draws a frown on the face.

This is how she rates her dates.

INT. DEBORA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A drunk James staggers in -- pants unbuttoned. He bumps into the wall and knocks some pictures to the floor. He struggles to maintain balance. His slacks drop to his ankles. He stumbles, waking Debora.

JAMES

(slurred)

Debora. Debora!

He uses the bed to help himself up.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Get ya ass up and greet me!

Now standing in his boxers, James shakes his pelvis like Elvis in a bad attempt to turn her on.

DEBORA

I'm gonna go get ya food.

He taps her butt, food isn't on his mind. She exhales silently; she knows the drill.

JAMES  
Get on over here.

From behind he licks her neck like a dog. She turns, wraps her arms around his shoulders and caresses his neck.

DEBORA  
You said you would stop drinking,  
honey. Remember?

He shoves her to the bed.

JAMES  
What I tell you about trying to  
control me, Debora!? Huh?!

James laughs while arousing himself and walking towards the bed.

INT. DEBORA'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

An alarm clock reads: "2:33." The bed squeaks from some heavy duty work. The only other noise we hear is from a man grunting.

James rolls off Debora, exhausted. He lies still for a moment, shoots her a look --

INT. DEBORA'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Debora moves around like a pro. She has an apron on as she prepares neckbones, grits.

INT. DEBORA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Debora carries a plate of food to his side of the bed. He looks so comfortable, so at peace, so secure. She stares in the mirror and sees the complete opposite.

James's Iphone vibrates on the dresser. Debora picks it up

*INSERT - PHONE*

*Hey Daddy. Miss you. Can't wait till you're here for good. I love you.*

BACK TO SCENE

She puts the phone down, food still in her hand, nudges him.

DEBORA  
Wake up, James! Get up!

JAMES  
(sleep)  
Ingrid, I told your ass about  
bothering me while I'm sleep.

DEBORA  
(shaking her head)  
I have your food.

James opens his eyes to a plate of hot food being mushed into his face.

INT. NEIMAN MARCUS - DAY

Veronica browses through racks of outrageously priced clothes.

VOICE (O.S.)  
Need help?

Here come's SASHA, her fly and naive coworker.

SASHA  
(very catchy)  
Hey, girl.

VERONICA  
Hey, Sasha.

SASHA  
The new seasons wear -- OMG. The  
Prada dress? Fab-u-lous!!

Veronica's eyes light up.

SASHA  
Come, let me show you.

They walk.

SASHA  
So last night -- how long is your  
lunch?

VERONICA  
Thirty.

SASHA  
Okay, so you know I'm seeing  
Jerry...

VERONICA

The lawyer who just made partner?

SASHA

That's Jimmy... no, I mean Gary --  
but Jerry made a bunch of money  
from investments, retired early. So  
anyway, his wife called right in  
the middle...

She pokes her finger through her fist.

VERONICA

WHAT?! What did you do?

SASHA

(with no remorse)

I kept riding him. Shoot, I knew  
the new season spring collection  
was coming out this week and I know  
better than better.

They share laughs.

VERONICA

I hear that.

SASHA

I know where my blessings come from

--

They stop at the Prada section of the store. Sasha runs her  
fingers across a thin silky dress.

Veronica glances at the \$2400 price tag. She caresses the  
dress. Nothing to die for and definitely not worth her six  
weeks salary.

VERONICA

That's one thing I love about  
Prada; they never overprice.

SASHA

Riiiiiiight. So reasonable. Like  
only a bum bitch couldn't afford  
this. This would look fly on you.  
Tell Cecil to hand over the credit  
card.

VERONICA

Girl, please. He would cut his meat  
off before he did that.

Sasha grabs a Neiman Marcus credit card application. Hands it to Veronica.

SASHA

27

You know his social, right?

27

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

A bed covered in designer bags, boxes, and clothes.

A foot sliding into a pair of Christian Louboutins. A Prada price tag marked at \$700 falls to the floor.

We follow the dress up a woman's body as she slides it on. It's fitting like a glove on OJ Simpson.

As the Angle widens it reveals a nasty room. This is no apartment -- just a room. The wood is burnt, the walls are bare, the floors creek with every step...

Sheree assesses her outfit in front of a foggy, cracked mirror. She's pleased. She grabs her open suitcase, her college diploma falls out. She quickly -- almost as if she's ashamed to see it -- tosses it back into the suitcase and shoves her clothes and shoes on top of it.

INT. ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

In the corner, a 13 inch TV rest on a standing breakfast tray, playing reruns of "I Love Lucy."

A tipsy Sheree saunters in. She's wearing the same dress from earlier. Shadowing her is MARK. He's nervous and jittery.

MARK

This ain't where you live, right?

SHEREE

No. I just rent this room... to get peace, ya know.

He's uncomfortable but he's horny too, so we know which feeling won.

Mark undresses, folding his clothes carefully. He pulls out a hundred dollar bill.

Sheree closes his hand into a fist.

SHEREE

I like you, Mark.

She mounts him.

INT. ROOM - LATER

Mark's getting dressed.

MARK

You live by here? I can drop you off.

SHEREE

When am I going to see you again?

MARK

Here, take the money. Just keep it.

SHEREE

Excuse me? I don't want your money. I'm not some whore.

He raises his eye brows. Her actions have fooled him.

MARK

You don't remember me, do you? They call you Goldie, right --

SHEREE

Leave!

Awkward silence. Mark flashes a devilish grin.

Sheree turns her head, avoiding eye contact. Ashamed.

MARK

(closing door)

You were just like they said --

Door slams shut.

Sheree fights her tears. Watching as Lucy and Ricky hug and kiss. She imagines she's Lucy someone loves her that much.

Sheree grabs her cell phone. Brings up O'Neal's name. Her finger dances around the SEND button.

She balls up her fist in frustration and tosses the phone to the wall. She reaches under her bed and grabs a bottle of liquor. Downs it.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

Sheree, wobbles up the street in last night's dress; too drunk to be bothered by the stares from CIVILIANS passing by. They look concerned, but not enough to help.

She stops at the corner, inches from the street. Off balance, knees shaking, liable to fall at any second. She reaches out to a TALL MAN -- his back to us -- she falls forward. He catches her inches from the floor.

A car screeches to a halt -- just missing them. We never see Tall Man's face.

EXT. NEIMAN MARCUS PARKING LOT - DAY

A trunk pops open. It's full of designer bags.

Veronica's trying to stuff more bags in. No success. Frustration sets in. She instead throws the bags in the back seat.

EXT. THE FOSTERS' TOWNHOUSE - DAY

Veronica almost knocks the MAILMAN over when she snatches the mail out his hand. She flashes him an unapologetic smile and runs up the stairs.

INT. THE FOSTERS' KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

She tosses the mail on the table, spreads it out wide.

She opens a Neiman Marcus bill addressed to Cecil: \$12,234. Minimum payment due \$900.

VERONICA  
(to herself)  
Damn!

INT. MALL - JEWELRY STORE - NIGHT

Cecil browses the cases of the finest jewelry: watches, rings and bracelets.

Sales associate MONA, a simple beauty, with teeth as white as the clouds, approaches...

MONA

Already I can tell you have great taste.

Cecil looks up. Impressed by her beauty.

Mona glances at his wedding ring.

MONA

Would you like to see something?

CECIL

(debates)

Ummmm. I'm alright.

MONA

Right now we're having a pre-valentines day special. Everything is twenty percent off. Just take a look. No harm in looking, right?

INT. CONNIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Connie, at her desk, typing when Tony lurches in.

TONY

(buttering her up)

Ms. Trife, how are you today? As good as you look?

Connie's eyes don't leave her computer.

CONNIE

What is it, Tony?

TONY

(fast)

I need big favor -- and I know you don't like to mix business with pleasure but I've been with you since day one and haven't asked you for anything this year, so please consider all those reasons why you should do this favor before you answer...

(normal pace)

My church will be honoring the decorating committee -- and as you know, I'm the head of it and I'd like you to attend.

CONNIE

You know how I feel about church.  
I'll send a gift.

TONY

The gift would be you. Please, Ms.  
Trife.

CONNIE

I have --

TONY

Nothing to do that day.  
And you could bring Kyle. Kids are  
more than welcome.

CONNIE

Let me mull it over some more and --

TONY

Ms. Trife, please. You are the only  
family I have. You know my parents  
still hate me. I just need someone  
there that is truly happy for me  
and accepts me for the person I am.

CONNIE

(touched, nodding)

For you I'll do it this one time...

TONY

(elated)

Thank you!

CONNIE

... But it's time for a new speech.  
You gave me that same one last  
year.

TONY

Ewww I did? How tasteless. I'm  
gonna go work a new one right now.

INT. CONNIE'S OFFICE - LATER

Connie paces the room. Intense conversation is taking place  
with whomever is on the other side of her earpiece.

CONNIE

... That's an option, but frankly,  
you're running out of options and  
I'm running out of time...

CONNIE (CONT'D)  
 my gender has nothing to do with  
 how I run things or look after my  
 clients best interest! And I  
 expect... hello...?

Tony enters carrying food. Connie settles behind her desk,  
 takes a few breaths and lets the blood settle down.

CONNIE  
 Men and their freaking egos!

TONY  
 (sets the food down)  
 Hmm, you don't have to tell me.

CONNIE  
 Truthfully, women run business  
 better than men. We take less risk  
 and focus more on the money.  
 URGGGGHHHH!  
 (looking at food)  
 Now this I like. A little  
 proactive.

TONY  
 I would love to take credit but  
 it's not my doing. Someone had it  
 sent up.

CONNIE  
 Who?

Tony shrugs. Connie stares at the food. He pulls out a bottle  
 of FIJI water.

TONY  
 They really studied you. Fiji. Hey.

CONNIE  
 Get rid --

She minimizes a screen on her computer and underneath it is  
 her horoscope. It reads: *Do something different. The best  
 decisions are often unplanned.*

EXT. PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

A car pulls off. Connie pulls up to the parking attendant  
 booth. Dexter's beaming.

DEXTER  
 How was lunch?

CONNIE  
Who told you?

DEXTER  
You're not as hard to figure out as  
you think.

He extends his hand for the ticket. She keeps her hands in  
the car.

CONNIE  
Not until you tell me how you knew.

DEXTER  
Fine with me. I can stare at you  
all day.

After some moments of Connie staring ahead and Dexter staring  
at her, a car pulls behind her.

Connie exhales. Mad she had to give in first.

CONNIE  
Here.

She extends the ticket.

DEXTER  
You really wanna know? Is it that  
important to you?  
(no response.)  
Fine, I'll tell you...  
(a beat)  
Over dinner.

She smiles and hands him the ticket.

CONNIE (V.O.)  
Do something unexpected...  
(out loud, playful)  
Here, creep. Great book. My son  
just read that.

Points to a Shakespeare book in his booth.

DEXTER  
I'm almost finish. How about you  
tell me his thoughts about it over  
dinner...

It's cute enough to get her to grin. He's not letting up.

CONNIE (V.O.)

The best decisions are often  
unplanned...

(a beat, out loud)

Would you even know where to take a  
woman like me?

DEXTER

You willing to find out?

Connie gives him the once-over. Takes her time answering. She  
nods yes. Dexter does his best to contain his excitement.

CONNIE

So dinner on Friday?

DEXTER

Now you asking me out?

She gives him the "boy please" face.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT - AFTER WORK HOURS

A room full of PEOPLE. Various ages, sizes, shapes and races.  
The MEN stand on one side; the WOMEN sit at the round tables  
set across the room.

GRIFF (50's), a tall, masculine, handsome man enters --  
picture Marvin Winans. He commands the attention of the room.  
Women look wherever he goes.

GRIFF

May I have your attention?!

(still some talking)

There's a cash prize!

(immediate silence.)

That was a Joke! I'd like to thank  
you all for coming out... for being  
active members of the ministry, and  
for seeing the vision I have for  
the singles. Oftentimes, we get  
overlooked around Valentines day.  
We get singles classes, or re-taught  
stuff we already know. No one shows  
us how to date or what questions to  
ask when we do date. This speed  
dating is especially important for  
my single sisters. On the table,  
are a list of questions that men  
hate to answer right off the back.

There are a couple "boos" from the fellas. Griff's eyes scan  
around.

GRIFF (CONT'D)

Sisters, those the guys you want to stay away from.

(they laugh)

But seriously, I want everyone to enjoy themselves, mingle, keep it holy and have a good time. I believe you've been briefed on the rules...

(they nod)

So have fun and remember dating is NOT A SIN. SO LADIES TAKE YOUR SEATS, fellas, be respectful. Enjoy.

INT. CHURCH - UPSTAIRS

Debora creeps in. She's wearing shades and a hat. Trying to go unnoticed.

GRIFF (O.S.)

May I help you?

DEBORA

(bashful, whispers)

Where's the event?

GRIFF

I'm sorry...?

DEBORA

Maybe I have the wrong place. You know what, I do. I was looking for LOVE OF JESUS... it must of moved.

GRIFF

This is the right place. But what -- oh, the speed dating?

DEBORA

Is Bishop Chrome still here?

GRIFF

No he passed two years ago. I'm Griff Martin, the new Pastor.

He extends his hand. She reluctantly shakes it, giving him the once-over. If her eyes could talk they'd be saying DAMN!

GRIFF

You are?

DEBORA  
 Debora... Sims.

GRIFF  
 Sims. Sounds familiar.

DEBORA  
 I grew up here. Use to go here  
 almost all my life.

GRIFF  
 I've never seen you.

DEBORA  
 Had you have, you wouldn't notice.

GRIFF  
 Believe me, I would.  
 (she smiles... a beat)  
 Since you have no clue why you're  
 here, even though you've been  
 coming HERE most of your life,  
 would you mind waiting a moment?

INT. GRIFF'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Griff's behind his desk signing a check. Dexter sits in a  
 chair. Legs shaking nervously.

GRIFF  
 My apologies, I should of had this  
 ready for you.

No response from Dexter. He's too excited to care.

GRIFF  
 Lost track of it with this speed  
 dating thing. It ain't too late to  
 sign up. A good turnout... some  
 nice looking ladies down there

DEXTER  
 Nah, I'm good.

GRIFF  
 (looks at his legs)  
 A bathroom down the hall.

Dexter's mind is on Connie. He shakes his head;has the  
 slightest clue where the bathroom comment came from.

DEXTER

I finally asked the girl from the office out!

GRIFF

The older one?

(Dexter shakes his head)

Haven't you been asking her out?

DEXTER

Well, yeah... she finally stopped playing and... you already know, Pastor.

Griff nods his head. Proud.

GRIFF

If we were on the street I'd say "my nigga."

INT. THE FOSTERS' LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cecil and his son JEFFERSON (12), are in a heated game of Modern Warfare on X-box.

INT. CECIL AND VERONICA'S - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cecil stands in the doorway.

VERONICA

How long is he gonna be here?

CECIL

He has a name. Second, as long as he wants. He's my son.

VERONICA

You know how I feel about him coming over unannounced. Like, have some respect for me, too. I am your wife.

Cecil balls up his fist and puts it to his mouth. It takes everything in him to restrain himself -- eyeing her down as he steps away backwards.

VERONICA

Ughhh! This what I mean, every time he comes around you act different.

CECIL

This is my son, Veronica. My son!  
He's welcomed here whenever!

She rolls her eyes.

VERONICA

Just go!

INT. THE FOSTERS'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cecil enters, masking his frustration with a smile.

Jefferson had the TV on mute and hadn't left the game on pause. He smiles at his father, letting him know he's winning. Cecil hops on the couch, snatches the controller and they are right back at it.

INT. DEBORA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Debora jotting in a notebook. She flips to the back where there is a year long calender.

INSERT - JANUARY 9th.

Circled in black&blue ink. And before that JANUARY 3rd, and we begin to notice the black&blue circles cover most of the calender.

Resume scene

She stares in the mirror, caressing her face. No bruises. Smiling.

EXT/INT. STREET - DAWN

Connie drives, while Kyle rides shotgun.

KYLE

And make sure you let him open the doors, pull out chairs, pay... Okay? Are you listening, Mom?

They pull up to a house.

KYLE

And most importantly, call me when you get in.  
(he opens the door)  
And how did you meet this guy?

CONNIE  
Get out my car.

Connie flashes a smile. She kisses his cheek and he scurries out the car.

Kyle points to his eye and then to Connie as if to say "I got my eye on you."

INT. NEIMAN MARCUS - LOCKER ROOM - DAWN

Veronica's at her open locker. She checks her left and right to see who's watching -- no one's around. She throws on a wig, a hat and a pair of shades.

INT. NEIMAN MARCUS - OPPOSITE SIDE OF STORE - DAWN

Veronica -- in disguise -- waiting in line nervously --

BLAINE (O.S.)  
Next.

Veronica steps to the register. Overly friendly BLAINE -- fresh off of training -- greets her with a warm smile. Veronica puts the bag on the counter.

BLAINE  
Hello. Returns?

Blaine pulls the clothes out; there are six or so items. She moves slowly, admiring each piece

BLAINE  
(holding a shirt)  
Wow, this is beautiful.

Veronica checks to see if she's being watched. Blaine admires another piece.

BLAINE (CONT'D)  
Was something wrong?

Veronica shakes her head: no. Growing impatient.

BLAINE (CONT'D)  
You have great taste. Are you a stylist?

Blaine begins scanning the items back into the system.

VERONICA  
No.

Blaine waits for more...

BLAINE

Oh. You look so familiar. Do I know you?

She scans a white shirt. There's a ring around the collar.

BLAINE

This has been worn. I can't take this back.

Veronica looks at the collar. She can't debate this.

VERONICA

Just give it here.

Now suspicious, Blaine begins to smell the clothes.

VERONICA (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

BLAINE

I'll have to call my manager over.

VERONICA

(slightly panicked)  
What? For what?

BLAINE

Ma'am this smells like perfume --

Blaine grabs the phone to call her manager. Veronica holds the receiver down. Blaine shoots a look. Veronica squints her eyes, rolls them, packs the clothes back into the bag and sashays out.

INT. 4 STAR RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Beautiful. Elegant. The best of the best.

Off at a table in the corner, Dexter and Connie each nurse a glass of wine. A nervous Dexter smiles whenever Connie speaks. They're in mid conversation...

CONNIE

Well, I don't know. I don't want to offend you.

DEXTER

No. Feel free to ask whatever. Anything.

CONNIE  
Is this a faze you're going  
through?

He's lost. Huh?

CONNIE  
Dexter, I'm older than you --

DEXTER  
Not by a whole lot, but I still  
don't get it. This is our third  
date. Can't you see I'm sincere?

CONNIE  
Are you really?

DEXTER  
Connie, my interest in you  
transcends our age. But lets be  
clear, I ALWAYS have liked older  
women... and I've always only liked  
WOMEN.

CONNIE  
Glad I didn't have to ask. What is  
it about older women that attracts  
you.

DEXTER  
Maybe it's the settled in  
lifestyle. I ain't into partying  
and clubbing, I prefer to Netflix  
or a nice drive. I find women my  
senior --

She shoots him a look. He smiles.

DEXTER  
Enjoys those same things.  
So how was your dating life before  
me?

He winks at her.

CONNIE  
THIS, as in dating or being out  
with the same man more than once --  
is ancient to me.

The WAITER sets their plates in front of them.

WAITER

Enjoy.

He walks off.

CONNIE

This is my first date-date in  
almost four years.

DEXTER

That says a lot.

Connie isn't sure if she should take offense or not. She's expecting an explanation but instead Dexter continues digging into his food.

CONNIE

Then I'll shutup. I already said  
too much.

Off her look Dexter rolls his eyes and shakes his head.

INT. 4 STAR RESTAURANT - LATER

Finishing up their food... what started as a nice time seems to have taken a turn for the worst.

Dexter's still trying to interact; making small talk with Connie while she fiddles with her blackberry.

DEXTER

(re: blackberry)  
... I hope that's paying for  
dinner.  
(no response)  
But really, what do you think?

CONNIE

I think your comment was rude and  
childish.

DEXTER

What? What are you talking about!?

In a hushed tone, through her teeth --

CONNIE

Lower your voice.

DEXTER

Pardon?

CONNIE  
Everyone doesn't need to know what  
we're talking about.

DEXTER  
I'm not your son.

CONNIE  
Damn right. He would never say  
something so ignorant. You know  
what, take me home.  
(a beat)  
NOW and THANK YOU.

DEXTER  
At least tell me what I said.

CONNIE  
Your "it says a lot" comment.

DEXTER  
Apologize if you were offended. I  
didn't mean --

CONNIE  
I'm ready to go.

DEXTER  
What? Why? I said I'm sorry. Just  
let me explain --

Connie throws her napkin on the table, snatches her bag and  
saunters out.

DEXTER  
Wait. Where you going?

INT. DEBORA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Griff is seated at the table, riffling through a magazine.

Debora joins him with two glasses of Kool-aid.

GRIFF  
(re: magazine)  
Two years and they threw in the  
towel.

DEBORA  
That isn't long at all.

GRIFF  
Get this, they been together  
sixteen.

                  GRIFF  
Ever been married?

NO RESPONSE. She's in a daze. Fantasizing about his lips and hands.

                  GRIFF  
Debora.  
                  (lifts his head from the  
                  article)  
Debora. Been married?

                  DEBORA  
                  (back to reality)  
No. Not against it, just every man  
I meet has been so...

                  GRIFF  
Don't let things like this scare  
you.

                  DEBORA  
That doesn't scare me. The male  
species does.

                  GRIFF  
Oh, really?

                  DEBORA  
You guys are animals. Selfish.  
Inconsiderate. Liars. Abusers.  
Cheaters.

Griff just grins. He doesn't say a word.

                  DEBORA  
Griff, can I ask you something?  
I guess I'm asking you as a Pastor -  
- and please don't be offended, but  
where are all the good men?

                  GRIFF  
We're all around.

                  DEBORA  
You guys start off nice, then you  
do a 180.

GRIFF

Debora, it boils down to who the person really is. I don't believe a person shows their true self two years down the line -- we just pay attention two years down the line. But signs are there. Always are. Despite what they say, love isn't blind... but loneliness is.

DEBORA

I would pray, and still do pray to God for a good man, a wholesome guy, he don't even have to be that fine -- just treat me right. Don't put your hands on me. Appreciate me for who I am.

GRIFF

If God sent the man who is everything you want -- all you prayed for -- would you be ready for him right now?

INT. MALL - JEWELRY STORE - NIGHT

Cecil ambles in. He makes a Beeline for the display case.

MONA

(surprised)  
You're back.

EXT. MALL - NIGHT

Cecil smiling from ear to ear. He ignores his ringing cell.

INT. THE FOSTERS' BEDROOM - MORNING

Heart shaped Balloons are floating around. A dozen long stem roses are on Cecil's side of the bed.

Cecil carries a breakfast tray with heart shaped pancakes and orange juice. He sets it beside Veronica.

Moments LATER

Veronica chows down her breakfast as she finishes reading her card...

VERONICA  
... You're engraved in my heart  
forever. Cecil.

For the first time, she shows a sense of gratitude and appreciation.

VERONICA  
Babe, this is so sweet. Give me  
kiss.

He leans in for a kiss and right before they touch he puts a jewelry box in between their lips. Her face lights up. She snatches the box and opens it. She pulls out the most beautiful bracelet we've ever seen.

Veronica bouncing with excitement. Her orange juice spills, the fork flies off the tray but she can care less.

She puts the bracelet on her wrist, tosses the tray to the floor and grabs Cecil by the ears pulling him on top of her.

INT. NEIMAN MARCUS - DAY

Veronica and Sasha both working the fragrance section.

VERONICA  
... It was ALL THAT, okay. ALL  
THAT.

SASHA  
It probably wasn't even that good.

VERONICA  
No it was. Trust.

SASHA  
You ain't had none in what, three  
months? Any sex is good after that  
long.

VERONICA  
Girl, bye.

SASHA  
That bracelet is fierce though.  
Nice to see he broke the bank for  
Valentines day.

VERONICA  
He better had, it's only right.

CUT TO:

AN ATM SCREEN READS -2,179 (checking). -930 (savings)...

We're at...

INT/EXT. DRIVE-THRU/CAR - DAY

An enraged Cecil throws the car into drive and floors it.

INT. CHURCH - SANCTUARY - DAY

Neat. Almost filled.

Connie's in the congregation. She listens on as Tony stands in between a team on SIX MEMBERS, closing out his speech...

TONY

From the bottom our heart, the very, very bottom, we here in the decorating committee just thank you for this award. My team... you guys make it possible and without God, none of this is possible. So thank you all.

There's a standing ovation.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT - LATER

Connie exits the bathroom. Tony is there waiting for her. Walking.

TONY

Thank you for coming. It means a lot, Ms.Trife.

CONNIE

See, I gave up my Sunday and my Valentines day just for you.

TONY

Oh, you had plans?

CONNIE

That's besides the point.

TONY

I have someone I want you to meet.

CONNIE

No, I'm leaving.

He grabs her hand and runs. She gallops as fast as she can in her stilettos.

INT. CHURCH VESTIBULE - CONTINUOUS

They make their way through the traffic. Tony spots someone. He gazes back, at a reluctant Connie.

TONY  
Hey, Brother Foster.

Brother Foster turns around.

TONY  
Someone I want you to meet.

Connie's face is frozen.

TONY  
(to Connie)  
This is our organist. Brother Foster.  
(to Brother Foster)  
What's your first name again?

DEXTER  
Dexter. Dexter Foster.

Dexter nods at Connie.

DEXTER  
(to Tony)  
Would you excuse me?

Dexter walks off.

AT THE DOOR

Griff greeting MEMBERS as they leave.

MOMENTS LATER

Connie breaks through traffic. She spots him heading into the basement.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

CONNIE  
Dexter! Dexter!

He stops, turns towards her. She's slightly out of breath.

CONNIE  
 Can we sit, just for a second?  
 (they take a seat.)  
 I never...

This is hard for her and he decides to make it harder. He pulls his phone out. Fiddling with it for no reason. Just being a dick.

CONNIE  
 Okay, this is not going to fly. I'm trying to talk to you...  
 (he raises his eyebrows.)  
 You're really acting your... I'll make this quick. I apologize and it won't happen again. Accept?

DEXTER  
 I felt that. Do I believe it? No.  
 Do I feel it? I guess.

She stands.

CONNIE  
 Great. Which way out?

DEXTER  
 Connie, you can't say it won't happen again because how would you ever know?

Connie gives a confused look.

CONNIE  
 I know when I'm sincere.

DEXTER  
 Only way to know if it's sincere is if we go out again. And what better day than today?

INT. O'NEAL'S KITCHEN/DINING AREA - AFTERNOON

A candlelit table set for two.

O'Neal, dressed in a suit, looks it over. He's pleased.

Bzzzzzz!! Bzzzzzz! He heads to the door. Buzzes the person in.

He pulls a bottle of wine from the fridge and uncorks it.

KNOCK!! KNOCK!

He grabs some roses out the freezer, hides them behind his back.

O'NEAL

Open.

The door swings open and to his displeasure, Sheree, filthy and barely dressed is standing there.

O'NEAL

What you doing here?!

She attempts to skate by him but he stops her.

O'NEAL

You can't Sheree. Not today.

Sheree looks over his shoulder and sees the dinner made for two. She pushes her way past him.

O'NEAL

Sheree, you gotta go!

SHEREE

This for the white girl?

Sheree takes a fork and digs into the food.

O'NEAL

What's wrong with you?

She saunters to the back of his house, towards his room...

SHEREE

Where is she? She in here ain't she?

He restrains her before she opens the door. She bangs on the door.

SHEREE (CONT'D)

Ain't she!?!

O'NEAL

You drunk!? You smell horrible!  
Sheree, you gotta go!

She breaks out crying. Uncontrollably. She wraps her arms around his shoulders. Hugging him, he tries to push her off, but her grip is too tight. Tears are getting on his suit.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

O'Neal sits across from his beautiful girlfriend MADISON. He looks bothered. Trying to hide his feelings but can't.

MADISON  
Sweetie, what's wrong? You don't  
like my outfit?

O'NEAL  
Baby, I'm fine.

MADISON  
You don't look it. I love the food.  
It's delicious. Oh wait, here...

She reaches in her pocketbook, hands him a card. Smiles as he opens it.

O'NEAL  
(reading)  
O'Neal, you are the man of my  
dreams, the man of my future and  
the joy in my life...

INT. O'NEAL'S BEDROOM - SAME

Sheree laying in his bed. Sleep.

O'NEAL (V.O.)  
... I love you, adore you and pray  
that I can be as great to you, as  
you are to me.

INT. O'NEAL'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Madison and O'Neal on the couch. She rest her head on his chest as a movie plays.

They're kissing. Each second intensifies.

O'Neal shirtless. Madison in her underwear.

O'Neal leading toward the bedroom, but abruptly stops.

He gives her the once over, bites his bottom lip and shoves everything off the kitchen table. He hoists her up, she wraps her legs around him. Without hesitation, he takes her right there.

INT. O'NEAL'S LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Freshly sexed, half naked and beyond exhausted, they lie on the floor in their own sweat. Madison, eyes closed, hand on her forehead. O'Neal stares at the ceiling.

MADISON  
(eyes closed)  
Babe, that was astounding. You were  
a lion.

The sound of a door creaking open.

O'Neal rolls on top her.

O'NEAL  
Want something to drink?

He peers up. Sheree is standing at his bedroom door, in his shirt, staring at them. He jolts --

MADISON  
What's wrong? You okay?

O'NEAL  
After effects. Shock. You know --

MADISON  
Like them earthquakes.  
(opens eyes)  
I can go freshen up and be ready  
again if you want?

O'NEAL  
No. No, gets dressed, let's go for  
a ride.

O'Neal hops up first. Bolts to his room before Madison can see Sheree.

INT. O'NEAL'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

O'NEAL  
(whisper)  
Listen. You have thirty minutes to  
be gone! Out of here, out of my  
life, away for good.

SHEREE  
Why you doing this to me?

O'NEAL  
Go Sheree!

SHEREE  
Just help me.

O'NEAL  
Do you remember what you said? "I'm  
not your business anymore."  
Remember that?"

Sheree reaches for the door but he stops her. She yells but  
O'Neal quickly covers her mouth trying to mute the sounds.

O'NEAL  
What the hell is your problem? You  
need to see a doctor Sheree.

SHEREE  
Just wanted to tell your little  
whore hi.

He gathers himself. Takes a deep breath. Before he leaves  
out...

O'NEAL  
And leave my shirt.

EXT. CONNIE'S ENCLOSED PORCH - NIGHT

Connie and Dexter sit on her swing chair. Close. Personal.  
Both nursing a mug of hot chocolate.

CONNIE  
It wasn't the comment, it was the  
way you said it. I guess... I don't  
know. I'm not good at making  
excuses. Oh, and the fact that you  
never explained the comment made it  
worse.

DEXTER  
It's better to ask than assume.

CONNIE  
Excuse me, young fella but I know  
these things.

DEXTER  
All it meant was: you've been  
single for a long time...

CONNIE

And?

DEXTER

You may have forget how to be in a relationship.

This hits Connie like a ton of bricks. It has some weight to it but she's not sure she totally agrees. She puts him to the test.

CONNIE

Explain.

DEXTER

Relationships aren't like riding a bike. You can't pedal someone's emotions. Once you've been use to considering you and your feelings for so long, it's hard to add someone else to that equation and put their feelings before yours. Damn near impossible for a woman like yourself.

CONNIE

Hard maybe, impossible no. I can do it... and I would, if he's worth it. When God sends me a good man, I'll know. Until then..

DEXTER

So you've never had a good guy, Connie?

CONNIE

Maybe one, or two, but they couldn't deal with the fact I made more than them. Also, and this is a BIG NO-NO, they still lived in apartments. I needed a man with a house. Preferably paid for, like mine is. I felt like that was only fair.

DEXTER

So they couldn't deal with you making more or you couldn't deal with them making less?

Connie's silent... but never at a loss for words --

CONNIE

I feel like some men -- the ones I've met -- don't want to do better. Y'all want us to prove how much we love you by ACCEPTING your WORST. And that's what I refuse to do.

DEXTER

Despite what society shows us, it's a lot of good guys out here. Females tend to think they deserve better, tho.

CONNIE

I'm above average and a average man won't do.

DEXTER

I'm not trying to sound sexist, it's just being TOO PARTICULAR is just never a good thing for anyone.

CONNIE

What makes you THINK you're an expert on women?

DEXTER

Studied them my whole life. My mom, two sisters, a psycho sister in law. All completely different yet the exact same in a lot of ways. My mom refused to be with anyone that didn't have a car. At 58, guess who she's with now? No ONE.

CONNIE

So women should settle so they can be in a relationship?

DEXTER

I would want the best for my daughter if I had one. But... Okay, look... You're in business. You know people settle all the time. Settling isn't a bad thing. It's often encouraged by both parties. No one gets everything they want. Routinely, we act like the things that matter most are negotiable: time, communication, love, stuff like that should never come second place to beauty or money.

INT. THE FOSTERS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cecil's sleep. Veronica's wearing nothing but a towel. Her shape is PERFECTION. She dries off.

VERONICA

I couldn't wait to get home.  
Everyone loved the bracelet. Them  
bitches were hating, just like I  
expected. You did the damn thing  
with this, baby.

She slips into bed, snuggles up to Cecil, kisses his neck...  
rubbing his chest... but still no response.

VERONICA

(in between kisses)  
Baby... Cecil... let me give you  
the rest of your gift...

His cell phone rings. He pops up. Answers...

CECIL

Hello...

Veronica doesn't move. We can hear a female voice on the  
other line. Cecil exhales loudly.

VERONICA

(under her breath)  
Oh, you trying it.

CECIL

Yeah, of course he can...

Veronica rolls her eyes and turns her back to him. Pissed.  
Cecil hangs up.

VERONICA

What did she want? And why she  
calling so late?

CECIL

She got evicted. Jefferson's gonna  
be staying with us.

VERONICA

Till she finds a place, right?  
(he shrugs)  
You just need to file for custody.  
Well what do you know!?

CECIL

(brash)

I know you know damn well you don't  
want my son living with us! So  
don't act like you in my corner  
now.

Caught off-guard, Veronica's too shocked to say anything back. Blank look settles in on her face.

INT. THE FOSTERS' BEDROOM - LATER

Backs to each other. Veronica tosses and turns but she's careful to never turn completely around.

Cecil doesn't move at all. He's to his limit and it shows on his face.

INT. O'NEAL'S BEDROOM - RAINY NIGHT

O'Neal, lying awake in bed. Madison sleeps under his arm asleep. O'Neal can't help but to think about Sheree.

EXT. CONNIE'S PORCH - SAME

Specks of rain splashing through the mosquito screen and on to Connie's face.

Connie's sheltered in Dexter's arms. Both are SLEEP and Neither of them have a care in the world.

MONTAGE

Insert - Cecil's pay stub: 119 hours worked.  
...Cecil shakes his head, and stuffs the stub in his pocket.

Jefferson sits awaiting dinner. Veronica sits at the table and sets her plate in front of her; completely ignoring Jefferson; fiddling with her phone as she eats.

Connie and Dexter walk through the supermarket. They get stares from Males and Females of various ages. Only Connie is uncomfortable.

Griff is preaching. Debora sitting in the front row.

Sheree empties all her liquor bottles into the toilet.

Dexter and Kyle are on the couch playing video games, while Connie stares on from the kitchen as she cooks.

Griff and Debora kneeled down in the living room, holding hands and praying.

Sheree getting dressed. She's cleaned up. Less revealing -- more presentable.

INT. DR. MISHGELL'S OFFICE - DAY

Plaque's and certificates are on the wall. Seated in a chair is DR. MISHGELL; on the couch across from her is Connie. She stares into space as she talks.

CONNIE

... And then he was gone. I don't know what to make of it.

DR. MISHGELL

It appears you still blame yourself. As though you hold yourself responsible for his actions.

CONNIE

Partly. I had never seen my father let us down. So when a man gave me his word, I swore by it. Looking back I see how stupid I was. You should trust no one that much. Being vulnerable played a major part. All my life I was wanted by attractive men. Then cancer came, my hair started falling out, and my skin was lightening, no one would even look my way. Then this gorgeous man just sweeps me off my feet. He doesn't care about how I look, he wasn't after my money, or some perverted creep that got off on Kemo patients... he was a God fearing man who had my back.

(a beat, tears flow)

Night after night for six years, I'd lay in bed replaying our relationship over and over again. Trying to find signs -- signals... some sort of something. Anything... but there were no cracks in the wall he built around me.

DR. MISHGELL

You felt isolated?

CONNIE

Yes... but safe. I yearned for the isolation. To be the only woman in his world. He made me feel comfortable relying on him. He never threw anything in my face. He took over where my daddy left off.

DR. MISHGELL

This fear of being let down, is something we usually experience as children which is why it becomes so hard to open ourselves up as adults, because the feeling is still very much pertinent in our existence. But in your case, being that it happened at terrifying point in your life you became more susceptible to the heartache that comes along with this kind of disappointment.

CONNIE

Being surrounded by successful, handsome, well paid men -- most which are married -- doesn't help either. I watch as they live double lives. They show up to events with their wives, but sleep with the temps. That in part has caused me to build up a wall inside of the wall that HE built.

DR. MISHGELL

In our previous session, you finally broached that you wanted Kyle to have a male role model in his life and that when you did make the acquaintance of someone that being a father figure is a mandatory must.

Connie exhales. Confused.

CONNIE

I thought by the time I really liked someone enough to meet Kyle, that he'd be grown or almost finishing high school.

DR. MISHGELL

This wall you've built, is it becoming a prison?

DR. MISHGELL (CONT'D)

Are you secluding yourself in your own fears?

CONNIE

If I could only be as good in relationship as I am in the boardroom.

DR. MISHGELL

Do you view relationships like you view business?

CONNIE

If only relationships were that easy...

DR. MISHGELL

You seem quite fond of Dexter. Don't let his age be the determining factor in the success of your relationship; rather focus in on your compatibility as individuals.

INT. NEIMAN MARCUS - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Veronica storms in. Angry. No mood to converse. She opens her locker, hangs her coat and pocketbook up. Pins her name tag on and slams her locker shut. She storms by Blaine who still can't quite place Veronica's face.

INT. NEIMAN MARCUS - BATHROOM - AFTERNOON

We hear crying inside a stall. Sniffling, heavy breathing, panting...

The door swings open. LOUISE (60's), searches each stool for the noise. She finds Veronica sitting on a closed lid toilet. Bawling.

LOUISE

Darling, what's... come here.

VERONICA

(shaking her head)

Not now, Ms. Louise. I just want to be left alone. Please.

Louise listens. Doesn't press the issue. But then --

VERONICA

(she screams)

I hate him!!

INT. NEIMAN MARCUS - NIGHT

It's after hours. Store is closed. Veronica and Louise do the nightly routine: Fold clothes and put them in the right place.

VERONICA

And I know it sounds selfish but that child of his...

LOUISE

Is he disrespectful?

VERONICA

I can't stand him. He irks my nerves. He needs to be with his mother. Things were rocky when he came but now they're crumbling.

LOUISE

Is the child the issue?

VERONICA

He's my main issue.

LOUISE

Why were you two rocky before his son moved in?

VERONICA

Basically he mismanaged money and spent our mortgage on a bracelet for valentines day. He had the nerve to ask for it back. What kind of man does that? To this day he's still holding that against me. It's been months. Then he moves his son in there without even talking it over with me. I'm just done. I'm so over it, Ms.Louise.

LOUISE

This is your marriage. Be careful what you speak out your mouth. I know you're frustrated and unhappy but days like this come.

Louise holds her left hand up. Wiggles her ring finger.

LOUISE

Thirty two years. I've been there.  
Right where you are. Commitment can  
harder than childbirth.

VERONICA

I want no parts of that man.

EXT. MALL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Veronica throws some Neiman Marcus bags in the backseat and  
hops in the front.

INT. VERONICA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

She goes to start the car but it won't crank. She tries a few  
more times, same result.

MOMENTS LATER

She's on the phone.

VERONICA

Yes.... about how long...  
(She rolls her eyes)  
Whatever, just hurry.

She hangs up. She views her cell phone. 12% left on the  
battery. She debates making a call -- fights it -- shakes her  
head.

INT. THE FOSTERS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cecil and Jefferson are sit against the headboard.

JEFFERSON

Dad, it's this girl at my school...  
man she fine.

CECIL

Oh, yeah?

JEFFERSON

Yeah, she real pretty. All the boys  
like her but she only talk to me. I  
think she like me but I don't know.  
She kind of high maintenance.

CECIL

RUN! Go the other way. Trust ya  
dad.

Cecil grabs his phone. Starts to text.

INT/EXT. VERONICA'S CAR/MALL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Bright headlights blind Veronica's eyes.

It's not a tow truck. It's a 2014 Porsche Truck.

TYLER exits the truck. He's tall, well groomed, handsome and with all the apparent signs of wealth. He knows he can have any woman he wants so he often behaves as such.

TYLER  
(assertive)  
Pop that thing, V.

VERONICA  
Excuse me?!?

TYLER  
The hood.

Tyler walks to the hood.

TYLER  
But don't act like you wouldn't  
have popped that other thang if I  
had said to.

She rolls her eyes.

VERONICA  
Can I charge my phone in your car?

He lifts the hood.

TYLER  
You just wanna check out the ride.

VERONICA  
I've been in better.

TYLER  
(sarcastically)  
That's obvious. So you still with  
country boy?

VERONICA  
New Jersey is not country.

He gazes at her wedding ring set.

TYLER

Looking at that LITTLE ROCK, I would of thought he was from Arkansas.

Veronica hides her hand.

TYLER

Don't hide your hands. I couldn't see it anyway.

He laughs.

EXT. MALL PARKING LOT - LATER

Tyler closes the hood.

TYLER

That should do it. Now get behind the stick.

Veronica gets in the car, cranks it up, it starts up fine. He puts the hood down. She steps out.

VERONICA

Thank you. I guess I owe you, huh?

TYLER

Stop. You know I'd do anything for you. That's why you called.

He grabs her by the waist, pulls her close. She pulls back some.

VERONICA

No, Tyler. Not that kind of party.

TYLER

I just want a hug.

... Though his eyes say a whole lot more.

VERONICA

Let me pay you.

TYLER

You can't even afford a new car. So you sure as hell can't pay me for my time.

VERONICA

Name your price.

He thinks. A devilish grin comes over his face.

INT. GRIFF'S CAR - AFTERNOON

Griff mans the wheel. Debora rides shotgun.

DEBORA

Slow down. What's the rush?

GRIFF

I want to catch the game.

INT. HOOTERS RESTAURANT - LATER

Griff, dressed in his Sundays best, is too into the game and his chicken wings to notice Debora has yet touched the food. He's screaming -- on the edge of his seat. Debora might as well be invisible. Surprisingly, she doesn't mind. She's thrilled to see him act out the box; however, she's slightly uncomfortable with the half naked women taking orders.

Game's over. Debora now has his attention. Occasionally he glances over her shoulder at the screen.

DEBORA

A pastor that likes Hooters and sports.

GRIFF

All men should.

DEBORA

Did your team win?

GRIFF

Nah, they're scrubs, but I love them anyway. I'm a loyal guy.

DEBORA

You feel comfortable in a place like this?

GRIFF

I'm comfortable anywhere, as long as I'm in my skin.

DEBORA

But look...

GRIFF

(smiles)  
I enjoy my life.

GRIFF (CONT'D)

What everyone else does, is not my concern. A couple of the young women here attend the church. Great, respectable young ladies. Tithers too. Best chicken in town, too.

She shrugs her shoulders. Griff stares at the plate, a little embarrassed.

GRIFF

You didn't get any?  
(she shakes her no)  
Aww, baby I'm sorry.

He kisses her hand, leaving hot sauce stains shaped like his lips, on her hands.

DEBORA

You preached today, you hear me? It was...

She continues talking. It's unclear what she's saying. We focus in on Griff's LAUGHING.

Debora think's he's laughing at what she's saying but it quickly registers to her that the TV has his attention --

DEBORA

... Griff.

GRIFF

(staring at TV)  
I'm sorry baby, this guy A FOOL.  
Check him out.

Debora turns towards the TV and lo and behold it's James on THE ROUND-UP -- a sports highlight show. Debora nearly falls off her stool.

INT. GRIFF'S CAR - NIGHT

Griff focuses on the road. Debora seems to have something weighing on her mind. Griff glances over and holds her hand.

INT. DEBORA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Debora is brought to tears by the photos of Sheree in High School.

She scans through another box and pulls out: diplomas, awards for OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT... report cards with all A's... her valedictorian award.

Lastly, she comes across a baby picture of Sheree. She flips the picture over. It says: "Mommy's bundle of joy at 6 months."

INT. NEIMAN MARCUS - DAY

Connie's in the dressing room. Dexter's squatted in a chair. In his view: Veronica and Tyler exiting the store hand in hand. As he rises to get a clearer look --

CONNIE (O.S.)  
What do you think?

He turns... Connie's in a beautiful white dress that's only suitable for a ball.

She doesn't have his full attention. He's more focused on Veronica and Tyler.

DEXTER  
You look great but where would you wear it?

CONNIE  
I don't know. Maybe if you took me somewhere that doesn't allow jeans or sneakers inside.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Standing on the long line amongst a younger crowd, Connie and Dexter seem to garner stares from everyone. It makes Connie uncomfortable, but Dexter feels proud.

DEXTER  
Something told me to pre-order the tickets.

We focus in (maybe slow motion) on the YOUNGER AGED GIRLS eyes that glance at Connie, then Dexter, THEN BACK AT Connie.

CONNIE  
It's not too late to go see "Where my heart belongs." There is no line for that.

DEXTER  
Next time. You promised --

She holds up her hand. Stops him mid sentence.

CONNIE  
I know, I know...

Up ahead, Karl locks eyes on Connie as he struts into the theater. She tries to turn her head before he can notice but she's too late. He stares at Dexter, trying to place the face.

DEXTER  
What's wrong?

She shakes her head. He can tell somethings up. He kisses her neck. No response.

DEXTER  
Connie. You mad?  
(in between kisses,  
playful)  
I'm sorry. You know I love your old  
ass.

Connie storms off the line. Dexter follows after her.

DEXTER  
Baby. BABY.

INT. CONNIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Dexter's at the wheel, Connie rides shotgun. They're having a very heated fellowship.

DEXTER  
First, the way I dress. Now the  
movies I select. Get a REAL  
PROBLEM, Connie.

CONNIE  
The way you dress is fine --  
sometimes... But must you wear  
jeans and sneakers everywhere?!  
It's okay to look like a GROWN UP!

She regrets that the moment it leaves her lips. A thick silence.

DEXTER  
Sorry, I like to be comfortable.

CONNIE  
I'm sorry, I didn't mean that.

DEXTER

I don't complain about your heels  
and furs that you wear EVERYWHERE  
we go. Who wears heels to go indoor  
rock climbing? A mink to go  
Bowling?

CONNIE

If you could afford it you would do  
wear it too!

Dexter pulls over. Tense. Turns to her.

DEXTER

What's ya problem?

CONNIE

What's yours?

DEXTER

Connie listen, I don't want to  
argue. But I won't let you  
disrespect me anymore.

CONNIE

Every thing I said was the truth.  
Was it not?

DEXTER

If that's how you see me then why  
you with me?

Connie stares straight ahead. No response. A few seconds of  
silence...

DEXTER

Do you wanna be with me?

No response. A beat...

CONNIE

Just drive, please.

Dexter's in disbelief. He turns the car off, gets out, and  
slams the door behind him.

Through the windshield, Connie POV: Dexter strolling down the  
dark highway.

INT. CONNIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A frustrated Connie doodles on her yellow notepad. Kyle  
enters, hops on her bed.

KYLE  
Uh-oh. What's wrong, Mom?

CONNIE  
I'm fine.

KYLE  
(re: notepad)  
You're never fine when that thing  
is out.

CONNIE  
Grown up problems, Kyle.

KYLE  
Like what? Tell me.

CONNIE  
Nothing you need to be concerned  
about.

KYLE  
You're my mother. Of course I'm  
going to be concerned.

A half smile overtakes Connie's face.

KYLE  
(a beat)  
Would you rather me guess? Ummm...  
Dexter looks younger than you and  
doesn't do things the way you want  
so you are looking for a reason to  
stop talking to him.

Connie's blown away but doesn't show it.

KYLE  
And even though you really like  
him, you're...

He stops mid sentence. Disappointed. Connie eyeballs him.  
Waiting on him to finish. He gives her a kiss and rolls off  
the bed. Mopes out.

CONNIE  
Where you going?

KYLE  
To bed.

INT. THE FOSTERS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cecil lies in bed, TV off, with the sheets pulled back, making space for Veronica. She lies beside him.

CECIL  
Come here, girl. Looking all sexy.

She flashes him a fake smile. Scoots over a little bit but really not in the mood.

He smothers her neck with kisses. Reaches for her breast but she shields them with her arm.

CECIL  
(in between kisses )  
Did I tell you how proud I am of you? You really been doing good with money. I haven't had to work overtime in weeks.

He reaches for her breast again. No success. He rolls her on to her side and mounts her. He tries to kiss her lips but she turns her face.

VERONICA  
I'm tired.

CECIL  
Too tired to kiss me?

She rolls her eyes and gives him a quick peck on the lips. Cecil squints at her in disbelief.

VERONICA  
I don't want to be touched. I'm just not in the mood.

He rolls off her.

CECIL  
You been saying that every night. Wzup? I pay bills, clean, provide a lifestyle so all you have to do is work, if you choose. What more is there?

She faces him. Appalled.

VERONICA  
You just don't get it. I don't want to work! I'm a woman. I want to be spoiled and treated right! Ugh.

CECIL

So you saying I don't do enough?

VERONICA

I'm your wife. You should go above and beyond. You go above and before for YOUR son so you should be willing to the same for YOUR wife.

Those words sting him.

CECIL

What? Where is this venom coming from? I swore we were in a better place.

VERONICA

Oh, now your lost? How can I give you children if you don't even do enough for me now? UGH!!

INT. THE FOSTERS' HOUSE - MORNING

Veronica's on her way out the house when she notices a bag on the door.

She takes the box and lays it on the kitchen counter. It's the dress she wanted. She can hardly contain herself until she looks at the label... it's not a PRADA. PISSED! She tosses the dress in the garbage.

INT. MANSION - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tons of unpacked boxes, stocked and scattered throughout the rooms. We can hear a phone ringing in the distance.

On the counter a cell phone displays: 17 missed calls.

When the ringing stops, we hear passionate -- airy -- lustful groans...

AHHHHHHHH! Someone just had the orgasm of their life. Tyler rises from behind the counter. Sweaty -- shirtless -- passion marks on his neck --

Veronica emerges, wearing just a bra. Catching her breath.

He heads out. She grabs her phone.

TYLER (O.S.)

I thought you handled that? Don't he think you doing inventory?

VERONICA  
 He don't listen.  
 (looks at her phone)  
 Damn, 17 missed calls. Can I  
 breath?!

Tyler's back with two bottles of water. He places them on the counter and opens them.

TYLER  
 (drinking)  
 What he want?

VERONICA  
 Probably what you just got.

Tyler's finished the first bottle. Veronica reaches for the second. He snatches it first, pops the top, downs it.

VERONICA  
 Well, damn, can a sister get a  
 bottle?

TYLER  
 (finished)  
 My bad.

He goes to the faucet and fills up the empty bottle. Holds it out for her to take. She reluctantly does so.

Veronica calls her machine. Turns on speaker phone.

CECIL (V.O.)  
 Veronica, call me back. It's  
 important.

She deletes the message with much attitude.

MACHINE (V.O.)  
 Message deleted. Next message.

CECIL (V.O.)  
 (sad)  
 Veronica, baby where are you? I  
 need you. Where are you?! I called  
 the house -- you're not there...  
 called your job... it's important.  
 Call me.

Delete.

MACHINE (V.O.)  
 Message deleted. Next message.

Lots of noise. Sounds like a hallway full of teenagers.

TYLER (O.S.)  
Aww, DAMN!!! Veronica!

She runs out. Leaves her phone behind.

MACHINE (V.O.)  
Last message.

Cecil speaking so softly that it's inaudible under his whimpering.

INT. O'NEAL'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A knock at the door. O'Neal opens. Sheree breezes by him and plops on the couch.

SHEREE  
You missed me?

O'NEAL  
Yo. I thought we had an understanding.

SHEREE  
Didn't come to start trouble. And don't act like you haven't missed me. Just want to say thank you and let you know for the last few months I've been on the straight and narrow.

O'Neal takes a seat.

O'NEAL  
That's good news.

SHEREE  
Yup. I found a job. Can you believe it?

O'NEAL  
Finally decided to put that degree to work?

SHEREE  
Not really. I'm a counselor. A "big sister" so to say. Just another step to a better me, while helping someone else become a better them. It's a win-win.

O'NEAL  
 It's a lot of lives at stake  
 Sheree. You sure you ready for  
 this?

SHEREE  
 Oh, here we go, doubtin' Doug. I'm  
 doing fine. And my supervisor is  
 very impressed thus far.

Sheree glances at the coffee table where there's a black ring  
 box.

SHEREE  
 Wait is that what I think it is?

O'NEAL  
 (grabs it)  
 Yes. For Madison. I'm going to make  
 her my wife.

This burns Sheree but she hides it.

SHEREE  
 Oh wow. So fast?

Uncomfortable silence. O'Neal gets up. He wants Sheree to  
 leave.

O'NEAL  
 So, I'm glad to see you're doing  
 well. Thanks for stopping by. And  
 as you can see,  
 (re:ring)  
 You can't just pop up whenever you  
 want.

She stands. He follows her to the door.

SHEREE  
 You said we'd always be friends.

O'NEAL  
 That was when I still had hope for  
 us. I don't have that hope for us  
 anymore.

Every word is cutting her even deeper. A beat.

O'NEAL  
 Take care Sheree.

INT. O'NEAL'S BEDROOM - LATER

O'Neal, shirtless, lying on his bed, staring at the ceiling. Stressed. Nervous. Battling regrets. He stares at the ring box, examining it.

INT. VERONICA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

The sunlight peeks through the blinds. Veronica wakes up. She notices she's in the center of the bed. Alone. She snatches her cell, more missed calls from Cecil.

Cecil's name flashes on her phone, it's an incoming call. The phone is on silent. She answers.

VERONICA  
Hello... Oh, GOD...

EXT. CEMETERY - GRAVESITE - DAY

The camera pans across the small casket.

GRIFF (O.S.)  
Heavenly Father, we thank you for revealing to us what lies beyond death, for giving to us the Holy Scriptures, for authenticating them through many wonderful evidences and making them sure through the incontrovertible evidence of the Lord Jesus Christ's resurrection...

In the front line we see:

Cecil, off balance and weak, crying on Veronica's shoulder. She's wearing shades and wiping tears from her cheeks.

ERICA, Jefferson's mother is crying hysterically.

GRIFF  
... May we also recognize and rest in the promise of Scripture that Young Jefferson is resting in the Lord's arms. Precious in the sight of the Lord Jesus Christ is the death of His saints and that death for the believer is a going home, a relief from the pain and sorrows of this life.

GRIFF (CONT'D)

May the family cast their cares upon you with the ability that is needed to focus on what death means to our beloved friend who is now with you. We ask that you would comfort and strengthen in the days ahead. Help the family and friends to rest and draw strength and comfort from YOU, Almighty Father.

INT. THE FOSTERS' HOUSE - DAY

We're at the repast. Pictures of Jefferson adorn the wall. Family and Friends eat. The TV plays an episode of MARTIN. Everyone's trying to make best of the situation.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Dexter and Cecil -- both sad -- stand there in an awkward silence.

VERONICA (O.S.)

Excuse me.

Veronica skirts by Dexter, rolling her eyes in the process. There's tension between these two. Dexter gives Cecil a hug.

DEXTER

I love you, bro.

INT. THE FOSTERS' HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is near empty. The last of the GUEST are clearing out.

KITCHEN

Out of Cecil's view, Veronica and Dexter are having a heated exchange. They talk in a strong hushed tone.

DEXTER

It is what it looked like and it looked wrong!

VERONICA

Don't come in here trying to start shit.

DEXTER

I won't let you do my brother like that.

VERONICA

Y'all not coochie crunch. Don't act like y'all are the best of friends.

DEXTER

We ironed out our issues!

VERONICA

Keep your voice down! My husband is mourning. He don't need to hear this.

DEXTER

Where were you when Cecil was calling you the night Jefferson died, huh? Cause you sure as hell weren't answering the phone. You sure as hell wasn't at work.

VERONICA

Stay out my damn business.

DEXTER

I told him he shouldn't of married you.

VERONICA

Well he did!

INT. THE FOSTERS' RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Cecil's in tears. Veronica enters, sits beside him. He rest his head on her breast.

CECIL

I can't believe he's not here. The perfect kid -- my only child is gone and all that drunk driving bastard gets is 15 years in prison. He'll see his children again. I won't.

VERONICA

You are such a strong man Cecil. We'll get through this, baby. We will. We have each other.

She lifts his head... leans in for a kiss... then another... Her lips taking over him until they get lost in each other.

INT. THE FOSTERS' BATHROOM - MORNING

Veronica's dolling her face up with eyeliner. She reaches in her purse and a box of MORNING AFTER PILL'S fall to the floor.

She rest her eyeliner on the sink and picks up the pills. She almost falls to her knees when she recognizes what it is. Her mouth hangs open.

INT. DEBORA'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

The bell rings. Debora heads to the door, opens it.

DELIVERY GUY holding a bouquet of flowers.

GUY  
Debora Sims?

DEBORA  
Yes.

He hands her the flowers.

DEBORA  
They're beautiful.

GUY  
Have a good day ma'am.

She closes the door. Heads into the

KITCHEN

She places them in the center of her island. She grabs her phone and makes a phone call.

Leaving a message...

DEBORA  
Hey Griff, thank you honey for the flowers. Anemones and Amaryllis are my favorites. That was so thoughtful. Just give me a call when you get this. Bye.

She hangs up.

The sound of FOOTSTEPS grow louder and closer.

SHEREE (O.S.)  
I knew you'd take him back.

DEBORA

(excited)

Sheree! Baby. Thought you forgot where I lived.

SHEREE

I always remember the places I'm not welcomed.

DEBORA

And these are from Griff. He's out of town preaching at a Male empowerment conference. If I had a way to reach you, I'd invite you over for dinner when he returns.

SHEREE

How long before you move this one in Daddy's house?

DEBORA

He has his own Sheree. He's a mighty fine man. Everything I asked God for.

SHEREE

How many times have I heard that line?

DEBORA

You look nice.

Debora heads to the fridge. Pulls out some frozen foods.

DEBORA (CONT'D)

Some of the ladies from church are coming over. You should stay.

SHEREE

Maybe.

DEBORA

Something's different about you, Sheree. What's new.

SHEREE

A lot, mama.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

They're sweating bullets. Water's boiling... foods in the oven. Both ladies wearing an apron. Debora mixes cake mix while Sheree sets the table.

SHEREE

And most importantly, I stopped drinking. Four months now.

Debora's eyes begin to water.

DEBORA

God's just been answering all my prayers.

SHEREE

I have some, too, that need to be answered.

DEBORA

He will do it. I promise you. If it's in his will then it will come to past.

SHEREE

O'Neal's getting married.

DEBORA

Well good for --

She catches the look on Sheree's face. Freezes.

DEBORA

... I don't believe you.

SHEREE

Mama, I wouldn't lie about this. A part of me wants to be happy for him but I can't be. I'm still so in love with him.

DEBORA

Does he know that?

Sheree shrugs.

INT. DR. MISHGELL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Veronica and Cecil rest hand in hand on the couch. Dr. Mishgell's doing her job.

DR. MISHGELL

Communication is known to close the gaps. Despite differences, it brings unity.

Cecil nods.

VERONICA

I feel like -- and I speak for both of us -- we're even closer now. We talk more, express feelings --

CECIL

That's not something you ever had a problem with.

VERONICA

Well, I do it more respectfully.

CECIL

Doc, I will admit that she let's things die down some before she goes rambling off. She hasn't quite mastered the art of "shutting the hell up" but I do look forward to coming home.

DR. MISHGELL

An immense improvement.

CECIL

Yeah, we're taking it day by day. I'm confident.

INT. DR. MISHGELL'S OFFICE - LATER

This productive session is over.

Cecil heads out the door first; Veronica follows leisurely.

CECIL

Stay inside. I'll bring the car around.

Veronica can't hold back her smile.

We hear the main door close behind Cecil. Veronica's mood instantly changes. She exhales. It's like an elephant has been lifted off her. She stares at Dr. Mishgell; fighting her tears.

VERONICA

I'm pregnant.

DR. MISHGELL

Congratulations.

VERONICA

No. I'm pregnant.

Dr. Mishgell reading her body language. She doesn't seem happy.

VERONICA

I don't know how to tell him...

DR. MISHGELL

With the improvements both of you are making and with the void that was left when Jefferson passed, it may --

VERONICA

-- Not be his.

INT. DEBORA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Twelve or so of well-dressed and powerful women in ministry yak it up.

A sweet melodious tune plays -- it's the doorbell.

Sheree opens the door, and there before her is LADY PRICE, a self-centered, brash woman with no filter.

LADY PRICE

Hiiiiii. And you would be?

SHEREE

Come in. I'm Sheree. Debora's daughter.

LADY PRICE

(as she steps in)

Oh, my God, you're so beautiful. Nothing like your mama made you seem. Thank God we don't look like what we been through, right? I'll keep my coat with me. I'm First Lady Price.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Debora yanks some finger foods out the oven. Lady Price sashays in. Sheree follows.

As Debora goes to hug her, Lady Price holds her palm out as if to say "that's not necessary."

LADY PRICE

Bathroom?

DEBORA

Upstairs.

LADY PRICE

You only have one? Hmm, I'll hold it.

A woman known as WILDA walks into the frame.

WILDA

(to Debora)

If you don't hurry you're going to miss your man preaching.

SHEREE

Moma, Miss Wilda's right. Go ahead, I'll take care of this.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The group of WOMEN focus on the TV.

T.V. SPEAKER (V.O.)

...Our speaker of the hour Pastor Griff Martin! Come on Ambassadors of Christ! Let's hear it for him.

DEBORA

Come on BABY!!

Lady Price rolls her eyes.

LADY PRICE

I don't know why they didn't call Bishop up first.

INT. CHURCH - LATER

Griff preaching to a congregation full of men.

Dexter plays an inviting melody on the piano, adding a perfect backdrop.

GRIFF

... And I tell you, God can heal and deliver you from anything.

There is an applause, some "Amens," -- the usual --

GRIFF

There are men in here now that have been delivered from drugs.

GRIFF (CONT'D)

God's healed some from alcohol,  
cancer... there's nothing too hard  
for my GOD!! I'm a Witness.  
NOTHING!

(more applause)

If you need healing, deliverance,  
no matter what it is, make your way  
to the alter.

A school of MEN make their way to the front -- hands raised  
and eyes closed.

GRIFF

Come on, come on. There are more in  
here. Don't be ashamed. No matter  
what it is. God knows. Don't let  
strongholds hinder you from your  
blessing.

Griff signals Dexter to bring it down some.

GRIFF

(a beat)

Listen. Before you, stands a man  
that has been flawed for years.  
I've had battles. I wasn't always  
what you see now. For years I was  
homosexual.

A group of 'Gasps' -- even from the pulpit.

BISHOP PRICE turns to a fellow PREACHER. We read Bishop's  
lips say: WHAT THE HELL?

GRIFF

I'm not ashamed to say the blood of  
Jesus delivered me.

In the congregation: EVERY MOUTH hangs open. Those at the  
alter make their way back to their seats and a few even leave  
out the sanctuary.

INT. DEBORA'S LIVING ROOM - SAME

Debora and the rest of the ladies watch with their mouths  
hung open. Everyone's shocked except Lady Price who wears the  
"I knew it" face.

INT. CHURCH - SAME

GRIFF

...It was a battle. I've been in  
love with a man. I was gone. All  
the way gone, but God delivered me.  
He changed me and turned me into  
the person I was created to be...

INT. DEBORA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sheree creeps in and finds her mother sitting against the  
headboard -- still disturbed -- not blinking. The news  
playing...

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

Pastor Griff Martin comes out the  
closet --

Sheree flips her TV off.

She pulls back the covers, fluffs the pillows and tucks  
Debora in. Sheree kisses her on the forehead, turns on the  
night light and places her Bible next to her.

INT. GRIFF'S CHURCH - AFTERNOON

Church is damn near empty.

Tony sits front row, cheering the pastor on. Scattered  
throughout the sanctuary are homosexual singles and couples,  
some ride or die old folks, and couple of Spectators that are  
there just to watch the drama unfold.

INT. GRIFF'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Griff steps in. Sulked.

BERNADETTE, his secretary, waits for him...

GRIFF

She call, Bernadette?

BERNADETTE

(avoids eye contact)

No pastor.

(a beat)

These are the numbers from today's  
offering.

She hands him a letter that puts him in an even worse mood.

BERNADETTE

The past six weeks we've been really low. Accountant says we may have to make some cutbacks.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

DR. BRADSHAW, is behind his desk. Veronica's squatted across from him.

DR. BRADSHAW

Well, the baby's healthy. We're going to give you prenatal pills and some vitamins. How's your diet?

VERONICA

I haven't had many cravings yet.

DR. BRADSHAW

Low acid. None is better.

Dr. Bradshaw searches through a manila folder.

DR. BRADSHAW

Do you or Cecil have sickle cell?

VERONICA

(clutches her stomach)

No. Not that I know of. Definitely not on my side. But my husband has all types of things on his side. Them folks jacked up.

DR. BRADSHAW

Okay. It's nothing to worry about. There are some signs of the SCT. Nothing too serious. Just ask Cecil about it.

INT. THE FOSTERS' BEDROOM - DAY

Cecil has a bunch of baby clothes laid out on the bed.

CECIL

Baby, look. What you think?

A groggy Veronica pops her head up from under the covers.

VERONICA

It's too early.

CECIL

You're eight weeks. Baby will be here before you know it.

She tucks her head back under the sheets.

INT. NEIMAN MARCUS - FRAGRANCE DEPARTMENT - DAY

Veronica squats in a chair behind a glass case. She's inhaling the smell of coffee beans. Through the corner of her eye she notices a familiar face. She cranes back, trying to go unnoticed. A minimal effort at best.

TYLER

Get ya ass up.

She rolls her eyes. Not wanting to be bothered. She stands.

VERONICA

Can I help you?

TYLER

Why you change your number?

VERONICA

We're done.

TYLER

I know. We been done. We can still bone tho'.

(she rolls her eyes)

Not good customer service. So you trying to walk the straight and narrow, huh? Be a good wifey.

VERONICA

I am a good wife.

TYLER

You can't have friends? You can't be a good friend anymore? You coulda checked on me. Seen how I was doing. I been laid up in the hospital.

VERONICA

You look fine to me.

TYLER

I mean, you know, I'm a fighter. Sickle cell might kick my ass but it ain't gon' keep me out for long.

A moment of unnatural silence before... she breaks out from behind the counter -- almost ghost like.

INT. THE FOSTERS' LIVING ROOM - DAY

Veronica peels in to find Cecil on the couch. Stoned face. Before him is a bottle of gin, a shot glass, and an open laptop. He throws a shot back.

Veronica approaches cautiously. Aware that this can get ugly. But she senses something's different. He watches her like a lion would a lamb.

She stops at a safe distance. Opens her mouth --

WHEEEWMMMMM. A bottle comes flying at her head with the speed of a bullet. She dodges it by inches. It shatters somewhere behind her. Too shocked to move.

CECIL

You BITCH!! You no good dirty ass  
BITCH!!

Cecil's drunk. He approaches slowly. She backs up until she can't anymore.

CECIL

How much you sold it for?!

VERONICA

(nervous)

You're drunk? Baby, sit down. Let's talk.

CECIL

You sit your ass -- better yet, lay ya ass down!! That's what you're good at. You slut! All I did for you. All I did... you know how bad I wanted a child. While I'm grieving you out there screwing -- Urrghhhhhh!!

VERONICA

(crying)

Cecil just calm down, please. I'm sorry. I never meant to hurt you.

CECIL

Who is it? WHO?!

VERONICA

(a beat)

It's Tyler, but I cut him off.  
Baby, I cut him off! I mean it!

CECIL

Who else knows? Who else!

ARGGHHh!!! A loud yell of frustration, disappointment, shame.

Enraged, Cecil punches through the wall. Purposely missing her face. But it's enough to scare her.

Veronica's in tears. She's hyperventilating but he couldn't care less at this point.

VERONICA

Please stop.

She plays the only card she has left... she clutches her belly.

VERONICA

Please. For the baby's sake.

CECIL

Everybody told me not to marry you.  
I turned my back on my brother --  
my own flesh and blood! You got an  
hour. I'm leaving. When I get back,  
be gone. Pack your shit.

He stares at her. Loathing the day he met her.

THPPPP! A wad of spit landing on Veronica's face. Cecil grabs his liquor and heads out.

Veronica's left on the floor, crouched, crying as her arm is wrapped around her belly. Crying her heart out.

INT. CONNIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Connie's reading through a brochure. Tony peeks his head in.

TONY

Ms. Trife, is this a bad time?

She waves him in. He closes the door behind him.

TONY

Ms. Trife, I always stay out your  
business but I need --

CONNIE

Don't overstep your bounds.

TONY

With all due respect, I may...

Now he has Connie's full attention. She sets the brochure to the side.

TONY

For seven years I've watched you grow and become this smart powerful woman. I've seen you at your low points and admire the way you bounced back and how you dominate things in this chauvinistic office. But that has to stop. I mean, not here but when you leave here. You can't be the boss all the time. You can't run things in a relationship. You've been in some f'd up situations but Dexter isn't that guy. You promised -- and I heard you -- that the next great man you met, if ever, would be the happiest man in the world --

CONNIE

That was years ago.

TONY

But what doesn't Connie do? Break her word right? Cause her words did things that her actions were too lazy to do.

CONNIE

I know what you're getting at.

TONY

Then why are you so comfortable like this? Alone, unhappy...

CONNIE

I have a business to run. And I don't have time to look after another child.

TONY

He's not a child.

CONNIE

Why are you advocating so hard?

TONY

Because he's a good guy! And he loves you. And I know you. Beneath all this power, you're still a woman at heart. You still want things money and power can't buy.

Connie's fed up with hearing the truth. Too hard to swallow.

CONNIE

Let yourself out. Thank you.

Tony leaves, but before the door can fully close, Connie's in a sea of tears. Disappointed with herself -- she reclines back in her chair, looking to the sky, biting her bottom lip. Trying to push the confusion away.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

DARK.

Just as Sheree unlocks her car doors, she's yoked up from behind and shoved into the car.

CLOSE ON: Sheree's terrified face.

MALE (O.S.)

Thought I wouldn't find you? You can't hide bitch! You owe me. And if I don't get my money, them little kids you mentor gonna get what you deserve. I want my money, bitch! Or your ass is mine AGAIN!

He turns her to him. Reveal CEAZER. A scruffy hoodlum that you don't want problems with.

He slaps her; sending her falling to the ground. Disheveled. He kneels down -- staring her in the eyes.

CEAZER

I want what's mine, Sheree. Remember what I said.

EXT. GYM - NIGHT

O'Neal's saunters out; gym bag strapped across his shoulder. He's a few paces away from the gym when Sheree grabs his hand. He turns -- ready to strike --

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

O'Neal drives. Sheree's shotgun.

SHEREE

I don't want you to judge me. Just help me. I don't have anyone else.

O'NEAL

Your mama.

SHEREE

O'Neal...

O'NEAL

I can't help you, Sheree. Where am I going to get ten thousand dollars from?

SHEREE

I'm working, I'll pay you back. With interest.

(a beat)

Do you still love me?

(no response)

You would do it for her.

O'NEAL

Damn right.

SHEREE

So then it should be no difference.

O'Neal pulls over.

O'NEAL

Get out!

SHEREE

What?

O'NEAL

I'm not letting you do this to me. Not again.

SHEREE

Look at these bruises. Look at my neck. My cheeks. Does it look like I'm trying to hustle you? I swear I'm not.

O'NEAL

I gave you chance after chance. Time after time, you do the same thing. You leave me -- I take you back. You gave me syphilis, I took you back. You couldn't pay your rent, who you call? Me. Not the sucker you left me for -- the man that beat the shit out of you. The one that pimped you out. I went above and beyond and never threw that stuff in your face. NEVER! All I did was love you. I loved you when you didn't love yourself and all you did was shit on me. So get the HELL OUT!

Tears fall from Sheree's face.

O'NEAL (CONT'D)

You chose that life. You got turned out and strung out. So the "feel bad for me story" won't fly no more.

He presses the unlock switch -- stares straight ahead. Sheree turns to him -- her eyes pleading but his heart is cold and his mind is made up.

Sheree gets out slowly, hoping he'll change his mind. Once she's out O'Neal pulls off.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

O'Neal stares through his rearview mirror. Watching his heart standing on the curb side.

A HORN BLARING!!!! HIGH BEAMS flashing --

An oncoming car holds the horn down as O'Neal narrowly avoids hitting them.

INT. DEBORA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Debora's startled by the repeated knocking and the doorbell ringing.

Deborah glances out the window and see's a UPS truck. She opens the door casually.

Before she can speak, Griff turns around holding her package.

INT. DEBORA'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Debora sitting on the love seat. Griff sits beside her but she inches all the way over. He places his hand on her leg but she pushes it away.

                  GRIFF  
          You look beautiful.

No response. A beat.

                  DEBORA  
          Is it the mustache?

He's hurt she would say such a thing.

                  GRIFF  
          I don't know what to say.

                  DEBORA  
          Then you should leave.

                  GRIFF  
          Debora we've had some great  
          times...

                  DEBORA  
          Fortunately, we never got close.  
          (a beat)  
          You're gay Griff! Gay!

                  GRIFF  
          No, I was.

                  DEBORA  
          And you didn't even tell me. I  
          found out when the rest of the  
          world did.

                  GRIFF  
          I never told you about any women I  
          dealt with --

                  DEBORA  
          These are MEN. MEN! Don't you think  
          that's something I should know?!

                  GRIFF  
          Truthfully, I'm changed. That was  
          years ago. Decades.

DEBORA

Once a man plays with that life,  
he's always apart of it.

GRIFF

God brought me out. I've been  
delivered. Don't you believe in His  
power?

DEBORA

He can. But you? No.

GRIFF

Don't be like that. Can you just be  
rational with me?

That hit a nerve. She stands. Furious!

DEBORA

Rational? You want me to be  
rational?! You shamed me on  
national TV! No warning. No  
anything! People calling me names,  
I'm embarrassed! Did you consider  
my feelings?

GRIFF

(he stands)

I'm sorry.

(she starts crying.)

I love you, Debora. I can't erase  
what I was. But that's not who I am  
anymore. You told me I am  
everything you wanted. I'm still  
the same person. We all come from  
something.

She storms into the

KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Griff follows...

DEBORA

If I was gay and use to sleep with  
women, wouldn't you want to know?

(awkward silence.)

I've lost weight, stressing.  
Haven't eaten. I feel betrayed.  
Betrayed by the man I love. You  
probably know how it feels to be  
betrayed by a man.

GRIFF

(shakes his head)

Debora, I'm sorry! Listen, please forgive me. I never meant to bring shame to you.

(inches towards her)

I'm not going to make excuses, but don't hold it against me. Judge me by what you see, what I show you, how I treat you and make you feel.

Griff grabs her hand. Gently pulls her close.

GRIFF

This connection -- this bond, it's God's doing. I'll protect you from the ignorant slander. I won't let your name get dragged around the mud. If I have to spend a lifetime making this up to you I will. I love you Debora, I adore you. I hold you in the highest esteem. I just need the chance to show you again.

Debora's still hesitant. Shaking her head no.

DEBORA

How can I trust you?

GRIFF

Baby, step outside your flesh and you'll see I never lied to you. We're called to forgive. You said you wanted a good man. Well, here I am. Right here in front of you.

Griff pulls her in close. Arms wrapped tight around her. Her arms just hand there. They cry together.

INT. CONNIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lights off. Connie's wrapped under the covers. Her thoughts are keeping her awake.

After some tossing and turning she flicks on the lamp and sits up. Connie reaches in her night stand, pulling out her yellow notepad.

There's a stick figure with the name Dexter over it. She stares...

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - OUTSIDE THE DOOR - NIGHT

Dexter, in his robe, comes bursting out the door. Connie looks at him, sorrow in her eyes. Dexter stares at her -- torn -- an invisible scab has just been reopened.

INT. DEXTER'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Neat. Quaint. They take a seat on the sofa.

DEXTER

Can I get you anything?

CONNIE

I just need to talk.

DEXTER

The floor is yours.

CONNIE

You have every right to never want to speak to me again. My own insecurities made me try and make you the man I always pictured myself with but you're not him -- and I'm fine with that. I knew God would never give me the man I wanted and I'm not mad at that because He did one better.

(tearing up, emotional)

He gave me you. I get a certain gusto when I'm with you. It was never you, Dexter. It's been me and I'm so sorry for trying to change you -- for not being there when you needed me most. There is no one I'd rather be with. You are my heartbeat, my best friend, the man I wake up and daydream about. I love you. And I'm so not ashamed to say it. If you could just find it --

And like that -- he kisses her. Taking her breath away. Barely leaving life in her body. This moment reminds us why people kiss, why love -- true love -- is what we all long for.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

More people than the last time we were here.

Cecil, Debora, Connie, Kyle, Tony -- all listen attentively as Griff preaches.

EXT. CHURCH PARKING LOT - DAY

Cecil and Dexter chop it up at Connie's car.

DEXTER

... Bro, if you need anything let me know. You can always come over the crib.

CECIL

You still got twelve roommates?

DEXTER

Ha ha. Me and Connie kinda staying together.

CECIL

It's that serious?

DEXTER

Yea.

He peers into the car where Connie and Kyle are singing along to the radio, making the ugliest faces.

CECIL

Just be careful before you make that move. Trust me. You see what happened to me.

DEXTER

I love her. She's the one. I'm confident in that. But I'll keep my eyes open.

(cautiously)

What you gon' do?

CECIL

That bitch is dead to me!

A CHURCH MOTHER overhears him as she strolls to her car. She puts her hand over her mouth.

DEXTER

(overly friendly)

Hey, Mother. How you doing? He said his itch is red. He got a little thing on his arm.

Satisfied with his response, Mother continues her stroll.

DEXTER (CONT'D)  
Bro, you not yourself.

CECIL  
Like I said... but you go on, be  
with the family, we'll get up.

They hug.

DEXTER  
Love you.

CECIL  
Same here.

INT. O'NEAL'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

O'Neal paces the floor. Nervous. Afraid.

MADISON  
Well, tell me what's wrong then,  
O'Neal?

O'NEAL  
I just need a break. Some time to  
sort things out in my life.

MADISON  
Talk to me. Why are you pushing me  
away?

O'NEAL  
Madison. It's not you. It really  
isn't.

MADISON  
(she stands)  
Don't do me like that. I'm not to  
be played with, O'Neal.

O'NEAL  
I'm going through something.

MADISON  
Then let me pull you through. Don't  
push me away.

O'Neal knows there's no easy way to do this. She's really in  
his corner and she deserves the truth...

Madison reaches for his hand. Leads him to the couch.

MADISON  
I'm here to help you.

O'NEAL  
(a beat)  
I'm still in love with my ex.

If looks could kill, Madison would be on trial for life. She shakes.

MADISON  
So you weren't really helping her?

O'Neal looks down. Ashamed.

MADISON  
Our anniversary -- when she was in the bedroom -- and you made love to me like I never knew you could, I didn't confront you about it because I believed you when you said we were solid. Safe. That you would keep my heart in one piece.

Part of O'Neal's brain is wondering how the hell she knew that.

O'NEAL  
Madison, I'm sorry. I really am.  
But it's not fair to you --

MADISON  
You told me you were over her! That you didn't love anyone but me.

Madison burst into tears. He tries to console her, but she pushes him away.

O'NEAL  
Mad, I'm sorry. Maybe I never stopped loving her. I just learned to live without her.

Madison slaps the hell out of him. He takes it in stride -- he knows it's well deserved. She takes her bag and storms out.

INT. PAWN SHOP - DAY

O'Neal stands in front of the glass. He studies the engagement ring one last time before handing it to the OWNER. He counts a few thousand dollars before heading out.

EXT. GHETTO STREETS - NIGHT

The worst side of any town. PROSTITUTES flirting, searching for Jon's. PIMPS, sit in their trucks keeping eyes on their girls.

O'Neal marches to a tinted JEEP, knocks on the drivers side window.

As the window slowly rolls down, Ceazer stares O'Neal in the eyes. Ceazer's hand holding a gun on his lap.

O'Neal throws a brown paper bag in the car. He stares Ceazer straight in his eyes. No fear.

O'NEAL

(re: bag)

Sheree. She even. Now leave her alone.

CEAZER

(licking his lips)

Who Goldie?

O'NEAL

Play if you want to.

O'Neal turns his back to him; marches away with the confidence of a KING.

INT. THE FOSTERS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Cecil, trudges around his house. His eyes are bleeding tears.

He peeks in Jefferson's room... then in his bedroom... things just don't feel the same.

INT. THE FOSTERS' LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A blanket and some pillows are on the couch. Cecil lies back down, stares at the ceiling.

EXT. STREET - DAY

PROTESTORS holding signs with writings and pictures. Right now, it's hard to see what it says.

Veronica trudges across the street. A horn honks at her. She doesn't budge, still walking at her own pace, in her own world. She makes her way through the protestors, and into a building.

EXT. BUILDING - DAY

Cecil splits the building with a paper in his hand. His phone rings. Answers...

CECIL  
Saw her where?!

CUT TO:

INT. CLINIC - DAY

Depressed WOMEN -- some being consoled by their BOYFRIENDS, but most are alone -- in their chairs, battling their decisions. Fighting their will to leave.

Veronica, in a trance, takes her seat next to Sasha.

SASHA  
This is the best place. Trust me. I  
wouldn't send you just anywhere.

Veronica looks beyond sick, unhealthy. She watches as women enter beyond the point of no return.

A DOCTOR steps from behind the door, grabs something off the receptionist desk.

SASHA  
He's cute.

Realizing she's the only one peppy, Sasha takes a more caring approach.

SASHA  
V, how you feeling?

Veronica gives her a "can't you tell" look.

SASHA  
Then why are you doing this?

VERONICA  
I love my husband. I can't bring  
another mans child into this world.  
I've hurt him enough.

SASHA

But what if you never get him back?  
Hasn't he already signed his part  
of the divorce papers?

Veronica cover her hands with her face. She's still wearing her wedding ring.

DOCTORS ASSISTANT

Foster.

Veronica tries to stand but she can't. The shame is weighing her down.

SASHA

(whispers)

It's your choice.

INT. SURGERY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Assistant helps Veronica onto the operating table.

INT. CLINIC - SAME

Cecil, out of breath, scans the room for Veronica. He spots a familiar face that's glancing away from him. Sasha looks up, they make eye contact. Her eyes tell it all.

Cecil breaks down. Almost falling to his knees.

The door to the surgery room opens, almost hitting Cecil. Veronica emerges holding her phone, waving for Sasha to come get it. Cecil's too in his feelings to notice her there. Sasha doesn't budge. Frozen. Unsure what she should do. She thinks quick --

SASHA

Veronica!

Cecil turns, sees his wife, their eyes meet. Veronica's at a lost for words.

CECIL

What are you doing here?

VERONICA

The right thing.

CECIL

Veronica, don't do this.

VERONICA

Cecil, I have to. I can't do this.  
I've destroyed enough lives.

CECIL

Don't make the biggest mistake of  
your life. I'm not letting you do  
this.

Veronica's crying. Confused.

DOCTORS ASSISTANT

Ma'am, please close the door and  
follow me. Sir, close that door.

CECIL

(talks fast)

It ain't the baby's fault. I just  
came from the doctor. I have the  
trait, too. It could be mine.

Veronica stares at him. She shakes her head no.

CECIL

Veronica, just come home!

She lets the door close. Cecil bangs on it. All eyes are on  
him.

CECIL

Veronica. Veronica!

He opens the door.

SECURITY dart from behind the door and push Cecil out. She  
stares as he's carried out. She turns and heads to the  
surgery room.

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DISSOLVE INTO 143

INT. RECEPTION HALL - DAY

**SUPER: 18 MONTHS LATER**

A beautiful two tier wedding cake sits off to the side.

Balloons, decorations, and floral arrangements adorn every  
table.

GUEST at their tables chatting it up.

Over at one table we find Veronica showing Connie some pictures in her phone.

CONNIE

Oh, my God, she's so beautiful. She looks just like you, Cecil.

Cecil blushes.

DEXTER

(to Cecil)

She looks like her mom in that picture.

Veronica puts her hand over her breast. Her fingers are moist.

VERONICA

(slightly embarrassed)

Excuse me. I'm leaking. Gotta pump.

CONNIE

I remember them days.

VERONICA

When I come back you can tell me all about how he proposed.

Connie gazes down at her beautiful engagement ring.

Veronica grabs a baby bag from under the table and carries it out with her.

INT. RECEPTION HALL - MOMENTS LATER

The lights dim. The HOST stands by the door with a microphone.

HOST

Our bride and groom are here, y'all. Welcome, Mister and Misses Griff Martin.

The DEEJAY spins some music. Everyone claps as the newlyweds enter hand in hand.

INT. RECEPTION HALL - LATER

The Martin's sit up front at a table for two. Sheree stands at the podium, behind a microphone -- holding a wine glass filled with sparkling cider.

SHEREE

(into mic)

Excuse me...

(louder)

EXCUSE ME. MAY I HAVE YOUR  
ATTENTION? I'd like to toast.

(Crowd comes to a hush)

I just want to say Mom, Griff, I'm  
happy for you guys. I love you  
both. Mom, you're my heart. And  
Griff, I guess you were my hero  
that day. Truly I'm happy that we  
have...

A shot of O'Neal smiling adoringly at Sheree.

SHEREE (CONT'D)

...an example of what life can be  
like and how love -- true love --  
can overcome every obstacle. I'm  
proud of you and I wish you a  
lifetime of happiness together. So  
raise your glasses. Toast to love,  
God's will and good -- no, GREAT  
MEN because you guys do exist.

The room toast.

SHEREE

Now lets dance.

The DJ spins a record -- something classic. Everyone breaks  
out to the dance floor.

FADE OUT