

BLESSINGS

by

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FADE IN:

INT. MOUNT CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

The blue-robed SINGERS in the women's choir sway and CLAP as they SING a joyful GOSPEL HYMN. They are near the end of their performance.

Almost a full-head taller than the other 30 women on the stage, GLORIA JOYNER, (17), SINGS with passion and expression. Her face is radiant. Her eyes, brilliant with happiness, radiate through black-rimmed glasses.

She is enthusiastically singing and clapping along with the music, seemingly having the time of her life.

Most of the congregation are on their feet, clapping along as well.

We see the no-nonsense Minister of Music, LLOYD BETELS, 60s, jamming on the church organ. Lloyd is a strict perfectionist with a tough exterior that deeply cares for his choir.

As the singing comes to an end, PASTOR ROBERT GRIFFIN, 60s, makes his way to the podium.

PASTOR GRIFFIN

Yes! Yes! A round of applause for our women's choir...

(beat)

.. How is everyone doing today?

The congregation begins to settle down and return to their seats. After a few moments, the room becomes quiet, anticipating the word from the pastor.

PASTOR GRIFFIN

Today, we are going to talk about Matthew 5:14-16. "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

EXT. MOUNT CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH - LATER

We see BARBARA JOYNER, Gloria's mother, 40s, standing in front of the church. She is exchanging pleasantries with some of the church members as they are walking out.

Gloria is also out in front of the church, but standing quite a ways from Barbara. Gloria is having a conversation with her maternal grandfather, JEROME, 80s.

Barbara is continuing small talk with a few members of the congregation until Gloria arrives.

GLORIA (O.S.)

Hey mom!

Gloria exits the church, walking towards Barbara.

BARBARA

Hey Baby!

Gloria catches up to Barbara the two share a hug. Jerome watches from a distance.

BARBARA

Ya'll sounded pretty good up there today.

They step away from each other and make their way towards the church parking lot. The two continue to converse.

GLORIA

Yeah, we're getting better. Mr. Betels said he is going to move some people around next week, and Lizzie is going to sing lead at the Easter service.

BARBARA

Lizzie Jenkins?

GLORIA

Yep

BARBARA

Oh OK. I don't think I've ever heard her sing.

GLORIA

She's good ma, she sang "At The Cross" last week at rehearsal and killed it.

There is a moment of silence as Gloria seems to think back on Lizzie's performance.

GLORIA (CONT'D)  
I wish I could sing like that.

Both are quiet until they arrive at Barbara's car, a blue Toyota Camry.

GLORIA  
Can I drive?

With a slight grin, Barbara looks up to the sky and closes her eyes.

BARBARA  
Lord, please watch over us today  
and give her a steady hand.

GLORIA  
Really Ma?! You know I'm a good  
driver.

BARBARA  
Girl, don't have me out her lying  
on a Sunday.

Barbara holds the keys up in the palm of her hand, and Gloria swipes them with lightning speed.

GLORIA  
Thanks, ma!

They enter the car and leave the church parking lot.

INT. BARBARA'S CAR - DAY

As Gloria is driving, she glances over at her mom who appears to be in deep thought (or afraid). Gloria looks back at the road for a few seconds, then back at her mom.

GLORIA  
Granddaddy and I spoke for a little  
while at church today.

BARBARA  
Oh yeah, what were the two of you  
talking about?

GLORIA  
He asked which college I was  
planning to go to and if I was  
trying to stay close to home.

BARBARA  
What did you say?

GLORIA  
I told him I plan to go to Carolina  
but A&T and NC State were also  
options.

BARBARA  
Speaking of college, did you  
schedule to take the SAT?

GLORIA  
Not yet, probably next week.

BARBARA  
Alright, don't mess around and miss  
the deadline. After next summer,  
you have GOT to get out of my  
house.

Gloria does not acknowledge Barbara's comment.

GLORIA  
You know ma, you should really  
reach out to Grandpa.

Barbara ignores Gloria's comment.

BARBARA  
I'm serious, your room is going to  
be my workout room.

GLORIA  
Ma, I haven't seen you work out  
since I was in middle school!

BARBARA  
Just because you haven't seen it,  
doesn't mean it's not happening.

Gloria rolls her eyes.

BARBARA  
You know what, I'm going to be  
taking you downtown so you can get  
a job with Uncle Sam.

GLORIA  
I just might make a good Soldier.

Gloria looks in the rearview mirror.

GLORIA

How do you think I'll look with a shaved head?

BARBARA

Like a damned fool!

They both have a good laugh.

INT. FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT HIGH SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

The cafeteria is alive with holiday artwork, green garlands, and a huge, grinning Santa. NOISY STUDENTS fill the space with CHATTER and LAUGHTER, typical for a high school about to be released for Christmas break.

At one of the tables near the center of the room, we see Gloria eating and conversing with three other females at her table - MELISSA GREENE, TASHA COVINGTON, and KAREN SMITH, all high school seniors.

MELISSA

So, anyone going to Sandra's party tomorrow?

TASHA

I'm still thinking about it. I didn't really get an invitation so I don't know.

MELISSA

She didn't send out invites, she announced it on Facebook and said the entire class was invited.

TASHA

Well, I'm not her friend on there, so I wouldn't have seen it.

MELISSA

(looking at Tasha)  
Are you in or out?

TASHA

Out.

MELISSA

(smacking her lips)  
Really, what about you Karen?

Karen is in the process of filing her nails and doesn't seem remotely interested in the conversation or the party.

KAREN  
I'm going out of town with my  
parents.

Karen pauses and looks under-eyed at Melissa

KAREN (CONT'D)  
(with fake excitement)  
Disney World! Disney World!

TASHA  
Again?

KAREN  
Yep. My parents always say the trip  
is for my sister and I ,but it's  
really for them; that place sucks.

Melissa forcefully exhales and leans back in her chair.

MELISSA  
No, you guys suck. I don't want to  
go alone.

TASHA  
Hey, you didn't even ask Gloria.

MELISSA  
Come on now, we all know what her  
answer is going to be.

Melissa turns to Gloria

MELISSA (CONT'D)  
You want to roll?

GLORIA  
I can't I have to wo-

MELISSA  
See!

GLORIA  
What? I can't help I have to work.

MELISSA  
You can always call out. It's just  
a crappy fast food job anyway.

GLORIA  
Well, some of us need the money.

MELISSA

Girl please, we've known you since middle school and you've always had an excuse to avoid going out with us.

GLORIA

Whatever!

MELISSA

Seriously. Before your job, you were always busy in the church. Before the church, you were busy with tutoring. Before that, it was piano lessons.

TASHA

Don't forget the girl scouts.

KAREN

Girls scouts? You were in the Girl Scouts?

MELISSA

Yeah she was; I almost forgot about that.

GLORIA

Hey, I can't help my mom wanted to keep me busy and away from bad influences.

Gloria points at the other girls at the table. They all share a laugh.

MELISSA

Whatever.

INT. JOYNER HOME - DAY

Barbara and Gloria are sitting at the kitchen table. Gloria is sitting behind a laptop, typing on the keyboard. Barbara is sitting right beside her, close enough to view the screen.

GLORIA

Ok ma, this is the part I was telling you about. I need to know how much money you and dad made last year.



BARBARA

(with an attitude)

I don't know why they would have us give our kids that kind of information.

GLORIA

It's standard for the financial aid forms for college ma since I am your dependant.

BARBARA

No, I get that it's standard. I'm just saying that there should be something that gets sent to the parents, we fill it out, and they use that for the application without kids being able to see what we make. That's ridiculous.

Gloria is amused to see how upset her mom is getting about providing her financial information for the student financial aid forms. Gloria is enjoying egging her on a bit.

GLORIA

I don't see what the big deal is ma. Why don't you want me to know how much you and dad make?

BARBARA

Because it's none of your business, that's why.

Gloria chuckles a little. She glances at the time in the bottom right section of the computer screen.

Suddenly, Gloria jumps out of her seat.

GLORIA

Oh crap ma, I'm going to be late for work!

Gloria sprints out of the room.

BARBARA

(annoyed)

Girl, you almost gave me a heart attack!

Gloria is running around the house, getting everything together for work. Barbara remains at the table, review the financial aid information.

We are focused on Barbara, but we are able to see flashes of Gloria as she runs about.

GLORIA (O.S.)

Ma!

Barbara answers without looking up from the laptop.

BARBARA

What!

GLORIA (O.S.)

Where are the keys?

Barbara is still focused on the laptop.

BARBARA

Look on the living room table.

Gloria appears on the screen as a blur, rushing from one room to the next.

BARBARA

You're not going to eat anything?

GLORIA

Nah, I don't have time right now.  
I'm running late.

BARBARA

You really need to start setting an  
alarm or something.

GLORIA

I know ma, I'll grab something at  
work.

Gloria finds the keys exactly where Barbara told her to look and jogs towards the front door.

GLORIA

Love you ma!

BARBARA

Love you too. You better not be  
speeding out there!

Barbara's words fall on deaf ears as Gloria exits the door. Barbara shakes her head and resumes looking over the form. She is still upset about having to provide her income on the form.

BARBARA  
This is ridiculous.

INT. CAR - DAY

Gloria starts the engine and immediately hears some old school gospel music on the radio, blaring through the speakers. She begins to sing along as she backs out of the driveway.

A few minutes later, Gloria approaches a stop sign. She looks in her rearview mirror to verify no one is behind her before she stops. She presses the AUX button on the stereo and connects her phone to the car stereo.

She takes a few seconds to find some R&B music that she likes.

A few seconds later, new school R & B music blasts from the speakers. Gloria turns up the volume and begins to dance in the car.

GLORIA  
(Snapping her fingers and nodding  
her head)  
Oh yeah! Uh Huh!

Gloria resumes driving for a few more blocks before she accidentally hits the phone cord, ripping it out of the AUX jack. Old school gospel starts blaring out of the speakers again.

GLORIA  
Ah, Cmon!

She looks down, searching for the other end of the cable. She looks up to discover she is rapidly approaching a stop sign.

Gloria slams on the breaks, but the car continues to slide forward on the icy road.

Out of the corner of her right eye, she spots a semi-truck hurtling towards her.

Gloria doesn't have enough time to get out of the vehicle. She closes her eyes as the sound of the truck horn comes closer and closer.

The semi-truck also appears to be sliding and smashes in Gloria's car, sending her car tumbling down an embankment.

(In slow motion)

1. As the car tumbles, we are shown the inside of the car. A large metal box is thrown from the passenger seat and strikes Gloria in the throat.

CUT TO:

2. We see the rest of her body being banged around inside of the car.

CUT TO:

3. Finally, the car stops upside down with Gloria severely injured and unconscious.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. GLORIA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

We see Gloria lying unconscious in a hospital bed. The room is dimly lit, but we can see casts on her right arm and right leg. She is also wearing a neck brace.

All we see is Gloria, nothing else is visible around the room.

Gloria slowly opens her eyes and immediately notices a huge white sign in front of her, placed on an easel. She squints in an attempt to read it, but her vision is blurry.

BARBARA (O.S.)  
Hey Babygirl.

Barbara moves out of one of the dark corners of the room and into Gloria's field of vision. She stops right beside the bed, next to Gloria.

BARBARA  
Don't try to speak. You had some damage to your throat.

Barbara points to the white sign Gloria noticed when she first woke up. Barbara notices Gloria squinting and remembers that Gloria probably can't read it without her glasses.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
It says, "Hello, Gloria, please refrain from speaking, doctor's orders."

Gloria looks at Barbara and does a slight nod.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
I totally forgot that you wouldn't  
be able to read that without your  
glasses. You lost them in the  
accident.

MELISSA (O.S.)  
Thank God!

Melissa moves into Gloria's view as well. She had been in the  
room the entire time.

MELISSA (CONT'D)  
(jokingly)  
See, it's not all bad news.

Melissa managed to get a tiny smile from Gloria. Barbara  
doesn't seem to think the joke was funny.

BARBARA  
Melissa, would you please let the  
nurse know Gloria is awake?

MELISSA  
Yes ma'am.

Melissa walks out of the room, leaving Barbara and Gloria  
alone for the moment.

Barbara gently grabs Gloria's hand and holds onto it.

BARBARA  
I'm not sure how much you remember,  
but you were in a severe car  
accident.

Gloria gives another slight nod.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
Don't you worry about that car or  
anything in it. The only thing I  
care about is right here in front  
of me.

Gloria gives a weak smile.

Immediately, Melissa walks in with DR. CARTER in tow.

DR. CARTER  
(upbeat)  
Good Evening everyone. Glad to see  
you awake Gloria.

Dr. Carter begins flipping through some of the papers he is carrying on his clipboard.

DR. CARTER (CONT'D)  
Gloria, I'm Dr. Carter. I performed a few surgical procedures on you earlier today.

Dr. Carter looks at Gloria to ensure she is comprehending the conversation.

DR. CARTER (CONT'D)  
I know you may have a few questions, so I will explain everything if you feel up to it. You can give me a thumbs up with your left hand for yes and a closed fist for no. Understand?

Gloria temporarily lets go of Barbara's hand and gives Dr. Carter a "thumbs up".

DR. CARTER  
You were involved in a vehicle accident with a semi-truck. During the collision, your vehicle was knocked down an embankment.

Barbara tightens her grip on Gloria's hand.

DR. CARTER  
You've sustained several injuries in the crash, primarily on your right side. Those injuries include a broken right arm, bruised right leg, and few broken bones in your right hand and a couple broken ribs.

Gloria shifts her eyes away from Dr. Carter and looks up at the ceiling, appearing to process the information.

Dr. Carter hesitates for a moment before continuing.

Gloria resumes eye contact with Dr. Carter.

DR. CARTER  
Gloria, even though these injuries sound terrible, I'm not too concerned with them. They should all heal in time and I don't see any foreseeable long-term damage.

Gloria raises her left hand and points at the brace on her neck.

DR. CARTER

Yes, I wanted to talk about that separately.

(clearing his throat)

During the accident, your throat received a devastating blow. Your windpipe, larynx and vocal cords all received quite a bit of damage. We did the best we could to ensure you could breathe and swallow, but we had to request a specialist for further consultations. He will arrive tomorrow.

DR. CARTER

In the meantime, do not attempt to use your vocal cords at all. No talking, whispering, humming, or anything. Ok?

Gloria gives him the thumbs-up sign. Dr. Carter moves towards Barbara.

DR. CARTER

Excuse me ma'am

Barbara moves out of the way and allows Dr. Carter to retrieve a wireless keyboard from the bedside desk drawer. He places the keyboard in Gloria's lap.

DR. CARTER

Here, you can use this to communicate. Type out the words, and they will appear on that screen.

Dr. Carter points toward a monitor mounted on the wall above the sink.

DR. CARTER

I know it will be a tedious process typing with one hand, but we thought it would be better than trying to write left-handed.

Gloria begins to type on the keyboard and words appear on the monitor.

(GLORIA)

(via keyboard)

Thank you.

DR. CARTER  
You're welcome. Please let me know  
if you need anything else.

Dr. Carter gives a nod to Barbara and walks out of the room.

MELISSA  
Well, I need to get going too.

Melissa walks over to Gloria gently squeezes Gloria's hand.

MELISSA (CONT'D)  
The girls and I really missed you.

Gloria grins at Melissa

MELISSA  
They were here earlier while you  
were sleeping. I'm sure they'll be  
back tomorrow.

Gloria gives the thumbs-up sign.

MELISSA  
Bye girl!

Gloria smiles at Melissa while she exits the room.

Now alone with Gloria, Barbara sits down and scoots her chair  
closer to Gloria.

BARBARA  
(rubbing Gloria's hair)  
You really had us worried for a  
minute, but I knew the good Lord  
would bring you back.

Gloria begins to type while Barbara is speaking.

BARBARA  
Oh, and your new glasses should be  
ready in a few days.

GLORIA  
How long was I out?

BARBARA  
About two days.

Gloria's eyes widen. She pauses briefly then continues  
pecking at the keyboard.



BARBARA

You're going to be alright baby. God is good.

GLORIA

All the time! I'm so sorry about the car.

BARBARA

Child, I'm not worried about that car. As long as you are good, I'm good.

Barbara stands up to kiss Gloria on the forehead.

BARBARA

Oh, I almost forgot. Your father wanted me to call him as soon as you woke up. He was in Denver when you got into the accident. He is on the way.

Barbara calls Mack while still speaking with Gloria. Mack answers on the second ring.

BARBARA

(to Mack)

Hold on a second, let me put you on speakerphone.

MACK

Hey Gloria, can you hear me?

BARBARA

Mac-

MACK

That's right, that's right. I forgot you can't answer me. Listen, I just wanted to say that I love you and I'm on the way back. This is one of the things that I hate about being a truck driver. Sometimes, I'm not around when you guys really need me.

Gloria begins to type on the keyboard.

BARBARA

Mack, hold on for a second. Gloria is typing something for you.

MACK

Okay.

It takes her a few minutes, but once she is done, Barbara reads everything to Mack.

BARBARA

Okay Mack, she says "I love you too dad. Don't worry about rushing home; I'm okay and mom is looking out for me."

MACK

No, no, no babygirl. There's no way I'm not coming to be with you. Of course, I know you're in good hands with your mom and the doctors, but I can't rest until I'm there with you. There's nothing more important right now.

Gloria smiles types on the keyboard.

BARBARA

She says thank you, and she'll see you soon.

MACK

Alright baby, get some rest and I'll see you in a few hours. Barbara, you can call me on the way home from the hospital if you want.

BARBARA

Okay, that sounds good. Love you Mack.

MACK

Love you too baby, bye.

BARBARA

Bye.

Barbara has the smile of someone that is genuinely in love. Gloria notices and smiles also.

BARBARA

Don't tell your dad, but I'm staying here all night. I know he'll tell me to go home and get some rest, but I can rest here.

Gloria starts typing.

GLORIA

(on the screen)

No ma, he's right.

(MORE)

GLORIA (CONT'D)

Go home and get some rest. There's nothing else you can do right now.

BARBARA

I can be here with you, and this is where I want to be. Like your dad said, we want really be able to sleep until your home.

Gloria starts to type.

BARBARA

Now Gloria, no need to waste your time and energy typing anything else. I'm staying the night, and that's all there is to it. I may go home tomorrow, but we'll see. Now, try and get some rest, you've been through a lot.

Gloria stops typing in mid-sentence and accepts that her mom is staying. She pushes the button to lower her bed down to a flat position.

Barbara walks over, and helps her adjust the sheets.

BARBARA

Do you need anything else? Is the room temperature okay?

Gloria gives a thumbs-up as she settles in for the night. She types on last message on the keyboard before going to sleep.

GLORIA

(on the screen)  
I love you, momma.

BARBARA

I love you too, Gloria.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. GLORIA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - THE NEXT DAY

MONTAGE

- Several visitors come in and out of Gloria's room in a slightly sped up sequence.

- Barbara places new glasses on Gloria's face. They appear to be identical to her previous ones.

- The number of flowers and cards continue to grow as more visitors stop by and drop off more.

- Pastor Griffin, Melissa, Karen, Tasha, Lloyd Betels, and several other people presumably from school, work, and church stop by the hospital room at various times throughout the day and evening.

- Gloria's father Mack, walks in. He hugs and kisses Barbara, who is still in the room. He goes to Gloria's bedside, and starts a conversation.

- Mack and Barbara tuck Gloria in for the night, and walk outside of the room towards the waiting area.

END MONTAGE

The hospital waiting room has a coffee pot, and Mack makes some for himself and Gloria. They both have a seat, and sip on coffee.

MACK

So, how is she really doing?

BARBARA

It's tough to tell if it's an act, but she seems to be doing fine.

MACK

Yeah, I know the doctors are worried about any long-term issues, but I'm just concerned about her mental health. I mean, that was a terrible accident.

BARBARA

I agree. We've been talking about it, with the typing and all, and it doesn't seem to bother her discussing it. I think we're just going to have to keep a close eye on her once she gets out of here.

MACK

I agree. Sometimes it may take months before some of the PTSD stuff starts happening.

Barbara and Mack sit there for a moment, sipping coffee in silence.

MACK

So, how are YOU doing?

BARBARA

Me? Don't worry about me, I'm fine.

MACK

I always worry about you, mostly when I'm on the road. I know it was tough for you to get that phone call. I can't imagine.

INT. GLORIA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Gloria is alone in the room. Mack and Barbara are still in the waiting area. Gloria is pressing the switch that controls her bed. She can't sleep, so she raises the bed into an upright position.

She reads a get-well card from Jerome. She knows he would be there to visit if it weren't for her mother.

She takes a sip of water from the cup on the table beside her bed. She looks up at the ceiling and closes her eyes.

Gloria begins to re-live the vehicle accident. She FEELS the impact of the truck and the dizziness of the vehicle rolling over. She opens her eyes and immediately feels hot and nauseous.

Gloria presses the nurses' button to call for assistance. While she waits, she finds her glasses on the table next to the water and puts them on.

After a few moments, a nurse enters the room and turns on the light.

NURSE #1

Are you okay?

Gloria raises a finger as in one second. Next, she picks up the pitcher of water next to the bed, and shows it to the nurse.

NURSE #1

So, you need more water?

Gloria places her left arm around her body and shivers as if she was cold. The nurse seems confused for a second before she catches on.

NURSE #1

Are you cold...  
(looking for signs)  
...oh I get it, cold water! You want some cold water!?

Gloria smiled and nodded her head. The nurse seemed excited to guess what Gloria was asking for, like she was playing Charades.

Before she can to fall asleep, Barbara walks in with a doctor Gloria's never seen before, DR. ANDREW MYERS.

DR. MYERS  
Good Evening Gloria.

Gloria waves at the doctor, reaches down to the side of the bed to retrieve the switch, and begins to return her bed back to the upright position.

DR. MYERS  
I apologize for my late arrival,  
it's been one crazy thing after  
another today. I am Dr. Myers.

Dr. Myers stops talking once he notices Gloria typing. He patiently waits until Gloria finishes, and he then reads the works on the monitor.

GLORIA  
Its okay, you can go ahead.

Dr. Myers smiles and continues on.

DR. MYERS  
Okay. I am the Otolaryngologist or  
Ear, Nose, and Throat specialist.  
I'll be assisting with your  
recovery.

Gloria gives a slight nod.

DR. MYERS  
I'm not sure you have been told the  
extent of your injuries and the  
challenges you may face.

Barbara, now standing at Gloria's side, moves a little closer.

DR. MYERS  
We will be performing another  
procedure tomorrow afternoon, but  
it's not much more than a check to  
see how your vocal cords are doing.

EXT. JOYNER HOME - DAY

Mack and Gloria pull up in front of their house in Mack's car. Gloria is wearing a cast on her right arm.

Mack turns the car off, and they both sit for a few seconds before anyone speaks.

MACK

Well, how does it feel to be home?

GLORIA

Great! I'm definitely not going to miss that hospital food?

Gloria coughs a little and clears her throat.

MACK

How's your throat feel?

GLORIA

It's still a little sore, and trying to get used to this voice.

MACK

Eh, you don't sound too different, just a little more like me.

Gloria and Mack both laugh.

GLORIA

(sarcastically)  
Thanks, dad.

MACK

(laughing)  
Anytime...(trying to stop laughing)...are you ready?

GLORIA

I've been ready for two weeks.

Mack exits the car and goes to the passenger side of the vehicle, and opens Gloria's door. He helps Gloria get out, and closes the door.

JEROME (O.S.)

Gloria!

Gloria turns around to see Jerome walking from his car that's parked across the street.

GLORIA

Grandpa!

Jerome walks over to Gloria, and they share a hug on the sidewalk in front of the Joyner home.

They release each other, and Jerome turns toward Mack.

JEROME  
Hello Mack.

MACK  
Hey Jerome.

They both share a quick handshake.

JEROME  
(to Mack)  
Thank you for setting this up.

MACK  
No problem.

GLORIA  
Thank you for the card and gift.

JEROME  
You're welcome. I'm just glad  
you're doing much better.

GLORIA  
I sure am...  
(looking toward the front door of  
the Joyner home)  
...come on in with us Grandpa.

Jerome takes a quick glance at Mack.

JEROME  
Gloria, I don't think that would be  
a good idea. You know how things  
are between your mom and I. I'm  
just thankful that Mack called and  
told me what time to be here.

MACK  
Anytime.

Gloria face turns into a frown.

GLORIA  
I wish you and mom would sit down  
and work things out. This doesn't  
make sense.

Jerome moves in and gives Gloria another hug.



JEROME

Maybe one day, sweetie.

Gloria returns the hug and they both release. Jerome looks across the street towards his vehicle.

JEROME (CONT'D)

Well, you go on inside and see your mom. We'll talk later.

GLORIA

Goodbye, grandpa!

JEROME

Goodbye Gloria. Goodbye Mack.

MACK

Goodbye.

Jerome turns around, and heads across the street toward his vehicle.

Mack and Gloria make their way to the front door of the home. Mack turns the knob and opens the door.

MACK

Ladies first.

Gloria accepts the offer and enters the home first. The first thing she notices is a giant welcome home banner hanging up in the living room and a multitude of red, white, and blue balloons spread throughout the house.

Before Gloria could turn around and address Mack, she hears the word SURPRISE!!. Hidden before, several people appear from different areas of the home. It's primarily the same family and friends that came to visit her in the hospital.

Some people are wearing party hats, blowing kazoos, and popping confetti.

GLORIA

(showing genuine surprise)

Oh wow! Thank you everyone, thank you!

Barbara moves in and gives Gloria a huge hug, being mindful of the cast.

GLORIA

Okay, mom, I can hardly breathe.

Barbara loosens her grip on Gloria but continues to hold on to her. Barbara leans back so she can look into Gloria's eyes.

BARBARA

We're so glad to have you home,  
baby!

GLORIA

I'm glad to be here!

Barbara hugs Gloria one more time for a second and lets her go.

Everyone else starts to move in closer to Gloria to have a word with her. It only takes a few minutes before Gloria is swarmed and is beginning to appear uncomfortable.

BARBARA

Okay, everyone, move out the way so  
she can sit down.

Barbara escorts Gloria to one of their large sofa seats. As Gloria sets down, the next hour or so becomes a blur. Numerous people walk over to speak with her, while others remain standing by to talk next.

All of the voices begin to blend as Gloria continues to smile and seem interested in the multiple conversations.

INT. JOYNER HOME - LATER

Gloria and Mack are ushering the last few guests to the front door. Pastor Griffin is the last one in line to leave. He pauses at the front door, turning around to speak with them.

Gloria is still sitting in the same spot as before.

PASTOR GRIFFIN

Well, thank you for the invitation,  
and I pray Gloria has a speedy  
recovery.

MACK

Thank you, Pastor. We're praying  
too.

Mack turns around to look at Gloria.

MACK (CONT'D)

We're glad to have her home.

PASTOR GRIFFIN

Well, you all have a blessed evening, and please give me a call if you need anything.

Mack stands out on the porch and returns inside once the Pastor leaves. Barbara is still trying to clean up the house.

BARBARA

Whew! That was nice, but I'm glad it's over. How do you feel Gloria?

GLORIA

Okay, just a little tired.

MACK

Yeah, we know it's been a long day for you. Why don't you go upstairs and get ready for bed?

GLORIA

Sounds like a great idea dad.

Gloria starts to stand, but it's evident that she is uncomfortable.

MACK

Do you need some help?

GLORIA

(wincing)

No, I got it dad, thanks.

Gloria manages to get up and starts sauntering towards the staircase.

BARBARA

Are you sure you aren't going to need any help going up those stairs?

GLORIA

Thank ya'll, but I got it. And thank ya'll for the surprise party. I really had a great time!

MACK

You're welcome, but you know your mom did everything.

BARBARA

Well, we all had a part to play.

Gloria begins her journey to walk up the staircase. She is moving at a sloth-like pace; each step is its own adventure.

GLORIA

Thank ya'll again. I'll see you in the morning.

BARBARA

Goodnight.

MACK

Goodnight.

Mack and Barbara wait until Gloria is almost up to the top of the staircase.

BARBARA

You know she gets that stubbornness from you. She knows she needs help.

MACK

(laughing)

Oh no, don't try to blame me. Gloria has always been just like you, mean streak and all!

BARBARA

Mean streak! I'll show you a mean streak!

Barbara tosses the dishcloth she is holding and hits Mack directly in the face. Barbara begins to laugh out loud.

Mack takes the dishcloth in his hand and starts to aim at Barbara. Barbara takes off in a sprint to try and avoid being hit.

Mack and Barbara run around the living room, laughing, playing, really enjoying each other.

Unbeknownst to them, Gloria is watching from the top of the staircase with a big smile on her face.

INT. FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT HIGH SCHOOL CAFETERIA - AFTERNOON

SUPER: "TWO MONTHS LATER"

Gloria, Karen, Melissa, and Tasha are all standing in the lunch line having separate conversations. Karen and Melissa are in the front and Gloria and Tasha are in line behind them.

TASHA

So, how does it feel to be back at school?

GLORIA  
I never thought I'd say this, but I  
really missed it.

TASHA  
Really?

GLORIA  
Yeah, crazy, right?

TASHA  
Definitely.

GLORIA  
Being cooped up in that house for  
two months was driving me crazy. I  
love mom and all, but sometimes she  
can be a little overbearing.

Melissa and Karen just received their food and are now  
heading toward their table. Gloria and Tasha are next in  
line.

TASHA  
So, how are you feeling? You know,  
with the healing and everything?

GLORIA  
Well, it's great to be out of that  
cast and neck brace, I'll tell you  
that! But, I still can't walk as  
fast or run, and of course, my  
voice is still different.

TASHA  
You know, I can tell your voice is  
different but not in a bad way. If  
I didn't know you before the  
accident, I couldn't tell. It  
sounds like a normal girl's voice.

GLORIA  
Yeah, but it's just a little deeper  
than my normal one.

GLORIA (CONT'D)  
So, what's been happening with you?

TASHA  
(excitedly)  
Yesterday, I got an acceptance  
letter from Howard University!

GLORIA

(excited)

Yo, that's great! Why did you wait to tell me just now?

TASHA

Well, you said you were coming back to school today, so I just wanted to share the news in person.

GLORIA

Wow, I'm so happy for you! I know that was your number one.

TASHA

Yeah, my mom and dad met there. All I ever heard growing up was how much they enjoyed their college experience.

Gloria and Tasha pay for their lunch and walk over to the table where Melissa and Karen are sitting.

TASHA (CONT'D)

Have you heard anything yet?

They reach the table and sit down with Melissa and Karen.

MELISSA

Heard what? What are we talking about?

TASHA

I was just asking Gloria if she heard back from any of her colleges yet.

Gloria hesitates for a moment, needlessly organizing the food, milk, fork, spoon, and knife in front of her. She looks up at the girls, hoping they would move on to a different topic, but they all remain quiet, anticipating her answer.

GLORIA

(looking down, playing with her food)

Well, I haven't because I haven't applied to any.

Melissa gasps in horror. Tasha and Karen drop their utensils.

MELISSA

Girl! Does Mrs. Barbara know?!

GLORIA  
No, and don't you say anything!

KAREN  
What about the SAT?

GLORIA  
I haven't scheduled a date yet.

TASHA  
Gloria, what's going on?

Gloria looks around the cafeteria for a second, picks up her milk, takes a drink, and places it back on the table.

GLORIA  
I don't know...  
(beat)  
...I had a lot of time to think while I was in the hospital. I had time to think about what truly makes me happy and what I want. I don't really like school now, and I'm not too sure that I want to leave here and go through another four years of the same.

The girls stay quiet, fixated on Gloria.

MELISSA  
So, what would you do if you didn't go?

GLORIA  
I want to travel, go away and experience new things for a change. One thing the accident has taught me is that life is short and fragile. I want to do something new and exciting.

MELISSA  
I don't know, Gloria. Traveling is cool and all, but it costs money. I know you don't make that much from work, and Mrs. Barbara ain't paying for no trip.

Tasha and Karen laugh a little.

GLORIA  
Well, I can't even work right now, doctor's orders.

Tasha was getting ready to speak, but the bell rings.

MELISSA

Saved by the bell! We got to finish  
the conversation tonight, girl!

All the girls begin to walk in separate directions toward  
their classes.

GLORIA

I have choir practice.

Melissa throws up her hands in frustration.

INT. MOUNT CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH - EVENING

Women's Choir Rehearsal. LLOYD is ordering all of the members  
of the women's choir on stage. We see about 15 women and  
teenage girls slowly organizing into their positions.

LLOYD

Let's go, ladies! I don't want to  
be here all night.

We see Gloria hurrying in to make it on stage before Lloyd  
notices, but it doesn't work out that way.

LLOYD

(with his back facing Gloria) Good  
Evening Gloria, glad you could make  
it!

Gloria is confused about how Lloyd could see her when he was  
facing the opposite direction. He must have eyes in the back  
of his head.

The choir appears to be settled on stage in their typical  
formation. Lloyd has been working with these females for  
years and knows their strengths, weaknesses, and attitudes.

Lloyd moves to his position at the piano and begins to play  
the melody of "Pass Me Not."

He raises his hand to signal he is ready and begins to play.

The choir starts on point and, it's quite clear that this is  
a talented group. Years of training have paid off, and they  
function like a well-oiled machine.

Lloyd ear is attuned to their voices after the significant  
time working with them. About a minute into the song, he  
notices something different.



He exactly describes it, but there is a difference in the harmony.

Lloyd begins to frown a little and tilt his head as if he is trying to hear a particular sound.

He abruptly stops playing the piano; this catches the choir completely off guard. Lloyd turns around to see DEACON WHITE, mid 20s, sitting near the back of the church listening to the choir.

LLOYD

Deacon White, will you come up here  
and jump on this piano for a  
second?

DEACON WHITE

Uh, sure if you need me to.

We see one of the choir members whispering to another member.

CHOIR WOMAN #1

We done messed up for real girl,  
Lloyd is coming up here.

Deacon White hurries to the piano to meet Lloyd. He seems a little nervous and confused.

LLOYD

So, you know where to pick up?

DEACON WHITE

I think you stopp-

LLOYD

Just take it from the top. All  
right, ladies let's try this again.

Deacon White starts to play but hits a wrong note and pauses. Lloyd looks at him with a mixture of disgust and impatience.

DEACON WHITE

Sorry, I got it now. I'm ready

LLOYD

No need to announce it, just play  
it, son.

Deacon White starts over. Lloyd walks on stage to get a closer listen. The choir is broken down into three sections on stage. A group is to the left, center, and right. All three are currently singing in unison.

Lloyd is standing center of the group with his head bowed and eyes closed. After a few seconds, he opens his eyes; with his head still bowed, he walks slowly back and forth between the three sections.

We see choir members looking at each other in confusion since this Lloyd has never done this before.

Lloyd stops in front of the left group and signals for the center and left groups to stop singing. Both groups comply, and now the left group is singing alone. He stands there listening for a few seconds before moving to the center.

This time, Lloyd motions for the center group to sing while the other two groups remain silent.

Finally, he moves to the group on the right and performs the same action.

Lloyd looks up and scans the group, looking for something that only he is aware of.

LLOYD  
(with a big smile)  
And there it is.

Suddenly, he signals for everyone to stop singing.

LLOYD  
I've been listening to you ladies sing for years. I know everyone's range, the good notes, and the terrible notes, and I can tell who's singing with my eyes closed. But tonight, I heard something different.  
(beat)  
Gloria, will you please come down here for a moment?

Startled, Gloria looks around to see if anyone else heard what she thought she heard.

GLORIA  
Me?

LLOYD  
(sarcastically)  
Are there any other Glorias' up there?

Lloyd waits a few seconds for a response.

LLOYD (CONT'D)  
Come here, girl.

Gloria makes her way down to Lloyd and stands beside him.

LLOYD  
Here, take this mic and sing the  
first verse.

GLORIA  
(whispering)  
Mr. Betels, you know I don't sing  
solos.

LLOYD  
We'll see about that. Your voice  
has changed a little since your  
accident, am I right?

GLORIA  
Yes, it's a little deeper now.

LLOYD  
Okay, well, let's take that bad boy  
for a spin.

Lloyd motions for Deacon White to play the piano. Gloria is visibly nervous. Lloyd leans in closer to reassure her.

LLOYD  
Gloria, look behind you.

Gloria turns around to see her fellow choir members looking at her.

LLOYD (CONT'D)  
We're all family. No one's here to  
laugh at you; just trust me.

Lloyd steps back, and we move in close on Gloria. She's shaking a little but doing her best to hide it.

Lloyd motions to Deacon White to begin. Deacon White plays the introduction to Shirley Ceaser's version of "Don't Be Afraid."

LLOYD  
The rest of you come in on your  
cue.

The music plays for a few bars and Gloria is dreading to sing. She wipes a little sweat from her forehead and closes her eyes.

It's time. Gloria takes a deep breath and begins to sing.

Gloria sings the first few notes and stops immediately. She does not recognize the voice she hears and is freaked out a little. Her voice is a rich Alto, instead of a Soprano.

LLOYD

Gloria, keep it going!

Gloria starts over, still amazed. She begins to smile ear to ear.

The other choir members are floored. Most of them have heard Gloria sing since she was a child and can't believe what they hear. Most of the members are so amazed that they missed their cue to sing.

LLOYD

Hey! What are ya'll doing up there?  
Quit messing around and sang! I  
don't have all night!

After a few moments of hearing Gloria and the choir sing, Lloyd's usual grimace turns until a slight smile. He knows he has the makings of something special now.

Gloria starts to feel herself a little and starts doing some unnecessary runs. She is still learning to use her voice, so she begins to sing a little off-key. She is definitely getting carried away.

Lloyd's grimace returns.

LLOYD

Okay, okay, stop! Gloria, oh, no,  
no, no, girl! You ain't ready for  
all that! Give me that mic!

Lloyd marches up on stage and snatches the microphone from Gloria.

Everyone in the church gets a good laugh out of Lloyd's EXTRA antics.

LLOYD (CONT'D)

Now, take your place back in the  
choir.

Gloria chuckles a little and almost skips back into her original position. She is on cloud nine right now, and nothing anyone can say to her can bring her down.

Some of the other choir members pat her on the back and congratulate her. Others want to ask questions about where her voice came from.

LLOYD (CONT'D)

Well, it seems we ain't gonna get much work done around here tonight. Everybody wants to stand around here yapping. I'll see you all next week, and you better have your game faces on.

Everyone starts to make their way offstage and toward the church exit. Gloria is no exception; she is all smiles as she heads towards the door.

LLOYD (O.S.)

Gloria!

Gloria turns around to see Lloyd standing behind the piano. She makes her way over to find out what he wants.

LLOYD

Wow. You didn't know you could do that until tonight?

GLORIA

No. I mean, I've been singing a little in the shower and thought I sounded pretty good, but I chalked that up to the shower acoustics. We always sound good in the shower, right?

Lloyd looks over at the other girls walking out of the church.

LLOYD

Not everyone.

Lloyd and Gloria share a laugh.

LLOYD (CONT'D)

Seriously, what happened to you is a blessing. Respect it and take care of it, Alright?

GLORIA

Yes sir...

(beat)

...I apologize if I was doing too much up there.

LLOYD

Yes, you were definitely doing too much up there with those runs, girl, but I understand. It's going to take a while to learn how to control it. Next time, save all that riffing for the professionals.

Lloyd and Gloria share another laugh.

INT. JOYNER HOME - DAY

We see Gloria burst through the front door.

GLORIA

Ma! Ma!

Gloria is walking around the home looking for Barbara.

GLORIA

Ma!

Barbara moves towards the front door from the kitchen. She is drying her hands using a towel.

BARBARA

What girl?! You gotta give me a chance to answer.

Gloria has a huge smile on her face and is pacing back and forth with excitement. She begins speaking at a rapid-fire pace without taking a breath.

GLORIA

Okay, I knew my voice sounded a little different when I was singing in the shower but everyone sounds good in the shower. When I was singing in the car, I thought I sounded better than usual, but I thought it might have been my imagination, especially since everything that has happened. When I-

Barbara frowns and holds up her hand in a motion for Gloria to stop.

BARBARA

Hold on, hold on! You're going too fast, Gloria! I can't understand everything you're saying!

Gloria pauses to take a deep breath. Still smiling and visibly excited, she tried to explain again.

GLORIA  
 Mom, I can sing! Not just sing  
 sing, but REALLY sing!

Barbara looks somewhat confused, trying to take things in.

BARBARA  
 But how?

GLORIA  
 Listen, ma!

Gloria proceeds to sing a few bars from His Eye is On the Sparrow. After she finishes, Barbara is left speechless.

GLORIA  
 So, what do you think ma?

BARBARA  
 Wow, that was beautiful, Gloria. I  
 still can't believe that was you.

GLORIA  
 I know, right! I still have a hard  
 time believing it too! It feels  
 like I'm dreaming!

Gloria is still standing there giggling, like a child; her excitement is beginning to rub off on Barbara. She is still trying to find the right words.

BARBARA  
 (shaking her head)  
 Wow!

INT. SPRING HILL MEDICAL CENTER - DAY

Barbara and Gloria are waiting in a small examination room. This is the standard room with a sink, examination table, posters of the human body, etc. We see them engaging in small talk just before DR. FRANKLIN, 50s, salt and pepper hair, walks in holding a clipboard. He sits on a small wheeled-stool that's directly in front of Barbara and Gloria.

DR. FRANKLIN  
 Good morning ladies!

Barbara and Gloria both respond

DR. FRANKLIN

I'm Dr. Franklin, and I'll be going over the results of your examination today. Before I get started, do either of you have any questions?

Barbara and Gloria look at each other for a second.

BARBARA

No, I think we're good.

DR. FRANKLIN

Okay, let's get started.

Dr. Franklin begins to read notes from the clipboard.

DR. FRANKLIN

So, according to Nurse Mitchell, your sutures have all dissolved with minimal scar tissue remaining. She said your pain level is a 0 today, is that correct?

GLORIA

Yes sir.

DR. FRANKLIN

Arm, leg, ribs, throat all good?

GLORIA

Yes sir. I think my right arm is still a little smaller than my left, but I think I'm good other than that.

DR. FRANKLIN

Yes, the muscle atrophy takes a while to correct itself, but it looks like you're in the final stages. Make sure you stick to your rehabilitation plan.

Gloria nods her head in agreement. Dr. Franklin, still sitting on the stool, slides over to the x-ray screens mounted on the office wall. He flips a switch to display Gloria's charts.

DR. FRANKLIN

(pointing at the charts) As you can see here, there are no cracks, no issues that I can see.



Dr. Franklin spins his chair around to face Barbara and Gloria.

DR. FRANKLIN

Nurse Mitchell said you had some questions regarding your voice?

GLORIA

Well, my voice is different than it was before the accident, mostly when I sing. There's no pain or anything, but I was wondering if this is a permanent change?

DR. FRANKLIN

Well, to be honest, we are in uncharted territory here. I've never had a patient that experienced such a dramatic change in their voice.

Dr. Franklin removes his glasses and moves a little closer to Gloria and Barbara.

DR. FRANKLIN

It means, you could have this new voice for two more days or two more years, or it could be permanent. I have no idea at this point...  
(flipping through some notes on his clipboard)  
...all I can do is have you come in every few months or so to look for any changes in your scans.

Gloria looks at Barbara and shrugs her shoulders.

DR. FRANKLIN

I know that's probably not the answer you were looking for, but that's all I have for now. Hey, I imagine it may be cool to have a fantastic singing voice, huh?

GLORIA

(smiling)  
Yes, it is.

DR. FRANKLIN

Maybe you should go out and have a little fun with it. Just remember, your voice is still adjusting, so I wouldn't overdo it.

GLORIA

Okay, doc.

Dr. Franklin looks over at Barbara.

DR. FRANKLIN

Mom, do you have any more questions?

BARBARA

No, I think you've helped us the best you can.

DR. FRANKLIN

Okay. Well, you both have my number. Don't hesitate to call if you have any questions or if there are any issues.

Gloria and Barbara thank Dr. Franklin as he walks out of the examination room.

INT. CHURCH - MORNING

Gloria is singing a choir solo. She sounds lovely, and everyone is clapping and swaying.

Lloyd is plugging away at the piano, rocking back and forth, feeling the music.

The pastor is sitting down in front of the pulpit, eyes closed, clapping along.

Barbara is in the congregation, smiling proudly at her daughter's performance. Beside her clapping along is Mack.

In the far back, Jerome is sitting down, singing along.

INT. CHURCH - AFTERNOON

Gloria finishes the song to a standing ovation.

Church is letting out for the morning. Gloria is walking towards the exit and spots her parents.

GLORIA

Hey ya'll

MACK

You did great up there, baby girl.

GLORIA  
Thanks, dad!

BARBARA  
Where do ya'll want to eat?

As Barbara and Mack begin to make plans, Gloria looks over Barbara's shoulder and notices Tasha standing by the entrance.

Gloria looks back at her parents, totally unaware of their conversation.

GLORIA  
Ma, I'll be right back. I'm going  
over to speak with Tasha.

Gloria walks over to Tasha. Barbara and Mack watch her walk away.

O.S  
They grow up fast don't they?

Barbara and Mack turn to see Pastor Griffin approaching.

MACK  
Yes they do.

Mack and the pastor shake hands.

PASTOR GRIFFIN  
Hey Mack!

MACK  
Hello Pastor!

Pastor Griffin reaches out to hug Barbara and they share a hug.

PASTOR GRIFFIN  
Hello Barbara.

BARBARA  
Hey Pastor.

PASTOR GRIFFIN  
(looking at Gloria, but  
speaking to Barbara and  
Mack)  
Gloria seems to be adjusting well.  
Is everything as it seems?

BARBARA

Yeah, she seems happier than she's ever been. If I could get her to start taking her college applications seriously, I may be happier too.

MACK

Yeah, she's all about this music thing now. We keep telling her that the clock's ticking.

PASTOR GRIFFIN

Well, you know how these kids are. She'll get everything done the day before the deadline.

All three share a laugh.

EXT. FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT HIGH SCHOOL PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

The last bell for the school bell has just rung. All of the students are heading to their cars or buses, heading home. Gloria just arrived at her mother's car that she was allowed to drive today. She is getting ready to open the door.

DERRICK (O.S.)

Hey.

Surprised, Gloria turns around and sees DERRICK, standing behind her car.

GLORIA

Oh, hey.

There is a moment of awkward silence.

DERRICK

So, the rumor around here is that you can sing.

GLORIA

Maybe.

DERRICK

You're like one of those superheroes that got superpowers from an accident or something.

GLORIA

I never looked at it that way?

DERRICK

I heard that you're the best singer  
in your church.

GLORIA

What is this about?

DERRICK

Alright. I make music, rap music  
and, I've been looking for somebody  
to sing the hook on one of my  
songs.

GLORIA

First of all, Derrick, we've been  
going to school together since 5th  
grade, and we've never had a  
conversation until today.

DERRICK

(smiling)

Are you sure about that? I thought  
we talked a few times before?

Gloria crosses her arms, showing that she is not buying  
anything Derrick is selling.

DERRICK(CONT'D)

Okay, okay you got me. Look, I  
think this can be a good  
opportunity for both of us.

GLORIA

(skeptical)

How?

DERRICK

When I book studio time, I  
typically overbook. I usually  
finish my song a few hours early.  
We can get you in there so you can  
record whatever you want. I  
recommend that you do a cover song.  
We just throw on the instrumental,  
and you go for what you know.

GLORIA

I don't know.

DERRICK

Have you ever recorded a song  
before?

GLORIA

No.

DERRICK

Well, see, this is a good chance to get some experience in the booth and get a song recorded for free, and you can't beat that.

Gloria looks around the parking lot. Quiet. Thinking.

GLORIA

Hey, why not?

DERRICK

Cool. So, I got it booked for next Saturday. Do you have anything going on this weekend?

GLORIA

I have to work this weekend, but I'm off on Wednesday.

DERRICK

Alright, you want to come over to my house after school around 6?

GLORIA

Your house? For what?

DERRICK

For practice. The more we get everything down, the less time we have to spend on my song and the more time we'll have on yours.

Gloria's body language changes. She crosses her arms and leans back slightly. Derrick picks up on the shift.

DERRICK (CONT'D)

Look, the only reason I suggested my house is because my equipment is set up there. I'll get find your instrumental too, and we can practice yours.

GLORIA

Okay, 6 o'clock.

Derrick extends his hand for a shake. Gloria shakes his hand.

DERRICK

I'll give you a call around 5:30.

GLORIA  
 You need my number to call me don't  
 you?

DERRICK  
 (with a grin)  
 I already have it.

Derrick walks away as Gloria stares in disbelief but pleasantly surprised.

INT. DERRICK'S HOUSE - DAY

Derrick is still adjusting the audio equipment. Gloria is being nosy, checking out the room. One particular picture on the wall catches her attention.

GLORIA  
 Is this your brother?

Derrick continues to work on the equipment while talking with Gloria.

DERRICK  
 Yeah, that's my big brother Yoke.  
 He does music too. He's the reason  
 why I got into this music thing.  
 What about you? Anyone else in your  
 family into music?

GLORIA  
 Everyone says my mom was a good  
 singer, but do you know what's  
 funny?

DERRICK  
 What?

GLORIA  
 I've never heard her sing.

DERRICK  
 Never?

GLORIA  
 Never.

DERRICK  
 Wow!

GLORIA  
 I mean, she hums here and there  
 while she cleans, but no singing.

DERRICK

Why?

GLORIA

Well, whenever I ask, she just says that she can't sing like she used to.

Derrick finishes the audio equipment set-up and is ready to begin.

DERRICK

Ok, everything is good to go.

Derrick presses play on the audio, and rap music begins to blast from the speakers.

Derrick starts nodding his head, feeling the music.

Gloria starts nodding as well, trying to get a feel for the music. Someone begins to rhyme over the beat.

GLORIA

Is that you?

DERRICK

Yeah, it'll sound much better after the final mix. What do you think about it?

GLORIA

I like it.

Judging by the way Gloria is nodding her head off beat to the music, Derrick already knows the answer to the question he is about to ask Gloria.

DERRICK

You don't listen to much rap, do you?

GLORIA

(laughing)

No, but I still think it's cool

Derrick starts to laugh as he reaches over to a nearby desk and picks up a sheet of paper.

He hands the sheet of paper to Gloria.

DERRICK

Here's the hook I want you to sing. I'll give you a countdown, and you'll jump in and do your thing.

(MORE)



DERRICK (CONT'D)

I'm gonna do it this time, so you understand how it goes.

Gloria reads the words, and begins to frown. Derricks hits play and the instrumental begins. Derricks lets the music play for about a minute and a half.

DERRICK (CONT'D)

Alright, here is the part where you jump in.

Derrick begins to sing the hook of the song for Gloria.

DERRICK (CONT'D)

*"If you ain't got the clientele say  
hell no, cause they gon' want their  
money, rain, sleet, hail, snow.  
If you ain't got the clientele say  
hell no, cause they gon' want their  
money, rain, sleet, hail, snow."*

Derrick stops singing, and looks over at Gloria to gauge her reaction, but notices her face is frowned up.

DERRICK

Was it that bad?

GLORIA

Would you turn the music down for a minute?

DERRICK

Yeah, no problem.

Derrick turns down the volume.

DERRICK (CONT'D)

What's up?

GLORIA

I need to go back for a second...  
(beat)  
...what is the name of the song?

DERRICK

Clientele.

GLORIA

Clientele?

DERRICK

I got the idea from Biggie's "Ten Crack Commandments". The hook is one of the verses.

GLORIA  
(visibly upset now)  
Is the song about drugs?

DERRICK  
Well yeah, kind of.

GLORIA  
So, I'm singing about selling  
drugs?

DERRICK  
Not exactly, loo-

GLORIA  
Are you a drug dealer?

DERRICK  
No.

GLORIA  
So, why are we doing a song about  
drugs?

DERRICK  
(getting very defensive)  
First of all, just because I don't  
sell drugs doesn't mean I'm not  
around it every day. That's just  
the life growing up around here. I  
rap about my environment and the  
streets. Besides, this is the music  
that's hot right now.

GLORIA  
Okay, so in this song, I guess the  
person gets killed if the money  
isn't paid?

DERRICK  
You're turning this into a big deal  
when it's not that serious.

GLORIA  
Singing about killing people and  
selling drugs is serious to me.

Derrick bends over, and puts his head in his hands for a  
second, trying to maintain his composure. He takes a deep  
breath and seems to have calmed down a bit.

DERRICK  
Look, my bad. I never thought you'd  
have an issue with the music.  
(MORE)

DERRICK (CONT'D)

I promise never to ask you to sing on this type of track again, but I really need your help on this one.

Gloria uncrosses her arms and takes a seat.

GLORIA

Of all the things to rap about, why does it always have to be about drugs, alcohol, guns and women?

DERRICK

Because that's what people want to hear. When I first started rapping, I wrote about black history, property, Africa, and stuff like that; my brother called it nerd rap. Nobody liked it; I guess because they couldn't relate.

Derrick stands up and paces around the room.

DERRICK (CONT'D)

But when I started rapping about what's really happening out here in the neighborhood, that's when people starting feeling my music.

DERRICK (CONT'D)

Here's the deal, if you sing this hook for me, I promise no one else will know about it other than the two of us, my brother and the studio engineer. We won't put your name on anything.

GLORIA

That's just a cop-out.

DERRICK

What are you talking about?

GLORIA

You're taking the easy route. It's easy to rap about those things because that's what's popular. I've always felt that the most timeless artists' blazed their own way and went against the grain.

DERRICK

Whatever. It's easy for you to say. Wait until you put your music out there one day and have it judged.

GLORIA

Hey, I'm just sayin...  
(beat)...you could always try and  
mix the street stuff with  
knowledge; I think that could be  
amazing.

Derrick doesn't have anything to say at this point. Gloria  
leans back in her chair, considering the initial offer.

DERRICK

Listen, we should be done with the  
song in about two hours, which  
means you will still have two hours  
of studio time after that.

GLORIA

Go on.

DERRICK

I was going to work on some of my  
other songs, but I'll give you  
those hours too so you for you to  
use on a second song if you want,  
maybe an original one to create a  
demo.

GLORIA

So, I can pick two songs now?

DERRICK

Yep, but I'll need as much notice  
as possible to start on the  
original track.

GLORIA

And that one will be mine alone to  
do whatever I want?

DERRICK

Yeah, and my brother may also be  
looking for a female on one of his  
songs. I'll talk to him about it.  
Now, do we have a deal?

GLORIA

I have to pray on this one. Let me  
think about it, and I'll have an  
answer for you tomorrow.

INT. GLORIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gloria is lying across her bed, talking to Melissa on the phone.

MELISSA

So, what did you tell him?

GLORIA

That I had to pray on it.

MELISSA

And?

GLORIA

We talked for a few more minutes,  
and then I left.

MELISSA

No girl, I meant, what did you  
decide?

GLORIA

Well, that's why I called you. I  
prayed on it last night but I'm  
still torn.

MELISSA

Me, I wouldn't have a problem with  
it. I listen to that kind of rap  
music all the time, but you're not  
me.

GLORIA

I know. I was thinking that it's  
only a few lines with some ad-libs  
here and there, and then I get to  
record some songs for free.

MELISSA

What songs were you thinking about  
doing?

GLORIA

Golden by Jill Scott for the cover.  
I'm not sure about the original  
song; I've never written a song  
before.

MELISSA

Ooh, I like Jill Scott. Hey, if you  
don't have time to write your own  
song, just do another cover.

GLORIA

Yeah, I guess I could do that.  
Girl, I got excited thinking about  
the whole recording thing!

MELISSA

Well, it sounds like you've made up  
your mind, my friend.

Gloria exhales deeply.

GLORIA

I don't know.

MELISSA

Promise me one thing.

GLORIA

Sure.

MELISSA

If you decide to do that song with  
Derrick's brother, you won't go to  
that studio with all of those dudes  
without me.

GLORIA

Why?

MELISSA

Cause Derrick's brother is a grimy,  
street dude, and there's no telling  
what he'll have going on up in that  
studio.

GLORIA

Ok, deal.

MELISSA

Besides, it may be the last time I  
get to see you if Ms. Barbara finds  
out.

Melissa and Gloria share a good laugh.

INT. NEW MONEY STUDIO - AFTERNOON

Gloria uses her cellphone to call Derrick. He answers on the  
third ring.

DERRICK (O.S.)

Hello?

GLORIA  
Hey Derrick, it's Gloria. I'm  
outside.

DERRICK  
Alright. I'm on my way outside to  
walk you in.

GLORIA  
Ok, bye.

Gloria hangs up, grabs her pocketbook, and heads toward the studio. As soon as she reaches the entrance, Derrick walks out to greet her.

DERRICK  
Hey.

GLORIA  
Hey.

DERRICK  
(smiling)  
Glad you could you make it...  
(beat)  
...nervous?

GLORIA  
A little. I apologize for running a  
little late.

DERRICK  
Hey, no problem. You ready to come  
in.

GLORIA  
Yep.

Gloria follows Derrick into the building. The building

They enter the recording studio room. The studio isn't exactly state-of-the-art, but it gets the job done. There is a black male behind the mixer boards, the audio engineer, GLOCK, early '20s.

DERRICK  
Gloria, this is our audio engineer  
Glock, Glock this is Gloria.

Glock nods his head towards Gloria to acknowledge.

GLORIA  
(to Glock)  
Hello.

DERRICK

Well, let's get started. Now, I already laid my vocals down so we could save some time. All we have to do now is your part. Follow me.

Derrick leads Gloria into the recording booth, giving her a short tour, and stops in front of the microphone.

DERRICK

Ok, here is the microphone, of course. This black thing here is called a P popper. As the name says, it stops the hard p sound on your record.

GLORIA

Okay.

DERRICK

This room is soundproof. The only noise you'll hear is through the headphones. You'll hear the music and your voice. We can hear you through the microphone, so let us know if you need us to make any adjustments. Any questions?

GLORIA

Nope, I think I got it.

DERRICK

Alright then. Put on those headphones, and I'll step out of here.

Gloria slides on the headphones and takes a few seconds adjusting them to fit over her hair. She also adjusts the microphone to her height.

Derrick is now sitting behind the mixer board next to Glock. He presses a button on the mixer that allows him to speak to Gloria in the booth.

DERRICK

Here we go!

Glock presses some button on the mixer, and the music starts to play in Gloria's headphones.

GLORIA

(startled)

Whoa!



GLOCK  
Is it coming too loud thru the  
headphones?

GLORIA  
No, just caught me off guard. I'm  
good.

Gloria begins to sing right on cue.

At the mixing console, Glock and Derrick are nodding their  
heads along with the music.

GLOCK  
You were right man; she sounds  
good.

DERRICK  
Yeah man. Wait until Yoke hears  
her.

In the recording booth, Gloria continues the sing her part of  
the song.

DERRICK  
Yo! I can't believe you did it in  
one take!

GLORIA  
That's not normal?

DERRICK  
Nah, most of the time, singers  
might hit a bad note or have to  
sneeze or something. That's normal,  
but you did it in one take!

GLORIA  
(smiling)  
Well, I'm glad you like it.

DERRICK  
Alright. Now I'm going to keep my  
word and we gonna do your song  
next. You ready?

GLORIA  
Oh yeah!

Derrick and Glock begin to turn knobs and push buttons on the  
console.

Gloria sips on some water and adjusts her headphones.

DERRICK  
(to Glock)  
Go ahead and put on track 3.

GLOCK  
Aight.

The instrumental to Jill Scott's "Golden" begins to play in Gloria's headphones.

Gloria sings the chorus and third verse.

INT. JOYNER HOME - EVENING

The front door slowly opens, and Gloria creeps inside. It's incredibly dark and quiet, except for a small lamp sitting on the coffee table. Gloria gently closes the door and stands there for a moment, allowing her eyes to adjust to the dark. Gloria slowly removes her shoes and turns towards the stairwell, and heads upstairs.

The stairs made too much noise as they always did when someone is trying to be quiet. Gloria manages to make it to her room without waking anyone. Her room is just as dark as the rest of the house. She steps in, turns around to close the door, flips on the light switch, and turns back around, and there is Barbara sitting on the bed!

Gloria's heart almost jumps out of her throat. She stumbles back and falls against the door.

GLORIA  
Jesus ma...  
(holding her chest)  
...what are you doing?!

Barbara is pressing buttons on her cell phone and never looks up to make eye contact with Gloria.

BARBARA  
(still not making eye  
contact)  
Texting your father, letting him  
know his daughter just got home,

Barbara makes eye contact with Gloria

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
after she lied about being at work.

GLORIA  
Ma, I-

BARBARA

No,

GLORIA

I also heard him say that I may lose this voice at any time.

BARBARA

Exac--

GLORIA

Ma, college isn't going anywhere. I have the rest of my life to go. What I don't know is how long I'll have this opportunity to sing.

Barbara shifts in her seat, growing impatient with Gloria.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

It's something I've always dreamed about, but I never thought it was possible.

Barbara frowns and rudely interrupts Gloria

BARBARA

So what are you going to do, huh? Try to sign some record deal? Do some local shows? Girl, there are plenty of people with the same dream that can sing just as good as you or better, and where are they...

(beat)

...right here, never left this town.

Tears begin to roll down Gloria's cheek.

GLORIA

Wow, thanks for the vote of confidence.

BARBARA

You don't understand.

Barbara gets up off the bed and begins to walk out of the room.

GLORIA

(shouting)

No, you don't understand! I almost died, ma!

Barbara stops, shocked by Gloria's outburst.

GLORIA

When I was lying in that hospital bed, I realized just how little I actually lived. No parties, no having fun, just studying, working, and being the person that YOU wanted me to be. Even these glasses, ma. You didn't like the ones I picked out, and you kept pressuring me to choose these.

Barbara turns around to face Gloria.

BARBARA

Gloria..

GLORIA

I don't want to feel like that anymore...

(beat)

...I believe this voice is a blessing, and was given to me for a reason; it has to be a reason. I searched the internet and this has never happened to anyone else in the world. Just because you wasted your voice doesn't mean I have to waste this one.

Barbara clenches her fist in anger. She opens her mouth to yell at Gloria for being disrespectful but decides against it.

BARBARA

Well, it's your life, Gloria. It seems you have it all figured out.

Barbara walks out of the room.

Gloria plops down on the bed, removes her glasses, and begins to cry with her face between her hands.

After a few seconds, she stands up and walks over to the mirror that's connected to the dresser. She wipes the tears from her face, adjusts her hair, and begins to stare at her reflection.

MONTAGE

---Gloria is waiting at a receptionist's desk. A lady returns behind the desk and hands Gloria a box that is labeled "daily disposable contacts." Gloria smiles and turns around to walk out.

---Now, without her glasses, Gloria is in the recording studio with Derrick. She is in the booth, wearing headphones and singing into the microphone. Derrick is behind the mixer boards, adjusting the sound.

---Tasha holds up a pair of pants for Gloria to try on. Gloria tries on several outfits, relying on Tasha's approval.

---Melissa, Tasha, Karen, and Gloria eat lunch at their usual table in the school cafeteria. Gloria is wearing new clothes that definitely fit tighter than anything she has ever worn before.

---A few guys come over and sit at the table; one of them shows an interest in Gloria. She seems to be enjoying the new attention.

---Gloria is church singing with the choir. Her parents and friends are all in attendance.

---Gloria walks into the front door of her home. Barbara is on the phone, speaking with Mack. Gloria and Barbara acknowledge each other, but it's obvious that tension remains.

---Gloria and Derrick are eating outside at a local fast-food restaurant. It appears they may be on a date.

---Gloria is at a house party with Melissa and Karen.

---Gloria is in her room, sitting in front of her laptop. On the screen is the online enrollment to register for the SAT. Gloria stares at the screen for a moment, and then she closes the laptop.

END MONTAGE

INT. MOUNT CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH - EVENING

The Women's choir is back on stage, conducting rehearsals. This time, they have the drummer and guitar player practicing with them as well.

The choir is in the middle of performing a song, but they are definitely some issues going on.

LLOYD

Oh, no, no, no, no! Everybody stop!

Everyone stops singing on command. Many of the girls appear tired and not interested.

LLOYD (CONT'D)

Gather 'round everybody. Guitar player, drummer, ya'll too, everybody.

Lloyd walks up onstage and stands near the microphone. Everybody forms a sort of horseshoe formation around him.

LLOYD

(annoyed)

Raise your hand if you think that sounded good.

One of the girls raises her hand.

LLOYD (CONT'D)

(at the girl that raised her hand)

As soon as we're done here, you need to tell your parents that you need a hearing exam because clearly, something is wrong with your hearing...

(beat)

...anyone else?

She puts her hand down. Embarrassed.

LLOYD (CONT'D)

Look, our Easter service is only a few weeks away. What I'm hearing from ya'll right now ain't gonna cut it. Ya'll ain't gonna embarrass me up here in front of God and everybody on Easter Sunday. So, what's the problem?

Complete silence. Most of the choir members are avoiding direct eye contact.

LLOYD (CONT'D)

Gloria is singing lead, but the song requires a lot of back and forth between her and the choir. You guys got to be on fire up here! I want that energy! Sopranos, ya'll need to get it together.

The Sopranos look at each other in disbelief. They feel they are the best thing happening in this choir.

SOPRANO #1

The Sopranos are always on point. I think we sounded good.

LLOYD

Really? Then you need to go with your friend over there to get your hearing checked.

Lloyd looks down at his watch to see if he has time for another try.

LLOYD (CONT'D)

Alright. We're done for the night. I'll see ya'll here on Sunday because I'll definitely be here praying.

Some of the choir members giggle as they walk out towards the exit. Once again, Lloyd calls Gloria before she can exit.

LLOYD

Gloria.

Gloria turns around, already knowing what's about to happen.

LLOYD (CONT'D)

Come over here for a second.

Gloria mopes over.

LLOYD (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

GLORIA

(surprised)

Uh, yeah...I guess so.

LLOYD

You didn't bring your A-game tonight; you were pitchy in a couple of places. Remember, having a great voice is only part of being a great singer. The other part is learning to control it, which comes with a lot of practice and staying focused.

GLORIA

Yes sir. Honestly, I have been having a lot going on lately, but I am still focused on the Easter service.

LLOYD

Good. That service is a big day for you. You'll be carrying the entire program on your shoulders. I know that's a lot of pressure, but I believe in you.

GLORIA

Thank you.

Lloyd pats Gloria on the shoulder and heads toward the exit.

Gloria massages her throat and clears it a few times. She frowns a little at the discomfort she feels.

EXT. JEROME'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Gloria pulls up in front of a small home in an assisted living community. The house looks very old-fashioned but it is in good condition. There's not much of a front yard, just a small patch of grass. The neighborhood is tranquil, not even the sounds of other vehicles or birds are present. Carrying a Tupperware dish, Gloria gets out of the car and head towards one of the homes.

She rings the doorbell and waits for someone to answer. After a few moments, the door opens, and we see Jerome. All smiles!

JEROME

Hey Gloria!

GLORIA

Hey Grandpa!

The two of them share a hug.

JEROME

Come on in here.

INT. JEROME'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Gloria walks into the home, and Jerome closes the door behind her.

JEROME

Here, let me take that.



GLORIA

It's lasagna, we had it for dinner today.

Gloria hands the Tupperware to him.

JEROME

Thank you!

Jerome goes to the kitchen to put the lasagna in the refrigerator. Gloria looks around the living room while she waits for him to return. The small, rectangular living room has coordinating wooden and glass furniture. The floor is stone, and the walls are papered. Table lamps provide light.

Gloria notices old pictures of Mack and Barbara's wedding photo, child photos of Barbara, and Gloria, and some pictures of Jerome's late wife, Pauline.

JEROME (O.S.)

So, how does it feel being a superstar?

GLORIA

Come on, Grandpa, I'm not on that level yet.

JEROME (O.S.)

Yet! See, that's what I'm talking about!

Gloria continues to look at the pictures spread throughout the living room.

Gloria picks up the picture of Pauline and wipes off the dust.

GLORIA

Grandma was so pretty.

Jerome is finished in the kitchen and is walking back toward Gloria. He looks at the picture of Pauline that Gloria is holding.

JEROME

Yes, she was. I always wondered why she chose me out of all the guys that used to chase after her.

He stretches out his hand to receive the picture. Gloria gives it to him and he pulls it closer.

JEROME

She was about 20 years old in this picture. This is before she was pregnant with your mom.

GLORIA

I wish I could have met her.

JEROME

Oh, she would be so excited to have been a grandmother!

Jerome puts the picture back in it's original place.

JEROME

Please, have a seat.

Jerome and Gloria both have a seat on the living sofas facing opposite of each other.

JEROME

So, what brings you here today?

GLORIA

(smiling)

I can't just stop by and visit my grandpa just because?

JEROME

You can, but you didn't. What's going on.

Gloria takes a deep breath and exhales.

GLORIA

Well, mom and I got into a little argument a few days ago.

JEROME

(smiling)

It must not have been too little if it brought you here to tell me about it.

GLORIA

You're right. Mom and I still are not really speaking to each other.

JEROME

Join the club. What happened?

GLORIA

It's mainly about college. The doctor told us that this voice might be temporary. I could have it for a few more days or a few more years. Either way, I want to try this music thing while I can.

JEROME

So, you don't want to go to college anymore?

GLORIA

Like I told mom, college isn't going anywhere, grandpa, but this voice might...

(beat)

...I've always dreamt of being a singer, but I never thought it would happen in a million years.

Jerome remains quiet for a moment, just taking everything in.

JEROME

Well, I understand why your mom is mad. She and Mack have been planning for you to go to college ever since you were born.

GLORIA

So, you're taking her side, Grandpa?

JEROME

No, I said I understand why she is upset. I also understand where you are coming from.

GLORIA

What am I supposed to do?

There is a coffee table placed on the left side of the sofa that Jerome is sitting in. He picks up his cup, takes a sip of his coffee, and puts it back on the table.

JEROME

(somber)

I can't tell you what to do, Gloria, but I can tell you from experience that the worst thing to have in this life are regrets.

Gloria is surprised to see this side of her grandpa. He is usually always upbeat and comical.

JEROME

I regret not being a better father  
to your mother...

(beat)

... and a better husband to my  
wife. I never had the opportunity  
to fix things with Paulina, and I'm  
not sure if your mom and I will  
ever be back to how we used to be.

GLORIA

I think ya'll will.

JEROME (CONT'D)

Talk to your mom about how you  
truly feel and let her know that  
you love her. I don't think we say  
that enough to each other. You  
never know what your last words  
will be to someone.

Gloria nods her head in agreement

JEROME (CONT'D)

After that, do what truly makes you  
happy, Gloria, even if it makes  
your parents angry. It's your life,  
not anyone else's.

INT. GLORIA'S HOUSE - EVENING

Barbara is on the telephone, speaking with Mack.

BARBARA

I don't know; maybe you need to  
talk to her.

MACK

I will but I just think we need to  
let this thing play out.

BARBARA

Play out?

MACK

Hold up. I'm just saying that she  
has gone through a lot and may need  
some time to sort things out.

BARBARA

Well, that's something we're  
running out of.

(MORE)

BARBARA (CONT'D)

She will be graduating before you know it and needs to start completing the college applications.

MACK

You know, WE want her to go to college, and WE want her to find a good career. But, as she said, WE never really asked her what she wanted to do.

Mack pauses for Barbara to respond, but she remains quiet.

MACK

Everything will work out, you'll see.

BARBARA

I really hope so...(beat)...wish you were here.

MACK

Me too, baby. This truck driving gig is getting old.

BARBARA

Getting old? It got old ten years ago.

Barbara and Mack share a good laugh.

MACK

So, what are we doing next weekend?

INT. NEW MONEY STUDIO - EVENING

We see Glock and another black male in the dark studio room, sitting behind the mixer panel.

The other man behind the mixer is Derrick's older brother, Fred aka YOKE, mid 20s. The man in the corner is Kev, early 20s. Kev is more of a comical sidekick to Yoke, instead of a serious music artist.

Glock and Yoke are both nodding their heads, listening to Yoke's newest track, when in walks Derrick, Gloria, and Melissa.

Yoke turns around and stands up to greet everyone. He and Derrick do a handshake that's unique to them and pull each other in for a side hug. Gloria is standing behind Derrick.

DERRICK  
 Gloria, and Melissa, this is my  
 brother Yoke. Yoke, this is Gloria  
 and Melissa.

Yoke briefly looks Gloria up and down in a perverted manner, causing Gloria to be a little uncomfortable. Yoke offers his hand for a handshake and Gloria shakes his hand. It's one of those handshakes where the other person holds on just long enough to make you feel uncomfortable.

DERRICK  
 (gesturing towards  
 Melissa)  
 And this is Gloria's friend  
 Melissa.

Melissa gives a head nod and speaks, giving off the body language that she is not interested in getting any closer or shaking anyone's hand.

MELISSA  
 What's up.

YOKE  
 (gesturing towards Glock)  
 You already met Glock.

Without turning around to face them, Glock quickly raises and lowers one hand while turning knobs on the mixer.

YOKE  
 (gesturing towards Kev)  
 And this is my boy Kev.

KEV  
 What's up, ladies?

Gloria and Melissa give a nonchalant response.

YOKE  
 (rubbing his hands  
 together)  
 Alright, Glock has the track going  
 and D gave you the lyrics your  
 singing right?

GLORIA  
 Yep.

YOKE  
 Okay, I need to go and handle some  
 business for a few minutes.  
 (MORE)

YOKE (CONT'D)

Go ahead and practice for a bit and let Glock know once you're ready to step in the booth. My bars are already on there, so I'm just waiting on you. We only got 2 hours so, don't be in here playing around.

Yoke and Kev leave the room.

DERRICK

Hey, you guys want something to drink?

GLORIA

I'll take some water.

MELISSA

Me too.

DERRICK

Okay. I'll be back.

Gloria and Melissa are sitting alone on the couch while Glock is busy with the mixer. The music is playing loud enough where he can't hear their conversation. We hear Yoke rapping on the beat.

Gloria and Melissa sit there for a few minutes listening.

MELISSA

Yo, this song is trash!

Gloria and Melissa both burst out laughing.

GLORIA

I know, right!

After she finally stops laughing, Gloria looks over the lyrics that she is supposed to sing. We see her mouthing the words and trying to connect with the beat.

The digital clock on the wall displays a time of 9:15 PM. In a transition, we see the time change to 9:40 PM. Things haven't changed much in the room.

Gloria and Melissa are still on the couch, but they both have bottled waters. Obviously, Derrick came back at some point, but he is still not in the room right now.

Gloria is fidgeting with the lyric sheet and bouncing her right knee up and down.

GLORIA  
(to Melissa)  
Wow, I'm still so nervous.

MELISSA  
You got this girl. Don't worry  
about anything going on out here or  
that fool Yoke. Just do your thing  
like you always do.

GLORIA  
Thanks, girl.

Gloria takes a deep breath, exhales, and stands up off of the couch.

GLORIA  
(to Glock)  
I'm ready.

GLOCK  
Aight, go ahead and step in. Let me  
know when you're set-up and I'll  
cue you in.

GLORIA  
Okay.

Gloria walks into the recording booth and slips on the headphones. She adjusts the microphone to the proper height. In her right hand, Gloria has the song lyrics in case she needs them. After a few minutes, she feels ready.

GLORIA  
(to Glock)  
I'm ready.

Glock presses a button on the mixer, and Gloria can now hear the track in the headphones. It's much louder than she would like.

GLORIA  
Can you turn it down a little?

The sound lowers gradually.

GLORIA  
That's good, right there.

Gloria gives Glock the thumbs-up sign. Gloria hears Glock speaking through the headphones.



GLOCK

You know how this works. You'll hear the cue, and you'll start singing after that.

GLORIA

Yep. Got it.

Glock starts the music. Melissa stands up from the couch to ensure Gloria can see her. Gloria spots her, and Melissa gives her a double-thumbs up for good luck. Gloria smiles and gives her a thumbs-up back. Gloria's hands are sweating; she wipes them on her pants. Suddenly, she hears the cue to begin.

Gloria begins to sing the chorus. The first few notes sound wonderful, but her voice cracks when she attempts to hit one of the higher notes. Embarrassed, she clears her throat and motions for Glock to stop the track.

GLORIA

Oh my God, I'm sorry! I can usually hit that with no problem. Can I do that over?

GLOCK

Yeah, it's all good. I'll run it back. Let me know when you're ready.

Gloria sips on the bottled water and clears her throat again. She looks up at Melissa and gives an awkward smile.

GLORIA

(to Glock)

Okay, I'm ready.

Glock starts the track again, and Gloria is back in the zone. She receives the cue to sing, and opens her mouth to start. This time, her voice is worse. She cannot hit the notes that she was able to a few moments ago, much less the higher ones. Gloria sounds awful. Glock stops the track.

She takes off the headphones and briskly walks out of the booth towards the bathroom, completely ignoring Glock and Melissa.

We see Gloria looking at herself in the bathroom mirror. She tries to sing a few simple notes that she usually has no issues with. Gloria is horrified when she hears what sounds like her old voice trying to return.

She gasps and places both hands over her mouth. Tears start to well up in her eyes.

Melissa starts to knock on the bathroom door.

MELISSA

Gloria, are you alright?

Gloria is still stuck in the same pose, not knowing what to do next.

MELISSA

Gloria? Are you good?

Gloria snaps out of her stupor and begins to wipe the tears away from her eyes.

GLORIA

I'm good. I'll be out in a second.

MELISSA

You're sure?

GLORIA

Yeah.

MELISSA

Alright.

We see Melissa walk away. Gloria continues to wipe her face and blow her nose. She does one more check in the mirror before walking out of the bathroom.

Gloria enters the recording room. Melissa is sitting on the couch, having a conversation with Glock sitting behind the mixer. There is no music playing, and so the room seems extremely quiet. As soon as Melissa sees Gloria, she stands up and walks toward her.

MELISSA

What's up, girl?

GLORIA

(talking low to avoid  
Glock hearing)

I think I'm losing my voice.

MELISSA

(showing concern)

Losing your voice as in getting  
hoarse or losing your voice as in  
losing your voice?

GLORIA

I'm not sure right now. I just know  
I'm not going to be able to sing  
tonight.

Gloria walks over to speak with Glock.

GLORIA

Glock, look, I'm having some voice  
issues and won't be able to finish  
the track tonight.

Before Glock can respond, Yoke, Kev, and Kevin walk through  
the door.

YOKE

(getting angry)  
Won't be able to finish what  
tonight? What are you talking  
about?

GLORIA

I'm starting to go hoarse; I don't  
know what's going on.

YOKE

Yo, you better drink some lemon  
water or do something to fix it. I  
already paid for this session and  
can't get my money back. I need to  
complete my song tonight.

Yoke pauses for a second to see if Gloria is going to  
respond.

YOKE

So, I need your voice on my track  
or \$2000 in my hand. Your choice.

Melissa pulls out her phone and starts to text while she is  
speaking to Yoke.

MELISSA

Yo, you're tripping. She can't help  
that her voice is going out!

YOKE

(frustrated)  
There was nothing wrong with her  
voice when she was getting that  
free studio time! There was nothing  
wrong with her voice when she was  
singing in church.

(MORE)

YOKE (CONT'D)

Now, when it's time to get on my song, all of a sudden she can't sing?! Nah, I ain't buying it.

DERRICK

Yoke, let me talk to you for a second.

YOKE

(speaking to Derrick, but still looking at Gloria)  
We ain't got nothing to talk about unless you got my money or you bout to start singing.

Yoke is standing in front of the studio room entrance. It's only one way in and one way out.

GLORIA

Listen, let me see how my voice is doing tomorrow, and maybe I'll be ready.

YOKE

Nah, tomorrow ain't good enough.

GLORIA

Well, what else do you want me to do?

YOKE

(yelling)  
I want you to pull out your phone, call mommy and daddy, and tell them to bring me my money!

Derrick steps between Gloria and Yoke.

DERRICK

Yoke! We really need to talk, bro!

Yoke and Derrick begin to argue. Yoke completely takes his attention away from Gloria and Melissa and focuses on Derrick. Melissa sees an opportunity. She grabs Gloria's hand and squeezes it to get her attention. Gloria looks at Melissa, and Melissa nods towards the door. Gloria understands what's happening.

While Derrick and Yoke are still arguing, Melissa and Gloria creep towards the door. They get closer and closer, and then the SPRINT out of the room, passing Kev, who is standing near the entrance playing with his phone.

Yoke notices them running out and starts to pursue. Yells at Kev on the way out of the room.

YOKE

Why didn't you grab them, man?!

Yoke, Derrick, and Kev all run out of the room chasing Melissa and Gloria.

INT. NEW MONEY STUDIO STAIRCASE - EVENING

Melissa and Gloria are running down a flight of stairs. Melissa is falling behind because she is wearing small heels. Gloria is wearing sneakers.

They look behind to see the men chasing them.

EXT. NEW MONEY STUDIO - EVENING

Gloria bursts through the building exit, making her way outside. She turns around to check on Melissa. Melissa makes it outside but is trying to run and take off her shoes at the same time.

GLORIA

Hurry up, girl!

Melissa's shoes are now off, and she is in the middle of starting a full sprint when she is violently jerked back. She turns to see Yoke holding on to her pocketbook strap, which she has strapped across her shoulder.

YOKE

(struggling to catch his  
breath)

Where do you think you're going?

Melissa starts tugging on her pocketbook strap to try and take it from Yoke, but he is still holding on.

MELISSA

Let go!

YOKE

I ain't letting go of nothing!

All of a sudden, time seems to slow down. A black 2019 Cadillac Escalade pulls up in front of the studio. Getting out of the vehicle is MEL, mid-30s. A black man, muscular about 6'3, 250 pounds. A violent street OG-turned legit businessman. He is wearing Timberland boots, baggy blue jeans, and an oil-stained white wife-beater shirt.

Yoke squints to see who's getting out of the vehicle.

YOKE  
(nervously)  
Yo, is that Mel?

DERRICK  
Yeah, that's what I was TRYING to  
tell you, man! That girl, Melissa,  
is Mel's little cousin!

YOKE  
Oh shi..

Yoke immediately releases Melissa's pocketbook strap.

Mel walks up, checking out the situation. Hard face. Serious.

MEL  
(looking at Melissa)  
What's up, little cuz?! I got your  
text.

MEL (CONT'D)  
(now looking at Yoke, Kev,  
and Derrick, but still  
talking to Melissa)  
What's going on here?

YOKE  
(with a nervous smile)  
Yo, we're good here, Mel. We just  
had a little misunderstanding,  
that's all. It's all good now.

MELISSA  
Yoke booked some studio time, and  
Gloria was supposed to sing on one  
of the tracks but lost her voice,  
and that fool said we couldn't  
leave until he got his money.

MEL  
(at Yoke)  
How much does she owe?

YOKE  
(still smiling nervously)  
Like I said Mel, we good man.

MEL  
Nah, my people pay what they owe  
and these are my people...  
(MORE)

MEL (CONT'D)

(beat)  
... understand?

YOKE

Aight, it was two stacks, but I can give you an OG discount and knock it down a bit.

KEV

Discount? You ain't never offered me a discount.

YOKE

Man, shut up!

MEL

Nah, I'll be back here around the same time tomorrow to pay you the two thousand. We good?

YOKE

We good.

Mel turns around and starts walking towards Melissa's car parked a few feet away in front of the studio. He gives a slight nod for Melissa to follow him.

As Yoke turns around to walk back into the studio, Kev has something to say.

KEV

Man, I'm still wondering about that discount.

Yoke lightly slaps him on the back of the head as He and Kev walk back inside the studio.

YOKE

Shut up man!

Derrick starts to walk toward Gloria, but decides against it. He stares at her for a few moments before walking back inside of the studio.

Mel, Melissa, and Gloria have reached the passenger side of Melissa's car.

MEL

(to Melissa)  
Yo cuz, you should know better than to deal with these clowns.

MELISSA

(gesturing toward Gloria)  
Yeah, I tried to talk her out of it, but she wasn't trying to hear it.

GLORIA

Mel, I can't let you pay that money. I'll talk to my mom or..

MEL

(cutting Gloria off)  
When I was out here wildin' out in the streets, mom would make me go to church every Sunday, hoping it would change me. Everybody in there looked at me as if I was a monster; I don't know, maybe I was, but I definitely know I wasn't wanted there...

(beat)

... Your dad was the only one that would talk to me and try to teach me something. Of course, I didn't listen at the time, but I always respected him for that. He's a good man.

Tears begin to well up in Gloria's eyes.

GLORIA

(wiping the tears away)  
I'm sorry, I don't even know why I'm crying. I'm so emotional.

MEL

Since I went legit and got my own repair shop, I always offer him free repairs, but he still insists on paying.

GLORIA

(wiping her tears away)  
Yeah, that's my dad for you

MEL

So, let me do this to return the favor. He won't let me pay him back, but maybe I can help his daughter. This can stay between the three of us, deal?

Gloria glances at Melissa for a moment. Melissa has a huge smile on her face.



Suddenly, Gloria moves in and gives Mel a huge hug. This catches him totally off guard, but he reciprocates.

GLORIA

Thank you.

Gloria pulls away and releases Mel from her bear hug.

MEL

(a rare smile)

No problem. Look, both of you need to stay away from this side of town, got it?

Gloria and Melissa speak in unison.

GLORIA

Got it!

MELISSA

Got it!

MEL

Aight, ya'll get out of here.

Gloria and Melissa enter the car. Mel remains on the passenger side and closes the door for Gloria once she is seated. Gloria and Melissa wave as they drive off, Mel waves back.

INT. JOYNER HOME - EVENING

Barbara and Mack are lounging on the living sofa, watching HGTV on television, and having a date night of sorts. Someone on the television mentions they have a \$600,000 budget.

BARBARA

\$600,000? Lord, what kind of jobs do these people have?

MACK

(laughing)

I know, right! I'm definitely not making that driving trucks.

On the television, we hear the host speaking with one of the guests.

HOST

So, what do you guys do for a living?

MALE GUEST

I work in construction, and she's a teacher.

Mack and Barbara respond in unison.

BARBARA

MACK

No way!

No way!

Suddenly, we hear the front door open and shut. We now see Gloria walking past the living room and headed upstairs to her room.

BARBARA

Well hello? What, we don't speak anymore?

Gloria pauses but continues to face upstairs, not making eye contact with neither parent.

GLORIA

(in a murmur)  
Hey mom and dad.

MACK

Is everything alright, baby girl?

GLORIA

Yeah, I'm just tired and want to lay down.

Gloria continues to make her way upstairs towards her room.

MACK

Something's wrong, I'll go talk to her.

BARBARA

No, No, I'll go. This may be a boy problem that needs a mama's touch. If I'm not back in 30 minutes, then that means I'm right.

Mack chuckles for a second and agrees.

MACK

Okay, just let me know if you need me.

BARBARA

Well, I need you to find out which state that couple lives in so I can move there and become a teacher.

Mack and Barbara share a laugh; then Barbara gets up off the couch and heads upstairs towards Gloria's room.

Barbara makes it to Gloria's room and stops at the door entrance.

Gloria is sitting upright in her bed, leaning against the headboard and pressing buttons on her cell phone.

BARBARA

So, you want to talk about it?

Gloria remains quiet for a few seconds, not making eye contact.

GLORIA

I think I lost it, ma.

BARBARA

Lost what?

GLORIA

My voice. My singing voice, I think it's gone.

Barbara enters the room and sits on the bed next to Gloria.

BARBARA

What happened?

GLORIA

I know you didn't want me to do it, but Melissa and I went to the studio to record a song for a friend.

Barbara frowns and inhales to get ready to criticize Gloria for her decision. She takes a look at how broken Gloria looks and decides just to let it go for now.

Gloria pauses in anticipation of the criticism and is surprised when Barbara remained silent. She glances over at Barbara to gauge her reaction but still can't determine if she is upset or not.

BARBARA

Go on.

GLORIA

Well, when we first started, everything was okay. There came a part where I had to sing some high notes, and I couldn't hit them at all. Then my voice started cracking, and it seems I could hear my original voice coming back.

Gloria adjusts herself to sit up straighter.

GLORIA

Anyway, the guy got mad that I couldn't sing as I promised and everything just got crazy from there.

BARBARA

Got mad? What did he do?

Gloria was definitely not going to tell her mom the full story. They would get in the car and drive to the studio to confront those guys.

GLORIA

Nothing ma. Anyway, I just don't know what to do now. Deep down, I believed this voice would always stay with me. Now, I might be back to being a nobody...  
(beat)  
... and on top of that, I have the solo at church tomorrow morning.

BARBARA

Gloria, you may think that voice is what makes you special, but it doesn't. There are hundreds of thousands of people in the world that have amazing voices.

Barbara moves closer to Gloria and puts a hand on her shoulder.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

I have raised a young woman of tremendous character, integrity, and empathy. Those are the things that will take you far in life, and that makes you special.

Gloria leans in and hugs Barbara.

GLORIA

I love you mom.

BARBARA

I love you too.

Gloria wipes the tears from her eyes and pulls away from her mom to make eye contact.

GLORIA  
May I ask you something?

BARBARA  
Sure.

GLORIA  
Why did you stop singing in the church, ma? I always hear how good you were.

Barbara adjusts herself on the bed. She hesitates for a moment, deciding if she is going to respond. She looks down and begins to play one of the plush bears on Gloria's bed.

BARBARA  
(smiling)  
When my parents were together, my father was all about me being in the choir once he realized I could sing. He was so proud of me and used to brag to all of his buddies about how good I was. He was so proud when I started singing solos in church.

Barbara looks up to make eye contact with Gloria before continuing with her story. She is no longer smiling, and her tone has definitely changed.

BARBARA  
When mom told me that dad had been having multiple affairs for years and they were divorcing. I was devastated. My mom was an angel and I could never forgive my father for what he had done...  
(beat)  
...even though dad moved out, he would still show up at church sometimes. I stopped singing in the choir because I felt I was punishing him. I just wanted to show him how upset I was and how he destroyed our relationship.

GLORIA  
Didn't you miss it?

BARBARA  
Yes, in the beginning, but I hated him so much back then that hurting him was more important.  
(MORE)

BARBARA (CONT'D)

After a few years, I moved up to New York to try and make it as a singer. I learned very fast that making it in the industry is not about what you CAN do, it's what you WILL do.

Barbara stares into Gloria's eyes and Gloria can see the tears forming.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

I don't want you to ever have to experience that world Gloria.

Gloria sits down to her original place on the bed. She slides her hand over and rests it on top of Barbara's.

GLORIA

Why didn't you tell me all of this before? About grandpa and New York.

BARBARA

Before your accident, I never had to worry about you having a singing career.

They both share a light chuckle.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

And as for your grandfather, I didn't want you to look at him differently. Ya'll have a great relationship, and no matter how I feel about him, I didn't want to ruin what the two of you have.

GLORIA

Well, that was over 20 years ago. I think granddad is a different man now, and everyone deserves forgiveness, right? At least that is what you and dad taught me.

Barbara starts to squirm a little, visibly uncomfortable with the direction of the conversation.

GLORIA

You ever think about trying it again someday?

BARBARA  
Singing? Not really. My voice is  
totally different now. It has to  
have been over 30 years since I've  
been on a stage.

Barbara is silent for a few seconds; then, she stands up off  
of the bed.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
Anyway, we are supposed to be  
talking about you, not me.

GLORIA  
Well, your life is much more  
interesting.

BARBARA  
(smiling)  
Interesting doesn't always mean  
better.

Gloria and Barbara both chuckle.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
How about you come downstairs and  
hang out with dad and me for a bit.  
I'll make you some honey tea while  
you rest your voice. Deal?

GLORIA  
Deal.

Gloria stands up and heads downstairs with Barbara.

INT. JOYNER HOME - MORNING

We see Gloria lying in bed. The morning sun is shining  
through her curtains.

Gloria rolls over in bed and looks at the digital clock. The  
time is 8:10 am. Gloria closes her eyes, returning to sleep  
when suddenly, her eyes pop open, and she jumps up in a  
panic.

GLORIA  
Oh no!

Gloria hops out of bed in her pajamas and runs down the hall  
to her parent's room. She knocks a few times on the door.  
Mack responds from the other side of the door.

MACK

What?

GLORIA

We're going to be late for church!  
I got the solo this morning!

BARBARA

I thought you were setting your  
alarm?!

GLORIA

I thought I did.

Gloria runs back down to her room and grabs her phone. She checked her alarm settings, and it didn't take her long to realize that she set her alarm for 8 PM instead of 8 AM.

We see Mack and Gloria hop out of their bed and to get ready for church frantically.

GLORIA

Something told me to get my stuff  
ready last night!

MONTAGE

Barbara and Gloria are running around frantically, while Mack is calm and methodical.

- Barbara is sifting through various dresses in her closet.
- Mack is calmly brushing his teeth.
- Gloria turns the faucet, getting ready to take a shower.
- Barbara is still trying to decide on a dress.
- Mack in putting on his pants.
- Draped in a towel, Gloria hops out of the shower to grab some soap and goes back in.
- Mack is tying his tie.

END MONTAGE

We see Barbara trying to decide on some shoes.

GLORIA (O.S.)

Ma, will you help me with my hair?!



BARBARA

Mack, maybe you should go ahead of us and let them know we may be running a little late.

Mack is fully dressed by this point.

MACK

(smiling)

Okay, baby. Do you need anything else?

BARBARA

No, unless you want to do some hair.

MACK

Uh, no.

Mack and Barbara share a laugh and then a kiss.

INT. MOUNT CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

Every seat in the church is filled for the Easter Service and Gloria's solo. In the crowd we see, Tasha, Melissa, Karen, Barbara's father, Mack, and seemingly everyone else in town.

Pastor Griffin is in the pulpit dragging out his sermon. By continuing to look at his watch, it's evident that he is stalling for time.

EXT. MOUNT CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

We see Barbara and Gloria just arriving in the church parking lot.

Gloria is singing a few notes to test out her voice.

BARBARA

You sound good, baby.

GLORIA

Well, that's because I'm just singing some of the easy notes right now. I'm not sure how things will go up there when I have to go all out.

Church music can be clearly heard from the parking lot.

GLORIA (CONT'D)  
 (removing her seat belt)  
 Alright, ma, I gotta go. I'm up  
 next!

Gloria hastily opens the door and steps out of the car.

BARBARA  
 Wait a minute!

Barbara hops out of the car and heads over to hug Gloria.  
 They share a quick hug.

BARBARA  
 (still holding on to  
 Gloria)  
 I know you're nervous about your  
 voice, but you got to have faith  
 that things will work out. Okay?

GLORIA  
 Okay, ma, but I really have to go.

Gloria pulls away from Barbara and begins to sprint inside.

GLORIA  
 Love you!

INT. MOUNT CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

The choir is onstage performing. Almost every seat in the church is filled today. It's normal for the Easter Program to draw a larger than usual audience, but today the church is packed.

We see Gloria backstage putting on her choir robe.

CHOIR WOMAN #2  
 Gloria! Where have you been?! Lloyd  
 is about to have a heart attack out  
 there!

The Choir Woman begins to help Gloria finish getting dressed.

GLORIA  
 I'm so sorry. Last night was just  
 crazy, and my mom and I just  
 overslept.

CHOIR WOMAN #2  
 No need to apologize to me; Lloyd  
 is the one you're going to have to  
 deal with.

Gloria makes her last few adjustments in the mirror.

GLORIA  
How do I look?

CHOIR WOMAN #2  
Beautiful as always. Now, go out  
there and kill it.

Gloria was smiling, but the smile goes away once she remembers her voice issues.

She turns around and eases through the stage door, and arrives behind the choir. Due to the placement of the stage door, Gloria was able to sneak behind the choir, out of sight from most of the congregation.

Lloyd notices Gloria and frowns

Gloria blends into the choir and joins the singing.

After a few minutes, the song ends and the congregation gives applause.

LLOYD  
Now, we will have a special  
performance from Gloria Joyner and  
our choir.

Gloria comes from the back of the choir and makes her way to the center of the stage. One of the choir members hands her a cordless microphone.

GLORIA  
(whispering to the choir  
member)  
Thank you.

The choir member briskly returns to her original position within the choir.

Gloria is staring out into the congregation. We see Pastor Griffin up front and center. We also see Mack, Melissa, Jerome, Tasha, and Karen spread throughout the audience. Gloria can feel her heart pounding in her chest.

The reason

Gloria puts the microphone up to her mouth and speaks, but there's no sound. She brings the microphone down and struggles to find the on switch.

After a few seconds, Gloria manages to find the switch and tries again.

GLORIA  
Good Morning everyone!

Various members of the congregation respond. Gloria just stands there for a few moments before Lloyd clears his throat to get her attention.

Gloria looks over at Lloyd, who is sitting behind the church piano. He nods to Gloria, and she nods back.

Lloyd begins to play softly on the piano as an introduction for Gloria to begin. Still unsure of her voice, we see Gloria subtly switch off her microphone before bringing it in front of her mouth.

She sings a note, and her voice cracks, sounding the same way as it did in the studio last night. A few of the choir members hear this and look at each other.

Gloria is nervous at this point and misses her original cue to start singing. She flashes an awkward smile towards the audience and glances at Lloyd.

Lloyd slightly raises his hand, where Gloria can see, displays all five fingers stretched out. Gloria recognizes this motion as the signal of the countdown to begin.

Lloyd lowers one finger. Gloria looks at the congregation and locks eyes with her father. He gives Gloria the "thumbs up" of reassurance.

Lloyd drops a second finger. Gloria looks at Pastor Griffin. He smiles at Gloria while giving her a slight nod.

Lloyd lowers a third finger. We see Melissa and Tasha appearing to worry for Gloria.

Lloyd lowers a fourth finger. Gloria makes eye contact with Lloyd.

Lloyd lowers the final finger, making a fist. Gloria switches on the microphone, closes her eyes and takes a deep breath in preparation to sing.

Gloria opens her mouth to sing when suddenly she hears a powerful, soulful voice.

We see Lloyd look up from his piano in disbelief. Gloria sounds good, but not that good.

The members of the congregation that have heard Gloria sing before appear somewhat confused.

We focus on Gloria again as she turns around to see....

BARBARA, walking from backstage, onto the center stage. She is wearing a choir robe and holding her own microphone.

Gloria just stands there, slack-jawed. She is amazed at her mother's voice and the fact that she is actually on stage singing.

This is the first time Gloria has ever heard her mother sing, and this is the first time anyone else has heard Barbara sing in over thirty years.

Barbara stands directly beside Gloria, looks at her, and gives a wink.

Gloria takes a side step to give Gloria a huge hug but stops.

Instead, she smiles, takes a few steps back, and joins the rest of the choir, making Barbara the center of attention.

Barbara continues to sing the song introduction in a slow, dramatic fashion.

BARBARA  
 (singing each word slowly)  
*"He...is...the...lion...of...judahh  
 hh!  
 "*

Pastor Griffin has an enormous smile on his face.

At the end of the last note, Barbara looks at Lloyd to make sure they are on the same page. Lloyd adjusts his position on the piano bench, stretches his fingers, and starts to play an upbeat gospel melody, "The Lion of Judah."

There are also church members playing the drums and guitar today, so the church is really getting a treat today.

With Lloyd jamming on the piano, Barbara begins to take over the stage completely. Her voice is unlike any that the congregation has had in their presence.

BARBARA  
*"Lion of Judah!"*

CHOIR  
*"Lion of Judah!"*

BARBARA  
*"You are my Lord and King."*

CHOIR  
*"You are my Lord and King."*

The energy that Barbara is emitting is rubbing off on the choir. They are moving from side-to-side, clapping their hands, stomping their feet, and some like Gloria is just all-out dancing on stage.

Between Barbara's performance and Lloyd's piano playing, the church congregation is going crazy.

Barbara is putting on a master class of stage performance. She holds the microphone out to the audience to let them sing parts of the song; she struts back and forth across the stage, interacting with the choir and the other instrument players, and she's able to do all of this without missing a beat or gasping for air.

Seeing her mother perform, Gloria now understands the difference between a singer and a star. Her mother was born to do this!

Barbara finishes to a standing ovation from the congregation. Gloria rushes over to hug Barbara. They share a hug onstage. Gloria leans back to look Barbara in the eyes.

GLORIA

Thank you, mom.

BARBARA

No, thank you, Gloria.

CUT TO:

GLORIA (V.O.)

Well, that's pretty much sums up my story. Mom made a comeback, and the church enjoyed her so much that Pastor Griffin and Lloyd convinced her to join the choir.

Barbara, Pastor Griffin, and Lloyd are standing around the church piano having a conversation.

Barbara is back on stage singing on a different Sunday.

We can tell by the way the audience is standing on their feet and clapping that Barbara has them eating out of the palm of her hand.

GLORIA (V.O.)

Ma and Grandad are finally speaking again. Granddad stops by every Sunday after church to have lunch.

(MORE)

GLORIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Mom finally let things go and forgave him. They both seem so happy when they're together. I love it!

Barbara opens her front door to find her father standing there with a homemade dish in his hand. They stare at each other, awkwardly for a brief moment before Granddad stretches out his hand to offer a handshake.

Barbara looks down at his hand for a second, then she steps forward, grabbing him to give him a firm hug. Granddad hugs back, and we see tears fall from both of their eyes.

Next, we see Barbara, Mack, and Granddad at the dinner table, having lunch and a good laugh.

GLORIA (V.O.)

And Derrick? It seems he took my advice after all. I must say, I'm proud of his new album, "The New X." Its still nothing I can play around my mom, but he brought back the black knowledge aspect, and I love it.

Derrick is in a music studio recording booth in front of a microphone, rapping. We hear a few lyrics in which he is talking about making positive changes in the black community.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

Apparently, Instagram does too. He is blowing up on there. We speak from time to time, and I haven't seen him much since I've been at...

Gloria looks at Derrick's Instagram profile and "liking" his new post.

Derrick is looking at his Instagram profile and smile once he sees the "like" from Gloria. He types her a short message, but we don't have the opportunity to read it.

GLORIA (V.O.)(CONT)

North Carolina Central University!  
Seems I was wrong about the application deadline. I barely made it, but I made it.

We see a campus sign for North Carolina Central University. Directly above the sign is a white banner that reads, "Welcome Freshmen." We see a flurry of young college students and their parents strolling around campus. Bags and children are being dropped off. We see Gloria inside of her dorm room unpacking. The room your standard 2-person college dorm. It has two beds, two desks, two lamps, two wall lockers, two nightstands, and feels too small.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

I still can't get rid of Melissa; she thinks she my big sister or something. But, I was right about one thing though, my new singing voice never returned.

Melissa walks into the room, plays around with Gloria, and starts decorating her side of the room.

GLORIA (V.O.)

When I lost the voice, I was depressed, but then I started thinking about mom and how she always taught me to count my blessings and how losing my voice helped her find hers again.

Gloria is in her dorm room alone, just completing the set-up of her Blue-Tooth speakers.

GLORIA (V.O.)

Yeah, I miss it sometimes, but I do have a few souvenirs.

She searches thru her phone for music to play and selects the version of "Golden" that she recorded in the studio.

In the end, the most important thing is that I'm happy with my family, I'm happy with my friends, I'm happy that I was able to make it to college, and finally, I'm happy with myself.

Once the song starts and she hears her voice, she begins to sing and dance around the room in pure joy like a little girl. She continues to dance and jumps into the air with her arms outstretched and smiling. The camera freezes on this pose.

FADE TO BLACK.