

"CANDYLAND"

by

Val Valdez

WGA #1179587

valvaldez2002@yahoo.com  
phone 512-231-9264

FADE IN:

EXT. SKY - DAY

It's predawn as the sun rises over the Fort Worth skyline. A hot air balloon passes in front of the clouds. In the wicker basket is a small group of people as the balloon ascends.

CANDACE WEST (23) holds a metal funeral urn which contains her Uncle Walter's ashes. She's small, with a smile that reflects her openness. She hugs the urn like a puppy.

Her boyfriend DANNY BLACK (24) stands beside her. Tall and athletic, he holds her tenderly. AMY PORTER (25) Candace's friend juggles her latte. She winks at the PILOT (27) who ignores her. BEV (65) Candace's grandmother holds Scooter, her toy poodle. She looks like the last century, worn but proud. MIKE ANDERSON (40) an attorney stands next to the pilot who pulls on the burner as fire shoots up into the balloon. Scooter barks at the sound.

INT. BALLOON BASKET - DAY

The balloon floats through the sky. Candace smiles as she looks skyward.

CANDACE

'The best answers come from above.'  
That's what Walter said when we took  
a ride. I love being up here with  
him.

DANNY

That's why you're his favorite niece.

CANDACE

I'm his only niece.

BEV

Walter was so proud of you. He  
admired your courage to try anything.  
He wanted to get me up here many  
times, but I never had your nerve.

Candace gazes out at the horizon.

CANDACE

You're here with him now, grandma.

Bev pats the urn and speaks to it.

BEV

It took two sedatives but here I am.

Scooter barks.

MIKE

Walter said he made his best decisions up here. It cleared his head.

DANNY

He came up with some wacky ideas, too. Like that tofu company stock?

AMY

He told me to invest in it. 'If you don't have a man, then at least have money.' I don't have either.

She looks at the pilot who still ignores her. Bev strokes and hugs Scooter.

BEV

My boy was an original. He would have loved to have seen your wedding.

Candace and Danny grin at each other.

DANNY

That's a balloon ride still to come.

Amy interrupts as she winks at the pilot again.

AMY

Maybe we can make it a double?

He looks the other way. Candace hugs the urn.

CANDACE

After my folks died seven years ago, Walter became everything to me.

MIKE

That's why he paid for your college.

AMY

That was generous.

DANNY

And your car.

AMY

That was generous.

CANDACE

I asked him to stop spoiling me.

AMY

That was stupid.

They all laugh.

CANDACE

I'd trade it all for one more sunrise  
with him.

Everyone is silent for a moment.

MIKE

I think we should get started, folks.

Mike reaches into his briefcase to retrieve Walter's will.  
Candace nods and tightens her grip on the vase.

MIKE

Walter asked you all be present for  
the reading of his will. Then we're  
to scatter his ashes in the wind.

(beat)

I Walter West, being of sound mind  
and body, hereby attest that this is  
my last will and testament. I leave  
to my mother, Beverly West, all my  
financial holdings of Veggie Heaven  
Tofu stock.'

They smile at Bev. Scooter perks up his head and barks again.

MIKE

'To Cinnamon, I leave my plant food  
formula for the beauty her work gave  
me.'

AMY

Maybe there was more to Walter than  
balloon rides and tofu.

MIKE

'To my niece Candace West, the joy  
of my life, I leave the business I  
named for her, Candyland, to do with  
as she sees fit.'

Mike folds up the will. They're silent and confused.

CANDACE

Candyland?

Scooter whines again as if to say "Candyland?"

CANDACE

I don't remember a business he named  
for me, do you grandma?

BEV

No.

Mike gives the will to Candace. She reads it.

DANNY

What kind of business is it?

CANDACE

Sounds like a toy store?

AMY

How about a tofu restaurant?

Mike clears his throat.

MIKE

It's a strip club.

CANDACE/DANNY/AMY/BEV

Strip club?

PILOT

Yeah, Candyland.

Scooter barks. The pilot gives thumbs up letting go of the rope as the wind rocks the balloon. Candace throws her arms up to balance herself. As she struggles to hold on, she drops the urn over the basket. It falls to earth.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

RUTH ANN GOODMAN (45) strolls through her massive garden. She's in a white nightgown and floats like an angel through her Eden.

She stops in front of her beloved roses just as the urn crashes; ashes scatter everywhere. She coughs covered with Walter's dust. She surveys the mess and picks up the urn. She examines it in shock then cast a confused gaze heaven ward as the balloon crosses the sky.

EXT. CANDYLAND CLUB - DAY

A neon sign glows in red-and-white strip letters which spells "Candyland - The Sweetest Place on Earth."

Several glass cases contain posters of the dancers. One holds a long piece of licorice; another sucks on a lollipop.

The club is painted a bright white. Red rose bushes form a hedge in front. Four large planters guard the entrance. Each one has a bush which resembles the seductive figure of a woman. A truck, Raul's Landscape Services, is parked out front. Several workers trim the bushes, slowly.

A hail-dented, Honda drives up and parks across the street. Candace sits behind the wheel and stares at her namesake. Mike sits beside her with Danny and Amy in the back seat.

INT. CANDACE'S CAR - DAY

Candace scans the garish neon signs.

DANNY

Candace, the parking lot isn't full.

AMY

There's a space reserved for owner, that's you.

She turns to Mike.

CANDACE

Are you sure Walter left it to me?

MIKE

Yes.

She turns to the others in the car and pleads her virtue.

CANDACE

I played the part of the burning bush in Sunday school. I was told I had the most inspirational flames. Now, I'm parked outside Sin City, and I own it.

AMY

Oh, how the mighty have fallen.

MIKE

You can sell it if you want.

DANNY

Or I'll run it for you, honey.

Mike opens his briefcase and takes out a folder.

MIKE

You asked me to contact a possible buyer.

CANDACE

Who?

MIKE

Bill Braun who owns some other clubs, The Hot Tamale and Jamaica Me Crazy.

DANNY

Oh, the Caribbean place over by the airport.

Amy nudges him. Candace turns around and glares at him. Mike checks his watch and opens the door.

MIKE

Come on, Mr. Braun will be here at two, so we have time.

CANDACE

Time?

MIKE

To meet your staff.

CANDACE

My staff?

MIKE

You're the new owner of Candyland.

CANDACE

But I'll sell it to Mr. Braun.

AMY

Don't be too eager, Candace.

DANNY

Based on my two years of law school, let him make you an offer you can't refuse.

Mike and Danny exit the car. Amy remains in her seat.

CANDACE

Amy, do you feel weird going inside?

AMY

You mean 'cause my IQ is greater than a swizzle stick, and I'm not named after a condiment?

CANDACE

Yeah.

Danny taps on the driver's window.

AMY

The natives are restless.

Candace rolls down the window. Danny pulls on her sleeve.

DANNY

Come on, boss.

Amy gets out of the car. Candace looks heaven ward.

CANDACE

Why didn't you just leave me the  
tofu stock, Walter?

Candace puts on her sunglasses and a hat with the brim pulled over her eyes. She exits the car and tries to hide behind the others as they walk across the street. The landscape crew watches as they enter the club.

INT. CANDYLAND CLUB - DAY

The club's main room is bright with swanky interiors. The music is loud but not deafening with pulsating beats. The dance floor has striped red-and-white poles on each corner of the stage. The bar is on the left side with EDDIE (28) the bartender's on duty.

Customers are scattered throughout. Several play pool while others sit by the stage or at tables and watch CINNAMON (21) dance on stage. She wears a gold metallic G-string and star shaped breasts pasties. She moves her hands up and down her torso and thighs then slides down a pole as they enter.

KIWI, (20) greets them.

KIWI

Welcome to Candyland.

MIKE

I'm Mike Anderson the attorney for  
the new owner. We're suppose to  
meet with Kristen.

She eyes Danny, and mistakes him for the new owner.

KIWI

Oh, Mr. West, we were so sorry to  
hear about your Uncle Walter.

She turns and motions at the bar.

KIWI

Kristen, the new owner's here.

DANNY

No, it's not me.

The dancers, dressed in skimpy costumes, quickly group in front of Danny and Mike. KRISTEN MOORE, (24) steps forward. She's the quintessential stripper, gorgeous with a perfectly shaped body. Amy eyes her in awe then crosses her arms in front of her small breasts.

KRISTEN

Mr. West, I'm Kristen Moore the dance manager.

MIKE

Ms. Moore, I'm Mike Anderson.

She shakes his hand in a firm business manner.

KRISTEN

It's nice to meet you.

Mike points to Danny.

MIKE

He's not the new owner.

KRISTEN

Then who is?

Danny, Mike and Amy step aside to reveal Candace behind them. She looks up beneath the hat's brim, smiles weakly and waves.

INT. CANDYLAND'S OFFICE - DAY

Candace seats behind Walter's desk. She looks at photos of herself in the burning bush costume, graduating from college.

Cinnamon and Kiwi sit on the sofa with Danny forming a stripper sandwich. Amy sits in a chair with her arms still crossed over her breasts.

Candace smiles at the photos then looks up to see Kristen.

KRISTEN

You?

Mike answers for Candace.

MIKE

She's Walter's heir. Ms. West wants you to remain as the manager during the transition.

KRISTEN

Why doesn't Ms. West ask me herself?

CANDACE

Ms. Moore, please remain as the manager during the transition?

Kristen ignores Candace then smiles at her dancers.

KRISTEN

I'll do it for them.

CANDACE

No one in the family even knew Walter owned a strip joint.

KRISTEN

Hey, this's a gentlemen's club, and a damn good one. There are clubs like the Hot Tamale.

CANDACE

And Jamaica Me Crazy. I just learned about it.

She glares at Danny.

KRISTEN

Those are strip joints, but Walter made Candyland into something else.

AMY

Like what?

KRISTEN

He put in a new floor and furniture, kept it cleaner than most clubs.

KIWI

He promised to add a piano, too.

KRISTEN

Walter was more ... decent than say, Bill Braun.

CINNAMON

We were shocked when Walter died of a heart attack.

KRISTEN  
The funeral home said there was a  
private service for his family only.

CANDACE  
That's right.

KRISTEN  
Obviously that didn't mean us.

MIKE  
Excuse me, but you mentioned Braun?

KRISTEN  
Do you know him?

MIKE  
I invited him to meet with us today.

KRISTEN  
Why?

CANDACE  
To talk about the club.

Kristen ignores Candace and addresses Mike.

KRISTEN  
I'll tell you everything, I mean  
everything, about him.

MIKE  
I'm sure you can, but Ms. West still  
needs to meet Bill.

Kristen focuses on Candace who shrinks under the glare.

KRISTEN  
Are you gonna sell Candyland to him?

As Candace starts to reply, there's a knock on the door.

KRISTEN  
Yeah?

Eddie the bartender enters.

EDDIE  
Bill Braun is here, Kristen.

Candace tries to take control of the meeting.

CANDACE  
Please, show him in.

BILL BRAUN (38) strides confidently into the room carrying a folder. He surveys the group and nods. He smirks as he sees Kristen then Candace.

MIKE

I'm Mike Anderson. We spoke earlier.

Bill shakes hands with Mike.

BILL

Thanks for inviting me.

KRISTEN

Hey, Bill.

Bill puts on the fake charm of a politician on a campaign stop. He raises his hand toward Kristen to pat her cheek but she jerks away from fear. Bill drops his hand immediately and pats her arm instead. Candace notices.

BILL

Crystal Ice, how marvelous to see you again. You look fantastic.

KRISTEN

You've gained some weight.

BILL

I miss your honesty.

MIKE

Bill, this is Candace West, Walter's niece, and new club owner.

As Candace rises from the chair, he shakes her hand firmly, now more certain of himself.

BILL

Thank you for seeing me, Ms. West, during this difficult time.

KRISTEN

Oh, boy.

Kristen sits in a chair.

BILL

My condolence to you and your family.

CANDACE

Thank you, Mr. Braun.

BILL

Please, call me Bill.

MIKE

Okay, let's get started.

Bill, Candace and Mike take their seats.

BILL

If Ms. West doesn't mind, I think we can speed this process up.

KRISTEN

You're always in a hurry, Bill.

BILL

I thought this was a private meeting?

MIKE

It is, Kristen,

CANDACE

Why don't you stay while the others get back to work, okay?

Kristen nods at the dancers who get up from the sofa. Danny loses his stripper sandwich.

Bill holds up a folder.

BILL

Ms. West, I want to buy Candyland. Here's the offer I made to Walter. It contains my P&L statements with an audited report, plus references.

Mike takes it and glances at it, then hands it to Candace.

CANDACE

Impressive.

BILL

I'll add ten percent to my offer.

CANDACE

Why so generous, Bill?

BILL

I don't want to lose this deal.

Candace looks at the papers then at Kristen. Seconds pass.

MIKE

Candace?

She looks at Bill then at Kristen who holds her breath.

CANDACE

I need time to think it over. I want to make the best decision for everyone.

Kristen sighs and leaves the room first. Mike nods at Bill that the meeting is over.

BILL

Of course. Please call me with any questions.

CANDACE

Thanks for coming.

BILL

Thank you, Ms. West. Bye for now.

Bill leaves the room. Danny, Amy and Mike surround her.

DANNY

I thought you wanted to sell to him.

AMY

He made an offer you shouldn't refuse.

CANDACE

I know.

INT. CANDYLAND CLUB - DAY

Candace walks out of the office into the club followed by Danny who gravitates toward the stage. Amy pulls him back.

Kristen writes on cocktail napkins. Some dancers sit at the bar with her while others parade around the club. Three dancers are on stage. Candace spots Cinnamon at the end of the bar and walks over to her.

CANDACE

Excuse me, Cinnamon.

Cinnamon doesn't respond. Candace steps closer.

CANDACE

Cinnamon?

A dancer taps her on the shoulder and points to Candace.

CINNAMON

Yeah.

CANDACE

Walter left this to you in his will.

Candace hands an envelop to her. Cinnamon opens it.

CINNAMON

Thanks. It's Walter's plant food formula. He used it on his roses in the front. He fussed over them all the time. He asked me to look after them when he was out of town. He loved those roses.

CANDACE

You've done a great job caring for them. They're beautiful.

Kiwi steps in and rescues Candace.

KIWI

What do you do, Ms. West?

CANDACE

I'm a bookkeeper. You mentioned something about a piano?

KIWI

Walter said he'd add one for parties. I'm classically trained like my grandmother. I also teach lessons.

Candace nods then walks toward her friends. Kristen grabs the stack of napkins and follows her.

KRISTEN

Ms. West, wait a minute.

Candace stops, looks at Kristen.

KRISTEN

I know we got off to a bad start.

CANDACE

It wasn't that bad.

The dancers surround Kristen for support.

KRISTEN

I'd like you to consider not selling the club to Bill Braun.

CANDACE

Then who would own it?

KRISTEN

You.

Candace turns and looks at her friends then back at Kristen.

CANDACE

Me?

KRISTEN

You're a bookkeeper so you know about finances and budgets.

CANDACE

But I don't know anything about this.

KRISTEN

I can teach you all you need to know.

CINNAMON

Braun will cheat us, among other things.

CANDACE

Like what?

KRISTEN

You know. This isn't just a club. Walter helped some of us. He wasn't a saint. We want you to try and keep it his way.

Candace looks at the dancers. They nod their heads. Kristen steps forward and hands the pile of napkins to Candace.

KRISTEN

This is my proposal. I know its not formal like Bill's, and I can't match his price.

Candace takes the napkins from Kristen. Mike steps up beside her.

MIKE

Is this a formal offer?

KRISTEN

Yes. I'll buy you out but not right away. I'll apply for a loan which will take some time.

CANDACE

How much time?

KRISTEN

I don't know. I'll need to put up collateral. Maybe a month.

Candace looks at Kristen then at the dancers. She turns to her friends.

CANDACE

I'll consider it, Kristen.

Candace takes the napkins.

KRISTEN

Thank you, Ms. West.

Candace and her group walk out of the club.

EXT. FULL OF HOPE CHURCH - DAY

An older "holy-roller" type church sits on the corner. Raul's Landscape Services' truck is parked in front. The same workers from the club now clip the church's hedges. A few toddlers with their parents enter the "Day Care" entrance.

Several ladies hurry as they enter the church. Candace runs after them. The workers recognize her from the club. She pulls her hat over her eyes to hid her face.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Candace runs inside past the day-care and down the hallway.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The room is filled with members of the ladies' auxiliary committee for the monthly meeting. Ruth Ann Goodman stands at the head of the table. She speaks in a Billy Graham style. Candace enters and interrupts Ruth Ann. She receives a stern glance from her.

CANDACE

I'm sorry I'm late.

RUTH ANN

Please, take a seat.

Most seats are full. Candace finds a chair in the last row. She can barely be seen behind the ladies with big hair.

RUTH ANN

As I was saying, the monthly meeting of the Ladies' Auxiliary Committee is now in session. Praise the Lord. We will now have the benediction. Lillie Beth, if you please.

LILLIE BETH, (70) rises slowly. All members bow their heads.

LILLIE BETH

Lord, bless this gathering of your faithful servants. Guide us to do your work throughout our daily lives. Fill our hearts with love and friendship for all mankind. And remind us not to park in a handicap spot without a sticker or we deserve to be towed, amen.

Another committee member, MARGO, (68) sits opposite Lillie.

MARGO

Lillie, how many times have I told you, I was wearing the wrong glasses.

LILLIE BETH

My husband could have seen that sign, and he's been dead ten years.

RUTH ANN

Ladies, please. Now, before we continue, I have an announcement. As you know, our treasurer Gladys Cooper moved away.

LILLIE BETH

Didn't she ran off with that parolee?

Everyone gasps.

RUTH ANN

That's just a rumor.

LILLIE BETH

She told me he had a pretty big rumor.

More gasps. Ruth Ann taps her gavel on the table for order.

RUTH ANN

Lillie, please, we're in church. The treasurer's position is vacant, again. Fortunately, a new church member who's a bookkeeper volunteered to assist us. Is Candace West here?

Candace raises her hand which is hidden behind the rows of big hair.

CANDACE

Here.

RUTH ANN

I can't see you. Ladies in the back, please duck.

The ladies with big hair bend forward so Candace can be seen.

RUTH ANN

Oh, there you are. The one who arrived late. Please, come take a seat at the table.

The ladies applaud as Candace walks to the conference table.

CANDACE

Where do I sit?

EMILY HANSON (25) offers the seat beside her.

EMILY

You can sit by me.

Candace takes the seat beside Emily and close to Ruth Ann.

EMILY

You remind me of Loretta Young.

Emily pats her on the arm.

RUTH ANN

You'll find that Emily is not only our music director, but our resident film expert, too. Not now dear.

LILLIE BETH

Ruth Ann, before we get started, tell us about your horrible accident?

RUTH ANN

I'm still traumatized by the ordeal.

The ladies lean forward. Candace is perplexed but interested.

EMILY

What happened?

RUTH ANN

I was in my garden when an urn crashed from above. My roses and I were showered with the ashes of some pathetic soul.

Candace is frozen as she realizes it was Walter's urn.

MARGO

Where'd it come from?

RUTH ANN

A hot air balloon that floated by. Some careless heathen obviously tossed it overboard.

MARGO

What did you do?

RUTH ANN

I called the police. I'll find out who owns it, I promise.

Ruth Ann reaches beneath the table, grabs the urn and places it on the table in front of Candace. She stares at it and slides down in her chair.

RUTH ANN

Then I'll press charges.

LILLIE BETH

Charges?

RUTH ANN

Assault with ashes.

EMILY

Maybe it's a sign?

RUTH ANN

Of what?

EMILY

Things to come.

Ruth Ann ignores her comment, turns her attention to Candace.

RUTH ANN

Candace, welcome to the Full of Hope Church Ladies' Auxiliary Committee.

CANDACE

Thanks, I'm happy to help.

She pulls herself back up in her seat.

RUTH ANN

It's my duty to now administer the oath.

CANDACE

The oath?

ALL LADY MEMBERS

The oath.

Ruth Ann opens a black velvet box. She takes a beautiful leather bible from it. Her name is embossed in gold on the cover. She motions for Candace to stand.

RUTH ANN

It's my custom made bible signed by the Reverend Billy Graham. Please, raise your right hand, place your left one on it then repeat after me.

LILLIE BETH

Remember about the handicap parking.

MARGO

Lillie, I will go to my grave ...

LILLIE BETH

How soon?

RUTH ANN

Ladies, focus.

(beat)

I Candace West, hereby swear alliance to the Full of Hope Church Ladies' Auxiliary Committee,

CANDACE

I Candace West, hereby swear alliance to the Full of Hope Church Ladies' Auxiliary Committee,

Ruth Ann emphasizes this next section.

RUTH ANN

And to its leaders without question for as long as I'm privileged to serve the church. Amen.

CANDACE

And to its leaders without question for as long as I'm privileged to serve the church. Amen.

The members applaud while Ruth Ann brushes off the Bible. Candace sits down. Emily pats her hand again.

RUTH ANN

Thank you, Candace. The next item is the reading of last month's minutes. Margo?

Margo puts on her glasses and searches through her purse.

MARGO

I know I put it in my purse yesterday. Oh, this is the wrong one. It's the one I keep filled with Dr. Scholl's.

She takes out foot pads and puts them on the table.

LILLIE BETH

Fix your damn glasses, woman. Get your stinking pads outta here. God don't care about your bunions.

RUTH ANN

Ladies, focus. Let's have the building fund report instead. Pam?

PAM (50) stands and reads the report.

PAM

The design for the church's new day-care center improvements is finished.

A round of applause.

RUTH ANN

Praise God. How much will it cost?

PAM

About two hundred thousand dollars. We've raised more than half already with contributions and bake sales.

More applause as WANDA, (60) the pastor's secretary enters and hands Ruth Ann a note. As she reads it, a horrified look crosses her face complete with a gasp and hand over her heart. She strikes the gavel on the table.

RUTH ANN

Excuse me, ladies. I've been informed of some terrible news. The bank has notified Pastor Murphy that Gladys, in her zeal for passion, withdrew all of the building fund money. The FBI reports she's left the country.

Stunned gasp from the ladies. Ruth Ann holds her hand up to quiet the crowd.

RUTH ANN

There's more. CNN also reports that Gladys and her male accomplice were seen riding a burro into the mountains of Costa Rica.

LILLIE BETH

I told you he had a big rumor.

INT. CHURCH DAY-CARE ROOM - DAY

Wanda and Candace walk into the room. It is small with pale yellow walls covered with faded Barney posters. The furniture is old and the toys are worn or broken.

Children sit cramped in several groups at tables. A female volunteer make paper flowers with the children. Another one holds a toddler. Several cribs line a wall with a baby asleep in each crib.

WANDA

This is our day-care center.

CANDACE

It's really small.

WANDA

It'll probably stay that way, now.

Wanda introduces Candace to the volunteers.

WANDA

She's the new treasurer, Candace.

Candace exchanges nods and smiles with them.

CANDACE

How many children do you have?

VOLUNTEER #1

We're allowed twenty for our space.

WANDA

We're at our limit already. Thanks to Gladys' libido, we'll stay this small.

VOLUNTEER #2

Pastor Murphy promised folks the new center would open in the fall.

CANDACE

Maybe it can. There's always hope.

VOLUNTEER #1

We can use the extra help, too.

CANDACE

You mean me? I'm not good with kids.  
I'd probably do something wrong.

WANDA

You work with the auxiliary ladies.  
They whine and crap just like  
children.

CANDACE

My schedule is so busy.

A toddler walks up to Candace and hands her a paper flower.

EXT. PASTOR'S CHURCH OFFICE - DAY

The sign on the door reads "STEVE MURPHY PASTOR."

INT. PASTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

STEVE MURPHY (40) He sits behind his desk, pops two pain pills then gulps some water. Candace sits in a chair in front of him.

PASTOR MURPHY

What a morning. They don't teach  
this kind of thing in the seminary.  
Candace, thanks for coming. I want  
to speak with you without Ruth Ann.

CANDACE

She's so ...

PASTOR MURPHY

Ruth Ann, I know. She gives all her  
time to the church. Every minute of  
every day, weekends and especially  
holidays. I can't run this place  
without her, but I'd like to try.

CANDACE

Okay. Emily is nice, too. I'll bet  
she's seen every movie since "Birth  
of a Nation."

PASTOR MURPHY

I think some of our congregation were in that movie. Last time the choir played "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" two church members had strokes trying to salute. Anyway, I should'a been suspicious when Gladys started taking speed Spanish lessons on-line.

CANDACE

Pastor, I promise I'll do the best I can as treasurer.

PASTOR MURPHY

I'm afraid that's not enough.

CANDACE

What more do you want?

PASTOR MURPHY

I need your passion.

CANDACE

Excuse me?

PASTOR MURPHY

I need you to find new donors to contribute to the church. We must replace the money Gladys stole quickly. If we don't the center won't open now or maybe ever.

CANDACE

What's my passion got to do with it?

PASTOR MURPHY

You're young and energetic. Business people will respond better to you than to Ruth Ann. There's a whole world out there past Luby's she doesn't understand.

CANDACE

I don't know if I can do this.

PASTOR MURPHY

You're all I've got. First I fluke out of law school then the minister's bowling league replaces me, now Gladys. I can't take it anymore. Please, excuse me, it's been a very emotional day.

He drinks some water and stops shaking.

CANDACE

I'm sorry.

PASTOR MURPHY

Candace, our congregation consist of people who give all they can. Most only have their social security. I sense you want to help people who no one else will help.

CANDACE

I do.

PASTOR MURPHY

Then this is your chance.

CANDACE

I'll try.

PASTOR MURPHY

God will bless you if you do.

CANDACE

Amen, I hope.

INT. JAMAICA ME CRAZY CLUB - NIGHT

Loud, Latin music with eye-melting color lights and lasers flash over the dance floor and Caribbean decor throughout.

Banners hang on the walls and promote the club's tenth anniversary. A giant cake sits on the table in the center of the dance floor. Dancers and guests surround the stage.

Candace walks in unnoticed and searches the crowd for Bill Braun. She walks to the bar and asks the BARTENDER.

CANDACE

Is Mr. Braun here?

BARTENDER

He's in his office.

The bartender motions her to the back of the club.

INT. CLUB HALLWAY - NIGHT

Candace walks down a hallway then comes to Bill's office door. It's semi-open and she's about to knock when she hears Bill shout at a dancer, AMBER (19).

Candace stands silent undetected. She can see Bill and Amber though the opening.

INT. BILL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

It's lavish with leather chairs, an oak desk and statues of Rodin's nude women on pedestals in the corners. Amber stands in front of Bill who leans on the edge of his desk.

BILL

I don't care. You're working tonight.

Her voice is weak from coughing.

AMBER

Bill, my fever is over one-hundred.  
I vomited twice today, I'm weak.

BILL

What did I just say?

AMBER

I'm weak. I feel like shit.

BILL

Wanna feel worse?

She steps back from him as he rises from his desk.

BILL

It's a full house for the party.  
Everybody works tonight.

AMBER

I'll work a double shift this weekend.  
I just need to rest tonight.

He moves toward her and steps on her foot so she can't run away. He mocks her.

BILL

I just need to rest tonight.

AMBER

Bill, if I could have tonight off.

He pushes her then grabs her hair. She gasps for air as he pulls her head back tightly.

BILL

You'll dance tonight fever or not.

She struggles to reply.

AMBER

Yeah, yeah.

He releases his grip. She stumbles and falls against the wall gasping ... holds her throat.

INT. CLUB HALLWAY - NIGHT

Candace hurries down the hallway and disappears into the club. Bills leaves his office. Amber slowly follows him.

INT. JAMAICA ME CRAZY CLUB - NIGHT

Candace is terrified but angry. Bill emerges and makes his way to the stage accepting congratulations. The music and lights stop as he proudly walks up to the huge anniversary cake on stage. He's about to cut it when a dancer pops out of the top to cheers.

Bill works the crowd as he moves through the club. Candace follows behind him unnoticed. He turns around and sees her. He goes into his auto-pilot, smooth mode.

BILL

Ms. West? What a wonderful surprise.

CANDACE

I'm sorry to interrupt but I need to speak with you. It's important.

BILL

Of course. Let's sit over there.

He leads her to an empty table by a palm tree. They sit.

BILL

I assume you want to discuss my offer.

CANDACE

Bill, I want to thank you but I'll pass on it.

BILL

Really?

Candace gains her strength.

CANDACE

I decided to sell to another owner.

Bill stares at Candace then smiles.

BILL  
Kristen? She talked you into this.

CANDACE  
No, I made the decision on my own.

He looks at her for a few seconds.

BILL  
Do you have any idea what you're getting into?

CANDACE  
I think so.

BILL  
No you don't. I have over ten years experience managing clubs. Kristen's only a dancer.

CANDACE  
She's been managing it so far.

BILL  
You put too much trust in her. Kristen's not a prom queen. She'll treat you like her best friend then rob you.

CANDACE  
I don't think so.

Bill gently pats her hand.

BILL  
Just sell Candyland to me then your problems disappear. I like you but you're naive, Candace.

CANDACE  
I know more than you think, Bill. I'll tell Kristen that I'm rejecting your offer.

Bill loses his cool demeanor.

BILL  
It doesn't matter what you tell her. She'll always be a whore.

Candace stands defiantly.

CANDACE

Don't say that about my staff. I saw what you did to that dancer. I suspected something about you from our meeting. Now I'm certain. This's how you'll manage the club if I sell to you. You're the whore, Bill.

People stop talking and look at her. Bill stands.

BILL

You'll regret that. I'm not running a day-care center. They give me shit, I give it back. That's business, honey.

CANDACE

That's not how Walter ran it.

BILL

Walter was a credit card capitalist. He owed everyone in town. Candyland isn't a gift from a beloved uncle, it's a debt-ridden business.

CANDACE

I'll make it work.

BILL

You don't have it in you.

CANDACE

Yeah, I do. You just put it there.

She walks through the crowd. Candace stops and eyes Amber, nods reassuring to her then exits.

EXT. CANDACE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

It's a small bungalow with Candace's Honda parked in the driveway. Several cars are parked in the street.

INT. CANDACE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Danny, Amy, Mike and Bev with Scooter are seated at the dining-room table. Candace stands in front of the table which is scattered with papers and cocktail napkins.

DANNY

Have you had a stroke?

AMY  
Not even Ripley's would believe this.

MIKE  
I'll have you declared legally insane.

BEV  
Scooter gives it a paw down, dear.

Scooter barks.

CANDACE  
Hush.

Everyone is silent and looks at each other then at Candace.

CANDACE  
I won't sell it to Bill. I'll keep it, Kristen manages it until she can buy it. And I'll donate the profits to the church for the day-care center. The club gets a tax credit for charity, and it'll be managed just like Walter did. I'm happy, the dancers are safe, and the church is happy. What could go wrong?

DANNY/AMY/MIKE/BEV  
Everything.

Scooter barks again and again.

CANDACE  
You sound like a Greek chorus.

AMY  
'Cause it's a tragedy in the making.

MIKE  
Candace, what you're trying to do is noble, misguided, but noble.

CANDACE  
Why?

DANNY  
Honey, you're mixing oil and water.

AMY  
I thought it was oil and vinegar?

MIKE  
That's for a salad dressing.

AMY

Bev, can we get a ruling on whether  
its water or vinegar?

BEV

What they're trying to tell you is  
you're bringing together two powerful,  
yet opposite forces of nature,  
strippers and church ladies.

DANNY

Candace, it won't work. The church  
will eventually find out where the  
money's coming from.

AMY

Then they'll burn you at the stake.

MIKE

You're taking a big risk.

CANDACE

What's life without risk?

AMY

Longer and safer.

CANDACE

That's the best part. As treasurer  
Pastor Murphy told me to find new  
donors. I'll tell him the donations  
are from a business owner who wants  
to remain anonymous. No one will  
know the money's coming from a strip  
joint.

DANNY/AMY/MIKE/BEV

Gentleman's club.

Scooter barks approval.

MIKE

How long will you be the anonymous  
donor?

CANDACE

The church needs to raise enough to  
cover the start of construction in  
about a month.

AMY

How much is that?

CANDACE  
About forty thousand dollars.

They all moan.

DANNY  
Honey, come on. You're trying to do  
the impossible.

She holds up the pile of cocktail napkins.

CANDACE  
Kristen will buy it when her loan  
comes through.

DANNY  
What about your religious beliefs?

CANDACE  
Jesus befriended the lepers.

AMY  
Lepers but not strippers.

MIKE  
Take Bill's offer before he loses  
interest.

CANDACE  
I saw Braun assault a dancer.

They look at Candace and each other.

DANNY  
You're not responsible for what Braun  
does with the club after he buys it.

CANDACE  
I won't let him do that to anyone.  
(beat)  
It's only for awhile anyway. Bev,  
what do you think?

BEV  
Sometimes the shortest distance  
between two points of view is a  
straight lie. However you justify  
it, your plan is based on deception.  
Deceiving everyone including yourself  
and God. Is this what you think  
Walter wanted you to do? Is this  
what your conscious tells you to do?

CANDACE

Grandma, I'm trying to help people who no one else will help. I just want everyone to be happy.

Bev gets up from the table and walks over to Candace.

BEV

Candace, you can either be happy or you can be like normal people. You're a beautiful and clever girl. Walter adored you, and so do I.

CANDACE

I don't know what else to do?

BEV

I'll sell the tofu stock and give you the money. You can pay me back next century.

CANDACE

I won't take it from you. If I lose my money, that's one thing.

BEV

Maybe there is no other way. Walter left the club to you for a reason. Knowing him, you're suppose to learn something. It's your decision.

Candace looks at everyone.

CANDACE

Our small boat matters.

Everyone looks at her bewildered.

DANNY/AMY/MIKE/BEV

What?

CANDACE

Walter and I would recite this poem after each flight. Deep water can drown or support a wondrous voyage. Our small boat matters.

Everyone is silent as Bev kisses Candace on the forehead.

BEV

Leave it to Walter to have the final say. I'll support you as long as you're at peace with yourself.

She picks up her purse and walks toward the door.

BEV  
I feel like a zombie, it must be  
after eight.

Mike looks at her watch.

MIKE  
Nine.

BEV  
Scooter, take me home but don't drive  
too fast.

Candace hugs Bev good-bye. Bev and Scooter leave.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Candace flops down on the sofa and covers her face with a pillow and screams. Danny sits down on the floor beside the sofa. Amy sits on the arm of the sofa.

DANNY  
Mike, how many years could she get  
for a scheme like this?

Candace hits him with the pillow.

MIKE  
It's not a crime to donate money  
from a gentleman's club to a church.

CANDACE  
Thank God.

AMY  
But on the sin meter of one to ten,  
I give it a twelve.

Candace hits her with the pillow, too.

MIKE  
You also risk damaging your reputation  
with the church.

AMY  
According to Bette Milder God's  
watching us. Do you want to risk  
eternal damnation from her, too?

DANNY

Honey, you can't remove all evil  
from the world.

CANDACE

I look the other way while I count  
my inheritance?

DANNY

Yes.

CANDACE

I understand if you don't want to be  
a part of this.

Danny, Amy and Mike look at each other. Mike stands and  
gathers them in a huddle. They turn and face Candace.

DANNY

After careful deliberation, we've  
decided to join you in your quest  
for eternal damnation.

AMY

Especially if it means pissing off  
Bette Milder.

The sound of tire squeals is heard. They hurry to the  
window. Looks of disbelief cross their faces as they see  
Bev's car speed away.

EXT. CANDYLAND CLUB - NIGHT

Candace's Honda drives up to the club and parks in the parking  
lot in the spot marked "Reserved for Owner." She jumps out  
of the car and strides toward the club. Cinnamon checks the  
rose bushes.

CANDACE

Hello, Cinnamon.

CINNAMON

Hi, Ms. West.

CANDACE

They look wonderful today.

CINNAMON

I watered them today with Walter's  
plant food. I enjoy doing it.

Candace bends down to smell a rose.

CANDACE

I haven't been to a strip, um gentlemen's club before.

CINNAMON

We don't have many nieces come here.

CANDACE

Is Kristen here?

CINNAMON

She's performing right now.

INT. CANDYLAND CLUB - NIGHT

Candace enters the club. She goes to the bar, and ask Eddie about Kristen. He points to the stage.

The stage is empty and dark as smoke rises then a booming, prerecorded voice is heard.

VOICE (V.O.)

Gentleman of all ages and sizes,  
reach into your pocket and pull out  
your biggest wad of bills because  
here comes Crystal Ice.

Men cheer and stomp to the beat of the music as smoke fills the stage and blinding colored lights flash. An iceberg prop moves through the smoke to center stage.

Kristen is perched on top of the iceberg, gyrating to the music. She wears a fur covered mini-skirt and two pieces of white fur over her breasts. She walks in high-heel fur-covered boots. On her head is a white fur cap.

As Kristen finishes her routine, she makes her way through the crowd accepting money and applause. She walks over to the bar and greets Candace.

KRISTEN

Hey, nice to see you again.

Candace looks up at the ceiling instead of at Kristen.

CANDACE

Now I know why the icebergs are melting.

Eddie hands a silky robe to Kristen, and she puts in on.

KRISTEN

I'll show you around.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Kristen takes Candace into the dressing room with women in various stages of dress. Kristen walks to her locker and opens it ... takes off her high heel boots and puts on a pair of sandals. She takes out a small black bag.

KRISTEN

Come on, I want to show you something.

EXT. CANDYLAND CLUB - NIGHT

Kristen opens the back door of the club and walks out to a playground area with an old, rusty swing set. Candace walks beside her.

CANDACE

Why's this here?

KRISTEN

It's left over from when this place was a youth center or something. I come out here sometimes.

(beat)

You're selling the club to Braun, aren't you?

CANDACE

Wait.

KRISTEN

You don't have to explain. I know it's business. I want to stay long enough to find another job, and help the others. That won't be easy since Bill owns other clubs in town.

CANDACE

I'm keeping Candyland.

KRISTEN

What?

CANDACE

Just until you can buy it. I'll do the bookkeeping but you'll manage it.

KRISTEN

Why don't you sell to Braun?

CANDACE

I want the club to stay the way Walter left it.

KRISTEN

Are you on a women's lib mission to save us?

CANDACE

No, it's has to do with a small boat. Someday you'll understand.

KRISTEN

I hope not. I'm not going to try to figure you out. Just give me your word.

CANDACE

You got it.

Candace extends her hand. She and Kristen shake firmly.

CANDACE

So, what is it you want to show me?

Kristen opens the bag and takes out a cylinder-shaped object called a Star Gazer. She looks through it at the stars.

KRISTEN

It's silly. I come out here and look at the stars.

Candace look up at the sky.

CANDACE

Isn't that the Big Dipper?

KRISTEN

Actually, the Big Dipper is a part of Ursa Major which means Great Bear. Runaway slaves used it to navigate their way north by night. It was their symbol of freedom.

CANDACE

Freedom, hum.

KRISTEN

It's called a Star Gazer. You set the star's coordinates like this. It gives you its location so you can find it.

Kristen programs some coordinates into it and puts the device to her eye and scans the sky.

CANDACE

How do you know when you find your star?

KRISTEN

You just know.

Kristen hands it to Candace then points at the sky.

EXT. CANDACE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Candace's Honda pulls into the driveway.

INT. CANDACE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

She enters through the front door. She sees a beautiful setting complete with candles, a vase of roses and a bottle of champagne. Danny stands in a black tux. He holds a single red rose in his hand as she enters the dining room.

INT. CANDACE'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

DANNY

In honor of being owner of Candyland, I did something special for you.

He points his hand at the table.

DANNY

The finest champagne five dollars can buy, and your new favorite meal strip steak.

CANDACE

Honey, thanks for the X-rated meal.

Danny hands her the rose.

DANNY

Cinnamon donated the roses. If that isn't enough, and it should be, for desert, me.

CANDACE

Baby, I'm so tired with the club and the church.

DANNY

Hey, I was extra good today, too.

CANDACE

Oh, that's right the job interview.  
How did it go?

DANNY

You would think a man of my breeding  
and legal background could get hired  
to make pizza. I've already given  
blood twice this month, and once it  
wasn't mine. I want to get something  
going so I can return to law school.

CANDACE

You will, Danny.

Candace hugs Danny as he pours the champagne.

DANNY

Oh, that church gal Ruth Ann called.

CANDACE

What did she want?

He hands her a glass and takes one for himself.

DANNY

You need to attend a special holy-  
rollers meeting tomorrow at her house.  
Did you ever notice how much she  
sounds like a female Billy Graham?

CANDACE

She thinks she's his love child.

DANNY

This moment requires a special toast.  
What's appropriate for becoming the  
new owner of a gentleman's club, and  
the church ladies' treasurer?

He squints and looks up in thought then his eyes open wide  
as a light bulb goes on.

DANNY

Bette Milder said it best, I'm proud  
of you for following your heart.  
For taking on more than is humanly  
possible and for bringing together,  
God help us, strippers and church  
ladies on the same continent. Above

(MORE)

DANNY  
all, for allowing me the privilege  
of being a part of this sin-in-the-  
making. I'm forever grateful, amen.

They intertwine arms and drink a toast. Candace pulls Danny  
by the arm.

CANDACE  
Follow me.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Candace and Danny hurry into the bedroom. They fall onto  
the bed and kiss. Danny stops and sits up on the bed.

DANNY  
I'm sorry, I can't right now.

CANDACE  
It's a stressful time. I understand.

DANNY  
It's not that. I have this burning  
image in my mind of Billy Graham.

INT. CANDACE'S CAR - DAY

As Candace drives, she gets a beep on her cell phone. She  
flips it open.

CANDACE  
(into phone)  
Hello?  
(beat)  
Kristen. What emergency?

INT. CANDYLAND CLUB - DAY

Candace walks in the front door. Kristen and the dancers  
stand by the bar.

CANDACE  
What's going on?

KRISTEN  
Bill didn't waste any time. He's  
offered our dancers jobs at his clubs  
at a higher rate.

A group of dancers approach Candace.

DANCER #1

Ms. West, we're sorry, but the money's too good to pass up.

DANCER #2

It'd be different if Walter was here.

KRISTEN

He is. I've talked with Candace, and she's going to let me buy the club. It'll take awhile but we can trust her. She's not like Braun. That's why I'm staying.

KIWI

Me, too.

CINNAMON

Count me in.

Kiwi and Cinnamon and other dancers walk up behind Candace.

DANCER #1

What if you don't make it? Bill's a tough competitor.

DANCER #2

I've got to go where there's a steady clientele. The crowds have dropped off here.

CANDACE

I understand but if you change your mind, come on back.

The dancers say good bye and walk out.

CANDACE

How many dancers do we have left?

KRISTEN

Barely enough. We have to find more.

Candace sighs then steps forward and addresses the dancers like a general addresses her troops.

CANDACE

Kristen, put an ad in the newspaper. You audition the girls who apply. Cinnamon and Kiwi, make sure it gets posted on our website. I'll be back after my meeting to go over the books. Operation Candyland Rescue is underway.

INT. CANDACE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Candace and Danny lie in bed after making love. He's sweaty and pants. She lies quietly in thought.

DANNY

You're amazing.

CANDACE

Will I be amazing if I fail?

DANNY

You won't fail, Candace.

Candace gets out of bed naked ... goes to the window ... looks at the sky.

CANDACE

I've raised hopes for a lot of people.

Danny gets out of bed. Puts on his robe. Grabs her robe puts it over her shoulders. He hugs her.

DANNY

Why is that bad?

CANDACE

They think I can fix any problem.

DANNY

They have faith in you.

CANDACE

I don't know if I deserve it.

DANNY

You deserve mine.

CANDACE

I don't care what anyone says, you're perfect pizza manager material.

DANNY

Someone heard you because I got the job with benefits. We'll never have to buy straws again.

CANDACE

Danny, I'm so proud of you. Today pizza manager, tomorrow, Luby?

DANNY

I object your honor. I always thought about being a lawyer. But I didn't think my journey to the Supreme Court would be paved with pepperoni.

CANDACE

You'll get there, honey.

Candace turns to look out the window.

CANDACE

Did you know the North Star was the symbol of freedom for the slaves?

DANNY

How do you know?

CANDACE

Kristen told me.

DANNY

I think it's time you find your own symbol.

EXT. RUTH ANN'S HOUSE - DAY

Candace's car drives up in front and parks on the street. Other cars line the driveway and street. Raul's landscape truck is in the driveway. Workers rake and mow the yard.

Candace stands in front in awe of Ruth Ann's home which resembles a mini Tara. She then walks up to the door and rings the bell. Ruth Ann opens the door.

RUTH ANN

Candace, welcome to my home. You're almost on time, again.

Candace enters and looks around the beautiful hallway.

CANDACE

Thank you, Ruth Ann. I thought the meeting was at two?

RUTH ANN

It's five after, dear.

Ruth Ann looks out the door and spots Candace's hail dented, sun-faded Honda.

RUTH ANN

I've asked my neighbors not to let their domestic help park in front of my house. We have so much company we need every spot.

CANDACE

Oh, I'm sorry, that's my car. I'll move it if you like.

RUTH ANN

The foreign one is yours?

CANDACE

That's my baby.

RUTH ANN

Those look like pox marks.

CANDACE

Hail damage. Danny, my boyfriend, just got a new job. It's been kinda' tough for us.

RUTH ANN

You live with your boyfriend?

CANDACE

Almost three years.

RUTH ANN

Congratulations on almost. Everyone's in the den.

INT. DEN - DAY

Ruth Ann walks into the den where the ladies are seated. A buffet table is set up by a wall with pastries and drinks. The room is stately.

RUTH ANN

Ladies, look who joined us; late again.

The ladies smile at Candace. Emily gets up and leads Candace by the hand. Ruth Ann walks to the head of the room and looks through some papers.

EMILY

I saved a spot for you by me.

Candace sits down.

CANDACE  
Thanks Emily. Sorry I'm late.

EMILY  
Let the fun begin.

Candace nods to Margo and Lillie Beth. Then she notices a pendent around Emily's neck.

CANDACE  
What does your necklace say?

EMILY  
You know what W-W-J-D means, right?

Candace touches the pendent.

CANDACE  
Sure, what would Jesus do. But what does W-W-B-D-D mean?

EMILY  
What would Bette Davis do? I made it myself.

CANDACE  
I'm sure you did.

EMILY  
What do you think about our money problem?

CANDACE  
I have an idea about what to do.

Ruth Ann picks up her gavel and taps it on the table.

RUTH ANN  
Ladies, let's get started.

CANDACE  
Does she take that gavel everywhere?

MARGO  
I hear even in the bedroom.

LILLIE BETH  
When she's had enough.

Lillie Beth pounds her fist on the chair's arm. Ruth Ann notices.

RUTH ANN  
Would you like to share something  
with the rest of us?

LILLIE BETH  
We were just admiring your gavel.

Ruth Ann takes a breath.

RUTH ANN  
Thank you all for coming to this  
emergency session. As you know, the  
church is in a serious financial  
crisis so, I've raised the security  
level to Hunter Green. But the  
exciting news is I have the grand  
prize for our annual raffle. The  
winner will receive a free dinner  
each month for a year at Luby's.

The ladies applaud.

MARGO  
Well done, Ruth Ann.

RUTH ANN  
Thank you.

Emily raises her hand. Ruth Ann motions to her.

EMILY  
I think we should hear from our new  
treasurer since she has an idea about  
how to fix our money problem.

CANDACE  
No, I don't have a new idea.

EMILY  
You just told me you did.

PAM  
Ruth Ann, you don't mind if Candace  
speaks? We haven't had a chance to  
hear from her yet.

Ruth Ann takes a very deep breath.

RUTH ANN  
Of course I don't mind. I'm here to  
best serve the church. I'm eager to  
hear any new, revolutionary ideas.

Emily pushes Candace to the front of the room. Ruth Ann stands in place and holds her gavel away from Candace.

CANDACE

I spoke with Pastor Murphy about finding new donors.

RUTH ANN

I don't recall him telling me.

CANDACE

He asked me specifically to seek out new donors for the church.

The ladies nod in agreement.

RUTH ANN

How interesting and revolutionary.

EMILY

What type of donors?

CANDACE

Different ones throughout the city. You know, this and that and here and there.

MARGO

Where is there?

CANDACE

Out there. Way out there.

RUTH ANN

Exactly how far is way out there?

Candace gathers her strength.

CANDACE

Past Luby's.

All the ladies gasp.

PAM

Candace, why would businesses way out there contribute to our church over here?

RUTH ANN

I was wondering that myself.

CANDACE

It's the Christian thing to do.

LILLIE BETH

Really?

CANDACE

Yes, it is Lillie Beth. It's why we're here, isn't it? We should never be too proud to ask for help when we need it to do his work.

EMILY

Pride goeth before the fall.

More head nods and a few claps.

CANDACE

There are Christians way out there, yes past Luby's, and we can't be afraid to go to the dark side to meet them.

EMILY

I want to go to the dark side. I need to travel more.

CANDACE

Believers who don't know us, and we don't know them. So, we must seek them out and share our message of faith and hope.

MARGO

Amen, sister.

Ruth Ann clutches her gavel.

CANDACE

That's why our church is named Full of Hope, isn't it? Because now is the time for us to be filled with all the hope we can get into our souls.

ALL LADY MEMBERS

Amen, that's right, sister.

CANDACE

Listen to me, even when we've been wronged, we must learn to forgive. Come on, I'm talking to someone in the room today.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #1

Amen, you sure are sister.

CANDACE

Forgive every trespass and forgive every trespasser, even one who parks in a handicap spot without a sticker.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #2

She's talking to you Lillie Beth.

LILLIE BETH

Oh, go to hell.

Candace walks over to her and stands over her with arms extended.

CANDACE

Lillie Beth, listen to me. You've got to let it go, just let it go. Don't be afraid. We're here for you.

ALL LADY MEMBERS

She's right. Let it go, Lillie.

Lillie is transfixed by Candace. The ladies are silent as she stands to look at everyone then finally at Margo. Her lips quiver, and she tears up.

LILLIE BETH

Margo, I forgive you.

MARGO

Lillie, I forgive you. You're my best friend.

LILLIE BETH

You're my only friend.

They hug and cry.

PAM

Candace, they've been fighting for twenty years, but you brought them together in five minutes. Praise God, it's a miracle.

ALL LADY MEMBERS

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord.

Emily walks up to Candace in a God-like trance.

EMILY

You're a miracle worker, Candace West. That's who you are.

Ladies come up to Candace to congratulate her.

CANDACE

No, I'm not Emily.

EMILY

Oh, yes you are. You're Jennifer Jones in "Song of Bernadette."

Ruth Ann pounds the gavel on the table.

RUTH ANN

Ladies, focus.

The ladies ignore her so Ruth Ann pounds the gavel harder until it breaks into pieces. She stands in shock. The ladies are quiet.

PAM

It's another miracle.

The ladies laugh, high-five each other . . . cheer with the holy spirit. Emily starts to sing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" to Candace.

EMILY

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.

All the ladies join and sing to Candace.

EMILY

He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored. He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword. His truth is marching on. Glory, glory hallelujah.

Ruth Ann picks up the pieces of her gavel . . . heart-broken . . . and angry.

EXT. RUTH ANN'S HOUSE - DAY

The ladies leave the meeting. Candace glows in their praise. Emily is the last to leave. Ruth Ann stands beside Candace.

EMILY

What you did was amazing. I'm going home to blog my emotions.

Emily hugs Candace and skips down the walkway.

CANDACE

Thank you, Ruth Ann for everything.

RUTH ANN

You're welcome, but I can't forget my manners in all the excitement you created. I haven't had a chance to show you my home.

Ruth Ann grips Candace's arm and leads her back inside.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

They walk down a hallway and pass by a large office.

RUTH ANN

This is my office where I do my Bible studying and spiritual contemplation.

CANDACE

It's oval.

Gripping Candace's arm, Ruth Ann leads Candace down a hallway.

INT. MUSIC ROOM - DAY

They walk into a music room where Ruth Ann's oldest son, ADAM (15) plays the piano.

RUTH ANN

Bravo, Adam.

She points to photos on the mantle.

RUTH ANN

Adam is the oldest, then Eve, and the twins Cain and Abel. My husband, Roger.

Adam stops and stands at attention.

ADAM

Thank you, mother.

RUTH ANN

This is Ms. Candace West, the committee's new treasurer.

CANDACE

Hi, Adam it's nice to meet you. You play beautifully.

ADAM

Thank you, Ms. West. It's nice to meet you. I heard your sermon, and you were awesome.

RUTH ANN

Please continue with your practice. Your recital is coming up.

They turn and walk out.

CANDACE

He's certainly talented.

RUTH ANN

Thank you. Now, let me show you my talent.

Ruth Ann walks with Candace to the French doors and opens them.

EXT. RUTH ANN'S GARDEN - DAY

It's a garden almost worthy of Versailles. It extends the entire length of the lot behind the house. It's filled with several fountains ... a mini labyrinth ... statues ... rows of manicured flowers of all types.

Raul's workers trim the hedge and turn when they enter. They recognize Candace and smile at her.

She lets go of Candace's arm.

RUTH ANN

Welcome to my Eden, Candace.

CANDACE

Oh, my God, it's beyond words.

RUTH ANN

You're speechless? I didn't think that was possible.

CANDACE

Ruth Ann, I'm sorry. I got carried away this morning.

RUTH ANN

Please, you were inspiring.

Ruth Ann walks into the garden.

RUTH ANN

There is the green house where I  
grow three different types of orchids.  
My tulips are in bloom, too.

Candace follows Ruth Ann.

CANDACE

It's magnificent.

RUTH ANN

Let me show you my real pride and  
joy. My roses.

Ruth Ann walks and gestures toward the rose section in the  
center of the garden. She has numerous varieties and colors.

RUTH ANN

I've named them for my favorite  
presidents. There is Dwight  
Eisenhower. The big and smaller  
ones are the George Bushes, of course.

Candace notices a shaggy rose bush in the corner with more  
thorns than roses.

CANDACE

What about that scruffy one by the  
shed?

RUTH ANN

That was an experiment that went  
horribly wrong. It almost took over  
the entire garden. I've tried killing  
it, but it won't die. It keeps coming  
back. I call it the Bill Clinton.

Ruth Ann shows Candace her prize rose.

RUTH ANN

This is my grand prize rose, Ronald  
Reagan.

She caresses it. Candace reaches for a stem but it sticks  
her.

CANDACE

Ouch.

RUTH ANN

Be careful. You don't know how to  
handle him. He's my Golden Thorn  
grand prize winner. Come closer.

Candace takes a step towards the rose. Ruth Ann steps behind her while Candace enjoys the fragrance.

RUTH ANN  
You insignificant pest. I'll destroy  
you.

Candace freezes at these words. Ruth Ann stomps on a bug on the ground. Candace jumps at the sound.

CANDACE  
Oh, the bug.

RUTH ANN  
Of course, the bug.

EXT. RUTH ANN'S HOUSE - DAY

Candace races to her car with a look of fear, jumps in, and speeds away.

INT. CANDYLAND CLUB - DAY

Candace walks into the club and sees Kristen with Amber at the bar. She walks up to Candace.

CANDACE  
Can I help you?

AMBER  
I don't know if you remember me from  
Bill's club. I'm Amber.

CANDACE  
I remember.

AMBER  
I heard you need dancers.

CANDACE  
Yeah.

KRISTEN  
You need to know our business is  
down. There's not a lot of customers  
right now.

AMBER  
There's no Bill Braun, either.

Candace steps closer to Amber.

CANDACE

What did he do to you?

AMBER

What didn't he do? I had to get out. I thought about calling my mother but she doesn't know what I do. I'm afraid to tell her. You can ask the other dancers though, they'll tell you I'm clean. I don't cause problems.

CANDACE

I know you don't, Amber. Kristen's the club manager. She'll get you settled in.

(beat)

So, does your mom live in town?

AMBER

Yeah. I left home about a year ago. I told her I was going into modeling so I'd be traveling a lot. I haven't talk with her lately. I don't know what to say.

KRISTEN

Go to the office and I'll get your schedule set up.

AMBER

Thank you both.

CANDACE

It's be alright.

Kristen points to the office. Amber walks toward it.

CANDACE

One down.

INT. CANDYLAND'S OFFICE - DAY

Candace works at her desk in the office with Kristen by her side. Eddie brings in two cups of coffee.

EXT. CANDYLAND CLUB - DAY

Candace hurries out of the club and jumps in her car. She speeds off.

INT. CPA'S OFFICE - DAY

Candace is at her job. She types at a computer. Her boss gives her more files to work on. She sips her coffee.

EXT. CPA'S OFFICE - DAY

Candace runs out of the office, puts her cup of coffee on the car's roof. She gets in and drives off spilling the coffee on her car.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Candace walks briskly into the church.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Candace stands in front of the committee. Behind her is a big tally board which shows a bar chart of the money raised. Emily brings her a cup of coffee.

INT. CHURCH DAY-CARE ROOM - DAY

Candace sits at a table and reads to the children. She yawns. A child hands her a cup of milk. She drinks it.

EXT. CANDYLAND CLUB - NIGHT

Candace parks in the owner's spot.

INT. CANDYLAND CLUB OFFICE - NIGHT

Candace works at her desk, yawns. Kristen brings her a cup of coffee.

EXT. BANK DRIVE THROUGH DEPOSITORY - NIGHT

Candace drives up and puts an envelope in the box then drives off.

EXT. CANDACE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Candace's car pulls up in the driveway.

INT. CANDACE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Candace flops into bed.

EXT. CANDACE'S HOUSE - DAY

Danny shoots hoops in the driveway. Candace's car pulls up into the driveway. He continues to play as Candace gets out of the car. She call for him but he ignore her.

CANDACE

Hey, Danny.

DANNY

Hey, stranger.

Candace walks over to Danny. She tries to kiss him. He moves to grab the ball instead.

CANDACE

Time-out.

DANNY

Since when?

CANDACE

What's that mean?

DANNY

I've seen you for ten hours this week.

CANDACE

We've talked about this. It's tough right now.

She reaches for the ball. He moves around her.

DANNY

I only see you between pizzas. I need more than Parmesan at night.

CANDACE

At least you're getting Parmesan. I'm lucky to get four hours of sleep. You don't hear me complain.

DANNY

I told you to sell the place. We'd be better off right now. You have to save the world instead. You're spending our future on day-care and strippers.

Danny slam dunks the ball.

CANDACE

You said you'd support me.

He dribbles the ball around her. He stops and looks at her.

DANNY

You're at the club with drunks and weirdos. It's not right.

CANDACE

Those weirdos are paying our bills. Besides, I'm in the office working.

DANNY

You could come home. I've driven by at night and it's pretty empty.

CANDACE

You're spying on me? I'm working three jobs and you don't trust me?

DANNY

I don't like it.

CANDACE

I don't like it smelling like beer and smoke. Coming home to a dark house and cold pizza. This is our life right now but not forever.

DANNY

How long? What if Kristen can't get a loan, or what if the club fails? I don't want to live my life by what if's.

CANDACE

You think I do.

DANNY

I don't know what you think. You're wasting your inheritance from your crazy uncle trying to prove how noble you are. Walter gave you a car and a free college education. You've had more hand-outs. You're just wasting it all.

Danny stops as Candace steps up to him furious and hurt.

CANDACE

I'd give it back right now. At least Walter never tried to made me feel ashamed.

She glares at him and walks into the house. Danny stands alone in the driveway.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Emily and Candace sit in a pew during Sunday morning services. Pastor Murphy addresses the congregation. Ruth Ann and her family sit in the front row.

PASTOR MURPHY

Our most recent fund-raising report shows we've raised almost twenty-thousand dollars.

The crowd applauds. Candace nods off from a lack of sleep. Emily nudges her awake.

PASTOR MURPHY

It's pretty amazing. Some of it came from our annual raffle and garage sale. Thank you, Ruth Ann for organizing those events.

Mild applause from the crowd. Ruth Ann smiles and nods.

PASTOR MURPHY

But most of the money came from an anonymous business donor. We don't know who he is, but the Lord does.

More applause from the crowd.

PASTOR MURPHY

But one person who won't remain anonymous is the one responsible for bringing this donor to us. I gave her an impossible task, and she's done it. Our own Ladies Auxiliary Treasurer, Candace West.

Wild applause from the crowd then a standing ovation. Emily cheers the loudest. Ruth Ann stands but barely applauds.

PASTOR MURPHY

Come up here and say a few words.

Candace makes her way to the alter.

CANDACE  
Thank you but I'm just doing the  
Lord's work.

The crowd stands and cheers.

INT. CANDYLAND STAGE - NIGHT

Kiwi is on stage to a small crowd. She smiles at Candace as she walks by. Candace waves at Eddie as she enters her office.

INT. CANDYLAND CLUB OFFICE - NIGHT

Kristen adds up the receipts.

CANDACE  
How are we doing?

KRISTEN  
Not good.

CANDACE  
What about the auditions today?

KRISTEN  
Only four showed up. I hired 'em.  
Braun has almost every dancer in  
town. I don't know what we'll do.

Candace thinks out loud.

CANDACE  
What does it take to be a dancer?

KRISTEN  
More than anything else attitude. I  
can teach anyone to be a good enough  
dancer as long as she has attitude.

CANDACE  
We've gotta have hope, Kristen.

KRISTEN  
We need a miracle. Maybe five or  
six or seven.

A huge light bulb goes off in Candace's head.

CANDACE  
I think I know where I can find 'em.

EXT. CANDACE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

A number of cars are parked outside the house.

INT. CANDACE'S HOUSE -DAY

About ten committee members and Amy sit around the living room.

CANDACE

Now you know everything. Who can help me?

Emily raises her hand.

EMILY

Are there benefits like dental?

CANDACE

No, Emily. Any other questions?

Everyone raises their hands.

CANDACE

Ladies, I'm desperate. If Candyland fails, then the church won't get the money for the day-care center.

PAM

Do you honestly believe we're dancers?

The ladies break out in chatter. A church lady stands.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #1

I've been a member of this church all my life, and I'm shocked.

CANDACE

I know I'm taking a risk asking you.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #2

I can't be a part of this.

Committee members #1 and #2 stand and walk out followed by several other ladies.

CANDACE

Ladies, please wait.

They stop and turn to face Candace.

CANDACE

I had the same feelings when I found out about the club. Before you say no, please meet the dancers. They're different than you think.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #1

They're exactly what I think, trash.

CANDACE

Don't say that about my staff.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #2

You choose them over your church?

CANDACE

I choose to help people who need it.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #1

Why should we help them?

CANDACE

'Cause they're helping us. You can judge me all you want, but don't judge them until you meet 'em.

Emily stands up.

EMILY

I'll do it.

Amy stands, too.

AMY

If it gets one guy to look at me sure, I'm in.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #2

Emily, how could you? Doesn't this go against your beliefs?

EMILY

This is exactly what my beliefs are about. Candace has done so much for us. Look at how she reunited Margo and Lillie Beth. And the money she's donated to the church instead of keeping it. She's made sacrifices for others without being asked or judging anyone. Candace is a true Christian, and my best friend.

(Beat)

Besides, Bette Davis would do it.

CANDACE

I'm not asking anyone to do something she's opposed to. I've had to make peace with my beliefs.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #1

Compromises.

Pam stands.

PAM

Candace, I'd respect you for everything you've done for the church. But you give us too much credit. Honey, we're just a bunch of middle-age, big hair, big ass Christian women who don't want surprises anymore. And this is a dilly. I gotta hand it to you for having the guts to ask us. But I'm really sorry, sugar. I'm out. Ladies, I suggest we keep this among ourselves. No need making Ruth Ann happy.

Pam and the ladies walk out as Candace, Amy and Emily watch.

INT. CHURCH DAY-CARE ROOM - DAY

Candace sits at a children's table. A baby sleeps in a crib and she's plays with two toddlers.

Danny creeps in and stands in the doorway until she notices him.

Candace looks up as the children point at Danny who waves weakly. She doesn't react and returns her attention to the children. Danny steps in as if it's a mine field.

He clears his throat several times. Candace doesn't react.

DANNY

Candace, I regret every word I said.  
I'm sorry.

Danny takes a step toward her.

CANDACE

Did I say you could move?

Danny freezes against the wall.

DANNY

No. Can I breathe?

CANDACE

For now.

Danny lets out a big breath and regains his composure.

DANNY

Candace?

Candace kicks a small chair at him.

CANDACE

Sit.

Danny sits frozen in the chair. Candace looks at him.

CANDACE

You hurt me in a way no one else  
could.

DANNY

I said things I didn't mean.

CANDACE

And?

DANNY

Please don't judge me by this. We've  
been together three years.

CANDACE

Obviously you've thought about it  
for a long time. Why are you so  
jealous of me? 'Cause I had someone  
who helped me. The word is had.  
Walter's gone, my folks are gone.  
Your parents will see you graduate  
from law school some day. They'll  
hear you say Merry Christmas and  
happy birthday for years. Talk about  
being jealous, Danny.

DANNY

I hope we can get past this.

CANDACE

Do you still feel that way?

DANNY

No, I don't, I swear.

CANDACE

Then forget about what Walter gave  
me. Stop thinking about what you

(MORE)

CANDACE  
 don't have 'cause you have more than  
 you realize.

DANNY  
 Candace, I love you, and I want to  
 earn your trust back. I promise  
 I'll help you.  
 (beat)  
 Is there still room for me in your  
 small boat?

INT. CANDYLAND OFFICE - DAY

Candace and Kristen reads through a pile of invoices. Danny enters with a cup of coffee, places it on the desk. Eddie rushes in with a surprised look on his face.

EDDIE  
 You all need to see this.

INT. CANDYLAND CLUB - DAY

They exits the office and walk out to the stage. Pam stands there with the church committee members. Candace, Kristen and Danny are shocked to see them. Candace steps forward.

CANDACE  
 What's going on?

PAM  
 We're here to see if you still need  
 dancers?

CANDACE  
 Yes?

Amber steps up to be with Pam.

PAM  
 Amber's my daughter.

CANDACE  
 I didn't know that.

PAM  
 She finally told me what she's been  
 doing for the past year. I'm shocked  
 but glad she's home. It's not the  
 kind of life I want for her; we've  
 talked about that. But Amber told

(MORE)

PAM

me it's better here than at other places because of you. Since she's only be a dancer for awhile longer, I know she'll be better here with you. Thank you, Candace.

CANDACE

I didn't do anything.

PAM

You did enough to make me think about what you asked. I've searched scripture and there's nothing in there that covers this. We've talked a lot about it and prayed. We took a vote and had two recounts. We've decided to help you out as best we can. No stripping though, just strutting around stuff.

CANDACE

I don't know what to say.

PAM

Don't say anything 'til you hear our condition.

CANDACE

Condition?

PAM

The dancers must attend church.

Kristen looks confused at the other dancers and Candace.

KRISTEN

Excuse me?

PAM

If we're willing to know your world, you need to know ours.

AMBER

For every dancer who attends church, a church lady will dance.

KRISTEN

You mean tit for tat.

PAM

Soul for soul.

EXT. CANDYLAND CLUB - DAY

Candace, Danny and Kristen and the other dancers stand behind the club by the swing set.

KRISTEN

You're freaked.

CANDACE

You said you could teach anyone how to dance as long as she has attitude. Believe me, church ladies have all the attitude you can handle.

KRISTEN

I might as well try to teach the swing. I'll bet it has more rhythm.

CANDACE

You can turn them, and me, into dancers good enough for some shows. It's not a permanent career move. The proceeds will be divided between the church and club.

KRISTEN

Then what?

CANDACE

I've had calls from dancers telling me Bill's keeping more for the house than he promised. Look, a few dancers came back yesterday. I think more will return if we're stable. All we need is to get past this bad patch then we'll be okay.

KRISTEN

They're still church ladies.

CANDACE

I asked them not to judge you, can't you do the same?

KRISTEN

I'm ain't joining a Jesus camp.

CANDACE

What choice do we have?

The dancers speak up in support of Candace.

CINNAMON

I used to go to church a long time ago. I don't think it'll hurt, much.

KIWI

My grandma played the organ in our church.

DANNY

At least the ladies are offering to help. What could it hurt now?

Kristen addresses the dancers.

KRISTEN

You're okay with this?

CINNAMON

If it means we can stay in business.

Kristen pleads with Candace.

KRISTEN

What about the customers? They won't pay to see holy-rollers.

CANDACE

We'll use a lot of smoke and lights, some free beer. We'll think of something.

KRISTEN

You're the most determined niece I've ever met.

CANDACE

Welcome to my world. First Walter died then I found about this place. I fought with Bill, Danny, and God. Insulted everyone from Luby's to Bette Milder. I've got a psycho Mrs. Billy Graham with garden shears after me. So, some cooperation and understanding is appreciated.

Kristen resigns herself to her new fate.

KRISTEN

I'll burn in hell for this.

CANDACE

I'll burn with you.

INT. CANDYLAND CLUB - DAY

Candace and the dancers lead Kristen back inside. Candace steps aside as Kristen faces the church ladies. The dancers stand beside her.

KRISTEN

We've talked and we agree to attend  
your church if you'll dance.

Kristen looks back at the dancers one last time. They nod in agreement. The ladies nod approval.

KRISTEN

Now, let me get an idea of your dance  
experience. Does anyone have any?

PAM

I did the dance of the seven veils  
on my honeymoon.

Emily shoots her hand in the air.

EMILY

I watch Carmen Miranda movies a lot  
so, I can do something with fruit.

Kristen turns away and almost walks off, but Candace stops her. Kristen walks up onto the stage. She starts to dance as she addresses the group.

KRISTEN

Ladies, let's get to it. This is  
your new place of worship. Think of  
the stage as the pulpit. When you're  
up here, all eyes are on you. You're  
the greatest power.

The ladies look at each other.

KRISTEN

I'm talking complete submission to a  
higher power than you've known before  
on earth called ...

Kristen struts around the stage then turns with cat-like speed to face the group.

KRISTEN

Dance.

The ladies are transfixed.

ALL LADY MEMBERS

Amen.

Kristen walks out to the edge of the stage. She looks at Candace then at the ladies. She turns and eyes her own dancers. They follow her on stage and begin to dance.

KRISTEN

If we're going to do this, we're going to do it right. Do you understand?

ALL LADY MEMBERS

Yes, ma'am.

KRISTEN

Okay, we begin tomorrow morning with our first rehearsal at eight sharp.

The ladies cheer and applaud. Candace hugs and thanks Kristen. Candace steps in front of the group.

CANDACE

Okay, I need your attention. Thank you for helping the club and the children who get a new day-care.

PAM

Thanks for adding excitement to our lives. It's fun being a Christian now.

CANDACE

But we must keep it a secret. You can't tell your husbands or boyfriends or anyone. No one can know.

PAM

How do you expect us to keep it from Ruth Ann?

KRISTEN

Don't talk about it around her. I know it'll be difficult, but we've got to do it.

EMILY

Maybe we should swear an oath?

CANDACE

An oath?

The ladies nod "yes."

PAM

Yeah, we're good with oaths.

Candace looks at Danny who nods.

CANDACE

Okay, raise your right hand and repeat after me. I solemnly swear to be faithful to the Full of Hope Church and Candyland Dancers Group.

ALL LADY MEMBERS

I solemnly swear to be faithful to the Full of Hope Church and Candyland Dancers Group.

CANDACE

And promise to preserve and protect and defend the secret of the group.

ALL LADY MEMBERS

And promise to preserve and protect and defend the secret of the group.

Candace pauses and thinks.

CANDACE

Against all enemies foreign and domestic.

ALL LADY MEMBERS

Against all enemies foreign and domestic.

CANDACE

And especially Ruth Ann. Amen.

ALL LADY MEMBERS

And especially Ruth Ann. Amen.

KRISTEN

Ladies, you're now Candyland dancers.

The ladies cheer.

EXT. CANDYLAND CLUB - DAY

Cars drive into the parking lot. The ladies enter through the club's front door.

INT. CANDYLAND CLUB - DAY

Candace and Kristen greet the ladies.

LATER

The ladies are shown basic dance moves on stage. They try to mimic the moves. Several falls down. Candace almost falls but manages to stand up. Kristen applauds her.

LATER

Kristen demonstrates how to use the pole.

A lady slides off of it onto the floor. Emily hugs the pole and won't let go. Candace slides down the pole and grimaces.

LATER

The ladies shake their heads "no" at the skimpy outfits that Kristen holds up.

LATER

The music fades. The ladies sit down at tables and on the stage. Kristen and Candace hand out a sheets of paper to each one.

KRISTEN

Here's your diet plan. You need to follow it daily. Also, some dance instructions for basic moves.

Pam reads out loud the instructions.

PAM

Caress your nipples until they're hard.

Emily reads the diet plan.

EMILY

Tofu? Is she a dancer?

The ladies moan.

EXT. FULL OF HOPE CHURCH - DAY

The sign announces Sunday morning service as people walk in to the church. Candace waits outside with Danny and Pam. She looks for the dancers to arrive.

CANDACE

I don't know what's keeping 'em.

PAM

They know our arrangement. We've kept our part so far, Candace.

CANDACE

They'll be here, I hope.

Pam looks unhappy and walks into the church. Candace looks dejected as she enters with Danny.

INT. FULL OF HOPE CHURCH - DAY

Candace and Danny sit on the left aisle in the front row with Emily and other committee members. Ruth Ann sits with her family in the front row of the center aisle. Candace nods at Ruth Ann. Ruth Ann barely acknowledges her.

Pastor Murphy enters and walks to the alter, bows then goes to the pulpit and opens his hymnal. He motions for the congregation to rise. Adam, Ruth Ann's son, plays "Joyful, Joyful" on an out-of-tune piano. Everyone sings. As the song concludes, the congregation sits down.

PASTOR MURPHY

Good morning everyone. It's an exciting time here. Lots of wonderful things are happening. I literally don't know what going to walk through the door next.

Kristen and the dancers rush in as if on cue. They stop in the entrance. The congregation turns around.

PASTOR MURPHY

More arrivals. Welcome. Come in.

The group quickly sits in the back pew. Candace smiles as she sees Kristen. Ruth Ann notices.

EXT. FULL OF HOPE CHURCH - DAY

The crowd makes their way out of the church after the service. Pastor Murphy stands outside to greet them. Ruth Ann stands beside him.

Candace and Danny exit.

CANDACE

Wonderful sermon, Pastor. I'd never thought of the disciples as a football team before.

DANNY

Jesus as the quarterback. That's different.

PASTOR MURPHY

You've gotta find ways to keep the message fresh. What we need is a different perspective.

Ruth Ann interrupts.

RUTH ANN

The late arrivals today, Candace, are they your friends?

Candace senses a trap.

CANDACE

Sort of.

RUTH ANN

I'd love to meet them.

Kristen and Cinnamon and Kiwi and other dancers emerge, as if on cue; again.

PASTOR MURPHY

Here they are now. I'm Pastor Murphy. Welcome to Full of Hope Church. So glad you came today.

KRISTEN

I'm Kristen Moore.

CINNAMON

Ann Marie Nelson.

RUTH ANN

Candace says you're her friends; sort of.

CANDACE

I met them through volunteer work.

The girls nod nervously. Ruth Ann's eyes dig into Candace. Kristen steps in to the rescue.

KRISTEN

That's right. We do volunteer work with Candace at the hospitals where we visit old people and sick children.

PASTOR MURPHY

I had no idea, Candace. Which hospital?

KRISTEN

All of them.

RUTH ANN

What do you do there?

Kristen thinks quickly.

KRISTEN

Entertain 'em.

RUTH ANN

How?

KRISTEN

Um, dance, um, song and dance, more song then dance. Right gals?

The ladies all nod. Kiwi joins the rescue attempt.

KIWI

I take my portable keyboard and play for them.

CANDACE

She's an great pianist.

KIWI

By the way, the church's piano is out of tune. That young man did a great job on it, though.

RUTH ANN

He's my son, Adam.

KIWI

He's excellent. I give lessons and I'd be glad to him show him some new songs for the services. He's so advanced, I'll bet I could teach him quickly.

PASTOR MURPHY

What a wonderful idea. Don't you think so, Ruth Ann?

Everyone looks at Ruth Ann. She keep a polite, forced smile.

RUTH ANN  
I couldn't agree more, Pastor.

Cinnamon interrupts.

CINNAMON  
Your flowers are a bit dry, too.

PASTOR MURPHY  
Thank you. I'll tell Raul.

RUTH ANN  
Are you a flower lover, my dear.

CINNAMON  
I grow roses.

RUTH ANN  
What a coincidence, so do I.

Kristen senses a trap, too.

KRISTEN  
We must be off. Old people and  
children to entertain. Roses to  
grow. You know what they say, the  
weeds shall inherit the earth.

Pastor laughs. Ruth Ann smiles quickly.

PASTOR MURPHY  
You're a delight. You have such a  
spirited way about you.

KRISTEN  
My pleasure. Kum-ba-yah. Good-bye.

Candace and Danny and the group make a move to leave. Then  
Pastor Murphy stops as if he's had a heart attack.

PASTOR MURPHY  
Folks, wait. Remember I said we  
need to find a new perspective.  
Something different to keep the  
message fresh and alive.

They all stop and look confused at the Pastor. Candace senses  
another trap.

CANDACE  
Yeah?

PASTOR MURPHY  
 Kristen, with your volunteer work  
 and uplifting spirit, I'd love to  
 hear what you have to say.

Kristen freezes.

KRISTEN  
 About what?

PASTOR MURPHY  
 Anything. I'm inviting you to give  
 the guest reading next week.

Everyone slowly turns to look at Kristen.

RUTH ANN  
 Excuse me, Pastor. I believe Ben  
 Wainwright is scheduled to give it.

PASTOR MURPHY  
 His asthma is back. I need someone  
 who can speak without  
 hyperventilating.

KRISTEN  
 What about, Candace? Wouldn't you  
 prefer to hear her perspective?

PASTOR MURPHY  
 We hear from her all the time. You're  
 new here. You'd be a breath of fresh  
 air. What do you say?

EXT. TWELVE OAKS JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT

A sign out front announces "Senior Musical Recitals".

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Ruth Ann and her husband Roger mingle with the crowd as they  
 take their seats in the front row. Danny and Candace arrive  
 and take their seats behind them.

The lights go down. Emily is pushed by unseen hands out  
 from behind the curtain. She hesitates, then walks to the  
 podium with a clipboard in hand. She freezes then taps the  
 microphone.

EMILY  
 Welcome, parents and friends.

AUDIENCE MEMBER #1  
Speak up.

Emily speaks a little louder.

EMILY  
And music lovers of all ages.

AUDIENCE MEMBER #2  
Still can't hear you.

Emily shouts and there's a loud buzz of feedback throughout the auditorium.

EMILY  
Welcome to our Senior Recital  
sponsored by Raul's Landscape Services  
whose motto is, We just cut the grass,  
not smoke it. Before we begin, I'd  
like to ask the parents to please  
control your children.

Twin boys chase each other onto the stage. They bump into Emily then run off.

EMILY  
Cain, Abel, please stop fighting.  
So, parents, your cooperation is  
appreciated but not expected.

She looks at the audience and sees Candace who smiles encouragement. Kiwi waves at Emily. Ruth Ann notices the exchange. Emily regains her composure and reads from her clipboard.

EMILY  
It was Mozart who said ...

AUDIENCE MEMBER #1  
Hey, just introduce the kids, okay?

Emily looks out at the crowd.

EMILY  
But I haven't finished. Mozart said  
something nice.

AUDIENCE MEMBER #2  
Bring 'em out.

Her bottom lip quivers as she flips the pages on the clipboard. Emily tries not to cry.

EMILY

Our first performer is Adam Goodman.

The curtain opens to reveal a grand piano. Emily hurries off the stage. Adam enters to applause and walks to the microphone.

ADAM

Good evening. I wish to dedicate my performance to a special person who taught me the true meaning of music.

Ruth Ann props herself up in her seat in anticipation of recognition.

ADAM

My piano teacher, Ms. Johnson. Where are you? There she is.

The audience looks around. Adam applauds as Kiwi stands. Adam sits at the piano. He runs his hands up and down the keys in a classical style then pauses. He puts on a pair of sunglasses then plays and sings a blues version of a hymn ala Ray Charles style.

RUTH ANN

He'll never get into Julliard now.

The audience gets into the music.

ROGER

Come on, enjoy it.

Ruth Ann stands, disgusted and marches from her seat to the back stage. Candace follows her.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Ruth Ann walks up to Emily.

RUTH ANN

You're to blame. How could you let this happen? He's ruined his talent. You should of told me what he was going to play. I would have stopped him from making a fool of me.

Candace finds Ruth Ann and steps in front to protect Emily.

CANDACE

Stop it. You have no right to speak to her like that.

RUTH ANN

I knew you were involved in some way. This is all part of your plan.

CANDACE

What plan?

RUTH ANN

To humiliate me.

CANDACE

I don't have a plan. It's all in your head.

RUTH ANN

There is nothing in my head. You've planned this ever since you took over the meeting at my home.

CANDACE

No, I've didn't.

RUTH ANN

You've taken away my committee, my church and now my children.

CANDACE

Ruth Ann, that's absurd. What I've done is for the church.

RUTH ANN

Don't preach to you. I've given my life to the Lord. Then you come along and change everything with your idea of hope as if you invented it. Who are you to judge me?

CANDACE

I've never judged you.

RUTH ANN

Of course you did, everyone does. You think I don't know the jokes people tell about me. It's so easy for you. You have your whole life. This's all I know. Where do I go from here, another bake sale? I'll never get back what you and this idiot have taken from me.

Emily cries and runs out the back door. Candace runs after her but stops to face Ruth Ann again.

CANDACE  
I'm sorry you feel like this. I  
didn't mean to hurt you. Don't take  
it out on Emily. Please forgive me.

RUTH ANN  
Forgiveness is only a word.

CANDACE  
It's a beginning.

RUTH ANN  
Not anymore.

EXT. TWELVE OAKS JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT

Candace runs after Emily.

CANDACE  
Emily, Emily, wait.

Candace finds Emily in a corner. She goes up to her and  
hugs her.

RUTH ANN  
I feel like Fredo. I only want some  
respect.

CANDACE  
Ruth Ann was wrong.

EMILY  
You're the only one who defends me.

CANDACE  
You stood up for me at the meeting.  
That took courage. Bette Davis  
woulda' been proud. Don't let Ruth  
Ann upset you. It's not about her  
anyway, Emily.

(Beat)  
So, tell me what Mozart said?

Emily recites it in German.

EMILY  
He said 'Wir können keine großen  
keinen Sachen der Sachen nur mit  
großen liebe tun'

CANDACE  
Huh?

EMILY

We can do no great things, only things  
with great love.

CANDACE

So true, Emily.

INT. CANDYLAND EXERCISE ROOM - DAY

The ladies workout on the exercise equipment. Everyone uses  
the dance pole correctly now. Candace watches and smiles.

INT. CANDYLAND CLUB - DAY

The ladies assemble in the main room. Kristen stands on the  
stage with Candace.

KRISTEN

Ladies, you've improved so much.

PAM

Thanks to you, I've lost ten pounds.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #1

My cholesterol dropped twenty points.

KRISTEN

Let's celebrate with veggie shakes.

The ladies stand, cheer and applaud. Eddie brings out trays  
of glasses filled with juice. The ladies each take a shake.

EMILY

We need a toast.

Candace holds her glass up.

CANDACE

Here's to us liking each other at  
the end as much as we do at the  
beginning.

The ladies toast each other and drink.

CANDACE

Ladies, I have another announcement.  
Kiwi, will you come up here?

Kiwi walks up to Candace.

CANDACE

Walter made you a promise that he didn't get to keep. We're keeping it for him. Close your eyes.

Candace turns Kiwi to face the stage. Eddie rolls a baby grand piano out from backstage. Kiwi opens her eyes.

CANDACE

Your piano.

KIWI

Oh, my God. It's a miracle.

Kiwi starts to cry, hugs the ladies. She then sits down at the piano and runs her fingers along the keys.

KIWI

I'll play the first song my grandma taught me.

She plays "Amazing Grace."

EXT. FULL OF HOPE CHURCH - DAY

Churchgoers walk inside for Sunday service. The music begins as Kristen runs inside after everyone. She trips as she goes up the stairs and drops her notes. She hurries to assemble them as she enters the church.

INT. FULL OF HOPE CHURCH - DAY

Pastor Murphy reads several announcements. Kristen finds a seat in the back with her dancers and waits anxiously. He sees her sit down.

PASTOR MURPHY

Today I have a treat for you. I invited a young lady, a new comer to our church, to give the guest reading. I think you'll be as delighted with her as I am. Kristen Moore, please come on up.

Kristen walks up the aisle to the pulpit. She passes Candace, Emily and Pam without looking at them. Pastor Murphy greets her. She's nervous as she stands before the congregation. She doesn't pay attention as she holds up a piece of paper and begins to read.

KRISTEN

I found some verses for today. I think Jesus said, "Caress your nipples until they're hard."

She realizes she's read from the dance instruction sheet. The crowd stares then starts to giggle. Candace waves her head at Kristen to stop. Kristen almost breaks down then begins to speak.

KRISTEN

Bring me your joy. Bring me your pain. Come to me as you are. I'm in each sigh you take. You are never alone.

She starts to regain herself.

KRISTEN

I wrote that poem in Sunday School years ago. It won first place during Holy week. I haven't thought about it for years.

She confesses a sin.

KRISTEN

You don't know this but I was chosen to be the angel of the Lord for the Christmas pageant when I was ten. But I got strep throat and sounded like the devil in "The Exorcist". So, Kerry Wilson got the part instead. I was mad at God for making me sick. I prayed for something bad to happen. Then it did 'cause during the show, her wings fell off and knocked out one of the wise men. I didn't go back to church after that. I'm sorry. That's all I have to say, Pastor.

She gathers her notes as Pastor Murphy pats her shoulder in reassurance. She leaves the pulpit.

PASTOR MURPHY

Thank you for your honesty, Kristen. I can't speak for Kerry Wilson or the wise man, but I know God forgives you.

The crowd applauds as Kristen walks back to her seat.

EXT. GARDEN CLUB FESTIVAL - DAY

The annual garden club festival is in full bloom. Tents are set up over the fairgrounds. Tables form a large circle with entries in various categories on each one. Candace, Danny, Amy and Bev, holds Scooter, mingle.

The crowd slowly makes its way to the arena where the entries are displayed for the best in show for the Golden Thorn award.

Cinnamon's roses are on a display table. The group walks up to her. Kristen and the dancers surround the table.

CANDACE

The roses are gorgeous. It was a great idea to enter them in the show.

Bev reads the name of the rose.

BEV

Naughty? That's different.

AMY

Do you have to be eighteen to smell it?

CINNAMON

Thanks for coming. It means so much to me and Walter.

KRISTEN

How's the competition?

CINNAMON

No one stands a chance against Ruth Ann with her rose tribute to Republican presidents.

Danny points to the items on the table.

CANDACE

Time to take our seats.

Scooter barks. They walk to find their seats. Candace turns to follow when Emily comes up from behind.

EMILY

Surprise. This is for you.

She hands Candace a large sunflower.

CANDACE

Oh, thanks Emily.

EMILY

The flowers are all so beautiful.

CANDACE

We'd better go see Ruth Ann's roses.

EMILY

I feel safer here with Naughty.

Candace walks over to Ruth Ann's table. Pastor Murphy, Margo, and Lillie Beth surround it.

RUTH ANN

Thank you, Pastor, for coming. I'm sure your blessing will do the trick.

PASTOR MURPHY

Hey, look who's here, Candace.

Ruth Ann stiffens as Candace approaches.

RUTH ANN

I didn't know you were a purveyor of flowers.

CANDACE

Just an admirer.

PASTOR MURPHY

Isn't Ruth Ann's roses a vision of perfection and patriotism?

CANDACE

It's a vision of something.

The judge steps up to the podium.

JUDGE

Flower lovers, please take your seats.

Candace finds a seat by Danny. The crowd applauds.

JUDGE

We've come to the end of another festival. It's time to announce the best in show for the coveted Golden Thorn Award. Each year the competition gets tougher. Ladies and gentleman, the Garden Festival's highest honor for a truly unique entry, the Golden Thorn Award goes to ... Alice Marie Nelson for her rose, "Naughty."

CINNAMON

Oh, my God, that's me. I won.

The judges walk past Ruth Ann to Cinnamon's table. They hand her a trophy. A photographer takes pictures. In her excitement she forgets and reveals the secret.

CINNAMON

I want to thank everyone, all my wonderful friends, Kristen and Kiwi and the whole gang at the Candyland Gentleman's Club.

She begins to cry.

CINNAMON

And especially to Walter. He died this year but his niece, Candace West, took over the club. She's works so hard managing it. God bless you, Candace.

Candace holds the sunflower up to cover her face as she slides down in the chair. Ruth Ann looks over at Pastor Murphy and the other ladies, then glares at Candace.

INT. CHURCH CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Pastor Murphy and Ruth Ann sit in the conference room filled with the committee ladies.

Candace enters alone. All eyes turn to her. She takes a seat by Emily who pats her arm for support.

PASTOR MURPHY

Thank you for attending this special meeting. As you all know by now, Candace is the owner of a gentleman's club called Candyland.

RUTH ANN

Where immoral behavior takes place.

PAM

You don't know anything about it.

RUTH ANN

I know a sinner when I see one.

PAM

Then you're looking at a roomful 'cause we've been to the club, too.

RUTH ANN

Heathens.

EMILY

No, dancers.

RUTH ANN

What?

PASTOR MURPHY

Everyone, calm down. Candace has confessed to me she's the anonymous donor. I think we should hear her side of the story.

Candace stands.

CANDACE

The money for the building fund came from Candyland's profits. I kept it a secret 'cause I thought it was the best way to help the church. When I lost most of my dancers to other clubs, I asked some of the committee members to become substitute dancers to help the club fund the day-care center.

Ruth Ann almost faints.

RUTH ANN

Oh, my God. I don't believe what I'm hearing. Ladies, how could you?

PAM

You should try it sometime.

Ruth Ann opens her mouth but for the first time she's speechless. Many of the ladies nod in agreement. Ruth Ann sits down with her mouth wide open from shock.

CANDACE

I know I hurt people I care about. A lot of you believed in me more than I deserve. I thought I could perform a miracle. I can't. I'm so sorry.

Candace sits down. Emily comforts her. Ruth Ann regains her composure and stands.

RUTH ANN

I move that the committee votes to remove from the treasurer's position, Candace West. All in favor, raise your hand.

Ruth Ann raises her hand. No one else does. The door opens, and in walks Danny, Kristen, with Cinnamon and Kiwi.

RUTH ANN

This is a closed meeting.

KRISTEN

Hold on to your cross, sister. We're here on Candace's behalf. She's gone through hell for everyone.

RUTH ANN

How dare you. That's quite enough.

Danny steps forward and takes charge of the meeting.

DANNY

What did Candace do that was so unforgivable? She kept a secret about the money and turning the church ladies into dancers. It's not a crime.

RUTH ANN

So, the ends justify the means?

DANNY

In this case there were a lot of ends. Candace just tried to bring them together. I said I believe in her and I do. So, I figured out a way to help.

CANDACE

What?

He takes an envelop from his pocket.

DANNY

I spoke with Amber and other dancers Bill Braun abused. I got affidavits from them. I warned Bill what to expect when I contact my friend in the DA's office about felony assault charges. Then a miracle happened. Bill donated twenty-five thousand dollars to the day-care fund.

Candace rises in shock. He hands the envelop to her. Stunned silence turns into applause as Danny and Candace kiss.

PASTOR MURPHY

It's a miracle.

RUTH ANN

You can't accept it. It's sin money.

Pastor Murphy finally confronts her.

PASTOR MURPHY

Shut up, Ruth Ann. Shit woman.  
That's right, I said shut up and  
shit to you. Long overdue. Damn,  
that felt good. Meeting adjourned.

The ladies and dancers cheer and hug Candace and Danny. Ruth Ann stands dismayed as they leave. Emily sneaks past Ruth Ann.

RUTH ANN

Sinner, heathen, Jezebel.

Emily stops. She breathes deep then slowly turns around. She channels Bette Davis in speech and manner.

EMILY

Really, Ruth Ann. I'll have you  
know that Candace has done more for  
me than I can ever repay.

She drags on a pencil as if it's a cigarette and exhales fake smoke. She struts a la Bette Davis to Ruth Ann.

EMILY

But I don't expect you to understand  
that poor, misguided Ruth Ann. No,  
I suppose you're destined to miss  
out on all the fun in life. What a  
pity. Not to worry because I'll  
enjoy the good times for you. Now,  
I'd love to kiss you, but I just  
washed my hair.

She takes a drag and blows fake smoke in Ruth Ann's face, walks away, stops and turns around. She puts her hand on her hip.

EMILY

Fasten your seat belt. It's going  
to be a bumpy night.

Emily walks out as Candace walks back into the room. She faces Ruth Ann then she goes to the shelf by the wall and takes the urn.

CANDACE  
I forgot my Uncle Walter.

Candace exits to Ruth Ann's shock.

INT. CANDYLAND CLUB - NIGHT

Candace gathers everyone together for a pep talk before the club opens. Danny, Bev with Scooter and Amy are present.

CANDACE  
Ladies, I want to say how grateful I am to you for supporting me. I never expected anything like this would happen.

Everyone looks at each other and laughs.

KRISTEN  
Neither did we, honey. It'll take a decade of confession and penance. Anyway, we have something to show what you really mean to us.

She takes a box from Cinnamon and hands it to Candace. Candace opens it and takes out a rolled piece of parchment which she reads.

CANDACE  
My own star?

KIWI  
Those are the coordinates so you can find it in the sky.

KRISTEN  
We named it, too.

CANDACE  
What?

EVERYONE  
Walter.

Candace looks inside the box and removes a new star gazer.

INT. CANDYLAND CLUB - NIGHT

The club is packed. The stage is dark and fog covers it. Danny's voice is heard.

DANNY

Ladies and gentlemen, saints and sinners, get ready to meet your maker for here come the Candyland Dancers with a special appearance by the Full of Hope Church Ladies' Auxiliary Committee. Praise the Lord, and pass the collection plate.

A pulsating drum beat is heard, Tina Turner's song "You're Simply the Best". As the vocals begin, Kristen steps through the fog. She stands center stage and moves slowly and seductively.

On the next beat, Candace step out of the fog and stands beside Kristen. They smile at each other. Then on the next beat two more dancers step forward, and so on. It proceeds like this until all dancers are on stage.

Danny, Bev, Amy and even Lillie Beth and Margo hold collection plates. They work their way through the crowd. Many in the crowd are so engrossed in the show that they take money from their pockets and put in the plate. Some even take off their wedding rings and place them it in the plates, too.

EXT. CANDYLAND CLUB - LATER

Candace exits the club's back door with cheers of the crowd heard inside as it closes. She walks toward the swing set.

She hold the gift bag and reaches inside and removes her new Star Gazer. She looks up at the sky then programs it.

Candace holds it to her eye and scans the heavens. She stops and holds her breath.

Then Candace slowly lowers it from her eye and a look of wonder and understanding crosses her face. She feels the swing seat behind her and sits down.

She looks at the club, the cheers no longer audible, just the sound of crickets in the night. The moon shines brightly and almost fills the sky.

The back door opens and Danny walks out.

CANDACE

I think I found my star.

Danny walks over to her with a bottle of champagne.

DANNY

I know I found mine.

(beat)

You know that saying life is short,  
it's not. Life is very long; too  
long to spend without you.

Danny sits beside her on the swing.

DANNY

I took a step down from pizza manager  
to paralegal. I can work around my  
classes when I return to law school.  
That's if you're not ashamed to have  
an attorney for a husband?

CANDACE

As long as you're not ashamed to  
marry a star gazer.

(beat)

I'm still trying to understand why  
Walter left the club to me.

DANNY

Bev thought he wanted you to learn  
something.

CANDACE

What?

DANNY

Ask him. You know his new address.

Candace points the star gazer up to the sky.

CANDACE

Hey, Walter. Am I suppose to learn  
a lesson from all this?

Danny opens the bottle and puts two straws in. Candace  
chuckles while they sip. A star twinkles but they don't see  
it. The star twinkles again as Candace looks up. She gulps.

CANDACE

Danny, did you see that?

DANNY

What?

CANDACE

Walter's star just lit up. Watch.  
Is that you, Walter?

Nothing happens.

DANNY

It's just a fluke.

Danny looks away as the star twinkles brighter for an instant.

CANDACE

Danny, the fluke heard you.

Danny looks up.

DANNY

I don't see anything.

Candace stands and steps forward looking skyward.

CANDACE

I do.

(to star)

Walter, is that you up there? I know it's you. I'm not afraid.

Still no reaction from the star.

DANNY

Candace, don't go holy on me.

She ignores him. Candace sings the "The Battle Hymn of the Republic".

CANDACE

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.

She pauses as she ponders the words. She looks at the club then at the star. Slowly, a light bulb look appears on her face. She looks back up at the star. Then it twinkles. Danny sees it now. He stands up in shock. It twinkles again.

DANNY

Holy, everything.

The star glows brighter.

CANDACE

(To Danny)

I told you. The best answers come from above. That's what you always told me, right?

The star twinkles twice. Danny freaks.

CANDACE

Calm down, its only Walter.  
 (to star)  
 I knew it was you. Walter, I love  
 you. Hey, you remember Danny?

The star twinkles twice, again. Danny freaks more.

CANDACE

Walter, I get it, now. I understand  
 what this is about. It took awhile.  
 I love you. I miss you so much.  
 (beat)  
 Walter, I'm just want to know one  
 thing, are my folks up there with  
 you?

Two stars beside Walter slowly glow. Candace and Danny stand  
 in awe.

CANDACE

Danny, Danny. They're here. They're  
 all up there.

He steps up behind her and holds her as she addresses the  
 stars.

CANDACE

Mom, daddy. It's me. I can't believe  
 it. It's been so long. I'm okay.  
 Walter took wonderful care of me.  
 Danny, too. This is him.  
 (to Danny)  
 Say something.

Embarrassed and uncertain.

DANNY

Hi. I mean hello up there. I truly  
 love your daughter. Her heart and  
 humor, and above all her spirit that  
 never quits. She never gives up on  
 anything or anyone; including me.  
 That's what I love most. Thank you  
 for giving her to me and all of us  
 down here. I'll take care of her.  
 I promise each of you.

Candace steps away from Danny, and speaks to the stars.

CANDACE

I need to know something. I didn't  
 get the chance to ask you before.

(MORE)

CANDACE

But it's real important for me to know. Are you proud of me?

The three stars glow brightly. Candace starts to cry.

CANDACE

I've tried so hard to do what's right. I try to help everyone I can. I always forgive people no matter what. I think good thoughts and imagine how happy we'd be if we could be together. We finally are. And I'm so happy right now.

Candace sobs. Danny holds her. She finally collects herself.

CANDACE

You know, it's been really tough down here. First, you both died in the fire then Walter had a heart attack a couple of months ago. Oh, the big surprise was finding out about Candyland. Don't get me wrong, Walter I'm grateful but imagine my shock. Then the church business with Ruth Ann. Oh, let me warn you about her. Spread the word up there.

Danny interrupts her.

DANNY

Okay, honey maybe that's enough for now. They probably know everything already. I'm sure they'll be right there when you need them.

CANDACE

Is that true? Can we talk again? I have so much catching up.

The stars glow even brighter.

CANDACE

Thank you mommy, daddy, and Walter. I'll make you even prouder of me.

DANNY

Candace, maybe we should keep this our secret, okay?

(to stars)

Good night, everyone.

CANDACE

Okay, honey.  
 (to stars)  
 We gotta go. I love you. I'll be  
 back, I promise. I love you all.

She blows kisses heavenward. Danny grabs her hand as they walk back into the club. She sings. Danny joins in.

CANDACE/DANNY

Glory, glory hallelujah. Glory,  
 glory hallelujah. Glory, glory  
 hallelujah. His truth is marching on.

The stars slowly twinkle one more time then return to normal.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CANDYLAND CLUB - DAY

The newly renovated club has it's grand opening. Balloons and streamers drape the roses and entrance. The parking lot is full.

A new sign replaces the neon one, CANDYLAND DAYCARE AND LEARNING CENTER, in red and white stripe letters.

Crowds of parents walk into the center with their children.

INT. CANDYLAND CLUB - DAY

The club is transformed - children's chairs and tables replace the bar. It's brightly lit and colorful with alphabet letters and numbers on the walls with posters of animals.

Kiwi gives a piano demonstration in the music corner. She plays Bach's "Joy" which is heard throughout the montage.

Kristen and Cinnamon show tap dance steps to parents and children on the new dance stage.

Emily shows cartoons to some children on a wall mounted TV.

Church ladies hand out application forms to parents while Lillie Beth and Margo serve cookies and punch.

Pam runs into the center, excited.

PAM

Here they come. Candace and Danny.  
 Everyone, come outside.

EXT. CANDYLAND CLUB - DAY

The crowd assembles outside the building and looks skyward. A hot air balloon slowly floats over the club. A banner hangs on the basket with 'Just Married' written on it.

INT. BALLOON BASKET - DAY

Candace wears a white wedding gown and stands beside Danny. Pastor Murphy beams as he pronounces them husband and wife. Bev holds Scooter while Amy cries. Scooter barks. The pilot finally kisses Amy as a burst of fire shoots up into the balloon.

CANDACE

Here's hoping we love each other at  
the end as much as we do at the  
beginning.

Candace and Danny kiss as she tosses her bouquet overboard. All the women leap for it. The bouquet bounces over their heads and lands in Emily's arms. The crowd waves and cheers as the balloon ascends. The music fades.

FADE OUT

THE END