

NOT EASILY BROKEN

Screenplay by  
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Adapted from the Novel by T.D. Jakes

Writer's Revisions  
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The SCREEN is filled with a heavenly WHITE glow as we hear an inspirational wedding song being sung by a black CHURCH CHOIR -- something like "WIND BENEATH MY WINGS."

FADE IN:

1 EXT. EMMANUEL FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - ESTABLISHING - DAY (1994) 1

And the glow becomes blue sky, and we FIND a church steeple reaching to heaven. And BEGIN MAIN TITLES as we WIDEN to see a white clapboard church somewhere in the city. A SIGN out front tells us where we are and the late-model cars tell us when: the early 1990s.

CUT TO:

2 INT. EMMANUEL FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - SANCTUARY - DAY (1994) 2

The joyous black choir sings the song as a wedding is in progress in a lovely sanctuary filled with happy, mostly black WEDDING GUESTS. The Fade hairstyles on the men and Anita Baker bobs on the women date us to the early 90s.

The gorgeous bride, CLARICE CLARK, mid-20s, makes a beautiful entrance down the aisle where she joins her handsome groom, DAVE JOHNSON, 25, standing with a nearly all-black wedding party -- save for one lone Caucasian young man we'll later meet as BROCK HOUSEMAN, his hair in a college mullet. Dave takes Clarice's arm and they step up to larger-than-life BISHOP WILKES, dressed in colorful Afrocentric robes. As the SONG ENDS, the Bishop opens his Bible, and END MAIN TITLES.

BISHOP WILKES

Dave, Clarice, I want to tell you something a wise king named Solomon once said...

(reading)

"It is better to have a partner than go through life alone. For if one falls down, the other is there to pick him up. Alone you are unprotected, but with a partner you can face the worst the world has to offer. Even better is a cord of three strands because it is not easily broken."

(closing Bible)

My brother, my sister... life is gonna try to knock you down. And it's hard to keep the good in a good marriage when bad things happen.

(CONTINUED)

The Bishop holds up a gold-braided cord. He places one end around Dave's shoulders and the other end around Clarice.

BISHOP WILKES (CONT'D)

The two of you represent the first two strands, but God represents the third. And as long as you stay close to Him, I promise your marriage will be a three-stranded cord this world can never break.

Dave and Clarice nod, then turn to face each other. Dave then spots Clarice's 50-something, strong-willed mother, MARY CLARK -- or MAMA -- staring at him from the front row. And it's a stare that says "I'm watching you, boy." He winces a little, but then loses himself again in his new bride's eyes.

DAVE (V.O.)

When I first met Clarice in college, I was totally sprung. She was spell-binding and I was bewitched.

And we'll begin hearing the song, "THREE TIMES A LADY."

DISSOLVE TO:

3 EXT. EMMANUEL FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - DAY - LATER

3

Dave escorts Clarice through a crowd of happy wedding guests gathered in front of the church.

DAVE (V.O.)

You know the kind of woman I'm talkin' about. You'd rather just listen to her breathing on the phone than hang up and go to bed. I did what a man does when he finds a real keeper. I went for the picket fence... the whole bit.

Dave helps Clarice into the passenger seat of a really clean convertible sedan decorated with all the "just-married" trappings. Sign on the back, tin cans, etc.

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

On our wedding night, it was just me, her and a little bit of heaven. We didn't come up for air for two days.

He eagerly jumps into the driver's seat and they both look back, smiling and waving to the crowd.

(CONTINUED)

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

Together we were goin' places in this world. Someday, she was gonna be the Donald Trump of L.A. A real estate rainmaker. And I was gonna be the starting left fielder of the Los Angeles Dodgers. A-Rod money. Endorsement deals. Hall of Fame stats. My own show on ESPN. Big contract. Big career. Big life.

He then puts the car into gear and we SLOW DOWN the camera until it FREEZES ON Dave's happy smile.

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

Until it all ended trying to steal a base during my rookie ball season.

DISSOLVE TO:

4 INT. DAVE'S PICK UP TRUCK - TRAVELING - DAY (PRESENT DAY) 4

We're still CLOSE ON Dave, only now he looks a dozen years older in a blue-collar work shirt, jeans and construction boots. A few gray hairs dust his temples. And somehow "THREE TIMES A LADY" is still playing -- only now, on the car radio.

On the other side of the boulevard, a Police cruiser zooms past, its SIREN WAILING, pulling Dave out of his thoughts. He inadvertently flips the radio dial to a NEWS-TALK station.

DAVE (V.O.)

You know how young love is... it always starts out like it'll go on forever.

PULL OUTSIDE the beat-up truck with construction tools and racks in back, far enough to read the sign on the side: "ALL-PRO BUILDING & REMODELING."

CUT TO:

5 EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - ESTABLISHING - DAY - LATER 5

Dave's truck pulls into the driveway of a nice, upper middle-class home in a neighborhood full of similar homes. A recent model Cadillac Escalade is already sitting in the driveway, with one of those magnetic signs plastered on the door: "HASTINGS PROPERTIES & REAL ESTATE."

Dave steps out of the truck, surveys the house for a long moment, lets out a sigh.

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

5

DAVE (V.O.)

But like the Bishop said, life has a way of knocking the hell out of you.

6 EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY - MOMENT LATER

6

Clarice, looking as girlishly trim as she did on her wedding day, scans real estate listings on her laptop in the well-appointed kitchen. She's dressed smartly in a sexy blouse and skirt as Dave enters -- with a smile now plastered on his face and a load of fresh dry-cleaning over his shoulder.

DAVE

Damn, Reesie. All those curves and me with no brakes.

CLARICE

Hey, baby.

Dave moves in for a kiss. But she turns her cheek to him.

CLARICE (CONT'D)

I just touched up my face.

Dave gives her a peck on the cheek. He sets the dry-cleaning over a chair, opens the fridge, sorts through the leftovers.

DAVE

You want me to heat you up a plate?

CLARICE

I have to show property. I'll grab a bite later.

DAVE

(takes out casserole dish)

I was hoping we could get us a little quality time tonight.

CLARICE

Baby, would you get your priorities straight. My commissions pay for this house. Plus, these clients could pay for that new work truck we've been wanting to get you.

Dave has heard this lecture before and Clarice can see he's tired of it. She softens her approach.

CLARICE (CONT'D)

You think I want my big, strong chocolate kiss driving around in that beat-up old thing?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLARICE (CONT'D)

You're building a business. We've got to get you looking fly.

She comes around behind him, starts massaging his shoulders.

DAVE

I know.

CLARICE

Tell you what... how about this weekend, we see if that jacuzzi tub upstairs is big enough for two.

She nibbles on his ear a little. Dave's jelly and Clarice knows it. She has him right where she wants him.

DAVE

Maybe we could talk about, you know --

CLARICE

(pulls away, rolling eyes)  
Don't push your luck, boyfriend.

She puts on her colorful real estate blazer, and heads for the door, looking back appraisingly.

CLARICE (CONT'D)

You should get your game on tonight. You're putting on some love handles.

She smiles and exits out the door. Troubled, Dave checks his middle for some extra baggage. Finds some. It bums him out.

CUT TO:

INT. BROCK'S BMW - TRAVELING - DAY

Brock Houseman, looking handsome as ever, his mullet replaced with George Clooney hair, is wearing ratty gym clothes as he pilots his shiny black BMW through Dave's neighborhood. Dave, also dressed for a workout, rides shotgun, holding a basketball. In back is a really big black dude we'll come to know as TREE with a beaten-down quality about him. Brock punches a button on high-end sound system and up comes a clean-enough-for-radio RAP SONG. Dave winces.

DAVE

Hey, Eminem, you're gonna give my neighbors a heart attack.

Dave punches off the radio. Brock chuckles it off.

BROCK

Sorry, bro.

(CONTINUED)

This sort of black/white banter is part of their friendship.

DAVE

Do I look like I'm getting fat?

BROCK

Are you what?

DAVE

You heard me. Reesie says I look like I'm putting on a few pounds.

TREE

Well, your ass has started to look a little bigger lately.

DAVE

What are you doing looking at my ass?

TREE

Got to look at something. Vanessa won't let me see her naked since she got pregnant.

Dave offers a half-smile, then looks out the window.

TREE (CONT'D)

Speaking of big asses, B, how'd ya'll's deposition with the divorce attorney go?

BROCK

Heinous, bro. I'm a dead man. Fiona's gonna try to take everything. My house. This car. Half my salary.

DAVE

What about the big screen? Please tell me she's not taking the big screen.

Brock nods sadly. Dave looks at Tree. That's bad.

TREE

Damn.

CUT TO:

A classy real estate office building with lovely landscaping and a sign matching the magnetic placard on Clarice's SUV, which is just now pulling into a parking spot.

9

INT. HASTINGS REAL ESTATE - DAY - MOMENT LATER

9

When Clarice enters, she is instantly waylaid by MICHELLE, her sassy, brassy, late-20s black colleague who has opinions on every subject and is not shy about sharing them.

MICHELLE

Okay, Clarice, you've been holding out on me.

CLARICE

What?

Michelle points through an office window where a professional-looking black couple, THE REIDS, wait.

MICHELLE

You didn't tell me you were taking out Oprah and Stedman to look at houses.

CLARICE

Mr. and Mrs. Reid. He's a federal judge and she's Miss *Chi-chi* art dealer. They're looking to get into a new zip code.

MICHELLE

(only half-teasing)

You're already salesperson of the year. How come you can't throw your sister-girl a little charity and help me meet my quota for the month?

CLARICE

(rubbing it in)

Because, sister girl, that's not how I got to be salesperson of the year.

Clarice gives her smile and crosses into her office. As she does, we begin HEARING a jam like 50 Cent's "PLACES TO GO" --

SMASH CUT TO:

10

INT. DOWNTOWN GYMNASIUM - CLOSE ON BASKETBALL - DAY

10

SLAMMING THROUGH THE NET. WIDEN to see we're in the middle of a shirts-and-skins pick-up game in an inner-city gym. Dave comes down hard, having just slammed-dunked the ball over a tatted-up, street-looking black dude in his 30s we'll come to know as DARNELL GOODEN.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

Dave thumps his sweaty chest proudly and exchanges high-fives with bare-chested Brock and a couple other black TEAMMATES. Darnell is fuming.

DARNELL

That was charging, dawg!

DAVE

Give me the lane if you don't want my foot in your hind parts, homey.

(motions for the ball)

Ball!

Darnell shoots a look at Dave. Another player chunks the ball to Dave who takes it in from the baseline, tossing it to Tree as Darnell and his team get back on defense. And for a long time, it's all passes and shiny bodies slamming into one another. And then Dave gets the ball back and sees Brock open. The action STROBES into a SERIES OF SLOW-MOTION SHOTS:

A) Dave fires a chest past to Brock.

B) Darnell sees what's happening and moves into action.

C) As Brock goes up for his shot, a black fist flies INTO FRAME and connects with his face -- hard.

D) Brock slams to the floor and the ball goes rolling out of bounds, and we'll be overtaken by REAL TIME once again.

Brock springs up, blood gushing from his nose, and charges Darnell. Soon they are a whirling dervish of kicks and punches. Dave and the other players jump in to break it up.

TREE

Yo, knock it off! Break it up!

Finally Dave and Tree are able to pry them apart and Brock and Darnell both come out of the tussle spitting mad.

BROCK

What was that, man?

DARNELL

(thrusts a finger at Dave)

This fool wanted street rules.

DAVE

Better check yourself, Darnell. You ain't in the prison yard anymore!

Darnell suddenly charges Dave, pinning him to the wall before Brock and the others can pull them apart. Dave is stunned.

(CONTINUED)

DAVE (CONT'D)

What is your problem!

DARNELL

You, college boy! You used to be good folks back in the day, but now you think you too good for the hood!

DAVE

That's messed up, man!

DARNELL

I got my integrity. I ain't playin' with no Uncle Tom living in his big-ass house.

Darnell fires the ball at Tree, then starts to walk off.

BROCK

Come on, Darnell, let's just finish the game. No harm, no foul.

DARNELL

Shut up, punk! Go back to Starbucks!

With that, Darnell is out of there, leaving nothing but frustrated looks all around, especially from Dave and Brock.

CUT TO:

We're in the beautiful, elegantly appointed foyer of one of those big hillside homes with bay windows overlooking a sea of city lights. Clarice enters with the Reids from the living room and we TRACK them as they move through.

CLARICE

What I love about this house for you, Judge Reid, is the floor-to-ceiling built-ins in the study for your law books, and the east-facing front door means the house has perfect *Feng Shui*.

MR. REID

Fung what?

Mrs. Reid trades a smile Clarice.

MRS. REID

It's Chinese, baby. It means harmony.

(CONTINUED)

MR. REID

Ask me, it all sounds like mumbo-jumbo. I assume the sellers are looking for full price?

CLARICE

We can ask, but I doubt they'll be willing to come down.

(trying to reel him in)

Of course, there's not too many other houses in this neighborhood with a garage big enough for your vintage car collection.

Mr. Reid looks at her surprised.

MR. REID

How did you know about my Corvettes?

CLARICE

I make it my business to know the unique needs of all my clients.

The Reids look at each other, impressed.

MRS. REID

(grabs Clarice by elbow)

Come on, Clarice. I wanna see how my *chi* flows in the master bedroom.

And the two of them head upstairs. And we'll PRELAP the sound of a busy outdoor swim venue.

CUT TO:

12 EXT. DOWNTOWN AQUATICS CLUB - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT 12

An outdoor swim center with Olympic pools, bleachers and stadium lights illuminating the night.

13 INT. DOWNTOWN AQUATICS CLUB - WEIGHT ROOM - NIGHT 13

Dave and Brock sitting on weight machine benches, having finished lifting weights, drinking Gatorade, while Tree is finishing a set on the chest press. And they are melancholy, reflective. Through a window in the b.g., we can see a boys youth swim team is practicing in the Olympic pool down below.

DAVE

I don't know why Darnell has to hate on me like that.

(CONTINUED)

TREE

You know exactly why.

DAVE

That was fifteen years ago. I got my scholarship fair and square. The brother needs to get over it.

BROCK

I know how he feels... being the better athlete and all.

DAVE

Better athlete, my ass. Now you're the one smoking crack.

BROCK

Well, nobody ever said life is fair.

TREE

Please. Just what part of your million-dollar-stockbroker life are you whining about now?

BROCK

Maybe you hadn't noticed, Tree, but I'm the one getting hosed by the divorce lawyers.

TREE

That's cause you're a hound.

BROCK

I'm not a hound.

DAVE

(trades smile with Tree)

Maybe you forgot. We were roommates. In college you got more tail than a public toilet.

BROCK

That's true, but with Fiona, I was always faithful... technically. I may have browsed, but I never bought.

TREE

All I know is, I don't browse. I don't buy. I don't do nothin' but keep my eyes frozen straight ahead.

DAVE

I feel you, brother. Clarice has radar. She can even see my eyes moving behind my sunglasses.

TREE

When I get up in the mornin', I just start tellin' Vanessa "sorry" even if I ain't done nothin'. If I say sorry ten times a day no matter what, it covers all the stuff I don't even know I do and it keeps the peace. The way I figure it, happy wife... happy man.

BROCK

What kind of life is that? That isn't living. That's just breathing.

TREE

Yeah, but I ain't the one losin' my big screen.

Dave and Tree trade some knuckles on that one. But they notice Brock is suddenly looking down to the pool deck below at a pretty, perky, 30-something woman watching a swim team warming up near an Olympic pool. This is JULIE SAWYER.

DAVE

Fool, would you put your eyes back in your head? Some jealous husband's gonna come up in here and slap the taste out of your mouth.

BROCK

No worries. I asked the guy at the front desk. Her name's Julie. She's single. And so am I. Almost.

Dave and Tree trade looks. This is one crazy Caucasian.

CUT TO:

Several BOYS have just finished a practice race and climb out of the pool. One of them is lean, wiry 12-year-old BRYSON SAWYER. An excited Julie wraps a towel around him.

JULIE

Nice heat, stud!

COACH SPINELLO, late-20s, crosses over to them.

COACH SPINELLO  
How did that feel, Bryson?

BRYSON  
Good, I guess.

COACH SPINELLO  
Make sure you check for the black flag when you're at five meters from the wall. I don't want any concussions out here.

BRYSON  
Sorry, Coach. I forgot that time.

COACH SPINELLO  
With the regional finals coming up, how would you feel if I added your backstroke to the 400 IM relay? You'd be swimming with the fourteen-year-olds.

Bryson exchanges an amazed look with Julie. She beams.

BRYSON  
Are you kidding me? That would be totally sick.

COACH SPINELLO  
I'll take that as a "yes."

As Spinello crosses off, Julie can't help but give Bryson a kiss. Bryson pulls away from her.

BRYSON  
Mom, stop! It's embarrassing.

JULIE  
Hey, you just cleaned the clocks of a bunch of high school freshman. Don't get too big for your speedos.

BRYSON  
(sighs, impatient)  
Fine.

Julie smiles and tousles his hair.

CUT TO:

15

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER

15

We'll slowly PAN a A bedroom decorated out of the Pottery Barn catalog where we see framed family photos on a wall, including a shot of Dave in his College Baseball Uniform. And as we continue the PAN we come to the door where Dave enters quietly. He sees that Clarice is already in bed. He slips out of sweats and climbs into bed.

DAVE

You awake, baby?

He kisses her shoulder, trying to arouse her. She turns over, looking at him suspiciously, smelling his breath.

CLARICE

Are you drunk?

DAVE

No. I just had a beer with my boys.  
(trying again at love)  
Come on, Reesie, we need to get back  
to the lovin' part of our marraige.

CLARICE

Please, I know what this is about.  
You are just trying to keep up with  
the Jones's.  
(raising her eyebrows)  
As in Tree and Vanessa.

DAVE

What's wrong with that?  
(nuzzling her again)  
We could make beautiful babies  
together.

CLARICE

Because I told you I'm not ready for  
all that. I have goals and dreams.  
A baby would get in the way right  
now. Besides, you have work in the  
morning. You can't build a business  
coming in all hours of the night.

Dave pulls back. The mood is bruised, broken, battered.

CLARICE (CONT'D)

By the way, I need you home at four  
on Friday night. For my awards  
dinner.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED:

15

DAVE

\*

Okay. Fine. Whatever.

Clarice turns her back on him, frustrated. Dave does the same thing. And PRELAP the CRACK of a BASEBALL coming off a bat.

\*

\*

DISSOLVE TO:

16 OMITTED

16 \*



17

EXT. DOWNTOWN LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD - DAY

17\*

CLOSE ON A BASEBALL as it rolls toward MARCUS, a heavysset kid playing second base on an inner-city field. Marcus tries to scoop it up, but the ball squirts through his legs. "Coach" Dave holds the bat as his assistants, Brock and Tree shag the balls. We are mid-Little League practice. The team is a Fat Albert gang. Besides Marcus, we'll come to know a few of them as DARIUS and DESHAWN.

DAVE

Marcus! How many times I got to tell you? Keep your hind end down. You pokin' the ball like it's a bug.

Evoking a round of SNICKERS from the boys. Dave hits a pop fly which shortstop Deshawn, a light-skinned kid, has to race back to catch. When he does, he struts around, show-boating.

DESHAWN

Who's your daddy now, suckers?

DARIUS

Please, Cracker, you look like your white mama makin' that play.

(CONTINUED)

Suddenly, Deshawn charges Darius and they wrestle each other to the turf, punching and kicking as the other boys egg them on. Dave, Tree and Brock all three rush out to squash the melee. Tree separates the boys and holds them by the necks.

TREE

That's it! This ain't happenin'.

The boys finally stop struggling against Tree's strong grip.

DAVE

Darius, what is wrong with you, son?  
How many times do I have to tell you  
boys ain't none of us gonna  
disrespect each other on this team.  
Both of you, look at me. What race  
am I?

They both look at him a little confused.

BOTH BOYS

Black.

DAVE

Wrong. You know what Brother King  
said? I'm human first, then black.  
Get it? There's only one race of  
people, the human race. And two  
kinds people, good ones and bad ones.  
(a beat, to Darius)  
Darius, what race is Coach Brock?

DARIUS

White.

DAVE

(sighing)  
We'll have to work on that later.  
All right. Wind sprints.

Which causes GROANS of protest. Dave blows his WHISTLE and the boys take off running as Brock and Tree trade smiles.

BROCK

Martin Luther King never said those  
words.

DAVE

No, but Don King did.

Tree's smile fades on something he sees.

TREE

We got company.

Dave and Brock turn to look where Tree is looking. Darnell is walking up with a couple of loose-looking woman in painted on jeans on his arm. He is chugging from a forty-ounce malt liquor and staring at us with red eyes.

DAVE

You're not welcome here with that King Cobra, brother.

DARNELL

Shut up, fool! I can come up in this piece and see my boy any time I want!

DAVE

Not drunk on your ass. It's a bad influence on the boys. And it's against league rules. Clean it up, or stay away.

If looks could kill, Dave would be a dead man. Darnell glances over and sees Darius staring at him, awkwardly.

DARNELL

Darius! I'm takin' you home!

Darius looks at Dave, frozen.

DAVE

Don't do this, Darnell --

DARNELL

GET IN THE CAR!

Dave gives Darius a sad nod. Darius starts slowly walking off the field. Darnell tosses Dave a malevolent smile and crosses off with his ladies.

BROCK

No wonder Darius has an attitude with Darnell as a father.

TREE

He's his daddy. But that's a long way from bein' his father.

Dave follows Darnell's exit, anger brimming in his eyes.

CUT TO:

18 EXT. DARNELL'S BEAT UP CAR - DAY - MOMENT LATER 18 \*

Darius is looking glum as he arrives with Darnell at Darnell's old station wagon parked near the ball field. Darnell notices. \*

DARNELL  
Buck the hell up, shorty.

DARIUS  
Why you got to make me quit the team?

DARNELL  
'Cause it's a waste of your damn time.

DARIUS  
But I wanna play ball like you did.

DARNELL  
Just forget about all that mess.  
Ain't nothin' but an empty dream.  
World gonna eat you up and spit you  
out, and ain't nothin' you can do  
about it. Now get in the car.

Darius looks even more downcast as he slowly opens his door.

CUT TO:

19 EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT 19 \*

Dave gets out of his just-parked truck and looks at his house. He gives a long sigh, wavering on whether to close his truck door. Finally, he doe and heads to the house. \*

CUT TO:

20 INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - FRONT PORCH/ENTRYWAY - NIGHT 20 \*

Dave enters to find Clarice standing in the entryway, looking stunning in a sexy evening gown -- the kind you don't win an award. But her face wears an angry, impatient expression. \*

DAVE  
Hey, baby, what are you all dressed  
to the nines for?

(CONTINUED)

CLARICE

Do you really not remember my awards dinner? \*

DAVE

(it dawns on him)

Oh, Reesie, I'm so sorry. I got caught up with those boys --

(off her glare)

Give me five minutes.

He rushes past her toward the hallway without waiting for an answer. \*

CUT TO:

21 INT. CLARICE'S ESCALADE - TRAVELING - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER 21

Dave, now dressed in a nice sports jacket and slacks, is putting pedal to the metal in Clarice's SUV as she pouts in the passenger seat.

They come to a stop at an intersection. An ambulance, SIRENS BLARING, flies through the intersection ahead them, headed to some emergency. But they don't seem to notice. The light turns green and he hits the gas again.

CLARICE

Don't you realize how important this night is for me. How hard I work for us? What an honor it is to be Salesperson of the Year?

DAVE

I know, baby. I appreciate how hard you work. I didn't mean to forget. I just had a little trouble with --

CLARICE

Why are you wasting time on those little gangsters?

DAVE

That's not fair, Clarice. You know how important it is to me working with those kids.

CLARICE

They're just gonna end up in prison like all their ghetto-pass-carryin' daddies anyway.

(CONTINUED)

DAVE

(frosting over)

Now that's something new. I could have sworn I saw your lips moving, but heard your Mama's voice.

CLARICE

Leave Mama out of this. All I know is, if you put in as much time on our marriage as you do with those boys --

DAVE

I said I was sorry.

\*

From out of nowhere... SLAM... a large PICK UP TRUCK plows into Clarice's side of the Escalade at full speed with the sickening impact of a nuclear shock-wave. Clarice screams as the air-bags deploy and it's all grinding metal and flying glass as the world outside spins.

22 EXT. DOWNTOWN INTERSECTION - HIGH ANGLE - NIGHT - SAME TIME 22

The truck rolls to a stop and the crippled Escalade finally stops spinning and dies several yards away in a smoking heap.

23 INT. CLARICE'S ESCALADE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS 23

Inside, Dave has glass cuts all over his face and a nasty bump on his forehead. Dave looks over at Clarice. She's unconscious. Her leg is wickedly pinned by twisted metal. He checks her pulse, gently pats her cheek.

DAVE

Clarice... baby... you okay. Reesie, you got to wake up.

Suddenly Dave's door is YANKED OPEN and a concerned-looking Caucasian MAN is looking in his door.

MALE ONLOOKER

You okay in there, fella?

DAVE

Yeah, but my wife's hurt.

MALE ONLOOKER

Hang in there. I called 9-1-1.  
They'll get you folks out of there.

Dave looks at still unconscious Clarice. He begins to panic.

DAVE

Baby, wake up! Please, Clarice, can  
you hear me? Open your eyes. I need  
you to wake up!

After a beat, her eyes flit open and she realizes what's  
going on. She looks at her leg and her eyes fill with panic.

CLARICE

Jesus, my side hurts so bad. And my  
leg... I can't feel my leg!

DAVE

I know, baby. We gonna get you out  
of here real soon.

CLARICE

(starting to sob)  
I'm scared, David!

DAVE

Shhh, baby, I ain't gonna let nothin'  
happen to you.

SMASH CUT TO:

Another ambulance races through an intersection... this one  
presumably with Dave and Clarice inside.

PARAMEDIC (V.O.)

Multiple leg fractures. BP ninety-  
five over sixty.

SMASH CUT TO:

25 INT. ALL SAINTS HOSPITAL - TRAUMA UNIT - NIGHT - LATER 25

DOUBLE DOORS fly open with the force of Clarice's gurney.  
TRAUMA NURSES and DOCTORS receive it from the PARAMEDIC.

TRAUMA DOCTOR

Distal pulse is dropping. Obvious  
abdominal edema. Get the O.R. ready.  
Stat.

Dave tries to follow them, but a nurse stops him.

DAVE

I have to go in there with her! She  
needs me!

TRAUMA NURSE

We'll take good care of her, sir.

She notices a nasty gash on the side of Dave's head.

TRAUMA NURSE (CONT'D)

Plus, somebody needs to take care of  
that cut.

CUT TO:

A26 INT. ALL SAINTS HOSPITAL - O.R. - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER A26 \*

Dave watches anxiously through a window as the Trauma Doctor \*  
and nurses work feverishly to get Clarice into surgery. It's \*  
all needles, monitors, IV tubes and people rushing around. \*

CUT TO: \*

26 INT. ALL SAINTS HOSPITAL - PRIVATE ROOM - NIGHT - LATER 26 \*

Dave, his head bandaged, his face weary, stands over  
Clarice's bed where she is resting in a post-op anesthetic  
twilight, her leg is elevated in a cast and in traction. The  
Trauma Doctor enters, checking his charts.

TRAUMA DOCTOR

You got one tough cookie here.  
Before she went under, she told me I  
was not allowed to remove any of her  
body parts without her permission.

DAVE

That's my Reesie.

(CONTINUED)



26 CONTINUED:

26

The doctor motions Dave into:

27 INT. ALL SAINTS HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

27

Where they walk as they talk.

## TRAUMA DOCTOR

The tear in the spleen was small enough to patch. It should heal in a week or so. Leg's another matter.

(off Dave's worried look)

We had to put pins in three places. She's not going to be able to bear weight on it for a good month.

## DAVE

She won't be happy to hear that. She's gonna want to be back to work the moment she gets out of here.

They turn a corner into the:

A larger waiting area.

## TRAUMA DOCTOR

Mr. Johnson, this is a very severe injury. If she doesn't want to have to park in the handicapped spot the rest of her life, she is going to need a few months of physical therapy. You need to make her understand that.

\*

## DAVE

Yeah, okay.

The Doctor exits back down the hall just as Brock and Tree arrive. Brock has flowers. Tree carries a huge Teddy Bear.

## BROCK

How's she doing, bro?

Dave smiles. He's happy to see them. They enter and all exchange brotherly hugs. Dave fights his emotions.

## DAVE

The leg was broke bad. But I guess it could have been a lot worse.

## BROCK

(sober beat, then)

Makes you count your blessings.

## DAVE

Yeah. How you're always just a blink away from losing them.

TREE

We brought some get-well stuff.

DAVE

She'll like the flowers. Don't know about Smokey the Bear, though.

TREE

Bear's for you.

DAVE

(a chuckle, then)

So, how you two feel takin' over the team awhile? Think you can handle those little thugs without me?

TREE

Ain't no thing. We do all the hard work anyway.

Another chuckle. The moment's soon dashed by an angry voice.

MAMA (O.S.)

What have you done to my Clarice?

They all turn to see Mama Clark coming through the lobby door like a heat-seeking missile, fear and anger on her face. She is a decade older than when we last saw her at the wedding, but hasn't lost any of her spit.

DAVE

Mama Clark. She's gonna be okay. She had to have surgery. But they got her stabilized.

MAMA

How come it took you 'til now to let me know my baby girl was lying in the hospital?

DAVE

I'm sorry. It all just happened so fast. I wasn't thinking straight.

MAMA

(indicates Tree and Brock)

Though I guess you were thinking straight enough to let Lenny and Squiggy know, weren't you?

Dave trades uncomfortable looks with Brock and Tree.

BROCK

Maybe we better go. Hit you  
tomorrow, bro.

Dave nods, and Brock and Tree cross off down the hall,  
leaving him standing there with the flowers and giant bear.

DAVE

This was an accident, Mama. Somebody  
ran a red light and hit us. \*

MAMA

Please, don't even try to go there.  
She called me when she was waiting on  
you to get home. If you hadn't been  
late coaching those kids you wouldn't  
have had to be in such a hurry and  
would have been paying more  
attention. This whole thing's your  
fault. I hold you responsible for  
the whole damn thing. \*

She turns and rushes off in the direction of Clarice's room.  
Dave just stands there with Smokey the Bear.

DAVE (V.O.)

Once I heard a radio talkshow host  
ask the question... "why do bad  
things happen to good people?"  
During Clarice's month in the  
hospital, we asked that question a  
lot. \*

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY - SOME DAYS LATER

Dave's truck pulls to a stop. And we see a SUPER: "FOUR  
WEEKS LATER." Dave gets out first, rushes to the bed and  
pulls out a wheelchair and unfolds it. He then opens the  
passenger door and helps Clarice into the chair. \*

DAVE (V.O.)

But coming home didn't get us any  
closer to finding an answer. Because  
now the really hard work was about to  
kick in.

As Dave begins pushing Clarice toward the house, her notices  
that her eyes have filled with tears. \*

(CONTINUED)

DAVE (CONT'D)

Don't cry, Reesie. We're gonna get  
through this.

CLARICE

We aren't the one with the leg  
twisted up like a damn pretzel.

DAVE

(staying positive)

Listen, I got everything set up for  
you, baby. Got a week of meals in  
the freezer for us. Got the house  
nice and clean. Let me get you  
inside and I'll heat you up a plate.

As they get to the front door, Dave pulls out his keys and is  
about to turn the lock when the door opens and Mama is  
standing there.

MAMA

I've moved in.

Dave trades a stunned look with Clarice. \*

MAMA (CONT'D)

Don't stand there all day. Bring her  
in. \*

DAVE \*

Look, Mama, I appreciate your  
concern, but I think I'm capable of  
taking care of my own wife.

MAMA

Let me break it down for you. If  
things were as "jiggy" as all that,  
then I wouldn't be here, would I?

Dave sighs and pushes Clarice inside. \*

CUT TO:

Clarice is sitting in bed in a silk robe with her leg up.  
She has her face on and an eager look in her eyes. A desk is  
set up next to the bed. Dave shows Michelle into the room.  
She's carrying a box. As soon as she and Clarice see each  
other, Michelle rushes over and they hug.

MICHELLE

Oh, my God, Clarice! How are you  
feeling?

(CONTINUED)

CLARICE

Good. Now that I got a sister here.

MICHELLE

I can't believe it. For what you went through, you look absolutely gorgeous.

CLARICE

You can knock me on my butt, but nobody's keeping this girl down.

MICHELLE

Now that's what I'm talking about.  
(remembering something)  
Oh, I almost forgot.

She opens the box and pulls out a beautiful crystal trophy shaped like a triangle and hands it to Clarice.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

To the Salesperson of the Year.

It takes Clarice's breath away as she runs her fingers across the inscription.

CLARICE

I have died and gone to heaven.

Michelle pulls some files out of the box.

MICHELLE

But no time to rest on your laurels. Your phone has been ringing off the hook and I brought all your current listings and offers.

Dave watches from the door. He smiles. This is a good day for Clarice. Mama comes to the door.

MAMA

David, put on some tea. Can't you see these girls need some tea?

Mama crosses in. Dave's smile is replaced by a glower.

CUT TO:

Brock enters the gym and passes the players we met earlier. They are just shooting practice shots on half the court.

(CONTINUED)

BROCK

Why you guys playing Horse? I thought we were gonna get our game on.

Tree just shakes his head and points down court.

TREE

Somebody hoggin' up half the court.

Brock turns and is surprised to see Dave shooting hoops all by himself at the other end of the gym. And given his sweat factor and fatigued look, he's been here awhile.

ANGLE ON DAVE

He slam dunks the ball and the whole backboard shudders. As he turns back the court, a basketball is fired at him from o.s. and he catches it, surprised. We ADJUST to see Brock and Tree walking over.

BROCK

Dude, either Clarice is making the world's fastest recovery... or you got your walkin' papers.

DAVE

(glowering)  
Don't ask.

BROCK

Mama?

Dave replies by firing the ball back at Tree.

CUT TO:

32 EXT. SPORTS COMPLEX - RUNNING TRACK - DAY - LATER

32 \*

After the game, Dave, Brock and Tree are warming down with some jogging around a track.

\*  
\*

DAVE

I was about to put my foot down, but the old banshee had already moved into the house.

TREE

See, D, you just haven't learned the lesson I learned a long time ago.

DAVE

What's that?

(CONTINUED)



TREE

When me and Vanessa can't agree on something, I just let her be right.

BROCK

Do you have any self-respect left?

TREE

Self respect is overrated. Besides, ain't no yellin' around my house, I get a hot meal every night, and unlike you, I ain't gonna end up with arthritis of the wrist.

Which even Brock has to smile at.

DAVE

I thought you said Vanessa won't let you near her now that she's got a bun in the oven.

TREE

Well, that's true. But it's mostly my fault. Like last night, she took a bubble bath. That's usually my green light. But then when I try to get all cuddly, she shoves me off. She said it's because I'm stanky and I don't clip my toenails.

BROCK

(feigning calling waiter)

Whoa, check please. That's too much information for me.

TREE

That's my problem. I'm a stanky man. Maybe I got stanky breath? Smell my breath.

DAVE

I'm not smelling your breath. Buy some Tic Tacs.

They all burst out laughing for a few beats. But then their melancholy returns.

BROCK

Even after everything Fiona's done to me, I still miss her.

(gives a little shiver)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BROCK (CONT'D)

There's just something about the way they cross their legs and rock those high heels up and down.

They all have the picture now, and stare into space for a long moment. Dave notices Tree wiping his eyes.

DAVE

You crying, Tree?

TREE

Nah, man.

BROCK

Yes, you are. You're crying.

TREE

It's just so tragic and beautiful all at the same time. They got us in one of those damn Star Wars tractor beams, pulling us in. We couldn't escape even if we wanted to, and it feels so damn good we don't want to.

DAVE

That's deep, Tree. That's deep.

They all think on this for another moment.

BROCK

So, D, seems like the only way you're gonna get Mama out of your house is to get Clarice back on her feet.

DAVE

Yeah, the doctor wants me to get her into physical therapy right away.

BROCK

Remember that girl I had my eye on?

DAVE

Which one? It's somebody different every day.

BROCK

Over at the pool. Julie. The word around the club is she's a terrific therapist, and I heard she makes house calls.

Dave looks intrigued.

CUT TO:

33 EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - DAY - LATER THAT DAY 33  
 The sun is setting over suburbia.

34 INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT 34 \*  
 Dave enters the room to see Clarice curled up on a recliner \*  
 chair. The smile and confidence we saw earlier is gone. \*

DAVE  
 Reesie, what's wrong?

CLARICE  
 Who was I kidding? I can't sell real \*  
 estate from a damn bed. The Reids \*  
 backed out of the deal while I was in \*  
 the hospital. I want you to call Mr.  
 Hastings and tell him that I'm done.  
 I'm out of the game.

DAVE  
 Baby, you are not out of the game.  
 You just need more time, and I'm \*  
 gonna get you the help you need.

Clarice doesn't respond.

CLARICE  
 (starting to cry)  
 Everything was going so perfectly.  
 What happened to my life?

DAVE  
 Don't go there. We'll get through  
 this. We have each other, right?

CLARICE  
 (turning away from him)  
 Just go. I don't wanna see or talk  
 to anybody right now.

An unnerving thing for him to hear. And PRELAP a DOORBELL.

DISSOLVE TO:

35 INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - FRONT ENTRY/LIVING ROOM - DAY - LATER 35 \*  
 Mama comes the door. Julie is standing there with her bag of  
 P.T. gear and a smile. Mama gives her the once-over.

(CONTINUED)

MAMA  
Go away. We're not buying anything.

Julie looks a little confused. Dave now comes to the door.

DAVE

It's okay, Mama. I got it.

Mama throws up her hands and grouses as she retreats within the house.

JULIE

I hope I have the right address. I'm Julie Sawyer. You called for an in-home physical therapist.

DAVE

Right. I'm Dave Johnson. Please come in.

Julie smiles and enters with her gear. Clarice is sitting in her recliner chair. When she sees Julie with Dave, she does not try to cover her downcast demeanor. \*

DAVE (CONT'D) \*

Reesie, this is Miss Sawyer. She's the therapist I told you about. \*

Clarice turns away without answering. Mama watches like a hawk from a far corner -- already doesn't like what she sees. Julie sets down her gear, pulls up a chair next to the bed. \*

JULIE \*

Mrs. Johnson, after what you've been through, I know the last thing you want is some stranger in your life. So why don't we just start out by getting to know each other a little. \*

CLARICE \*

I'm not looking for anyone to psychoanalyze me either. \*

JULIE \*

That's good. Because that's not what I'm here for. \*

Clarice's affectation remains flat and Mama remains skeptical. But Dave has to smile a little on that one. \*

JULIE (CONT'D) \*

But talking about how you're feeling emotionally can help me design a better plan for getting you back up on that leg again. \*

35 CONTINUED:

35

Clarice's eyes fill with tears of frustration. \*

CLARICE \*

How do I feel?! I feel like damn  
Humpty-Dumpty! That's how I feel! \*

MAMA \*

Okay, that's about all of this  
nonsense I'll put up with. Young  
lady, you're just making things  
worse. \*

CLARICE \*

(intervening) \*

No, Mama. She's just doing her job.  
Give us some time alone. Please. \*

Mama starts to say something, but thinks better of it. \*

DISSOLVE TO: \*

36 OMITTED

36 \*

37

EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY - AN HOUR LATER

37\*

Julie has her gear bag in hand and Dave is escorting her out.

DAVE

I'm worried about her. I've never seen her like this before.

JULIE

Some depression is normal when you've been through a traumatic experience like this. Soon as she sees she's making progress, she'll snap out of it, Mr. Johnson. I promise.

DAVE

Call me Dave. It doesn't make me feel so old.

JULIE

In that case... I'm Julie.

Dave smiles, shakes her hand. Julie then exits. We'll begin HEARING a tune like Luther Vandross' "A HOUSE IS NOT A HOME."

DISSOLVE TO:





45 OMITTED 45 \*

46 OMITTED 46 \*

47 OMITTED 47 \*

48 INT. DOWNTOWN AQUATICS CLUB - WEIGHT ROOM - DAY (MOS) 48 \*

And now Clarice is sitting on an exercise bike slowly pedaling. Then faster. Even faster, as Julie stands nearby.

DAVE (V.O.)

Women started becoming their own \*  
 heroes. Maybe because their men \*  
 forgot how to be, or because women \*  
 didn't want to be protected anymore. \*

A48 EXT. SWIM STADIUM - POOL - DAY (MOS) A48 \*

Julie has Clarice in the shallow end of the pool extending \*  
 her leg. It's painful, but the water makes it easier. \*

49 INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY 49

Clarice is in her wheelchair. As Dave comes in from the kitchen in his work clothes, drying his hands on a towel, and Mama watches from the sofa, Julie hands Clarice a cane. At first Clarice doesn't want to try, but Julie gives her an encouraging smile. Finally, Clarice plants the cane in front of her and pulls herself up into a standing position. She can't believe it. She's up on her own two legs.

DAVE (V.O.)

But whatever the cause, the world  
 took away a man's reasons for bein' a  
 man. It told him he wasn't important  
 anymore. And when that happened, it  
 turned the whole world upside down.

Then Clarice takes a step and a breaks into a broad victory smile. She gives Julie and grateful hug. Even Mama has to smile about this. And Dave gives Julie a look of thanks as the SONG and our MONTAGE ENDS.

DISSOLVE TO:

Julie is packing her gear into the trunk of her Sentra. Dave is there with Clarice, propped up on her cane.

CLARICE

Sometimes I never thought I'd get here. I don't know how to thank you.

JULIE

Well, first you can send a "Happy Letter" to my boss at the clinic, telling him you've never met a more skilled and professional therapist.

CLARICE

You got it.

JULIE

Second, you need several more weeks of therapy, and I could still use the work, so please don't quit yet.

CLARICE

Wouldn't think of it.

JULIE

(climbs into her car)

Well, I guess I'll see you Monday.

She goes to turn her key. A gruesome GRINDING NOISE comes from her engine. Then a horrible CLUNKING NOISE.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Don't worry, it always does this. It's probably just the battery.

DAVE

That sounds like more than a battery.

JULIE

Please, just go back inside and enjoy your evening. I'll get it running.

CLARICE

Nonsense. You can't be late for your son. Dave'll run you home.

Julie tries to start the car again. More GRINDING NOISE. As she does, Dave looks at Clarice, speaks in hushed tones.

DAVE

I'll just call her a tow truck.  
(off her look)  
It's my hoops tonight. I can't miss my hoops.

Mama is at the doorway where she has been watching.

MAMA

That girl saved your wife's life.  
You can be a little late.

OFF Dave's sigh of resignation --

CUT TO:

The sun is sinking as Dave and Julie drive through downtown. They've never been alone before. And it's a quiet ride.

JULIE

I really appreciate this.

DAVE

No problem.

At that moment, they pass by a storefront business whose ALARM BELL is ringing. They don't seem to notice.

JULIE

I wanted to tell you what a great job you did supporting Clarice through all of this. It was more important to her success than you know.

DAVE

Thank you. You did real good, too.

Julie chuckles this off. More silence.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Can I ask you a question? I have a friend who's been wanting to ask you out on a date, but he's sort of in a... complicated situation right now.

(CONTINUED)

JULIE

Don't tell me. Recently broken up?  
Or getting divorced? Or lives with  
his mother?

DAVE

Getting divorced. But he's got a  
good job and a lot of money -- well  
at least his ex-wife does.

JULIE

Thanks, Dave. But I'll pass. Single  
mothers don't exactly have a lot of  
options, but I don't need to be his  
rebound relationship.

DAVE

It's none of my business, but how did  
you... I mean, what happened to --

Dave doesn't really know how to finish the question. But  
Julie knows how to answer it.

JULIE

Believe me, I wish the story was more  
dramatic than it is, but truth is,  
I'm just a small town cliché. Ted  
and I were high school sweethearts.  
We went to our senior prom and three  
months later we were married 'cause  
Bryson was on the way.

(beat, sadly)

Then one day when Bryson was about  
six months old, Ted was... gone.

DAVE

I'm sorry. How did he pass?

JULIE

Not that kind of gone. Just walked  
out and never looked back.

DAVE

I didn't mean to pry.

JULIE

It's okay. I used to chop up  
cucumbers every night and think of  
him. I'm down to once a week now.

Which makes Dave both wince and smile, which she enjoys.  
Dave can feel her eyes on him. He points out the window.

51 CONTINUED:

51

DAVE  
Here's the swim club.

52 EXT. DOWNTOWN AQUATICS CLUB - DAY

52

Julie and Dave approach a confused-looking Bryson who is just exiting the center, still wet from practice, carrying his warm up bag.

JULIE  
Hi, Bry. This is Dave. His wife is my patient, remember? The ones in the accident.

BRYSON  
Oh, yeah. How do you do, sir.

DAVE  
What's up, Bryson?

JULIE  
My car died again. Dave offered to give us a lift home.

BRYSON  
Cool.

They begin walking as they talk.

JULIE  
How did practice go?

BRYSON  
Good. Coach showed me how to do a better flip turn on my freestyle leg.

DAVE  
See, now the only freestyle I know about is rappers spittin' rhymes on a street corner. But if you stick a basketball or a baseball in my hand, I got the skills to pay the bills.

BRYSON  
I've always wanted to try baseball, but Mom throws like a girl.

JULIE  
Watch it.

DAVE  
I coach a team over at Eastside Field.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

52 CONTINUED:

52

DAVE (CONT'D)

You should come by sometime and I can hook you up with a few pointers.

BRYSON

Are you serious? That would be totally sick.

JULIE

(off Dave's confused look)  
It means "cool."

Dave gives Julie a smile and a nod.

CUT TO:

53 EXT. JULIE AND BRYSON'S BUNGLAOW - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

53

The SUV pulls up to a clean, modest little house on lower middle-class street full of similar homes. As Bryson gets out with his swim bag, Julie follows Dave to the trunk. When he opens it, she grabs her gear bag.

JULIE

Thanks for this. Really. I'll call a tow for my car. \*

Bryson has already scampered inside the house. Julie turns back on the porch. \*

DAVE

No, don't do that. I got a repairman who owes me a favor. And Clarice and I owe you. \*

JULIE

Are you sure? \*

(CONTINUED)

53 CONTINUED:

53

DAVE

Absolutely.

It's awkward for a beat. She gives him a grateful smile.

JULIE

Thank you.

Dave smiles and nods.

\*

DISSOLVE TO:

54 EXT. JULIE AND BRYSON'S BUNGALOW - NIGHT - LATER

54

That same door, only now there's a white fist rapping on it. After a beat, the porch light comes on and the door opens, and Julie is there. We ADJUST to reveal Brock standing there, holding a set of keys.

JULIE

Yes?

BROCK

Uh, Julie... I'm Brock Houseman. We haven't actually met, but I'm a member of your swim club. I'm a buddy of Dave Johnson's. Anyway, he told me you were having car trouble, and I just so happen to know a little something about alternators.

\*

\*

He hands her the keys and points to the Sentra in the driveway. Julie is stunned.

55 INT. BROCK'S BEAMER - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

55 \*

Dave and Tree are waiting in Brock's car out front of Julie's house. The engine is still running. They look to see Brock chatting amiably with Julie. He points out to them and Julie waves from the porch. Dave offers a little wave back, then wipes auto grease off his hands with a rag.

(CONTINUED)

DAVE

I got a ten that says he's taking all  
the credit for fixing the car.

TREE

Reason two-hundred-and-twelve for  
why he's losing his big screen.

Dave chuckles this off. And we'll HEAR the sound of a CHURCH  
CHOIR and beautiful SOLOIST singing a kicking Gospel tune,  
maybe something like Kirk Franklin's "BLESSING IN THE STORM."

DISSOLVE TO:

56 INT. EMMANUEL FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - SANCTUARY - DAY

56

The service is in full swing and a full house of congregants  
is swaying to performance of the soloist and the choir, as is  
Bishop Wilkes and some of his deacons up on the platform. In  
the audience, Clarice looks stunning in her best church dress  
and hat, and she sits between Dave and Mama. The choir comes  
to a SOFT INTERLUDE in the SONG which they continue to sing  
quietly as Bishop Wilkes steps up and calls out to his flock.

BISHOP WILKES

Brother and sisters, our Lord Jesus  
called out to the multitude, "Come to  
me, all you who are weary and heavy  
burdened, and I will give you rest."  
So right now, all you in need of  
healing and prayer, all you in need  
of encouragement, come to the altar  
and receive the Lord's blessing.

As folks make their way down front, Clarice feels drawn out  
of her seat. So does Dave, and he helps her down the aisle  
with the aid of her cane. When they reach the front, they  
kneel at the altar, and the Bishop lays loving hands on them.  
And we FIND Mama watching, wishing she had the courage to go  
forward, too. But as the choir's SONG CRESCENDOS, she stays  
put in her seat.

CUT TO:

57 EXT. EMMANUEL FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - SANCTUARY - DAY - LATER

57

The service has now concluded and the Bishop is greeting  
folks at the door. Mama exits the church with Clarice and  
Dave on the same steps where they had their wedding send off.

(CONTINUED)



MICHELLE (O.S.)

Lord Jesus, I'm having a vision!

They all turn to see Michelle standing with her handsome husband, TODD. Michelle rushes over and embraces Clarice.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Look at you! Walkin' up in here like Miss America!

CLARICE

Hi, sister girl.

MICHELLE

Please tell me this doesn't mean you're coming back to work and now I have to start fighting you for clients again.

CLARICE

I feel a Beyonce song coming on.  
(happily)  
A little something called, "Can't Help Myself."

As Michelle gives her rival a hug and drags her over to chat with some other girlfriends, the Bishop offers his hand to Mama and Dave.

BISHOP WILKES

I hope you know you all have been right at the top of our prayer tree. It was really good to see you folks in church today.

DAVE

After what we've been through, it's good to be seen, Bishop.

MAMA

The Lord's been good, Bishop. Clarice had a wonderful therapist who got her walking again. And David has been a real trooper.

Dave looks at Mama, a little surprised by the compliment.

BISHOP WILKES

Well, I hope you know we're always here for you. Twenty-four-seven. Even if you just wanna come in and talk.

(MORE)

BISHOP WILKES (CONT'D)

If God's family was only for Sundays,  
then we'd be a pretty flimsy family.

DAVE

Thanks, Bishop. That's straight up.

DISSOLVE TO:

A58

INT. DOWNTOWN CAFE - NIGHT

A58 \*

A quaint, expensive-menu bistro. Clarice and Dave are dressed nicely and sitting at a table with two other well-dressed, pompous-looking black COUPLES, now enjoying dessert wines and cheese. Clarice has some architectural sketches and profit projections laid in front of the two men, ALLEN and CURTIS.

CLARICE

I think you can see how a retail space in this neighborhood would be a home run. That is, with the right financial backing.

At that moment, the MAITRE'D comes by with check.

MAITRE 'D

Excuse me. Who will be taking the check?

CLARICE

Dave, get that.

The Maitre 'D hands Dave the bill, and he reacts to the amount for a beat. He then pulls out his wallet and hands over a credit card -- slightly uncomfortable doing so.

ALLEN

This is all very impressive, Clarice. I like what I'm seeing. I'm glad to see you're back on the job.

(looking at Dave)

Dave, what do you think of your wife's ambitions?

DAVE

I really wouldn't know where to how to comment on a big project like this, sir.

Clarice looks a little disappointed in his answer.

CLARICE

He's just being modest. Dave runs a very successful construction company.

(CONTINUED)

ALLEN

Really? Maybe we could make this a family affair, Dave. Clarice develops and you do the build-out.

DAVE

Like I said. I mostly do small jobs, remodels, that kind of thing.

Clarice shoots Dave another look. The Maitre 'D returns to Dave with a snooty expression on his face.

MAITRE 'D

I'm sorry, sir. But your card is over the limit.

ALLEN

Please. Let me take care of this.

Allen hands the waiter one of those black Amex-type cards. Dave's embarrassed. Clarice is mortified.

CLARICE

I'm so sorry, Allen. There must have been mistake with the computer.

ALLEN

Of course there was.

But Dave fumes. The damage has been done.

CUT TO:

58 EXT./INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - FRONT PORCH/ENTRY WAY - LATER 58 \*

Clarice and Dave are both getting out of Clarice's parked Escalade. And by the looks of things, they are both hot under the collar.

CLARICE

I have never been so humiliated in my life. Do you realize how you made me look in front of my clients?

DAVE

(flaring)

How I made you look? Clarice, do you know how slow construction has been for me lately? I've been the only breadwinner since you got laid up.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DAVE (CONT'D)

If I embarrassed you in front of Mr.  
Fancy-ass Developer, you should have  
known better than to ask me to pick  
up the bill.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

CLARICE

It is just irresponsible of you,  
David, to be over your limit.

\*  
\*  
\*

This really raises Dave's hackles. He grabs her by the arm  
before she can get to the front door.

\*  
\*

DAVE

You hold it right there, Clarice!  
Don't you lecture me on being  
overextended. While you were  
recuperating, I was paying the bills,  
remember? If you want to talk about  
being over the limit, the mortgage  
you got us into on this house is  
about to bankrupt us.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Suddenly Mama comes out the door in a chiding mood.

\*

MAMA

Well, maybe if you would stop wasting  
time on those little gangsters in  
training, and start taking care of  
business, you wouldn't be having this  
conversation.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

DAVE

Stay out of this, Mama.

\*  
\*

But Clarice takes up the sword from Mama.

\*

CLARICE

Now it's your turn to listen to me,  
David. I have worked too hard to get  
us up into the proper station in  
life. I'll sell my car and all my  
jewelry before I move out of this  
house.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Now Dave is starting to feel ganged-up on.

DAVE

"Proper station in life?" What kind  
of uppity nonsense is that? We're  
not Denzel and Paulette, Clarice.  
Stop living in a fantasy world!

\*  
\*

MAMA

Don't you talk to my daughter that  
way!

DAVE

She's my wife! I'll talk to her any  
damn way I please!

An emotional stand off. Dave throws up his hands.

\*

DAVE (CONT'D)

Fine! Whatever. Sorry I brought it  
up!

\*

Dave turns and stalks into the house. Clarice stars after  
him. Mama grabs her by the arm.

\*

MAMA

Let him go, baby. I raised you to be  
a strong, independent woman. You  
know what's best in this marriage.  
You always have and you always will.

\*  
\*

Clarice thinks for a long beat, then sits back down.

CUT TO:

Brock and Dave are driving on an inner-city street. Dave is  
stewing. Both wear their coaching garb.

DAVE

I don't how much longer I can put up  
with all this drama.

(CONTINUED)

BROCK

Sorry, bro. Maybe you should just try to sit Clarice down and talk it all through.

DAVE

(looks at him skeptically)  
I can talk all day long. I think both she and her mama are missing the listening gene.

Brock's cell phone RINGS. He answers it.

BROCK

Brock Houseman.  
(listens for a long beat)  
Yes, ma'am, I understand. I'll let him know. Bye.

Brock hangs up his phone and looks at Dave.

BROCK (CONT'D)

Darius' mom. She says Darnell won't let the boy come to practice anymore.

Dave screws up his face in disbelief and frustration.

DAVE

What is that fool trying to do?  
Guarantee his kid ends up like him?

Brock pulls into the parking lot of the field.

CUT TO:

As Dave and Brock exit his car, we can see that several of the team members are already tossing around balls with Tree supervising. And something else: Julie and Bryson near the backstop, smiling.

BROCK

What is Julie doing here?

DAVE

I never thought they'd actually come.

Brock checks her out -- bumper to bumper.

(CONTINUED)

BROCK

You know, I'm feelin' a little leg cramp coming on. Maybe she'll rub it out for me?

DAVE

You are such a scam artist.

OFF Brock's smile --

CUT TO:

61 EXT. DOWNTOWN LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD - DAY - MOMENT LATER 61

Dave and Brock approach the backstop, carrying the team gear.

BRYSON

Yo, Coach!

JULIE

Dave, I hope you don't mind, but he wouldn't take "maybe next week" for an answer.

DAVE

No, that's cool. That's great. Glad you could make it, little man.

Brock quickly bumps past Dave, offering his hand.

BROCK

Julie. Great to see you again. How's the car running?

JULIE

Good. Thanks again.

BROCK

Anytime.

Dave calls out to the field.

DAVE

All right, bring it in! This is Bryson. He's gonna be working out with us today.

BRYSON

What's crackin' ya'll?

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED:

61

Around the diamond, the boys' reactions range from stunned to skeptical to jaws hanging open. Even from Tree.

CUT TO:

62 EXT. DOWNTOWN LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD - DAY - LATER

62

Bryson is now standing in the batter's box with a helmet on and a bat in his hand as Julie watches from the stands. Brock is on the mound, Tree is in the field and Dave is nearby to provide guidance.

DAVE

Okay, Bryson, keep your eye on the ball. Level swing.

Out in the field, lots of AD LIB CHATTER from the players: "Hey, batter-batter-batter" and "Yo, Twinkle Toes," etc.

BROCK

Here we go, Bryson. Nothing fancy.

Brock winds up and fires the ball to the catcher, Marcus. Bryson doesn't even get the bat off his shoulder, causing a chorus of BOOS from the field.

MARCUS

What you waitin' for, batter?

BRYSON

I thought it was outside.

MARCUS

Boy, that was so down the middle Amtrak coulda sold seats on it.

ANGLE ON STANDS

Now Julie is concerned, and biting her nails nervously.

BACK TO SCENE

Brock throws another pitch right down the middle. Bryson swings right through it. Deshawn calls in from the field.

DESHAWN

Yo, Coach, my 'lil sister could hit that pitch and she blind in one eye.

Which ignites a round of CACKLES across the diamond.

(CONTINUED)



TREE

(calling out)

Maybe we should let your little sister take your spot on the roster.

DESHAWN

(changing his tune)

Nice swing, little white dude.

Bryson starts to walk away, a little ashamed. Dave catches his arm and nudges him back into the batters box.

DAVE

Don't listen to any of that nonsense, son. It doesn't matter what other people say or think. It only matters how you feel about yourself. Remember, it's just you and the ball. Nothing else gets in your head.

BRYSON

Okay, coach. I'll try.

Bryson cocks his bat, and Brock goes into his wind up, and throws the ball. Bryson takes a hard level swing -- CRACK -- the ball goes slicing through the infield into the outfield for a solid base hit.

JULIE

Whoo-hoo! Bryson! Put a hurt on that ball!

Bryson runs to first base. Brock and Tree AD LIB their encouragement.

DAVE

Now that's what I'm talking about!

DESHAWN

(calling out)

Nice hit, dawg.

BRYSON

Thanks.

A connection that makes Dave proud.

CUT TO:

Practice is over. ADJUST to FIND Dave and Brock stowing equipment near home plate as Julie and Bryson cross to them.

(CONTINUED)

BRYSON

Hey, Coach. I owe you.

DAVE

What do you mean, son?

BRYSON

You taught me how to hit. Now I have to teach you the freestyle stroke.

DAVE

(humoring him)

Sounds good, B.

Bryson smiles and crosses off to chat with the other players.

JULIE

Sorry. He gloms onto any male role models who pay him attention.

DAVE

If I were in his shoes, I would, too.

JULIE

This meant a lot to him. And to me.

A comment not lost on Dave. Or Brock.

BROCK

Julie, why don't you let me walk you guys to your car.

JULIE

Oh... okay. Sure  
(looking again at Dave)  
Thanks again, Dave.

Dave smiles and nods. As Brock leads Julie away, he hands her his business card.

BROCK

I wanted to give you my contact information, you know, in case Bryson ever wants to come to practice again.

JULIE

Thank you.

BROCK

I was also wondering if you might like to go to dinner sometime?

JULIE

(taken aback)

Oh, that's really sweet of you, but sometimes it's hard for me to get a babysitter.

BROCK

For a 12-year-old?

JULIE

(searching for any excuse)

He's very babyish for his age.

BROCK

Look, I know Dave told you about my divorce. But it's almost final. I'm one -- two months away at best.

JULIE

Thanks. I'll think about it.

Brock smiles. That's good enough for him. Dave watches them from a distance, shaking his head.

CUT TO:

Nasty-sounding RAP plays somewhere. Dave MOVES through a trash-strewn corridor and comes to a door. He RAPS on it with his fist. After a few beats, it opens and a red-eyed Darnell stands there, shirt off. Behind him, smoke hangs in the air, and a beaten-down looking WOMAN -- probably Darius' mama -- is folding laundry at a kitchen table.

DARNELL

What the hell you want?

DAVE

(loaded for bear)

If you wanna beef, then let's do it.  
But don't kill your boy's future  
'cause you got a problem with me.

Darnell seems taken aback Dave's ferocity for a beat, then hardens again.

DARNELL

Ain't your business what I do with my  
boy, college boy!

Darnell has no answer for this. Just keeps staring.

(CONTINUED)

DAVE

You better knock that victim chip off your shoulder or someday Darius is gonna end up where you are.

DARNELL

Your punk-ass would know all about that, wouldn't it?

DAVE

When you gonna stop blamin' the world for punchin' my college ticket instead of yours, Darnell? Nobody forced you to sling that crack. That was all on you.

Darnell looks at him with hateful eyes. Cold and hard.

DAVE (CONT'D)

From now on, I'm picking Darius up for practice. And you better stay the hell out of the way.

Dave turns walks away from Darnell.

DARNELL

Next time you come up in here, dawg, you better come strapped!

Dave never looks back. Darnell slams his door.

CUT TO:

A three-story housing unit. All broken glass and pimped-up rides out front. Dave exits through a door with a sign: "NO ANIMALS ALLOWED." He trades looks with a young black crew on the stoop. They look at him like "who's this alien mofo?"

CUT TO:

Dave slows to a stop in front of the house. Clarice's SUV is parked in the driveway.

DAVE (V.O.)

I never did see too much of my daddy growing up. He kind of came and went a lot. But I remember one time him talking about driving past the house.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

66 CONTINUED:

66

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

He would stop out front, not knowing if he should go in or drive around awhile more. I never knew what he meant by that. But after Clarice and I had been married a few years, it all became clear.

After a beat, he drives on again.

CUT TO:

67 INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM/DINING ROOM - NIGHT

67 \*

When Dave enters, Clarice and Mama are clearing the dinner dishes in silence. Dave doesn't look at them, or say a word as he goes to the fridge and pulls out a beer. His cell phone RINGS. He looks at the caller ID.

DAVE

I'm taking this outside.

As Dave exits, Clarice trades a concerned look with Mama.

CUT TO:

68 INT. JULIE'S NISSAN - TRAVELING - NIGHT - SAME TIME

68

Bryson has his head jacked into an Ipod and is getting his dance on, as Julie drives and talks on her cell phone.

JULIE

Dave, I'm sorry for calling you so soon, but this kid is higher than a kite.

INTERCUT WITH:

69 EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - NIGHT - SAME TIME

69 \*

Dave paces as he talks on his cell phone.

JULIE (OVER PHONE)

And he's not gonna give me any peace until I ask you something

DAVE

Ask me what?

In the car, Bryson pulls off his earphones, grabs the phone.

(CONTINUED)

BRYSON

Coach, can you come to my swim meet Saturday so I can show you my stuff?

DAVE

Well, it'd have to be the afternoon. We got a game in the morning.

BRYSON

Cool. See you at the pool.

Bryson hands Julie back the phone. She rolls her eyes at him.

JULIE

Sorry about that. Really no pressure it it's too much --

DAVE

No. Tell him I'll be there. And tell him I think he could sell fried chicken at a family reunion.

70

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - SAME TIME

70 \*

Clarice is looking out to the front of the house through the living room window. While we can't make out Dave's conversation through the window, he seems to be in a friendly chat. Clarice turns and sees Mama staring at her. \*

MAMA

Since when does he tell you he's takin' a call outside?

Clarice doesn't like her meaning, but doesn't respond.

MAMA (CONT'D)

I had too many years with your raggedy-ass father not to know when something's not right.

Mama exits to the living room. Something gnaws at Clarice. Something she hasn't felt before.

DISSOLVE TO:

71

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - DAVE'S GARAGE - NIGHT

71 \*

Dave has a portion of the garage set up for some manly recreation. This is his "cave." He has an old beat-up couch facing a vintage stereo system, and right now, he is zoned out, listening to some MILES DAVIS style jazz on his old record player. \*

(CONTINUED)

Clarice comes to the open garage door and watches him for a long moment. She takes a deep breath for the courage to say something. \*

71 CONTINUED:

CLARICE  
This scares me, David.

DAVE  
What?

CLARICE  
This. The silence between us.

He doesn't say anything.

CLARICE (CONT'D)  
I know it's been stressful since the accident.

DAVE  
It's been stressful a lot longer than that.

CLARICE  
Okay. But I've never felt some of the feelings I've been feeling. And I don't know how to deal with them.  
(tearing up)  
There have been some days I wished I would just never wake up.

Dave can't help but melt a little at this vulnerability.

DAVE  
I know.

CLARICE  
But it scares me that you're pulling away from me. It's not like you.

Their eyes meet for a long moment.

CLARICE (CONT'D)  
Could we to talk to someone about it?

DAVE  
You mean like a counselor?

CLARICE  
I just want us to go back to the way it was before it all got messed up.

She crosses to him and pulls him into her arms. But as she holds him, the look on his face says he doubts it will do any good. \*

DISSOLVE TO:



72

INT. EMMANUEL FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - BISHOP'S OFFICE - DAY

72

CLOSE ON a painting which depicts a rather-dark complexioned Jesus, and then PAN to FIND an uncomfortable Dave sitting on a couch with Clarice across from the Bishop.

CLARICE

Thank you for seeing us, Bishop.

BISHOP WILKES

I want to give you both some love for having the courage to come in here. It's not easy to keep a marriage strong these days.

(beat, then)

So who wants to start?

Clarice jumps in immediately. Dave sits back, watching her.

CLARICE

Well, since the accident I know I've been depressed. But we just aren't communicating. Our whole marriage, David was always Johnny on the spot with me. So supportive of my career. But lately, he seems like he's somewhere else. I don't mean physically. Except for all that time he spends with his little league team, he has been a trooper during my recovery. I mean emotionally. It's like he's a ghost in that house. I'm not sure he even listens to me. I'm not sure what he's thinking or feeling. It feels like he's pulling away to pay me back for something I don't even know I've done.

Dave is just staring out the window. The Bishop notices.

BISHOP WILKES

Dave, what do you want to say to Clarice right now?

DAVE

What's the point? She's on a roll.

BISHOP WILKES

What do you mean?

(CONTINUED)

DAVE

I mean she already has the whole thing figured out. It's all my problem. What am I gonna say that will change anything?

CLARICE

That's what I'm getting at. We used to be able talk things through and we never had any hostility between us.

DAVE

No, you used to be able talk things through. You carry on whole conversations all by yourself. I just sit there and nod my head, wag my tail like some damn puppy dog, and you think we're communicating. The only reason you wanted to come here is because I haven't been a good puppy lately. And that drives you and somebody else crazy.

CLARICE

(flaring, then)

You leave Mama out of this.

DAVE

Why? I'm surprised you didn't want to bring her here with us. If I'm "somewhere else," maybe it's because I'm trying to get away from her being all up in my grill about everything.

CLARICE

Mama loves you. She's concerned --

DAVE

She doesn't love me. She doesn't respect me. No matter what I do, I can't please the woman. Or you.

BISHOP WILKES

Why do you say that, Dave?

DAVE

Because... I don't know... it's like I'm not enough or something. Like Clarice doesn't really need me.

(beat, thinking)

Sometimes I feel like I'm just visiting this damn marriage.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAVE (CONT'D)

Like she has this big hotel filled with all her things, and I'm showing up with my two shabby suitcases. And she tells me, you won't need anything at my hotel, so just leave everything at the door.

BISHOP WILKES

Okay, that's good. That's honest.

CLARICE

(dismissively)

Oh, please.

BISHOP WILKES

Clarice, what irks you about Dave coaching those little leaguers?

CLARICE

I just don't get why he wants to spend so much time with those boys when he could be spending it with me.

The Bishop takes a probing beat before his next question.

BISHOP WILKES

You mean, like what a daddy might want to do if he had a son?

The question hangs in the air for a long, awkward pause. Dave looks at the Bishop as if a light has gone on for him.

CLARICE

Oh, we're not gonna dredge up that tired old subject, are we?

DAVE

Why not, Clarice?

CLARICE

Because we been over it a million times. It's not what I want. I'm not ready to give up all the places I wanna go in life. Besides, look at us, trying to keep our marriage together. You think a baby's gonna solve our problems?

DAVE

(with sad resignation)

I used to.

Bishop can see he's taken this about as far as he should.

(CONTINUED)

72 CONTINUED:

72

BISHOP WILKES

Do the two of you remember how I told  
you on your wedding day how hard life  
can be?

They both search their memories for a beat, before nodding.

BISHOP WILKES (CONT'D)

Well, that three-stranded cord I  
wrapped around your shoulders that  
day will always be there -- unless  
you choose to remove it.

But both Dave and Clarice's faces say they are not so sure.

CUT TO:

73 EXT. LOS ANGELES - AERIAL VIEW - DAY

73

We're SOARING over a sea of glass, cars, concrete and a  
million human stories.

CUT TO:

74 INT. CLARICE'S ESCALADE - TRAVELING - DAY

74

Dave and Clarice ride along in their own raw spaces, not  
saying anything. Some NEWS-TALK SHOW, playing on the radio,  
is suddenly interrupted by a long TONE, and then:

ANNOUNCER (OVER RADIO)

This is a test of the emergency alert  
system. This is only a test. If  
this had been an actual emergency, an  
official message would follow.

But neither Dave or Clarice seems to have noticed.

DISSOLVE TO:

75 INT. PRIVATE MASSAGE ROOM - NIGHT

75

Dave is prone on his stomach on a massage table in a room lit  
with candles and SENSUAL MUSIC (perhaps "SEXUAL HEALING").  
We'll TRAVEL from his contented face, along his side, to his  
hind parts, covered by a small towel.

His back is now covered with oil, and now petite, strong  
WHITE FEMALE HANDS begin running down his back suggestively.  
Her fingers linger, teasing, at his towel line. We catch a  
glimpse of a short, sexy robe.

(CONTINUED)

75 CONTINUED:

75

Dave moans as she whispers in his ear. He then turns over on his back and looks up at the woman. It's Julie. She smiles seductively and begins loosening the belt of her robe.

Dave closes his eyes, receiving some mysterious pleasure.

SMASH CUT TO:

76 INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT - SAME TIME

76

We're CLOSE ON DAVE'S face and he is being shaken awake, and we WIDEN to see Clarice is the one doing the shaking.

DAVE

What's wrong? Why you shaking me?

CLARICE

You were moaning. I thought you were having a heart attack.

DAVE

I... I must have been dreaming.

Clarice's eyes travel down the sheet covering him.

CLARICE

Yeah, you been dreaming all right.

Embarrassed, Dave turns over to cover his arousal. She shakes her head, gets out of bed and we'll FOLLOW her to the bathroom sink. She gets a drink of water, then notices Dave's cell phone sitting on the counter. She looks to see that Dave is not watching, then opens his phone and pushes a button.

POV - PHONE

We're looking at the "CALL LOG" screen and the most recent call on the list is from: "SAWYER, JULIE."

BACK TO SCENE

Clarice stares at the phone for a long beat, then closes it with a worried look. She gets back into bed, and turns her back to his back. They both lay awake. Thinking. Worrying.

DISSOLVE TO: \*

77 INT. SUBURBAN EXECUTIVE HOUSE - DAY

77 \*

Clarice, dressed sharply in an attractive pants suit, is walking with the aid of her cane. Michelle is walking with her.

\*  
\*  
\*

(CONTINUED)

CLARICE \*  
 (referring to folder) \*  
 I thought these people would go with \*  
 another agent when their listing \*  
 expired. \*

MICHELLE \*  
 Are you kidding? Apparently, they \*  
 were just waiting for the salesperson \*  
 of the year to get back on the job. \*  
 (teasing sigh) \*  
 I guess I'm gonna have to go back to \*  
 being second fiddle again. \*

Clarice gives her a half-hearted smiled. Michelle had hoped \*  
 for a bigger reaction than that. \*

MICHELLE (CONT'D) \*  
 Okay, Clarice, where is your head at? \*  
 Your number one competitor just \*  
 voluntarily took a back seat to you, \*  
 and you didn't even blink. What is \*  
 goin' on? \*

CLARICE \*  
 It's nothing. I'm fine. \*

MICHELLE \*  
 Don't make a sister go Oprah on you. \*

Clarice sighs sadly and a burden mists up in her eyes. \*

CLARICE \*  
 I think Dave is stepping out on me. \*

MICHELLE \*  
 Oh, honey, are you sure? \*

CLARICE \*  
 I can see it in his eyes. \*

MICHELLE \*  
 Hmm-hmm. It's always in the eyes. \*

CLARICE \*  
 It's my therapist, Julie Sawyer. \*

MICHELLE \*  
 That little white thing? Oh, no he \*  
 didn't. Baby, you've got to get over \*  
 there and open up a can of soul \*  
 sister power on her behind. \*

CLARICE

I can't do that. I don't have any  
real proof.

MICHELLE

Now listen to me. I'm not letting  
you Wait to Exhale on me, girl.  
Dave's too good a man to lose. Last  
thing you want to do is something you  
can't take back. Trust me, I know.

CLARICE

Don't tell me Todd is tapping  
something, too.

MICHELLE

(beat, hanging her head)  
No. It was me who did the tapping.  
(off Clarice's surprise)  
I know. I know.

CLARICE

Well, how did he forgive you?

MICHELLE

It took a long time. But I learned  
that that's a secret about how God  
works. He makes possible what the  
world says is impossible. My husband  
didn't give up on me, and I don't  
ever want to sacrifice his heart like  
that again.

CLARICE

I'm glad for you. But I don't think  
I have it in me to do that.

OFF Michelle's worried look --

CUT TO:

79 OMITTED

79 \*

80 OMITTED

80 \*



81 EXT. DOWNTOWN AQUATICS CLUB - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

81 \*

Dave, Julie and Bryson are walking out front of the stadium as they talk. Bryson is back in his warm ups, and still toweling off.

DAVE

You were off the chain, young man!

BRYSON

Thanks, Coach.

DAVE

How many more of these races do you have? I don't know if I can take another one like that. You about stopped my heart.

BRYSON

I'm here all weekend. If I keep winning, the finals are tomorrow.

COACH SPINELLO (O.S.)

Hey, Bryson, wait up.

They turn to see Coach Spinello catching up with them.

COACH SPINELLO (CONT'D)

There's a rep here from the Junior Olympics. I'd like you to meet him.

(CONTINUED)

BRYSON

Are you serious?

Bryson looks at Julie and Dave as if he can't breathe.

DAVE

We'll wait for you out here, B.

Bryson smiles and heads back inside. Julie looks flushed.

JULIE

My head's spinning. Junior Olympics?

DAVE

This boy could do some serious damage in this sport.

JULIE

(gratefully)

I really appreciate you taking the time to be here today. You have no idea what it means... to both of us.

DAVE

A deal's a deal.

They stroll a few paces as they talk.

JULIE

Can I ask you a question? I saw your college photo at the house. What happened to your baseball career?

DAVE

Anterior cruciate ligament. I was sliding into home plate. My body went one way. My knee went the other. Along with my dream of making it to the big leagues.

JULIE

Yeah, but at least you're passing that dream along to those little leaguers.

Dave shrugs his shoulders. He guesses so. She gazes at him.

JULIE (CONT'D)

I hope you don't take this the wrong way, but we single women are experts on a few things.

DAVE

Like what?

JULIE

Like good men. The "'Til Death Do Us Part" type. The protect and cherish type. Me and my friends sit around complaining about how all the guys like you are already taken. Clarice is a lucky woman. Take it from a loser at love. She has no idea how hard it is find a man like you.

DAVE

(going out on limb)

I guess that's not enough for some women.

The implications of this hang in the air for a long moment.

ANOTHER ANGLE

We're CLOSE ON a bouquet of flowers, and ADJUST to see Brock approaching the stadium. And he suddenly freezes at something he sees. And we ADJUST again to what he sees: Dave and Julie -- together. And now they see him. Awkward.

BROCK

What are you doing here, bro.

DAVE

I could ask you the same thing.

BROCK

Well, I was on my way to check out Bryson's swim meet -- and perhaps ask him and Julie out for pizza later. But it looks like my happily married friend beat me to the punch.

More awkward looks all around.

JULIE

Brock, please don't read anything into this. Bryson invited Dave to come. He was kind enough to say yes. There's really nothing more to it than that.

She and Dave trade a look. Is that last comment really true?

JULIE (CONT'D)

I'm gonna get back inside.

Julie scurries off as quickly as she can.

BROCK

Are you hitting it with this woman?

DAVE

First of all, you're not my mama, so you need to get up off my neck. And second, even if I was, what exactly would it have to do with you?

BROCK

(beat, that hurt)

Gee, forgetting for a moment that maybe I had a thing for this woman, how about the fact that I'm your best friend, and I don't want to see you totally screw up your life?

DAVE

You're too late, brother. My life's already screwed up.

Dave starts off. Brock tries to stop him, grabbing his arm.

BROCK

Come on, man, don't do this.

Dave pulls his arm free and glares at Brock.

DAVE

We're done here.

Dave turns and crosses away. Brock sighs, tosses the flowers into a trash can.

CUT TO:

Dave enters somberly. The curtains are drawn shut and the only light comes from lit several candles. Dave lays his cell phone on the night stand, then sits on the edge of his bed and puts his head in his hands.

CLARICE (O.S.)

You didn't notice the candles.

Dave looks up to see Clarice in sexy nothing of a nighty, poised on her cane near her vanity. Dave is not only surprised to see her -- but surprised to see her like this.

DAVE

Reesie...

(CONTINUED)

CLARICE

(best come-hither voice)

Remember the candles when we first got married? They were always my signal. "You pass go, baby. I'm gonna whip something on you."

Clarice limps slowly to Dave with her cane, her scars more visible than ever on her leg.

CLARICE (CONT'D)

It's been way too long since I lit my candles for you.

DAVE

(beat, conflicted)

Are you sure you wanna do this?

She gingerly climbs on the bed, begins rubbing his shoulders.

CLARICE

I sent Mama on an errand. We need this. I think it's why we've been arguing so much. We need to get back to the loving part of our marriage.

DAVE

What about your leg?

CLARICE

I'll be careful.

She begins to kiss him on the neck. But he doesn't respond.

CLARICE (CONT'D)

Oh, baby, I want you so much.

She tries to nibble on his ear. This time, he stops her.

DAVE

Reesie, we don't have to do this.

She pulls back on the bed, wounded, desperate, resolved.

CLARICE

Are you sleeping with her, David?

DAVE

What?!

CLARICE

With Julie.

DAVE

(long stunned beat)

No. Absolutely not.

CLARICE

Then what is it? What are the phone calls about? Where is your head at? What is the truth if you're not sleeping with her?

Dave looks at her with a mix of confusion, guilt in his eyes. She's not wrong. After a long moment, he sighs.

DAVE

I'm not gonna lie to you. Things haven't been right for us in a long time and we both know it. And I don't know what it is, but I do feel something for this girl.

Big tears of resignation form in Clarice's eyes. She covers herself with the sheet, as if ashamed of her body.

CLARICE

Then it's worse. She's taken your heart from me, and that's not something I can do anything about.

Neither of them says anything for a long time.

DAVE

(eyes welling up)

What do you want me to do?

CLARICE

I don't know. But I can't look at you right now.

Dave turns and exits quietly. Clarice falls back into her pillow, sobbing. And FIND his cell phone on the night stand.

DISSOLVE TO:

We're CLOSE on a black feminine HAND knocking on the door. And WIDEN to reveal Clarice standing on Julie's front porch. She dressed nicely and looks poised, on her cane. The door opens, and Julie's there, taken aback.

JULIE

Clarice? What is it? Are you okay?

(CONTINUED)

There is a barely controlled rage brimming in Clarice's eyes. Julie's face says she knows trouble is coming.

CLARICE

As much as I would like to knock your home-wrecking little ass into next week, I am not going to do that because I'm grateful for you helping me get back on my feet. But let me make myself clear. Stay the hell away from my husband.

Julie is at first stunned by Clarice's declaration, but then she steels herself and does not back down, even an inch.

JULIE

Clarice, the problems in your marriage have nothing to do with me.

CLARICE

In case you didn't hear me the first time. Stay away from my man.

Clarice turns and goes. We'll PUSH IN on Julie's reaction, and begin HEARING a soulful R&B tune, perhaps Heather Headley's "IN MY MIND."

DISSOLVE TO:

A MONTAGE OF MOS SCENES

84 INT. DOWNTOWN GYMNASIUM - DAY

84

Dave returns to the empty gym and begins shooting hoops all by himself. He turns to see someone else there. Darnell. They face each other for a long moment. Dave finally fires the ball to him -- an invitation to a little one-on-one game. Darnell smirks. Let's do this.

85 EXT. SWIM STADIUM - DAY

85

Bryson's in the pool and pulls himself up into a crouching position, along with the other boys in the other lanes. Julie looks on proudly in the b.g. And we'll see the PUFF OF SMOKE from the starter's gun and Bryson lurches backwards into the liquid blue and begins back-stroking.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

86 INT. DOWNTOWN GYMNASIUM - DAY - MOMENT LATER

86

Darnell tries to fake Dave with the ball, but Dave doesn't go for it, so Darnell drives right through him hard.

(CONTINUED)

- 86 CONTINUED: 86
- Dave falls on his back, slamming his head on the court and Darnell scores. Dave pops back, up rubbing his head, and holds out his hand for the ball. Now it's his turn.
- 87 OMITTED 87 \*
- 88 INT. DOWNTOWN GYMNASIUM - DAY 88 \*
- Dave is driving toward the basket, leaping higher until his knees are at Darnell's head. As Dave slams dunks the ball, his knee catches Darnell in the face. When Dave lands, Darnell is wiping blood from his mouth, smiling at him.
- 89 EXT. SWIM STADIUM - POOL 89
- We're TRACKING Bryson as he makes his final flip turn. And then suddenly we're trying to catch back up him because he has picked up his pace. And now we can see that he is a full length ahead of the next best swimmer.
- Further down the lane, he has total focus. All by himself out in front of the pack. But just a few feet above him, we see him now passing the 5-meter warning flag and he not looking. He never looks at the flag.
- In the stands, Julie goes wild with joy and begins hugging everybody around her. But then she feels a need to look down at the pool. And her smile turns to concern and then to confusion and fear.
- 90 INT. DOWNTOWN GYMNASIUM - DAY 90
- Dave bats the ball out of Darnell's hands. They both dive after it on the floor, wrestling each other for the ball, before finally realizing how ridiculous this all is.
- And ADJUST to FIND Dave's cell phone sitting on the floor \*  
 next to his keys and wallet. And it is FLASHING with a call. \*  
 PUSH IN TIGHT to read the Caller ID screen: "SAWYER, JULIE." \*
- But Dave never notices it. \*
- 91 OMITTED 91 \*



92

INT. DOWNTOWN GYMNASIUM - DAY - SAME TIME

92 \*

Dave and Darnell are bloodied, bruised and completely spent from their duel and sitting in heaps against the wall.

DAVE

I'd call that a draw, homey.

DARNELL

Man to man, nobody listenin'... who gets that baseball scholarship if we are still back in the day?

DAVE

You, dawg. Hands-down. World's always gonna love a slugger rather than a utility man. Plus, you're just a better athlete.

Darnell savors Dave's words for a long beat.

DARNELL

So you think all the hell I been through is my own fault?

DAVE

Trust me, you're not the only one with problems. In some ways, you have no idea how good you got it.

DARNELL

You talkin' about Darius?

Dave takes a long thinking beat.

DAVE

I'd trade that scholarship and all I've ever had for a son like Darius.

DARNELL

Here I been trippin' all these years over you gettin' my scholarship. And you been jealous of me. That's messed up, dawg.

DAVE

Yeah. It is messed up.

And the look on Dave's face says he doesn't have a clue how to fix it.

CUT TO:

93

EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - DAY

93

As Dave's truck pulls up, we see a piles of clothing on the driveway. Dave gets out, puzzled, and starts picking up.

DAVE

Oh, hell, no.

At that moment, Mama comes out of the house with another arm load of clothes and tosses them at Dave. There's a fire in her eyes that we haven't seen before.

MAMA

Young man, it's time to pack up your philanderin' ass and get outta Dodge!

DAVE

This is not happening, Mama!

Clarice comes out of the house. She's not carrying any of his belongings, but is clearly in a dark place.

CLARICE

Please, Mama. This is not the way.

DAVE

No, Clarice. Let her speak her mind. She always had an equal vote in this marriage. Why change things now?

MAMA

What is wrong with you? You got this beautiful black queen right here, and you do the bumpty-bump with some Caucasian girl?

She pitches another wad of clothes into the driveway.

DAVE

You can't do this! This is my house!

MAMA

Not anymore, it isn't. This is a house-cleaning that should have happened a long time ago.

(to Clarice)

Baby, this man's been living off your money and your beautiful house and dreams for too long. It's time to cut him loose. You are more of a man than he'll ever be.

Dave has heard more than he can stomach and finally erupts.

(CONTINUED)

DAVE

That's it! Now you're gonna listen to me, you angry, man-hating old ball breaker!

Dave starts to gather up his clothing piles and shuttles them to his van as he talks, his emotions getting the best of him.

DAVE (CONT'D)

You're right. Clarice is more of a man than me, and it is time to cut me loose. Because I don't give a damn anymore, you hear me? Both of you. I'm done. I don't want another minute in this "beautiful house." I don't want another minute of this sham of a marriage.

Clarice is in tears and Mama is staring daggers at him. Just then, Brock's car screeches to a stop in front of the house. Brock jumps out in a panic.

BROCK

Dave, where have you been? I've been trying to call your cell phone!

DAVE

What? What are you talking about?

BROCK

There's been an accident. At the pool. It's Bryson.

Dave is suddenly alarmed. Clarice looks concerned, too.

DAVE

What happened?

BROCK

Somehow he went into the wall too hard. They rushed him the hospital. Julie tried to call you. She finally tracked me down when she couldn't get you. It's bad, bro. It's real bad.

Dave looks over at Clarice. There's nothing left to say. He has to go. And he climbs into Brock's car and it speeds off. Clarice turns and walks slowly into the house.

SMASH CUT TO:

94 INT. ALL SAINTS HOSPITAL - TRAUMA UNIT - DAY - MOMENTS LATER 94

Dave and Brock are rushing through the unit when they come to the door to the E.R. An orderly pushes through and the door stays open, and Brock and Dave look in to see Julie standing with the trauma doctor we remember from Clarice's accident. He has his hand on her shoulder and is talking quietly to her. In the b.g. Bryson's lifeless body lies on a gurney as a nurse shuts off the monitoring equipment.

JULIE

No! Please dear God, no!

Julie leaves the doctor and rushes to Bryson's gurney, where she collapses over his body, wracked with sobs.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Please, not my baby boy! Not my baby!

Dave and Brock watched, stunned.

CUT TO:

95 EXT. ALL SAINTS HOSPITAL - PARKING LOT - DAY 95

Dave and Brock are walking back toward Brock's car.

BROCK

She's all alone. She doesn't have anybody to help her through this.

DAVE

She has me. I'm gonna take care of everything.

It's a strange comment. But Brock's not going to debate it.

CUT TO:

96 OMITTED

96 \*

97 EXT. WEEKLY RATE MOTEL - DAY 97\*

We're HIGH AND WIDE over a two-story budget motel overlooking the lights of L.A. Dave's truck is in the parking lot and he is climbing the exterior stairs, carrying two duffel bags.

98 INT. WEEKLY RATE MOTEL - DAVE'S ROOM - DAY - MOMENT LATER 98

Dave stands in the doorway, holding his bags, looking in at a dimly lit room with two twin beds. This isn't the Motel 6. It's not even the Motel 3. But it's home -- until he can figure things out. He sighs and sits down on the bed. As he does, we'll begin HEARING the mournful sounds of a gospel SONG -- something like Kirk Franklin's "HOLD ME NOW."

DISSOLVE TO:

99 EXT. EMMANUEL FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - SANCTUARY - DAY 99

Another beautiful day with a steeple pointing to heaven. But there's a somber emotional cloud hanging over the place.

100 INT. EMMANUEL FELLOWSHIP CHURCH - SANCTUARY - DAY 100

Inside, we'll CRANE DOWN to see the sanctuary has a DOZEN MOURNERS gathered for a private memorial service, and we'll PUSH IN on the singing faces of the GOSPEL ENSEMBLE. The song takes us into:

## SERIES OF MOS SHOTS

A) A lovely casket with a wreath of flowers and a framed school photograph of a smiling Bryson Sawyer.

B) Julie sits in the front row and Dave, Brock and Tree sit in the row just behind her, all wearing their best suits.

C) Bishop Wilkes, in his colorful ministerial robes, delivers a few words of comfort from the Bible to the crowd.

D) Coach Spinello files past the casket, and lays Bryson's gold medal on top. He then pays his respects to Julie.

E) Bishop Wilkes notices someone entering the back of the church. It's Clarice, limping, with the aid of her cane.

F) Now Clarice files past the casket, and then pays her respects to Julie. It's awkward, but she does the right thing. However, she and Dave avoid eye contact.

G) A strange interaction which the Bishop finds puzzling.

H) And as finally the Bishop is the last one to pay his respects to Julie. He holds her hand in his big hands for a long moment as the SONG FADES DOWN and SERIES OF SHOTS ENDS.

DISSOLVE TO:

The service has ended. As mourners are exiting the church, Clarice is sitting alone in a lovely courtyard. The Bishop exits the church and heads to her when he sees her.

BISHOP WILKES

Clarice, let's walk a minute.

Clarice gets to her feet and they chat while walking through the garden. He gives a sad sigh.

BISHOP WILKES (CONT'D)

Before I have to go bury this child, I wanted to talk to you. It took me awhile, but I think I'm putting the puzzle pieces together.

The Bishop looks over and sees Dave and Brock standing with Julie near the hearse. Clarice notices, too.

BISHOP WILKES (CONT'D)

Dave with Julie Sawyer over there, and you sitting way over here.

(CONTINUED)

CLARICE

Mama's staying with me. He's moved out 'til we can sort out what to do.

BISHOP WILKES

He getting his cake and eating it, too?

CLARICE

I don't think it's gone that far, but Mama says it's only a matter of time.

BISHOP WILKES

Mama sure does a lot of talking, doesn't she?

CLARICE

I guess so.

BISHOP WILKES

Clarice, be honest with me, has God been the third strand in that cord I wrapped around your shoulders all those years ago?

Clarice looks at him, her eyes welling with tears.

CLARICE

I think he was at first, Bishop. But I've been so busy with my career, in trying move up in the world, for a long time, he's seemed far away.

BISHOP WILKES

Well, baby, if you don't feel close to God, guess who moved?

(off her surprised look)

He's been right here the whole time, waiting for you to depend on him. But when you start trusting your own success, or your material blessings to be the third strand in your marriage, it's only a matter of time before life snaps that cord in two.

Clarice thinks about it and has to nod that she understands.

BISHOP WILKES (CONT'D)

I've been wondering about something since that day you came in to talk to me. When did your daddy leave, Clarice?

101 CONTINUED:

CLARICE

He didn't leave. Mama tossed him out 'cause she suspected him of cheating on her.

BISHOP WILKES

Suspected?

CLARICE

Yeah.

BISHOP WILKES

Maybe it's just me, Clarice, but it seems like the acorn hasn't fallen very far from the tree.

Their walk has left them on the familiar front steps of the church. The Bishop gives her shoulder a squeeze, then crosses off. She watches him go, puzzled for a second until his meaning sinks in. She then sees Dave help Julie into her hearse and then get in after her for the funeral procession. And we'll FADE UP again on "HOLD ME NOW" again for another:

DISSOLVE TO:

102 MONTAGE OF MOS SCENES 102

103 INT. WEEKLY RATE MOTEL - DAVE'S ROOM - NIGHT 103

Dave spends another lonely night in his room. The TV is on, but he's not really paying attention. He looks out the window into the night. He has a lot of time to think.

104 EXT. JULIE AND BRYSON'S BUNGALOW - DAY - ANOTHER DAY 104

Dave drives slowly past the house in his truck. The shades are drawn. No sign of life. He can't decide whether to stop, then sighs and drives on.

105 INT. JULIE AND BRYSON'S BUNGLAOW - DAY - SAME TIME 105

Julie is curled up on her sofa in the front room, with a blanket on her lap. She's obviously been grieving and hasn't changed out of her funeral dress. She's holding a photograph of Bryson and her eyes are red liquid prism of pain.



- 106 OMITTED 106 \*
- 107 OMITTED 107 \*
- 108 EXT. JULIE AND BRYSON'S BUNGALOW - DAY - ANOTHER DAY 108 \*
- Dave's truck is parked out front, and he walks up the steps, carrying a bouquet of flowers. He knocks on the door. Waits for a long moment. No answer.
- 109 INT. JULIE AND BRYSON'S BUNGALOW - DAY - SAME TIME 109
- Julie is still on the couch, still in her black dress, and her emotions are completely flat. She is clearly progressing through the stages of grief. This one is the depression stage. We can see Dave peering through the lace curtains of the window next to the door. But Julie doesn't respond.
- 110 EXT. JULIE AND BRYSON'S BUNGALOW - DAY - SAME TIME 110
- And as Dave gives up and slowly walks back to his truck, our SONG ENDS, and we'll:
- DISSOLVE TO:
- 111 EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - BACK YARD - NIGHT 111 \*
- Mama is sitting on a porch swing, looking at a small framed photo of handsome middle-aged BLACK MAN, when she's startled. \*
- CLARICE (O.S.)  
What's that, Mama?
- Mama looks up to see Clarice coming through a sliding glass door. She quickly shoves the photo under her leg. \*
- MAMA  
Nothing.

CLARICE

That was a photo of Daddy, wasn't it? \*

MAMA

No... yes.

(sighing)

It's the one piece of him I hang onto as a reminder I made the right decision.

CLARICE

Do you remember when I won that cheerleading competition?

MAMA

I remember all your accomplishments, baby.

CLARICE

That was the same weekend Daddy left.

Mama looks at her curiously, not sure where this is going.

MAMA

Let's not dredge up that mess. That was good riddance to bad rubbish.

CLARICE

I've always been curious. How come it was Daddy who had to tell me that he didn't start having an affair until after you drove him out of the house?

Something flashes in Mama's eyes -- anger maybe.

MAMA

I'm not having this conversation.

CLARICE

Why not?

MAMA

Because my bedroom drama with your daddy isn't any of your business.

Which pushes a nerve in Clarice, and she raises her volume.

CLARICE

Excuse me? I think it is my business when you've been all up in my koolaid about my marriage.

Something changes in Mama's eyes as she goes on a tirade.

MAMA

That's because you don't know men like I do. I'm just looking out for you. See what that man did to you, swapping gravy with some little white trash biscuit. Men are like chiggers. You got to hold a match to their behinds to get 'em out of your hair. To keep 'em from getting under your skin.

It's almost like Clarice is seeing Mama like she's never seen her before. Shriveled, sad, bitter, pathetic.

CLARICE

Mama, there's something scary about you when you're talking about men. You're like a man-eating shark up in here. Who made you so angry and bitter? Was it Grandma Clark? Was it Grandpa?

Clarice has flirted with an emotional trip wire. Mama's eyes flare for an instant, but then she pushes it all back down, and repeats her survival mantra.

MAMA

I am a strong, proud, independent black woman.

Now Clarice is suddenly feeling pity for her mother.

CLARICE

I don't know what dark secrets you're hiding in your heart, but in all your lessons to me about how to be a strong, proud, independent black woman, you left out some things.

MAMA

What things?

CLARICE

You forgot to teach me how to listen, how to care, how to love. You handicapped me, Mama.

Panic washes over Mama's face. She has no answer for this.

MAMA

This conversation is over. I will not be disrespected by you.

(MORE)

111 CONTINUED:

MAMA (CONT'D)

If you're not going to listen to your  
mama, then I need to leave this  
house.

But Clarice is going to have the last word.

CLARICE

I didn't mean to disrespect you,  
Mama. But from now on, I have to  
find my own way without you. I'm  
gonna start by trying to learn how to  
love my man.

(beat, softly)

And I'm gonna pray for you.

MAMA

What for?

CLARICE

That it's not too late for you to  
learn how to love people, too.

Clarice turns and re-enters the house. Mama is shellshocked. Her carefully constructed defenses have been shattered. She retrieves the picture from her side, and looks at it, and does something we've never seen her do -- she begins weeping quietly. And we'll PRELAP the sound of a DOORBELL.

\*  
\*

CUT TO:

112 INT. JULIE AND BRYSON'S BUNGLAOW - NIGHT

112

Julie is no longer in her funeral dress, and she looks like she has probably showered, but she still has dark circles under her eyes and wears frumpy, baggy sweats as she sits on the sofa. The DOORBELL rings again.

DAVE (O.S.)

(through door)

Julie, please open the door. I just  
need to know that you're okay.

After a long beat, Julie goes to the door and opens it. Dave looks relieved when he sees her.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Thank God. I was starting to think --

JULIE

I wouldn't have done that. But I  
can't say it didn't cross my mind.

(CONTINUED)

She crosses back to the sofa and plops down on it. Dave closes the door and crosses in.

DAVE

I keep thinking about that day.  
Wondering if maybe there was  
something I could have done if I had  
been there.

JULIE

It was an accident, Dave. Nothing  
more. Nothing less. He was so  
focused on trying to win that gold  
medal he missed that flag. That  
little black warning flag.

Dave sits down next to her and they sit there for a long moment in silence.

JULIE (CONT'D)

We have to get the trash out when we  
get home.

DAVE

(looks at her, confused)  
Pardon me?

JULIE

That was the last thing I said to him  
before the race. "We have to get the  
trash out when we get home."

(tears really coming now)

Not "I love you, Bryson." Not "I'm  
so proud of you." Not "I'm so lucky  
to be your mom."

Dave puts a reassuring arm around her and she gathers into his chest, as if trying to hide in his arms. He holds her close for a long moment, before she looks up into his eyes. Dave's heart is thumping in his chest as she reaches up and strokes his face. The magnetic connection between them, born of mutual need, is just too strong. She puts her other hand on his face and pulls him into a very chaste kiss. They look into each other's eyes again as if testing whether or not that just happened. And then Dave takes her soft features into his hands and pulls her into a more real kiss -- before he finally breaks it off. He quickly gets to his feet.

DAVE

I'm sorry, I -- I just need to think  
for a minute.

Julie musters a resigned smile through her tears.

JULIE

You're doing it to me again.

DAVE

What?

JULIE

The reason I want somebody like you so badly is the reason I can't have you. Every other man has wanted something from me. But you have only given. That's because you're a gentleman. The most gentle man I've ever met.

(beat, then)

A man who's still in love with his wife.

He looks at her for a long moment.

DAVE

Yes, I am. I can't put it into words, and it might not make sense even if I could. But in spite of everything we've been through, I love still that woman. With all my heart.

JULIE

Then what are you doing here, Dave?  
Go home.

And as he smiles at her through his own tears, we begin HEARING his remembering voice once more.

DAVE (V.O.)

It was that moment when Julie told me to go home that a light turned on for me.

CUT TO:

Dave is packing his clothes into a duffel bag, when the door opens. It's Clarice and she's holding a plate covered with aluminum foil.

DAVE

(surprised)

Reesie...

(CONTINUED)

CLARICE

(showing him hotel key)

I'm sorry. The manager gave me a key.

DAVE

It's okay.

CLARICE

Dave, I need you to let me say some things to you.

Dave nods and she sits on the bed across from him.

CLARICE (CONT'D)

I've been round and round with my heart, and I want you to know two things. First, Mama has lost her voting privileges in this marriage.

(fighting back tears)

Second, nobody ever taught me how to be one of those wives who hangs on her man's every word and trusts him to take care of her. But I'd like to learn how to be. And no matter what you decide, I need you to know that I can't live without you. I don't want to live without you. And that I love you.

Dave looks at her for a long moment, tears of relief filling his eyes.

DAVE

I was on my way home to tell you the same thing, Baby.

He tries to pull her into an embrace, but the foil-covered plate gets in their way. Dave takes the plate from her.

DAVE (CONT'D)

What's this?

CLARICE

I thought you might be hungry, so I heated you up a plate. I hope it tastes okay.

Which fills Dave's heart with even more love for this woman. He sets the plate on the bed and now they hold each other like they haven't held each other in a long, long time.

(CONTINUED)

113 CONTINUED:

DAVE (V.O.)

See, I used to beat my head against the wall, trying to figure out what my purpose was. And I looked in a lot of wrong places to find it.

DISSOLVE TO:

114 EXT. DOWNTOWN LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD - DAY - WEEKS LATER 114

We're HIGH ABOVE the diamond, as if watching from heaven. Practice is apparently over because Dave all by himself, and we'll CRANE DOWN to see him raking the pitcher's mound.

NEW ANGLE

Dave turns and sees Darnell approaching. This time, the man looks clean and sober, but also a little nervous.

DAVE

What's up, brother?

DARNELL

How these boys playin'?

DAVE

Doin' some damage up in here.

DARNELL

That's good. You think maybe Darius could come back to the team?

DAVE

He's my slugger. Welcome anytime.

DARNELL

Cool.

Darnell starts to turn to go, but then turns back.

DARNELL (CONT'D)

I was also thinking... maybe you could teach my boy a few things. You know, like how to be a decent man.

Dave is moved by the request and puts a hand on his shoulder.

DAVE

I got a better idea. Why don't we both do it?

We've never seen any emotion in Darnell. We do now. Dave offers him his hand and they shake on it.

(CONTINUED)



As Darnell turns and crosses away, Dave watches him go, then turns to survey his ball field.

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

I found out that if you want to know the purpose of a thing, you can't ask the thing to tell you. A car doesn't know why it's a car. Only the manufacturer knows what it was made to do. And I guess that's the way it is with us and God.

Dave then turns and sees Clarice walking briskly toward him from another direction. She has a spark in her eye.

CLARICE

What color do you like better -- blue or pink?

DAVE

(confused)

What do you mean, Reesie?

She pulls a pregnancy tester from behind her back. The little window registers PINK. As the meaning of this sinks in, Dave's jaw drops and so does his rake.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Are you saying... ?

Clarice answers with a happy, smiling nod. Dave looks as if he's going to explode with joy as he scoops her into his arms and they spin together in an embraces on pitcher's mound.

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

God didn't just make Dave Johnson to be a husband, or a coach, or a friend, or a daddy.

And we'll PULL UP and BACK into that heavenly WIDE SHOT and look down on this beautifully repaired cord of three strands.

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

Those are just roles. Not who I am as a man. But I guess sometimes he has to let life turn you upside down... so can learn how to live right side up.

FADE OUT.

THE END