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

by

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

A hand writes neatly on a yellow notepad.

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

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

    KYLE
    Hello, mother. What might thou be
doing today?

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

    CONNIE
    Nosy. It's none of your business.

    KYLE
    I figured thou would speaketh that
reply.

    CONNIE
    What's with the dialect?

    KYLE
    (holds up book)
    I'm reading "The Massacre at
Paris." Oh, how I adore the
Elizabethan era.

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

    CONNIE
    And what do you think you're doing?

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

She shoots him a look. He laughs.
KYLE
I know, ain't ain't a word but...

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

KYLE
Yes, Mother, I know.

CONNIE
Now don't get too comfortable in my bed.

KYLE
Mom...

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

KYLE
I know, but it kills me seeing you lonely.

INT. DEBORAH'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

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

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

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

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

She pours. James grunts his approval.

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

JAMES
We been together too long for you to be asking me to take you out. Real life hadn't set in with you yet now, huh?
DEBORA
You don't have to spend --

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

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

DEBORA
Maybe a movie... dinner?

JAMES
(grunts)
Dinner sounds good.

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

JAMES
God dammit, Debora, why am I hungry?!

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

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

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

She hops up. Panicking.

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

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

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

INT. THE FOSTERS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

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

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

CECIL
Veronica, what was the music channel over here?

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

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

VERONICA
Do you not care?

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

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

CECIL
Sounds tiring. You must be exhausted.

She eyes the boxes in the corner.

VERONICA
And then I come home and...
(bout to raise hell)
VERONICA (CONT'D)
wait you didn't finish unpacking
the rest of the dishes?! I told you
to finish while I was in the
shower!

He ignores her. Gets in the bed.

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

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

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

A rap video comes on the TV.

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

CECIL
Well tell she, that he does.

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

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

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

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

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

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

VERONICA
Do it now.
He slides closer towards her. She stares at him. Dead serious.

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

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

Cecil stares a moment. Bobbing his head: okay.

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

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

CECIL
(to himself)
He gon' play, with or without you.

EXT. ROADSIDE - NIGHT

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

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

INT. O'NEAL'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

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

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

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

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

Her cell PHONE RINGS.

INSERT - PHONE
"CEAZER"

She drops the phone.

BACK TO SCENE

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

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

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

O'NEAL
Hell no, you won't.

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

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

Sheree gives him the middle finger.

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

O'NEAL
Your problems are not mine anymore.

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

O'NEAL
(a beat)
You gotta get it together, Sheree... and soon.
INT. CONNIE'S OFFICE - DAY

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

CONNIE
Come in.

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

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

Connie stops typing. Equally surprised.

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

CONNIE
Throw them away.

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

She resumes typing.

CONNIE
Get rid of them, Tony.

TONY
(pouts)
Fine. But you should be open-minded, Ms. Trife.

CONNIE
Open-minded people usually have their brains fall out.

TONY
They usually fall in love, too.

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

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

EXT. BUILDING - PARKING LOT/PARKING ATTENDANT BOOTH - DAY
Connie drives up to the parking attendant booth.

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

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

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

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

CONNIE
ARE in town.

DEXTER
Huh?

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

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

CONNIE
I'll be busy then, too. Sorry.

DEXTER
Like sorry, "maybe next time," or --
CONNIE
We've been through this for the past two months.

DEXTER
Actually, the past fifty two days...

Connie flashes a smile. She's growing impatient.

CONNIE
How much do I owe you?

DEXTER
It's on the house.

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

Dexter lifts the post.

EXT. THE FOSTERS' TOWNHOUSE - DAY

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

INT. THE FOSTERS' LIVING ROOM - DAY

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

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

INT. THE FOSTERS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

CECIL
Thank God...

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

Just as his butt touches the bed, Veronica leaps up like a fish out of water. BUSTED!
VERONICA
Why would you sit on MY bed with your nasty ass uniform on? You know how I feel about that!

She glances over and sees footprints on the floor.

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

CECIL
Just go back to bed. I'm tired.

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

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

VERONICA
I contribute just as much to this household.

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

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

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

INT. CONNIE'S JOB - BOARDROOM - DAY

A room full of MEN -- mostly white -- sit at the executive table. On a projector screen is a pie chart. Connie's wrapping up a presentation.
CONNIE
At the end of this fiscal year, stocks should be up by 11 percent.

OLD WHITE MAN #1
Give us the worst case scenario.

CONNIE
(smiling)
Eleven percent is the worst case.

They're elated. Connie basks in the moment.

INT. BOARDROOM - SHORT WHILE LATER

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

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

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

ROB
You better. You like boats -- the water?
  (she nods)
  Come with me to Napa.

CONNIE
Mr. Johnson --

ROB
It's Rob.

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

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

A beat as Rob smiles at her...

ROB
Ehhh, God dammit! My wife was right. She said you wouldn't go for it. She swears you're not like the others.
She's unsure how to take it but her smile hides the questions in her head. Rob leaves.

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

KARL
Bravo. Great job. You held it down.

CONNIE
Thank you, Karl.

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

She was hoping he wouldn't mention this.

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

CONNIE
My married colleague.

KARL
Soon to be divorced colleague.

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

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

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

(he winks)
Give it fair thought.

CONNIE
(correcting him)
Some thought.

He looks at her. Perplexed.
INT. CONNIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

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

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

CONNIE
Watch your language.

KYLE
Mom, lighten up. I'm just joshing.

He plays with his spaghetti.

KYLE (hesitant)
Remember Abigail? She asked me to be her valentine.

Connie restrains her smile.

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

KYLE
Told her I would talk it over with you first.

Connie's eyes widen.

CONNIE
That's right. Mama comes first.

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

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

CONNIE
How are her grades? Is she polite?

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

CONNIE
Hold on, her grade?
KYLE
She's in sixth.

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

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

Connie holds back her laugh. Just shakes her head.

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

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

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

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

CONNIE
That sounds like a good, affordable idea.

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

CONNIE
And me?

KYLE
I haven't forgotten about you, Mom.

He winks at her.
CONNIE
You know what I could use?

KYLE
Ummmm... a date?

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

KYLE
(under his breath)
No, YOU wouldn't know what to do...
(normal tone)
You have a lot going for yourself, Mom.

CONNIE
And men are intimidated by that.

Kyle doesn't believe that.

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

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

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

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

INT. KYLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

KYLE
God, thank you for my life and everything you gave me. My mom, my school, my valentine, my clothes.
KYLE (CONT'D)
Can you make my mommy happy, too, and send her a nice guy? In Jesus' name, amen.

INT. CONNIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

INSERT PAD - A GAME OF HANGMAN

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

**Height:**
- She draws two short legs.

**Punctuality:**
- A body with two arms --
- Arrows pointed at the wrist

**Not enough education:**
- She draws a head. Beside it she's written "no brain."

**Bad teeth:**
- She draws a frown on the face.

This is how she rates her dates.

INT. DEBORA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

JAMES
(slurred)
Debora. Debora!

He uses the bed to help himself up.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Get ya ass up and greet me!

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

DEBORA
I'm gonna go get ya food.

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

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

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

He shoves her to the bed.

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

James laughs while arousing himself and walking towards the bed.

INT. DEBORA'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

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

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

INT. DEBORA'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

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

INT. DEBORA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

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

INSERT - PHONE

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

BACK TO SCENE

She puts the phone down, food still in her hand, nudges him.
DEBORA
Wake up, James! Get up!

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

DEBORA
(shaking her head)
I have your food.

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

INT. NEIMAN MARCUS - DAY

Veronica browses through racks of outrageously priced clothes.

VOICE (O.S.)
Need help?

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

SASHA
(very catchy)
Hey, girl.

VERONICA
Hey, Sasha.

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

Veronica's eyes light up.

SASHA
Come, let me show you.

They walk.

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

VERONICA
Thirty.

SASHA
Okay, so you know I'm seeing Jerry...
VERONICA
The lawyer who just made partner?

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

She pokes her finger through her fist.

VERONICA
WHAT?! What did you do?

SASHA
(with no remorse)
I kept riding him. Shoot, I knew the new season spring collection was coming out this week and I know better than better.

They share laughs.

VERONICA
I hear that.

SASHA
I know where my blessings come from --

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

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

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

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

VERONICA
Girl, please. He would cut his meat off before he did that.
Sasha grabs a Neiman Marcus credit card application. Hands it to Veronica.

SASHA
You know his social, right?

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

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

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

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

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

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

INT. ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

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

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

MARK
This ain't where you live, right?

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

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

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

Sheree closes his hand into a fist.

SHEREE
I like you, Mark.
She mounts him.

INT. ROOM - LATER

Mark's getting dressed.

MARK
You live by here? I can drop you off.

SHEREE
When am I going to see you again?

MARK
Here, take the money. Just keep it.

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

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

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

SHEREE
Leave!

Awkward silence. Mark flashes a devilish grin.

Sheree turns her head, avoiding eye contact. Ashamed.

MARK
(closing door)
You were just like they said --

Door slams shut.

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

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

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

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

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

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

EXT. NEIMAN MARCUS PARKING LOT - DAY

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

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

EXT. THE FOSTERS' TOWNHOUSE - DAY

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

INT. THE FOSTERS' KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

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

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

VERONICA
(to herself)
Damn!

INT. MALL - JEWELRY STORE - NIGHT

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

Sales associate MONA, a simple beauty, with teeth as white as the clouds, approaches...
MONA
Already I can tell you have great
taste.

Cecil looks up. Impressed by her beauty.

Mona glances at his wedding ring.

MONA
Would you like to see something?

CECIL
(debates)
Ummmm. I'm alright.

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

INT. CONNIE'S OFFICE - DAY

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

TONY
(buttering her up)
Ms. Trife, how are you today? As
good as you look?

Connie's eyes don't leave her computer.

CONNIE
What is it, Tony?

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

(normal pace)
My church will be honoring the
decorating committee -- and as you
know, I'm the head of it and I'd
like you to attend.
CONNIE
You know how I feel about church.
I'll send a gift.

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

CONNIE
I have --

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

CONNIE
Let me mull it over some more and --

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

CONNIE
(touched, nodding)
For you I'll do it this one time...

TONY
(elated)
Thank you!

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

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

INT. CONNIE'S OFFICE - LATER

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

CONNIE
... That's an option, but frankly,
you're running out of options and
I'm running out of time...
my gender has nothing to do with how I run things or look after my clients best interest! And I expect... hello...?

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

CONNIE
Men and their freaking egos!

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

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

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

CONNIE
Who?

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

TONY
They really studied you. Fijii. Hey.

CONNIE
Get rid --

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

EXT. PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

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

DEXTER
How was lunch?
CONNIE
Who told you?

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

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

CONNIE
Not until you tell me how you knew.

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

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

Connie exhales. Mad she had to give in first.

CONNIE
Here.

She extends the ticket.

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

She smiles and hands him the ticket.

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

Points to a Shakespeare book in his booth.

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

It's cute enough to get her to grin. He's not letting up.
CONNIE (V.O.)
The best decisions are often unplanned...
   (a beat, out loud)
Would you even know where to take a woman like me?

DEXTER
You willing to find out?

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

CONNIE
So dinner on Friday?

DEXTER
Now you asking me out?

She gives him the "boy please" face.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT - AFTER WORK HOURS

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

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

GRIFF
May I have your attention?!  
   (still some talking)
There's a cash prize!  
   (immediate silence.)
That was a Joke! I'd like to thank you all for coming out... for being active members of the ministry, and for seeing the vision I have for the singles. Oftentimes, we get overlooked around Valentines day. We get singles classes, or retaught stuff we already know. No one shows us how to date or what questions to ask when we do date. This speed dating is especially important for my single sisters. On the table, are a list of questions that men hate to answer right off the back.

There are a couple "boos" from the fellas. Griff's eyes scan around.
GRIFF (CONT'D)
Sisters, those the guys you want to stay away from.
(they laugh)
But seriously, I want everyone to enjoy themselves, mingle, keep it holy and have a good time. I believe you've been briefed on the rules...
(they nod)
So have fun and remember dating is NOT A SIN. SO LADIES TAKE YOUR SEATS, fellas, be respectful. Enjoy.

INT. CHURCH - UPSTAIRS

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

GRIFF (O.S.)
May I help you?

DEBORA
(bashful, whispers)
Where's the event?

GRIFF
I'm sorry...?

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

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

DEBORA
Is Bishop Chrome still here?

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

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

GRIFF
You are?
DEBORA
Debora... Sims.

GRIFF
Sims. Sounds familiar.

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

GRIFF
I've never seen you.

DEBORA
Had you have, you wouldn't notice.

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

INT. GRIFF'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

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

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

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

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

DEXTER
Nah, I'm good.

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

Dexter's mind is on Connie. He shakes his head; has the slightest clue where the bathroom comment came from.
DEXTER
I finally asked the girl from the office out!

GRIFF
The older one?
(Dexter shakes his head)
Haven't you been asking her out?

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

Griff nods his head. Proud.

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

INT. THE FOSTERS' LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

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

INT. CECIL AND VERONICA'S - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cecil stands in the doorway.

VERONICA
How long is he gonna be here?

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

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

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

VERONICA
Ughhh! This what I mean, every time he comes around you act different.
CECIL
This is my son, Veronica. My son!
He's welcomed here whenever!

She rolls her eyes.

VERONICA
Just go!

INT. THE FOSTERS'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cecil enters, masking his frustration with a smile.

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

INT. DEBORA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

INSERT - JANUARY 9th.

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

Resume scene

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

EXT/INT. STREET - DAWN

Connie drives, while Kyle rides shotgun.

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

They pull up to a house.

KYLE
And most importantly, call me when you get in.
(he opens the door)
And how did you meet this guy?
CONNIE
Get out my car.

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

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

INT. NEIMAN MARCUS - LOCKER ROOM - DAWN

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

INT. NEIMAN MARCUS - OPPOSITE SIDE OF STORE - DAWN

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

BLAINE (O.S.)
Next.

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

BLAINE
Hello. Returns?

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

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

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

BLAINE (CONT'D)
Was something wrong?

Veronica shakes her head: no. Growing impatient.

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

Blaine begins scanning the items back into the system.

VERONICA
No.
Blaine waits for more...

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

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

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

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

VERONICA
Just give it here.

Now suspicious, Blaine begins to smell the clothes.

VERONICA (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

BLAINE
I'll have to call my manager over.

VERONICA
(slightly panicked)
What? For what?

BLAINE
Ma'am this smells like perfume --

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

INT. 4 STAR RESTAURANT - NIGHT


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

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

DEXTER
No. Feel free to ask whatever. Anything.
CONNIE
Is this a faze you're going through?

He's lost. Huh?

CONNIE
Dexter, I'm older than you --

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

CONNIE
Are you really?

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

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

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

She shoots him a look. He smiles.

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

He winks at her.

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

The WAITER sets their plates in front of them.
WAITER
Enjoy.

He walks off.

CONNIE
This is my first date—date in almost four years.

DEXTER
That says a lot.

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

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

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

INT. 4 STAR RESTAURANT - LATER

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

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

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

CONNIE
I think your comment was rude and childish.

DEXTER
What? What are you talking about!?

In a hushed tone, through her teeth --

CONNIE
Lower your voice.

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

DEXTER
I'm not your son.

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

DEXTER
At least tell me what I said.

CONNIE
Your "it says a lot" comment.

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

CONNIE
I'm ready to go.

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

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

DEXTER
Wait. Where you going?

INT. DEBORA'S KITCHEN - DAY
Griff is seated at the table, riffling through a magazine. Debora joins him with two glasses of Kool-aid.

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

DEBORA
That isn't long at all.
GRIFF
Get this, they been together sixteen.

GRIFF
Ever been married?

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

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

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

GRIFF
Don't let things like this scare you.

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

GRIFF
Oh, really?

DEBORA

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

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

GRIFF
We're all around.

DEBORA
You guys start off nice, then you do a 180.
GRIFF
Debora, it boils down to who the person really is. I don't believe a person shows their true self two years down the line -- we just pay attention two years down the line. But signs are there. Always are. Despite what they say, love isn't blind... but loneliness is.

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

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

INT. MALL - JEWELRY STORE - NIGHT
Cecil ambles in. He makes a Beeline for the display case.

MONA
(surprised)
You're back.

EXT. MALL - NIGHT
Cecil smiling from ear to ear. He ignores his ringing cell.

INT. THE FOSTERS' BEDROOM - MORNING
Heart shaped Balloons are floating around. A dozen long stem roses are on Cecil's side of the bed.

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

Moments LATER
Veronica chows down her breakfast as she finishes reading her card...
VERONICA
... You're engraved in my heart forever. Cecil.

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

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

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

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

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

INT. NEIMAN MARCUS - DAY

Veronica and Sasha both working the fragrance section.

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

SASHA
It probably wasn't even that good.

VERONICA
No it was. Trust.

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

VERONICA
Girl, bye.

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

VERONICA
He better had, it's only right.
AN ATM SCREEN READS -2,179 (checking). -930 (savings)...

We're at...

INT/EXT. DRIVE-THRU/CAR - DAY
An enraged Cecil throws the car into drive and floors it.

INT. CHURCH - SANCTUARY - DAY
Neat. Almost filled.

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

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

There's a standing ovation.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT - LATER
Connie exits the bathroom. Tony is there waiting for her. Walking.

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

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

TONY
Oh, you had plans?

CONNIE
That's besides the point.

TONY
I have someone I want you to meet.

CONNIE
No, I'm leaving.
He grabs her hand and runs. She gallops as fast as she can in her stilettos.

INT. CHURCH VESTIBULE - CONTINUOUS

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

TONY
Hey, Brother Foster.

Brother Foster turns around.

TONY
Someone I want you to meet.

Connie's face is frozen.

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

DEXTER
Dexter. Dexter Foster.

Dexter nods at Connie.

DEXTER
(to Tony)
Would you excuse me?

Dexter walks off.

AT THE DOOR

Griff greeting MEMBERS as they leave.

MOMENTS LATER

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

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

CONNIE
Dexter! Dexter!

He stops, turns towards her. She's slightly out of breath.
CONNIE
Can we sit, just for a second?
(they take a seat.)
I never...

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

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

DEXTER

She stands.

CONNIE
Great. Which way out?

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

Connie gives a confused look.

CONNIE
I know when I'm sincere.

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

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

A candlelit table set for two.
O'Neal, dressed in a suit, looks it over. He's pleased.
Bzzzzzz!! Bzzzzzzz! He heads to the door. Buzzes the person in.
He pulls a bottle of wine from the fridge and uncorks it.
KNOCK!! KNOCK!!
He grabs some roses out the freezer, hides them behind his back.

O'NEAL
Open.

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

O'NEAL
What you doing here?!

She attempts to skate by him but he stops her.

O'NEAL
You can't Sheree. Not today.

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

O'NEAL
Sheree, you gotta go!

SHEREE
This for the white girl?

Sheree takes a fork and digs into the food.

O'NEAL
What's wrong with you?

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

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

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

SHEREE (CONT'D)
Ain't she!?!?

O'NEAL
You drunk!? You smell horrible!
Sheree, you gotta go!

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

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

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

O'NEAL
Baby, I'm fine.

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

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

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

INT. O'NEAL'S BEDROOM - SAME

Sheree laying in his bed. Sleep.

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

INT. O'NEAL'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

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

They're kissing. Each second intensifies.

O'Neal shirtless. Madison in her underwear.

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

He gives her the once over, bites his bottom lip and shoves everything off the kitchen table. He hoists her up, she wraps her legs around him. Without hesitation, he takes her right there.
INT. O'NEAL'S LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

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

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

The sound of a door creaking open.

O'Neal rolls on top her.

O'NEAL
Want something to drink?

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

MADISON
What's wrong? You okay?

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

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

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

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

INT. O'NEAL'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

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

SHEREE
Why you doing this to me?
O'NEAL
Go Sheree!

SHEREE
Just help me.

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

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

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

SHEREE
Just wanted to tell your little whore hi.

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

O'NEAL
And leave my shirt.

EXT. CONNIE'S ENCLOSED PORCH - NIGHT

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

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

DEXTER
It's better to ask than assume.

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

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

DEXTER
You may have forget how to be in a relationship.

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

CONNIE
Explain.

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

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

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

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

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

Connie's silent... but never at a loss for words --
CONNIE
I feel like some men -- the ones I've met -- don't want to do better. Y'all want us to prove how much we love you by ACCEPTING your WORST. And that's what I refuse to do.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

        CECIL
        Hello...

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

        VERONICA
        (under her breath)
        Oh, you trying it.

        CECIL
        Yeah, of course he can...

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

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

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

        VERONICA
        Till she finds a place, right? (he shrugs)
        You just need to file for custody. Well what do you know!?
CECIL
(brash)
I know you know damn well you don't want my son living with us! So don't act like you in my corner now.

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

INT. THE FOSTERS' BEDROOM - LATER

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

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

INT. O'NEAL'S BEDROOM - RAINY NIGHT

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

EXT. CONNIE'S PORCH - SAME

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

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

MONTAGE

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

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

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

Griff is preaching. Debora sitting in the front row.

Sheree empties all her liquor bottles into the toilet.

Dexter and Kyle are on the couch playing video games, while Connie stares on from the kitchen as she cooks.
Griff and Debora kneeled down in the living room, holding hands and praying.

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

INT. DR. MISHGELL'S OFFICE - DAY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Connie exhales. Confused.

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

DR. MISHGELL
This wall you've built, is it becoming a prison?
Are you secluding yourself in your own fears?

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

DR. MISHGELL
Do you view relationships like you view business?

CONNIE
If only relationships were that easy...

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

INT. NEIMAN MARCUS - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

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

INT. NEIMAN MARCUS - BATHROOM - AFTERNOON

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

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

LOUISE
Darling, what's... come here.

VERONICA
(shaking her head)
Not now, Ms. Louise. I just want to be left alone. Please.

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

VERONICA
(she screams)
I hate him!!
INT. NEIMAN MARCUS - NIGHT

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

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

LOUISE
Is he disrespectful?

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

LOUISE
Is the child the issue?

VERONICA
He's my main issue.

LOUISE
Why were you two rocky before his son moved in?

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

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

Louise holds her left hand up. Wiggles her ring finger.
LOUISE
Thirty two years. I've been there. Right where you are. Commitment can harder than childbirth.

VERONICA
I want no parts of that man.

EXT. MALL PARKING LOT - NIGHT
Veronica throws some Neiman Marcus bags in the backseat and hops in the front.

INT. VERONICA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS
She goes to start the car but it won't crank. She tries a few more times, same result.

MOMENTS LATER
She's on the phone.

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

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

INT. THE FOSTERS' BEDROOM - NIGHT
Cecil and Jefferson are sit against the headboard.

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

CECIL
Oh, yeah?

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

CECIL
RUN! Go the other way. Trust ya dad.
Cecil grabs his phone. Starts to text.

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

Bright headlights blind Veronica's eyes.

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

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

    TYLER  
    (assertive)  
    Pop that thing, V.  

    VERONICA  
    Excuse me?!?  

    TYLER  
    The hood.  

Tyler walks to the hood.

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

She rolls her eyes.

    VERONICA  
    Can I charge my phone in your car?  

He lifts the hood.

    TYLER  
    You just wanna check out the ride.  

    VERONICA  
    I've been in better.  

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

    VERONICA  
    New Jersey is not country.  

He gazes at her wedding ring set.
TYLER
Looking at that LITTLE ROCK, I would of thought he was from Arkansas.

Veronica hides her hand.

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

He laughs.

EXT. MALL PARKING LOT - LATER

Tyler closes the hood.

TYLER
That should do it. Now get behind the stick.

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

VERONICA
Thank you. I guess I owe you, huh?

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

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

VERONICA
No, Tyler. Not that kind of party.

TYLER
I just want a hug.

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

VERONICA
Let me pay you.

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

VERONICA
Name your price.
He thinks. A devilish grin comes over his face.

INT. GRIFF'S CAR - AFTERNOON

Griff mans the wheel. Debora rides shotgun.

    DEBORA
    Slow down. What's the rush?

    GRIFF
    I want to catch the game.

INT. HOOTERS RESTAURANT - LATER

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

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

    DEBORA
    A pastor that likes Hooters and sports.

    GRIFF
    All men should.

    DEBORA
    Did your team win?

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

    DEBORA
    You feel comfortable in a place like this?

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

    DEBORA
    But look...

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DEBORA
... Griff.

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

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

INT. GRIFF'S CAR - NIGHT

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

INT. DEBORA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Debora is brought to tears by the photos of Sheree in High School.
She scans through another box and pulls out: diplomas, awards for OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT... report cards with all A's... her valedictorian award.

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

INT. NEIMAN MARCUS - DAY

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

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

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

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

DEXTER
You look great but where would you wear it?

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

EXT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

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

DEXTER
Something told me to pre-order the tickets.

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

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

DEXTER
Next time. You promised --
She holds up her hand. Stops him mid sentence.

    CONNIE
    I know, I know...

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

    DEXTER
    What's wrong?

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

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

Connie storms off the line. Dexter follows after her.

    DEXTER
    Baby. BABY.

INT. CONNIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

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

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

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

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

    DEXTER
    Sorry, I like to be comfortable.

    CONNIE
    I'm sorry, I didn't mean that.
DEXTER
I don't complain about your heels and furs that you wear EVERYWHERE we go. Who wears heels to go indoor rock climbing? A mink to go Bowling?

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

Dexter pulls over. Tense. Turns to her.

DEXTER
What's ya problem?

CONNIE
What's yours?

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

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

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

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

DEXTER
Do you wanna be with me?

No response. A beat...

CONNIE
Just drive, please.

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

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

INT. CONNIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A frustrated Connie doodles on her yellow notepad. Kyle enters, hops on her bed.
KYLE
Uh-oh. What's wrong, Mom?

CONNIE
I'm fine.

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

CONNIE
Grown up problems, Kyle.

KYLE
Like what? Tell me.

CONNIE
Nothing you need to be concerned about.

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

A half smile overtakes Connie's face.

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

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

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

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

CONNIE
Where you going?

KYLE
To bed.
INT. THE FOSTERS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

CECIL
Come here, girl. Looking all sexy.

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

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

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

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

VERONICA
I'm tired.

CECIL
Too tired to kiss me?

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

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

He rolls off her.

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

She faces him. Appalled.

VERONICA
You just don't get it. I don't want to work! I'm a woman. I want to be spoiled and treated right! Ugh.
CECIL
So you saying I don't do enough?

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

Those words sting him.

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

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

INT. THE FOSTERS' HOUSE - MORNING

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

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

INT. MANSION - KITCHEN - NIGHT

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

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

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

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

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

He heads out. She grabs her phone.

TYLER (O.S.)
I thought you handled that? Don't he think you doing inventory?
VERONICA
He don't listen.
(looks at her phone)
Damn, 17 missed calls. Can I
breath?!

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

TYLER
(drinking)
What he want?

VERONICA
Probably what you just got.

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

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

TYLER
(finished)
My bad.

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

Veronica calls her machine. Turns on speaker phone.

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

She deletes the message with much attitude.

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

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

Delete.

MACHINE (V.O.)
Message deleted. Next message.
Lots of noise. Sounds like a hallway full of teenagers.

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

She runs out. Leaves her phone behind.

MACHINE (V.O.)
   Last message.

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

INT. O'NEAL'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

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

SHEREE
   You missed me?

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

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

O'Neal takes a seat.

O'NEAL
   That's good news.

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

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

SHEREE
   Not really. I'm a counselor. A "big sister" so to say. Just another step to a better me, while helping someone else become a better them. It's a win-win.
O'NEAL
It's a lot of lives at stake
Sheree. You sure you ready for
this?

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

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

SHEREE
Wait is that what I think it is?

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

This burns Sheree but she hides it.

SHEREE
Oh wow. So fast?

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

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

She stands. He follows her to the door.

SHEREE
You said we'd always be friends.

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

Every word is cutting her even deeper. A beat.

O'NEAL
Take care Sheree.
INT. O'NEAL'S BEDROOM - LATER

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

INT. VERONICA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

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

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

VERONICA
Hello... Oh, GOD...

EXT. CEMETERY - GRAVESITE - DAY

The camera pans across the small casket.

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

In the front line we see:

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

ERICA, Jefferson's mother is crying hysterically.

ERICA

GRIFF
... May we also recognize and rest in the promise of Scripture that Young Jefferson is resting in the Lord's arms. Precious in the sight of the Lord Jesus Christ is the death of His saints and that death for the believer is a going home, a relief from the pain and sorrows of this life.
GRIFF (CONT'D)
May the family cast their cares
upon you with the ability that is
needed to focus on what death means
to our beloved friend who is now
with you. We ask that you would
comfort and strengthen in the days
ahead. Help the family and friends
to rest and draw strength and
comfort from YOU, Almighty Father.

INT. THE FOSTERS' HOUSE - DAY

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

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

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

VERONICA (O.S.)
Excuse me.

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

DEXTER
I love you, bro.

INT. THE FOSTERS' HOUSE - NIGHT

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

KITCHEN

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

DEXTER
It is what it looked like and it
looked wrong!

VERONICA
Don't come in here trying to start
shit.

DEXTER
I won't let you do my brother like
that.
VERONICA
Y'all not coochie crunch. Don't act like y'all are the best of friends.

DEXTER
We ironed out our issues!

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

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

VERONICA
Stay out my damn business.

DEXTER
I told him he shouldn't of married you.

VERONICA
Well he did!

INT. THE FOSTERS' RESIDENCE - NIGHT

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

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

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

She lifts his head... leans in for a kiss... then another... Her lips taking over him until they get lost in each other.
INT. THE FOSTERS' BATHROOM - MORNING

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

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

INT. DEBORA'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

The bell rings. Debora heads to the door, opens it.
DELIVERY GUY holding a bouquet of flowers.

GUY

Debora Sims?

DEBORA

Yes.

He hands her the flowers.

DEBORA

They're beautiful.

GUY

Have a good day ma'am.

She closes the door. Heads into the KITCHEN

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

Leaving a message...

DEBORA

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

She hangs up.

The sound of FOOTSTEPS grow louder and closer.

SHEREE (O.S.)

I knew you'd take him back.
DEBORA
(excited)
Sheree! Baby. Thought you forgot where I lived.

SHEREE
I always remember the places I'm not welcomed.

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

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

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

SHEREE
How many times have I heard that line?

DEBORA
You look nice.

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

DEBORA (CONT'D)
Some of the ladies from church are coming over. You should stay.

SHEREE
Maybe.

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

SHEREE
A lot, mama.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

They're sweating bullets. Water's boiling... foods in the oven. Both ladies wearing an apron. Debora mixes cake mix while Sheree sets the table.
SHEREE
And most importantly, I stopped drinking. Four months now.

Debora's eyes begin to water.

DEBORA
God's just been answering all my prayers.

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

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

SHEREE
O'Neal's getting married.

DEBORA
Well good for --

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

DEBORA
... I don't believe you.

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

DEBORA
Does he know that?

Sheree shrugs.

INT. DR. MISHGELL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

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

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

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

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

VERONICA
Well, I do it more respectfully.

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

DR. MISHGELL
An immense improvement.

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

INT. DR. MISHGELL'S OFFICE - LATER
This productive session is over.

Cecil heads out the door first; Veronica follows leisurely.

CECIL
Stay inside. I'll bring the car around.

Veronica can't hold back her smile.

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

VERONICA
I'm pregnant.

DR. MISHGELL
Congratulations.

VERONICA
No. I'm pregnant.
Dr. Mishgell reading her body language. She doesn't seem happy.

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

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

VERONICA
-- Not be his.

INT. DEBORA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

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

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

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

LADY PRICE
Hiiiii. And you would be?

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

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

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

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

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

LADY PRICE
Bathroom?
DEBORA
Upstairs.

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

A woman known as WILDA walks into the frame.

WILDA
(to Debora)
If you don't hurry you're going to miss your man preaching.

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

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The group of WOMEN focus on the TV.

T.V. SPEAKER (V.O.)
...Our speaker of the hour Pastor Griff Martin! Come on Ambassadors of Christ! Let's hear it for him.

DEBORA
Come on BABY!!

Lady Price rolls her eyes.

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

INT. CHURCH - LATER

Griff preaching to a congregation full of men.

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

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

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

GRIFF
There are men in here now that have been delivered from drugs.
GRIFF (CONT'D)
God's healed some from alcohol,
cancer... there's nothing too hard
for my GOD!! I'm a Witness.
NOTHING!
(more applause)
If you need healing, deliverance,
no matter what it is, make your way
to the alter.

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

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

Griff signals Dexter to bring it down some.

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

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

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

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

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

INT. DEBORA'S LIVING ROOM - SAME

Debora and the rest of the ladies watch with their mouths
hung open. Everyone's shocked except Lady Price who wears the
"I knew it" face.
...It was a battle. I've been in love with a man. I was gone. All the way gone, but God delivered me. He changed me and turned me into the person I was created to be...

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

Pastor Griff Martin comes out the closet --

Sheree flips her TV off.

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

Church is damn near empty.

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

Griff steps in. Sulked.

BERNADETTE, his secretary, waits for him...

She call, Bernadette?

(avoid eye contact)

No pastor.

(a beat)

These are the numbers from today's offering.

She hands him a letter that puts him in an even worse mood.
BERNADETTE
The past six weeks we've been really low. Accountant says we may have to make some cutbacks.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

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

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

VERONICA
I haven't had many cravings yet.

DR. BRADSHAW
Low acid. None is better.

Dr. Bradshaw searches through a manila folder.

DR. BRADSHAW
Do you or Cecil have sickle cell?

VERONICA
(clutches her stomach)
No. Not that I know of. Definitely not on my side. But my husband has all types of things on his side. Them folks jacked up.

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

INT. THE FOSTERS' BEDROOM - DAY

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

CECIL
Baby, look. What you think?

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

VERONICA
It's too early.
CECIL
You're eight weeks. Baby will be here before you know it.

She tucks her head back under the sheets.

INT. NEIMAN MARCUS - FRAGRANCE DEPARTMENT - DAY

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

TYLER
Get ya ass up.

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

VERONICA
Can I help you?

TYLER
Why you change your number?

VERONICA
We're done.

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

(she rolls her eyes)
Not good customer service. So you trying to walk the straight and narrow, huh? Be a good wifey.

VERONICA
I am a good wife.

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

VERONICA
You look fine to me.

TYLER
I mean, you know, I'm a fighter. Sickle cell might kick my ass but it ain't gon' keep me out for long.
A moment of unnatural silence before... she breaks out from behind the counter -- almost ghost like.

INT. THE FOSTERS' LIVING ROOM - DAY

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

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

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

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

CECIL

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

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

CECIL

How much you sold it for?!

VERONICA
(nervous)


CECIL

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

VERONICA
(crying)

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

CECIL

Who is it? WHO?!
VERONICA
(a beat)
It's Tyler, but I cut him off.
Baby, I cut him off! I mean it!

CECIL
Who else knows? Who else!

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

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

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

VERONICA
Please stop.

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

VERONICA
Please. For the baby's sake.

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

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

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

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

INT. CONNIE'S OFFICE - DAY

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

TONY
Ms. Trife, is this a bad time?

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

TONY
Ms. Trife, I always stay out your business but I need --
CONNIE
Don't overstep your bounds.

TONY
With all due respect, I may...

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

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

CONNIE
That was years ago.

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

CONNIE
I know what you're getting at.

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

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

TONY
He's not a child.

CONNIE
Why are you advocating so hard?
TONY
Because he’s a good guy! And he
loves you. And I know you. Beneath
all this power, you’re still a
woman at heart. You still want
things money and power can’t buy.

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

CONNIE
Let yourself out. Thank you.

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

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

DARK.

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

CLOSE ON: Sheree's terrified face.

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

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

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

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

EXT. GYM - NIGHT

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

O'Neal drives. Sheree's shotgun.

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

O'NEAL
Your mama.

SHEREE
O'Neal...

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

SHEREE
I'm working, I'll pay you back. With interest.
(a beat)
Do you still love me?
(no response)
You would do it for her.

O'NEAL
Damn right.

SHEREE
So then it should be no difference.

O'Neal pulls over.

O'NEAL
Get out!

SHEREE
What?

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

SHEREE
Look at these bruises. Look at my neck. My cheeks. Does it look like I'm trying to hustle you? I swear I'm not.
O'NEAL
I gave you chance after chance.
Time after time, you do the same thing. You leave me -- I take you back. You gave me syphilis, I took you back. You couldn't pay your rent, who you call? Me. Not the sucker you left me for -- the man that beat the shit out of you. The one that pimped you out. I went above and beyond and never threw that stuff in your face. NEVER! All I did was love you. I loved you when you didn't love yourself and all you did was shit on me. So get the HELL OUT!

Tears fall from Sheree's face.

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

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

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

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

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

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

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

INT. DEBORA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

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

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

Before she can speak, Griff turns around holding her package.
INT. DEBORA'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

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

GRIFF
You look beautiful.

No response. A beat.

DEBORA
Is it the mustache?

He's hurt she would say such a thing.

GRIFF
I don't know what to say.

DEBORA
Then you should leave.

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

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

GRIFF
No, I was.

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

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

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

GRIFF
Truthfully, I'm changed. That was years ago. Decades.
DEBORA
Once a man plays with that life,
he's always apart of it.

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

DEBORA
He can. But you? No.

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

That hit a nerve. She stands. Furious!

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

GRIFF
(he stands)
I'm sorry.
(she starts crying.)
I love you, Debora. I can't erase
what I was. But that's not who I am
anymore. You told me I am
everything you wanted. I'm still
the same person. We all come from
something.

She storms into the

KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Griff follows...

DEBORA
If I was gay and use to sleep with
women, wouldn't you want to know?
(awkward silence.)
I've lost weight, stressing.
Haven't eaten. I feel betrayed.
Betrayed by the man I love. You
probably know how it feels to be
betrayed by a man.
GRIFF
(shakes his head)
Debora, I'm sorry! Listen, please forgive me. I never meant to bring shame to you.
(inches towards her)
I'm not going to make excuses, but don't hold it against me. Judge me by what you see, what I show you, how I treat you and make you feel.

Griff grabs her hand. Gently pulls her close.

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

Debora's still hesitant. Shaking her head no.

DEBORA
How can I trust you?

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

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

INT. CONNIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

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

There's a stick figure with the name Dexter over it. She stares...
INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - OUTSIDE THE DOOR - NIGHT

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

INT. DEXTER'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

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

DEXTER
Can I get you anything?

CONNIE
I just need to talk.

DEXTER
The floor is yours.

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

(tearing up, emotional)

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

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

INT. CHURCH - DAY

More people than the last time we were here.
Cecil, Debora, Connie, Kyle, Tony -- all listen attentively as Griff preaches.

EXT. CHURCH PARKING LOT - DAY

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

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

CECIL
You still got twelve roommates?

DEXTER
Ha ha. Me and Connie kinda staying together.

CECIL
It's that serious?

DEXTER
Yea.

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

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

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

(cautiously)
What you gon' do?

CECIL
That bitch is dead to me!

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

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

Satisfied with his response, Mother continues her stroll.
DEXTER (CONT'D)
Bro, you not yourself.

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

They hug.

DEXTER
Love you.

CECIL
Same here.

INT. O'NEAL'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

O'Neal paces the floor. Nervous. Afraid.

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

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

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

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

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

O'NEAL
I'm going through something.

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

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

Madison reaches for his hand. Leads him to the couch.
MADISON
I'm here to help you.

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

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

MADISON
So you weren't really helping her?

O'Neal looks down. Ashamed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

INT. PAWN SHOP - DAY

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

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

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

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

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

O'NEAL
(re: bag)
Sheree. She even. Now leave her alone.

CEAZER
(licking his lips)
Who Goldie?

O'NEAL
Play if you want to.

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

INT. THE FOSTERS' HOUSE - NIGHT

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

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

INT. THE FOSTERS' LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

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

EXT. STREET - DAY

PROTESTORS holding signs with writings and pictures. Right now, it's hard to see what it says.
Veronica trudges across the street. A horn honks at her. She doesn't budge, still walking at her own pace, in her own world. She makes her way through the protestors, and into a building.

EXT. BUILDING - DAY

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

   CECIL
   Saw her where?!

CUT TO:

INT. CLINIC - DAY

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

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

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

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

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

   SASHA
   He's cute.

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

   SASHA
   V, how you feeling?

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

   SASHA
   Then why are you doing this?

   VERONICA
   I love my husband. I can't bring another man's child into this world. I've hurt him enough.
SASHA
But what if you never get him back?
Hasn't he already signed his part
of the divorce papers?

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

DOCTORS ASSISTANT
Foster.

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

SASHA
(whispers)
It's your choice.

INT. SURGERY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Assistant helps Veronica onto the operating table.

INT. CLINIC - SAME

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

Cecil breaks down. Almost falling to his knees.

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

SASHA
Veronica!

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

CECIL
What are you doing here?

VERONICA
The right thing.

CECIL
Veronica, don't do this.
VERONICA
Cecil, I have to. I can't do this. 
I've destroyed enough lives.

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

Veronica's crying. Confused.

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

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

Veronica stares at him. She shakes her head no.

CECIL
Veronica, just come home!

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

CECIL
Veronica. Veronica!

He opens the door.

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

INT. RECEPTION HALL - DAY

SUPER: 18 MONTHS LATER

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

Balloons, decorations, and floral arrangements adorn every table.

GUEST at their tables chatting it up.
Over at one table we find Veronica showing Connie some pictures in her phone.

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

Cecil blushes.

    DEXTER
    (to Cecil)
    She looks like her mom in that picture.

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

    VERONICA
    (slightly embarrassed)
    Excuse me. I'm leaking. Gotta pump.

    CONNIE
    I remember them days.

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

Connie gazes down at her beautiful engagement ring.

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

INT. RECEPTION HALL - MOMENTS LATER

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

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

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

INT. RECEPTION HALL - LATER

The Martin's sit up front at a table for two. Sheree stands at the podium, behind a microphone -- holding a wine glass filled with sparkling cider.
SHEREE
(onto mic)
Excuse me...
(louder)
EXCUSE ME. MAY I HAVE YOUR
ATTENTION? I'd like to toast.
(Crowd comes to a hush)
I just want to say Mom, Griff, I'm happy for you guys. I love you both. Mom, you're my heart. And Griff, I guess you were my hero that day. Truly I'm happy that we have...

A shot of O'Neal smiling adoringly at Sheree.

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

The room toast.

SHEREE
Now lets dance.

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

FADE OUT