

THE DAWSONS

By

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INT. DAWSON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

We open to a fancy mansion with cars pulling up in the driveway, two couples; one with two children are greeted at the door by the house staff and welcomed inside. As we walk inside, the tables in the foyer are filled with huge flower bouquets, anniversary greeting cards, and gifts. One of the staff members is putting them away. We head upstairs where PHILLIP and JANET; a middle-aged couple and owners of the home are getting ready to attend to their guests.

PHILLIP

Why do we always have to keep our guests waiting when we're the ones always complaining about being on time?

JANET

Speak for yourself, I'm not the one who tried on 5 suits in the last thirty minutes.

PHILLIP

(chuckles)

Well come on baby, let's go. This is ridiculous.

He grabs her hand and helps her down the stairs as her long sequin gown flows across each stair. The guests are in awe watching the lovely couple. They greet each other and make their way to the dining room where a long decorated dining table with flowers and candles is set up, soft music is playing. Phillip and Janet sit at both ends of the table. The house staff starts to bring drinks and starters as the guests chat amongst themselves. Gregg who is the oldest of the Dawson clan gets up and raises a glass.

GREGG

I would like to raise a toast for my wife and me to be here with you to celebrate your fortieth wedding anniversary. I have watched you guys over the years and seen how you stuck by each other and never let go. I admire you both for the great example you have given us of what a soulmate and finding your true love is. I love you both dearly and happy anniversary. Cheers everybody! To the Dawsons

They all toast to the speech.

During the middle of dinner, Janet is starring at Gregg's wife Shonda struggling to eat with the right utensils. Janet and her daughter Jess make it obvious they are mocking her. Everyone has finished eating and they are sitting in the large luxurious living room, filled with family photographs, big chandeliers, and luxurious decor. All the couples are sitting next to each other, the kids are in another area. They are enjoying some champagne and fancy dessert. Phillip joins the adults, he stands right in the center of the room facing everyone.

PHILLIP

I'm not good at these things but I guess in honor of the occasion, I'll say a few things myself. I am so proud of what this family has accomplished over the years, because of our hard work and tenacity, we are a well-known and respected family in society. All of that couldn't have been possible without your mother. This woman has been my backbone and motivation to always strive to be at the top and make a name for myself. When everyone saw a poor kid from a low-class family who would amount to nothing; she saw what I could be. This woman knows me more than I know myself, she has pushed me to become more than I thought I could and made me realize my truest potential. Honey, thank you for thirty amazing years, you have given me more than I ever thought I could have in this little unpredictable thing called life. Happy anniversary darling, I love you.

There are some claps and awe in the room, Janet gets up to give a kiss to her husband. Greg plays some music on the speaker system, Phillips grabs his wife's hand and they go for a dance. A few minutes later, the other couples join them.

Later that night, Phillip invites Gregg to talk in his office while Shonda gets the coats for their kids since they were the only guests left. Phillip locks the door behind him.

PHILLIP

So how's life treating you son? We haven't been in touch that much lately.

GREGG

You know me. Same thing every day and I never get bored. I love what I do and I wouldn't change a thing. I know you wanted to hear something else.

PHILLIP

You know I'm still amazed to this day that you would choose to be a teacher instead of taking on the family empire. The position is still open in case you change your mind, which I know you will.

GREGG

Dad, I'm good. I told you that's just not me, I'm not a business type like you guys. Maybe you should let Jess take over, I know she'd do a better job.

PHILLIP

I thought about it but Jess already has her own companies and that's too much pressure on her. Plus it wouldn't be a good time to think about taking on another business, your mother told me she was talking about starting a family.

GREGG

Well, it's about time. Evan and Allison need play dates and this house needs a little more chaos.

They both smile

PHILLIP

Yeah, I don't know about that, it's not part of my retirement plan. I already had my share with Kian and Kenya.

GREGG

Speaking of, I barely see those two. I know it's not just school keeping them that occupied. Can't even remember the last time they came over to our house. The kids barely know them.

PHILLIP

That's that stage, they're hiding from everyone and they get detached from everything; except their damn phones. just last night I realized Kian grew a mustache.

GREGG

Maybe you haven't made yourself available that much either.

PHILLIP

Well, it's for a good reason, I'm trying to make sure they can keep this lifestyle and never lack a thing.

GREGG

What about the lack of their father's time and attention?

A house staff interrupts their conversation.

STAFF

Excuse Mr. Gregg, Miss Shonda said she's waiting for you in the car, the kids are sleepy.

GREGG

Oh, thank you, Candice. Tell her I'll be there in a minute.

STAFF

Yes Sir.

Gregg kisses his mother goodnight and takes off. Phillip and her go back to their bedroom as the night ends.

INT. DAWSON'S BEDROOM BALCONY -DAY

The morning after, Janet is having breakfast on the balcony of their bedroom. Phillip joins her.

JANET

I had a great time last night, I loved your speech.

PHILLIP

You did? Could have fooled me. The whole time your face had turned to stone.

JANET

Well I did, you've come far from those "happy anniversary honey, I love you". End of speech.

PHILLIP

Slowly but surely.

JANET

So... I was thinking. It's been a while since we had some quality time just the two of us, what if we went on a small trip before you start your new project? I need new scenery. I want some inspiration.

PHILLIP

Are we not enough inspiration ourselves? I mean look at what we've accomplished.

JANET

That's not what I mean Phil, I don't know I feel like I need to do something else that will fulfill me. The kids are grown now and Kian and Kenya are barely around and neither are you. I stay in this house all day twirling my fingers and making sure our finances are in order. It kind of gets boring quickly.

PHILLIP

But you're the one who asked to be in charge of our finances and letting me handle the businesses. We're partners in this remember?

JANET

I did, but that was a long time ago honey, you were new money. I didn't want you spending faster than we were making it. I've seen how people act once they get a little taste of luxury, they lose their damn minds.

Phillip's face becomes more serious

PHILLIP

Do you always have to bring up the fact that I wasn't as privileged as

you? You act like I was starving and begging for scraps on the streets.

JANET

You know that's not what I meant. What did we say to each other when we started dating? We would be a team, fill in the other's weakness. You are good at creativity and have that entrepreneur spirit and I don't. You don't know how to manage your money though, I do that for you and we even doubled our investments. We make a pretty good damn team don't you think?

PHILLIP

Yes, we do honey but listen, I don't think this is the right time for a vacation. I have too much on my mind and my main priority is making sure this venture takes off. I have too much invested in this, I can't lose my focus.

JANET

so that's a no?

PHILLIP

We have more than enough time to plan it, Jay it's not that urgent. I have to go, I'm meeting Mike in less than an hour. I'll see you tonight.

He kisses her and grabs his coat and leaves, Janet continues reading her book.

INT. CAFE BISTRO -DAY

Gregg pulls up to a café bistro for a scheduled lunch with Jess and her husband Chris. They are already waiting for him.

JESS

Well, at least you got one thing from mom and dad; lateness.

GREGG

Damn, you're busting my balls already?

He greets Chris and takes a seat, a waiter arrives at the table.

WAITER

Hi, are you ready to order?

GREGG

Yeah, I'll just get a turkey sandwich and the house salad.

The waiter leaves to put in the orders.

JESS

So dad tells me you rejected taking over his companies? Can't say I'm surprised but I think you're making a big mistake.

GREGG

Why's that?

JESS

I mean don't you wanna do something else with your life Gregg? Something impactful and rewarding, a legacy that you can pass on to your family?

The waiter returns with Gregg's order. He digs in.

GREGG

How did you figure I wasn't doing that? Just because I'm not as ambitious as you make my life mediocre and meaningless? What, because I don't live in the suburbs like mom and dad or you mean I'm wasting my life?

JESS

Oh, come on! What did you always tell me as kids? How dad inspired you and you would be like him one day, travel the world and be somebody. What changed?

GREGG

My perspective on life changed and so did my purpose. People change along the way; you should try it.

JESS

I'll tell you what happened, you got too comfortable because you knew you had parents to run off to in case it gets tough.



GREGG

No, I don't do handouts. I'm happy with my life, the question is.. are you?

JESS

Oh, don't worry my life is great. I have a successful career, a loving husband that adores me and I know I don't have to rely on anyone to write my checks.

GREGG

But are you happy?

Jess has no answer. Chris who has been quiet and watching the two go at it already finished his food and is occupied with his phone.

CHRIS

Man, you two sure can put on a show, I forgot what was the purpose of this meeting.

JESS

Babe stay out of this, please!

Gregg's not pleased with her tone. The waiter returns with the tab, Gregg offers to pay.

GREGG

Chris is right, I forgot about why I came here. Are you gonna come and do the presentation or not? Maybe you can inspire some of the kids, there's something meaningful for you.

JESS

Yeah, I'll do it, but not for you. Who knows? I could inspire those kids to do take risks and thrive to never settle. Lord knows they need someone to push them a little bit.

GREGG

Well thank you, I'll give you a call ahead to schedule.

The waiter comes back.

WAITER

I'm sorry but your card didn't go through, would you like to try another one?

GREGG

Are you sure? Maybe it didn't read it correctly.

WAITER

We processed it twice Sir.

Jess and Chris have their heads down trying to avoid eye contact with the waiter.

CHRIS

Try this card.

Gregg is embarrassed and puts away his card.

JESS

You need to reevaluate your life dude, this is not it. Now I'll never show my face in this restaurant again. Thank you!

INT. JESS'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Later that night, Jess arrives home from work after an awkward lunch earlier. Chris is watching tv drinking beer, she kisses him and goes to change upstairs. She heads to the kitchen and starts taking out things from the fridge. Chris comes to join her.

CHRIS

So how was your day?

JESS

Fine, there are a few meetings I missed because of that embarrassing so-called lunch.

CHRIS

Speaking on that, you seemed a bit tense more than usual.

JESS

Why do you say that?

CHRIS

Well, you pretty much chewed the guy

and spit him out, what was that all about?

JESS

Nothing, I'm just tired of Gregg always embarrassing me and my family. He needs a harsh reality check, he wants to be a rebel in the family but he is messing with our reputation. That's one thing you don't do with us; mess with our name.

CHRIS

You both are a trip. Anyways I'm sick of always being caught in your family drama so I'd appreciate it if you kept me from it. And another thing...

He gets closer to her and grabs her neck as she tries to gasp for air. He whispers in her ear.

CHRIS

Next time you raise your voice at me in public; especially in front of your family... think twice.

He smiles and turns her face to him and kisses her. He returns to the living room as Jess continues her cooking; holding back tears.

INT. NEIGHBORHOOD DRIVE - DAY

Phillip and Janet are driving to visit his parents who live on the other side of town. Janet is not too pleased with seeing them since she does not get along well with them. She has been quiet the whole ride and Phillip hasn't uttered a word either.

PHILLIP

Anything on your mind? You seem distant.

JANET

No, I'm ecstatic can't you tell? Why do you keep forcing me and your parents to have a relationship when you know they do not like me?

PHILLIP

I don't think you've put up much of an effort to give them a chance.

JANET

You know me quite long enough to know I don't force myself to do things I do not want to do or don't seem natural.

PHILLIP

Please change your attitude before we go in, these are my parents.

JANET

I'll do my best.

INT. WILL AND YOLANDA'S HOUSE - DAY

Will and Yolanda, who are Phillip's parents are setting up the table for Phillip and Janet. Yolanda is paying extra attention to details making sure everything is perfect and in order. The bell rings and Will goes to answer.

WILL

Welcome son, long time.

PHILLIP

Hey dad, good to see you.

They hug and enter. Yolanda goes for a hug with Janet but she opts for a handshake and a barely-there smile. They are offered a seat as Yolanda finishes setting up the table.

WILL

It's really good to see you son. We only see you on birthdays and funerals. there is no excuse for you not visiting your parents regularly.

PHILLIP

Well, that's the life of a businessman dad. Plus I have a new project I'm cooking up with Mike so it's a lot of hard work and time put into it. This is bigger than anything I have ever worked on.

WILL

How is Mike?

PHILLIP

He's still coping, I think he is coming to terms with the tragedy and trying to move on so he's been drowning himself in work to distract

him.

WILL

Everyone has different ways of coping with a loss son, you tell him I said hello.

He turns to Janet who has been quiet and listening to them whole time without interrupting.

WILL

Excuse us, Janet. We seem to have excluded you from the conversation. How are you and the kids? And how come I have to track them down to get in contact with them?

JANET

Pops they are grown adults now, even I can barely get the twins to spend time with me.

WILL

Well tell them Grandpops wants to talk with them, I'm scared then next time they come to see me I will be lying in a casket.

(laughs)

Phillip and Janet nervously laugh back.

YOLANDA

Okay everyone dinner is served, let's head to the dining room.

The dinner starts awkwardly with the only noise are forks scratching plates and drinks being poured in glasses.

YOLANDA

So, Janet, I've been trying to call you about a small favor I wanted to ask you but you never returned my calls.

JANET

Oh... I never saw any missed calls, I barely have my phone on me.

YOLANDA

Really? You haven't let it go since you arrived, interesting.

JANET

So you've been watching me the whole time?

YOLANDA

Not necessarily, it's your lack of presence and attentiveness that is hard to ignore.

Phillip tries to deescalate the heating conversation

PHILLIP

So mom, Janet and me were thinking about finally retiring for good.

YOLANDA

Both of you or just you? I mean some of us don't even have to; our whole lives have been a vacation.

JANET

Yolanda if you have something to say to me, I'm sitting right here.

YOLANDA

What's left to be said? It's all been said.

JANET

You know miss Yolanda, let me tell you this. just because you never worked hard and created the life you wanted and had to leech off my husband, does not mean others cannot enjoy theirs.

YOLANDA

I beg your pardon? You're teaching me about living off people? What exactly is your job Janet? Please enlighten us.

JANET

(chuckles)

You wanna know something? Your son would have never made it to where he is now if it wasn't for me. And on that note, I think I'm gonna cut this dinner short. Have a good night.

PHILLIP

Honey, where are you going?

JANET

I knew this was a bad idea. I'm gonna leave, you can get yourself an Uber.

Janet grabs the keys from her husband's jacket, gets her coat, purse and exits. Everyone else continues their dinner in silence.

INT. GREGG'S SCHOOL - DAY

It's after school, Gregg who is a history teacher at a high school is grading homework in an empty class. Someone knocks on the door, he opens it. It's Janet.

GREGG

Well this is a surprise!

JANET

That was the kind of the idea.

They hug and she sits on a chair.

GREGG

Why didn't you just stop by my house?

JANET

You know why Gregg.

GREGG

Still don't like Shonda huh? Come on mom, she's a great person once you get to know her.

JANET

We don't have a lot in common so why bother? anyways I won't take much of your time. I wanted to ask you something.

GREGG

What's that?

JANET

Why haven't you brought the kids over? I miss them.

GREGG

Well I've been a bit busy you know? It's a new semester and I'm working on my teaching materials. It's hard to find time

JANET

Gregg, you are not running a multi-billion empire here, you can find time I'm sure.

GREGG

You're not buying it huh?

JANET

Not even one bit.

GREGG

Okay, well here's the truth. Shonda is having an issue with the kids coming to stay there. She felt some kind of way about how you and Jess were acting towards her during the anniversary dinner and she feels disrespected. She has told me countless times that she does not feel welcome in the family; especially by you.

JANET

How does she feel like I'm not welcoming? I never said or did anything to make her feel that way.

GREGG

You didn't roll out the carpet for her either. When was the last time you two spent together aside from family gatherings or dinners? Even then you never approach her or try to have a relationship with her.

JANET

You know I'm not that social Gregg, I'm like that with everyone. I have always been an introvert.

GREGG

Okay, now I'm not buying that. You make an effort when you want to get to know a person, I mean I don't understand what you have against her. She's always tried to fit in the family and every chance you get, you and Jess mock her.

JANET

Maybe we're just too different. We



come from different backgrounds Gregg;  
you cannot blame me if I'm skeptical  
of her motives.

GREGG

What? Motives? Mom, do you realize  
you're talking about the mother of  
your grandkids? Maybe she's right...

JANET

about what?

GREGG

I don't think you should see the kids  
until you apologize to my wife.

JANET

You're siding with her?

GREGG

I'm not siding with anyone! It's  
common sense mom! Why would she want  
you to see her kids if you barely  
acknowledge she exists?

JANET

What is it with you all being so  
sensitive in this family? I can't deal  
with it anymore. I hope you change  
your mind about this, those are my  
grandkids. I'll let myself out.

EXT. GOLF COURSE - NIGHT

Phillip and his business partner Mike are doing some late-  
night golfing while talking about their new business venture.  
Phillips seems distracted.

MIKE

so I was talking to David and he said  
everything's in order. He's waiting on  
the funds.

PHILLIP

I don't know, I feel like he still has  
to test out the market and make sure  
this idea will work. Tell him to give  
me a couple of weeks.

MIKE

You're telling me after all the

research and hard work we put in, now that we're about to launch this thing you're getting cold feet? This is not the Phil I know.

PHILLIP

You don't understand Mike, I'm putting a lot of money into this. I even took from our retirement account and my children's trust funds. This has to work.

MIKE

And it will... now relax you're getting me anxious. I've known David for years and he knows what he's doing, you said it yourself. Just get the money and let's do this.

PHILLIP

I think I'm gonna let some of my employees go, and save some money to put into it.

MIKE

Do what you got to do man, this is a deal of a lifetime. Can we play some golf now?

They resume their game.

INT. JANET AND PHILLIP'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Phillips gets home very late that night. He tries to sneak in quietly without making a sound walking up the stairs; only to find her awake reading a fashion magazine. He plays it off.

PHILLIP

Still awake?

JANET

Still sneaking in late?

PHILLIP

I lost track of time, sorry about that.

JANET

That's not the only thing you forgot.

PHILLIP  
What do you mean?

JANET  
Make sure you're available tomorrow  
night.

PHILLIP  
Why? Who's coming over?

JANET  
Wow... So you did forget?

PHILLIP  
Stop playing mind games with me Janet,  
I'm tired.

JANET  
Yeah, I'm tired too Phillip. I'm tired  
of always having the same conversation  
each year. Goodnight... and HAPPY  
BIRTHDAY TO ME!.

Realizing he forgot their anniversary for the third year in a row, he doesn't have a response.

INT. FRENCH RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Phillip and Janet arrive at one of their favorite restaurants to celebrate her birthday the next night. She is still mad. Phillip is being the perfect gentleman pulling out chairs for her and giving her all his attention. She is not phased.

PHILLIP  
You still mad at me huh? Look honey  
I'm sorry. I'm just so caught up with  
work and making sure our retirement  
plan is all set up.

JANET  
This is the third time Phillip, I  
already heard this excuse before and  
it's tired. Tell me something new.

PHILLIP  
You're right, I'm truly sorry and do  
feel bad, I want to make it up to you.  
I might reconsider taking that trip  
you were talking about...

JANET

Yeah, I did too. It's not the right time.

PHILLIP

ooh... okay. So tell me, how was your day?

JANET

(sardonic laugh)

You know every time we spend some time alone together I realize something. How much of strangers we are to each other; despite being married for this long. It's the same questions, same conversations, same answers, and the same awkward silence. We barely have anything to talk about other than the kids or money.

PHILLIP

That's not true, we wouldn't have made it this far if that was the case.

JANET

Because we never want to fail in anything we do, business-wise or life in general. Sometimes I feel like we're more of business partners than husband and wife. We don't have that spark people in our stage should have, we've become so satisfied and comfortable with the distance between that we don't even notice it anymore. Our lives were full of adventure when we met; we were hungry back then.

PHILLIP

(interrupts)

Where is all this coming from? I thought we were here to celebrate your birthday; not in a marriage counseling session.

JANET

I think you choose not to see it so we don't have to talk about it. We pretend in front of everyone that we're this loving and madly in love couple, but this is us in real life. Two strangers who are tied together in

this thing called marriage. What are we doing Phil?

PHILLIP

I'm not gonna have this conversation here, baby why are you trying to start something? We can't even have a decent meal together now?

JANET

I'm sick of pretending, I'm starting to believe the lies myself. Let's get this dinner over with. Cheers to another fabulous year.

INT. JESS' OFFICE - DAY

Jess is overloaded with documents in her office, she's getting phone call after another. She is overwhelmed.

JESS

Carla! Can you come in here?

CARLA

Yes, Mrs. Cambridge?

JESS

Did you call the vendors yet?

CARLA

Ummm... I have not gotten to that yet.

JESS

WHY THE HELL NOT? What am I paying you for then? Sit your butt down and look pretty? You're my assistant! Do your damn job! We are launching a new season in a couple of months Carla, WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING THIS WHOLE DAMN TIME?

CARLA

I'm very sorry, I'll get right to it Mrs. Cambridge.

JESS

Yeah, you do that. Unless you want to end up on the unemployment line tomorrow. Get out of my office.

(deep exhale)

She gets a drink of water and tries to organize her desk. A

few minutes later she closes the blinds in her office and breaks down.

INT. JANET AND PHILLIP'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Phillip comes home late again, this time he does not try to sneakily get in; he already knows his wife is not asleep. Janet is in the kitchen with the staff cleaning up for the night. He goes upstairs and straight into the shower room. While taking a shower, Janet comes in and finds his clothes laying on the floor as usual. She picks them up and searches the pockets to make sure there's nothing in them before throwing them in the laundry bin; she senses a strong smell. She sniffs the shirt; realizing that's where the smell is coming from. Janet hears Phillip getting out of the shower and quickly exits, she puts the dirty clothes in the laundry bin. She sniffs the shirt again before putting it with the rest.

EXT. KENYA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Kenya is hosting her two best friends Nisha and Tracey in her bedroom; listening to music and enjoying some snacks. She brings out two very colorful and fluffy dresses and sets them on the bed.

KENYA

I need you guys' help, can't decide.

NISHA

I see why. There is no choice here. Girl, what are you thinking? This is not a tea party! I don't want you out here making us look like clowns.

TRACEY

Yeah dude, don't you have anything else in there? We want to make sure we can get into the party, that dress screams Sunday's best.

KENYA

I've looked in the whole closet, that's all I got.

NISHA

Maybe it's time for a closet makeover, you know I'm always down for some shopping!

KENYA

I'm gonna ask my mom for some cash; my dad's been too stingy lately.

NISHA

Well, I can't wait to lock some lips with some hot buff seniors. These little sophomores are not doing it for me. Time to be on my grown woman shit.

TRACEY

So will Kenya, unless she's too chicken to make a move.

KENYA

What do you mean?

TRACEY

Come on Kenya, we've caught you a few times drooling over Bryson in the hallway. I'm sure he will be at the party so you better get on it.

NISHA

Right! Or hoe ass Brittany will beat you to it. Damn that girl has been ran through.

They all laugh.

EXT. LOCAL GROCERY STORE - DAY

Janet is grocery shopping at a supermarket before heading home. Her cart is full so it's taking longer to checkout, she walks around to kill time while the helper puts the items on the checkout line. She looks out the window, her face drops. She walks out of the store to take a closer look, on the other side of the road is Phillip putting groceries in the trunk of his car. She's confused and keeps watching him; trying to make sense of it all. A few seconds later, a woman brings more grocery bags and hands them to him. She hugs him and kisses him on the cheek then leaves. Phillips gets in the car. Janet who has been witnessing all of this is still in a state of shock, she decides to call him. He picks up

PHILLIP

Hey honey!

JANET

Hey... where are you?

PHILLIP

Oooh, I just left the office, I'll be home soon. why?

JANET

I'm five minutes away, I thought we could grab some lunch.

PHILLIP

I already left, you just missed me.

JANET

Oh well, that's a bummer. I'll see you at home then.

PHILLIP

Okay, love you.

She hangs up the phone and watches him drive off.

INT. JESS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Jess is taking a shower while the food on the stove is cooking, Chris gets home. He notices smoke coming from the kitchen; something on the stove is burning. He quickly turns it off and opens the windows. Chris gets heated trying to find his wife. She gets out to find him sitting on the bed waiting for her to finish.

JESS

Hey, I didn't realize you were back.

CHRIS

Good thing I got here earlier or you'd have burned the house down.

JESS

I think I left it on there too long, I'll just run to the store and get something else.

CHRIS

Need I remind you my parents will be here in an hour?

JESS

I know, it won't take long.

CHRIS

Is there anything you can do right? Like ever? Do you have to embarrass me



every chance you get? You can't even make a simple ass dinner for my parents?

JESS

It was an accident, I was taking in the shower. No need to blow the roof off.

CHRIS

You couldn't fucking wait till it was cooked to shower! huh? Are you that stupid?

JESS

Okay, you're being ridiculous. I need to go to the store.

She walks to get some clothes but he grabs her arm and pushes her on the bed.

CHRIS

WE'RE NOT FINISHED HERE, DON'T YOU EVER WALK AWAY FROM ME WHEN I'M TALKING TO YOU, YOU UNDERSTAND?

JESS

You're drunk, get off me.

He punches her face multiple times while she tries to cover it with her hands. There is a knock on the door, he gets off her.

CHRIS

Get yourself cleaned up, you look a damn mess.

He leaves Jess with bruises all over her face and blood coming out of her mouth. He closes the door behind and goes to see who it is. It's his parents.

CHRIS

Hey guys! I didn't think you'd be here this early.

LUKE

We had guests who were supposed to come over for a bit but they canceled last minute, so we thought why wait?

CHRIS

Oh okay! come in guys. Mom, you look lovely.

ALICE

Thank you, honey. Geez what is that smell? I didn't know it was a barbecue?

CHRIS

Yeah about that... Jess kind of left the stove unattended and there's your result.

ALICE

Can't say I'm surprised.

LUKE

Alice, don't start. By the way where is she?

CHRIS

She should be done getting ready in a few. Let's see if there is anything left to eat.

They sit down in the living room as they wait for Jess to come out. Chris seems impatient.

CHRIS

You know why don't we just get started?

LUKE

Without her? Are you sure?

CHRIS

Yeah.. she won't mind.

A few minutes later Jess comes out.

JESS

Hello Mr. and Mrs. Cambridge, sorry I kept you waiting.

LUKE

No that's alright, we came earlier than planned.

CHRIS

It's not nice to keep people waiting

honey; especially when you're the host.

JESS

(to Chris)

I'm sorry I was getting my face done.

Alice who is sitting next to Jess notices the covered bruise under her eye but stays quiet.

Later that night after dinner, Alice comes to help Jess wash the dishes and clean. She has noticed a change in her behavior.

ALICE

Thank you for dinner Jess, it was wonderful.

JESS

No, thank you. It's always a pleasure having you here.

Alice can't stop staring at the bruises on her face but still making sure Jess doesn't catch her.

ALICE

I know you and I haven't always gotten along, but you know you can come to me for advice or anything you need right?

JESS

Yeah, I know Alice.

ALICE

How's everything going between you two?

JESS

We're fine, better than never. Why do you ask?

ALICE

What kind of mother-in-law would I be if I didn't ask.

JESS

Sometimes I think you ask just to know if our marriage is falling apart.

ALICE

You truly believe that?

JESS

Come on Alice, you know you were against this marriage from the start.

ALICE

Maybe not for the reasons you have in mind. I just want you to know that I'm here for you if you need anything.

JESS

Well thank you for the offer, but we're doing great.

ALICE

Good to know.

They continue washing the dishes.

INT. DAWSON'S POOL - DAY

It's a beautiful sunny day, Janet is enjoying the sun by the pool in their backyard while watching the twins have fun in the water. She receives a notification, it's from her bank. The notification states that there was an overdraw on their kid's college fund. This infuriates her, she heads inside. Janet finds Phillip deeply asleep. She shakes him awake.

PHILLIP

what the hell are you doing?

JANET

I just got a notification that you took money from the twins' college money?

PHILLIP

Is that why you had to interrupt my sleep? This couldn't wait?

JANET

You did not answer my question. Why did you take money out of that account Phillip?

PHILLIP

There's a damn good reason why, we can talk about it later. Can I go back to sleep now?

JANET

Have you lost your damn mind,+

Phillip? You know we can never touch any of that money; it's for the kids!

PHILLIP

Listen, I'll put the money back in a couple of days don't worry about that.

JANET

What is so important you would take that much money anyway?

PHILLIP

Since when are you interested in how I invest my money?

JANET

Since you're going behind my back and stealing from our kids.

PHILLIP

I just said I'll put the damn money back, more than I even took out. Is that okay with you?

JANET

Just make sure that money is there by the end of the week or I'm taking it out of your personal account.

JANET

You wouldn't even dare.

JANET

Oh really? We'll see about that.

She slams the door behind her.

EXT. GREGG'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

After putting the kids to bed, Gregg turns off the lights in the house and heads to bed as well. He cuddles with his wife.

GREGG

Mom came to the school a few days ago asking why the kids haven't been to their house in a while.

SHONDA

Did you tell her the truth?

GREGG

Yeah, she didn't like it that much.

SHONDA

She never liked anything about me anyway, she'll be fine.

GREGG

Baby, we have to think about this though. Think about the kids too; they miss their grandparents.

SHONDA

I'm not gonna change my mind on this Gregg so don't even try. I have tolerated your mother's insults and disrespect for years, I can't do it anymore. I will not allow people like that in my life again; I've been too tolerant with your family. They think I need their approval to be happy.

GREGG

I know my mom hasn't always been so nice to you, you don't have to talk to her. At least allow me to drop the kids off to visit, not even sleepover. You don't think they see that something changed?

SHONDA

I don't think they would want to see their mother disrespected either.

GREGG

And what about me? Have you thought about how it makes me feel? Having to choose between my wife and my mother?

SHONDA

I never asked you to choose between me and her! I would never let you do that. But I will not tolerate being treated like trash. Do you know the sad part? Not once did you ever stand up for me in this, seems to me like you made the choice already.

GREGG

Shonda you know how my mother is..

SHONDA

Oh, I do. That's why I'm staying the hell away from her. Can we go to bed?

Shonda turns the other way and puts on her sleep mask.

INT. DOUGHNUT SHOP - DAY

Phillip is waiting for someone at a doughnut shop, in walks a woman with a stroller. It's the same mystery woman Janet saw him with at the grocery store. Phillip takes the baby from the stroller and plays with him as the woman speaks with the waitress. The woman takes pictures of Phillip holding the baby and they enjoy their lunch.

EXT. JANET AND PHILLIP'S BEDROOM - DAY

While late for work, Phillip is in a rush trying to find something in his room. Kenya walks in

KENYA

Hi daddy.

PHILLIP

Hey sweetie, have you seen my laptop case? I gotta run and I can't find it.

KENYA

I'll help you find it if you say yes to what I'm about to ask.

PHILLIP

what is it? I'm in a hurry.

KENYA

So there's this party on Saturday that Nisha and Tracey are going to, they invited me but mom wouldn't let me go . Can you please talk to her? All my friends are going and they are counting on me to be there.

PHILLIP

If she says no, there must be a good reason.

KENYA

Like what dad? We're just going to hang out, dance, and eat. What's wrong with that? She just doesn't trust anybody; including me.

PHILLIP

Well your mother has that habit  
sweetie.

KENYA

What?

PHILLIP

Nothing. You can go, just make sure  
you're home before curfew and leave  
the address before you leave.

KENYA

But dad...

PHILLIP

You want to go to this party or no?

She jumps with excitement and showers her dad with kisses

PHILLIP

Not so fast, can you help me find my  
briefcase now?

KENYA

Oh, I saw it on the kitchen counter  
this morning.

PHILLIP

You couldn't have told me this before  
Kenya?

KENYA

I needed leverage.

PHILLIP

(chuckles)

You're definitely your father's  
daughter. Bye honey.

KENYA

Bye, dad.

EXT. RANDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

That night, Phillip and Janet are having a get-together with  
one of their friends in their big lavish backyard. The  
husbands and wives are having their own conversation as the  
house staff brings out more food.



RANDY

So the annual trip is coming soon... any suggestions for our destination?

CHRISTY

I would go for something tropical...

JANET

Yeah, I agree. I need some sunshine.

RANDY

We might have to do it earlier because we have another trip planned this year.

PHILLIP

Oh yeah? Where are you guys going?

RANDY

Our son Brian wants us to visit him this summer as well. We've been delaying it because of work, so it has to happen this year.

PHILLIP

He's still in Paris?

RANDY

Yeah... He's launching another fashion line so this might be long-term.

JANET

Must be hard for you both.

CHRISTY

It is, the house feels so empty. You know the kids are all grown and have their own families now. Sometimes I wish we'd have had more kids, it gets lonely.

JANET

Are you kidding? You don't know what you're talking about. I love the calmness and tranquility at home. I've had enough chaos for a lifetime thank you!

(Christy laughs)

RANDY

Now back to my previous question, I think this is the perfect time to plan

this. What do you think Phil?

PHILLIP

Umm... right now at this moment, I really can't guarantee it will be possible this year.

RANDY

Why?

PHILLIP

I have a ton of things on my schedule and some businesses I'm opening up so I'm quite booked.

RANDY

Oooh... Maybe we can push it back a little.

PHILLIP

I just need some time to figure things out and we plan from there.

RANDY

Is it a financial issue?

PHILLIP

Why would you ask me that?

RANDY

Because it seems like you are trying to avoid telling me the real problem, which insults my intelligence and our friendship.

PHILLIP

Nothing of that sort, It's just not the right time for me that's all.

RANDY

If you say so, let us know when you're ready then.

PHILLIP

Will do.

There is an awkward silence.

EXT. DRIVING HOME - NIGHT

While driving back home after dinner, Phillip is quiet but

you can see a wave of deep anger in his face.

JANET  
Quite a dinner huh?

PHILLIP  
I don't wanna talk about it.

JANET  
I do, and we will talk about it. What is with you these days? You think everyone is out to get you. You're shutting everyone down, including me.

PHILLIP  
Drop it, Janet.

JANET  
Why don't you tell me what the real issue is Phillip? How many secrets are you trying to hide?

PHILLIP  
What the hell are you talking about?

JANET  
What is the real reason you want to postpone the trip? And don't try that I'm busy bullshit, I've heard enough of that. Are we having financial problems?

Phillip freezes.

JANET  
(chuckles)  
You know what? Don't even answer that, I already know. I don't want you thinking of another lie. Jus... Just tell me how bad it is.

PHILLIP  
It's nothing for you to be worried about, I got it under control.

JANET  
You better.

INT. DAWSONS KITCHEN - DAY

Kian is eating breakfast while playing on his phone with

AirPods in his ear. All of a sudden, there is a loud noise that startles him. He goes to check, he finds Kenya trying to pick up the pieces from the broken vase on the floor.

KIAN

Well isn't this interesting... weren't you supposed to get back home around midnight?

KENYA

Are you gonna snitch?

KIAN

I could... but that wouldn't be fun for me. I need an incentive.

KENYA

I'll cover for you when you need me to.

KIAN

I don't sneak out, you know that.

KENYA

Well what do you want then?

KIAN

Let me get back to you on that.

KENYA

So do I have your word?

KIAN

Yes. now get out of here before mom wakes up and then you're screwed.

KENYA

Thanks.

KIAN

wait a minute... this is not the same outfit you had on last night. Since when do you wear these kinds of dresses?

KENYA

Please leave the moral speeches for dad.

Kenya takes off her shoes and sneaks upstairs to her bedroom.

INT. GREGG'S HOUSE - DAY

Gregg and his family are about to leave for church, everyone is all dressed up and ready to go; except Shonda. Gregg's son Evan is watching his father tie his shoe.

EVAN

Dad, are you dropping us off at Grandma's today?

GREGG

Uhh... no. Not today son.

EVAN

Why not?

GREGG

Well, Grandma and Grandpa are busy this weekend.

EVAN

But we always go to their house on Sundays.

GREGG

I know Evan, it's better if we go next weekend. That way they have more time to spend with you two.

EVAN

Okay.

GREGG

Babe are you planning on attending this service or not?

SHONDA

5 mins please.

EVAN

I'll be in the car.

GREGG

Hey, did you brush your teeth?

EVAN

oops.

GREGG

That's what I thought.

INT. JANET AND PHILLIP'S BEDROOM -NIGHT

Later that night, Janet is walking back and forth in their backyard while talking on the phone. It starts to get cold, she comes back inside.

JANET

I don't know what to do anymore Steph.  
You know the feeling you get when you  
know something is wrong?

STEPH (V.O)

Yeah, I know but these are things you  
don't rush. Are you sure?

JANET

So my eyes are tricking me now?

STEPH (V.O)

That's not what I am saying.

JANET

I can't believe he would do this to  
me, after all these years I stood by  
his side and did everything for this  
family. He wants to go around and mess  
with a young thing.

STEPH (V.O)

Has anything changed recently? Or  
maybe something happened and his  
behavior is different.

JANET

How would I know? He barely tells me  
anything.

STEPH (V.O)

You sure you want to talk about  
telling everything?

JANET

Are you crazy? You want me to go in  
front of him and say " Honey, I  
married you for your money, but now  
that we have it I'm madly in love with  
you? is that it?

STEPH (V.O)

Yeah... maybe don't say anything.

JANET

Maybe this is my karma, I should have been honest from the jump.

STEPH (V.O)

But people change Janet, I've seen you when you're with him. You care about him.

JANET

Of course I do. The issue is it's not the kind of care for someone I built my life with and have four kids by. I feel like it's more of me being obligated to be there for him. Maybe it's too late to try and build something with him.

STEPH (V.O)

It's never too late. If you didn't feel something for him, you wouldn't feel bad about his behavior. I also think it's time to tell him the truth so your conscience can rest. No good comes from hiding a secret that huge in a marriage.

JANET

I'm gonna think about it. Listen I have to go, I'll talk to you soon.

STEPH (V.O)

Okay, take care.

She hangs up the phone and lays down. All of a sudden, the bathroom door opens wide; it's Phillip. He has been there since Janet came back from outside. She's in shock.

JANET

How long have you been in there?

PHILLIP

Long enough.

JANET

About what I said...

PHILLIP

I don't need your explanations Janet, it was crystal clear. All this time I have been feeling guilty and bad

because of how I was behaving, yet you're the one who fooled me all these years. You can go to hell for that.

JANET

I can explain... I was.

PHILLIP

What's there to explain? You used me! And I was stupid enough to believe it was real.

JANET

It's not like that.

PHILLIP

Talking about I'm out here keeping secrets and lying, you're a damn hypocrite!

JANET

You're not so perfect yourself Phillip! So I won't let you look down on me like you're a saint.

PHILLIP

I'm not the one who lied to this family!

JANET

Well I'm not the one sleeping around with some young thing now am I? Don't get quiet now, let's talk about it. WHO WAS SHE? who was that woman you were with last week getting groceries? Huh? You wanna tell me about that? I'm not the one trying to destroy this family Phillip!

PHILLIP

You destroyed this family before we even had one. Maybe we were destined for each other, we know how to use each other. Get out of my face.

JANET

I'll do you one better, I'll get out of your life too.

Janet heads to her closet and starts packing her clothes. While exiting the room, Phillip grabs their wedding picture



that was on the nightstand and slams it on the ground; it breaks. He leaves as Janet breaks down in the closet.

EXT. GRACE AND CARL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Janet arrives at her parent's home (Carl and Grace) later that night. She finds her mother watering the plants in the front yard. She leaves the bags in the car and walks up to her mother. Although Janet's parents are wealthy as well, they live in a moderate home and a not so lavish lifestyle.

GRACE

Hi sweetie... kind of late for a visit isn't it?

JANET

Hey ma, is dad here?

GRACE

No, he's out of town. Are you okay?

JANET

ummm.. yeah.

GRACE

Want to come inside? I was about to eat dinner.

JANET

Yeah. I'll be there in a minute.

GRACE

Okay.

Janet waits for her to walk away and gets her bags from the car, Grace looks back and notices. They make eye contact, she comes back down and gets one bag from her. Grace wraps her arm around her as they go up the stairs.

INT. DAWSONS KITCHEN- DAY

3 months later

Early morning, Kenya wakes up to get ready for bed. She showers and gets ready and heads to the kitchen for some breakfast. There's scrambled eggs on the kitchen counter and some pancakes, she makes herself a plate and sits down. She takes a bite, chews for a little while but she does not swallow. Kenya runs to the bathroom with her hand on her mouth, trying to make it in time. She throws up in the sink.

EXT. JESS' OFFICE - DAY

Jess is taking some time off and enjoying the afternoon by the pool. She gets a phone call from her dad, she picks it up.

JESS

Hey dad.

PHILLIP (V.O.)

Hi Sweetie, do you have a minute?

JESS

yeah, what's up?

PHILLIP (V.O.)

I don't know if you're already aware but your mother moved out.

JESS

Why? what happened?

PHILLIP (V.O.)

I can't talk about it over the phone, I was just calling to see if she had been in contact with you. I was wondering where she was staying.

JESS

Sorry, we haven't talked.

PHILLIP (V.O.)

This is crazy, after all these years. I can't believe we got to this point. Anyways if you hear from her, let me know.

JESS

Okay, dad. I love you.

PHILLIP (V.O.)

Love you too.

She hangs up the phone and continues her relaxation. Chris comes to join her, they kiss.

CHRIS

Who was that on the phone?

JESS

It was my dad, I guess they had a big

fight, and mom moved out.

CHRIS

When are they not fighting?

JESS

Come on, it's not that bad.

CHRIS

Oh really! Your mother always looks like she might chew on him any minute. Then they pretend on anniversaries and in front of their rich friends that they're inseparable.

JESS

Well, my parents taught us that image is everything. Even if you have to fake it sometimes.

CHRIS

They've been faking it for so long though, it's ridiculous.

JESS

They're not the only ones out here pretending, remember?.

CHRIS

Oh yeah? Something you want to say?

JESS

If you don't know, there's no need to even bring it up.

CHRIS

You're very outspoken, that's what I loved about you but watch yourself. You know what they say.. too much of anything.. well you know the rest.

JESS

I have to go, I have some work to do.

CHRIS

You don't want to spend some quality time with your husband?

JESS

I can't right now, maybe later.

CHRIS

Fine, get out of then. I'm not gonna beg you to stay.

Jess grabs her drink and laptop and goes back inside.

INT. JESS' HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Chris finds Jess in her office crying. When he enters she tries to hide her tears and pretend she was working. He walks behind her and puts his arm around her. He kisses her cheek.

CHRIS

Babe, I'm sorry for how I acted earlier. I was a jerk, I didn't stop to think about how this was affecting you. I'm truly sorry.

JESS

You know when I come to you with my problems, it's not that I want you to join my misery; you're my husband. I want to feel comforted and listened to; that's all.

CHRIS

I hear you.

JESS

You hear me, but do you listen? I don't want you to be just my husband Chris. I want a friend in you as well. Clearly we're not there yet.

CHRIS

Listen I'm not a perfect guy who's gonna do everything right, I'm still learning.

JESS

I never asked you to be perfect. I want a loving husband, who brings me up when I'm down and doesn't criticize everything I do. A husband who loves me, flaws and all. I don't want to end up like my parents; being husband and wife just on a marriage certificate.

CHRIS

I know I haven't been the ideal partner, but I love you. Isn't that all that matters?

JESS

No, it's not Chris. You need more than that to make a marriage work, and I want us to work. Do you?

CHRIS

What are you trying to say?

JESS

What I'm saying is, either we work this out or there's no need to stay married. This is not the kind of marriage I want.

CHRIS

Are you trying to leave me?  
(he laughs)

JESS

You're not the same anymore Chris, you drown your sorrows and ignore your deep issues with alcohol and you take it out on me. I'm not gonna let that happen anymore, I'm tired of being your punching bag; literally. You deal with your issues, you don't mask them. How many times did I ask that you go to therapy? I even offered to go with you.

CHRIS

I'm not a drunk and watch your next words. I don't like being called names.

He wraps his arm around her neck and tightens. He whispers in her ear.

By the way, I'm the one who says when this marriage is over. As of now, it's not. So why don't you be a good darling wife and make your husband a quick snack, will you honey?

He leaves.

INT. DAWSONS BATHROOM - DAY

Kenya is sitting on the floor with a pregnancy test in her hands, she has been crying. We take a closer look at the test in her hand, it is positive. She pulls out her phone and texts her friend Tracy. It says:

" Can you come to pick me up? I need to talk to you ASAP."

EXT. PHILLIP'S OFFICE - DAY

Mike goes to see Phillip at his workplace, he enters his office.

PHILLIP

Hey Mike, so what's the emergency?

MIKE

I just got a call from David.

PHILLIP

What did he say?

MIKE

He needs more capital

PHILLIP

How come?

MIKE

One of the investors backed out, I guess he changed his mind last minute.

PHILLIP

How much are we talking?

MIKE

Two million.

PHILLIP

Damn, I don't know how I'm gonna get that money. I already took out so much from our savings and the kids' trust funds, and I have Janet on my ass right now who's watching my every move.

MIKE

You have to make her understand that

this is a huge opportunity man, she should know that being the wife of an entrepreneur. It comes with risks.

PHILLIP

I can't lie, I'm kind of nervous too.

MIKE

Does that mean you can't come up with the money?

PHILLIP

No, I'll figure it out. Give me a few days.

MIKE

Okay man, I'm counting on you. We don't have much time left and we can't keep postponing the launch.

PHILLIP

No, I got it.

Mike gets up and gives him a handshake.

MIKE

Alright man, I'll talk to you soon.

PHILLIP

Say hi to Sheila.

MIKE

Will do.

Mike leaves.

EXT. JESS' DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Jess just arrived at her home late at night, she stays in the car on her phone as Chris stares at her in the dark by the garage. She does not notice him watching her and keeps interacting with her phone. He walks closer to the car and taps on her window; she jumps. Jess rolls down the window.

CHRIS

Are you ever gonna get out?

JESS

Sorry, I was replying to an email.

CHRIS

You couldn't do that in the house?

JESS

I was planning on it until you crept  
in on me.

CHRIS

What's up with the attitude?

JESS

I don't have an attitude; you asked a  
question and I answered.

CHRIS

You better not be doing anything  
you're not supposed to.

JESS

(laughs)

Have you been drinking?

Immediately, he opens the door and aggressively pulls her out of the car. She tries to fight back but he pushes her to the ground. As she lays on the floor trying to fight him off, he grabs her hair and brings her up.

CHRIS

YOU THINK SO HIGHLY OF YOURSELF DON'T  
YOU? YOU THINK YOU'RE BETTER THAN ME?  
YOU WOULDN'T BE SHIT WITHOUT ME! I  
BUILT YOU!

JESS

Yes, I'm better than you! I don't take  
out my frustrations on other people. I  
don't run away from my problems, I  
deal with them head-on!

As he is about to slap her in the face, a hand grabs him from behind. He looks back; it's Gregg. Gregg punches Chris a couple of times, Chris falls on the lawn. They tussle on the lawn as Jess watches the whole thing in horror. Eventually, Gregg knocks Chris out and leaves him unconscious on the ground.

GREGG

Jess, go get your stuff! Hurry!

Jess rushes inside and goes to their bedroom, she enters the closet and pushes some clothes back. There is a packed bag on



the floor, she grabs it and a few things from her nightstand. Jess and Gregg both enter their cars and drive away, leaving Chris slowly gaining consciousness.

INT. GRACE AND CARL'S GUESTROOM - DAY

Janet is in her room unpacking her bag, she puts some clothes in the closet. At the bottom of the bag, she finds an old picture of her and Phillip as young adults and stares at it for a while. Tears start falling down her eyes, she tries to hold them back. She starts going back in time.

BEGIN FLASHBACK: EXT. OLD NEIGHBORHOOD PARK - DAY

Young Phillip and Young Janet in their twenties are enjoying some ice cream on a summer afternoon at a park. Phillip can't stop staring at her and her charm. On the other hand, Janet is too into her melting ice cream and trying to finish it before it makes a mess. Phillip scooches closer to her.

YOUNG PHILLIP

Can I ask you a direct question?

YOUNG JANET

Sure.

YOUNG PHILLIP

Do I have a chance?

YOUNG JANET

(shy laugh)

How can you ask me that on our date?

YOUNG PHILLIP

Well, I'm a straightforward person. I tell it how it is.

YOUNG JANET

What do you think? I'm here with you right now, seems pretty obvious.

YOUNG PHILLIP

A little sassy... I like it.

They both laugh.

YOUNG JANET

Can I ask you something?

YOUNG PHILLIP

Shoot.

YOUNG JANET

What are your aspirations in life?

YOUNG PHILLIP

Honestly, I just want to be able to provide for my family and give them more than a mediocre life and living paycheck to paycheck.

YOUNG JANET

That's it? Do you just want to be above average? What about yourself?

YOUNG PHILLIP

For me it's about taking care of the people I love, giving back to my parents after all the sacrifices they have done for me. That's what success looks like to me.

YOUNG JANET

Huh.. not too ambitious. I like men who want to take over the world and never settle. Someone very competitive and reaching for the impossible. You kind of fall short on that. How's that for straightforwardness?

YOUNG PHILLIP

Touché. Well miss overly ambitious, why don't we continue to enjoy our little ice cream date?

YOUNG JANET

When did we stop?

YOUNG PHILLIP

I want to get to know you more on a personal level. I think we have a few differences but as they say "opposites attract". Don't they?

YOUNG JANET

Sometimes they clash too.

YOUNG PHILLIP

I'm willing to take that risk. That's the entrepreneur spirit in me. This is a very interesting date. I never met someone so bold and not afraid to speak their mind like that.

YOUNG JANET

I'll take that as a compliment.

BACK TO PRESENT: INT. GRACE AND CARL'S GUESTROOM - DAY

After the small trip down memory lane, Janet continues putting the stuff away and organizing her room. Her mother walks in.

GRACE

Hi honey, I'm going to the grocery store. Need anything?

JANET

No, I'm good mom. Thanks.

GRACE

You know, you should go out and get some fresh air. You've been inside the room for too long.

JANET

I'm trying to unpack some stuff, another time maybe.

GRACE

Okay, call me if you want me to get you something.

JANET

Alright, mom.

Janet lays on the bed and takes a break.

EXT. TRACEY'S CAR - DAY

Tracey is driving Kenya home. Kenya seems down and depressed, they're both quiet. Tracey is bothered by the silence.

TRACEY

So have you told your parents?

KENYA

I wouldn't be here if I did.

TRACEY

What are your plans?

KENYA

I don't know, I'm in limbo right now.

TRACEY

I mean you have to answer the big question first; are you keeping it? You know you have a choice.

KENYA

I have to ask my mom.

TRACEY

What? For what? What does she have to do with this? It's your decision one hundred percent.

KENYA

Yeah, but maybe she'll help me make the right decision.

TRACEY

Okay, I've never said this but I think this is a perfect time so here it goes. You rely on your mom way too much, you're almost eighteen Kenya. You're not a teenager anymore, you don't need mommy to agree on every little thing you want to do in your life. You're way too scared of her disapproving of your decisions and that's no way to live.

KENYA

That's not true.

TRACEY

Oh you know it is... little miss can't disappoint mommy.

KENYA

Stop it.

TRACEY

You know me girl, I'll tell you what's on my mind, but know this. Whatever decision you make, it better not be because your mom said so. Not in this situation. I know it's not perfect timing but everything happens for a reason. Remember that.

KENYA

Gotcha.

TRACEY

What about the daddy?

Kenya nods her head.

TRACEY

Okay, you need to get it together, the sooner the better.

EXT. MIKE'S HOUSE - DAY

Phillip is driving around a neighborhood, there is a couple of police cars blocking his way. People are outside in their front yard staring at the scene of police officers standing outside. He parks his car on the other side and gets out. He walks closer to the house with all the chaos going on, a police officer stops him from getting closer.

POLICE OFFICER

Sir, you can't come over here.

PHILLIP

I know the owner of this house, what's going on?

POLICE OFFICER

I can't talk about that.

More police officers come out of the house, Mike walks out with the officers; he's handcuffed. Phillips runs to him to try to understand the situation.

PHILLIP

Mike!! What the hell is going on?

MIKE

I'm sorry Phil, I'm very sorry about this. I will explain everything later

PHILLIP

What do you mean?

MIKE

I'm so sorry man. I didn't want you to find out this way.

Mike is pushed into the back of the police car. Phillip doesn't know what to do and who to run to for answers. He gets a phone call.

PHILLIP

Hello

SHEILA (V.O)

Phil, it's Sheila.

PHILLIP

Sheila, what is going on?

SHEILA (V.O)

I don't know everything, I just called David and he is not picking up. I just talked to his wife. Apparently, Mike and David were involved in a Ponzi scheme.

PHILLIP

Mike? that's impossible!

SHEILA (V.O)

I need to talk to Mike. I'm trying to call him but his phone is switched off.

PHILLIP

Sheila.... your husband just got arrested right now!

SHEILA (V.O)

What?! What are you talking about?

PHILLIP

I just came over to talk some business and found cops all over your house.

SHEILA (V.O)

Oh my God! What is happening! Okay... Okay.. .I'm about to leave right now. Please let me know if you have any more details.

PHILLIP

Wait... Sheila.. .did you know about this?

SHEILA (V.O)

I'm sorry Phil, I don't know all the details but here's what I know. Mike and David were doing some sort of Ponzi scheme from what David's wife told me. They were the masterminds

behind the whole thing. I guess they tried to scam the wrong people and they got caught.

PHILLIP  
THIS CAN'T BE HAPPENING TO ME!!

SHEILA (V.O)  
Please don't tell me you invested in it as well.

PHILLIP  
I put all my damn money into this! Our savings, our retirement. EVERYTHING!

SHEILA (V.O)  
Oh my God! I'm so sorry Phil. I don't know what to say. Listen, I have to go now. Again, I'm so sorry about all of this but I have to go see my husband.

Phillip almost passes out from everything happening.

INT. CHRIS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Chris gets dropped off by a friend, seems like he came straight from the hospital. He has bandages on his arm and is walking on clutches enters his house. He turns on the lights and walks around. The house is a mess, there are dishes in the kitchen sink and everything is scattered around. He walks into their bedroom to find it empty, Jess' stuff is gone from the closet. He sits on the ground and pulls out a cigarette. He starts smoking.

BEGIN MONTAGE: CURRENT SITUATIONS

With everyone's personal life in shambles. We see the current situation of each of the family members.

- Janet looking at her family portrait
- Kenya looking at her bump in the mirror
- Gregg going through the mail, most are past due bills
- Kian is in their house alone, tit's empty and quiet
- Jess is talking to a lawyer about a divorce. She signs the documents
- Phillip is packing boxes and getting ready to move, there is

a sign outdoor that shows the house has been sold.

- Someone knocks on the door, Chris goes to open it. It's a woman, she enters. They have a drink and head to the bedroom.

EXT. GREGG'S KITCHEN - DAY

Jess comes downstairs from her room to join her brother and his family for dinner. Everyone else is already seated and waiting for her. There is a seat waiting for her next to Gregg, she sits down.

GREGG

Well, you just missed grace.

JESS

That's alright, I'm not really in a graceful mood.

EVAN

Heey...

GREGG

She doesn't mean it. Don't mind her.

JESS

Yes please, don't mind me.

SHONDA

So Jess, tomorrow I'm going shopping with my girlfriends. Want to join us?

JESS

No, I have a ton of work to do. Thank you though.

SHONDA

Are you sure? It would be nice to do something fun and brighten up your mood.

JESS

No, I think I'll pass.

SHONDA

Okay. The offer is still on the table if you change your mind.

GREGG

By the way, I'm going out of town for a couple of days. I'll be back by the



end of the week. Shonda will be here though and you can call me if anything happens.

JESS

I'll be fine. You go handle your business.

GREGG

My flight leaves early in the morning, please let me know if you think I should stay.

JESS

I wouldn't want you to miss out on an opportunity because of me, you have a family to take care of.

GREGG

Okay.

EXT. PHILLIP'S NEW HOUSE - DAY

Phillip and the kids just moved to a smaller house in a suburban neighborhood across town. There is a UHAUL and a few moving helpers taking boxes out of it. Phil is showing the movers where to place the boxes in the house. Kian is taking things out of the boxes as Kenya puts plates and kitchen utensils in cabinets. She starts feeling dizzy and weak, she sits down. Kian notices and walks up to her.

KIAN

Dude, how long do you think you can keep this a secret? You're starting to show.

KENYA

I will tell him when I'm ready.

KIAN

And when is that? In the delivery room?

KENYA

I need to tell mom first before I tell dad, I already know he will snitch on me.

KIAN

Well, you better do it quickly because you're starting to show. If I can see

it, I'm sure dad can too.

KENYA

Why do you think I've been wearing these baggy clothes recently?

KIAN

Yeah.. like that's not gonna raise any suspicions.

Phillip walks in.

PHILLIP

Hey guys, how are we doing in here?

KIAN

This place is a little dirty dad, it's gonna take a couple of days to clean it.

PHILLIP

Yeah I know, Jess and Shonda are coming to help us finish unpacking this week. Are you guys hungry

KENYA

No, I just had a sandwich.

KIAN

I can't believe this is our new home.

PHILLIP

Look guys I know this is too much to take in. But I promise you, we will get through this as a family.

KENYA

What about mom?

PHILLIP

Your mom and I are taking some time apart to figure things out, everything will go back to normal I promise.

KIAN

Can we at least go visit her?

PHILLIP

Of course! What made you think you needed my permission from me to see her?

KENYA

Because you haven't mentioned her since she left. We didn't know if you'd be okay with it.

PHILLIP

That's your mother, you have a right to see her whenever you want. I'm sure she misses you guys.

KIAN

If she did, she would have tried to spend time with us.

PHILLIP

I know this is hard, for all of us. But the only way we will move forward is if we're all on the same page. Okay? Now let's try to get the kitchen together and go from there. Sounds good?

KENYA

Alright.

THEY CONTINUE UNPACKING.

INT. GREGG'S GUESTROOM - NIGHT

Later that night, everyone in Gregg's house is sleeping. Jess is wide awake staring at the ceiling. She gets a notification that wakes her. It's a text from Chris, it says:

" You think you can just walk away freely after all the things I've done for you? You must be more delusional than I thought. I need you back home tomorrow, I won't say it again."

She blocks his number and goes back to sleep. A few seconds later, she receives another text. It's from an unknown number. She reads it:

" Nice try. come home, I miss you. I'm sorry about everything and I am ready to work on this marriage. Don't give up on us, you know we have something good going.

She replies:

" Leave me alone Chris, We're done."

She blocks him again, turns her phone off, and makes sure her

location is off. She returns to sleep.

INT. GRACE AND CARL'S HOUSE - DAY

Janet is having lunch in the afternoon, she is all alone in the house. Someone knocks on the door, she goes to open it.

JANET

Kenya?

KENYA

Hi mom, I came to talk to you.

JANET

Come in.

Kenya sits down on the sofa as her mother brings her something to munch on. Janet can tell she is not at ease and something's up.

JANET

So how have you been?

KENYA

We're good, we have been busy getting the house together.

JANET

Jess told me you moved.

KENYA

Why didn't you come to see us at the new place?

JANET

I can't honey. But you are more than welcome to come and see me anytime you'd like. How's your brother?

KENYA

He's good, he had a test to study for so he couldn't come with me.

JANET

Tell him I want to see him.

KENYA

Okay.

JANET

So.. what did you want to talk about.

KENYA  
ummm... I took a pregnancy test.

JANET  
wh.. what?

KENYA  
It came out positive. I'm pregnant.

JANET  
I'm sorry I didn't quite hear that,  
what did you just say?

KENYA  
I'm pre ...

Janet slaps her.

JANET  
Have you lost your damn mind? You come  
here to tell me this mess? ARE YOU  
CRAZY? wai.. wait who the hell did  
this?

KENYA  
This guy I have been seeing from  
school. His name is Bryson.

JANET  
A guy from your school? Someone you  
never even told us about? What's the  
matter with you Kenya? You think  
you're grown now and you're having  
sexual relations however you want? IS  
THIS HOW YOU WERE RAISED!? DO YOU KNOW  
HOW THIS WILL MAKE US LOOK? HAVE YOU  
THOUGHT ABOUT THAT? Girl, you better  
answer me when I'm talking to you.

KENYA  
You weren't worried about what others  
would think when you up and left.

Janet smacks her again.

JANET  
Oh... so you backtalk to your parents  
now? You better watch your mouth  
little girl... I'm not one of your  
little friends. Does he know?

KENYA

No

JANET

Good, there is still time to get rid of it. I'm gonna make you an appointment immediately

Janet gets up and grabs her phone from the kitchen counter.

KENYA

I'm keeping it.

JANET

(chuckles.)

Do you think I'm gonna let you jeopardize your life just like that? I'm gonna set up an appointment and you will go. Do you understand me? I'm gonna pretend I didn't hear that.

Kenya grabs her purse angrily and is ready to leave.

KENYA

No, mom. I'm not gonna let you dictate my life and choosing what you think is best for me anymore, I've allowed it for way too long. You made me go to a school I didn't want. You always pressure me to do the things you think are good for me. It's like you're living your life through me. I may still be young but I want to have control over my life. So I'm keeping it, I just came here to let you know. I gotta go

JANET

KENYA YOU COME BACK HERE RIGHT NOW!!

She slams the door behind her. Janet has an emotional breakdown.

INT. MYSTERY WOMAN'S HOUSE- DAY

Phillip is rocking the baby to sleep in the living room. Once the baby is asleep, he puts him in his crib and watches him sleeping. He looks back to see the mystery woman standing by the door admiring the scene. He walks over to her and gives her kisses her on her forehead. She turns off the lights in the baby's room and joins Phillip who is watching tv.

INT. SHONDA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jess just got back from work, it's raining heavily so she runs quickly to avoid getting too wet. She finds Shonda eating her dinner by herself.

SHONDA

Hey Jess! how was work?

JESS

It was okay, I had a few employees call in so we were overloaded. Everyone's getting sick. You're home early.

SHONDA

Yeah, I had to drop the kids off for a sleepover.

JESS

No wonder the house is quiet.

Shonda laughs.

SHONDA

Would you like to join me for dinner?  
I'll make you a plate.

JESS

Thank you, I'm starved.

Jess sits down and she watches her sister-in-law put food on her plate. Once they start eating, there is silence. No one is talking and they both stare at their plate without uttering a word. Shonda isn't bothered at all; Jess is.

JESS

(clears throat)

You know, I've been meaning to talk to you about something.

SHONDA

Well now is the perfect time than any.

JESS

I wanted to tell you how grateful I am to you for allowing me to stay here for a while. We both know I was never easy on you and my attitude towards you was disgusting in the past. I didn't think you fit into our family

so I didn't bother to try and get to know you because I thought you wouldn't last. I convinced myself that once we showed you how out of place you were, you would leave on your own. Looking back now, I realize how selfish I had been, I never once thought about what you meant for my brother. And now look at me... this is my karma for treating people the way I did.

SHONDA

Hey .. hey stop this. None of this is your fault, it's just life. We all go through our seasons; all of us.

JESS

I'm so embarrassed. Do you know how many times I idolized that man and spoke highly of him? Always trying to make people feel envious of us and seen as the perfect and powerful couple we were not. I just feel so dumb. I put in more effort into portraying this fake image than actually working on our marital issues...

SHONDA

One thing I've noticed about your family is you guys care way too much about perfection and being polished all the time. Life's not like that' it gets ugly and raw; yet beautiful. It's like a rollercoaster, there are ups and downs. The fun comes in knowing it's full of surprises. That's what makes it adventurous. Maybe that's why I never fitted in; no one could because nobody is perfect. Who wants a perfect life anyway?

JESS

I just really want to apologize for my rude behavior and anything I ever did that hurt you. I'm truly sorry.

SHONDA

I appreciate your apology. It means a lot. Now let's eat before it gets cold



shall we?

JESS

Yeah.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Janet is sitting on a couch writing on a little notepad, someone knocks on the door. They enter.

JENNIFER

Mrs. Dawson?

JANET

Yes.

JENNIFER

Hi, I'm Jennifer Sanders. I'm the marriage counselor here. How are you today?

JANET

Hello, Well not so good since I'm here.

JENNIFER

We can work on that. So what brings you in here today?

JANET

Honestly, I came because my mother pressured me to but since I'm here; might as well take the chance. I'm here because my marriage and my life is falling apart. Actually everything already fell apart. I just want to know how I can rebuild both and if my marriage is worth saving.

JENNIFER

So will your husband be joining us?

JANET

No, I'm not even sure where he stands.

JENNIFER

Okay, well let's work on your side with you for now, and hopefully he'll come around.

JANET  
Works for me.

JENNIFER  
I'm ready when you are.

EXT. LOCAL CAFE BISTRO - DAY

Kenya arrives at a small restaurant where her secret boyfriend Bryson is watching her walk up to him. He kisses her and they sit down.

BRYSON  
So do you want to order something?

KENYA  
No, not yet. I have something to talk to you about first.

BRYSON  
Okay, you're kind of scaring me but I'm all ears.

KENYA  
I'm pregnant.

Bryson doesn't utter a word. He stays still for a while.

KENYA  
Are you gonna say something?

BRYSON  
Are you a hundred percent you're pregnant?

KENYA  
I took a pregnancy test multiple times and all of them turned out positive.

BRYSON  
Wow... I... I don't know what to say.

KENYA  
A little support would be nice from my boyfriend.

BRYSON  
I mean you just dropped a bombshell on me, how do you expect me to take it all in so quickly?

KENYA

It's not easy for me either, trust me. I'm still processing. I'm tired of getting the same reaction from everyone I tell this to.

BRYSON

Have you told your parents?

KENYA

I told my mom and my brother. I'm gonna tell dad soon; he's just dealing with a lot. I don't wanna add to his plate.

BRYSON

So what is your plan?

KENYA

What do you think?

BRYSON

Good, because we're not ready for something like this; we just started dating. We barely know each other.

KENYA

What are you talking about? I'm keeping it.

BRYSON

What? You're keeping it?

KENYA

Yeah.

BRYSON

Are you crazy? You are keeping it?! You're joking, right?

KENYA

Why would I be joking?

BRYSON

You already decided without me? Isn't this something we're supposed to decide together?

KENYA

Yeah but at the end of the day. it is my body. I don't want to get rid of

it.

BRYSON

And what if I disagree with your decision?

KENYA

Then I don't know what to tell you.

BRYSON

(shakes head)

You know what? It seems like you already made up your mind about this. Why am I even here? Can't change your mind anyways. But know this; I'm not ready for this so whatever you do; it's on you.

KENYA

That's all you have to say?

BRYSON

Pretty much, yeah. I will not be forced into having a child okay? I have a full life ahead of me and I want to enjoy it. Good luck with this.

KENYA

I don't need your good wishes and I certainly don't need you to raise my child. Thanks for the immense amount of support by the way; very much needed. You can go to hell.

She grabs her purse and leaves.

INT. JESS' OFFICE - NIGHT

Jess is in her office working late, everyone already left. She is trying to stay awake by chugging down some coffee. She gets a phone call.

JESS

Hello?

PHILLIP (V.O.)

Hi sweetie. How are you?

JESS

I'm good, just at work putting in some overtime. Kind of late to be calling

isn't it?

PHILLIP (V.O.)

I know, I just wanted to check in on you. You know baby I'm sorry I haven't been there for you at this time. I know you're going through a lot and I feel terrible that I've been caught up in my issues. How are you feeling?

JESS

I'm trying to move on, that's all. I filed for divorce a few days ago so that's my first step.

PHILLIP (V.O.)

I'm proud of you honey, I know how tough of a decision that is; especially knowing how much you loved him.

JESS

He had deep issues dad, I can't help him anymore. The more I try to save him; the more I sink myself. I can't help someone who denies he needs help.

PHILLIP (V.O.)

I understand. I want you to know I'm here for you from now on. Anything you need, talk to me.

JESS

Thanks, Dad. So have you reached out to mom?

PHILLIP (V.O.)

(deep exhale)

I gave up Jess. Do you know how many times I called her and left voicemails? I'm not that desperate.

JESS

What about visiting her?

PHILLIP (V.O.)

What makes you think she would want to see me?

JESS

Don't you both think you're being a

little childish about this?

PHILLIP (V.O.)

Nope, I don't

JESS

You guys are gonna have to talk at some point, did you forget you have kids together?

PHILLIP (V.O.)

When we have to, it will. Some time apart will do some good; for both of us.

JESS

Seems like everyone needs a breather huh? I can't believe what's happening to this family; everything is falling apart.

PHILLIP (V.O.)

I know. This has been quite a year. Just happens that we're all going through it at the same time. We'll go through it though; we're strong.

JESS

And you and mom?

PHILLIP (V.O.)

I don't know what will happen, I'm scared to even think about it.

JESS

I just think you should leave your ego out of this if you want to save your marriage. You guys have been through way too much to get to this point. It hurts me to see you like this, I'm sure the twins feel the same. They need their mother by their side; especially Kenya.

PHILLIP (V.O.)

Why?

JESS

You know why.

PHILLIP (V.O.)

No, I don't.

JESS

Oh... umm I have to go, I need to get back to work. It's getting late. I love you.

PHILLIP (V.O.)

Jess. wait... what do you mean? Jess abruptly hangs up.

INT. GREGG'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jess arrives at her brother's home very late, it's very dark outside and raining. There is no car in the driveway which means Shonda is not home. Once inside, she takes off her work clothes and slips into a t-shirt and sleep shorts. She walks to the kitchen and takes out a plate of food from the fridge, she heats it. She stands in front of the microwave waiting for it to finish. Before she could turn back, someone grabs her by the neck; it's Chris. He pushes her against the microwave still holding her by the neck, she is fighting back and trying to get his hand off her. The more she fights, the stronger he squeezes her.

CHRIS

I always liked the fierceness in you, it's so sexy. Now, what did I tell you? I want you home! I've waited long enough.

JESS

(barely understandable)  
Get.. get your hands off me.

CHRIS

Don't make me do this babe, you're coming with me!

She kicks him in the crotch and escapes from his hands. She grabs a knife. Jess cuts him on his arm, he grabs her by the waist and throws her on the sofa. Jess manages to block a couple of fists but then he starts punching her stomach as she screams. He grabs her by the collar and pulls her closer.

CHRIS

You think you can leave me after everything I did for you? You selfish bitch.

JESS

I will never come back to you, I'd rather die!

CHRIS

Well, that's good, we're right on schedule for that. If you can't be mine, you don't serve a purpose of being alive. YOU UNDERSTAND ME?!!

JESS

GO TO HELL!

She spits on him, Jess manages to push him on the floor and runs to her bedroom; she locks the door. She opens her nightstand and grabs the gun. She makes sure it's loaded and the safety key is off as Chris is banging on the door, he finally breaks inside. Jess is already pointing the gun at him, ready for his next move.

CHRIS

(chuckles)

You've grown a lot of balls, I'll tell you that. But even you know you won't shoot.

JESS

Don't try me, babe. I'm not the same weak pushover girl you married. I'll kill you right here right now if you don't leave.

CHRIS

You'd kill your husband?

JESS

Would you like to find out?

He tries to take a step.

JESS

DON'T COME ANY CLOSER! YOU'RE A DAMN COWARD. All my life I made excuses for you and thought I could turn you into a better man; how foolish of me. The truth is you will never change. You're a loser, Chris. Even when you had a wife who stood by you through thick and thin; you still messed it up. I won't give you another minute of my life so I'm done with your ass. All I



need from you is to sign the divorce papers and get out of my life, but for now please leave.

CHRIS

Oh you mean those little documents you sent me? Ooops, I think I accidentally put them in the trash, where they belong.

JESS

Leave Chris, this is your last chance.

CHRIS

Make me.

He tries to run towards her but there are shots. We don't see if she shot him.

INT. PHILLIP'S NEW HOUSE- DAY

Janet is standing outside Phil's house, questioning whether to knock or just leave. She tries to hear any sounds from inside but someone suddenly opens the door; it's Kenya.

KENYA

Hi mom! I didn't know you were coming.

JANET

Hey, is your dad here?

KENYA

Yeah, he just got back. Come in.

Janet walks in, she takes a look around with a disappointed face.

KENYA

So how have you been mom?

JANET

I'm fine, how are you feeling?

KENYA

I'm okay. I'm still get morning sickness but I can manage.

JANET

So you haven't changed your decision?

KENYA

No mom, my decision is final.

JANET

(clicks tongue)

You don't listen Kenya, don't come crying to me when you realize how big of a commitment you have made.

KENYA

Good to know mom, I think I got that.

Phillip walks in; shocked to see Janet.

PHILLIP

Hey...

JANET

Hello.

PHILLIP

What are you doing here?

JANET

I came to talk to you.

PHILLIP

Okay.. let's go upstairs.

They go upstairs to the living room, he locks the door behind him.

PHILLIP

So what brings you to my humble abode?

JANET

I'm here to ask you where we stand, marriage-wise. We can't keep going like this, it's been months. Are we ending this or what?

PHILLIP

Of course, you would give up easily, that's what you do.

JANET

You gave up on us when you started chasing miss young thing remember that? Or should I refresh your memory?

PHILLIP

You don't know what you're talking about.

JANET

(sarcastic laugh)

You know what? Never mind, that's not why I'm here. What are we doing Phil?

PHILLIP

Well, I'm not ready to get a divorce; although I have a good reason to. I'm not a quitter like you; I think about our kids before deciding something like this.

JANET

You're such a hypocrite. You only think about the kids when it benefits you.

PHILLIP

Benefits me? Do you think this benefits me? LOOK WHERE I AM JANET! I'm back at square one! All my hard work and sacrifices over the years... poof! Just vanished in a second.

JANET

Maybe if you didn't trust people so blindly you wouldn't have lost everything.

PHILLIP

You're right, I shouldn't trust you so easily; starting with you. How foolish of me to think you loved a boy from a low class who just had big dreams right? And you want to talk about trusting the wrong people? You just saw a chance to live the luxurious life you were used to without lifting a single finger.

JANET

Do you think that's why I married you? If it was I most definitely wouldn't have chosen you! I had better suitors who would have given me everything and more.

PHILLIP

Well, it was certainly not because you were madly in love with me. You were right about one thing though, we were more of business partners than life partners.

JANET

I think I'm gonna go. Clearly, we're not going anywhere with this so what's the point. When you have made a decision, get back to me. And tell Kian we still need to talk. Bye.

She leaves.

LOCAL CLOTHING STORE - DAY

Kenya took a visit to a clothing store with Nisha, Kenya already has the cart with a few maternity clothes she is ready to purchase. She gets to the last rack but doesn't find anything she likes. The baby clothes department is next; it catches her attention. She walks closer and starts looking through. She admires each piece she gets to and it puts a smile on her face. She goes over the newborn girls' area and is smitten by the cute colorful pink dresses on the racks. As she is looking through the clothes, she realizes she has been cradling her bump the whole time. She notices Nisha is about to be checked out next so she grabs the last few dresses dress she was checking out and puts them in the cart. Once she arrives at checkout, Kenya puts her clothes first on the tray and the baby stuff in the end; Nisha notices her admiration for the cute baby clothes.

EXT. GRACE AND CARL'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Janet is sitting outside watching the stars at night with a cup of tea and a blanket wrapped around her. Her mother comes out and sits next to her.

GRACE

Would you like some company?

JANET

Yeah, why not? I was getting bored out here.

GRACE

So have you talked to the kids recently?

JANET

Yeah, I talked to Kenya and the others but Kian still hasn't called yet. I think he's mad at me, I have a feeling he blames me more than his father.

GRACE

What do you think about that?

JANET

Everyone is playing me out to be the villain in all of this; I don't need to be where I'm not appreciated.

GRACE

How do you know you're not appreciated, honey? You're just going through a rough patch in your marriage; we all experience one at some point. You're always worried about looking desperate or being vulnerable. You know you remind me so much of your father; it's crazy. You're both so egotistical and sometimes that ego makes you blind about everything else. Don't even get me started about your stubbornness.

JANET

That makes me a whole lot better mom, thanks. Is that your little motivational mother-daughter speech you had prepared?

GRACE

No this is the real talk you need right now. How long are you gonna pretend and act like you're not affected in a situation like this? There's no winner in this honey, everyone is losing; including yourself.

JANET

I'm not that desperate mom; especially when he's acting like I won't survive without him or his money. I couldn't care less.

GRACE

And yet you've been refusing to eat,

lock yourself in the room all day and barely talk to me, you're bothered and you know it. Why are you afraid to admit that you don't want to lose him and your family? Why would you think that makes you look desperate? It makes you a wife and a mother willing to work things out for the sake of your family. That's not being desperate.

JANET

Are you forgetting the fact that this man has been cheating on me and has a whole baby on the side? I don't tolerate cheating you know that.

GRACE

Then why are you afraid to end this marriage if you know that's something you won't accept? You wanna know why? Because you're afraid it might not be the best decision and could regret it later. That's why. Look he's not perfect Janet! And neither are you. You have tried to find and achieve perfection all your life, when are you gonna wake up and realize you're chasing the impossible?

JANET

I know what I deserve mom and I will not settle for less.

GRACE

Well, why stop now? You settled the minute you married that man when you didn't love him remember? Unless something changed along the way that made you stay all these years, which I know did. Do you want to know what it is? It's that little four-letter word you've been afraid of admitting you feel for him. At some point you're gonna have to be honest with yourself honey, that's the only way you will move on from this; no matter what decision you make. Both of you are hurting your whole family because of your egos and it's not worth it. You know no matter what you decide I'm on

your side. Just please.... make sure you listen to your heart. Okay? I love you.

Grace squeezes her shoulder to show support and goes back inside.

INT. PHILLIP'S KITCHEN - DAY

Phillip is sitting in the kitchen with lots of documents on the table as he works on his laptop. Someone rings the bell, Kenya comes down to open but he beat her to the door. He opens.

BRYSON

Hello Sir.

PHILLIP

Hi, can I help you?

BRYSON

Hi Mr. Dawson. My name is Bryson and I'm here to see Kenya.

KENYA

I asked him to come, Dad.

PHILLIP

Oh.. come in.

BRYSON

Thank you.

All three of them sit down and there is tension in the room. Kenya tries to break the ice.

KENYA

Dad... umm... Bryson is my boyfriend. He... he's the father.

PHILLIP

I see... so what's he doing here? I thought he didn't want any parts of this.

BRYSON

I didn't, but I don't think it was the right decision. I wouldn't be able to live with myself knowing my child doesn't know me.

PHILLIP

Leave a picture, that'll help.

KENYA

Dad..

PHILLIP

WHAT! Do you think he knows what it takes to be a father? He already gave up on her, why are you trusting him to stick around this time?!

BRYSON

Her? It's a girl?

Kenya nods. This lightens up Bryson's face

BRYSON

Sir, I am here to apologize to Kenya and your family in person, It was a huge mistake to leave her like that. I was just too afraid of a commitment like this and didn't want to take a risk.

PHILLIP

Well, you should have thought about that before you two idiots had unprotected sex. You want all the fun but not the responsibilities, right?

BRYSON

Sir, I promise you that I will do everything I can to be there for your daughter and our kid. You have my word.

PHILLIP

You know you don't need to be with her for the child. No one is forcing you to do anything here.

BRYSON

I'm not only here for the baby, I love your daughter. I'm here because I want to be here, I know I'm new at this but I'm willing to make mistakes and learn from them.

PHILLIP

Hmmm.... words mean nothing to me



young man; I'll see if you live up to them.

BRYSON

So are you giving me a chance?

PHILLIP

Seems like Kenya already made up her mind so who am I to stand in her way. But you two better know what you're doing because someone else is about to depend on you both.

BRYSON

Thank you very much, Sir.

KENYA

Thanks, Dad, I love you.

She hugs him.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Jess is seated by the hospital entrance for Gregg and Shonda who are talking to the doctor. She is still in pain and looks weak. It looks like her arm is broken because she has a cast on her left arm. They thank the doctor and head her way. They start walking out of the hospital.

GREGG

Are you ready?

JESS

Yeah, I wanna get out of this place; it's too depressing.

They start walking out of the hospital.

SHONDA

So the doctor gave me your prescription, we'll grab it on the way home. And he emphasized again on lots of rest.

JESS

Just what I needed; right before I was about to launch my new season.

GREGG

Jess, don't start. You better put your health first and push that back.

Shonda and I are gonna change our shifts for a while so someone can be with you when the other is at work.

JESS

Look it's fine, he's not coming back. I don't need a babysitter.

SHONDA

Are you so sure of that? Because they still haven't found him to arrest him.

GREGG

He's probably already left the state like a coward that he is. But don't worry they'll find him eventually.

SHONDA

Well in the meantime we need to take all the precautions we can. Have you told your parents yet?

JESS

No...

GREGG

WHAT? How can you not tell them? This is not something you keep from your parents.

JESS

Look, I don't want to stress them out even more. What's the point? They're gonna find Chris and arrest him anytime now; It's over.

They get to their car, Gregg and his wife help her get in. While waiting for them to finish putting her bag and clutches in the trunk, she reminisces.

BEGIN FLASHBACK: INT. GREGG'S HOUSE - NIGHT

We go back to when Jess is pointing the gun at Chris in her bedroom. He tries to run and grab the gun, she shoots him in the shoulder. He falls, he's bleeding. She gets closer to him still pointing the gun.

JESS

Don't make me do this Chris!! JUST LEAVE!

CHRIS  
YOU STUPID BITCH! YOY SHOT ME!!!

JESS  
GET OUT OF HERE!!!

She shoots the ground right next to his face, almost hitting him.

This is your last chance, GET THE HELL  
OUT!

Chris gets up with his bloody hand trying to stop the bleeding. As he walks out of the room, he looks back at her.

CHRIS  
You're gonna regret this. This is not  
over.

JESS  
I think it is.

She makes sure he is out the door and watches him walk to his car and drive off. She locks the door

END FLASHBACK.

BACK TO PRESENT: EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Jess' walk down memory lane moment is interrupted by Gregg knocking on her window. She rolls her window down.

GREGG  
Are you okay?

JESS  
Yeah... just feel lightheaded.

GREGG  
You wanna stop and get something to  
eat?

JESS  
Yeah, why not.

GREGG  
okay.

INT. PHILLIP'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Phillip's driveway is filled with a few more cars, they have

some company. Back inside it is very quiet. Phillip's family is together once again; the only person missing is Janet and Greg's kids. Shonda is passing around some snacks to munch on as they wait for the family meeting to officially begin. Kenya (with a big belly now) is laying back on the couch with her legs on a pillow. Once everyone is served, they sit down.

PHILLIP

First of all, thank you all for coming on such short notice. I wanted to have all of you here because this is a family issue. I'm not gonna beat around the bush, you all know your mother and I are currently separated. We have tried to work through our issue but we're not resolving anything. I want to apologize for not letting you know about this earlier. We were still trying to figure it out ourselves. I know I have never been the best at communicating but this time it's different. I've kept a secret from you and my wife and I can't hide it anymore, that's why I brought you here today. I wish your mother was here as well, I called her and sent texts with no response. Hopefully, she makes it.

GREGG

What's going on dad? You're kind of scaring us now...

PHILLIP

I have been hiding a secret for so many years because I didn't want to lose your mother; I might have already. Since she's not talking to me, I figured I would let you guys know first.

There is a knock on the door. Shonda is closest to the door, she opens. It's Janet. She enters not looking too happy to be there.

SHONDA

Evening Janet

JANET

Hello. Sorry, I'm late everyone.

GREGG

It's alright, you didn't miss much.  
There's a seat right here, come sit  
down.

She takes off her coat and sits next to Gregg.

PHILLIP

Thank you for joining us, I appreciate  
it. Like I was saying, I'm tired of  
keeping secrets from the people I love  
the most. I realized it hurts you more  
by hiding it than facing the truth.

JESS

Dad, are you gonna get to it anytime  
soon?

PHILLIP

Yes. Just be patient, please.

He pulls his phone out, checks something and goes outside.  
Everyone is confused. A few minutes later, he walks in...  
another person follows him. It's the mystery woman. Upon  
recognizing her, Janet explodes.

JANET

ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR DAMN MIND! THIS IS  
WHAT YOU BRING US HERE TO SEE? I CAN'T  
BELIEVE YOU BROUGHT THIS TRASH IN  
FRONT OF YOUR KIDS? IN FRONT OF ME?

PHILLIP

Will you let me explain, please!!

JANET

Explain what? What's there to explain?  
Do you think I'm gonna let you  
humiliate me a second time? In front  
of our kids?

PHILLIP

Let me explain Janet! This is not what  
it looks like.

Janet tries to control her anger and calm down.

PHILLIP

Everyone, this is Cassie. She's my...

JANET

Your whore... there I said it for you.

PHILLIP

She's my daughter.

THERE IS A SHOCK, EVERYONE'S JAW DROPS.  
JANET STANDS THERE LIKE A STATUE TRYING  
NOT TO FAINT. CASSIE IS UNCOMFORTABLE AND  
DOESN'T KNOW WHERE TO LOOK.

PHILLIP

She is the secret I have been hiding  
from all of you for a long time. I  
don't think it's fair to keep her  
hidden from you guys and not fair to  
you either. I should have done this a  
long time ago, just didn't have the  
courage.

GREGG

Dad what do you mean she's your  
daughter? Did you cheat on mom?

PHILLIP

No...

JANET

Oh really!? So she was born through  
immaculate conception is that it  
Phillip?

PHILLIP

Before I met your mother, I was seeing  
my high school sweetheart. We were  
going through tough times and didn't  
think our relationship would last so I  
started seeing another woman; your  
mom. Some months later she got in  
contact with me and told me she was  
pregnant. Things were going great with  
your mother and I didn't want to  
jeopardize it so I didn't say  
anything. I took care of her while I  
was still with Janet, she had the  
baby. I tried my best to keep your  
mother from finding out all these  
years. When Cassie turned twelve, her  
mother passed away from a car  
accident. She asked me to meet my  
other kids and I was too coward to say

yes. I was so in love and obsessed with your mother that I didn't want anything that would make her leave me. After some years passed, I started feeling resentment towards your mother because I was sacrificing so much for her; resulting in me distancing myself from her and everyone else. I knew she would never accept her as her own and I didn't want Cassie to suffer; so I bit my tongue all these years.

JANET

And what about the baby I saw you with?

PHILLIP

That's her son... Her husband was serving overseas, he was killed on duty. I had to be there for her and my grandson.

Everyone is speechless, some of the family members are filled with tears.

GREGG

Dad, how could you not tell us something like this?

PHILLIP

I'm sorry son, I should have told you sooner. I just didn't want to think of the outcome.

JANET

(shakes her head with disbelief)  
Do you see me as this monster who would mistreat a child just because they're not mine? Is that how you think of me? Am I that evil to you? And your parents?

PHILLIP

They knew. I asked them to never mention it to you. All I can say is I'm sorry, to all of you. I will have to live with this for the rest of my life; that's enough punishment. The only thing I ask from you guys is to truly welcome Cassie to our family; she's innocent in this. She needs the

warmth of people who love her and will be there for her. I know you guys can do that.

JESS

So is she older than Gregg?

PHILLIP

Yeah, she's the oldest amongst all of you.

JESS

Wow. Well, I have nothing against her, I'm gonna do my part at making her feel a part of this family. I made a mistake once, this is my chance to redeem myself. I'm not saying right now we're gonna be the best of sisters, but I want to get to know her.

PHILLIP

Thank you so much, honey.

GREGG

Yeah me too, I have a big sister now. No more older sibling pressure for me.

Cassie smiles.

PHILLIP

What about you twins?

KIAN

I'm down too.

KENYA

The more girls the better.

PHILLIP

That means a lot guys. Thank you for being so understanding.

GREGG

What about you, mom? You haven't said a word.

JANET

This is too much for me to take right now, I'm gonna need some time. I have to go.



Janet grabs her coat and purse, she heads for the door. As she passes Cassie on her way out; she stops.

JANET

I'm sorry about all of this and what I said earlier. I misjudged you before I knew the whole situation and now I feel stupid. I have nothing against you, it's just gonna take me some time to adjust to this news. I want you to know you're welcome in this family and I want you to feel at home okay?

CASSIE

Thank you.

Janet waves goodbye to everyone and she exits.

JESS

So are you hungry Cassie? Let's get you a plate.

Cassie gives her son to Phillip and goes with Shonda to the kitchen.

EXT. JESS CAR- DAY

It's early morning, there's traffic as people are heading to work. There's some road construction that is making cars go even slower. Jess is sipping some coffee as she waits for cars to be allowed to clear out. She gets a phone call.

JESS

Hello?

ALICE (V.O)

Hi Jess, it's Alice.

JESS

Hey... how are you?

ALICE (V.O)

Umm... I'm okay. Are you able to talk right now?

JESS

Yeah, We can talk.

ALICE (V.O)

Jess, I know you don't want anyone from our family to reach out to you

right now but I had to call you. It's about Chris.

JESS

Alice, let me stop you right there. I don't want anything to do with Chris; him and I are done. I don't even want to hear that name. It's over.

ALICE (V.O)

Jess, Chris is dead.

There is no response.

ALICE (V.O)

Jess are you there? Jess? He got in a fight with a guy at a bar a few days ago. When he was leaving later that night, the guy was waiting for him outside on a corner.

(voice breaks down)

He stabbed my son fifty times.

Alice burst into tears as Jess can barely hold the phone.

ALICE (V.O)

We are holding the funeral in a couple of days if you'd like to stop by and pay your respects. Look I know things ended roughly for you two, but he was your husband, and you guys used to be family. Maybe come and say goodbye. I have to go, I'm sorry to tell you this on the phone. I didn't think you'd want to see me. I'll see you soon.

Alice hangs up.

INT. WILL AND YOLANDA'S HOUSE - DAY

Phil is at his parent's house to visit them. He is in his old room looking at old photographs of him as a young man, everything looks like it stayed in its place and nothing was touched. His father enters the room, he pulls out a chair and, sits.

PHILLIP

I can't believe you guys kept the room as I left it.

WILL

Well, you left in a hurry and never looked back. It's like you didn't want to spend another second in this house or neighborhood.

PHILLIP

To be honest I didn't. I felt like I didn't belong here and there was something more out there.

WILL

I'm sorry we didn't give you the childhood you dreamed of. We tried our best though.

PHILLIP

No, I'm the one who's sorry dad. I up and left and didn't bother to thank you. It's crazy how life turns out right? Now I'm back here again in the same place I swore to never return to. I feel like an idiot.

WILL

Maybe there's a reason you're back.

PHILLIP

Oh I know there is, I'm back because I was stabbed in the back by people I thought would never hurt me. Then people wonder why I always wanted to work alone.

WILL

That could be it.. or there may be another reason. You know I've realized something though. Sometimes life will bring us back to a situation or a time where there is a lesson we missed, or an opportunity we never took.

PHILLIP

What am I supposed to learn here?

WILL

Maybe how to never forget your roots.

PHILLIP

I never did, I just knew I didn't belong here. You know changes are not

so bad; especially when you know you're meant for something bigger.

WILL

Yeah, I like changes too; I just don't step on people and trash them on my way to the top.

PHILLIP

Dad, did you come here to bash me?

WILL

No son, I came here to tell you a few things I wish I had told you when you were younger. Now I realize it's a little too late.

PHILLIP

Well, I'm sorry I tried to make something of myself dad, I mean that's so awful of me.

WILL

Do you think I'm not proud of what you have accomplished? I truly am; your mother as well. What hurt us is how much you changed on your way to becoming the man you are today; being somebody as you always put it. So many people who helped you and you treated them like trash once you got everything you wanted. You always say you're self-made but I don't believe that. Everyone needs help at some point. Seeing how you turned your back on those who helped you along the way was hurtful to watch.

PHILLIP

I'm sorry dad, I had to make a lot of tough choices and sacrifices to get to where I wanted and the woman of my dreams. You do everything it takes.

WILL

If to be successful requires losing a part of yourself; I think that's too high of a price to pay. You also don't need to sacrifice that much for love.

PHILLIP

Well jokes on me because she left. She just found an idiot who would give her everything and live a life where she wouldn't need to lift a finger. You guys were right, we were from two different worlds...way too different. Anyways, I came here to sincerely apologize to you and mom for my actions towards you guys. I sincerely want you to know I'm sorry. It took me twenty-plus years to say this but it's still sincere.

WILL

Thank you for apologizing son, better late than never.

Phillip hugs his father in an emotional father-son reunion.

INT. CEMETERY - DAY

Jess is attending Chris's funeral. She is not sitting with the rest of the attendees. She stays in her car on the side of the road; watching the event. After everyone has paid their respects and final goodbyes, people start leaving and going home. As Alice is walking to her car with her husband, she sees Jess. She waves at her and Jess waves back. Once everyone had left, Jess goes to say her goodbyes. She puts a rose on the casket.

JESS

Between me and you, I didn't know if you would want me to come; neither did I. I have so much to say, yet so little but I think we both know it's all been said a hundred times. I know it's a bit too late to say this but I'm sorry for my part in how things ended between us. I should have tried a little harder to help you; I was just scared that I was sinking in the same hole with you. I was trying to save myself too, I'm sorry Chris.

She starts breaking down.

I hate how things ended so badly between us. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think we would be here. Thank you for being part of my life

Chris, I wouldn't change anything about us because that was our story; our destiny. I want you to know that I forgive you for your part in our falling out. May you rest peacefully. I love you. Goodbye Chris, until we meet again.

She kisses the casket and leaves.

INT. PHILLIP'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kenya is walking up the stairs with her big belly; as slowly and carefully as she can. She knocks on a bedroom door, her father opens it.

PHILLIP

Hey, honey. Are you okay?

KENYA

Yeah... there is someone here to see you?

PHILLIP

Who?

KENYA

Mom.

PHILLIP

Oh...

KENYA

Yeah, so I'll be in my room blasting some music in my ears.

You can tell he's getting more nervous as he walks down the stairs. He finds Janet looking at family photos on the wall as she waits for him.

PHILLIP

Hello Janet

JANET

Evening, Phillip. Sorry I came unannounced.

PHILLIP

It's all good, must be a good reason. Have a seat.

They both sit down.

JANET

I'm gonna go straight to the point.

PHILLIP

Okay.

JANET

I'm tired of being in limbo in this marriage Phil. I don't know where we stand and it messes me up every day trying to figure where your head is. I miss my kids, I miss my whole family together and I miss you. I know you heard the phone conversation but you didn't hear the whole thing. Yes in the beginning I wasn't really in love with you, I saw an opportunity in you and took it. I thought to myself, sometimes people fall in love along the way and that's fine too. So I committed myself to never make you question my true motives of marrying you, I did everything I could to portray the perfect housewife. Along the way, I started feeling guilty and forced myself to have any sort of connection or attraction but it never happened.

PHILLIP

So you're here to remind me that you used me and I was just your ATM?

JANET

No. I realized that there must be a reason why I can't move on with my life and end this charade of a marriage.

PHILLIP

I know, you're going broke.

JANET

I think I am in love with you Phil. As much as I convince myself otherwise that I just want to stay for the kids, somewhere in my heart I know there's more to that. There's something there and I am willing to find out what it

is.

PHILLIP

And why should I believe you now?

JANET

Because of what you offered me before you lost, why would I be back? You're back to where you started. I want to give us a real chance and see if there's something worth staying for. I want my family back, I want us to start over; no lies and no secrets. I want to make it right.. that's if you will allow me.

PHILLIP

I never stopped loving and caring for you Janet, even when I found out the truth. Despite how our story started, we could still make it work. I do want to make it work. I'm sorry for hiding Cassie and keeping a secret so huge from my own family. I was so in love with you I didn't want to take any chances of losing you. Despite everything that happened, I was still in love with you. You may have married me for the wrong reasons but you made me the man I was meant to be. I wouldn't have achieved half the things I did if you weren't there to support me. Sometimes true love isn't so magical and that love at first sight fantasy they always feed us. It's two people who will go through hell and back and not give up on each other. I haven't given up on us, I can see you haven't either. Let's give this another try, shall we? I'm truly sorry I haven't been the best husband to you, I was selfish and let other things stir me away from my duties as a husband. I may have changed along the way but one thing stayed the same; that's how much you mean to me.

Janet rushes and embraces him. They enjoy the moment in their little world; not noticing Kenya and Kian are watching them.



INT. JESS' NEW HOUSE - DAY

Shonda and Gregg are carrying heavy boxes and their kids are helping them as well. Jess just purchased a home and they are helping her with the move. They hired professional movers who are putting furniture together as the others deal with the rest. Jess and Shonda start taking out plates and glasses and putting them in cabinets while Gregg continues to bring more boxes.

SHONDA

This is such a beautiful house Jess,  
I'm so jealous.

JESS

Oh, thank you! I'm so excited. It's a  
great reminder that I'm beginning a  
fresh start. it feels good.

SHONDA

It is a beautiful beginning, and we're  
so proud of you sweetie! You've been  
through so much this year, you deserve  
this and more.

JESS

Everyone has a season, this was mine.  
I just can't believe how much can  
happen in a year. I'm still grateful.  
One thing I learned recently is being  
grateful. So with that being said,  
thank you again for everything. You've  
truly been there for me and I'll  
forever be indebted to you.

SHONDA

Girl, don't mention it. We're family  
Jess, we stick together through it  
all. I'm just happy that at least  
something good came out of all this;  
we became friends.

JESS

Yes, we did. Come here.

Jess gives her a warm hug.

INT. KENYA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Janet has finally moved back in with her husband and the twins. After washing the dishes and cleaning the kitchen, Jess goes to Kenya's room.

JANET

Knock knock..

KENYA

Hey mom, come in.

JANET

Why are you still awake honey? It's quite late.

KENYA

I was checking if I have everything for the hospital bag. We're getting close.

JANET

Yes we are. How are you feeling?

KENYA

Honestly, I'm kind of scared. I don't know what to expect and the research I did online did not help at all.

JANET

It is scary, especially your first pregnancy but you forget it all once you see that innocent face for the first time. We're gonna be with you till the end, don't worry. I also wanted to apologize to you, I should have never reacted that way. Being a mother is a beautiful thing, the timing might not be ideal but that's not what matters. I was more worried about how we would look and people's opinions than anything else. I support you through this and will be with you in every step of the way honey. I know you'll make a great mother; more than I ever was.

KENYA

Mom, don't say that.

JANET

No, it's true. I had my priorities all wrong. I was so focused on seeming like the perfect family, always put together, successful, and poised in the eye of the public that I forgot about being a mother. I wanted everyone to be envious of our family and forgot to enjoy the people in it. I failed this family, as a mother and a wife. I have to live with that now. That's why I want to be there for you with the little time left before you are a mother yourself. Will you allow me to? Will you let me be a mom, not a mother?

Kenya gets emotional. She shakes her head as Janet kisses her forehead and wipes her tears. They hug.

INT. PHILLIP AND JANET'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Once again, the Dawsons host a family dinner. This time there are a few extra members; Bryson, Kenya's newborn baby, Cassie, and her kid. The whole family is gathered outside on their patio on a beautiful evening; including both Janet and Phillip's parents. Things are different now, there are no fancy table setting, glamorous fashion, or staff to serve the guests. The ambiance is more cheerful and casual as everyone is having a good time. There are some loud laughs and the energy is great. Janet is holding her new grandson and chatting with Shonda. Phillip is taking in the beautiful view in front of him while taking in the moment. He gets up.

PHILLIP

This year has been a real-life changer; in so many aspects. I've lost a lot and life beat me to the ground but I also gained some perspective. When I was a young man, I was so disappointed with my life and the kind of lifestyle my parents offered me. I knew that when I became a father, I would give my kids everything. I would make sure they never lacked a thing; give them the life I always dreamed of. I thought that way I would be a better father than mine was. My ego and selfishness drove me away from my family and I was more focused on being somebody, I left my family behind. I'm

so thankful I still have all of you so in the end... I didn't lose. I still want to apologize to all of you for being so self-centered, not putting my family first, and letting other people's opinions take first place and cloud my judgment. I want you all to know how much I appreciate, value, and love you. I also want to thank you for welcoming Cassie as a member of this family. All of us have gone through hell this year in our own lives but here we are.. still standing; that's the spirit of the Dawsons. No matter what life throws at us, we don't back down. That's why I'm confident and certain that it will only get better from here on out. So let's raise a toast to the Dawsons...still standing and forever strong. To the Dawsons!

They all toast their glasses with one another and sit back down.

THE DAWSONS

JANET

Great speech honey.

PHILLIP

Yeah, I think I'm getting better at this.

GREGG

So what happens now?

PHILLIP

Now?

He ponders for a second.

Now, we rebuild. The right way.

They share a kiss and gush over their newest family addition.

THE END.

# THE DAWSONS